



ADVENT

Discipleship Guide



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Introduction

Every family has a story; His changes everything. This series focuses on Matthew's presentation of the Lord's genealogy in the first chapter of his Gospel. This first chapter of the New Testament is a rich revelation of God's faithfulness, the sovereignty of grace, and the centrality of Christ in redemptive history. A study of the Lord's family tree shows clearly that He came *from sinners for sinners*.

Each week, we'll draw on key figures in this genealogy to see how God's grace was manifested throughout biblical history, culminating in the incarnation of Jesus.



Jesus: The True Israel

Careful Bible readers will notice that, in Chapter 1 of his Gospel, Matthew traces Jesus's lineage back to Abraham, whereas Luke traces it all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:38). Why does Matthew stop at Abraham? This detail helps us understand Matthew's purpose in writing his Gospel: he wants his readers to know and trust that Jesus, the crucified, risen, and authoritative Lord, truly is the long-awaited Savior and divine King of Israel. And who was the "father" from whom the nation of Israel came? Abraham.

But Matthew's purposes go even deeper. Throughout his account of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, Matthew shows his readers that Jesus isn't just the long-awaited King of Israel; He *is* Israel. Jesus is the true, perfectly obedient Israel. Below are key details to help you grasp this essential biblical truth.

Israel was a son of God; Jesus is *the* Son.

In Exodus 4:22, we're told that God considered Israel, collectively, His "son." Later in biblical history, the prophet Hosea also refers to Israel as God's son, writing, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."



Matthew then quotes this same passage and applies it to Jesus (Matt. 2:15). Later in his Gospel, Matthew records the words the Father spoke about Jesus at His baptism: "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17).

Israel's "baptism" foreshadowed Jesus's baptism.

After freeing Israel from slavery, God brought them through the Red Sea untouched by their enemies (Ex. 14). The Apostle Paul refers to this miraculous event as Israel's baptism (1 Cor. 10:1). Matthew arranges his Gospel in such a way that, after Jesus is "brought out of Egypt" in Chapter 2, He's baptized in water in Chapter 3. The perfect Son of God, the true Israel, has passed through water and is ready to enter the wilderness, just as Israel had done.

Israel's wilderness failures anticipated Jesus's perfect victory.

After His baptism, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness, the same place that marked so many of Israel's failures, sins, and disobedience. But in Matthew 4, we read about Jesus, the true Israel, victoriously overcoming the true enemy of God after fasting for 40 days and nights (a time period which mirrors Israel's 40 years in the



wilderness due to their sin). And how does Jesus overcome the devil? With the Word of God, specifically by quoting from the Old Testament book Deuteronomy, which was given to Israel during their wilderness wandering. Where Israel collectively failed, Jesus perfectly succeeds.

Israel's Law and mediator revealed the need for a better covenant and Mediator.

How was Israel governed and led in the wilderness and beyond? Moses ascended Mount Sinai as the nation's mediator and received the Law, which served as Israel's covenant document. There were blessings promised for obedience and curses for disobedience. Israel sinned at every turn, but God continued to preserve a remnant from whom He would bring a new Mediator and a new covenant. So, in Matthew 5, after Jesus successfully overcame the evil one, He ascended a mountain and delivered the Sermon on the Mount, showing how He governs and leads the citizens of His kingdom. Through His perfect obedience, Jesus secures for all who trust Him the promised blessing, while bearing the curse on the cross. Jesus is the truly faithful priest and king, succeeding where everyone else had failed and sinned, ultimately securing a covenant with God in His resurrection and ascension.



Advent

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship writes that Advent “is designed to cultivate our awareness of God’s actions—past, present, and future” because, throughout this season, God’s people “heighten our anticipation for the ultimate fulfillment of all Old Testament promises, when the wolf will lie down with the lamb, death will be swallowed up, and every tear will be wiped away.”¹

We live in a time of unprecedented distraction and entertainment. We succumb to the lie that the world is at our fingertips, rarely looking up from our phones to see and experience the reality around us. This has dulled our fear of the Lord and helped us be bored with the staggering beauty of Christ crucified, resurrected, and ascended.

If we rightly approach Advent—intentionally focusing on the infinite God becoming a man in Jesus of Nazareth—we might once again start on the journey toward genuine awe of the triune God.

¹ *The Worship Sourcebook, Second Edition*, page 427.



Study Resources

If you're someone who loves serious Bible study, we recommend the following books on the Gospel of Matthew:

Matthew by R.T. France (Introductory)

Matthew by R.T. France (Scholarly)

Matthew by J.C. Ryle

Matthew by Grant Osborne

If you're looking for some free and reliable resources for studying, check out the links below:

Introduction to the Gospels and Acts

Matthew (free commentary)

Introduction to Matthew (free course)

Celebrate Christmas!

Boise: Dec. 24th @ 6pm

Address: 8775 Ustick Rd., Boise, ID

Carson City: Dec. 21st @ 8:30am & 10am

Address: 504 Bath St., Carson City, NV (Fritsch Elementary)

Downtown Sparks: Dec. 21st @ 9am & 10:30am

Address: 201 Lincoln Way, Sparks, NV (Lincoln Park Elementary)

Elko: Dec. 14th @ 4pm & 6pm

Address: Elko Performing Arts Building (651 13th St., Elko, NV)

Fernley: Dec. 21st @ 9am & 11am;

Dec. 24th @ 6pm

Address: 868 Cottonwood Ln., Fernley, NV

North Valleys: Dec. 21st @ 4pm & 6pm

Address: 210 Silver Lake Rd., Reno, NV

Reno: Dec. 23rd @ 6pm; Dec. 24th @ 3pm & 5pm

Address: 445 South Virginia St.

South Reno: Dec. 20th @ 4:30 & 6pm;

Dec. 21st, 8, 9:30, 11am

Address: 95 Foothill Rd., Reno, NV

Spanish Springs: Dec. 23rd @ 7pm

Address: 1065 Eagle Canyon Dr., Sparks, NV (Spanish Springs High)

Winnemucca: Dec. 21st @ 9am & 11am

Address: 403 Hanson St., Winnemucca, NV



Week 1: Matt. 1:1-2; Gen. 17; Gal. 3

MAIN POINT

God made a seemingly impossible promise to an old man named Abraham. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus. Our ancient faith has modern meaning; God knows our doubt and skepticism and, in grace, covers us.

GROUP INTRO

You can only pick one of the following Christmas movies; which one do you pick, and why? Home Alone, Elf, A Christmas Story, or Christmas Vacation?

TEXT

1. Read Genesis 17:1-8, 15-19, then read Matthew 1:1-2. How does Genesis 17 reveal God's power and grace, as well as Abraham's faith and weakness?

Leader help: Before even promising that Abraham would have a son, God reveals Himself as "El Shaddai" or "God Almighty," showing that He loves to reassure sinners, even when He knows they'll be skeptical about His promises. The author shows Abraham's faith by noting that he fell on his face in God's presence, then reveals his weakness by stating his age (99), reporting that his first response to God was laughter and skepticism (v. 17), and recording his prayer about his other son, Ishmael (v. 18).



2. Despite Abraham's skepticism, God fulfills His covenant promise by sending Jesus, through whom He brings blessings to people all over the world. Read Galatians 3:1-9. How does someone receive the blessing God promised to Abraham, and what is this blessing?

Leader help: By faith alone in Jesus. Paul writes in Galatians that Jesus was "publicly portrayed as crucified" to them, meaning that the gospel was proclaimed to them, and they believed in Jesus as a result. Then, by faith in Jesus, they received the Spirit, not because they had earned God's blessing through obedience, but because God had long ago graciously promised to bless Abraham's offspring. Paul argues that Jesus is the offspring, and all who trust Him are united to Him and therefore recipients of the promised blessing.

The blessing could be summarized as "adoption." It includes being declared righteous by God, being free from God's curse, receiving the Holy Spirit who empowers and comforts believers, and being given the status of "heir," meaning that all who trust Jesus are now God's children and can call on Him as "Abba," and will receive all that Jesus earned through His perfect life and sacrificial death.

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3. By highlighting Abraham in Jesus's genealogy, Matthew is helping his readers see Jesus as the fulfillment of God's covenant. Using Genesis 17:4-8, how would you describe the covenant that Jesus fulfills?

Leader help: Remembering what Paul writes in Galatians 3 about the "offspring" being Jesus, we will recognize that the covenant Jesus fulfills is unilateral, meaning that it's God who commits to bringing about the promises (He repeatedly says "I will..." in these verses); the covenant is eternal/everlasting, meaning that the blessing God promises isn't limited by time or human disobedience because Jesus fulfills the demands to "walk before" God and "be blameless"; the covenant is personal and global, meaning that God promises to be involved and active in the lives of His people; the covenant promises all of God's children the eternal Promised Land, which will be fulfilled in the new creation after the return of Jesus.²

APPLICATION

1. How can God's gracious persistence with Abraham encourage you when your faith or obedience feels weak?

² The land of Canaan is considered a "type" in biblical theology. The Promised Land was a real gift from God to His people. Still, this land pointed to something far greater (the new creation/the entire world once it's been renewed by God), which is given as a gracious gift to all who trust in Jesus. This is why Paul says in Romans 4:13 that Abraham and his offspring will be "heir of the world." So, even though Israel forfeited the Promised Land in history through their disobedience, God's promise still stands, because Jesus is the true Israel who obeyed on our behalf, securing the new creation, which is the ultimate Promised Land, for us.

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2. Since Jesus perfectly fulfilled the command to “walk before God and be blameless,” how can you rest in His righteousness this week, while also pursuing holiness with gratitude?
 3. Jude 1 says this: “You, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt.” Would you say you’re doing well with this? What are some ways to “keep ourselves in the love of God” and have mercy on those who doubt?

PRAYER

Thank God that He responds to your weakness and skepticism with grace.

Passage to guide your prayers: 2 Corinthians 12:9

Confess the ways you’ve trusted your strength, not God’s grace.

Passage to guide your prayers: Galatians 3:2-3

Ask God to deepen your trust in Christ’s covenant fulfillment and obedience.

Passage to guide your prayers: Romans 8:32