

Can I Get A Witness? *The Great King?*

If you were asked to perform or speak, who would you want to introduce you? Often when I am asked to present, the person tasked with my bio usually mispronounces my name or emphasizes things about me I would rather not have mentioned. Introductions matter, especially when you have a last name like *Pickell*. In this weeks lesson we have a whole cloud of witnesses that emerge one at a time to remind us of who Jesus is. Some of them are the most unlikely characters, and some acknowledge who he is by default - but each one helps tell the story. Pay close attention this week to the list of witnesses provided by Matthew that introduce us to Jesus.

Journey Together:

- 1). Who would you want to introduce you to others and why?
- 2). What would you most like people to know about you?
- 3). What is the most important thing to know about a person?

Road Map: Matthew 1:1-17.

- 4). Why would Matthew choose to introduce Jesus by tracing his family history? What can we learn about Jesus from his genealogy?
- 5). What surprises you most about the names in this list? If you could leave out some of these people to protect Jesus reputation which ones would you strike from the list and why?

Read Matthew 1:18-25, and chapter 2 & 3

- 6). So far the entire Old Testament is referenced in the genealogy of Jesus as a witness of who he is. List some of the other important witnesses who provide testimony about the person of

Jesus. What are all these characters saying about Jesus? Who is he and why is this important?

- 7). Everyone from the Old Testament record (genealogy) which moves us from Abraham to Jesus in one grand historical sweep - to King Herod and the Devil himself, all know who Jesus is. How does this help inform our view of Jesus?

- 8). How does this great cloud of witnesses right in the beginning of Matthew impact our obedience and discipleship to Jesus? What difference does it make that we are becoming disciples of “King” Jesus?

- 9). Becoming Lord of our lives is the first step or competency in discipleship. When did Jesus become king in your life? What steps would you need to take for him to take the throne of your heart?

- 10). What further questions do you have from this weeks reading?

Discipleship Challenge: Our challenge this week after rereading Matthew 1-3 - is to surrender to Jesus as the rightful king of our hearts and to offer him the very first place in all we do. In fact, as a disciple this is our first act of every day – to begin each day acknowledging Jesus as Lord of all.

- 11). How can this group pray for you right now?

My Journey:

- 1). How has God been using journey in your life this week to do *Great Things* for Him?
- 2). How is surrender to Jesus different than merely believing in and accepting him?
- 3). How can this group pray for you today?

Backstory:

When we step back and look at the first three chapters of Matthew it's as if one character after another marches onto the scene each one by design or default providing witness of who Jesus is. First is the Old Testament genealogy from Abraham to Jesus. Biblical genealogies serve several purposes. They trace the lineage of the individual being highlighted. They also provide a broad sweep of history through the family tree. But perhaps more importantly the biblical genealogies move us from one important character to the next. For example, in the first genealogical list we come across in the Bible we move from Seth to Noah – the next important biblical character in the Biblical story (Genesis 5). In Matthew, we move from Abraham, the father or beginning of God's people to Jesus, the new beginning for the people of God. However, as mentioned in *Greater Things* introduction, Matthew breaks up the genealogy into three significant historical periods of fourteen generations each: Abraham to David, David to the Babylonian Captivity and the Babylonian Captivity to Jesus. When compared with other genealogical records of the Old Testament, the generations do not fit so nicely into fourteen generations between each division, but genealogies don't actually have to be exact since their overall intention serves the general purposes mentioned above. In this case, Matthew's genealogy introduces us to Jesus - the start of a new people (Abraham) and a new kingdom (David) that will ultimately lead us out of our bondage of sin (Babylon). Jesus is *Son of Abraham, Son of David our Deliverer*.

The next witnesses in Matthew's list is Mary and Joseph. The surprise here is His humble yet miraculous birth – a conviction that both his earthly parents share and defend which could have resulted in their divorce if they had not been visited by angel messengers.

Of course, the next important witness is the Holy Spirit who made it possible for Jesus to be born without an earthly father. The presence and conception of the Spirit in the birthing process is the clearest evidence that He is in fact the messianic king.

The next witnesses brought in to testify of Jesus noble birth is the Persian Magi. These ancient pagan astrologers are more tuned into the significance of Jesus identity than the Jewish leadership including ruling King Herod. Gentiles know that Jesus is the long-awaited king of Israel. Herod is himself a witness in the slaughter of every male Bethlehem child two years and under. Who cares what the Magi think if Jesus isn't a real threat to Herod's throne? Of course, the Jewish leaders also bear witness to Jesus by filling in His birth place. They at least know that Micah 5:2 predicted Bethlehem – the city of David as the location for Messiah's birth.

The testimony of John the Baptist sealed it for many people. John bore witness that he saw the Spirit God descend upon Jesus at His baptism – the one evidence John was to look for as the key sign of the true Messiah. However, the witness of John is not just the witness of a biblical prophet. John is the last of the Old Testament revelation. John's testimony is the weight of the entire Old Testament word coupled with the presence of the Spirit in dove like witness and made certain by the very voice of God, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him." This tri-fold witness of Word, Spirit and the voice of God is undeniable.

Still, we would expect all these to stand up for Jesus. It may just be that the most undeniable witness is Satan himself in the wilderness temptation. The Devils testimony is another witness by default. His support is in the importance he placed on the Jesus temptation. Jesus must be the one that Satan fears the most or he would not have worked so hard to make him stumble.

All these with one voice – Abraham, David, Joseph, Mary, the Angel of the Lord, The Holy Spirit, The Gentile Magi, King Herod, John the Baptist, The Spirit and the Father, and even Satan are saying the same thing. This is King Jesus! Does Jesus need so many voices? Probably not, but it is amazing when we put them all together! They become a loud and impressive crescendo – a bold witness that Jesus is King!