

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

All those names listed in Jesus' genealogy are meaningless apart from the Old Testament. So let me state at the outset that we're not focusing on the New Testament during this one-year study because the Old Testament is irrelevant! Jesus and the New Testament authors quoted from the Old Testament at least 700 times. If you add the New Testament allusions to the Old Testament, that number increases into the thousands. God gave us one continuing revelation, not two separate revelations with the older being completely supplanted by the new. That is why Christian Bibles contain both Old and New Testaments. Those designations, by the way, would have been completely foreign to Peter and Paul.

It is true, of course, that some of what was written in the Old Testament has limited relevance to New Covenant Christians. But every bit of the Old Testament still has some relevance, as all of it reveals to us something about God and His will. Moreover, the Old Testament contains predictive prophecies that are still waiting to be fulfilled. If you toss out the book of Isaiah, for example, you might as well toss out the book of Revelation.

So don't forget this. As we start reading Matthew's Gospel today, we're breaking into the middle of the story. What we read about today---the arrival of the Messiah---had been anticipated in the Old Testament from its very first pages. And from reading Jesus' genealogy, it is clear that Matthew wanted his targeted Jewish readership to know that Jesus was thoroughly Jewish and qualified by His lineage to be the Messiah, a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David. All those men were promised that the Messiah would be their descendant.

If the Mosaic Law stipulated that adulteresses should be put to death (see Lev. 20:10), why does Matthew state that Joseph, upon discovery that Mary was pregnant, "being a righteous man," intended to dissolve their engagement secretly? Should not a righteous man uphold the Law?

This is an important question, and perhaps it will provoke us to consider what makes someone truly righteous in the light of this scripture.

God is the perfect example of righteousness, but He is also very merciful. He gives sinners time to repent, rarely judging them immediately. Jesus certainly demonstrated such mercy towards the woman caught in the act of adultery (see John 8:1-11). Matthew wrote that Joseph did not want to disgrace Mary, calling attention to what she had done. Although he naturally assumed the worst about her pregnancy and was hurt because of it, he continued to act with love towards the one who offended him. Joseph was a righteous man indeed, imitating a righteous God.

Notice, however, that righteous Joseph intended not to marry his betrothed once he learned of her pregnancy. Some would want us to believe that love tolerates any behavior. Not so.

I'm so glad that an angel cleared everything up for Joseph. What a switch! Mary's pregnancy was not a tragedy, but the most wonderful event of human history! She was carrying "God with us."

Notice the angel declared that Jesus would save His people "from their sins," implying not only the forgiveness of sins, but also deliverance from sinning. Praise God that is part of our salvation. Jesus saved us from our sins by bearing them on the cross, so we see a foreshadowing of His sacrificial death even at His conception. He was born to die---for us.