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Arthur Carr

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MATTHEW.

1 1-17. The Genealogy of Jesus Christ. Luke iii. 23-38.

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

Abraham begat Isaac ; and Isaac begat Jacob ; and 2
Jacob begat Judah and his brethren ; and Judah begat 3
Perez and Zerah of Tamar ; and Perez begat Hezron ;
and Hezron begat Ram ; and Ram begat Amminadab ; 4
and Amminadab begat Nahshon ; and Nahshon begat
Salmon ; and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab ; and Boaz 5
begat Obed of Ruth ; and Obed begat Jesse ; and Jesse 6
begat David the king.

1. **The book of the generation**, i.e. the pedigree extracted from the public archives which were carefully preserved and placed under the special care of the Sanhedrin. The expression recalls, perhaps designedly, Gen. v. 1 'The book of the generations of Adam.' (1) The genealogy is an answer to the question which would be asked by every Jew of any one who claimed to be the Messiah, 'Is he of the house of David?' for by no name was the Messiah more frequently spoken of by Jews and by foreigners (see ch. xv. 22) than by that of the Son of David. (2) Both this genealogy and that in St Luke's Gospel trace Joseph's descent. But see below, v. 16. (3) St Matthew traces the pedigree from Abraham, the Father of the Chosen Race, through David, from whose house the Messiah was expected ; St Luke, writing for the Gentiles, traces it from the common Father of Jew and Gentile. (4) St Matthew gives the *royal succession* ; St Luke, the *family lineage*. This accounts for many variations in names. (5) This genealogy *descends* from father to son, and is therefore probably the more exact transcript of the original document. St Luke's *ascends* from son to father.

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2

ST MATTHEW

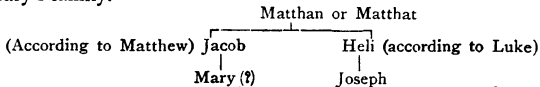
1 7-17

And David begat Solomon of her *that had been the*
 7 *wife* of Uriah ; and Solomon begat Rehoboam ; and
 8 Rehoboam begat Abijah ; and Abijah begat Asa ; and
 Asa begat Jehoshaphat ; and Jehoshaphat begat Joram ;
 9 and Joram begat Uzziah ; and Uzziah begat Jotham ; and
 10 Jotham begat Ahaz ; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah ; and
 Hezekiah begat Manasseh ; and Manasseh begat Amon ;
 11 and Amon begat Josiah ; and Josiah begat Jechoniah
 and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away
 to Babylon.

12 And after the carrying away to Babylon, Jechoniah
 13 begat Shealtiel ; and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel ; and
 Zerubbabel begat Abiud ; and Abiud begat Eliakim ;
 14 and Eliakim begat Azor ; and Azor begat Sadoc ; and
 15 Sadoc begat Achim ; and Achim begat Eliud ; and Eliud
 begat Eleazar ; and Eleazar begat Matthan ; and Matthan
 16 begat Jacob ; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband
 of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called
 Christ.

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

16. **Jacob begat Joseph.** 'Joseph which was the son of Heli' (Luke), see last note (4); probably Joseph was the son of Heli and the heir to Jacob. It is conjectured with much probability that Jacob was Mary's father. In that case, although both genealogies show Joseph's descent, they are in fact equally genealogies of Mary's family.



17. This division into three sets, each containing fourteen steps of descent, is an instance of a practice familiar to readers of Jewish antiquities. Such a system necessitates the omission of steps in descent.

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1 18-21

ST MATTHEW

3

18-25. **The Birth of Jesus Christ.** Luke i. 26-56 and ii. 4-7. St Mark and St John give no account of the birth of Jesus, St Luke narrates several particulars not recorded by St Matthew, (1) the annunciation, (2) Mary's salutation of Elisabeth in a city of Juda (or Juttah), and (3) the journey from Galilee to Bethlehem.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise : When 18 his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous 19 man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But when he thought on 20 these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall 21 bring forth a son ; and thou shalt call his name JESUS ; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.

18. **Jesus.** See v. 21. **Christ** (anointed). The *title* of Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King. **Mary.** The Hebrew form is Miriam. **betrothed.** Among the Jews the betrothal took place a year before marriage, and during the interval the betrothed maiden remained with her own family. But from the day of betrothal the pair were regarded as man and wife.

19. **being a righteous man,** i.e. one who observed the law, and, therefore, felt bound to divorce Mary. But two courses were open to him. He could either summon her before the law-courts to be judicially condemned and punished, or he could put her away by a bill of divorcement before witnesses, but without assigning cause. This is what is meant by *putting her away privily*, the more merciful course which Joseph resolved to adopt.

21. **Jesus** = Jehovah (Lord), Saviour. *Jesus* represents the Greek form, while *Joshua* represents the Hebrew form of the same name. The same Hebrew root occurs in the salutation *Hosanna* : see note, ch. xxi. 9. Joshua who led the Israelites into the Promised Land, and Joshua or Jeshua, who was high priest at the time of the return from the Babylonish Captivity, are types of Jesus Christ in respect both of work and name. **save his people from their sins.** An announcement of a spiritual Kingdom. Contrary to the thought of many Jews, the salvation

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4 ST MATTHEW 1 22-25, 2 1

22 Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,

And they shall call his name Immanuel ;

24 which is, being interpreted, God with us. And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord

25 commanded him, and took unto him his wife ; and knew her not till she had brought forth a son : and he called his name JESUS.

2 1-12. The Visit of the Magi. Recorded by St Matthew only. The insertion of this and the following incidents (13, 14) by St Matthew again connects the N.T. with O.T. prophecy (see Numb. xxiv. 17 ; Hosea xi. 1 ; Jeremiah xxxi. 15).

2 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the

which Jesus brought was not to be a saving from the Roman or Herodian rule, but a life protected from sin.

22. **is come to pass.** The Evangelist speaks as a contemporary. The tense is a note of the early date of this Gospel.

23. **the virgin shall be with child.** See Is. vii. 14. At the time of Isaiah's prophecy Ahaz is alarmed by the threatened invasion of Pekah and Rezin—the confederate kings of Samaria and Damascus. Isaiah reassures Ahaz, who hypocritically refuses to ask for a sign. Yet a sign is given. The virgin, as yet unmarried, shall bear a son, probably a scion of the royal house of David ; he shall be called Immanuel, and before he arrives at years of discretion the deliverance shall come, though a heavier distress is at hand.

1. **Jesus was born.** The birth of Jesus Christ is now placed at least 4 years, and by some authorities even 6 or 7 years, before the commonly received date. **in Bethlehem.** St Matthew omits the circumstances which brought Mary to Bethlehem. **Bethlehem** (*The House of Bread*, cp. John vi. 51), the city of David, situate on a limestone ridge a few miles S. of Jerusalem. The old name of Bethlehem was Ephrath or Ephratah ; it is now called Beit-lahm. It is worthy of remark that no visit of Jesus or of His disciples to Bethlehem, His birthplace and the cradle of His race, is recorded. **Herod.**

east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born **2**
 King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are
 come to worship him. And when Herod the king heard **3**
 it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And **4**
 gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the
 people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be

Called afterwards, but not in his lifetime, Herod the Great; he was an Idumæan (Edomite) who, chiefly through the friendship of M. Antony, became king of Judæa. The title of King distinguishes him from the other Herods named in the Gospels. Antipas, who tried in vain to obtain the title, is called king by courtesy, Mark vi. 14. Herod was not an absolute monarch, but subject to the Roman empire, much in the same way as some of the Indian princes are subject to the British government, or as Servia was till recently subject to the Porte. He died B.C. 3 or possibly B.C. 4. **wise men.** Marg. **Magi**, originally the name of a Median tribe, who were said to possess the power of interpreting dreams. Their religion consisted in the worship of the heavenly bodies and of the elements. At this date the name implied a religious caste—the followers of Zoroaster, who were the astrologers of the East. The tenets had spread widely; and as the East is a vague term, it is difficult to determine from what country these Magi came. The common belief that the Magi were three in number is a mere tradition, which has been perpetuated by great painters. It was probably an inference from *v.* 11. An equally groundless tradition has designated the Magi as kings, and has assigned names to them, Caspar, Balthasar, and Melchior.

2. his star. The simplest explanation of this is that a star or meteor appeared in the sky to guide the Magi on their way, first to Jerusalem, then to Bethlehem. It is, however, quite possible that the Magi were divinely led to connect some calculated astronomical occurrence with the birth of the 'King of the Jews.' **in the east**, or possibly, as the words might be translated, *at its rising*.

3. was troubled. Herod, with the instincts of a tyrant, would be alarmed for his throne. His subjects (i.e. 'all Jerusalem') had learnt to dread his outbreaks of passion.

4. gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, or Chief Council. For an account of the Sanhedrin see note ch. xxvi. 3; for scribes see Introduction IV. and notes on ch. vii. 29; and for chief-priests, note ch. xxi. 15. **where the Christ should be born.** Lit. *where the Christ or Messiah is born*. Where do your sacred writings represent Him to be born?

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[More information](#)

6

ST MATTHEW

2 5-12

5 born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa :
for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah,
Art in no wise least among the princes of Judah :
For out of thee shall come forth a governor,
Which shall be shepherd of my people Israel.

7 Then Herod privily called the wise men, and learned of
8 them carefully what time the star appeared. And he sent
them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search out carefully
concerning the young child ; and when ye have found
him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship
9 him. And they, having heard the king, went their way ;
and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before
them, till it came and stood over where the young child
10 was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with
11 exceeding great joy. And they came into the house and
saw the young child with Mary his mother ; and they fell
down and worshipped him ; and opening their treasures
they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and
12 myrrh. And being warned of *God* in a dream that they
should not return to Herod, they departed into their own
country another way.

5. **Bethlehem of Judæa.** To distinguish this Bethlehem from the Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun (Josh. xix. 15).

6. **And thou Bethlehem** &c. Micah v. 2. The quotation (as usually in passages cited by St Matthew alone) nearly corresponds with the Hebrew text.

11. **the house.** St Matthew gives no hint that 'the house' was an inn, or that the babe was lying in a manger. The holy family had by this time moved from the inn to a private house. **their treasures.** '*Caskets*' or '*chests*' in which treasures were placed. Such offerings to kings were quite in accordance with Eastern usage; Seneca says: 'No one may approach a Parthian king without bringing a gift.' Cp. Ps. lxxviii. 29, lxxii. 10. **frankincense and myrrh.** These were products of Arabia, and, according to Herodotus, of that country only. They were both used for medicinal purposes and for embalming; cp. John xix. 39.

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Arthur Carr

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2 13-16

ST MATTHEW

7

13-15. The Flight into Egypt. Narrated by St Matthew alone.

Now when they were departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son.

16-18. The slaughter of Infants at Bethlehem. Narrated by St Matthew alone.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all

13. the young child. Named first as the most precious charge and the most exposed to danger. **Egypt.** Egypt was at all times the readiest place of refuge for Israelites, whether from famine or from political oppression. It had sheltered many thousands of Jews from the tyranny of the Syrian kings. Consequently large settlements of Jews were to be found in various cities of Egypt and Africa. In Alexandria the Jews numbered a fifth of the population. Wherever therefore the infant Saviour's home was in Egypt, it would be in the midst of His brethren according to the flesh. At this time Egypt was a Roman province.

15. until the death of Herod. According to the chronology adopted above this would be for a space of less than two years. **Out of Egypt did I call my son.** Hosea xi. 1. The history of Israel is regarded as typical of the Messiah's life. He alone gives significance to that history. He is the true seed of Abraham. In Him the blessing promised to Abraham finds its highest fulfilment. Even particular incidents in the Gospel narrative have their counterpart in the O.T. history. Accordingly St Matthew who, as writing specially for the Jews, naturally reverts to this thought more constantly than the other Evangelists, recognizes in this incident an analogy to the call of Israel from Egypt.

16. all the male children. Profane history passes over this atrocity in silence. But Josephus may well have found his

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

8

ST MATTHEW

2 17-22

the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had carefully learned of the wise
17 men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by
Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

18 A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children ;
And she would not be comforted, because they
are not.

19-23. The return from Egypt to dwell at Nazareth, comp.
Luke ii. 39, 40.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the
20 Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying,
Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go
into the land of Israel : for they are dead that sought the
21 young child's life. And he arose and took the young
child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.
22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over

pages unequal to contain a complete record of all the cruel deeds of a tyrant like Herod. Besides, the crime was executed with secrecy, and the number of children slain was probably not large.

18. Jer. xxxi. 15, in LXX. xxxviii. 15. In a singularly touching passage, Rachel, the mother of the tribe of Benjamin (whose tomb was close to Bethlehem; Gen. xxxv. 19), is conceived of as weeping for her captive sons at Ramah—some of whom were possibly doomed to die; cp. Jer. xl. 1. The Evangelist pictures Rachel's grief re-awakened by the slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem. The Ramah alluded to by Jeremiah, generally identified with the modern Er-Rama, was about five miles N. of Jerusalem, and in the tribe of Benjamin.

22. **Archelaus.** A son of Herod the Great. His mother was Malthaké, a Samaritan. After a cruel and disturbed reign (under the title of Ethnarch) of about eight years he was banished to Vienna in Gaul—the modern Vienne. His dominions, including Samaria, Judæa, and Idumæa, then passed into the direct government of Rome. See note, ch. xiv. 1, and Introduction v. **the parts of Galilee.** Now under the government of Herod Antipas, full brother of Archelaus.

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Arthur Carr

Excerpt

[More information](#)**2** 23, **3** 1 ST MATTHEW 9

Judæa in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned *of God* in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene.

3 1-12. John the Baptist preaches in the Wilderness of Judæa. Mark i. 2-8; Luke iii. 1-18; John i. 15-34. St Matthew alone names the coming of the Pharisees and Sadducees. St Mark's brief account contains no additional particulars. St Luke adds the special directions to the various classes—people—publicans and soldiers. The fourth Gospel reports more fully the Baptist's disclaimer of Messiahship; he recognizes the Messiah by the descent of the Holy Spirit, he points Him out as the Lamb of God. Again (ch. iii. 25-36) John shows his own disciples the true relation between Christ and himself—Christ is the Bridegroom, John is the friend of the Bridegroom.

And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching **3**

23. Nazareth. St Matthew gives no intimation of any previous residence of Mary and Joseph at Nazareth. If the Son of David, full of wisdom and grace, had continued to live on at Bethlehem, the home of His ancestors, hopes and schemes, and therefore dangers, might have gathered round Him, rendering impossible such a quiet life as He led at Nazareth. **Nazareth**, said to signify **the Protectress** (Hebr. *natsar*), is a small town of central Galilee, beautifully situated in a sheltered valley among the hills which bound the plain of Esdraelon on the north. **should be called a Nazarene.** The meaning of this passage was probably as clear to the contemporaries of St Matthew, as the other references to prophecy *vv.* 15, 17; for us it is involved in doubt. An explanation may be found in the fact that 'Nazareth' resembles in form and sound two Hebrew words, one meaning *a branch*, the other meaning *to protect*. 'The Branch' was a recognized prophetic title of the Messiah, and to save and protect was the Work and Office of Jesus. In any case Nazarene cannot be the same as Nazirite. The words are quite distinct and in no sense was Jesus a Nazirite.

1. in those days. See Luke iii. 1, where the time is defined. **John the Baptist.** So named by the other Synoptists and by Josephus: in the fourth Gospel he is called simply John, a note of the authenticity of St John's Gospel. **preaching**, lit. *heralding*, a word appropriate to the thought of the proclamation

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

10

ST MATTHEW

3 2-3

2 in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye ; for the
 3 kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was
 spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying,
 The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
 Make ye ready the way of the Lord,
 Make his paths straight.

of a king. **the wilderness of Judæa**, i.e. the uncultivated Eastern frontier of Judah. The term also includes the cliffs and Western shore of the Dead Sea. In this wild and nearly treeless district there were formerly a few cities, and there are still some luxuriant spots. See Tristram's *Topog. of H. L.* Ch. iv. The wilderness has a threefold significance, (a) as the desolate scene of John's ascetic life, (b) as the battle-field of the Temptation (see notes ch. iv.), (c) as the pathway of the royal Advent. In this last aspect John fitly appears in the wilderness as the herald of a promised deliverance foreshadowed by two great prophetic types—the deliverance from Egypt (Numb. xxiii. 21, 22; Ps. lxxviii. 4-7), and the deliverance from Babylon, each associated with a march through the desert.

2. **Repent ye.** More than 'feel sorrow or regret for sin.' It is rather, 'change the life, the heart, the *motive* for action.' It was a call to self-examination and reality of life. **the kingdom of heaven.** St Matthew alone uses this expression, but he also employs the equivalent phrase, *the kingdom of God*, in common with the other N.T. writers. In itself the expression was not new. It connected itself in Jewish thought with the theocracy—the direct rule of God—of which the earthly Kingdom was a shadow. It implied the reign of the Messiah (cp. Dan. vii. 14). It became the watchword of the Zealots, 'No king but God.' Jesus took up the word and gave it a new, deep and varied spiritual significance, which is rather illustrated than defined. The principal meanings of the Kingdom of Heaven in N.T. are (1) The presence of Christ on earth. (2) His Second Advent. (3) The inner life of righteousness. (4) Christianity, (a) as a Church, (b) as a faith. (5) The life eternal.

3. **by Isaiah the prophet.** The reference in Is. xl. 3 is to the promised return from Babylon. A herald shall proclaim the joyous news on mountains and in the desert through which the return should be. This incident in the national history is transferred to the more glorious deliverance from bondage and to the coming of the true King. **The voice.** The message is more than the messenger, the prophet's personality is lost in the prophetic voice. **Make his paths straight.** The image would be familiar to Eastern thought; a Semiramis or a Xerxes orders