

## LESSON 1

December 6, 2020

### Unit I: The Beginning of a Call

#### Fulfilling One's Calling

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 102:12-22

**Background Scriptures:** Hebrews 1; Matthew 1:1-17

**Print Passages:** Hebrews 1:1-5; Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17

**Key Verse**—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, KJV)

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In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. (Hebrews 1:2, NIV)

#### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Grasp the significance of Jesus' earthly heritage and His heavenly origins.
- Wonder at the depth and scope of God's eternal plan to bring salvation through Jesus.
- Worship Jesus as God's definitive word to humanity.

#### Key Terms

**Appointed (Hebrews 1:2)**—Greek: **tithém (TEE-thay-mee)**: placed; laid; set.

**Begat (Matthew 1:2 [KJV only])**—Greek: **gennaó (ghen-nah'-o)**: brought; begotten; fathered children.

**Glory (Hebrews 1:3)**—Greek: **doxa (dox'-ah)**: honor; renown; glory, an especially divine quality; the unspoken manifestation of God; splendor.

**Heir (Hebrews 1:2)**—Greek: **kléronomos (klay-ron-om'-os)**: an heir, inheritor.

**Inherited (Hebrews 1:4)**—Greek: **kléronomeó (klay-ron-om-eh'-o)**: obtained (possessed) by inheritance; acquired; "by inheritance obtained" (KJV).

**Prophets (Hebrews 1:1)**—Greek: **prophétés (prof-ay'-tace)**: prophets (interpreters or forth-tellers of the divine will); persons who declare the mind (message) of God.

**Provided purification (Hebrews 1:3)**—Greek: **katharismos (kath-ar-is-mos')**: cleansing; purifying; purification: literal, ceremonial, or moral; met: expiation; "purged our sins" (KJV).

## INTRODUCTION

Each year, millions of families gather for reunions. Usually, before one year's reunion is completed, plans for the next gathering are already underway. Families anticipate the opportunity to gather in a single location—together. Most get excited at the expectation of any type of family gatherings, whether for holidays, weddings, or other occasions. For many families, however, such gatherings are not met with eager anticipation; not all family get-togethers result in unity. This is especially the case when families gather to grieve the loss of a loved one. During times of stress and bereavement, unexpected feelings surface—like jealousy, ill will, and latent guilt, which dissipate unity and give way to frustration and hostility. Sometimes, dark secrets are divulged, old grudges are uncovered, and bad feelings are shared. Hoping perhaps to preserve a strong image, many families have developed a long tradition of repressing feelings and hiding scars and bruises from the past. Some discourage any discussion of unpleasant family history—broken relationships,

business deals (unprofitable or possibly illegal), health challenges, and so forth. The hiding or hushing of what is known only to a few family members often causes more harm than good. When the truth is finally revealed, the impact is often worse than if the matter had been disclosed and resolved much earlier. For example, the disclosure of family health issues could likely help other family members with prevention, early detection, and survival. Hiding issues creates a false sense of reality—the perception that all is well when it is not. There are no perfect people and, therefore, no perfect families. Everyone is vulnerable to something—we all make mistakes. Knowing the truth can empower people to overcome unhealthy patterns of dysfunction and protect them from the enemy’s age-old agenda to destroy the family. Today’s lesson tackles the history of a people that is wrought with highs and lows, strengths, and frailties. God used people with stained, blemished histories to change the world. The good news is that no matter who or what is in your past, God can use you too.

## **THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT**

Biblical Christology pictures Jesus as the exact likeness and complete image of God (see Colossians 1:15, 19; and Hebrews 1:3). As stated in early creeds, Jesus was both fully man and fully God. Only God could accomplish such a task and of all humanity, only Jesus fits such an explanation. The term “last days” is not necessarily eschatological, as in pointing to the final days prior to judgment. Rather, “last” (eschatos) can refer to the time after which the plan of God was finished through the sacrifice of Jesus (see John 19:30). Additional support can be found in Hebrews 1:2; Acts 2:16-17; 1 Peter 1:20; etc. The idea of inheritance (see Hebrews 1:4) is a key concept in the life of the Hebrews. Since Jesus has the inherent position as Son of God, Jesus passes an eternal inheritance to those called to follow Him (see Hebrews 9:15). The book of Hebrews takes its title from its original audience. Arguably, the text was written to all believers, including Gentiles, to assist their understanding of the connection between Christian faith and Jewish heritage. Bible scholars tend to agree that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians, in general and not to a specific local church, as evidenced by the recurring thematic references to heritage, terminology, and traditions that would be familiar to persons of Jewish ancestry.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT**

### **A Rich Heritage: Extraordinary (Hebrews 1:1-5)**

#### **KJV**

**1** GOD, WHO at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

**2** 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;

**3** Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:

**4** Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

**5** For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

## **NIV**

**1** IN THE past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,  
**2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

**3** The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

**4** So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

**5** For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

The unit and lesson begin by calling the reader to give attention to God's final Word, in the image and essence of Jesus Christ, God's full self-revelation to humanity. The writer of Hebrews does not offer any form of introduction, nor any salutation or greeting. The narrative moves directly to the content of the writer's message. The first section opens by describing God's past dialogue with humanity—God previously spoke in various times and methods, revealing Himself initially through the ministry of the prophets (verse 1). The ongoing revelation of God unfolded over time, beginning with the prophets of God and culminating in the last days or dispensation, says the writer, in Christ (verse 2a). The phrase "these last days" refers not to the end of time but, rather, to the period of history in which God had delivered His final revelation to humanity in the person and presence of Christ Jesus. The writer further establishes the authority of Jesus Christ as the heir of all things and an agent in Creation (verse 2b). The writer then seeks to capture the nature of Christ in four dimensions (verse 3). First, being "the brightness of [God's] glory" refers to reflection of divine glory. Hence, Jesus stated, "When you have seen Me you have seen the Father" (see John 14:9), again emphasizing His oneness with God. Second, being "the express image" of God indicates the exactness of Jesus in displaying all characteristics of the Father. Third, Jesus' "upholding all things by the word of his power" speaks to His power to sustain or keep what He has created by His Word. Finally, the writer reminds the reader that once Jesus completed the task of purging the world of sins, He returned to His seat of power, majesty, and authority. In verse 4, the writer emphasizes that Jesus is much higher than any created being and has an excellent name that makes Him worthy of worship. The writer establishes the superiority of Jesus' identity and heritage in the question of verse 5, which emphasizes that not even an angel is privileged to call himself a son to God the Father.

**What Do You Think?** How do you explain the twofold nature of Jesus' identity as both the Son of God and the fully divine manifestation of God?

## **A Deep Heritage: Extensive (Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17)**

## **KJV**

**1** THE BOOK of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

**2** Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

**3** And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

**4** And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

**5** And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

**6** And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;

.....

**16** And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

**17** So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

#### **NIV**

**1** THIS IS the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

**2** Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

**3** Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram,

**4** Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

**5** Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse,

**6** and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife.

.....

**16** and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

**17** 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.

Matthew jumped into the writing in a respectful emphasis on Jesus' strong family history. His Jewish readers would quickly understand the initial phrase "the book of the generation" (verse 1) as one meaning deep heritage and family roots. The phrase is used in Genesis 2:4 and Genesis 5:1 as a connection to the creation of the world and the generations of Adam, respectively. Matthew was intentional in helping readers to know and appreciate the richness of Jesus' lineage. Verse 1 notes that He is the "Christ," the Anointed Messiah of God. It continues by identifying Jesus as the "son of David," a messianic statement, emphasizing Jesus as the promised King to sit on the throne of David forever. Finally, Jesus is introduced as the "son of Abraham," emphasizing Jesus as the fulfillment of God's covenant promise to Abraham that his descendants would be a blessing to all the families of the earth (see Genesis 12:3). Matthew anchored Jesus' introduction in the past, moving forward from the father of the faithful, Abraham. Matthew's presentation stands in contrast to Luke's, whose introduction of Jesus looks back through history, moving from Jesus to Adam and then to God Himself (see Luke 3:23-38). The first names in the list—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of Israel—are familiar to most Bible readers (verse 2). Jewish readers, in particular, would perceive the link between faith and family heritage. Jesus descended honorably from the twelve tribes and thus the whole Nation of Israel; and, specifically, from the tribe of Judah. Jews would recognize Judah as the royal tribe, the tribe of David. From there, in verses 3-6, Matthew presents a roll call of the generations to "David, the king." Other than King David, Matthew gives no one else a title until Jesus, who is noted as the "Christ" (verse 16). King David is the first within a royal lineage that spanned a thousand years under the care and loving hand of

God. This extensive, deep dive into Jesus' heritage closes with a confirmation of three sets of fourteen family names to solidify Jesus' connection to Jewish heritage and as a messianic identifier to the Hebrew people (verse 17).

**What Do You Think?** How important is family history today? (Discuss its spiritual implications.)

## **A CLOSING THOUGHT**

This unit deals with the beginning of the call of Jesus Christ. A review of Jesus' family heritage reveals Him to be the Son of God and rightful heir to the throne of David, as well as the fulfillment of messianic promise and divine grace. Everyone has a heritage. God has planted seeds of purpose in each person's life. Understanding your spiritual and family heritage will enable you to fulfill your God-given purpose. Everything in your family lineage has shaped you to become, to do, and to receive all God has planned for you, to the glory of God.

## **YOUR LIFE**

This week, take time to speak with family and church members to gain a better understanding of the richness of your family and faith history.

## **YOUR WORLD!**

This week, develop a plan for engaging others to research, acknowledge, and celebrate your community's heritage (e.g., neighborhoods, institutions, notable achievements, etc.). Suggest ways to publicize those plans.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Lord, help us to fully appreciate both our biblical and ancestral heritage. We believe that each of us has a calling that is enhanced by an understanding of our past. Help us to understand clearly, and show us the correct paths to take for Your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **CONCLUSION (PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON)**

While reading the Background Scripture, consider this thought: "How excited are you at the fact that God has called you to participate in a promise to be fulfilled?"

## **HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

*(December 7-13, 2020)*

Monday, December 7: "A Sign of God's Presence" (Isaiah 7:10-15)

Tuesday, December 8: "Called as Light to the Nations" (Isaiah 42:1-9)

Wednesday, December 9: "Called to Mission before Birth" (Isaiah 49:1-7)

Thursday, December 10: "Birth of Jesus Is Foretold to Mary" (Luke 1:26-38)

Friday, December 11: "Simeon Foretells Jesus' Ministry" (Luke 2:34-38)

Saturday, December 12: "Mary, in the Lineage of Ruth" (Ruth 4:9-17)

Sunday, December 13: "The Miracle of the Holy Spirit Conception" (Matthew 1:18-25)