

The Church of the Servant King

Home Bible Study

Survey of the Bible Series

The Gospel of Matthew

(Lesson SB-1)

Introduction to Matthew & Chapters 1-2 (Jesus' Birth and Childhood)

Author: The author is not named in the Gospel, but there are certain clues that all but name Matthew. For instance:

- External evidence – many early church fathers cited Matthew as the author in spite of the fact that he was not one of the more prominent apostles.
- Internal evidence:
 - There are more references to coins or money in this Gospel than in any of the other Gospels. Matthew was a tax collector. There are three terms for coins that are found nowhere else in the New Testament, i.e. the two drachma tax (17:24); a four drachma coin (17:27); and talents (18:24).
 - Matthew's hometown was Capernaum. When Capernaum is mentioned in this Gospel, it is given special attention with some type of description attached to it (4:13; 11:23).
 - The Gospel of Matthew omits the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector that is recorded in Luke 18:9-14.
 - The Gospel of Matthew omits the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who restored fourfold what he had stolen (Luke 19:1-10).
 - The writer of the Gospel of Matthew refers to himself in less flattering ways than do others. For instance, Matthew refers to himself throughout the Gospel as "Matthew the tax collector." But Mark and Luke do not use such contemptuous language when describing Matthew. (A tax collector was not a highly esteemed occupation, especially when the tax collector was a Jew as was the case with Matthew). Also, Matthew invited his friends to what he described as a "dinner" (9:9-10); whereas Luke called the dinner "a great banquet" (Luke 5:29).

Date of Writing: While the date of writing is not known, several clues give us an idea of a range of dates that might be possible. The Gospel of Matthew was written before 70 A.D. since Matthew made no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and he referred to it as the "holy city" in such a way as to imply that it was still in existence (4:5; 27:53). In addition, Matthew includes references to certain customs and stories continuing "to this day" (27:7-8; 28:15) so as to imply that some time had passed since the Crucifixion of Jesus. Therefore, a range of dates from 50-60 A.D. would have been possible. I lean toward an early 50's date because during the first two decades or so after the Crucifixion, the Church was largely Jewish in nature having obtained converts from Judaism. Evangelism was centered around the synagogue.

Recipients: All the evidence indicates that Matthew was writing to Jews in particular. Some of this evidence includes the following:

- No other Gospel places such great stress upon the restoration of the glories of David's kingdom.
 - He uses the Jewish royal title "Son of David" nine times in his Gospel.
 - He calls Jerusalem "the holy city" (4:5; 27:53) and the "city of the great King" (5:35) which are both uniquely Jewish ways of referring to it.
 - The phrase "kingdom of heaven" appears 33 times and the phrase "kingdom of God" appears 4 times.
- He has more quotations from or allusions to the Old Testament than any other New Testament author. There are approximately 50 direct citations from and about 75 allusions to the Old Testament. On 13 of these occasions, Matthew indicates that Jesus' actions were a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

- Matthew discusses the law, ceremonial cleansing, the Sabbath, the temple David, the Messiah, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, Moses – all from a Jewish point of view. There is no explanation of these references in most all cases. This indicates that Matthew expected his readers to already be familiar with such things.

However, this doesn't mean that Matthew restricts his Gospel to Jews. Similar to the manner in which believing Gentiles in the Millennial kingdom will pay homage to Jesus ruling from the throne of David, Matthew records the coming of the Magi (non-Jews) to worship the infant Jesus. He mentions the centurion with his great faith (8:5-13), and the Canaanite woman who had greater faith than Christ had seen in all of Israel (15:22-28). Matthew also gives a full statement of the Great Commission (28:18-20).

Major Theme: To prove to Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah and the promised King.

- His title "Son of David" (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:41-45)
- Genealogy in Chapter 1 emphasizes Jesus' Davidic lineage and His legal claim to the throne
- The magi, looking for a king, worship Him
- John the Baptist declares, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (3:1)
- The teachings about kingdom law are recorded to their fullest extent (chapters 5-7, 13)
- The triumphal entry of Christ where the crowds cried "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (21:9)
- OT prophecies of the Messiah are noted as being "fulfilled" in Christ's life and ministry (Matthew includes nine occasions where the OT is "fulfilled" – 1:22, 23; 2:15; 2:17, 18; 2:23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 27:9, 10).

Secondary Theme: To explain God's kingdom program to his Jewish readership and explain how it relates now to Israel and to the Gentiles.

- Distinguishing characteristics of the spiritual life of the believer in the Kingdom (chapters 5-7)
- Parables relating to the Kingdom in response to opposition (chapter 13)
- The Kingdom is offered to the Jews and rejected (e.g. 11:16-24; 12:25-30; 21:28-22:46)
- The Kingdom is postponed with its promises to be fulfilled at Christ's Second Coming (19:28; 20:20-23; 23:39; 24:29-31; 25:31-46)
- The prediction of a new and yet undisclosed administration, i.e. the Church (16:28)

Outline

- The King and His Kingdom are Offered to Israel (1:1-9:35)
- The King and His Kingdom are Rejected by Israel (9:36-12:50)
- The King Explains the Kingdom Program (13:1-53)
- The King Withdraws to Instruct His Disciples in Light of His Rejection (13:54-20:34)
- The King and His Kingdom are Officially Offered and Rejected by Israel (21:1-22:46)
- The King Proclaims the Fate of Israel's Religious Leaders (23:1-39)
- The King Prophesies Regarding the End of the Age and His Coming Again (24:1-25:46)
- The King is Betrayed, Tried, and Crucified (26:1-27:66)
- The King is Vindicated and Authenticated as the Messiah Through His Resurrection (28:1-20)

Chapters 1-2

Chapter 1

Verse 1 - Introduction

- Genealogies were very important to Jews.
 - They proved that one was a Jew (thus the need to trace one's lineage back to Abraham).

- They identified the tribe to which one belonged (thus established one's responsibilities and one's relationship to certain prophecies, e.g. Levites as the priestly tribe, Judah as the ruling tribe, etc.).
- Genealogies were rarely comprehensive and only traced a few lines of descent. Most followed the male lineage.
- Mentions David first before Abraham. Very important to understand why.
 - Jesus' legal right to the throne of Israel came through David (see 2 Samuel 7:12-13).
 - Joseph, Jesus' legal human father, was a descendant of David.
 - Jesus' right to be King of Israel is essential to His offer of the Kingdom to Israel which is a theme of the Gospel narrative.
 - Jesus' claim to be the Messiah is related to His legal right to the throne.
- David in Hebrew is DWD which consists of the 4th letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Da'Leth), followed by the 6th letter (Waw), followed by the 4th letter (Da'Leth). When summed, 4 + 6 + 4 = 14. Matthew's genealogy lists 14 individuals, three separate times. Some ingenious symbolism.
- It is necessary to mention Abraham to establish that Jesus was a Jew.

Verses 2-17 – the Genealogy

- To mention women in a Jewish genealogy is unusual. Five women are mentioned:
 - **Tamar** (v. 3) – See Genesis 38. After Jacob's sons had sold Joseph into slavery to the Midianites, Jacob's son Judah married a Canaanite woman identified as the daughter of Shua. Judah had three sons by this wife, i.e. Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er married Tamar, another Canaanite woman, but the Lord later killed Er because of his wickedness (Gen. 38:7). Onan refused to fulfill his *levirate* marital responsibilities (a custom later incorporated into the Mosaic Law in Deut. 25:5-10) and the Lord killed him (Gen. 38:10). Judah then refused to give Tamar to his other son, Shelah (Gen. 38:14), so Tamar eventually deceived Judah after his wife's death by pretending to be a harlot (Gen. 38:15-16). Judah eventually confessed the fact that Tamar had been more righteous than he had been for he had withheld his son from her as was her due (Gen. 38:26). Tamar conceived twins by Judah, Perez and Zerah. Perez is mentioned in the lineage of David in Matthew 1:3 and Tamar is also mentioned. Thus, **Tamar became a member of the family of promise even though she was a Canaanite and had played the harlot.**
 - **Rahab** (v. 5) – See Joshua 2. The first city to fall to the Israelites as they marched into Canaan was Jericho. Joshua had sent two spies into Jericho to reconnoiter the city in advance of the attack. It is likely that Rahab had resorted to prostitution to provide for herself after her husband's death since her husband is not mentioned. She was a believer in the God of the Israelites and her testimony in Joshua 2:8-13 not only provides evidence of that fact, but it also illustrates how the exploits of the Israelites were used by God to evangelize Gentile peoples. After the conquest, Rahab bore a child, Boaz, by Salmon (Ruth 4:21 cf. Matt 1:5). Thus, **Rahab became a member of the family of promise even though she had been a harlot and a Gentile because like Tamar she had demonstrated a righteous behavior and attitude toward the children of promise and their God, i.e. the Jews.**
 - **Ruth, the Moabite** (v. 5) – See Ruth 1:4. After the untimely deaths of Naomi's husband and Naomi's two sons while she and her deceased husband had lived in Moab to escape a famine in Judah, Naomi gave her two daughters-in-law the right to return to their own families as she journeyed back to Judah. One returned to Moab, but Ruth proclaimed her faith in the God of the Jews and of Naomi. God later honored that faith by providing for Ruth in her widowed status. Boaz fulfilled his levirate responsibilities under the Mosaic Law (Deut 25:5-10) and thus became a type of Christ as a kinsman-redeemer even though he was not the nearest relative (Ruth 4). Christ is the kinsman-redeemer of Gentiles even though He was a Jew and had a lineage separate from the Gentiles. So, **Ruth, a woman who as a widow was rejected and consigned to a life of oppression and hardship in ancient society, would be included in the genealogy of Jesus because of her faith.**

- **Bathsheba**, the wife of Uriah the Hittite (v. 6) – See 2 Sam 11:1-12:23. Bathsheba was not only an adultress, but she had participated inadvertently in the murder of her husband, Uriah, at King David’s command. Even though David confessed his sin, his first born son through Bathsheba would die (2 Sam 12:19). The next son was Solomon, through whom the promised Messiah would come. So, **Bathsheba, an adultress with David**, is included in Matthew’s genealogy as the mother of one of Israel’s most prosperous kings and wife of Israel’s most revered kings.
- **Mary**, the mother of the humanity of Jesus (v. 16) – Even though the virginity of Mary is unquestioned today by Christians who accept the Biblical account, such an idea was not only questioned, but explained away in Jesus’ day by those who did not accept His claim to be the Messiah/King of Israel. He was considered a bastard child, born out of wedlock by those opposed to Him.
- Therefore, Matthew included these women in the genealogy to demonstrate that Israel’s history was scattered with revered women who were tainted by sin and not of the Jewish race. All four of the women mentioned before Mary were either prostitutes, adulterers, or widowed. At least Mary was Jewish. All had been the recipients of the sovereign grace of God in spite of their sin. No doubt, they provided a great example for Israel to follow if she would only accept God’s gracious offer through Jesus.
- When the fifth woman, Mary is mentioned in the genealogy, an important change occurs. Up until Mary, the genealogy repeatedly consisted of the phrase, **the father of** someone. At this point Matthew changes and says, **of whom was born Jesus** in reference to Mary. The prepositional phrase “of whom” is a feminine relative pronoun (ex hs or ex es). The Greek construction clearly indicates that Jesus was the physical Child of Mary but that Joseph was not His physical father.
- Jeconiah (a.k.a. Coniah and a.k.a. Jehoiachin) succeeded his evil father to the throne of Judah shortly before the Babylonian captivity. Due to his evil character also, Jeremiah pronounces a curse from the Lord upon Coniah in Jeremiah 22:30 that this man should be considered as childless. Yet Jeconiah is included in the genealogy of Matthew and had seven sons (1 Chronicles 3:16-18). Is this a contradiction in the Bible? Answer: No. Jeconiah’s sons never occupied the throne, thus Jeconiah (Coniah) was treated as if childless. However, the legal right to the throne did pass through his sons. Jesus obtained the **legal** right to the throne through Coniah’s son, Shealtiel. Luke’s Gospel makes it clear that Jesus was a **physical** descendant of David through another son, Nathan while Jesus’ human father was a descendant through a lineage that traced back to David and included Coniah. Had Jesus been a **physical** descendant of Coniah, He could not have a claim to the throne.