

Matthew 19-02-17b

Let's pick up our study now in Matthew chapter one, we're looking at the genealogical section here. And I mentioned that in the Old Testament, we have some support for the notion that a generation is 35 years and 14 generations would make up 490 years. This comes from the book of Job, where in Job 42, 16 at the end, remember after his restoration and he offers sacrifices on behalf of his three friends.

He doesn't have to offer them for the fourth because he doesn't need them. He's the representative of the Lord Jesus. But at the end, it says that after Job is restored and his fortunes are renewed and he has seven new sons and three new daughters, everything else has doubled.

But of course, because his first set of seven and three are coming back, the second set is a doubling. And this is another signal of the resurrection in the Old Testament. But Job 42, 16 says that after this, Job lived 140 years and saw his sons and his sons sons even unto the fourth generation, four generations.

Well, take 140 and divide it by four and what do you get? 35. So this is, you can press the math and say, well, but did he see them all the way until they were getting ready to have the fifth generation? It's God's math. It's Bible math.

In the same way that you could press objections about the generations, if you look at the listings here between, from Abraham to David, there are actually 12 intermediate generations. You have to include Abraham and David to get the 14. And then you have to include David again to the captivity to get those 14.

And when you get to the final set, there's only 13 names. And it's intriguing to ask yourself the question, why is there a missing name? People have said, well, Mary is supposed to be the, because she's the human link in this genealogy to the Lord Jesus, but she would replace Joseph then, wouldn't she? She wouldn't be Joseph and Mary. And it would be artificial.

So what is that next generation? And I would think just out of my top of my own head that the Lord Jesus is actually two generations because there is his physical life on this earth. And then he left and had a body remain behind to represent him, which is us. And so the Lord Jesus counts as two, the one that arrived at the first advent and accomplished redemption.

And the second is his body that represents him until he physically returns. And that ensures that there is a generation on the earth, especially given that there are no more generations for Israel. They are cut off in 70 AD, which is essentially after the birth of the Lord Jesus, you have a give or take roughly a 70 year period, which is twice 35.

My mother pointed out during the break, a fascinating observation, which is we all, I've told you many times that we all got excited in 1988 because of biblical generation is 40 years. The nation of Israel was established in 48. We thought, well, you know, that generation will not pass away till all is fulfilled.

And so Jesus can't come back any later than 88 because of the generation prophecy that he himself made. Well, he didn't come back by 88 in case you didn't notice. And we went to 98 in 2008 and 2018.

But this now is the 70th anniversary anniversary coming up. So there was a 70 year captivity, and it's possible that there could be a 70 year renaissance of the secular nation before the real thing starts coming in. So it's another time to get your spare sheet, cut a hole in it, stand on the porch and start jumping up and down for the rapture.

But 70 years has always been a significant quantity. The ministry of the Lord Jesus was three and a half years, which is half a week, a seven year week. But if you multiply by 10, then that's 35 is half of 70.

And the thing I would encourage is another observation out of these genealogies is God chooses to view things, how God views them. His ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

We like to have a mechanical formula. And we say, oh, okay, a generation is 35 years, or a generation is four years. Let me do the math and I can figure things out.

But God's variables are truly variable. And a generation from Abraham to David isn't the same length as a generation from David to the captivity, or from the captivity to the coming of the Messiah. God can make a generation whatever he wants.

I would suggest that God can make a day whatever he wants, because God's clock is not our clock. His frame of reference is not our frame of reference, except as we enter into it and learn it. And so reflection and study and comparing scripture with scripture can give us insight.

I will say that I think the 490 years is the reason that people like Simeon and Anna and those in their circle of acquaintance knew to be watching for the Messiah. And this 14 generation calculation was something that they could have deduced and applied and realized. So moving forward now from that, again, what is our point of application from all of this? God has a long standing plan.

He works slowly. He works through the centuries. He works through the generations, but the plan is always moving forward.

It is under God's guidance. God will include those who qualify themselves by faith. God will exclude those who exclude themselves by lack of faith.

And so you will have Ruth, you will have Tamar, you will have Rahab, and then you will have Athaliah. And you will have the three intermediate kings in the days of Athaliah who could have overcome their association with her, but they did not, even Joash. And doing some things to rebuild the temple, those actions didn't salvage his inclusion in the genealogy because at the end, he threw it all over and became a reprobate and a rascal.

And you can't do a few good things and then rest on your laurels. And Joash is cut out of the line in terms of this record. Well, you remember and are well familiar with, and I in some ways apologize for giving this a light touch, but this is very well-traveled territory, beginning with the birth of Jesus on this wise or as follows in verse 18.

And I want to just pick one aspect to look at that we don't often think of at Christmastime or when looking at the birth narrative. After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, being righteous, being upright in his generation, not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately, secretly.

But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. Circle dream. Of all of the possible ways, didn't Gabriel appear personally to Zechariah? Didn't Gabriel appear personally to Mary? But the angel appears to Joseph in a dream.

Circle dream. Joseph, son of David. This is a wonderful honorific, especially given that he's in the line of Coniah.

But Joseph is a man of faith and guess what? Regardless of the gaps in his genealogy, regardless of the Athaliah blood flowing in his veins, regardless of the Jeconiah curse, the angel addresses him and says, Joseph, son of David. This is how God looks at Joseph. His faith puts him in the line, keeps him in the line.

And he is a son of David in his heart as well as in his genealogy. Joseph, son of David. No accident that he's addressed in this way.

Do not be afraid to take to you, Mary, your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bring forth a son and you shall call his name Yeshua. Yeshua, Jesus.

For he will save his people from their sins. He is the redeemer. He is the suffering servant, bruised for iniquity, wounded for transgression.

By his stripes, we the people are healed. Talking about Israel primarily at this point. Save his people from their sins.

All this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying, and this of course is Isaiah 7.14. Behold, the virgin shall be with child,

bear a son. They shall call his name Emmanuel, which is translated God with us. Then Joseph being aroused from sleep did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife and did not know her in the intimate sense of fathering children until she had brought forth her firstborn son.

And he called his name Yeshua exactly as the angel commanded. The man is faithful and obedient. Two things about this.

First of all, when it says all this was done that it might be fulfilled, and we've talked about when we were going through Isaiah 7 that there was a young woman. The word does not imply that she had never had relations with a man. It simply means young woman.

And she had a son and the near-term characteristics of his life before he knew the difference between right and wrong, before certain things, the pica resin conspiracy would fall apart. There was a near-term fulfillment and you would think, well, that's all there is. If it had not been quoted here, it would lay in place as a near-term, short-term sign prophecy.

This will be a sign to you, O king. This is the sign. Oh, I don't want to ask a sign.

Well, God's going to give you a sign anyway. It was fulfilled very soon afterward. This young woman had a child and before that child got very old, God resolved the threat circumstance facing the kingdom.

So how is that now amplified and inspired to apply to the Lord Jesus? Notice when Joseph woke up, had your circle dream. He's having a dream. He's asleep, right? And he says, don't be afraid to take Mary to wife.

She's going to have a son. This is what you're going to name him. Then we have 22 and 23.

Then Joseph being aroused from sleep, did as the angel commanded. So guess who quotes Isaiah 7, 14? The angel. How is Joseph to know that he didn't just get ahold of a bad taco or something and make this stuff up? It's a dream.

How does he know? The angel quotes Old Testament scripture that Joseph knows. He confirms it. And he says, you wouldn't think that this scripture would apply to you, but it does.

And what is the point of connection? It's not really even the virginity of the woman. It's the name, God with us. She is with child of the Holy Spirit.

Keep in mind that there wasn't a big Trinitarian idea prevalent in these days because the third member of the son had not yet been made manifest. So people understood God

and the spirit of God very closely connected. The spirit does God's bidding and implements God's power and is involved in the creative process going all the way back to Genesis.

And so when the angel, I think, quotes Isaiah 7, 14 to Joseph and gives him an additional witness, a confirmation, God in rescuing his people from their dire situation is going to put God with us. And this child that is conceived of the Holy Spirit, this is not a new idea. This is God with us.

And a woman is going to encompass a man. Old Testament prophecy, but the virgin will be with child, bear a son. They will call his name Emmanuel, which is translated God with us.

So the angel gives Joseph two names for the son, Yeshua, which is the one who saves, and Emmanuel, which is God with us. And Joseph has got enough spiritual horsepower because he is a man of faith and obedience that this connects in his mind. What has God done in terms of divine guidance here for Joseph? He has put him in a circumstance.

He has planted fresh thoughts in his heart that are connected to and confirmed by scripture. That's how Joseph knows that this is in fact God's will. He's not being bamboozled.

He's not being cuckolded. He's not engaged to a wayward woman. And what's the other thing that Joseph knows? He knows Mary and he knows her well.

And that connection of two people with a very healthy spiritual life, he knows that Mary hasn't been playing around. If she had been, as some have suggested, raped by a Roman soldier, she would have told him. There is a level of communication and a level of knowledge between two growing believers who are in an intimate engagement or marriage that is difficult to explain.

But if anything strange had happened with Mary, and what is he going to do? By this time, Gabriel has appeared to Mary and there is a third witness, which is Mary's own testimony. The angel Gabriel appeared to me and said the same thing. My, she's going to go to her cousin Elizabeth and get another confirmation when the babe leaps in the womb.

God, here's the point for application. When we need guidance in a difficult circumstance and we're confused by what's going on, God will get the information to us that we need. And a part of that information is going to be scripture.

Scripture is going to confirm what other witnesses tell us, whether it is a friend or a relative, whether it is someone with whom we are intimate and God has planted that same understanding in their heart by whatever means. We don't necessarily expect dreams and angels in our lives, but the principle is the same. When we need guidance to

make important decisions, life changing decisions, God will get the information to us and some of it is going to be faithful believers around us and some of it is going to be scripture.

You can easily see that in this case, but it's no accident that the prophecy is quoted before the angel leaves and before Joseph wakes up because it's a part of what he's told. It is confirmed in the scriptures. Now, after Jesus was born, chapter two, I know you think I'm not going to make it, but I am.

Days of Herod the King, wise men from the East, where is he that's been born King of the Jews? We've seen his star in the East and have come to worship him. These are Gentiles, but what do they have? They have the scriptures left behind by Daniel in Chaldea. They've got the law.

They've got the prophecies of Balaam. A star will arise, a scepter will arise and smite the brow of Moab and there is astrological understanding that confirms what? Scripture. Scripture informs these men and God gives them additional information about the timing through the stars.

There's not a lot of Jews in Chaldea. There aren't faithful believers with whom they can consort other than each other, but they are Gentiles. And yet they latch on to truth that God's own people have missed because they are men of faith.

They are men who are intimately connected. How many people want to say, well, I think for my devotional this morning, I'll go study the prophecy of Balaam. These men knew the prophecy of Balaam and responded to it, acted on it, took a long and expensive journey because they wanted to see the one born king.

The scepter is gonna arise and this could have been a comet. I think it would have been cool if it was a comet and it was shaped like a scepter and it went into the constellation associated with Moab and hit it in the brow and it had arisen out of the constellation associated with Israel, which is right next door. And Moab, of course, is where Ruth is from.

And you have all of these connections and these men figured it out. God gave them the grace, gave them the information, but a part of it is scripture. Some of it is external, some of it is internal, but it is scripture combined with other witnesses to people of faith.

If you are a person of faith, stay in the scriptures, watch for God's truth to be confirmed and elucidated by additional means and then stand on it, act on it, make it an object of faith. So chief priests and scribes inquired where the Christ was to be born. They said Bethlehem because they knew the scriptures after they went and looked it up.

Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined what time the star appeared, sent them to Bethlehem, go search. They departed, the star went before

them, came and stood over where the young child was. They saw it, they rejoiced, came into the house, they give him the gold frankincense and myrrh, verse 12, then being divinely warned in a dream, circle dream.

This is now the second dream in our story. Joseph has a dream, stick with Mary, you're gonna have a son, here's what to name him. Here's scripture confirming what I'm telling you.

It's consistent with it, it applies to you. God with us is Yeshua. So being warned in a dream, they departed for their own country another way.

Gentiles are the first to honor the King of Israel. I say again, Gentiles are the first to honor the King of Israel. What's gonna happen at the second coming of the Lord Jesus? The Gentile, largely Gentile church is gonna be the first to recognize and honor the King.

Seven years before he takes his seat on David's throne, his church, his Gentile body is going to honor him and come back with him. Now, when they had departed, verse 13, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, circle dream. Arise, take the young child and his mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I bring you word.

For Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night and departed for 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, I called my son. And I would bet you a shekel that when the angel appeared to Joseph, he quoted this scripture.

You need to go to Egypt. I am authentic. My message is consistent because this is God's son, God with us, Yeshua.

What is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, my son. Now you have additional insight into other Old Testament scriptures. And if God talks about his son, which when you go to look at it at first blush in the prophets, as we've seen, it seems to be Israel itself.

Israel, the nation is characterized as God's son and calling them out of Egypt is the Exodus with Moses, but it resonates and confirms the angel's guidance to Joseph by amplification, by association, my son. In the first case, Emmanuel was the link. In this case, my son is the link.

And notice how God's ways and God's application is higher than ours. We would mechanically say, well, that can't apply to Jesus because it's talking about Moses and the Israelites. That can't apply to Jesus because it's talking about the young woman in Isaiah's day, 714 and the sign to the king.

God's operating on a higher channel and he will make it clear to us when human reason fails and human wisdom falls short. God will make it clear. This is my doing.

This is my word. And there is a recognition of a true message of God that is reconciled in our hearts by the presence of the Holy Spirit. And so if we're not sure if we're getting guidance from God, ask, seek, knock, pray.

God is not going to leave confused someone who is looking to him for clarity, for guidance and for wisdom. And it became clear to Joseph that this was in fact divine guidance. He's beginning to recognize the mechanism by which God communicates with him.

And the angel says, I will come back to you again. So watch for me. So Herod does the slaughter of the innocents there in Bethlehem, as it is often described.

It fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet. Voice was heard in Ramah. Lamentation, weeping, great mourning.

Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they are no more. And you know that this news would have reached Joseph and Mary down in Egypt that because they had heeded the warning of the angel, they escaped. The angel didn't have to come down and drag them out like Lot and his wife and his daughters.

He tells Joseph, Joseph packs and goes. Who wants to go to Egypt? But at the word of the Lord, he goes. And notice the consistent unquestioning obedience of Joseph.

He's not Zachariah saying, well, how do I know this is really gonna happen? I mean, I'm old and no question, no hesitation. God gives Joseph an order. He's like a good Marine.

You tell him, jump. He says, how high? And he goes. And here is another scripture consistent with what's going on in their lives.

Now, verse 19, Herod was dead. The angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. He said he was gonna come back and tell him.

And here he is. Arise, take the young child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. For those who sought the young child's life are dead.

Well, he's already got the Jeremiah passage. He's already got the previous statement of the angel that he was going to come back. And he's got a circumstantial detail that Herod is dead.

Herod and those around him who were implementing this barbaric policy of infanticide are dead. Circle dream in verse 19. So he arose, took the young child and his mother, came into the land of Israel, but he heard Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father, Herod.

He was afraid to go there and being warned by God in a circulate dream. Warned in a dream. Now, the wise men were warned in a dream.

How many times has God communicated to Joseph now in a dream? He had the one that said, take Mary the wife and name the child. He had one that said, go to Egypt. He's had one now that says, come back from Egypt, right? So this is Joseph's third dream.

Warned he turned aside into the region of Galilee and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets. He shall be called a Nazarene. And I would bet you another shekel that the angel, when he warned him not to stay in Judea, and he says, well, where should I go? He says, well, you know, there's a prophecy that he will be the root shoot from the stump of Jesse, a Netser.

And Joseph says, ah, Netsereth, Nazareth. That's where I'll go. And that's where he does go.

Well, that gets us all the way through chapter two. And we're at the cusp of chapter three. What do we observe about this? What is the man's name that is at the center of these decisions all through chapter two, last half of chapter one? Who have we been looking at that's got the three dreams? What's his name? Joseph.

Who's the most, there are two guys that are intensely famous for dreams and the interpretation thereof in the scripture. One is Daniel, who had the prophecy of the 490 years that we saw in the first part of chapter one. And who's the other? Joseph, right? So would Joseph have a kind of confidence when God consistently communicates with him in a dream that God is doing with him what he did with his namesake? This is another affirmation.

This resonates. It makes sense. You can see a slight smile on God's face when he always chooses to communicate with Joseph in dreams.

The man knows his Old Testament, knows his namesake. And even though he's in the tribe of Judah and is a son of David, Joseph is, as we know in hindsight, such a powerful foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus himself. And you had that Joseph's father being Jacob.

You have this Joseph's father being Jacob. And God communicates via a dream. And God will use communication to us and guidance for us that is normal and makes a kind of sense for us in our situation.

It will be different for different people. Zechariah required an appearance. John at the Jordan heard a voice, John the Baptist.

Joseph has his communication in a dream. The wise men were given scripture, signs in the heavens, and a dream. I wonder how many of them were, how many of them had the dream? Did they all have the dream? Did one of them have a dream? Were there three? Malchus and whatever the old traditions are.

Because there are three gifts, they say three wise men, but nobody knows how many

there were. I suspect it was a much larger party. But they, each entity, each individual, each group is communicated with.

Look at the shepherds, the shepherds on the hillside, keeping watch over their flocks are communicated with by an angelic appearance. One angel and then a host of angels. And for shepherds, this makes sense because you have a head shepherd and then you have all of the sheep.

You have a leader and you have a group. They are communicated with by a leader and then a group. It suits, it fits, it's comfortable to them.

They understand hierarchy. There is a chief shepherd and there are under shepherds. There is a chief communicator and there are under communicators.

It's the paradigm that they understand. And a point of observation that leads to application for us is when we look for divine guidance, we don't need a ball of fire from heaven. We don't need the signs in the skies.

In our day with the fullness of scripture and with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, we have those as the primary mechanisms of God's communication and guidance to us. But within that, it is tailored. Some people learn from one pastor or kind of pastor.

Others learn from another. Some thrive in a big church. Some thrive in a small church.

Some thrive in a large group of fellow believers. Others thrive with a few important and strong, deep brother and sister connections. There's a friend that sits closer than a brother and we are all different.

We are all unique. Every time I look through the glass door into our wood stove, I think in all of the history of humanity, there's never been a fire exactly like this one. The pieces of wood are unique.

The arrangement and the order in which they burn, the kindling that I use, the arrangement of the embers. It's a unique, I heard this joke from my weekly reader when I was a child, but some guy says, I'm gonna show you something that's never been seen before and will never be seen again. And then he cracks open a peanut and then eats it.

But each thing is unique. And each of us as individuals in the Christian faith and in the body of Christ is unique. Don't expect your experience to be the same as the person next to you.

Don't measure by the way God works or doesn't work or communicates or doesn't communicate in the life of someone else. We are each unique and God will tailor his communication, tailor his guidance as a loving father. You think about parents who are good parents and pay attention to their children and interact with each one in a slightly

different way.

As you get to know them, you realize that with one, you can just frown and they're crushed. With another, you've got to beat the living daylights out of them to get their attention, metaphorically speaking. You have to really take steps to get their attention because they're different.

When you look at the record of God's communication just in these first two chapters, you see the uniqueness. You see the way God dealt with each of the individuals in these generations. You could take a year and address each of the names in the first part of these generations and talk about the events of their lives and God's appeal to them and his expectations of them and their success or failure in meeting those expectations and being people of faith and obedience.

It's a summary. It's a standing back and looking at it in terms of generations. And the 14 pattern encourages us to look at it in terms of its continuity.

Each of the little links in the chain is unique and distinct. Some of the links have been clipped out and the ends have been joined together. Some of the links are longer and some of the links are shorter, but they're a link.

They're a generation. But the links between Abraham and David are long links. Links between David and the captivity are shorter links.

And the links from there to the coming of the Messiah are of an unknown length because we don't have a measure for them, but they're links. And God looks at them as links, but they're each unique. And God knows their needs.

He knows how to communicate with them. He knows how to provide when they are responsive. And he does the same with us.

We are unique. We are links in a chain. We are part of a generation, so to speak.

And God will communicate with us and deal with us to the extent that we are responsive, to the extent that we are faithful, to the extent that he can count on us to obey. God said, I'm gonna send an angel to Joseph in a dream and I know the man is gonna do exactly what I ask. What a wonderful thing, if you're a craftsman, to pick up a tool and know that it's going to do the job.

It's gonna hold its edge. It's going to turn the screw or pound the nail or cut the material cleanly and precisely and not with any element of unpredictability. It's not gonna, there's nothing worse than trying to cut along a straight line and have your saw just deviate and go into your work to have a knife blade break and you jam the broken end into your work and probably cut your hand in the process.

I do speak from experience. What a wonderful thing if God can pick us up from the tool bench and use us for his purpose and we are fully functional, fully competent. We don't fail, we don't bend, we don't fall short.

That's what these individuals have done. The ones that are marked out for special attention and God deals with each of them in his own unique way. But always the common denominator is faith.

Always the common denominator is a role and a place and a record of faithfulness in God's plan and being associated eternally with God's greatest gift and greatest accomplishment which is the Lord Jesus Christ and his work on the cross. So that summarizes a lot of what we already know about these first two chapters and prepares us to start looking in more detail at the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus because we are going to skip about 30 years now as we cross the threshold from chapter two to chapter three and move into a wonderful firsthand look at the Lord Jesus Christ himself and that's where we will begin next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the place in history that we occupy, your careful coordination of heredity and environment and geography and spiritual guidance and sustenance that has brought us to faith in the Lord Jesus and has enabled us to grow in grace and knowledge of him through the teaching of faithful men and the exploration and reflection on the truth of your word in the hands of your Holy Spirit. We pray that as we look at these truths and seek their pertinence and applicability in our own lives that the Holy Spirit will shine a light on them, show us how we should then live and encourage and motivate each one of us to be faithful unto death, to look for the return of the Lord Jesus, to be ready when he comes and to not be ashamed. We are so gratified to have the level of detail we have at his first coming and we are excited as we study the details and the opportunities and the potential when he returns a second time apart from sin for our deliverance.

So we thank you for this passage. We pray that you will bless our study as we go forward in the gospel of Matthew and we ask all these things in Jesus' name, amen.