

4. Matthew "names" Jesus

**Compare Matthew 1:23 and Matthew 28:20**

- a. With what name for Jesus does Matthew bookend his Gospel?
- b. What does that say to you about the writer of Matthew?

5. "So What?"

- a. What significance does Matthew's birth narrative have for you today?
- b. ...for the future?



NEXT WEEK:

LUKE'S OVERTURE

OUT WITH THE OLD; IN WITH THE NEW

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL



OVERTURES FROM THE (HOLY) GHOSTS  
OF CHRISTMAS PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

SESSION THREE  
MATTHEW'S OVERTURE PART II  
"MOSES, MYTH, & MIDRASH"

MATTHEW 1 & 2

FOCUS SCRIPTURE:

MATTHEW 1:18

"Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way."

[1] Neusner, Jacob (5 August 2014). Jacob Neusner, What Is Midrash (Wipf and Stock 2014), p. xi. Wipf and Stock Publishers. ISBN 978-1-4982-0083-7.

[2] Gafney, Wilda (2017). Womanist Midrash : a reintroduction to the women of the Torah and the throne (First ed.). Louisville, Kentucky. ISBN 9780664239039.

## VOCABULARY TERMS:

**Torah:** the compilation of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, namely the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In Greek, the Torah is referred to as the Pentateuch, or the Five Books of Moses.

**Midrash:** is expansive Jewish Biblical exegesis<sup>[1]</sup> using a rabbinic mode of interpretation prominent in the Talmud. The word itself means "textual interpretation", the root verb darash means "resort to, seek, seek with care, enquire, require". Midrash and rabbinic readings "discern value in texts, words, and letters, as potential revelatory spaces", writes the Hebrew scholar Wilda Gafney. "They reimagine dominant narrational readings while crafting new ones to stand alongside—not replace—former readings. Midrash also asks questions of the text; sometimes it provides answers, sometimes it leaves the reader to answer the questions."<sup>[2]</sup>

## CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

What is important to remember is what is happening at the time Luke's and Matthew's Gospels are being written. Remember, the Jews have lost their beloved Jerusalem, scores are slain, scores have fled Palestine. Followers of "the Way" have not instituted a new and different religion, but retain their Jewishness as followers of Rabbi Jesus, and remain part of the Jewish religion. Regardless, rabbis continue searching scriptures and maintaining rigorous rabbinic traditions, one of which is the Midrash. Popular in the first century is the theology of Rabbi Ishmael, focusing on the book of Exodus. This lesson's insert contains some of the pertinent and popular stories of the time; stories of their greatest prophet, Moses and Rome's first and greatest emperor, Augustus. Last lesson, as we discovered the significance of Moses in Matthew's overture, this lesson will delve into the actual aggadahs (legends or parables) used to illustrate Moses' story. Secondly, there is another parallel in Octavian Caesar Augustus's story, as well.

## STUDY:

### 1. Jesus' and Moses' Birth Stories:

#### **Read Matthew 1:18-25**

- What influence does all the information about a betrothal, a quiet divorce, and a remarriage have on the basic story?
- Would the story change if it were left out, and the narrative simply began with Joseph's dream?
- Why do you think Matthew includes it?

#### **Read Exodus 2:1-4; 6:20**

- Compare Exodus 2:1 & 4 with Exodus 6:20.
- What children are born to these two?

#### **Read Moses' Parents, "Jochebed and Amram" from the insert**

- What similarities do you see between Joseph's story and Amram's?
- What connection might Matthew's birth narrative be making with Moses?

### 2. The "bad guys"

#### **Read Matthew 2:1-8 and Pharaoh's Dream section of the insert**

- Who are the bad guys?
- List all the similarities between the two stories.

#### **Read Matthew 2:8-11 and the "But the poet Virgil..." paragraph**

- What connections are made between Jesus and Caesar?
- List all the Luke details that are absent from Matthew.

#### **Read Matthew 2:12-18; Exodus 1:15-22**

- What are the many ways God intervenes in both these stories?
- What other comparisons can you make between these two stories?

### 3. Conclusion of Matthew's Overture

#### **Read Matthew 2:19-23**

- Note where Matthew places Jesus in Roman history, v. 22. Compare that to the timeline provided in lesson 1.
- What was happening to make Joseph fearful of returning to Palestine?