Motivation: Christmas Day is coming! Family, eggnog, presents…tradition! But in the midst of the tinsel, let’s not forget whose birthday we celebrate. Note: Houston’s FBC Life Bible studies will not meet next Sunday, December 29. You may choose to continue the Numbers series by teaching the 12/29 lesson on this date.

I. The Ancestry of Jesus (1:1-17)

Genealogy in v. 1 is transliterated from the Greek word *genesis*, thus a fitting opening verse to the New Testament.

A. Direction - HCSB, p. 1608: 1:1 “The title of this genealogy introduces several important themes in Matthew. Jesus is identified as the Christ, Messiah, the King anointed by God to rule over His people. This is reiterated by identifying Jesus as Son of David (v. 20; 2:2; 9:27; 12:3, 23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15). OT prophecies like 2 Sm 7:16 and Is 9:2-7 foretold that Messiah (the “anointed one”) would be a descendant of King David. Jesus’ Davidic lineage shows that He meets this qualification. Though the genealogy is otherwise arranged in chronological order, Matthew shifted “Son of David” ahead of Son of Abraham to lay emphasis on the royal title.

The title “Son of Abraham” implies that just as Abraham was the father of national Israel, Jesus will be the founder of a new spiritual Israel. The phrase the historical record of Jesus is unusual. OT genealogies are consistently named after the earliest ancestor in the lineage
because the Jews considered that person to be most significant since everyone else derived from them. That Matthew names his genealogy after Jesus, the final descendant in the lineage, implies that Jesus is more important than anyone who preceded Him.

**B. Distinction - HCSB, p. 1608: 1:2-6**

“Matthew mentioned four women in his genealogy, all of them Gentiles.

- **Tamar** was a Canaanite.
- **Rahab** was from Jericho.
- **Ruth** was a Moabitess.
- **Uriah’s wife** Bathsheba was probably a Hittite. The mention of these women signals God’s intention to include Gentiles and women in His redemptive plan. Several kings are named also, but only David is explicitly given the title **King**. This highlights that the Son of David (Jesus) will likewise be a kingly figure.

**C. Description - HCSB, p. 1608: 1:7-16**

“Matthew’s genealogy agrees with the genealogies of 1Ch 1-3 and Lk 3:23-38 from the generation of Abraham down to David. After David, Matthew’s genealogy agrees with that of 1 Ch except for a few intentional gaps; but departs significantly from Luke’s. Some interpreters argue from this, that one or both of the NT genealogies is inaccurate. However, Jews in David’s line carefully preserved their genealogies because they knew from the OT prophecies that one of their descendants would be Messiah. David’s descendants also had the privilege of providing firewood for the altar in Jerusalem (m. Ta’an 4:5). Naturally, they kept careful records to demonstrate their Davidic descent and preserve their privileges. Evidence in Josephus (Life 1) and rabbinic texts suggests that genealogical archives were kept in public registers.

Scholars suggest several ways in which the genealogies of Matthew and Luke may be harmonized. First, one may preserve the genealogy of Jesus through Mary and the other through Joseph. Second, the custom of levirate marriage resulted in a child having different biological and legal fathers. Perhaps one genealogy follows the biological line while the other follows the legal. Third, one genealogy may trace David’s legal descendants who would have reigned if the Davidic kingdom had continued while the other lists descendants in Joseph’s specific line. A combination of these approaches is also possible.

In English, it is difficult to identify the antecedent of the first occurrence of the pronoun **who** in
verse 16. However, in Matthew’s Greek, the pronoun is feminine. Thus, although the rest of the genealogy focuses on fathers and only rarely mentions mothers, Matthew identified a human mother but not a human father of Jesus, thus implying Jesus’ virginal conception.

D. Davidic - HCSB, p. 1609: 1:17 “Matthew’s arrangement of Jesus’ genealogy into three sets of 14 generations is probably an example of gematria, a system that assigns numerical value to letters of the alphabet (e.g. A=1, B=2, etc.) in order to communicate a subtle message. In Hebrew, the numerical value of the letters composing the name “David” is 14. Thus, Matthew’s artistic arrangement probably highlights Jesus’ Davidic lineage. If Matthew did intentionally use gematria, this supports the view that he originally wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, for the gematria functions in the Hebrew version of the genealogy but not the Greek.”

II. The Savior (1:18-23)

“The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit.” (18)

A. Family: Matthew used “engaged” (18), “husband” (19) and “divorce” (19) all in the space of two verses. What is unclear to us would have been very clear to a Jewish reader. Traditional marriages had three stages:

1. Engagement (18) - often an engagement was arranged while the principals were still children,

2. Betrothal - upon ratification of the engagement by all parties, the betrothal was absolutely binding, lasted one year, and could only be dissolved by divorce.

3. Marriage (24) - a ceremony taking place at the end of the one-year betrothal.
B. **Fulfillment**

1. **Betrayed** “So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.” (19) - Thinking that Mary had been unfaithful to him, Joseph endeavored to terminate their relationship. Betrothal could only be ended by divorce, publicly in the presence of three rabbis if contested, or privately, in the presence of two witnesses, if uncontested.

2. **Birthed** “But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.” (20-21) Jesus’ virgin birth is the affirmation from God that His Son is divine. Matthew’s gospel is very careful to emphasize that Jesus had no earthly father.

   vs. 16 - Notice that the use of “fathered” ends and that Joseph is simply described as the husband of Mary, not the father of Jesus.

   vs. 18 - The Child is described as “by the Holy Spirit.”

   vs. 20 - What has been hinted at is made clear by the angel, “because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit.”

   vs. 23 - “See, the virgin will become pregnant…” - Isaiah’s choice of wording was specific as was Matthew’s. In both cases, the Holy Spirit led them to use a specific word meaning virgin or chaste.

   vs. 24 - “Joseph…did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son” (24) HC SB,
“The words of Jesus Christ are in an emphatic position in the Greek text, implying that the circumstances of Jesus’ birth differed from those of everyone else in the genealogy. Although several of those people were conceived by miracles, they all had a human father. Only Jesus was born of a virgin. Before they came together means that Joseph and Mary had not yet had intercourse. Joseph thus assumed that Mary had been unfaithful. Pregnan means that Mary’s pregnancy was a miracle performed by the Spirit, not that God assumed material form and physically impregnated her. This makes Jesus’ conception dramatically different from Greek myths that speak of Children born to gods who lay with women.”

3. Benefactor “Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel, which is translated “God is with us.”

a. Jesus - “Yahweh Saves” HCSB, p. 1609, 1:21 “Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua which means “Yahweh saves.” The angel explained that Jesus’ name revealed His purpose: He would rescue sinners from the punishment they deserve. This salvation would be experienced by His people, identified as those who follow Jesus.”

b. Immanuel - “God is with Us” HCSB, p. 1609, 1:23 “The name Immanuel (God with us) implies Jesus’ deity. Mary’s virgin-born Son would be God Himself living among His people. The Immanuel of Is 7:14 is to be identified with the person described in Is 9:2-7 and 11:1-9.”

III. The Arrival (24-25)

“When Joseph got up from sleeping, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he
named Him Jesus.
(24-25) Joseph’s immediate and explicit obedience is an example to all of Jesus’ followers:

A. ▶️ Obedience in Marriage “He married her”

B. ▶️ Obedience in Abstinence “did not know her intimately until she gave birth”

C. ▶️ Obedience in Naming “he named Him Jesus”

IV. ▶️ The Search (2: 1-2)

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived unexpectedly in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” We don’t know how many magi came to Jerusalem although tradition holds to three because of the three gifts. We can learn by their example:

A. ▶️ Wise Men

1. Faith - Hebrew religious leaders had centuries of prophecy pointing the way to the Messiah; these magi only had a star to follow.

2. Sacrifice - Their journey would probably have been from Persia, a trip that was both costly and dangerous.

3. Generosity - Their gifts (11) were fit for a king. Their worship of Jesus in verse 11 would identify them as the first Gentile followers of our Lord.  

HCSB, pp.1609-10: 2:1
The wise men were magi. Eastern magi mixed Zoroastrianism with astrology and black magic. They are described in Dn 2:2, 4-5, 10, where they are associated with diviner-priests, mediums and sorcerers. The term “magus” (sg of “magi”) appears only once in the NT. It describes the sorcerer whom Paul portrayed as a “son of the Devil, full of all deceit and all fraud, enemy of all righteousness” (Ac 13:6-10). The magus of whom Paul spoke would have held beliefs that were similar to those of the wise men. Thus, the summons of the magi to visit Jesus demonstrates God’s intention to save Gentiles from their futile religions. As an adult, Jesus cast out demons and broke Satan’s grip on beleaguered people. Here we see that even in His infancy, Christ plundered Satan’s kingdom and set captives free. The east may refer to Babylonia or Persia.

B. Unwise King: Herod was appointed procurator of Judea in 47 B.C. Upon the death of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Octavius advised the senate to declare him “King of the Jews.” He was known for his grand building plans which included the temple and his shrewd and ruthless political intrigue that involved assassination of his favorite wife and his own sons. HCSB, p.1610

: 2:2
“The question posed by the wise men was an unintentional challenge to Herod’s reign. Jesus was born King in the sense that He was from David’s line and thus king by birthright. Herod, however, was neither a full Jew nor a descendant of David and thus was not genuinely qualified to reign as king. The word translated star can indicate many different astronomical phenomena, including comets, meteors, or planetary conjunctions. Matthew later (2:9) described the star as moving through the sky in order to point the magi to Jesus’ precise location. This indicates that it was no ordinary star.
In the east probably means “at its rising,” indicating that the star mysteriously appeared in the eastern sky to signal Messiah’s birth. The interest of the magi in astrology, a practice condemned in the Bible (Is 47:13-15), probably first directed their attention to Messiah’s star. In another profound display of grace, God condescended to use the magi’s pagan superstitions to draw them to Jesus.”

V. The Inquiry (3-6)
When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born. “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah: because out of you will come a leader who will shepherd My people Israel.”

A. Disturbance: Since Herod was already declared ‘King of the Jews’, a foreign delegation searching for another “King of the Jews” would certainly disturb Herod; and, if Herod was disturbed, all Jerusalem would be disturbed because of his notorious homicidal rages.

B. Direction: There was no question among the chief priests and scribes that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Jesus’ virgin birth and birth in Bethlehem were two of the twelve Old Testament prophecies that Matthew cites as being fulfilled in the life of Jesus (1:23, 2:15, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9).

The chief priests and scribes (v. 3) knew Scripture well enough to identify Bethlehem as Messiah’s birthplace (Mc 5:2; Jn 7:42), but nevertheless they later opposed His teachings. Knowledge of Scripture does not guarantee that your heart is right with God. The priestly opposition to Jesus is foreshadowed here by the fact that they made no effort to go visit Him even as the magi undertook the last leg of a long journey to do so. Micah 5:2 foretold that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of a king, a ruler who would shepherd…Israel. Although Micah said that the promised prince would “rule” over Israel, Matthew’s translation says that Messiah will “shepherd” Israel. Matthew likely chose this word to reflect Micah’s use in 5:4 and thus show that the entirety of Mc 5 applies to Jesus. This indicates that Jesus is eternal since Micah says, “His origin is from antiquity, from eternity.” Micah’s prophecy also said that the shepherd’s “greatness will extend to the ends of the earth.”

VI. The Plot (7-8)

Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find Him, report back to me so that I too can go
and worship Him.”

Evil Plots, whether at work, at church or in the home, have three basic elements:

A. Secrecy “secretly summoned” Pastor Gregg has said more than once that ‘secrets make you sick’. Herod needed secrecy because of his reputation. Sin often involves secrecy, but Jesus’ words are appropriate “For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light.” (Mark 4:22 NLT)

B. Planning “Go and search carefully for the child...” When the secret is discovered, one’s natural response is to make excuses: “I didn't know” or I didn’t mean any harm”. In fact, evil plots or schemes require forethought and planning.

HCSB, p. 1610:
2:7-8
“Herod questioned the magi about the exact time of the star’s appearance under the assumption that the star first appeared at the time of the child's birth. On the basis of this date, he ordered the execution of all male children in Bethlehem two years of age and under (2:16). This implies that the magi’s journey was lengthy and involved great sacrifice. Herod’s pretended desire to worship Messiah highlights his deceitfulness.”

C. Deceit “so that I too can worship Him.” Obviously, this was an outright lie. Herod had no intention of worshipping another “King of the Jews”; anyone in the court would have known that, thus the need for secrecy. Satan is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44) When we lie to cover an evil scheme, we're imitating Satan rather than Jesus.

VII. The Presentation (9-12)

9 After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen in the east! It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed beyond measure.”
11 Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts: Gold, frankincense, and Myrrh. 12
And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.”

A. The Star (2, 9-10) Attempts have been made to link this heavenly phenomenon with a conjunction of planets, nova, or known star. Because it went away and reappeared, the star seems to be a supernatural rather than a natural appearance. (Numbers 24:17)

B. The Gifts (11) Notice that they come into a “house” rather than a stable. Some time has elapsed since Jesus’ birth perhaps as much as two years (16). Gold would remind us of Jesus’ royalty, frankincense of His priestly office and myrrh of his impending death. In Isaiah 60:6, those bringing gifts to the future Lord of Zion bring gold and frankincense, but no myrrh.

VIII. The Flight to Egypt (2:13-15)

Believer’s Study Bible 1335: 2:15 “Some suggest that, by employing Hosea 11:1 in this verse and Jer. 31:15 in vv. 17, 18, Matthew implies that Jesus recapitulates the history of Israel. The passage from Hosea, which follows the flight into Egypt, recalls the Exodus. Under this view, Matthew sees in the personal experiences of Jesus a summary of the experience of His people. He is afflicted with their affliction (Is. 63:9) and repeats their religious experience of the Exodus from Egypt. As Egypt had been a refuge for God’s people (Gen. 12:10; 46:3, 4; 1 Kin. 11:40), so now it offers asylum for the Lord’s anointed. Hosea saw in the Exodus both the liberation and election of the chosen people (cf. Ex. 4:22). Matthew uses Hosea to stress that Jesus is the liberating Messiah and Son of God, whose birth and infancy are guided by God’s providence as was Israel’s history.”

IX. The Massacre of Bethlehem’s Babies (2:16-18)

Matthew’s gospel views this tragic incident in light of God’s plan of deliverance. The quotation of verse 18 is from Jeremiah 31:15 concerning the Exile; just a few verses later (Jer. 31:31-34) the New Covenant is introduced. HCSB, p.1611: 2:16-17 “Skeptics deny that Herod ever slaughtered the boys of Bethlehem since no extra-biblical source documents this horrific event. However, the murders are consistent with his documented dealings, such as his murdering his own family. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that Herod arranged for many Jewish nobles to be murdered upon his death in order to ensure that the land mourned
his passing (Ant. 17:167-69). Herod's behavior is reminiscent of Pharaoh’s around the time of Moses' birth (Ex. 1:15-22). This and other striking similarities to Moses’ birth narrative strengthen Matthew’s presentation of Jesus as the new Moses whom God promised in Dt. 18:15-19. Ancient Jews thought of Moses as a deliverer (Ac 7:25, 35). By highlighting parallels between Moses and Jesus, Matthew shows that Jesus was the promised Deliverer who would save His people from their sins. Herod killed all boys
two years old and under
in Bethlehem because the star had appeared to the magi two years previously, presumably at the moment of Jesus’ birth.”

**X. The Return to Israel and the Home in Nazareth (2:19-23)**

> HCSB, p. 1611: 2:22-23 “Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, inherited his father’s violent traits. His rule over Judea signaled that the holy family should settle elsewhere, and so Joseph led his family to resettle in the obscure Galilean village of Nazareth, where Joseph and Mary had previously lived (Lk 1:26). Matthew states that the decision was a fulfillment of an OT prophecy that Messiah
> will be called a Nazarene
> . No specific OT text explicitly prophesies this, and so Matthew was appealing to a prominent OT theme rather than a particular text. Specifically, he was probably alluding to the “Branch prophecies” since the Hebrew consonants nzr (which make up the word “branch”) are shared by the words “Nazareth” and “Nazarene.” These prophecies (Is 4:2; 11:1; Jr 23:5; 33:15) told of a righteous descendant of David whose wise and just rule would be empowered by the Spirit and who would bring salvation to Judah. Matthew thus saw Jesus’ hometown as a subtle clue to His identity as Messiah.”

**XI. The Requirement (Numbers 21:6-9)**

> “Then the Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people, and they bit them so that many Israelites died. 7. The people then came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Intercede with the Lord so that He will take the snakes away from us.” And Moses interceded for the people.
> 8. Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake image and mount it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will recover.”
So Moses made a bronze snake and mounted it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, and he looked at the bronze snake, he recovered.

(Numbers 21:6-9)

HCSB, p.256, 21:8-9 “
The Lord directed Moses to make a snake image and mount it on a pole as an antidote for those who had been bitten by these snakes. Those who looked at this snake image would be healed – by faith in God’s provision, not by faith in the graven serpent. Because it was God who graciously did the healing, it was neither idolatry nor magic. John’s Gospel cited Jesus’ use of this imagery as a metaphor for His crucifixion. Just as those in Moses’ time looked upon this snake and were healed, those who look in faith to the Christ who was lifted up on the cross will be healed of their sins. Those who looked upon Him and believed in Him would have eternal life (Jn 3:14-16).

Application:

1. Jesus’ miraculous birth confirms His unique nature as all God/all man.

2. Jesus’ worship by the wise men suggests His universal Lordship

3. Jesus’ flight to Egypt reminds us of Satan’s opposition. (Revelation 12:4-6)


Illustrator: QuickBites: The Wise Men
Numbers Lesson 4: “God Saves”

Written by David Self
Monday, 16 December 2019 00:00 -

Notes: **You may access David’s Lesson Preview in MP3 format at: www.hfbcbiblestudy.org; also, the Highpoint Bible Study (Downtown) is available on MP3 at the HFBC site under the Highpoint link/downloads.

Dates: 12/24 – Christmas Eve Services; 12/24-25 – Christmas Holidays (church offices closed); 12/29 – NO LBS; 12/31 - New Year’s Eve.

2020:
1/1
– New Year’s Day – offices closed;
1/6-9
– Daniel Fast;
1/15
– Midlink preview;
1/17-19
– LIFT Weekend;
1/22
– Midlink 1 thru 2/26;
1/26
– Fitness EXPO;
1/31
– Midnight Madness;
2/7
– Night to Shine;
2/9
– First Camp;
2/14-15
– Superstart Preteen Conf.;
2/16
– MIYCO;
2/21
– Marriage Matters;
2/23
– Parent Commitment;
2/29
– Senior Adult Rodeo Hoedown;
3/7
– Men’s Conf. Iron Sharpens Iron;
3/7-19
– RUSHMORE.