
WHAT CHILD IS THIS: SON OF ABRAHAM

Matthew 1:1-21

As we discussed briefly, we are starting our new Advent series. We are going to do a miniseries out of Matthew, Chapters 1 and 2, leading up to Christmas. For those of you who are newer to the Christian faith, you have probably heard the Christmas story many times. But you might not know that almost all the biblical content that we have for the Christmas story comes out of Matthew, chapters 1 and 2, and Luke, chapters 1 and 2. So to enjoy the holidays this year, we decided to use Matthew, chapters 1 and 2, as a way to preach through the Christmas story, but also combine that with our Advent readings and our Advent candle lighting. The devotional that you pick up will coincide. That's what you heard today, the candle of blessing. I will tell you more about it after I read our text. We are going to read portions of Matthew, chapter 1, and then I am going to pray and tell you more about the series. Let's go to the Lord's word right now.

Verse 1:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

Drop down to verses 16 and 17:

...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the Christmas narrative. Here we go. Verse 18:

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Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (which means the Lord saves), for he will save his people from their sins.”

Drop down to chapter 2, verses 1 and 2.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

Let’s pray. Father God, we pray that you would come by your Spirit now and fill this room. Lord, fill our hearts, that as we read and reflect upon this familiar story, you would ignite our hearts afresh to see the glory of Jesus Christ in a fresh way, to see that in you, Jesus, all the promises of God are fulfilled. Lord, you are the hope of Israel and the hope of the world. As we enter into this Christmas season, Lord, we pray that all of our families and each one of us here would center our hearts on Jesus Christ, the greatest gift the world has ever known. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The famous Christmas hymn begins with the following: “What Child is this?” Are you familiar with “What Child Is This?”

What Child is this
Who laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?

The question asked in the hymn is the following: What Child is this? When the angels announced to the shepherds, “Behold, this Child has been born,” what Child is this? When the angel appeared to Joseph and told him to take Mary as his wife, “What Child is this?” When the angel appeared to Mary and said that she would be conceiving the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, “What Child is this?”

When I was a new Christian, I started reading my Bible (that’s a good idea if you’re a new Christian) and I read Matthew 1 and 2. I read that genealogy and I was lost. I’ll just be honest. You read through it and you are like, “What are we talking about here?” And the longer I’ve been a believer, I’ve started to see how the New Testament authors quote the Old Testament, particularly in Matthew chapters 1 and 2, to show Jesus – what Child this is – that we’ve been expecting.

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So, we are going to do a Christmas series for the next couple weeks, but it's going to be a little different than what you are used to. We are going to do Advent for the next couple weeks and we are going to be answering this question: Who is this Child? And how does he fulfill all the prophecies quoted by Matthew?

I would read these prophecies about him being a son of Abraham and a son of David, or "out of Egypt I have called my Son" when the Holy Family fled to Egypt, where "he shall be called a Nazarene." I would flip over and read those passages and say, "I don't know how this all fits together. I don't understand how Jesus is the fulfillment of these things." But now that I do, every time I read my Old Testament, I see Jesus everywhere.

I was thinking about this back when I was a kid. Remember those Magic Eye books? There were all these funny patterns. You would stare at them but couldn't see anything. Then if you stared just long enough and crossed your eyes just a little bit, all of a sudden an image would pop off the page. Do you know what I'm talking about? They used to be really popular. The Holy Spirit did something like that in my life. I started to see how the apostles and how the New Testament writers read their Scriptures, and all of a sudden Jesus popped off the pages everywhere.

Our prayer for you over the next few weeks as we enter into the Christmas season and look at Matthew chapter 1 and the "What Child Is This" devotional that you will go through with your family or personally, is that you are going to see the Christ Child in three incredible dimensions. He is going to pop off the pages of your Scripture for you in ways you've never seen before.

But what this requires us to do is springboard from Matthew's text back into the ancient source text. So we are actually going to spend some time today looking at Abraham, because Jesus is the child of Abraham. This is how the series is going to work. Today we are talking about how Jesus is the son of Abraham, and all week in your devotional you are going to be reading texts about how Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. I can't hit all of them in the sermon today, so please go deeper. I hope it whets your appetite to study this more. We are repurposing Advent.

For those traditionalists here, please forgive us. Usually it's a candle of hope, faith and all that. We are going to call it the candle of blessing. Then next week, how Jesus is the son of David – the candle of royalty. How he is the son of Nazareth, saying, "He shall be called a Nazarene" – the candle of humility. How he is the Son of God, Immanuel, God with us – the candle of divinity. Then on Christmas Eve, as Brian talked about, we are going to light the Christ candle, not unlike a wedding, where you bring the two flames together into one. We are going to take these four flames and light the center flame, saying, "Christ is the fulfillment of all of these blessings." Christ is the fulfillment of all of these promises, and see the fulfillment of Jesus Christ from Matthew, chapters 1 and 2. Are you excited? I'm excited.

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We are going to be in Matthew chapters 1 and 2 today, but that's also going to require us to go into Genesis. So flip over to Genesis chapter 15. As you flip there, I'll finish the hymn

This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the son of Mary.

What Child is this? Matthew chapter 1 said that he is the son of Abraham. It recorded the fact that Jesus was born from Abraham through Isaac, up through David the king, which we will hit next week – the son of David. But the founder of our faith is Abraham. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all look back to this man of faith, Abraham, from thousands of years ago.

You are in Genesis 15. I'm going to tell you some of the story. I will read chapter 15, just the beginning of it through verse 6, then I want to tell you about this amazing man and how he points forward to Jesus Christ.

Are you there? Genesis 15, verses 1-6.

After these things (after Abraham had given 10% of his spoil to a priest, which we can't go into right now) the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

That verse, verse 6, is one of the huge verses to understand how we are made right with God. He believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness. Christmas is a time where we talk about belief a lot. You walk through the malls and you see the word "believe." You watch the movie about Santa Claus. At the end, if everybody believes, magic is going to happen, right?

We talk about belief a lot at Christmas time, and by the way, I pray that today you will believe in the message of Christmas. But it's not about the North Pole, and it's not about a big fat man who drops off toys. Somehow (and I love all of Christmas – I'm not here to slam Santa Claus right now) our belief has gotten off. We talk about believing, but we are believing in the fairy tale instead of the true glory of Christmas, Jesus Christ.

Abraham is an incredible character because he believed God. And because of his faith in God, God declared him righteous and made him the founder of our faith. In Genesis chapter 12, God calls Abraham out of his homeland. Abraham is a descendant (he was called Abram back then) about 400 years after Noah. He was like the great, great, great, great...eight generations after Noah.

Here is the problem. God has just wiped out the world because of their sin. Then they want to build a big tower to worship themselves and to make a name for themselves. But God said, "This is not going to happen," so he scattered them across the world. And you know what they started to do? Worship false gods.

We have a tendency to do that as human beings. They started to worship all these false gods. In fact in Ur, where Abram is from, they used to worship a god named sin. Isn't that interesting? He was also called the moon god or Nanna, the crescent moon. We still see that in some religions. That comes out of that place. There was a big altar and tabernacle to him. They were worshipping false gods. But God called his family, called his father, called his brothers out of that area. He said, "I'm going to take you to a new land."

So he left with his father and his brothers. He had two other brothers. His oldest brother died. His older brother was a lot older than him and had a son named Lot. They were about the same age. So Lot leaves with them. They leave the land. Then in chapter 12 God calls them out and says, "I am going to show you, Abram, a new land, a land where you can worship me, a land where I am going to make you great, a land where you are going to have a great nation. I am going to bless you, and I am going to bless all the families of the earth through you."

So Abram leaves. It's not like he's a small family like me, packing up my minivan with my four little kids. He has a whole host of people and servants. This guy was rich! It's a caravan going. They said, "Hey Abram, where are we going?" And he said, "I don't know. The Lord is going to show us! Let's just go!" They are out sojourning in tents, trying to find out where God has called them to go. But God has given them this promise -- that through his Child, God is going to bless the whole world.

But there is a problem. When Abram is leaving, he is already 75 years old, and his wife is barren. You see that show up a lot in the Bible. When a woman can't have a child a miracle is about to happen, right? She can't have any children. They go for 10 years and Abram still hasn't had a child.

In chapter 15 here, God renews his promise that we just read about. What we learn about Jesus Christ as the Son of Abraham is that:

- I. Jesus Christ fulfills God's star-filled promise.

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What do I mean by that? Abram says, “God, I’m not sure about this promise you made to me, because I’ve been doing this for 10 years and we still don’t have any kids. I think I’m going to have to give this all off to one of my servants, because they have kids, because I don’t think you’re going to come through for me.

God says, “Abram, it’s nighttime. Go outside. Look up at the sky. What do you see?” “I see lots of stars, Lord.” “Can you count them?” “No way. There are millions, billions of these things.” “Abram, your offspring are going to be like the stars in heaven. You are going to have so many stars. You are going to be such a blessing that you can’t even count them.” In that moment, faith welled up in Abram’s heart and he believed God. And God said, “Because of your faith, I’m going to make you the father of the faith. You are righteous now in my sight. There are going to be countless people made right with me through the faith that you have right now.”

Through believing in God, believing in his promises, you are made right with God, just like Abraham. The promise of scripture is this: The ultimate offspring, the ultimate promise fulfilled in Abraham is the seed of Abraham, the descendent of Abraham -- Jesus Christ.

This whole week you are going to go through Scripture seeing that in your devotional. I can’t cover all of that right now, but the Bible says this, and you have to believe me -- that Jesus is the seed of Abraham. And through faith in Jesus Christ, you become a descendant, a spiritual inheritor of the blessings that were given to Abraham. God said he was going to bless not simply his offspring, but all the families of the earth! All the nations of the earth would find a great spiritual inheritance in the seed of Abraham, and that seed was lying there in that child in a manger 2000 years ago. His name is Christ the Lord, the Child of Abraham. Incredible promise made thousands of years before. Through faith in Jesus Christ, you become a child of Abraham, a child of God. And through faith, through believing like Abraham, you are made right, you are counted right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ fulfills God’s star-filled promise.

As I was preparing for this sermon – praying, meditating, and reading Matthew chapters 1 and 2 – a thought struck me. It’s kind of crazy to me that the Lord used a star to take the wise men to Jesus. As they looked up at the heavens, God used a miraculous, moving (I don’t even know how he did it), bright as you can imagine, star. They saw that star, they read the Hebrew Scriptures, and somehow the Lord revealed: Follow that. Because the King of Israel, the fulfillment of Israel’s prophecies in Scripture – by following that, you are going to find him.

So they follow the star to the baby, to the Christ Child. By following the star, they found the star of Abraham himself. And by looking to the star of Abraham, looking to Jesus Christ, you become one of those stars. Remember? Each one of them represents one of Abraham’s children. Think about that. One of those stars flickering in the night when Abraham looked up – it’s flickering for you. Before the foundation of the world, when God spoke the stars into creation, he lit up these galaxies and planets. These blazing suns, millions and billions of miles across the galaxy – countless – each one of

them represents one of our salvations. That would be Stefan; that would be Mike; that would be Joe and Susie and Lisa. The star that leads us to the Christ Child leads us to the fulfillment of the star-filled promises of God.

I want you to remember this every time you look up at the heavens and see the glory of the stars. If you are in Christ, if you believe in Jesus Christ, one of those stars is lit up for you. You are a child of Abraham, a child of God. Jesus Christ fulfills God's star-filled promise.

II. Secondly, Jesus Christ provides God's perfect offering.

To see this, I want you to flip over to chapter 22. God fulfills his promise to Abraham. He gives him a son through his wife Sarah. They have a son named Isaac. Literally, by the time this child is born, Abraham is like 100 years old. The cool thing back then is people lived a lot longer. He lived to about 175, but he is still old, alright? He is an old man. His wife is past the way of women. That's what the Scripture says. She is not in the baby-making season of her life. But the Lord miraculously gives them a child. He gives them the child of the promise. He gives them Isaac, the child of blessing. We remember that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And from Jacob comes the 12 sons, the 12 tribes of Israel. That's where this is headed! This is Isaac! He is the link in the chain to bring about the fulfillment. We read the genealogy. This is Isaac! Everything hinges on Isaac. Everything hinges on Isaac's offspring now to bring us the Christ Child.

In chapter 22, it's almost unthinkable, but we read about the offering up of Isaac. Look at verses 1 through 14.

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his

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hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

As the son of Abraham, Jesus Christ provides God's perfect offering. I'm not going to pretend there aren't a lot of questions racing through your mind and mine right now about why God would ever ask Abraham to do such a crazy thing. Theologians have wrestled with this for centuries. But I do know this, and we all agree on this (if you have more questions you can ask Brian after the service - no) this passage foreshadows the offering up, the provision of God, of Jesus Christ so incredibly that if you miss Jesus Christ, just tip the book a little bit. Squint your eyes a little bit and Jesus will jump off the pages.

We learn later in the Bible that Mount Moriah is where they built the temple, where the sacrifices were offered year after year for the sins of the people. Mount Moriah, where the temple was built by Solomon, became the place where outside on the hill the Lord provided, so that his Son, his only Son, the only Son of the Father would become our sin substitute.

"Father, where is the lamb?" John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." On the third day Abraham received his son back, and Jesus Christ on the third day rose from the dead. Just as the son carried his own wood to his atoning sacrifice, the Son of God carried his cross to the hill, to the mount of Calvary where the Lord provided. Jesus Christ would become the sin substitute, the offering, the son of atonement, the son of Abraham, to take away not only Abraham's family's sins, the offspring's sins, to take away Israel's sins -- he died to take away the sins of the whole world. The whole world! Jesus came to take away your sins.

Listen, if you're tempted to read this and say, "This is too crazy," let me add a few things. Isaac probably wasn't like three or five at this point. People think he's probably somewhere between 15 to 30. He is carrying wood for miles, alright? These are not twigs that you asked your kid to pick up to make a bonfire. He is carrying some serious wood right now. He is old. He is a lot stronger than his father. He could have overcome his dad's arm in a nanosecond. Listen, he is in his prime. This represented self-sacrifice for the son to trust the father and to trust God.

Abraham did not have to do this. God stopped it. Mary was not so fortunate. She had her only son, her firstborn. She stood on that mountain and she had to give him up. As we celebrate Christmas and the Child in the manger, let us never

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lose sight of Calvary. The incredible woman that gave her own body to deliver the Son of God and the son of Abraham gave him up for us.

There is a contemporary Christian hymn for Christmas that always chokes me up. I tear up when I hear it. It's called, "Mary, Did You Know?" Do you know that one? Here are the lyrics.

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered will soon deliver you.

In the Christ Child, God himself (and here is the other area where this does not follow the same narrative), God the Father, through the Son, came and placed himself on the altar. God himself, Immanuel, God with us, took on flesh to deliver you. The Lord will provide. The Lord has provided. At Christmas we celebrate the gift of Jesus Christ. The greatest gift that God has given us is the gift of the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for the sins of the world. On the mount, the Lord has provided. Jesus Christ delivers us. He delivered Mary and he will deliver you if you trust in him. That leads to our third and final truth today.

III. As the son of Abraham, Jesus Christ extends God's global blessing.

Look at verse 15 of chapter 22.

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, (Why?) because you have obeyed my voice.

Jesus Christ brings the blessing of God to all the nations of the earth. The blessings of God can come to you today through faith in Jesus Christ. We read that the angel declared to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." The Bible is very clear that every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies becomes ours through faith in Jesus Christ. The blessings that you need, both of salvation and provision in this life, will only and always come to you through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham.

To end this sermon, I want to go to the Magnificat of Mary in Luke chapter 1, because this is where we hear the blessing given to Mary, and the blessing that comes to us this Christmas. Thank you for working your Bibles so much this morning.

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I'll give you some context here and then I'll read it to you. Elizabeth is now having a child. It's a miracle. I love the miracles of these babies. John the Baptist is in her womb. She is about six months along. Mary, her relative, is pregnant with the Christ Child, with the Son of God in her womb. Mary goes to stay with Elizabeth and when she comes to see her relative, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaps for joy because Jesus has just entered the room! Even the child in her womb can recognize the Savior of the world. First, Elizabeth cries out the following, after the baby leaps in her womb. She says to Mary in verse 42:

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord (the mother of God) should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

And the historic and famous Magnificat, where Mary blesses the Lord. Verse 46:

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

Verse 54:

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

The child of Abraham. Blessed is Mary, blessed virgin. She is a blessed virgin, is she not? She is a blessed saint. We don't worship her, but she is the conduit of the blessing of God, and blessed is the child in her womb. The blessing of Abraham now comes through this blessed child to you and to me. The blessings God promised thousands of years ago can come to you right now, today in 2017, this Christmas holiday season, through faith in Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham.

Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Here is where I want to end this message. Do you believe God? Do you believe this story? Do you believe the Christmas story? Do you believe the right Christmas story? Believe. Christmas is a season of belief. If you believe it, just as God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness, he will

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count it to you today, because Jesus provided the sin substitute for you. And he provides the blessing and the righteousness of God for you today. Through faith in Jesus Christ, today you can become a child of Abraham, a child of God.

I want to go to the Lord in prayer and call upon his name, and give you an opportunity to call out to God in faith right now if you've never done that. Because the Bible says everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved, will be justified, will be made righteous, will become a child of God. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Bow your heads and close your eyes.