

In The Beginning

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1 NKJV).

Context

Who, What, Where, When and Why

Who: This Gospel written by Matthew also known as Levi. His name means the gift of Yahweh. He was formerly a tax collector working near the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum at a route where traffic passed between Damascus and the Phoenician seaports. He was called by Jesus Christ to be one of his 12 closest disciples known as apostles.

What: Matthew's aim is to tell his countrymen about the historical Jesus of Nazareth who also is the long-awaited deliverer, the Messiah, the one whom God's people have longed for over centuries. His is a historical-theological narrative designed as something of an apologetic concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Where: As far as we know, Matthew was from Galilee and remained in Galilee and Judea throughout his ministry. The events Matthew writes about all took place in and around Judea and Galilee.

When: Matthew lived and ministered in the early first century. We do not have information concerning the time of his death. Although many think the gospel of Matthew has a later date, it is most likely he it was written sometime before A.D. 70 and the closure of the old covenant age.

Why: During Matthew's lifetime there was a great expectation concerning the appearance of the Messiah. Matthew wrote his gospel to convince his countrymen that Jesus is truly the Messiah. He is the one they had been waiting for. He sought to present Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises to his people.

Content

What was the original author concerned with and what did he want his original audience to understand. Furthermore, how would the original audience interpret it.

Matthew reveals his intention in the first sentence of his gospel. He says this is the record of the genealogy - or the genesis - of Jesus the Messiah son of David the son of Abraham. Matthew is talking about a new creation. He is talking about a new reality that has come into being with the advent of the kingly son of David who is not a true Israelite. Indeed, he is *the true* King and *the true* son of Abraham – the true Israel.

The genealogy that follows is designed to grab the attention of the audience and impress them with the splendor of Jesus family tree. Matthew takes great pains to show that Jesus is the descendant of King David. He is careful to define Jesus as a true Israelite, a son of Abraham. The stylized structure of the genealogy (edited and sorted into sections of 14

names) is designed to enable the reader to easily remember, in fact memorize, the family tree of Jesus the Christ.

Although Matthew's primary audience is the Jewish people, he also intends to show the family established by Jesus Christ is open to all races. Thus, Matthew mentions certain members of Jesus' family tree that are not Israelites but are foreigners – some with rather dubious character qualities.

Finally, the first verse of Matthew's account and the genealogy that follows are designed to show Jesus' actual genealogy is that he is the son of God. In other words, Matthew could have simply said this is the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of God and then skipped to the part where Joseph enters the picture. Of course, that isn't all that Matthew wanted to do; that is why we have the stylized genealogy.

Consideration

What are the principles found here and how do they apply to the modern Christian?

The Bible has a lot to say about a new creation. Not just in the New Testament or in Paul's letters. The Mosaic dispensation turned the eye of God's people to the concept of a new creation in the rituals of cleansing. The prophets characterize the emergence of Israel as a nation as a new creation and later spoke of a new heaven and a new earth wherein God's people would dwell. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all turn our thoughts toward a new reality – a new creation with the opening lines of their respective Gospels.

Scripture tells us all things are made new in Jesus Christ. The old things have passed away. We are a new creation and have a brand-new start in Jesus.

And Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God's intention for his people. Truly, all of God's promises are yes in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). Moreover, he is the reigning King of the universe. At the end of Matthew's Gospel Jesus is recording as saying that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him. Therefore, he is our King and master. This is why he told us if we call him Lord we should do what he says (Luke 6:46 – 49).

In addition, Jesus is the true son of Abraham. The apostle Paul says he is *the* seed promised to Abraham. Not only that, in Jesus we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Therefore, all of the promises made to Abraham are given to us. And according to the Bible, Abraham was promised the entire world (Romans 4:13).

Finally, Matthew, like Mark Luke and John, intend to tell us the genealogy that matters is that Jesus is the son of God. As such, all of the family described in the genealogy is caught up and realized in the Messiah. So, the only way to be a child of God is to be in Jesus. The only bloodline that matters is the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Study Questions

1. *What was the purpose of the first line in a manuscript in the first century world?*
2. *What was the nature of the first century Jewish "exile?"*
3. *What is the chief way modern Christians participate in the covenant promises of Abraham?*

If you would like input on your answers to the study questions you may message me through myFaithBase.com or email me at mfb@davidericwilliams.com