

THE
GOSPEL OF

MATTHEW

WILLIAM MACDONALD



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

The Gospel of Matthew

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Published by:

Emmaus Correspondence School
(A division of ECS Ministries)
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First Printed 2010 (AK '10), 2 UNITS

ISBN 978-1-59387-125-3

Code: MATT

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Originally published as *The Gospel of Matthew: Behold Your King* by Walterick Publishers © 1974, William MacDonald.

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Printed in the United States of America

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Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions. It is important that you read the Bible passages referenced as some questions may be based on the Bible text.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

INTRODUCTION

In his gospel, Matthew shows that Jesus is the long-expected Messiah of Israel, the only one with a right to the throne of David.

The book does not claim to be a complete biography of Christ's life on earth. It begins with His genealogy and early years, then jumps to the beginning of His public ministry when He was about thirty. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Matthew selects those aspects of the Savior's life and ministry which proclaim Him as God's Anointed One—for that is what the title "Messiah" means.

The book moves toward a climax—the trial, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. And in that climax, of course, is laid the foundation for man's salvation. That is why the book is called a "gospel"—not so much because it explains the way by which sinful man may receive eternal salvation, but rather because it describes the sacrificial work of Christ by which our salvation was made possible.

We do not know when Matthew wrote this book, whether it was AD 40 or 70 or at some time in between. And even if we did, this information would not add to our enjoyment of it or benefit from it. We have purposely avoided the so-called "critical problems"—that is, the questions concerning the sources and history of the text. Our purpose is to concentrate on the exposition of the text as it is found in our Bibles.

This course and commentary seeks to stimulate independent study and meditation. Most of all, it is aimed at creating in the reader's heart an intense longing for the return of the King.

1

MATTHEW 1–2

The Royal Genealogy (1:1-17)

Those who read the New Testament for the first time may wonder why it begins with something as seemingly dull as a family tree. They might easily conclude that this catalog of names is really not very significant and choose to skip over it to where the “action” begins.

The truth is, the genealogy is essential. It lays the foundation for everything that follows. Unless it can be shown that Jesus was a legal descendant of David through the royal line, it is hopeless to try to prove that He was—and is—the Messiah-King of Israel. Matthew begins where he *must* begin—with documentary evidence that Jesus inherited the legal right to be King of the Jews through His stepfather, Joseph.

It is good to remember that this genealogy traces the *legal* descent of Jesus as King of Israel and that the genealogy in Luke’s gospel traces His *lineal* descent as Son of David.

Matthew’s genealogy follows the *royal* line from David through his son Solomon, who succeeded him as king; Luke’s genealogy follows the *blood* line from David through another of his sons, Nathan. This genealogy descends from Abraham and David down to Joseph, of whom Jesus was the *adopted* Son; the genealogy in Luke 3 is generally believed to trace the ancestry of Mary, of whom Jesus was the *real* Son.

A thousand years before Jesus’ birth, God had made an unconditional agreement with David. He promised him a kingdom that would last forever, and that his actual descendants would sit upon the throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12-13). The covenant is fulfilled in Jesus Christ: because He lives forever,

— ❧ —

**The genealogy
lays the foundation
for everything
that follows.**

— ❧ —

His kingdom will last forever, and He will reign forever as great David's Greater Son.

Matthew begins with the formula: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." A similar expression is found in Genesis 5:1: "This is the book of the genealogy of Adam." There it is used in connection with the first Adam; here it introduces the genealogy of the last Adam. The first Adam was head of the first creation, that is, the physical creation. Christ is Head of the new creation, the spiritual creation. Since there will never be another creation for man, Christ is the last Adam.

The grand subject of this book is Jesus Christ. The name "Jesus" presents Him as Jehovah-Savior. The name "Christ" presents Him as the long-awaited Messiah of Israel (*Christ* being the New Testament term for "Messiah"). The title "Son of David" has two connotations: it is closely associated with the role of Messiah and also of King. The title "Son of

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**The grand subject
of this book is
Jesus Christ.**
————— ❧ —————

Abraham" presents our Lord as the One who is the ultimate fulfillment of the glorious promises made to the father of the Hebrew people.

The genealogy itself is divided into three historical sections: from Abraham to Jesse; from David to Josiah; and from Jeconiah to Joseph. The first section leads up to David; the second covers the kingdom from the height of its prosperity to its downfall; the third preserves the record of royal descent during the dark years following Judah's deportation to Babylon (586 BC).

There are many interesting features in this remarkable register. First of all, four women are mentioned: Tamar (v. 3); Rahab (v. 5); Ruth (v. 5); and the wife of Uriah (i.e. Bathsheba [v. 6]). Aside from the fact that women were rarely mentioned in eastern genealogical tables, it is noteworthy that three of these women were public sinners (Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba) and two of them were members of doomed Gentile nations (Rahab and Ruth). Perhaps we have here a subtle suggestion that Christ's coming would bring salvation to sinners and grace to Gentiles, and that in Him, barriers of race and sex would be torn down.

Also of interest is the mention of a king named Jeconiah (vv. 11-12). In Jeremiah 22:30, we find that God pronounced a curse upon this man. Coniah (Jer. 22:28) is another form of the name Jeconiah. "Thus says the Lord, 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in

his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.” If Jesus had been the *real* son of Joseph, he would have come under this curse. Yet He had to be a legal son of Joseph in order to inherit the rights to the Davidic throne. The problem was solved by the miracle of virgin birth: Jesus was the legal heir to the throne through Joseph, and He was the real Son of David through Mary. The curse upon Jeconiah did not fall upon Mary or her Child.

Notice another interesting touch in verse 16. It reads: “And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.” A person reading this casually might assume that the word “whom” refers back to Joseph and Mary, and that therefore Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary. But the Spirit of God has guarded against such a conclusion: the word “whom” in the Greek is in the feminine gender. Jesus was born of Mary, but not of Joseph.

But while the genealogy has its interesting features, it has its difficulties too. We will mention three of them.

1. The genealogy is divided into three sections of fourteen generations each (v. 17). However, for some unknown reason, certain names are missing from the list. We know, for instance, that Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah reigned as kings between Joram and Uzziah (v. 8). These omissions are not however uncommon in biblical genealogies; they do not always present a complete line.
2. The genealogies in Matthew and Luke seem to overlap by the mention of two names, Shealtiel and Zerubbabel (compare Matthew 1:12-13 with Luke 3:27). It seems strange that the ancestry of both Joseph and Mary should merge in these two men, then separate again. The difficulty is increased when we notice that Matthew and Luke list Zerubbabel as the son of Shealtiel, whereas in 1 Chronicles 3:19 he is listed as the son of Pedaiah.
3. The third difficulty is that Matthew counts twenty-seven generations from David to the Lord Jesus while Luke gives forty-two. Even allowing that the evangelists are describing different family trees, it still seems odd that there should be such a wide difference in the number of generations.

What attitude should we take toward these difficulties and seeming discrepancies? First, we should adopt as our foundational premise is the truth that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that therefore it cannot

contain errors or contradictions. Second, because it is the Word of God, it is infinite; we can never expect to understand all there is in it, even though the fundamental truths are clear. So when we come to difficulties, we should conclude that the problem is in our lack of knowledge rather than in the Book's fallibility. Bible problems should challenge us to study and search for the answers.

Past experience should warn men against confident assertions that the Bible contains errors. Careful research by historians and painstaking excavations by archaeologists have repeatedly confirmed the biblical narrative—to the confusion of its critics. What seem to us like difficulties and contradictions all have reasonable explanations, and these explanations are filled with spiritual significance and profit. We should seek the meanings like silver, and search for them as for hidden treasures (Prov. 2:4).

The Miracle Birth (1:18-25)

The birth of Jesus Christ was different from any of the births mentioned in the genealogy. There we found the repeated formula, “so-and-so was the father of so-and-so.” But now we have the record of a birth without the involvement of a human father.

The facts connected with the miraculous conception are stated with dignity and simplicity. Mary had been promised in marriage to Joseph, but the wedding had not yet taken place. In Bible times betrothal was a form of engagement, but it was more binding than engagement is today; it could be broken only by divorce. A man who was betrothed to a woman was legally her husband (Gen. 29:21; Deut. 22:23). Although they did not live together as husband and wife till they actually got married, breach of faithfulness on the part of the betrothed was treated as adultery and punished with death.

During the time of her betrothal, Mary became pregnant by a miracle of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). A cloud of suspicion, shame, and scandal soon hung ominously over her. In all of human history there had never been a genuine virgin birth. When people saw an unwed woman who was pregnant, they had only one possible explanation.

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**The birth of Jesus
Christ was different
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births mentioned in
the genealogy.**
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Even Joseph did not yet know the true explanation of Mary's condition. He might have been highly indignant at his fiancée for her apparent unfaithfulness to him and because he would almost inevitably be accused of being the child's father. But love and mercy triumphed over any feelings of bitterness and vindictiveness he might have had. Rather than expose her to the publicity and disgrace that would normally accompany a divorce action, Joseph decided to break the betrothal quietly.

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**Mary's pregnancy
 was a miracle of the
 Holy Spirit.**
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While this gentle and deliberate man was mapping his strategy to protect Mary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The greeting, "Joseph, son of David," was doubtless designed to stir up the consciousness of his royal pedigree and to prepare him for the unusual advent of Israel's Messiah-King. He should have no misgivings about marrying Mary. Any suspicions he might have concerning her moral purity were groundless. Her pregnancy was a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

The angel then revealed the unborn child's sex, name, and mission. Mary would bear a son. He was to be named Jesus, which means "Jehovah is salvation," or "Jehovah, the Savior." True to His name, He would save His people from their sins. This wonderful Child of destiny was Jehovah Himself, visiting this planet to save men from the penalty of sins, from the power of sins, and eventually from the very presence of sins.

As Matthew rehearsed the events connected with the royal birth, he realized that a great, new era had dawned. The words of messianic prophecy, long dormant, had now begun to spring to life. He thought especially of Isaiah's cryptic prophecy of a virgin birth and saw it fulfilled in Mary's Child (vv. 22-23). Notice that Matthew claims divine inspiration for the words of Isaiah; the Lord had spoken by the prophet, and therefore his words were truly God-breathed.

The setting of Isaiah's prophecy was as follows: King Ahaz was terrified that the kingdom of Judah might be destroyed by Syria and Israel, and that David's kingly line might be wiped out. God assured him (through Isaiah) that this would not happen, and He gave Ahaz a sign: the virgin birth of the Messiah would be His guarantee that the house of David would never perish. Perhaps the prophecy had some immediate meaning for Ahaz (in connection with the threat of imminent invasion), but the ultimate fulfillment is found in the birth of the Lord Jesus.

Isaiah made this detailed prophecy at least seven hundred years before Christ was born. Matthew adds the explanatory comment that *Immanuel* means “God with us.” And so this incomparable Child, born of a human mother, was the eternal God dwelling with mankind. Someone may object that Christ was not called Immanuel when He was here on earth—He was called Jesus. But the name Jesus implies the presence of God with us,



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because it means Jehovah, the Savior. And there is also the possibility that “Immanuel” will be His characteristic name in His second advent just as “Jesus” was in His first.

As a result of the angel’s interview, Joseph abandoned his plan to divorce Mary. He continued to recognize their betrothal until after Jesus was born. Then he lived with her as husband and wife. Verse 25 disproves the teaching that Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life. The marriage was consummated after Jesus was born. Other Scriptures indicate that Mary subsequently had children by Joseph; see Psalm 69:7-8; Matthew 12:46; 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 7:3, 5; Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5; and Galatians 1:19.

In taking Mary as his wife, Joseph also took her Child as his adopted son. As mentioned already, this is how Jesus became legal Heir to the throne of David. In obedience to the angelic visitor, he called the Baby “Jesus.” And thus the Messiah-King was born. The Eternal One entered into time. The Omnipotent became a tiny Infant. The Lord of glory veiled that glory in a human body. And in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

The King Who Feared a Baby (2:1-12)

Verse 1 in the NET Bible reads, “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the time of King Herod . . .” This translation helps us conclude that Christ’s birth preceded the visit of the wise men by an unspecified period of time.

Herod the Great was a descendant of Esau and therefore a traditional enemy of the Jews. He himself had become a convert to Judaism, but his conversion was more nominal than real. After the death of Julius Caesar, he was promoted from being governor to king of Judea in 40 BC.

It was toward the close of his reign that “wise men” came from the East in search of one who was born king of the Jews. Some think that these men were pagan priests, and that because of their knowledge and predictive powers, they were often chosen as counselors to kings. We do not know where they lived in the East, how many there were, or how long their journey lasted.

It was the star in the East that somehow made them aware of the birth of a king. Possibly they were familiar with the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah’s arrival. Perhaps they knew, for instance, Balaam’s prediction that a Star would come out of Jacob (Num. 24:17). And perhaps they connected this with Daniel’s prophecy of seventy weeks which foretold the time of Christ’s first coming (Dan. 9:24-25). But it seems more probable that the knowledge was communicated to them supernaturally via this original Telstar.

Various scientific explanations have been offered to account for this star at this point in history. Some say that it was a conjunction of planets. But the course of this star was highly irregular in that it went ahead of the wise men from Jerusalem till it came to rest over the place where the child was (v. 9). In fact, it was so unusual that it can only be accounted for as a miracle.

When Herod heard that a baby had been born who was to be King of the Jews, he was troubled. Any such baby was a threat to his uneasy crown. All Jerusalem was troubled with him. The city that above all cities should have received the news with delirious joy was disturbed by anything that might upset its current power base or risk the displeasure of the hated Roman rule.

Herod assembled the religious leaders of the Jews to find out where the Messiah was to be born. The chief priests were the high priest and his sons, and perhaps other principal members of his family. The scribes were lay experts in the law of Moses. They preserved and taught the law and served as judges in the Sanhedrin (Jewish religious leaders). These priests and scribes promptly quoted Micah 5:2, where Bethlehem of Judea was named as the future birthplace of the King. Actually, in Micah’s prophecy, the city was called “Bethlehem Ephrathah.” This identified it part of the tribal territory of Judah. There was more than one Bethlehem in Palestine, and thus the specific city is named with precision. Though one of the smaller hamlets of Judah, it was in no way the least significant, for out of it would come a Ruler in Israel.

Herod then called the wise men secretly to find out when they first saw the star. His secrecy betrayed his sadistic motive; he would need this information later if he was not able to locate the right Child. To cover up his real intention, he sent the wise men to find the Child, then to bring back word so that he too could go and worship. As the men started out, the star which they had seen in the East reappeared! This indicates that the star had not guided them all the way from the East. But now it actually did guide them to the house where Jesus was.

Special mention is made of the great joy of the wise men when they saw the star (v. 10). These Gentiles diligently sought Christ while Herod planned to kill Him, while the knowledgeable priests and scribes were as yet indifferent, and while the people of Jerusalem were troubled. All these attitudes were omens of the way in which the Messiah would be received.

When they entered the house, the wise men saw Jesus with Mary His mother (notice that they were not found in the stable, indicating some length of time had elapsed). They stretched out on the ground in worship before Him, offering costly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We should not miss several beautiful touches here. First, let us mark the unusual order: “they saw the child with Mary his mother . . .” We would usually mention the mother first, then her child. But this Child is unique and must be given first place (see also vv. 13-14, 20-21). In that same connection, we should observe that the wise men worshipped Jesus, not Mary or Joseph. (Joseph is not even mentioned here; he will soon disappear entirely from the gospel record.) The lesson for us is simple: wise men still worship Jesus.

Finally, the gifts they brought spoke volumes. Gold is a type or figure of deity and of glory; it speaks of the bright, shining perfection of His divine Person, Frankincense is an ointment, or perfume; it suggests the fragrance of His life of sinless perfection. Myrrh is a bitter herb, sometimes used in embalming; it pictures the sufferings which He would endure in bearing away the sins of the world.

In Isaiah 60:6 we read a prediction that Gentiles would come to the Messiah with gifts, but Isaiah mentions only gold and frankincense, not myrrh. The reason is that Isaiah was speaking of Christ’s second coming in power and great glory. There will be no myrrh then, because He will not suffer then. But here in Matthew, the myrrh is included because His first coming is in view. In Matthew we have the sufferings of Christ; in Isaiah 60, the glories that shall follow.

The wise men were warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod and so they obediently returned to their own country by another route. Someone has said that no one who meets Christ with a sincere heart ever returns the same way. True encounter with Him transforms all of life.

Exile in Egypt (2:13-15)

From early childhood the threat of death hung over our Lord. The storm clouds gathered with unprecedented speed and fury. It was clear that He was born to die. But there was an appointed time, and He could not die before then. Any man who walks in the center of God's will is immortal until his work is done.

An angel of the Lord warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt with his family as Herod was ready to embark on his "search and destroy" mission. And so this humble little Jewish family took the long, weary trip to Egypt. We do not know how long they stayed; all we know is that they were refugees until Herod's death. Then the coast was clear for them to return home to Palestine.

And so another prophecy of the Old Testament became clothed with new meaning (v. 15). God had said through the prophet Hosea, "Out of Egypt I called My son" (11:1). In its original context, this referred to Israel's deliverance from Egypt at the time of the exodus. But the statement is capable of a double meaning. The Messiah's history would closely parallel that of the nation of Israel; here the prophecy is fulfilled by His return to Palestine from Egypt.

Massacre in Bethlehem (2:16-18)

When the wise men failed to return to Jerusalem, Herod realized that he had been frustrated in his plot to locate the young King of the Jews. In senseless rage he ordered the death of all male children under two years of age in Bethlehem and its locale. Estimates vary as to the number slain; one writer suggests about twenty-six. It is not likely that hundreds were involved in light of the known population level of the area. Herod set the two-year age limit according to the time when the star first appeared to the wise men. This gives us some clue as to the approximate age of the Baby Jesus at this time.

The weeping which followed the killing of the children was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15. In the prophecy, Rachel, of course, represents the nation of Israel. The grief of the nation is attributed to Rachel, who was buried in a hamlet called Ramah near Bethlehem, where the massacre of the infants took place. As the bereaved parents passed her tomb, she is pictured as weeping with them. It is poetic language.

In his effort to eliminate a potential rival, Herod gained nothing but dishonorable mention in the annals of infamy.

A Nazarene in Nazareth (2:19-23)

After Herod's death an angel of the Lord assured Joseph that it was now safe to return to the land of Israel. When he first reached the land Joseph heard that Archelaus (pronounced Ar-kel-lay-us) had succeeded his father as king of Judea. Joseph knew that the new king had been cruel to the Jews, and so he was hesitant to venture into Judea. His fears were confirmed by a warning from God, so he travelled northward to Galilee and settled in Nazareth.

For the fourth time in this chapter Matthew reminds us that prophecy was being fulfilled. He does not mention any prophet by name but simply says that it had been foretold that the Messiah would be called a Nazarene. There is no verse in the Old Testament that says this in so many words. A more probable explanation is that "Nazarene" is used to describe anyone who lived in Nazareth. The town was viewed with contempt by the rest of the people. Nathaniel expressed this by the proverbial question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). The scorn which was heaped upon this "unimportant" town naturally fell upon its inhabitants as well. So when verse 23 says, "He shall be called a Nazarene," it means that He would be treated with contempt and mockery. Although we cannot find any prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene, we can find one that says that He would be despised and rejected by men (Isa. 53:3). Another says that He would be a worm and no man; scorned by men, and despised by the people (Ps. 22:6). It is rather amazing that when the Mighty God came to this earth, He was given a nickname of reproach. Those who follow Him are privileged to share His reproach (Heb. 13:13)!

THE
G O S P E L O F

MATTHEW

EXAM BOOKLET
AK '10 (2 UNITS) MATT

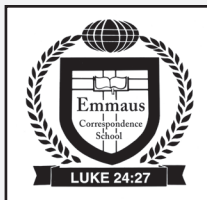
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COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THESE EXAM PAGES

First Printed 2010 (AK '10), 2 UNITS

ISBN 978-1-59387-125-3

Code: MATT

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Printed in the United States of America

CHAPTER 1 EXAM

MATTHEW 1–2

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. The genealogy in Matthew 1 is essential because
 - A. it is an interesting way to start a book
 - B. it lays the foundation for everything that follows
 - C. it shows that Jesus was a natural descendent of Adam
 - D. it creates interest in Old Testament history _____

2. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus traces his _____, whereas Luke's genealogy traces His _____.
 - A. legal descent / lineal descent
 - B. lineal descent / legal descent
 - C. bloodline / royal line
 - D. maternal heritage / paternal heritage _____

3. When we come to difficulties in the Bible we should
 - A. realize that the Bible may be wrong
 - B. give up reading it
 - C. decide it's not really important
 - D. conclude that the problem is our lack of knowledge _____

4. The name *Jesus* means

A. "grace and peace"	C. "King"
B. "Jehovah is salvation"	D. "crown"

5. At least 700 years before Jesus was born, God gave _____ a prophecy of the Messiah's virgin birth.

A. Jonah	C. Isaiah
B. Amos	D. Malachi

6. Herod the Great was a descendent of _____, a traditional enemy of the Jews.
A. Esau C. the Philistines
B. Amalek D. the Assyrians _____
7. The future birthplace of the King of the Jews was predicted in
A. Isaiah 9:7 C. Isaiah 60:6
B. Micah 5:2 D. Psalm 22:10 _____
8. The wise men worshipped
A. Jesus and Mary C. Jesus
B. Mary D. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus _____
9. The number of children massacred by King Herod in the area of Bethlehem was probably about
A. 25 C. 100
B. 50 D. 500 _____
10. Being called a Nazarene meant that Jesus would
A. be honored for His position
B. be treated with contempt and mockery
C. be a man with unusual influence
D. be hunted by the Romans _____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What is most interesting to you about the genealogy of Jesus?
