

December 6

Lesson 1 (KJV)

C ALLED TO BE HEIR

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 102:12–22

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:1–17 ; Hebrews 1

MATTHEW 1:1–6, 16–17

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.

16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

HEBREWS 1:1–5

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

KEY VERSE

[God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. — Hebrews 1:2

CALL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Unit 1: The Beginning of a Call

LESSONS 1–4

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Recall key names in the lineage of Jesus.
2. Explain why Jesus' heritage was central to His mission on earth.
3. State a way to improve acknowledgement of his or her spiritual heritage in Jesus.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. Who Am I?
- B. Lesson Context: Matthew's Gospel
- C. Lesson Context: The Book of Hebrews

I. Wanderers to Kings (Matthew 1:1–6)

- A. Abraham to Jesse (vv. 1–5)

The More You Know

- B. Jesse to Solomon (v. 6)

II. Captives to the King (Matthew 1:16–17)

- A. Jacob to Jesus (v. 16)
- B. The Generations (v. 17)

III. The King as the Son (Hebrews 1:1–5)

- A. Greater than Prophets (vv. 1–2)
- B. Seated in Heaven (v. 3)
- C. Over the Angels (vv. 4–5)

Conclusion

- A. Heritage of the King
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Aminadab Uh- min -uh-dab.

Bathsheba - Bath- she- buh.

Caesarea Maritima - Sess-uh- ree -uh Mar-uh- tee -muh.

Judas - Joo- dus.

Moriah - Mo- rye -uh.

Obed - O -bed.

Patriarch - pay-tree-ark.

Phares (Pharez) - Fair- ezz.

Rachab - Ray -hab.

Salmon - Sal -mun.

Thamar - Thay- mer.

Urias - Yu- rye- uhs.

Zara (Zarah) - Zair -uh.

Introduction

A. Who Am I?

Heritage connects people to the past and provides roots for understanding themselves in the larger world. In my case, my “Italianness” was always an important part of my self-identity. Growing up, it helped me understand that I shared a history with millions of other people, a history that began long before I was born. I felt this connection despite being adopted by a non-Italian family with no discernible Italian influences.

Both Matthew and the writer of Hebrews concerned themselves with Jesus’ heritage. In that regard, the focus remained on God’s work in a specific family to bring about His purposes. Also, Jesus’ divine superiority to every created being was of utmost importance to emphasize. These two writers remind us that Jesus’ beginnings are both humble and unimaginably glorious.

B. Lesson Context: Matthew’s Gospel

From the exile in Babylon of 586 BC onward, Judea was rarely free of foreign powers that imposed their will on the nation. After Babylon came Persia, then Greece, and finally Rome. In about 38 BC, Rome declared Herod to be king of Judea.

Herod imposed Greek and Roman culture onto the Jews, even erecting a temple to the goddess Roma in Caesarea Maritima. The Jews despised Herod not only for these acts but also because he wasn’t Jewish by heritage and thus not a rightful king. Matthew wrote against this background, which makes his

genealogy more than a list of names. It is a link to a time when David's line held the throne, saying something important about Jesus' birthright.

C. Lesson Context: The Book of Hebrews

Hebrews is a bit unusual. It ends with greetings like an epistle (Hebrews 13:20–25), yet the beginning is unlike that of a normal letter (contrast its opening verses with those of Colossians, etc.). Its original readers were likely Christians of Jewish background who had been undergoing some persecution, which tempted them to give up on Christianity for old ways that had been superseded (10:32–39 ; etc.). We can almost hear the original readers' questions that prompt our author to write chapter 1 : "We know about angels; is Jesus as strong as they?" "He died; is He powerful enough to save?" The author of Hebrews has clear answers.

I. Wanderers to Kings

(MATTHEW 1:1–6)

A. Abraham to Jesse (vv. 1–5)

1 . The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The names Jesus Christ, David , and Abraham all represent turning points in Israel's history. Only by looking at the covenants associated with David and Abraham can a person properly understand Jesus' importance as the fulfillment of those promises. Connecting Jesus to David foreshadows the rest of Matthew's Gospel, where we learn that Jesus fulfilled the promises to David (examples: Matthew 2:20–21 ; 21:5 ; see commentary on 1:6 , below).

What Do You Think?

What guardrails can we erect to ensure that we do not misuse biblical genealogies?

Digging Deeper

How do Matthew 3:9 ; 1 Timothy 1:4 ; and Titus 3:9 help you answer this question?

THE MORE YOU KNOW

Several years ago, my father was shaken when he found out that the man he believed to be his biological father wasn't. Sadly, the answers to his questions were buried with the few people who could have answered them. He believed he would never have a clear picture of his heritage.

Today, with the help of DNA testing and hours and hours of research, my father has identified his biological family and traced his lineage back nearly 1,000 years, to William the Conqueror. He even established his legitimate claim to gain admittance into his Scottish clan.

Matthew's genealogy establishes Jesus as the fulfillment of both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. Jesus' lineage proves His earthly identity and supports His rightful place as heir to the throne of David and, therefore, the means by which the whole world can be blessed. How can you ensure that you won't miss out?

2a . Abraham begat Isaac.

Abraham received the covenant that ultimately established the people of Israel. The story of Abraham is one of faithfulness—from both the patriarch and God (Genesis 12:1–7 , 15 , 17).

Despite Isaac’s being the only son of promise (Genesis 17:19–21), Abraham was faithful in preparing to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah (22:1–10). God showed His faithfulness to Abraham again by sending a ram to replace Isaac on the altar and then renewing the covenant (22:11–18).

2b . And Isaac begat Jacob.

After Abraham’s death, the covenant promise passed to Isaac . Little is said about Isaac, but his and Rebekah’s parenting style of playing favorites (Genesis 25:28) blighted his sons (27:19–41).

2c . And Jacob begat Judas and his brethren.

God met Jacob at Bethel and promised him land and children (Genesis 28:13–15), echoing promises made to Abraham (see Matthew 1:2a , above). Of Jacob’s 12 sons, Judas (spelled Judah in Genesis 49:8–10) unexpectedly inherited the promise of a royal line (see Matthew 1:6 , below); he wasn’t the first-, second-, or even third-born son (Genesis 29:32–35). Further, he was born to Leah, who was “hated” by her husband (29:31).

3a . And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar.

The rarity of women in this genealogy should draw attention to all five who are mentioned, as each was uniquely notable. Thamar (spelled Tamar in Genesis 38:6) is the first woman listed. She was widowed before bearing children for her husband, so Judas (Judah), her father-in-law, told her to wait until that man’s brother was old enough to become wed to her. But detecting deception on the part of Judas, she tricked him into impregnating her (38:13–25). On learning the truth, he declared, “She hath been more righteous than I” (38:26).

Phares and Zara (spelled Pharez and Zarah in Genesis 38:29–30) were twins. During their births, Zara put out his hand first and thus had a scarlet thread tied to him to mark him as firstborn. But Phares (meaning “he who bursts forth”) was actually born first, thus his inclusion in the next verse.

3b . And Phares begat Esrom.

Little is known of Phares outside of his birth story other than the fact that his house maintained a good reputation (Ruth 4:12). Esrom (spelled Hezron in Genesis 46:12) was born in Canaan and journeyed to Egypt with Jacob and the rest of the family (46:7–9). His name establishes a link between the beginnings of the 12 tribes in Genesis and their fertility and subsequent struggle in described in Exodus (compare Numbers 26:21).

3d . And Esrom begat Aram.

Aram (spelled Ram in Ruth 4:19) was one of the children born in Egypt, part of the evidence of Israel’s fruitfulness in that land (Exodus 1:7).

4–5a . And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon. And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab.

The male names in this segment match those in 1 Chronicles 2:10–11 . These loosely represent the period of the judges (about 1380–1050 BC), and therein lies a bit of a problem: there are not enough names in either record to cover that 330-year period of time. Instead, the names represent all that time. This drives the narrative represented by the genealogy closer to David (see also on Matthew 1:6 , 17 , below).

Not mentioned in the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2 is Rachab (spelled Rahab in Joshua 6:17), second of four women mentioned in Matthew’s genealogy. She hid the Israelite spies in Jericho, thereby saving their lives (Joshua 2:3–16 ; Hebrews 11:31). Her inclusion here points not only to the importance of women in Jesus’ lineage but also to God’s love for non-Israelites (compare Matthew 12:20–21). The way she honored God in speech and deed transcended both her deception and occupation (Joshua 2:1–21). For this reason, she was welcomed without question into Israel despite being born in an unfaithful nation (Joshua 6:25 ; James 2:25).

Like his father Salmon , Booz (spelled Boaz in Ruth 4:21) is often overshadowed by the remarkable woman he married (see Matthew 1:5b , next).

5b . And Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse.

Ruth is the third woman listed in the lineage. She was from Moab, a nation that Israel was to avoid or else risk being led astray (example: Numbers 25). Ruth represents an exception based on faithfulness: she took her mother-in-law Naomi’s God and family as her own (Ruth 1:16). Ruth met and later married Booz (Boaz; Ruth 2:1 ; 4:13). Their son Obed became the father of Jesse , grandfather of David (see Matthew 1:6 , next).

B. Jesse to Solomon (v. 6)

6 . And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.

This verse marks a transition from the period of the judges to the time of the united monarchy (about 1050–930 BC). David the king comes with many stories of faithfulness to God (example: 1 Samuel 17). However, the story line Matthew reminds his readers about was ultimately one of God’s faithfulness in the midst of human sin: God kept His promise even after David’s sin against Urias (spelled Uriah in 2 Samuel 11) and Bathsheba. She is the fourth woman listed, but referred to only as the wife of Urias . The full account and its consequences are recorded in 2 Samuel 11–12 .

Bathsheba’s second son was Solomon . As a result of intrigue and violence in the royal family, this son inherited the throne (1 Kings 1:1–35). He was a wise man (example: 10:1–5) who nevertheless stumbled into faithlessness (11:1–13).

II. Captives to the King

(M ATTHEW 1:16–17)

A. Jacob to Jesus (v. 16)

16 . And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

The final three names in the genealogy seem like history repeating itself as they remind us of others who bore the names before (see Genesis 37:3 ; 45:8–11 ; 47:13–26). Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. Mary, the fifth woman in this list, is a Greek form of the Hebrew name Miriam (Exodus 15:20).

B. The Generations (v. 17)

17 . So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

This verse highlights a pattern that Matthew wants the genealogy to portray, as the names are broken into three sections of fourteen names each. This may be a simple memory device since the three consonants of the name David occupy the fourth, sixth, and fourth places in the Hebrew alphabet, respectively—adding up to 14. If so, there’s no mystical numerology involved, just a simple and useful memory device. This possibility gains strength when we realize that Matthew chose not to include certain names in Matthew 1:8 , 11 that are included in 1 Chronicles 3:10–16 . The result is that each of Matthew’s three sections adds to 14.

What Do You Think?

What Scripture memorization techniques do you find most helpful personally?

Digging Deeper

How do passages such as Psalm 119:105 and Matthew 4:4 speak to this topic?

The phrase from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations summarizes the story of God’s leading His people home again. That began with the return from exile in about 538 BC.

III. The King as the Son

(H EBREWS 1:1–5)

A. Greater than Prophets (vv. 1–2)

1–2a . God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

In the past, God primarily communicated indirectly. Considering that the Old Testament is God’s revelation through many writers over the course of many centuries, we understand what the author means by the phrase at sundry times in divers manners. Those diverse ways included a burning bush (Exodus 3), dreams (1 Kings 3), and visions (Ezekiel 1).

The phrase unto the fathers refers to Jewish ancestors, the recipients of God’s communication that resulted in Scripture. The instrument God used to communicate was the prophets. Unlike those prophets, however, Jesus is God’s own Son. This equates Jesus with God (John 1:1 ; 5:18). Attention is

now to turn away from the prophets to Jesus and His message. The phrase these last days refers to the time that began with Christ's first coming and continues through our own days (see 1 John 2:18).

What Do You Think?

How would you respond to a fellow Christian who believes that Hebrews 1:1–2 , along with passages such as Colossians 2:14 , implies that the Old Testament can be disregarded?

Digging Deeper

In what circumstances would it be useful to introduce Romans 15:4 ; 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 ; and/or 2 Timothy 3:16 into the dialogue?

2b . Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

Jesus, the heir of all things , has divine authority and ownership, far more than any created being since all things means everything that exists. It is He who fulfills the promises of the Old Testament covenants (see Hebrew 1:5 , below). These certainly include God's promise to Abraham to bless all the nations (Genesis 12:3). Jesus declares in Matthew 28:18 that His authority is absolute.

Jesus is the one who brought the worlds into existence (John 1:1–4). The Greek word translated worlds often refers to eternity in this epistle (Hebrews 1:8 ; 5:6 ; 6:20 ; 7:17 , 21 , 24 , 28 ; 13:8 , 21), but here the word worlds fits better (as it also does in 11:3). Think about how foolish it is not to trust Jesus to bring God's message into the existence that Jesus himself created!

B. Seated in Heaven (v. 3)

3a . Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

The Father has glory of His own, of course. At the same time, the Son also has actual light— brightness or radiance. Thus the Son is not reflected light, as we see coming from the moon, but has light himself, as we see from the sun.

Moreover, the Son bears the image of God in ways we do not (Genesis 1:26–27). The term for express image is used of the imprint stamped on coins. Person refers to God's real essence or actual being. These two terms make clear that the Son, though distinct as a person from the Father, is of the same divine nature as the Father. Whatever the "stuff" is that makes the Father to be God also makes the Son to be God. The relationship between the Father and Son is best summarized by Jesus: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

IMAGE

As a child, I was the spitting image of my father, and I had precious little resemblance to my mother. Whenever the two of us went to the store, strangers would proclaim how wonderful it was that my mother chose to adopt. Although she agrees that adoption is a praiseworthy choice, she was disappointed that I was not recognizable as her flesh and blood.

I am no longer the spitting image of my father. I have grown to look more and more like my mother. Today it would be impossible not to see how I am related to both of them.

In a similar vein, I am not an exact reflection of the image of God. His image in me is marred by sin. However, as I continue to grow into maturity, I can catch more and more glimpses of God in my reflection. I will never be the express image of God. Only Jesus is and can be. Praise God that by His grace you and I both can have enough resemblance to be identified as family!

3b . And upholding all things by the word of his power.

The Son sustains all things. Deuteronomy 33:27 speaks of God's everlasting arms being Israel's refuge. Isaiah 46:4 says God will carry His people and deliver them. The Son uses the word of his power to do this; this recall the power of God's word revealed at the beginning in Genesis 1 . The Son's role as sustainer is that which only the divine one can fill.

3c . When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The Son brought about the purging, or cleansing, from sins when He died on the cross. Jesus' ability to purge sins reinforces His deity, as only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:7).

To be seated at the right hand is a position of honor (1 Kings 2:19 ; Luke 20:42) given for the Son's completed work on earth. This is a repeated theme in this epistle (Hebrews 8:1 ; 10:12 ; 12:2).

C. Over the Angels (vv. 4–5)

4 . Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Jews of the first century AD had a pervasive fascination with angels . We see evidence of this in some of the nonbiblical writings that came into being in the time between the Old and New Testaments (the intertestamental writings). In all the ways already mentioned so far, the Son is as superior to the angels as His name is to theirs. What names? Son versus angel. Whereas an angel is a created messenger, the Son is the divine, uncreated Creator. The difference is infinite.

What Do You Think?

How can this text help you guard yourself against mistaken beliefs about angels?

Digging Deeper

What vital dimensions do 2 Corinthians 11:14 and Colossians 2:18 add to that question?

5a . For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?

The word he refers to God. The phrase Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee is from Psalm 2:7 It is used here to make a vital point: no angel is called my Son. That is a title reserved for the unique Son of God, as described in Hebrews 1:1–4 , above. Though the promises made by the Lord in Psalm 2:8–9 apply in part to David, they can apply fully only to Jesus.

5b . And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

This quotation is from 2 Samuel 7:14 . It comes from the passage that established the Davidic covenant. David wished to build a temple for the Lord. Through Nathan the prophet, the Lord explained that He did not need a special house. Instead, the Lord would establish a house for David.

In 2 Samuel 7:12–16 , the Lord said He would raise up David’s “seed” and establish his kingdom. It was that seed who would build His house; the seed, ultimately, is the Lord’s Son. His house, unlike Solomon’s temple, endures eternally. Solomon governed a nation in a golden age, but that kingdom did not endure. The Son’s kingdom, by contrast, will never end (Isaiah 9:7 ; Luke 1:33).

What Do You Think?

How will Jesus’ absolute authority affect your service to Him in the week ahead?

Digging Deeper

Which area of thoughts, actions, and speech need the most improvement in this regard?

Conclusion

A. Heritage of the King

Matthew told his readers about Jesus’ human heritage: Jesus is the king promised to bless all nations. The major theme is God’s faithfulness, which situates Jesus as the final step in God’s fulfillment of His old and new covenant promises. The theme of covenant promises prepares us for the message and mission.

The author of Hebrews, by comparison, focused on Jesus’ divine heritage. When Jesus finished His earthly ministry, He was honored by the Father, further indicating the importance of accepting His message.

Through these texts, the Holy Spirit directs us to pay attention to Jesus’ message. He is God’s Son, greater than any angel or prophet. But He is also God himself.

B. Prayer

Father, thank You for sending Your Son to fulfill Your promises! Help us to live each day remembering that our future is in Him. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Our future is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.