

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes - Matthew 1

by John Wesley

John Wesley's sermon explores the genealogy of Jesus, emphasizing its significance in affirming his messianic identity and God's faithfulness through generations.

Scripture: Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:1-23, Luke 3:31, John 1:14, Romans 1:3, Galatians 3:16, Hebrews 7:14

Topics: "Genealogy of Christ", "Identity of Jesus"

Description

John Wesley explains the genealogy of Jesus Christ as presented in Matthew 1, emphasizing its significance in establishing Jesus' rightful place as the Messiah from the lineage of David and Abraham. He notes that the genealogies serve to affirm the fulfillment of God's promises and the importance of Jesus' identity as both Savior and King. Wesley highlights the role of women in the genealogy and reflects on the nature of Christ as our mediator, prophet, and king, addressing our spiritual needs. He concludes with a reminder of the transient nature of human life and the eternal significance of being remembered by God.

Transcript

Verse 1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ - That is, strictly speaking, the account of his birth and genealogy. This title therefore properly relates to the verses that immediately follow: but as it sometimes signifies the history of a person, in that sense it may belong to the whole book. If there were any difficulties in this genealogy, or that given by St. Luke, which could not easily be removed, they would rather affect the Jewish tables, than the credit of the evangelists: for they act only as historians setting down these genealogies, as they stood in those public and allowed records. Therefore they were to take them as they found them. Nor was it needful they should correct the mistakes, if there were any. For these accounts sufficiently answer the end for which they are recited. They unquestionably prove the grand point in view, that Jesus was of the family from which the promised seed was to come. And they had more weight with the Jews for this purpose, than if alterations had been made by inspiration itself. For such alterations would have occasioned endless disputes between them and the disciples of our Lord. The son of David, the son of Abraham - He is so called, because to these he was more peculiarly promised; and of these it was often foretold the Messiah should spring. Luke 3:31.

Verse 3. Of Tamar - St. Matthew adds the names of those women also, that were remarkable in the sacred history.

Verse 4. Naasson - Who was prince of the tribe of Judah, when the Israelites entered into Canaan.

Verse 5. Obed begat Jesse - The providence of God was peculiarly shown in this, that Salmon, Boaz, and Obed, must each of them have been near a hundred years old, at the birth of his son here recorded.

Verse 6. David the king - Particularly mentioned under this character, because his throne is given to the Messiah.

Verse 8. Jehoram begat Uzziah - Jehoahaz, Joash, and Amaziah coming between. So that he begat him mediately, as Christ is mediately the son of David and of Abraham. So the progeny of Hezekiah, after many generations, are called the sons that should issue from him, which he should beget, Isaiah 39:7.

Verse 11. Josiah begat Jeconiah - Mediately, Jehoiakim coming between. And his brethren - That is, his uncles. The Jews term all kinsmen brethren. About the time they were carried away - Which was a little after the birth of Jeconiah.

Verse 16. The husband of Mary - Jesus was generally believed to be the son of Joseph. It was needful for all who believed this, to know, that Joseph was sprung from David. Otherwise they would not allow Jesus to be the Christ. Jesus, who is called Christ -The name Jesus respects chiefly the promise of blessing made to Abraham: the name Christ, the promise of the Messiah's kingdom, which was made to David. It may be farther observed, that the word Christ in Greek, and Messiah in Hebrew, signify anointed, and imply the prophetic, priestly, and royal characters, which were to meet in the Messiah. Among the Jews, anointing was the ceremony whereby prophets, priests, and kings were initiated into those offices. And if we look into ourselves, we shall find a want of Christ in all these respects. We are by nature at a distance from God, alienated from him, and incapable of a free access to him. Hence we want a mediator, an intercessor, in a word, a Christ, in his priestly office. This regards our state with respect to God. And with respect to ourselves, we find a total darkness, blindness, ignorance of God, and the things of God. Now here we want Christ in his prophetic office, to enlighten our minds, and teach us the whole will of God. We find also within us a strange misrule of appetites and passions. For these we want Christ in his royal character, to reign in our hearts, and subdue all things to himself.

Verse 17. So all the generations - Observe, in order to complete the three fourteens, David ends the first fourteen, and begins the second (which reaches to the captivity) and Jesus ends the third fourteen. When we survey such a series of generations, it is a natural and obvious reflection, how like the leaves of a tree one passeth away, and another cometh! Yet the earth still abideth. And with it the goodness of the Lord which runs from generation to generation, the common hope of parents and children. Of those who formerly lived upon earth, and perhaps made the most conspicuous figure, how many are there whose names are perished with them? How many, of whom only the names are remaining? Thus are we likewise passing away! And thus shall we shortly be forgotten! Happy are we, if, while we are forgotten by men, we are remembered by God! If our names, lost on earth, are at length found written in the book of life!

Verse 19. A just man - A strict observer of the law: therefore not thinking it right to keep her.

Verse 21. Jesus - That is, a Saviour. It is the same name with Joshua (who was a type of him) which properly signifies, The Lord, Salvation. His people - Israel. And all the Israel of God.

Verse 23. They shall call his name Emmanuel - To be called, only means, according to the Hebrew manner of speaking, that the person spoken of shall really and effectually be what he is called, and actually fulfil that title. Thus, Unto us a child is born - and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace - That is, he shall be all these, though not so much nominally, as

really, and in effect. And thus was he called Emmanuel; which was no common name of Christ, but points out his nature and office; as he is God incarnate, and dwells by his Spirit in the hearts of his people. It is observable, the words in Isaiah are, Thou (namely, his mother) shalt call; but here, They - that is, all his people, shall call - shall acknowledge him to be Emmanuel, God with us. Which being interpreted - This is a clear proof that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Greek, and not in Hebrew. Isaiah 7:14.

Verse 25. He knew her not, till after she had brought forth - It cannot be inferred from hence, that he knew her afterward: no more than it can be inferred from that expression, 2 Samuel 6:23, Michal had no child till the day of her death, that she had children afterward. Nor do the words that follow, the first-born son, alter the case. For there are abundance of places, wherein the term first born is used, though there were no subsequent children. Luke 2:7.

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