



Just a List of Names?

Series: Matthew: The King and His Kingdom

Matthew 1:1-17

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This is a gospel that was written, as you may have guessed, by the disciple Matthew who was himself a former tax-collector and traitor to the nation of Israel but who was redeemed and transformed by God's grace into a disciple of Jesus Christ and because of the writing of this gospel becomes a great friend to true, spiritual Israel.

This gospel of Matthew occupies a unique and vital place in the history of the early church. It was the favorite gospel of the early church. As the first gospel written, it was used for instruction in the life of Christ, for instruction in Christian living, for instruction in evangelism, for what it means to be the church. We are going to begin by seeking the answer to five important foundational questions: What is a gospel? What is the purpose of the gospel of Matthew? What are the major themes of the gospel of Matthew? Why start with a genealogy? And last...what do we learn from a list of names? So let's first answer the question:

What is a Gospel? We use the word gospel in different ways. We use the word "gospel" to refer to the content of message that we preach – the proclamation of God's gracious saving work in the person of Jesus Christ. That is one use of the word gospel and as the people of God, we love to declare it. But when we use the word gospel to refer to the Gospel of Matthew, for instance, we are speaking of a type of New Testament Scripture, a specific kind of writing. A gospel is the record of the life of Christ and of the work of God in Christ to bring about salvation for His people. A gospel is an inspire -- a book inspired by the Holy Spirit -- which records the works of God in Christ for the salvation of His people.

We need to understand that the Gospels are not biographies of Christ's life in the contemporary sense of the word. There are many details that are left out, stories that are not recorded, and conversations that did not get included in the record that Matthew wrote. Gospels are not a thorough and complete biography of the life of Jesus, but neither are they intended to be. The gospels are written, not to give us every detail of the life of Christ, but to

record the powerful and sovereign work of God to save sinners through the incarnation, the earthly life, the mighty acts and the suffering and death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. So the Gospel of Matthew is not a diary of the travels of Matthew and the disciples with Jesus through the dusty roads of Palestine, not a journal or a blog – it is an inspired book with a specific purpose. That leads to our next question:

What is the Purpose of the Gospel of Matthew? There are common purposes, I think, that all of the Gospels share in common. We can boil it down to three major headings. First, the gospels were written with an eye toward conversion.

1) Conversion: The gospels were not merely eyewitness reports intended to convey information. The gospels were not written to satisfy historical curiosity about the man, Jesus of Nazareth or to portray Jesus as a revolutionary or a dreamer or to win the sympathy or admiration of men and women. The gospels were written, in the words of Matthew 16:16, to demonstrate that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mat 16:16) The gospel of Matthew was written to bring people to faith in Christ, to clearly present the evidence that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of sinners and to call people to repentance and faith. Not only were the gospels written with an eye to conversion, but also with an eye to:

2) Instruction and Sanctification: We know that true saving faith evidences itself in fruit, in righteousness, in obedient living and pursuit of Christ. All of the gospel writers portray this reality. Salvation inevitably leads to personal righteousness and conformity to the image of God. In light of that truth, the gospels are all filled with instruction for the purpose of sanctification – growth in obedience to God and in conformity to the image of Christ. Last, all of the gospels were written for the purpose of evangelism.

3) Evangelism: The proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the known world. All of the gospels were used for evangelistic purposes. Immediately, in this first gospel, there is an evangelistic and missionary edge.

The unique purpose of the gospel of Matthew however, in contrast to the other gospels, was to show how true Judaism --the religion of the OT, all the commandments, the ceremonial and

moral law, the promises and the prophecies of God -- finds its fulfillment and comes to climax in the person of Jesus Christ. Matthew is concerned throughout this book to show that Christianity is the fulfillment and the proper end of true Judaism. One of the most striking examples of this is the repeated emphasis, by Matthew, on the fulfillment of prophecy in the life and ministry of Christ. He has a specific formula that we see as early as chapter 1 and verse 22: All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet – a formula that is repeated in various ways throughout the gospel. In fact, Matthew quotes from the OT 61 times as compared with 31 in Mark, 26 in Luke, and 16 in John. And it is not only the number of quotations from the OT, but the way in which they are used to apply to Christ and His mission. Running throughout this gospel is the thought that God is working His purposes out and the one way that in which that purpose can be seen is in the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus Christ alone. It is the bridge book between the Old and New Testaments and served well as a guide for those Jews who were saved to Christ from Judaism, as well as instruction for Gentiles coming to Christ in the Jewish roots of Christianity.

What Are the Major Themes of the Gospel of Matthew? The first and the overarching theme of entire gospel of Matthew is the truth that:

1) Jesus is the True Messiah, God's Savior-King. The fundamental theme running throughout this gospel is that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah. He is the only Savior and God's chosen and true king, not only of the nation of Israel, but of all the nations and of the entirety of the creation. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, like a divine spotlight, Matthew will shine the light of God's glory upon Christ and show Him to be the only One who can fulfill all the requirements of the prophecies of God. He alone will be shown to have the right and the might to reign as God's anointed.

2) The Kingdom of God/Heaven. In the gospel, Matthew will labor by the power of the Holy Spirit to emphasize the nature of God's Kingdom and the revelation of His rule. Matthew views the kingdom of heaven as coming in the person of Christ, that wherever Christ's kingly rule is acknowledged and embraced by faith, there is the Kingdom of God. Christians enter the kingdom, become children in the Kingdom and receive the kingdom by responding to Christ's kingly rule and surrendering to the King. Once we enter the kingdom by repentance and faith, we are reckoned to be sheep not wolves, wheat not weeds, good trees not bad. New birth leads to new behavior. So this is a kingdom that demands a new ethic rooted in the Kingship of Christ. But Matthew also presents the Kingdom as a kingdom that will continue to grow, a reign

that will progressively be visibly extended – I say visibly because God’s sovereignty extends to all of creation though it is not always seen – it is a kingdom that will progressively be revealed until the future consummation of the Kingdom when Christ will be fully revealed as Sovereign Lord and God will be all in all and His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. The Kingdom of heaven is a central theme of this gospel. Along with that, Matthew will take up the theme of the

3) The Church – The People of the Messiah. Matthew is the only one of the gospel writers to refer to the church by name. Though the actual word “church” appears only twice, the idea of the church is much more prevalent throughout the gospel. Jesus expected the continuation and expansion of his disciples into a distinct community– the church. Matthew envisions the church as the visible “first-fruits” of the Kingdom of God and for that reason, he includes instruction regarding true righteousness (the Sermon on the Mount), encouragement to persevere in the faith, warnings to be ready to meet Christ, instructions in prayer in chapters 6 and 7, warnings against false prophets and false Messiahs in chapters 7 and 24, discriminating between true and false disciples within the professing community in chapters 7, 13, and 22, the expectation of trial and persecution for the sake of the gospel in chapter 10, instruction regarding taking up the cross and following Jesus in chapters 10 and 16, as well as the proper approach to church discipline and relationships within the Christian community in chapter 18. Matthew is concerned that the church rightly reflects the present and future Kingdom and the rule of King Jesus. For that reason, Matthew was also concerned with the theme of

4) The Life of Discipleship. Matthew’s gospel is strong on discipleship. He is clear that to be a disciple of Jesus requires the repudiation of the old ways of living. He deals a death blow to no-Lordship salvation, the thought that someone can take Jesus as Savior with no submission to his Lordship. In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus said: (Mat 7:21-27) The point is this: Not everyone who names the name of Christ, who professes faith in Christ or even who hears the word of Christ will inherit the Kingdom of heaven – the key issue is receiving the Word of God, hearing the Word of God, being instructed by the Word of God, by faith and by grace building our lives on the Word of God and thereby doing the will of the Father who is in heaven. It is for that reason that Matthew includes in his gospel five major sections of teaching from Jesus Christ encompassing chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18, and 23-25. Discipleship is of great concern, the expectation of true salvation. Salvation demands discipleship: Then Jesus told his disciples, (Mat 16:24-26)

5) Anti-Pharisaism. Matthew records the confrontations of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ with the Pharisees with clarity and precision. We see very quickly the divine displeasure and judgment upon false professors of godliness and particularly the Pharisees. Jesus saves his sharpest rebukes for the self-righteous, the self-exalting, the hypocritical and the self-magnifying. Matthew chapter 23 is an insight into the indignation, disdain, and judgment of Christ against such people. This is not “nice” Jesus. This is true Christ who is concerned for true godliness and real faith.

6) The Judgment to Come. More than any of the other gospels, Matthew contains significant teaching concerning the end of the age and the coming judgment. Chapters 24-25 deal exclusively with such themes as the signs of His coming and the close of the age, the rise of false prophets and false christs, the great tribulation and coming of Christ at an hour and a time that no-one knows, the parables to watch and to be faithful and ready for His return and the final judgment. (Mat 25:31-34)

7) The Universality of the Good News. The gospel which is considered to be the most Jewish of them all and in which Jesus tells his disciples in chapter 10 as he sent them out in ministry: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (Mat 10:5-7) – nevertheless ends with Jesus triumphantly commissioning the disciples to make disciples of all the nations -- (Mat 28:18-20) This indicates the universal nature of the gospel call to repentance and faith in the only Savior Jesus Christ.

So these are the major themes that we will be seeing developed for us as we preach through the gospel of Matthew, themes that impact every area of our lives. This will be a richly theological and immensely practical series which brings us then to the big question in light of this text that we have read today:

Why Start with a Genealogy? Why, if Matthew is going to deal with all of this great stuff, would he begin this gospel with a genealogy, with a list of names? Well, I want you to remember that this is a book serves as a bridge from the OT to the NT, that shows that Judaism finds its fulfillment and its true end in the coming of the Christ. We see the goal of this genealogy

expressed in the very first verse of the chapter: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

(Mat 1:1) Now we have to be careful not to miss the forest for the trees. It would be easy to get distracted with all of the names and all of the stories behind the familiar names that we see here. The point of the genealogy is not to highlight every person that is listed in it and tell of all of their exploits. You can do a study on most of the people in the line and I encourage it, but the point of this genealogy is to show that it comes to its completion with Jesus. He is the goal of it. This genealogy sets Jesus of Nazareth in the context of what God has been doing to redeem His people from the earliest days. The climax of God's saving work for mankind throughout the centuries is Jesus. Genealogies were very important to the Jews – it was vital to them to be able to establish lineage for all sorts of reasons – inheritance, who could serve as a priest, what tribe you were from, just all sorts of things. Genealogy played an important role in Israel and by beginning with the ancestry of Jesus, Matthew is establishing Jesus' place in Israel's history. He is concerned to demonstrate very clearly and to offer proof from the very beginning, by way of his genealogy, that:

Jesus is the Rightful Messiah – the King of Israel and the Savior of the Nations. He does this by calling him: Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. The name Jesus is the Hebrew name Yeshua and it means "Yahweh is salvation" or "Yahweh saves". The angel who came to Joseph, Jesus' stepfather had told him -- (Mat 1:20-21) The point underlying all of the names that are given in this genealogy is that Jesus has come to be the Savior of his people, to save them from their sins.

(Psa 130:7-8) In His incarnation, Jesus came to deal with sin because that is our greatest need. Our

We can see that just in the names that are listed here. We can see the depravity and sin as we look at the kings that are listed here. Starting with David in verse 6, he lists several of them in a row from David to Jeconiah. But looking inside that royal line we see that not all of the men were so righteous. About half of them were men of faith – some of them like David, Hezekiah, and Josiah were notable in that regard. Still even among the believers there were striking sins. We all know about David and Bathsheba. Hezekiah in a foolish display of pride showed the treasures of Israel to their enemies who would later plunder them (2 Kings 20). Jehoshaphat in weak faith, at the end of his reign, entered into alliances with wicked men – (2 Chronicles 20). After years of successful and prosperous reign, Uzziah became proud and dared to usurp the

place of a priest and entered the Lord's temple to burn incense on the altar and God struck him with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26). And these were the good kings beloved.

Half of these kings were grossly wicked men. Ahaz worshipped the pagan gods of Assyria, practiced human sacrifice, killed one of his own sons, stripped the gold and silver from the temple, and defiled the Lord's altar. Rehoboam and Jeconiah were almost as bad as Manasseh. Scripture says in 2 Kings 21:9: Manasseh led them astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel. (2Ki 21:9) This genealogy points to their very clear need for a Savior and Jesus is that.

But even more, Matthew presents Jesus as the Christ. Now I want you to understand something. In the way that we speak of Jesus we call him "Jesus Christ" as if his first name is Jesus and his last name is Christ. In our speaking of Jesus, Christ has become his last name – but that is not the way that the word "Christ" was originally used. Originally it was a title for the Messiah. As a title, it simply means "anointed one." To be anointed was to be set apart and empowered by God for the task that he appoints. In Israel, priests and kings were always anointed, and some prophets were as well. In Jesus' day, "Christ" or "Messiah" came to signify a specific king to come from God, one anointed with God's strength to deliver the people. They expected that the Messiah would be a king who would deliver the nation of Israel from her enemies by military force. One of the books of that day, the Psalms of Solomon said it like this:

See, Lord, and raise up for them their king,

The son of David, to rule over your servant Israel

In the time known to you, O God.

Undergird him with strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers,

To purge Jerusalem from Gentiles

Who trample her to destruction. (Psalms of Solomon 17:21-22)

As Messiah, Jesus is the one appointed by God, anointed by God, equipped and empowered by God and sent by God for a far greater victory than that – a victory that he accomplished by

taking all three of the main leadership offices of Israel. He is king, anointed to defeat the greatest foes – sin and death. He is the priest, anointed to offer a sacrifice to finally and forever remove the penalty of sin from believing sinners. He is the prophet anointed to proclaim the true way of righteousness and salvation. Jesus is the Savior who is the Christ, the Lord.

The Son of David, the True King of Israel. What Matthew is meaning to do by calling him the Son of David is to establish his right to the throne of Israel showing how, on the side of his step-father Joseph, Jesus descended by human accounting from the royal line of David. But there is even more to it than this. Matthew is not just saying that Jesus is in the line of the kings but his point is something far more. In calling Jesus by the title of “Son of David,” Matthew is meaning for us to see that not only is Jesus a King in the line of David, He is in fact the end, the climax, the culmination of the Davidic line. He is the fulfillment of God’s promise made to David in 2 Samuel chapter 7: When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When (literally if) he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2Sa 7:12-16) God repeated the promise in Psalm 89: 34-37.

Matthew’s point is that none of these promises ever reached their fulfillment until the birth of Jesus, the final Davidic King, the one of who Isaiah had prophesied saying: (Isa 9:6-7)

This becomes even clearer when you understand the manner in which this genealogy is constructed. Matthew does something here that is rather interesting. Matthew’s genealogy is divided into three sections, each consisting of 14 generations by Hebrew accounting. In order for Matthew to achieve this order, he had to omit some names that would normally be there and repeat some. It’s not an issue because the Greek term (rendered “the son of”) refers to one’s descendants, who might therefore be sons, grandsons, great-grandsons, etc. Why did he do it like this – as a series of 14, 14, and 14? Here’s a little insight into that arrangement. In Hebrew, there were no numbers like we have numbers. Letters were assigned numeric values. Taking the consonants that are used to write David’s name – there are no vowels in biblical Hebrew – if you take the consonants – in English D, V, D – and you add them together you get $4+6+4 = 14$. In a very subtle way, Matthew is reminding us by using this device to order the

genealogy that this line terminating in Christ is fulfillment of the line of David. The line of David finds its climax in Christ. There are no more kings to come; He is the eternal King in David's line – there is no one after Him, a truth that is made clear by the fact that there are no descendants listed after Jesus. He is the final fulfillment, the eternal Son of David.

Let me just say one other thing about this. Matthew shows us that Jesus is in the line of the kings of Israel by virtue of His adoptive father, Joseph. But that is not all that is required of a king. Not only does he have to be in the line of the kings, the line of succession, even by adoption, but he must have Davidic blood running through his veins. And to top it all off, it has to be Davidic blood that does not come by way of the last king listed here – Jeconiah. Why is that?

Jeconiah was the king under whom Judah was taken captive into Babylon for seventy years. Because of Jeconiah's wickedness, God had placed him under a curse in Jeremiah 22. He is there referred to as "Coniah"; and God speaks through Jeremiah in that passage and says, (Jer 22:24-30)

God had made the promise to King David that his "throne" would be "established forever"; and so because Jesus was to be King, he had to be in the line of the kings, in the line of Jeconiah. But because of the curse that had been placed on Jeconiah and his line, the Davidic kingship had effectively come to an end. If he were born of the lineage of Jeconiah, he would have been born of a lineage that was prevented from ever sitting on the throne again!

How God solved this great problem is an astonishing work of His sovereignty that further shows the uniqueness of Jesus the Christ. If you look at Matthew's genealogy, you see that Joseph was born from David in the lineage of David's son Solomon that went through Jeconiah. He was of the kingly line but was prevented by God's curse from being a king. But there is another genealogy of Jesus found in Luke, a genealogy that is traced down to Joseph from the lineage of Joseph's father-in-law Heli. Though it has been disputed in recent years, the historical view is this: Matthew gives us the royal lineage of our Savior through Joseph, and Luke gives us the actual physical genealogy of Jesus through Mary. And Mary was born from David in the lineage of another of David's sons - Solomon's brother Nathan (Luke 3:31).

Solomon's descendants were the sons of David that held the right to be king because Solomon, of all the sons of David, was the king. But because of Jechoniah, Solomon's physical offspring were under a curse that prevented any of them from ever sitting on the throne. Nathan's descendants were the descendants of David that were not under a curse. But since Nathan had not become king, none of his physical offspring possessed the rights of royalty. And so, God, in wisdom beyond words, ordained that Jesus our Savior would be born as a full Son of David - physically born of the lineage of David that was not under the curse by being conceived in the womb of His mother apart from the agency of a man; but also then inheriting the full rights of royalty through the royal lineage of David, without inheriting the curse, by being adopted by Joseph. Jesus is the only one who would be the True King of Israel and only by the miraculous and marvelous sovereign work of God. Not only does Matthew mean for us to see that he is

The Son of Abraham -- The Seed in Which all of the Nations Would be Blessed. Of course if Jesus is the offspring of David, he must be the as well the offspring of Abraham – that's a no-brainer. But that is not the point that Matthew is making and if you have been with us on Wednesday night, you can probably guess where I am going with this. Abraham had begun his life as a pagan. But God, by sovereign grace, chose Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees in order to create through him the nation of Israel. When God called him out of Ur, he promised him: (Gen 12:2-3; 17:4; 22:18)

Just as Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to David, He is as well the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. He is the Seed, the true Son of Abraham through whom all of the nations would be blessed. He is the fulfillment of the promise of an offspring, a seed that would bless the nations. It is through His incarnation, sinless life, sacrificial death and resurrection that a new nation – a holy nation – the redeemed of the Lord from every tribe and nation and tongue – a multitude have become the children of Abraham, the father of the faithful who believe in God.

Matthew wants us to know that Jesus is the only Savior, not only for Israel, but for all of the nations and he makes that crystal clear by the women whom he includes in this genealogy – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and the wife of Uriah the Hittite – at least three of them are Gentiles – Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth and it is possible that Bathsheba was as well. At any rate, what we discover by comparing the genealogy in Matthew with the one in Luke is that Jesus not only had Jewish blood, but Gentile blood running through his veins as well. Beloved, what Matthew

wants us to see so clearly in this genealogy is that Jesus is the Rightful Messiah – the King of Israel and the Savior of the Nations.

What Do We Learn From This List of Names?

1) The genealogies are important because they prove to us that God works providentially and sovereignly through something over which no one but Him has control - that is, the people from whom other people are born.

2) God's purposes are unassailable – no sin of man can derail the sovereign purpose of God. The genealogy is filled with sinners, yet it produces the Savior King.

3) Jesus the Christ, whom Matthew introduces here, is utterly unique and how you respond to Him will determine your eternal destiny. As the unique Savior-King, He deserves unique worship.

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