

## *The Incarnation*

This Christmas season, folks all over the world will look *back* 2000 years to the incarnation of the Son of God. But for more than 4000 years, folks on the other side of the incarnation looked *forward* to that same event. The birth of the eternal Son of God was no accident; it was not the result of unforeseen or uncontrollable events. Jesus was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. God does not respond to human events; He predestined them. Nowhere is that more clearly seen or more profoundly delineated than in the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Down through the Old Testament period, there were definite prophecies concerning the ancestry of the Messiah who was to come and the conditions that must be fulfilled. For instance:

- 1) He must be the seed of Abraham(Gen 12:1-3; 22:15-17);
- 2) He must be of the tribe of Judah(Gen 49:10);
- 3) He must be of the house of David(2 Sam 7:8-13);
- 4) He must have legal right to the throne(Is 9:7);
- 5) He must be born of a virgin(Is 7:14);
- 6) He must be born in Bethlehem(Micah 5:2);
- 7) He must be God(Is 9:6).

During the Old Testament times, there were many determined efforts on the part of man, inspired by Satan, to interrupt the bloodline of the Messiah. Among them were the decree of Pharaoh to kill all the newborn male children among the Israelites(Ex 1:22); the attempt of Athaliah to exterminate all the royal seed (2Kings 11:1); and the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities with the attendant danger of assimilation.

It often appeared that the promise of a divine Deliverer who would meet the required conditions had been rendered void. But God overruled man's wickedness and actually made it serve His purposes. God made two unchangeable and irrevocable promises to David(Ps 89:4); first, that the throne of David would endure forever(2 Sam 7:12); and secondly, that his descendants would sit upon the throne(2 Sam 7:13). In other words, David was unconditionally assured that the lineal descendants would be preserved to sit upon the throne. These promises of course, looked forward to the coming of the Messiah.

David had several sons, but the right to sit upon the throne passed to only one of them: namely Solomon(1 Kings 1:30). Only those who were of the kingly line inherited throne rights. In other words, one could be a descendant of David, and yet not have the legal right to sit upon the throne.

The list of David's descendants to whom was given the right to sit upon the throne of Israel is given in Matthew 1, and this genealogy terminates with Joseph, the betrothed husband of Mary. The genealogy beginning with Solomon is as follows:

Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehosphaphat, Joram, Ussiah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, ***Jeconiah or Coniah***, Shealtiel, Zerubbablel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Akim, Eliud, Elazar, Mattan, Jacob and Joseph.

Notice the highlighted and italicized name, Jeconiah or Coniah. Jeremiah 22:28-30 pronounces a curse on this king because of his sin:

*Is this man Jehoiachin a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know...This is what the LORD says: "Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah."*

This curse did not mean that Coniah would never have any children, but rather that none of his descendants would sit upon the throne of David. Those who had the legal right to the throne were thus barred from occupying it.

In Matthew 1, it is recorded that Joseph, the espoused husband of Mary, was a direct descendant of Coniah. This means that although Joseph inherited the legal right to the throne of David because he descended through the kingly line of Solomon, yet he could not sit upon that throne because he came under the curse upon Coniah(that no man of his seed would ever sit upon the throne).

But it means something else of far greater importance. It means that if Jesus had been the real son of Joseph, He too would come under the curse pronounced on Coniah and would not have been able to sit upon the throne of David. This poses a real problem. Three main conditions must be met that seem humanly impossible of fulfillment: 1) Jesus must be a lineal descendant of David(in order to fulfill God's promise to David – that his seed would sit upon his throne); 2) He must also be the legal son of Joseph in order to inherit the right to sit upon the throne of David; 3) Yet he cannot be the real son of Joseph without coming under God's curse on Coniah.

Could such a dilemma ever be resolved? Yes, God had planned the miracle of the virgin birth all along. Notice carefully – the genealogy in Matthew 1 traces the kingly line from David down to Joseph. Jesus was not the real son of Joseph; at the time of the Savior's birth, Joseph had never known Mary as his wife(Matt 1:25). But Joseph adopted Jesus as his son, and thus the Lord inherited the legal right to the throne of David. Jesus became the legal son of Joseph, even though He was not his real/biological son. This leaves one condition unfulfilled, however was prophesied that the Messiah would be a lineal descendant of David. Was he?

The answer is found in Luke 3:23-28 where Mary's family tree is recorded. Mary was a direct descendant of David, not through the kingly line of Solomon, upon which the curse of Coniah fell, but through another son of David named Nathan.

Thus, the curse of Coniah did not affect her or her child. In summary, Jesus was the actual son of Mary, and thus a direct descendant of David. In Him, God's promise to David is fulfilled. Jesus was the legal son of Joseph(by adoption) and thus inherited the legal right to sit on the throne of David. But, not being the biological son of Joseph, he escaped the curse of Coniah.

Clearly this is the work of God. The wonderful interweaving of circumstances...does not such design, spread out over centuries of human history, demand a Designer who is absolutely sovereign? No human mind could ever trace the bloodline of the Messiah in such a way as to fulfill all the promises and yet escape the curse through the miracle of the virgin birth! And so, in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a virgin, born under the law, to redeem lost mankind. The gift of Christmas is the gift of God's Son, a living Savior for a dying world.