

# In Between

## Monday December 15th, 2025

Scripture – Matthew 21:23-26 He had gone into the Temple and was teaching, when the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him and said, 'What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?' In reply Jesus said to them, 'And I will ask you a question, just one; if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting like this. 'John's baptism: what was its origin, heavenly or human?' And they argued this way among themselves, 'If we say heavenly, he will retort to us, "Then why did you refuse to believe him?", but if we say human, we have the people to fear, for they all hold that John was a prophet.'

Observation: The religious leaders asked about his "authority" because he had just turned over the tables of the money changers just outside of the temple. Jesus refused to answer their question directly since they were not willing to admit anything, challenging or obvious about John.

Narrative: It is common enough that when faced with a challenge we look for a way out or an explanation other than the obvious. We sometimes reject or dismiss the obvious because it directly challenges our own assumptions.

Question: When have you refused to admit or believe in the obvious to protect your view or opinion on something?

## Tuesday December 16th, 2025

Scripture - Matthew 21:28-32 "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I *will*, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They \*said, "The first." Jesus \*said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing *this*, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.

Observation: A continuation of Jesus' verbal sparring and confrontation with the chief priests and elders from yesterday. One must recognize that oral debate was the way of discussion and consensus building at that time.

Narrative: In the purity system that ruled Jewish religious life at the time, it would be an understatement to say that tax collectors and prostitutes were not only seen as despicable, but also impure, dirty, and largely beyond redemption. A system of "insiders and outsiders."

Question: Do we continue the "insider and outsider" approach still in the Church? Do you see that approach play out in other areas of your life? How do we reconcile such with Jesus?

## **Wednesday December 17th, 2025**

Scripture – Matthew 1:17 For brevity, look up the genealogy of Jesus in your Bible. The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to Christ. It is also in Matthew that women are also mentioned in the genealogy.

Observation 1: Placing the lineage in an orderly fashion by sets of fourteen, Matthew is making the point that the coming of Jesus was orderly and inevitable >> the Jewish history was predestined to reach its climax in Jesus, the Messiah. It follows a patriarchal and kingly lineage of Jesus, thereby a legal justification as Messiah for the Jewish people. If you wish to compare, Luke (Lk 3:23-28), is less structured in some senses, and follows Jesus' lineage from Adam, including many prophets, and thus Jesus is a prophetic figure for all people.

Observation 2: In including women, it shows that God can work through the “imperfect” as well, in God's goals for humanity >> we must remember that in 1st Century Palestine, women were thought of as less than, in a male dominated culture. Also, all the women in the Genealogy had their additional “imperfections” besides just being women.

Narrative: For Jews, for monarchies of the past and those today, what blood line you share is extremely important; your roots tell you not only something of who you are, but who you are destined to be, and what your legacy should include?

Question: Does your lineage as a Christian cause you to think about who you should be, how you should behave, and what your legacy should be?

## **Thursday December 18th, 2025**

Scripture – Matthew 1:19-20 Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit.

Observation: Upon waking from the dream, Joseph did take Mary into his home.

Narrative: Being an “upright man,” Joseph took a huge risk in welcoming Mary into his home. Being a small city/village at that time, the people of Nazareth would have knowledge of this “shameful” pregnancy and made it difficult for both Joseph and Mary > ”a black eye” for sure.

Question: Have you or someone you know taken a tough position, and then taken an even tougher position based on principle and love? How did it turn out?

## **Friday December 19th, 2025**

Scripture – Luke 1: 5-7 In the days of King Herod of Judaea there lived a priest called Zechariah who belonged to the Abijah section of the priesthood, and he had a wife, Elizabeth by name, who was a descendant of Aaron. Both were upright in the sight of God and impeccably carried out all the commandments and observances of the Lord. But they were childless: Elizabeth was barren and they were both advanced in years.

Observation: In the service to the Lord's Sanctuary, when all the people were outside praying, Zechariah would have a spiritual experience/angel visit concerning Elizabeth bearing a child in her advanced years > John, to be called the Baptist.

Narrative: The focus for me in this part of Luke's account is the fact that no matter how "upright in the sight of God" we might be, or how impeccably we apply our religious, moral, and ethical practices, it does NOT protect us from grief, pain, loss, or disappointment. A rosy life also has thorns as well.

Question: If you or someone you know has led an "impeccable" life, what has been your/their reaction to, and handling of, the difficulties of life?

## **Saturday December 20th. 2025**

Scripture – Luke 1:38 Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

Observation: The final statement of Mary during the spiritual vision/experience with the angel Gabriel.

Narrative: Whether in a moment or over a period of time, Mary was disturbed, fearful, questioning, and doubtful >> very human reactions to hearing news that would change the course of her life dramatically. But finally she accepted her destiny as a servant.

Question: Have you or someone close to you had to accept a radical change in life's direction? What types of emotions and stages did you/they go through? Was the inevitable accepted eventually? Would you characterize that acceptance as being a "servant"? Are there leftover regrets, disappointment, bitterness? > if so, how do you move forward in spite of them.

