

# Christmas 2019 // Waiting

**Merry Christmas, everybody.** My name is...

Some of you know that I started a short podcast called AMA. It's where... Well, one of the things I get asked sometimes around Christmas is why we celebrate Christmas on Dec 25. Are we sure that was the day Jesus was born?

No, we're not, and I hope this is not unnerving to you, but we don't know the exact date. The Virgin Mary didn't leave much of a social media trail so it's hard to pin down.

One of the reasons we ended up celebrating Christmas on December 25 was it was the date of the Roman solstice (solstice, which means it is the shortest day in winter, when the days are shortest and the nights are longest).

And it just made sense to early Christians to celebrate the birth of Christ then, because that's what Christmas is really about--God's light shining into darkness. (Plus, that date was also about 9 months from the time of year when Mary received the annunciation, so it's in the ballpark).

Jesus was born into a time of darkness. Matthew, the first book in the NT, shows us that in a very unique way by opening up with a genealogy. It can be a confusing passage of Scripture, and an odd way for Matthew to start his gospel, but it has massive implications for how you interpret God's activity in your life.

The first verses of Matthew read: **1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**

Then it goes on to say: *Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah... (and so forth)*

Matthew lists out the names from Abraham to Jesus, and then he concludes: **<sup>17</sup> Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.**

Again, this may seem like an odd way to open up the New Testament, but when you look more closely at it, you see that it is designed to communicate a very important message.

## • **Fourteen generations from Abraham to David**

- Matthew starts with Abraham because Abraham was the one to whom the salvation promise was given: "I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing... you will be my people and I will be your God."
- David because David represents the King Israel always thought they needed, the King who would bring in the salvation and peace and blessing they hoped for.

## • **Fourteen from David to the exile**

- Exile because exile represents the failure, first of David, and then of the entire nation of Israel, to follow God. Because of their persistent disobedience, God drove them out of the Promised Land and into exile.

## • **Fourteen from the exile to Jesus**

- Jesus was God's answer to the exile. He was the fulfillment of God's promise to rescue them and bless them.

**Fourteen generations** between each of these divisions. You say, "Well, that worked out pretty exact." **But here's the thing.** If you go back and look at

the Old Testament records, you can see that there was more than 14 generations. Matthew left out some names.

- (And Matthew knew that you could do this, btw; it's not like he's trying to pull a fast one on you. He knows you can see that).
- **So, why does he say "14" then?** He's trying to communicate, in his own artistic way, that the coming of Jesus was a perfect and perfectly-timed fulfillment of God's promises.
  - Fourteen is two 7's. And seven, of course, is the biblical number of completion.
  - Also, in Hebrew, if you add up the 3 letters of David's name, their numerical value is 14.

**He's trying to communicate, in a Jewish, artistic way, that God** is faithful, always in control, always working to fulfill his promise in his perfectly designed way.

It had been 550 years since the exile, and they had sat in darkness since then, wondering if God had forsaken them, wondering if he was good, wondering if he was even there.

**Here's what you and I are supposed to see in that at Christmastime:**

### 1. God sees you in your waiting

You see, many of you find yourself in a posture of waiting this Christmas. A time of darkness. Of longing--longing for something to be set right. A longing for some yearning to be fulfilled.

- Maybe it is to have your family put back together
- Or, maybe to have a family of your own. Last Christmas...
- Still not pregnant
- Grieving the death of a child

- Maybe this season finds you engulfed with sorrow over someone you've lost
- Or heartache over a family that has fallen apart
  - A prodigal who is yet to come home
- Maybe this Christmas represents another year that physical healing hasn't come
- Or another year where financially things have still not worked out

And you've tried everything you know how to try. And you've prayed and worked and believed and done all you knew to do but still, things haven't happened.

**So you wait. And, if you are honest, you wonder:** "God, are you up there? God, do you hear me? God, are you really, and truly good?"

I want you to know that God sees you. All these names are recorded to show us that God had not forgotten them. Not a single one of them. And **just like he saw these people and remembered them**, he remembers you.

Right now, he sees you.

### 2. God *always* comes through

- That's what this genealogy demonstrates. God, in his own perfect way, in his own perfect time, always comes through. He's going to **turn your chaos into his perfect 14**.
- It seems now like you are sitting in darkness, but God is coming, if you wait on him.
- Recently I've been reading a lot in the prophets and Psalms, and it's amazing how much of their lives is spent in a posture of waiting.
- And here's what they promise:
  - In Lamentations, the prophet Jeremiah says: **"The Lord is good to those who wait for him."** (Lam 3:25)

- Isaiah says, "...blessed are all those who wait for him." (30:18)
- and, "...those that wait for me shall not be put to shame." (49:23)
- God will not disappoint those of you wait for him. He will not let you be put to shame. No one who ever has waited on God has ever been let down. He will always come through.
- You say, "**Well, why then am I waiting?**" Because there are things that you can learn in a time of waiting that you can't learn any other way.
- Jeremiah says: "**It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.**" Lam 3:26.
  - This is a verse **God has been using** in my life lately. It is good for me to sit quietly and wait for God's salvation.
  - Unfulfilled longings teach you to press into the goodness of God, to probe the depths of his character, to wrestle with whether you believe his promises and that he really is good and you can trust him.
  - And that wrestling will produce in you a trust in God that will give you a joy and strength of faith you couldn't have known any other way.
- Isaiah 40:31, "**Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they will mount up on wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.**"
- I don't know who you are or what you are waiting on, but I want to tell you, first, that Christmas proves that God sees you, and second, that he is good to those who wait on him.
- Keep waiting.
- Are you in darkness? Does he seem distant? That's exactly the situation Christmas speaks to. Blessed are those who wait for him. God will come through. He always has; he always will.
- No one who has waited for him has ever been put to shame. You won't be the first.

### 3. Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of our waiting

- *Stay with me, here.* This **passage demonstrates that Christ is the ultimate answer** to our waiting.
- You see, what you and I **most** need is not physical health or a strong family. (Or, in **Israel's case,** political deliverance.)
- What we are **most missing deep in our souls** is reunion with our heavenly Father.
- **You and I were created for God.** Whether we know it or not.
- **Blaise Pascal**--a great Christian philosopher--famously said that the human heart has a gigantic hole in it...
  - Recently, I read a sad and unexpected affirmation of this from the **comedian Jim Carrey:** "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer."
- Money is not. Love is not. Family is not. Nothing the Hallmark channel points you to is the **ultimate answer.**
- Christ is. **St. Augustine:** *Our hearts are restless...*
  - You were created for God, you need to be restored to him, and only the Messiah can do that.
- **I want to be clear:** God is good, and we are supposed to wait on, and look for, and expect his goodness to break into our lives and our families.
  - He promises he is good to those who wait for him, and will not disappoint those who wait.
- **But first and foremost Jesus came to restore our relationship with God.** And that's what is most important. Because apart from that, any other fixes would only be superficial.

#### According to the Bible,

- **Sin** separates us from God. Sin is...
- What Jesus did...
  - Lived the life you were supposed to live/died the death
  - JIMP

- Not just for you, instead of you
- I often tell people I can **summarize the Bible in 4 phrases**: Bad news/worse news/good news/better news

## Invitation

- **So, are you waiting?**
  - **First, let Christmas remind** you to trust in the goodness of God. At the perfect time, in just the right way, his goodness will come. In your family. In your marriage. In you.
  - No one who waits for him will ever be put to shame.
  - He sees you. He waits with you.
  - In time, he will come through. He always does.
- **Have you received Christ? Because that's what Christmas is most about.**
  - I may not be able to wave a magic wand this morning and give you the romantic relationship you long for at Christmas--you'll have to wait on God for that--but I **CAN introduce you God's love and tell you that the arms you yearned for in romantic love** were his. And that his love is better.
  - I may not be **able to guarantee you immediately your dream job, but I CAN connect you to the promises of a God** who says he will cover you with his wings and provide for your every need.
  - I may not be able to grant you physical healing this morning, but I can tell you about a God who was **broken for you** and says "*He that believes on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,*" who was **wounded for your transgressions** and bruised for your iniquities so that by his stripes you could be ultimately be healed. And now walks by your side through every step of the pain. And **that is better**.

**I can offer you Christ, because that's what Christmas is about.** And he is better. Have you received him?

- It happens through surrender/faith...