

Telling the Story-1 Matthew & Mark

How do you begin to tell the story, the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, the Messiah? We have four written narratives of the actions and teachings of Jesus, culminating in his suffering, death, burial, and resurrection-ascension. Each one is written by a disciple of Jesus. Two are apostles who accompanied Jesus for three years (Matthew and John) and the two others are written by close associates of apostles, Mark (Peter) and Luke who traveled with Paul and did historical research. These four present Jesus in the days of his flesh among people. We do have one who tells the story of Jesus' current ministry in heaven, namely the author of Hebrews. It is instructive to see how each begins to tell the story of Jesus. Now the story of Jesus is actual interpreted facts which have the power when received to connect people savingly to God. We refer to this as "the gospel". Paul writes in Romans 1:16-17, ¹⁶*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* ¹⁷*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

Matthew, the son of Levi, a directly called apostle, begins to tell the story of Jesus by giving a purposefully constructed genealogy tracing Jesus' family line to the God-called patriarch Abraham and the God-chosen King David. What is the significance of this? Matthew is pointing to Jesus as the fulfillment of the covenant promises made to Abraham and later to David.

Abrahamic Covenant / Promise

Genesis 15:4b-6 (NASB)

[God spoke to Abraham] "one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." ⁵ And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶ Then he believed in Yahweh; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 17:3-8 (HCSB)

³Then Abram fell facedown and God spoke with him: ⁴“As for Me, My covenant is with you: you will become the father of many nations. ⁵Your name will no longer be Abram, but your name will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings come from you. ⁷I will keep My covenant between Me and you, and your future offspring throughout their generations, as an everlasting covenant to be your God and the God of your offspring after you. ⁸And to you and your future offspring I will give the land where you are residing—all the land of Canaan—as an eternal possession, and I will be their God.”

Galatians 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.

Matthew points to Jesus as the Promised Seed of Abraham.

Davidic Covenant/ Promise

2 Samuel 7:11b-13,16

And Yahweh declares to you that Yahweh will build a house for you. ¹²When your days *are* full and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you who will go out from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ...¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.”

Acts 2:29-36

²⁹“Brothers, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: He is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Since he was a prophet, he knew that

God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing this in advance, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah:

He was not left in Hades,
and His flesh did not experience decay.

³² “God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this. ³³ Therefore, since He has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, He has poured out what you both see and hear. ³⁴ For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says:

The Lord declared to my Lord,
‘Sit at My right hand
³⁵ until I make Your enemies Your footstool.’

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!”

Peter’s point in his sermon on Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus’s resurrection and 10 days after his ascension back into heaven, is that Jesus is the Promised Son of David who is the King of the Kingdom. ***Jesus is great David’s greater Son!***

Matthew establishes for us Jesus’ credentials as the Messiah, the Promised Son of the covenant God made with Abraham, and the Son whom God promised to David. He is in his person and his work the fulfillment of these two foundation covenants. This is the reason that the title ‘Son of David’ occurs more frequently in Matthew than in the other Gospel narratives. It has been observed that Matthew calls Jesus “the Son of David” in his opening sentence and follows it up with a genealogy to prove it. Then he alludes to this title at least twice more in the infancy narrative, and records the title as related to Jesus during his ministry seven times in the mouths of others on five separate occasions. He brings his claim to a climax in Matthew 22:41-46 in the assertion that Jesus is King David’s greater Son and his Lord!

Paul tells how important Jesus’ identity is to the gospel in Romans 1:1-4

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

But Matthew also brings Moses and the covenant God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai into his gospel presentation. He does this in the summary sermon we call *the Sermon on the Mount*. As Jesus explains the depths of the law expressed in some of the Ten Words (i.e., the Ten Commandments), he prefaces each exposition with the words, "You have heard it said," followed by a law quotation and the words, "but I tell you." Thus, when he says, "I have come not to destroy the law but to fulfill it," he means that he keeps it completely and perfectly and thus brings it to its fulfillment. In truth he is the New Lawgiver, a greater than Moses because Moses and all the prophets spoke of and pointed to Him.

We thus observe that Matthew tells the story of Jesus as the fulfiller of God's covenants to Abraham, with the addition some 330 years later of the law covenant to Moses and Israel and the covenant to David.

When we turn to the Gospel presented by Mark, he too begins with God's prior revelation to the Prophets Isaiah and Malachi with a startling claim.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

*"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,*

³ *the voice of one crying in the wilderness:*

*'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"*

To understand the full implication, we need to turn to Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1:

A voice is calling in the wilderness, "Clear the way of Yahweh!
Make a highway smooth in the desert for our God! (*Lexham English Bible*)

"Look! I *am* going to send my messenger, and he will prepare *the way before me*. And the Lord whom you *are* seeking will come suddenly to his temple, and the messenger of the covenant, *in whom you are* taking pleasure—look!—*he is* about to come," says Yahweh of hosts. (*Lexham English Bible*)

Mark makes a bold assertion that Jesus is the unique Son of God. The messenger is identified as John the Baptizer who prepares the way for the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant. God says he will prepare for my coming. Thus, the One who comes is Yahweh himself in the person of the Son. There are two sections discernable in Mark. In chapters 1-8:30 Jesus is shown to be Mighty Messiah and Son of God, and the second section shows us the Suffering Servant of the Lord who redeems people through his sacrificial death. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

So these two gospel writers, Matthew and Mark, begin the story of Jesus from two different but related angles. Yet the overall goal is the same, to present Jesus to Jew and Gentile as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Deliverer and Savior of God's people everywhere.

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