

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW: Mt. 1:1

Today, I start out on a journey through the book of Matthew. Matthew bridges the gap between the OT and the NT. There are what are called “the four-hundred silent years” between the last of the OT prophets and New Testament Revelation, which bursts on the scene with the birth of Jesus Christ. It seemed like out of the blue this happened, but in truth, it was in perfect accord with God’s perfect timing.

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Before we get into Matthew 1, which presents the genealogy and birth of Christ, let us consider a little background on the book of Matthew.

Author: *Matthew* – also called *Levi*. Matthew means “*gift of the Lord*”. Matthew was a Jew who collected taxes from the Jewish people for the Roman government. His own people would have considered him a “traitor”. At the call of Jesus, he left all and followed Christ, becoming one of the twelve disciples/apostles.

Date written: (?) Many believe it was written somewhere around AD 50, and most conservative scholars believe it was written before AD 70 because the book seems to have been written from the perspective that the temple is still standing (cf. Mt. 24:2).

Purpose: To clearly present to the Jewish people that Jesus was, in fact, the promised and prophesied Messiah as foretold in the Old Testament.

Matthew’s target audience: Matthew’s gospel is Jewish in orientation, so it is replete with OT references containing more than any other NT writer apart from the book of Revelation.

A Synoptic gospel: Matthew is one of the Synoptic gospels, meaning that in many ways it is very similar to Mark and Luke. The 4th gospel of John is unique, being mostly its own material.

Matthew’s gospel gives more detail on the life of Christ than the other gospels. It also gives larger blocks of Jesus’ teaching than the others. And Matthew alone makes specific future references to the coming church (cf. Mt. 16:18; 18:17).

Matthew shows the credentials of Jesus the Messiah. It then chronicles His presentation to Israel and their rejection. Matthew also shows that one day Christ will come again. Until then, we need to be about obeying THE GREAT COMMISSION, which is how the gospel ends.

Theme: Christ the King

Properly understood, Matthew 1 presents Christ's human credentials and also His divine credentials to be the Messiah. He had to be both human and divine to meet ALL the criteria of OT prophecy. It all intersects perfectly in Jesus Christ, as Matthew will demonstrate.

Matthew 1:1 (NKJV)

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

This first verse serves as a sort of title for the genealogy seen in the first 17 verses, but it also serves to introduce the thematic idea that Jesus is of the royal lineage of King David – the Son of David, who fulfills the covenant promises. The theme of Jesus being the promised KING (the Son of David) is prominent in Matthew and is seen here in the very first verse.

Jesus is His historical/human name given to Him at the time of His circumcision (cf. Lk. 2:21). It corresponds to the name Joshua in the OT, and it literally means “**YHWH is salvation**”. Thus, it serves to define Him. Jesus is YHWH God who provides salvation. This is His name – His person – Who He is.

Christ is a Greek word that corresponds to the Hebrew word Messiah. It literally means “Anointed One”. Those anointed in the OT were set apart by God for a special purpose. Jesus is THE ANOINTED ONE – the most special One – set apart by God for the most important role ever. The term Christ is rooted in the OT and it designates the special promised Coming One who would come as both Deliverer and King.

“**Son of David**” is a Messianic designation recurring 10 times in the book (cf. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45). God promised David that a son of his would sit on his throne forever. God promised David an eternal throne and a Son to sit on it (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16). Jesus is the promised Son who will fulfill this promise that we commonly refer to as the “Davidic Covenant.”

“**Son of Abraham**” is a given since He is the “**Son of David**”. However, it makes a point. Abraham is the human father of the Jewish nation. It was to

Abraham that God gave the great Abrahamic Covenant involving land, seed, and blessing (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). Jesus is the One Who brings about the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham, which would extend blessing to the nations.

Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

"Jesus the Messiah came in fulfillment of the kingdom promises to David and of the Gentile-blessings promised to Abraham (cf. also Matt. 3:9; 8:11)." -**D.A. Carson**

Genealogical records today are not studied very seriously by the average reader. However, they are essential in establishing the claims of anyone who would claim to be the Messiah. Many assume that the genealogical records at the time of Christ were kept in the temple or some public place where they could be referenced.

"At the time of the Lord's birth, ample genealogical evidence was available to check a Hebrew's historical background. Such would be crucial in determining whether Christ had the necessary 'genealogical pedigree' to establish his ancestry. If these records were not available, any attempt to argue for the Lord's messiahship on the ground of Old Testament prophecy—at least pertaining to his ancestry—falls flat. The fact is, however, those genealogical records substantially vanished when the Romans slaughtered and/or dispersed the Hebrew populace in A.D. 70. Accordingly, no modern Jew [or anyone after 70 AD] could possibly argue that he is the promised Messiah, since he would be unable to establish his lineage from David." – **Wayne Jackson**

That is really quite profound to think about. Jesus had to be born prior to 70 AD to be able to prove His genealogical qualifications as Messiah. In the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD, all these official records were lost or destroyed. The timing of God sending His Son historically came just prior to this so that the truth of His genealogical records could be established. And those records were still available at the time Matthew was written in about 50 A.D. Indeed, in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son (cf. Dan. 9:25-26).