

“Advent”

Week #1

Introduction

As we approach the Christmas season, our focus turns to the advent or “coming” of Jesus. His birth in the hills of Bethlehem brought the hope for redemption to all mankind. In the Gospel of Matthew we are introduced to the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, Mary’s husband. It is an astonishing revelation of those Jesus was associated with and in a way foreshadows the good news that Matthew’s Gospel brings us. Rather than glossing over this long list of ancestors, let’s consider who is represented in the lineage of Jesus, and why this is good news for us.

Ice Breaker (Optional): How far back can you trace your family tree?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Declaring a Revolution

Q1. Read Matthew 1:1-18; Matthew 27:11; John 18:36

The Jews were awaiting the coming messiah¹. Jesus birth followed 49 generations from Abraham; or 7 sets of 7 generations (Mat 1:17). The number 7 is symbolic of completion, and Jesus’ birth was the completion of God’s promise to send the messiah. Among the many names listed by Matthew, which do you find reference royalty? Rome ruled over the Jews, who longed to overthrow Caesar’s power. How does Jesus’ direct link to the Jewish royal line challenge Rome’s authority over the Jews (Matthew 27:11)? How does Jesus explain His kingdom in John 18:36? Jesus came to challenge the kingdoms in our lives, not Caesar. What are some of the ways we know the kingdom of God is ruling in us?

¹anointed; usually a consecrated person (as a king, priest, or saint)

A Different Kind of Kingdom

Q2. Read Matthew 1:3, 5; Galatians 3:28

Women were held in low regard in the time of Christ. A Jewish genealogy would not have included women or gentiles as Jesus’ genealogy does. (Matthew 1:3, 5) But this is another reference to the good news of the Gospel; an open invitation to all who would come. How does Paul explain this in Galatians 3:28? Can you think of

reasons people might think they are not welcomed in God’s kingdom today?

God’s perfect plan

Q3. Read 2 Samuel 12:9-10; Isaiah 46:8-11; Proverbs 19:21 Matthew was not building the “perfect family” resume; instead he included some very imperfect people. How does verse 6 refer to Solomon’s parents? How did Nathan expose this sin of David and the consequences that followed? (2 Samuel 12:9-10). Certainly Matthew was aware of this passage in the scripture, yet he included a direct reference to David’s sin in Jesus’ genealogy? What hope does this give to those who think themselves beyond redemption? God’s purposes are not deterred by our circumstances. How certainly is this stated in Isaiah 46:10? Sometimes we feel that we, or those we love, have gone too far astray to see God’s purpose in their lives fulfilled. During your prayer time today declare this truth: God’s purposes will indeed be fulfilled and will not be deterred by any mistakes we have made.

Wrap-Up

Matthew traced the lineage of Jesus through Joseph to include outcasts and sinners as well as kings and priests. In doing so he extends hope that the kingdom of God is open to all who will come. We find the details of that redemption story contained in the Gospels. But it is alluded to even in these first verses as we find women, gentiles, adulterers and a murderer included. God’s perfect plan is to redeem imperfect people and our sins, and the mistakes we make in our lives will not prevent God from fulfilling His purpose in us.

Memory Verse

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28 ESV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life and other needs (see space to write on back).

Challenge: Read the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23-38, believed to be Mary’s family. What similarities and differences do you find?

