

Matthew's Christmas List

Looking at the four gospels from a Christmas perspective, only two of them even mention the story of Jesus' birth. Mark and John start thirty years later, with the ministry of John the Baptist – and Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner. Matthew stands alone with a unique (and perhaps “boring”) introduction – a lengthy genealogy to prove to His Jewish readers that Jesus had the right lineage to be their Messiah. He needs to connect Jesus with King David, but he goes even further back to connect Him to Abraham.

David wanted to build God a house (temple), so God said he would build David a house (lineage) that would be established forever! This is the Messianic promise given to David from God through the prophet Nathan:

2 Samuel 7:12-13 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

And this is the covenant that God made long before that with Abraham:

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

However, Matthew does something really strange in this genealogy. In ancient times, the only histories written were those written by hired historians – hired by the powerful to make them look good! Histories and genealogies were always written with a point in mind. The point of Matthew's genealogy is to connect Jesus the man with David the man and with Abraham the man – because that lineage is where He gets His right to be the Jewish Messiah. However, Matthew gives us the names of several WOMEN, some of whom are not even Jewish! It's like he is going out of his way to show that Jesus doesn't have a pure bloodline! This certainly doesn't help his case that Jesus is the Messiah.

- v. 3 – Tamar
- v. 5 – Rahab
- v. 5 – Ruth
- v. 6 – the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba)

Why all this distraction? Matthew hasn't even started his story yet! If he wanted to mention women, why not some of the OT's righteous women?

Why? Because sinners were the POINT of Jesus' story! Sin was the issue that Jesus came to earth for! Jesus' story is the story of forgiveness, in a world that had known only condemnation. And ... for Matthew, this is HIS story, because sinners are HIS kind of people!

Do you know that the most embarrassing moment in Matthew's life was probably the day he met Jesus? It happened in Capernaum ...

Matthew 9:1-8 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Moments later, Matthew is eyeball to eyeball with the Son of God! Matthew was a TAX COLLECTOR – or a PUBLICAN. Because a publican betrayed his own countrymen to benefit Rome and himself, he was hated by everyone. Publicans were considered to be so evil that the Jews had a separate category for them – “**publicans and sinners.**” So the other disciples are NOT happy to even be associating with Matthew, let alone going to his house or associating with Matthew's friends!

Matthew 9:9-13 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many **publicans and sinners** came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with **publicans and sinners**? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. **But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:** for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Hosea 6:6 For I desired mercy (“LOYAL LOVE”), and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

God gave us “loyal love” and He is looking for that in return – love that keeps on giving even when it doesn't understand the other's actions!

God isn't looking for PERFECTION from us (that's the point of Matthew's story and Jesus' genealogy!) – He is looking for LOYAL LOVE!