

Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew

Call to Worship: Psalm 47

1st Scripture: Luke 3:23-38

2nd Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17

Hymn #689- *One Day!*

Hymn #26- *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*

Hymn #226- *Rejoice, the Lord is King!*

Introduction

Having finished our series on “the prayer life of Christ,” this morning, we embark on a new journey into the Gospel of Matthew. And as I generally do, when beginning to work through any Book of the Bible, I want to start off this morning, with an introduction to the Book, so that, we can enter into our study, with an understanding of some of the key themes and ideas that spring out of the whole of the Book. This will help us to look at the broader context, within which, our chapter by chapter, text by text, exposition takes place. And certainly, we will turn back to these key ideas and themes throughout our study, periodically pulling back from the trees, to once again, view them, in light of the whole forest.

And then finally, for this morning, we will make some important observations about the genealogy, here given in Chapter 1, which we will find, fits right into the main theme and purpose of the Book.

I. Thematic Considerations

1) We simply note that Matthew is the first, of what we like to call, the “Synoptic Gospels,” which consist of Matthew, Mark and Luke. We call these three Gospels, the Synoptics, because they are similar in various respects, especially in that they give us an historical record of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ, with several portions of overlap, often telling of the same events, but at differing angles and to serve each author’s unique purpose. Sometimes, recorded events are virtually identical, and other times, there are significant differences that help give us a broader and more fuller picture of any given event in the life of Christ. And so, without losing the intended purpose of each author, it can be very helpful, and we would be wise, when studying and considering any one of the Synoptics, to do so, in the light of what the others state, if the same event is found in either (or both) of the two

other Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel of John, of course, while sharing some of the same events (and also useful to these ends), hits things at quite a unique level, distinguishing itself in some profound (not contradictory, but profound) ways, especially presenting the clearest and fullest picture of the deity of Christ. And so, Matthew is the first of the Synoptic Gospels.

2) It is important to recognize that Matthew's Gospel is written primarily to a Jewish audience. Now, that doesn't eliminate its great relevance for us, but it does provide us with a critical lens, that will help us understand *how* to interpret and understand the Book, which in turn, will lead us to properly draw out relevant applications (for *us*) from it. If you lose the Jewish lens, you will misinterpret various portions of the Book, including (but not limited to) understanding the driving force behind the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount (given in Chapters 5-7).

Now, how do we know that Matthew was written primarily to a Jewish audience? Well, because the entire Book is steeped in attempting to show that Christ has fulfilled much of what has been prophesied in the OT, especially relating to prophecies that speak of the ministry and coming of the Messiah. Matthew, in many ways, is a gospel exposition of the OT. It is a lens that decodes and reveals Christ in the OT. Now, when you read Luke's Gospel, you will find that Luke is written primarily to a gentile/Greek audience? And how do we know this? At times, you'll find Luke explaining Jewish practices/festivals to his audience, of which, his audience would not have understood, because they were not Jewish. It is also significant to note that Luke's (who was a Greek gentile Himself) genealogy takes you all the way back to Adam and God, whereas, Matthew's (as we'll see shortly) brings us back to Abraham. And so, each author is clearly writing in such a way that would best speak to his audience.

Now, before moving into the key theme of Matthew's Gospel, let me give you a taste of its Jewishness, by showing how Matthew often takes pains to link the historical events surrounding Jesus's life and ministry, to OT Scripture and prophecy.

- a) Matthew 1:22-23. [Virgin birth, God with us]
- b) Matthew 2:5-6. [Born in Bethlehem]
- c) Matthew 2:14-15. [Called out of Egypt]
- d) Matthew 2:17-18. [Herod murders the children]

- e) Matthew 2:23. [Called a Nazarene]
- f) Matthew 3:1-3. [John the Baptist, forerunner]
- g) Matthew 4:13-16. [Light to the Gentiles]
- h) Matthew 5-7. [Sermon on the Mount, steeped in OT (*will explain)]
- i) Matthew 8:16-17. [Healing/Miracles ministry]
- j) Matthew 9:12-13. [Emphasis in mercy over sacrifice (*critical theme)]
- k) Matthew 11:10. [John the Baptist connection to Elijah; vs. 14]
- l) Matthew 12:7. [Mercy vs. sacrifice major theme reiterated]
- j) Matthew 12:15-21. [Discreet and gentle emphasis of Messianic role]
- k) Matthew 13:14-15. [Blindness and hardening of Jews]
- l) Matthew 13:34-35. [Use of parables, again blindness and hardening of Jews]
- m) Matthew 15:7-9. [Jewish error; legalism; non-heart religion/plasticity]
- n) Matthew 19:3-6. [Pharisaic misuse of the law, erroneous understanding of use of Law]
- o) Matthew 19:16-22. [Again, Jewish misuse of Law; gets to the heart (*big theme)]
- p) Matthew 21:4-5, 9. [Arrives at Jerusalem on a donkey]
- q) Matthew 21:13, 16-17. [Hypocrisy of Pharisees, Christ revealed to babes]
- r) Matthew 21:42. [Rejected by Jews; rejection of Messiah by Jews]
- s) Matthew 22:37-40. [Heart of the Law vs. plasticity]
- t) Matthew 22:43-44. [The Messiah is both from and greater than David]
- u) Matthew 23. [Exposes hypocrisy of, and judgment upon Pharisees]
- v) Matthew 26:31. [The Messiah to be killed, disciples scattered]
- w) Matthew 26:54, 56. [Betrayal and arrest of the Messiah]
- x) Matthew 27:9-10. [Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver]
- y) Matthew 27:35. [Garments divided..etc.]
- z) Matthew 27:46. [Psalm 22:1]

[Note: This is a quick span of the entire Book, but when factoring in, implications and overall themes, it is very clear that Matthew is written *primarily* to a Jewish audience, serving as a lens for understanding the Messianic message of the OT, the error of the Jews and the true nature of religion from the heart, which God is after.]

This then brings us to our next thematic consideration.

3) What is the primary purpose of the Gospel of Matthew? Let me leave you with three purposes, all of which, converge into one main purpose:

a) The first and most obvious purpose is to show that Jesus is, indeed, the Messiah. And as we've seen, at a glance already, Matthew goes to great lengths to accomplish this, by connecting the life, ministry and teaching of Jesus, to the OT Scriptures and some of the prophecies that He had fulfilled. To convince a Jewish audience of the authenticity of Jesus's Messianic calling, one could see how this would be absolutely necessary.

b) Matthew also goes to great lengths to unravel the hypocrisy of the Pharisaical traditions and the legalistic teachings, into which Judaism has evolved, contrary to God's true purpose of the Law. He knows that he must strip away the burdensome bands of Pharisaical Judaism, in order to drive his audience to what God is truly after (and the only means of attaining to what God is truly after, which is the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah/Christ). The Pharisaical understanding of the Law is a stumbling block to the Jews, because it presents a way of salvation; a way into God's favor, that is self-righteous/justifying (based upon one's own law keeping and good works). And as the Apostle Paul proved very clearly in Romans, this is a dead end. It is impossible, because we are all born with a sin nature that defiles everything that we do. And so, Matthew wants to lift away the stumbling block, so that the Jews will see their desperate need of Christ, to obtain the righteousness of God, so that, they might then live in a way which is pleasing to God, by faith (having a righteousness that is, therefore, greater than the Scribes and the Pharisees). [*This helps explain why the Jews, in general, rejected (and still reject) Jesus*]

c) Finally, in keeping with the first two points, Matthew puts great emphasis on showing how God is after the heart, and not simply outward obedience to the letter of the Law. "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," is a repeated theme, both directly stated and implied, throughout Matthew's gospel, and in fact, it is one of the keys to unlocking the Sermon on the Mount.

And so, we can "lump sum" these three purposes into one main purpose, which can be stated this way: Speaking primarily to a Jewish audience, Matthew exposes the great error of Pharisaical Judaism, pointing to the true religion of the heart that God is after, and the only way

to that true religion (and true righteousness), by forsaking the error of Pharisaical Judaism and embracing Christ as the true Messiah, in accordance with all that is taught in the *OT*.

This then should suffice to provide us with a general introduction to the Gospel of Matthew.

II. The Relevance of the Genealogy Provided Here in Chapter 1

Having this background and introduction in place, we can then grasp the main purpose for the genealogy, which Matthew records here in Chapter 1:1-17.

If Matthew is going to have any chance of convincing a Jewish audience that Jesus is the true Messiah, at the very basic level, he will certainly have to affirm his Davidic lineage. It was undeniable to any and every Jew that the Messiah must come from the line of David. Now, that doesn't mean that just because Jesus came from the genealogical line of David, that He is the Messiah. That's why there's more than one Chapter in Matthew's Gospel. However, whoever the Messiah would be, He **MUST** come from David's lineage, and so, establishing Jesus's genealogical connection to David is critically important and foundational, right from the outset, which is why Matthew opens His Gospel with a recording of this genealogical lineage of Jesus.

Now, you might say, "Isn't Jesus's connection to Abraham important, as well?" Of course, and the genealogy takes us back to Abraham as well, for that very reason, as we will see in a moment, but, if you can get to David, you automatically get to Abraham (no one would have dared deny David's connection to Judah, and then to Abraham and Isaac through Judah). But, establishing the connection to Abraham is also important, not to prove David's connection to Abraham, but rather, to remind them of the original promise given to Abraham, concerning his seed. This is why Matthew begins by saying in verse 1, "The Book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, *the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.*"

Matthew is about to make some very bold statements (throughout His whole Gospel), especially from a Jewish standpoint. And so, right from the outset, he labels Jesus as the Son of David and of Abraham, as if to say, "He is the true Messiah!" "The Messiah has arrived, and it is this Jesus!" The terms "*the Son of David,*" and "*the Son of Abraham,*" themselves, would have

been terms that the Jews would have used and known, to be referring to “the Messiah.” And then, the entire genealogy given here, is given, primarily to make that very connection.

And finally, in keeping with a common Jewish practice, Matthew provides a memorable equation, tying the coming of Jesus (the Christ) to two other historic time periods, providing an orderly sense of balance to the entire genealogy, as it is given. [Read verse 17]

III. Closing Thoughts

Let me just leave you with two closing thoughts, in light of what we’ve gone over this morning, before we conclude our time:

1) It is important to recognize that, in many ways, the New Testament Scriptures are an exposition of (or a commentary on) the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament does not replace or eliminate the Old Testament. Rather the New Testament provides us with a clearer gospel lens, through which, we can better understand the Old Testament. I say this, because, in our day, there is a significant devaluing of the importance and present relevance *for us*, of the Old Testament, that is taking place among some evangelicals. And that is disgraceful and tragic! Matthew, and not just Matthew, but also the NT writers as a whole, utilize the Old Testament as the primary foundation and resource, which enables them to write the Books of the NT. The NT authors never override or cast away the OT, but rather, they shine the light of Christ and the Gospel all through it, to explain the proper meaning of the OT. Both Testaments are One, and while certain practices of the OT have been fulfilled in Christ, even those fulfilled practices, find significant relevance and application in the New Covenant. Now, this will become clearer, as we work through Matthew’s Gospel, but it is worth stating this from the outset, because of the present dichotomy, that is sadly, often made, between the Testaments, in our day.

2) Finally, building on the first point, as Matthew shows in his gospel (along with the other writers of the NT), Christ is the main substance and subject of the OT. In the volume of the Book, it is written about Him. He is implied throughout, the main subject of prophecy, the central focus of the entire history of redemption, the substance of every promise and the fulfillment of every shadow, provided by direct revelation and historical analogy. He’s the promised Seed of Genesis 3, the true manna from heaven and the rock which provides water, as

pictured by the manna and rock in the wilderness, the substance to which all personal types point (Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samson, David...etc), the great redemption from sin, pictured in Israel's redemption from Egypt, the true voice of the Psalmist, the true Beloved from Song of Solomon, and we can go on and on and on. The entire OT belongs to Him, and is about Him and is for His glory, even as the NT is. And so, summing it all up, Matthew is about Christ, because the entire OT, from which he draws, is about Christ!

3) This gospel should be precious to both believers and unbelievers, providing encouragement to the former and hope of eternal life for the latter!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25