

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **The Beginning of the Call**

December 2020

Winter Quarter

**December 5, 2020**

## **Lesson #1 –Called to Be Heir**

**Scripture Focus – Matthew 1:1-6:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-5**

### **ICE BREAKER –**

1. Why is it important that we do not disregard the Old Testament?
2. What difference does it make to you that Jesus is “heir of all things” and that the Father made the universe through Him?

***Key Verse: [God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.— Hebrews 1:2***

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

#### **A. Who Am I?**

Heritage connects people to the past and provides roots for understanding themselves in the larger world. In my case, my “Italianness” was always an important part of my self-identity. Growing up, it helped me understand that I shared a history with millions of other people, a history that began long before I was born. I felt this connection despite being adopted by a non-Italian family with no discernible Italian influences.

Both Matthew and the writer of Hebrews concerned themselves with Jesus’ heritage. In that regard, the focus remained on God’s work in a specific family to bring about His purposes. Also, Jesus’ divine superiority to every created being was of utmost importance to emphasize. These two writers remind us that Jesus’ beginnings are both humble and unimaginably glorious.

#### **B. Lesson Context: Matthew’s Gospel**

From the exile in Babylon of 586 BC onward, Judea was rarely free of foreign powers that imposed their will on the nation. After Babylon came Persia, then Greece, and finally Rome. In about 38 BC, Rome declared Herod to be king of Judea.

Herod imposed Greek and Roman culture onto the Jews, even erecting a temple to the goddess Roma in Caesarea Maritima. The Jews despised Herod not only for these acts but also because he wasn’t Jewish by heritage and thus not a rightful king. Matthew wrote against this background, which makes his genealogy more than a list of names. It is a link to a time when David’s line held the throne, saying something important about Jesus’ birthright.

### C. Lesson Context: The Book of Hebrews

Hebrews is a bit unusual. It ends with greetings like an epistle (Hebrews 13:20–25), yet the beginning is unlike that of a normal letter (contrast its opening verses with those of Colossians, etc.). Its original readers were likely Christians of Jewish background who had been undergoing some persecution, which tempted them to give up on Christianity for old ways that had been superseded (10:32–39; etc.). We can almost hear the original readers' questions that prompt our author to write chapter 1: "We know about angels; is Jesus as strong as they?" "He died; is He powerful enough to save?" The author of Hebrews has clear answers.

#### LESSON COMMENTARY

**1:1.** Matthew introduced his gospel by emphasizing the legal right of Jesus of Nazareth to be the king of the Jews and of the entire world. Matthew included Jesus' genealogy to argue for the validity of His claim to David's throne. As the creation accounts began with the phrase **record of the genealogy** (LXX Gn 2:4; 5:1), Matthew's description here of the fulfillment of God's plan begins with the same phrase, suggesting that He was beginning the "new creation" (2Co 5:17). In Christ's humanity, He was legally a son of David and was a rightful heir to the Davidic throne (2Sm 7:12–13).

**1:3–6.** What is the connection between **Tamar**, **Rahab**, **Ruth**, and **Bathsheba**? Women were not usually included in Jewish genealogies (though cf. 1Ch 2). It is impossible to be certain, but perhaps the best view is that all four had unusual marriages through which God brought much good. He did the same through the unusual circumstances of the virgin birth. **Tamar**, **Rahab**, and **Ruth** were Gentiles, and **Bathsheba** was married to a Gentile. This may suggest Matthew's desire to indicate to his audience that Gentiles not only had a role in the ancestry of the Messiah, but should benefit from the sacrificial death of the Messiah as well (Mt 28:18–20).

**1:17.** Matthew structured the genealogy in three groups of 14 names, possibly to indicate that the Davidic kingdom dismantled in the exile would be restored by King Jesus. The importance of the number **fourteen** is unclear, but the name "David" (Hb. *dwd*) adds up to 14 on the basis of Hebrew numerology (4 ["D"] + 6 ["W"] + 4 ["D"]), and since there were three letters, this may account for three sets of 14. But Matthew left no clues for the significance in his thinking of this arrangement. This is not a pure genealogical record, but makes a theological statement about Jesus as son of David. In order to get 14-14-14, David should be counted only once, but Jeconiah twice (because of the break ending v. 11 and introducing v. 12, where Jeconiah is viewed both as the last of the kings of Judah before the exile, and the first of the kings of Judah during the exile).

**LESSON NUGGET** – What you do with the word of God determines what you will enjoy of God's will and claim of your inheritance. Jesus Christ is the Father's last word. In Him, divine revelation is seen and heard in its fullness: and in Him, God's revelation is complete.

**Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary***