

The Gospel According to Matthew Matt. 1:1-17

Without controversy the appearance of Jesus Christ on the stage of history was the emerging of the most remarkable life that was ever lived. The modern ambivalence towards Him is more a mark of our modern superficiality than anything else.

- Men have lodged claims of divinity but they have all been received as so preposterous as to be immediately dismissed.
- No other pebble dropped in the pond of humanity has produced so great a ripple. Who else's arrival has made so great a stir as to become history's reference point? King was fond of saying, "Jesus split history into B.C. and A.D. so that even the life of the Caesars must be dated by His name."

Part of what fuels the modern ambivalence is our biblical amnesia. The Bible is the record of salvation history- the story of humanities fall and God's promised provision of redemption. This promise centers on and is embodied in Jesus Christ.

This is the only context in which Jesus can properly be understood and appreciated. As this biblical framework is forgotten so is the context in which Christ can be properly know and treasured. This is why all the gospels are so concerned to root the life and ministry of Jesus in this bigger context.

Matthew's gospel begins with a genealogical introduction of Jesus as God's King who comes in fulfillment of God's promises made to Israel on behalf of the entire world.

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I want to examine the genealogy itself as it's given in **Vv. 2-16** and then turn around and give attention to the introductory and concluding statements that brackets it.

1. **The Genealogy hints at the sovereignty and grace that saves. Vv. 2-16.** While I don't intend to open the genealogy in great detail **six features are** interesting and instructive regarding our salvation.
 - a. **It's a tale of sovereign initiative.** The genealogy begins not with a human quest but of divine initiative. God called Abraham in the aftermath of Babel.
 - b. **It's a tale of divine election.** The story unfolds along an axis that's defined "**not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.**"
 - i. **V. 2.** Matthew doesn't mention Abraham's other children.
 - ii. **Vv. 2-3.** Of Isaac, Jacob, Judah, & Perez none are eldest. All came into their position by a prophetic promise.
 - c. **It's a tale of amazing grace.** Though it unfolds along distinctively Jewish lines Matthew's includes four women. Two were originally outsiders. Of the four: 1 a prostitute, 2 adulterers, *all* lowly, despised.
 - d. **It's a tale of a promised king.** Various kings are mentioned but only David is so-called. It is of concerned at all with earthly reigns but with the fulfillment of God's promise of His own king.
 - e. **It is a tale of deliverance and preservation.** There is specific stress placed upon the captivity in Babylon. (**vv. 11-12**) There are two great reasons:
 - i. **The spectacle of their survival.** It is a wonder their identity was not entirely obliterated during that period as so often happens. This happens even under occupations and deportations that are peaceful. **Illustr. Hawaii, Egypt, Assyria.**

- ii. **The similarity of their deliverance.** It was seen as similar to the original deliverance and a type of the ultimate deliverance of the race.
 - f. **It is a tale of divine intervention.** This is the biggest surprise of all. Having come to Joseph, he is shockingly identified as **“the husband of Mary.”** The attention shifts to her **“of whom....”** The active verbs give way to a passive.
 - i. It is Joseph’s genealogy but he is not important as Jesus’ physical father but as legal parent.
 - ii. The reason for this mysterious shift is found in the virgin birth narrated in the next section.
2. **The opening words are intended to convey great salvation historical meaning. Note three things.**
- a. **The opening expression. “The book of the genealogy...”** It *lit.* is **“book of the origin”** a deliberate allusion to the formula found in **Gen. 2:4; 5:1**. It corresponds to or climaxes the original creative act. The original creation involved a *historical developmental* process; like wise the New heavens and New Earth.
 - b. **The title ascribed to Jesus. *Cristo, j*** isn’t likely a surname but a title. It means **“Anointed”**. The Hebrew term is *Messiah*.
 - i. **Anointing.** In the OT anointing was performed for the office of prophet, priest or king.
 - ii. **Messiah.** The OT promised a righteous servant who would be a prophet greater than Moses, priest after the order of Melchizedek and a king born of David but greater than David.
 - c. **The historical theological point of orientation.** The names signify more than the two most important people in Israelitic history. It links Him to the two great redemptive promises that controlled Israel’s history and shaped their hopes. Both were *rooted* in son-ship and *characterized* by disappointment.
 - i. **“The Son of David.”** God promised a son and a throne that would endure forever before Him. The story of Solomon begins well but ends in ruin. *Jesus comes as the descendant who overcomes Solomon’s failure.*
 - ii. **“The Son of Abraham.”** Abraham looked for a son who would be a channel of blessing to the nations. Isaac was born of divine power but characterized by weakness and failure. *Jesus is the Abrahamic son who realizes the promise.*
 - d. **The historical theological context of realization.** The three sets of fourteen have engendered much discussion. Clearly they are significant to Matthew because he only accomplishes it with great effort. There maybe a twofold redemptive significance.
 - i. **Sabbath Jubilee.** Dr. Meredith Kline suggests that Matthew sets us six sets of seven, that is, seven sabbath-cycles, which ends with Christ. This leads to the ushering in of the seventh, and final, sabbath-cycle through the person and work of Emmanuel, God with us.
 - ii. **Return from Exile.** The last cycle sets a context of captivity for the work of Christ patterning it on the promised return from exile (which itself was patterned on the Exodus).

Matthew is introducing Jesus as the great one promised in the pages of the OT.

Donald Hagner says the introduction, **“far from being simply the recitation of historical data for their own sake, is above all an artistically devised theological statement.”** Behind the highest and lowest points of Israel’s history God kept watch and fulfilled His promise. In the same way He guides the Church.