

Matthew: On Earth As It Is In Heaven

The King Has Come * Matthew 1:1-17

Well, we have had a great day, haven't we? We've had baptisms, and the choir singing, some great corporate worship, and hopefully it's going to get even better as we open God's Word together. And so right now I am going to say a phrase that I will say many times in the days ahead, a phrase that I have been looking forward to saying for many months. Are you ready? Can you sense the anticipation? Take your Bibles and turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew. Today we begin a brand new series entitled "On Earth As It Is In Heaven" from the very first book of the New Testament. I have to tell you that I am excited to be back to preaching through an entire book. It was good and necessary for us to study the topic of discipleship over the past few months, but my preferred method for preaching is to go verse by verse through books of the Bible, and Matthew is going to give us the opportunity to do that for a good long time.

Introduction

Now, I have two things to try to accomplish this morning. First, I want to give you an introduction to the book and set the stage for the entire series. And then once we have laid this important groundwork, I will attempt to teach through the first 17 verses of chapter 1. As you can see this means we have a lot of work to do, so let's get busy. I will start by giving you four things you need to know in order to understand this book.

1. The book of Matthew is a Gospel.

Number one, the book of Matthew is a Gospel. I recognize that at this point you might be thinking, well, of course it is, that's what the heading of my Bible says - "The Gospel According To Matthew." But what does that actually mean?

Well, the word "gospel" means good news, and specifically refers to the good news about Jesus Christ. So, we can say that this book is the good news about Jesus Christ according to Matthew. This book is about the words and deeds of Jesus Christ during His time on earth. If you look in the very first verse of chapter 1 it says *the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ*. The word "book" means *record* or *account*. So, this is a record or account of the person (who He is), and the work (what He has done) of Jesus Christ.

Of course, there are three other Gospels, three other accounts of the life of Jesus - Mark, Luke and John. And you might wonder why we have four separate accounts. The reason for four accounts is that the Gospel is like a diamond. When you look at a diamond from different angles you see different aspects of the diamond. The diamond

doesn't change in any way, but how you see it does. And that's what the Gospels do for us. They show us different aspects of Jesus' words and deeds. This means that each of the Gospels have different emphases.

For example, the Gospel of Mark emphasizes the fact that Jesus is the suffering servant. A key verse in Mark is 10:45:

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45 ESV)

In Luke the emphasis is on Jesus as the Son of Man. Luke repeatedly uses this title to emphasize Jesus' humanity. A good example is Luke 19:10:

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10 ESV)

In John the emphasis is on Jesus as the Son of God. In fact, here is how John summarizes his Gospel:

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31 ESV)

And here in Matthew we will see the emphasis is on Jesus as the Sovereign King. Matthew uses the title King 22 times, more than any other book in the New Testament. And he does so to clearly articulate that Jesus is the King and what it means to submit to His rule and reign.

2. The book of Matthew is written by Matthew the Apostle.

The second thing you need to know about this book is that it was written by Matthew the Apostle. It is the account of Jesus' life through the eyes of one of His 12 disciples. To be honest we know very little about Matthew other than that he was a tax collector. And most of what we know about him we find in chapter 9. In fact, take your Bibles and turn quickly with me to Matthew 9. Look at verse 9:

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. [10] And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. [11] And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] Go and

learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:9-13 ESV)

This passage gives us some insight into how tax collectors were viewed in 1st century Israel. They were even more despised than the IRS today. At the time that Jesus was born, Israel had been under Roman control for around 60 years. And one of the worst forms of Roman oppression was the system of taxation, a system that was relentless and ruthless. To make matters worse, those who collected the tax were allowed to keep as profit whatever they could collect above the tax amount set by the government. And since most of the tax collectors were citizens of the country they were collecting in, they were hated not only as extortionists but also as traitors. Therefore, they ranked with the lowest in society and were ostracized in many ways, including from many synagogues and even from the Temple. That is why the Pharisees couldn't understand why Jesus would associate with such people.¹ But Jesus not only associated with Matthew, He also invited him into His inner circle and gave him the privilege of writing one of the four accounts of His life.

3. The book is written to a Jewish audience.

The third thing you need to know about this book is that it was written to a predominantly Jewish audience. Specifically, it was written to Jews who were Christians or were considering becoming Christians. This is why Matthew spends two whole chapters detailing Jesus' origin. Family heritage was a big deal to the Jews and so Matthew wanted to clearly spell out for his readers who Jesus was and where He had come from. But not only that, he wanted to make it clear that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, what His messiahship would be like, and what it would mean to follow Him.

At this point I would like to take a moment to highlight the three groups of people that we will come across in Matthew. Three groups of people with three different responses to Jesus, the same three responses that people have today. The first group is the religious leaders who outright reject Jesus. The second group are those who follow Him as long as it is comfortable and He gives them what they want, but who fall away when the going gets tough. And then there is a third group who gives up everything and follows Him no matter the cost. And so right here, right now in the introduction to this series I want to lay out for you the biggest question that will come from this series. Every single one of us has to decide which response we will give to Jesus. Will we reject Him? Will we casually follow Him until the going gets tough? Or

¹ MacArthur, p. x-xi

will we give up everything and follow Him no matter what the cost? Which one will it be for you?

4. The structure of the book is a mixture of stories and teaching.

The fourth and final thing that you need to know about this book is that it is a mixture of stories and teaching. In Matthew, more than any of the other gospels, Jesus' teaching is front and center. Over the coming months we are going to have the privilege to study the greatest sermons that have ever been preached. Not my sermons, but Jesus' sermons. I am particularly looking forward to the most famous one of all, the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5-7. All told, there are five major discourses in Matthew, surrounded by stories that help to illustrate and drive home the points of Jesus' teaching. Each of these five teaching blocks ends with Matthew penning the words "When Jesus had finished these sayings..." which indicates that Matthew is moving from a teaching section into a narrative section. So be looking out for that.

Overall what we will see through the structure of the book is that Matthew weaves together a beautiful picture of the life of our Savior in word and deed, in His actions and in His teaching. And I have to tell you; I believe that it is going to be fantastic. Throughout most of church history this Gospel has been held to be the most important. In fact, one commentator says that Matthew is the most important book ever written. And perhaps we will feel the same way once we are done.

Genealogy

All right, let's now turn our attention to the text. Matthew 1 has two parts, a genealogy and the announcement of Christ's birth, what is known as the annunciation. This morning we are going to take a look at the genealogy and next week we will study the annunciation. Now, I recognize that I may have just lost a number of you by saying that we are going to study a genealogy. I realize that it's easy to look at the first 17 verses of Matthew 1 and wonder what could possibly be of interest here. It just looks like a bunch of names, most of which you can't even pronounce. But bear with me for a few moments, because I have to tell you there is more here than you can begin to imagine. In fact, there is more in these 17 verses than we even have time for today. And you really need to stick with me as we go through this, because there is something at the end that you don't want to miss. Hang on for that. So, while I am not going to read the entire passage for fear of putting you to sleep, I do want to show you five things that Matthew is trying to show us in these 17 verses.

1. Jesus is the Savior.

The first thing that Matthew wants to show us is that Jesus is the Savior. Look at verse 1:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham.

Let's talk a little about Jesus' name. Jesus is the Greek form of the name Joshua, which means *Yahweh saves* or the *Lord is salvation*. Matthew wants his audience to get right from the beginning that Jesus has come to save His people from their sins.

In fact, look at what the angel tells Joseph in verse 21:

She [Mary] will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ESV)

I want you to listen to me carefully church. This right here is what Christmas is all about. As we enter in the Christmas season and all the hustle and bustle and gifts and food and parties and shopping, let's not forget what Christmas is all about. It's not about Santa Claus and it's not about getting together with family and it's not about giving and receiving gifts. Christmas is about the fact that God came to earth to save His people from their sins.

2. Jesus is the Messiah.

The second thing that Matthew wants us to see in this genealogy is that Jesus is the Messiah. I think sometimes we get confused and think that Christ is Jesus' last name. Like Jesus is his first name and Christ is his last. However, Christ isn't a name but rather a title. It means *anointed one*. Jesus is God's promised Messiah who has come to deliver His people. Now this is where understanding that Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience comes in handy. You see, the Jews had read in the Old Testament Scriptures for thousands of years that one day God was going to send a Messiah to deliver His people. But by the time of Jesus' birth many had lost hope that this was actually going to happen. For more than 500 hundred years the Jews had been under the rule of foreign nations. Much of this time it had been an extremely oppressive rule. Worse yet, God had been silent for a long time. It has been 400 years since the completion of the Old Testament Scriptures. And then bam, out of nowhere, right here in the very first verse of the New Testament, Matthew gives the news that the long-awaited Messiah has arrived, and His name is Jesus.

3. Jesus is the Son of David.

The third thing the genealogy points to is that Jesus is the Son of David. This is actually the focus of the entire genealogy. Matthew's main objective in these 17 verses is to show that Jesus is the rightful heir to David's throne. In fact, there is an up and down trajectory to the entire genealogy, with the Davidic kingdom being the high point throughout. You can actually break down the genealogy in this way:

Verses 2-6 show how Israel ascended to royalty from Abraham to David.

Verses 7-11 show how Israel loses royalty from Solomon to the deportation to Babylon.

Verses 12-16 show how Israel regains royalty through the birth of Jesus.

Now, to see the significance of this I want to take you to a few Old Testament passages. The first is 2 Samuel 7. King David has just finished fighting his many wars and Israel has entered a time of peace. And so David decides that it is time to build a temple for the Lord. But the Lord says, no you are not going to do that. The temple is Solomon's to build. Instead, the Lord enters into a covenant with David. He makes David a huge promise, a promise that altered all of history. Notice what 2 Samuel 7:12-13,16 says:

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. [13] He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. [16] And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. (2 Samuel 7:12-13,16 ESV)

Now, there is a sense in which this offspring is referring to Solomon. But it has to go beyond Solomon, because in verse 13 and 16 God says He will establish David's kingdom forever. You see, David would eventually die. And Solomon would eventually die. But God promised that their kingdom would endure forever. But how is that possible? We know that Israel as a nation was divided not too long after this was written. And we can even see in Matthew 1 that there was a major deportation. And at the time of Jesus' birth Israel was living under Roman rule. So, how in the world is David's kingdom going to endure forever?

To answer that, let's take a look at another Old Testament passage. To be honest, we are simply going to scratch the surface this morning. There are many passages that we could look at. It's all over the Old Testament. But let's go to a very familiar one, Isaiah 9:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [7] Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV)

Isaiah is prophesying that there is going to come a day where a child will be born, a child who will sit on David's throne from which He will rule and reign forever. And here in the very first verse of the New Testament Matthew is announcing that Jesus is this one. Jesus is the promised seed. He is the promised Messiah. He is the long awaited eternal King of Israel. He is the heir of David, the one who will rule and reign forever.

Now, not only is He the Son of David, but He is also the Son of Abraham; which is the fourth thing Matthew wants us to see.

4. Jesus is the Son of Abraham.

By the way, I hope you recognize that we aren't even out of verse 1 yet. Do you see why it's important not just to breeze by these genealogies? In fact, let me take a moment to address our view of the Bible here at Harmony Bible Church. We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Verbal means that every single word of the Bible is inspired by God. And plenary means that the entire Bible is inspired by God. This means that all of the words in this book are God's Words. And since they are all God's words, they are all important. They are all necessary. All of them have something for us. And we are certainly seeing that today.

Ok, back to the text. Jesus is the Son of Abraham. What is the significance here? Well, let's go to the Old Testament one more time. Let's go to Genesis 12. In Genesis 12 God says to a pagan named Abraham:

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. [2] And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3 ESV)

Here we have God making another covenant. He makes a covenant with Abraham to bless him and through him to fulfill a global purpose to bless all the nations on earth.

When we put this together with Matthew 1:1 we see that the blessings comes through Jesus Christ.

Let me try and make this connection a little clearer for you. And this is absolutely huge. In Genesis 12 God promises that He is going to bless all the nations of the earth. Brothers and sisters, this includes you and me. We are part of the nations here. Thousands and thousands of years ago God promised that He was going to bless us. When he says this to Abraham in Genesis 12, He has you and me in mind.

And the way that He brings this blessing to us is through Jesus Christ. Here is what Galatians 3 tells us:

*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." [9] So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
(Galatians 3:8-9 ESV)*

In Galatians 3:8 Paul quotes Genesis 12 and says that when God made the promise to Abraham He was preaching the Gospel to him. This means that God knew that the Gentiles would one day be justified by faith; in other words, would be blessed by God. And the way that they would be blessed would be through faith in Jesus Christ. Do you see how all of this ties together?

In Genesis 12 God says that He will bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham. And the way that He does so is by sending Jesus Christ, a Son of Abraham, to die for the sins of the world. And the nations receive the promised blessing by faith in Him.

By the way, this sheds new light on the way that Matthew ends his gospel. We all know it right? In the final verses of this book, Jesus tells his disciples to do what? He tells them to go and make disciples of all nations. The way that the nations receive the blessing that God promised thousands of years ago is by you and I going and telling them of the offer that God makes to bless them. You see, Matthew starts and ends with God's plan to bless the nations through Jesus Christ.

5. Everyone needs a savior but no one is beyond saving.

The fifth and final thing that Matthew wants us to learn from this genealogy is that everyone needs a savior but no one is beyond saving. Let me explain what I mean.

I think that Matthew is trying to show from the genealogy that even the greatest people who have ever lived couldn't save themselves. Consider some of the names in

the list. Abraham, Isaac, David, Solomon, Joseph, and Mary. Most of them incredibly wealthy. All of them used mightily by God. All heroes of the faith. And yet they could not save themselves. Therefore, one of the things that we need to realize as we read Matthew 1 is that if these people couldn't save themselves, then we can't either. Let me press this a little because I have a real concern for some of you. My concern comes from the many conversations I have with people where I ask them where there hope is for eternal life. And all too often I get the response, "well I try to live a good life", or "I try pretty hard", or "I am a pretty good guy". I am afraid that way too many of us are trusting in ourselves for salvation. We are trusting in our inherent goodness. We are trusting that our good deeds will outweigh our bad. But let me say gently to you, that doesn't cut it. It's really hard to live a better life than Abraham or Isaac or Joseph or Mary. I mean, Mary was chosen to give birth to the Son of God. She was favored enough to be given the privilege of being the mother of the Son of God. And yet she still needed a savior. Her good works didn't earn her salvation. And if they didn't earn her salvation, ours won't either. Every single one of us needs a savior.

But that said, the genealogy also shows that no one is beyond saving. And this is just a wonderful truth that if you skim over this passage you will completely miss. So, let me try and point it out to you. There are some names on this list that you wouldn't in your wildest dreams think you would find. Specifically, there are five women that are mentioned in the genealogy. This is unusual because women are almost never included in biblical genealogies, and if so, they are included to ensure the purity of the line or enhance its dignity.² However, it seems as if Matthew is doing almost the opposite. Let me tell you, some of you think that you have a crooked family tree. Well, you have nothing on Jesus. Let me show you.

Look at verse 3. Matthew records the fact that Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar. Now on the surface this doesn't seem to be any big deal until you find out that Tamar wasn't Judah's wife but rather his daughter-in-law who posed as a prostitute in order to deceive him into fathering a child for her. So, there is incest in Jesus' family tree.

Verse 5 says that Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab. And for those of you somewhat familiar with the Old Testament, the name Rahab should ring a bell. Do you remember who Rahab was? She was a prostitute who hid the Israelite spies in Jericho. One of Jesus' great-great-grandmothers was a prostitute.

² Frederick Dale Bruner. Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1: The Christbook, Matthew 1-12 (p. 9). Kindle Edition.

Verse 5 also tells us that Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth. The same Ruth that the Old Testament book is named for. The Ruth who was a Moabite. Moabites were known for their sexual immorality and at one point in the Old Testament were banned from Israel for 10 generations. One of Jesus' great-great-grandmother's came from an incestuous, banned, sexually immoral, pagan people group. Are you beginning to see an underlying theme here? Well wait, it gets better.

Verse 6 tells us that David was the father of Solomon by, well the sin was so heinous that Matthew doesn't even mention her name. He simply says it was by the wife of Uriah the Hittite. You remember her name as Bathsheba, the woman David committed adultery with and then to cover it up had her husband murdered. So there is adultery and murder in Jesus' family tree. Your family doesn't look so bad does it?

And of course, there is one more woman mentioned. A woman that is held in honor by us but would have been looked down upon by those in her day. She was a poor teenage girl from a backwoods town in the middle of nowhere who would become pregnant before she was married. Not exactly the lineage you would expect for the Son of God.

Now, to make some sense of this it's helpful to understand that Matthew does not give a full genealogy here. There are lots of names and entire generations that he leaves out. His point in this genealogy is not chronology. Rather, he is trying to get something else across. But what exactly is it? Why does he include the most notorious affairs in Jesus' family history? I mean think about it. If you were going to detail your family's history you would probably try to focus on the high points. Grandparents, and aunts and uncles and cousins who were famous and left a good legacy. But Matthew seems to go out of his way to include the most embarrassing elements of Jesus' family line. Why?

Frederick Bruner in his commentary on this passage answers it this way:

One gets the impression that Matthew pored over his Old Testament until he could locate the most questionable liaisons possible in order to insert them into his record and so, finally, to preach the gospel even in his genealogy.³

And that's what the genealogy is about. It's about the gospel. The good news that no one is beyond saving. The good news that God's grace is for everyone. For prostitutes, adulterers, murderers, and "good people" like you and me.

³ Frederick Dale Bruner. Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1: The Christbook, Matthew 1-12 (p. 9). Kindle Edition.

Martin Luther wrote that God intended for those who read this genealogy to say “Oh, Christ is the kind of person who is not ashamed of sinners – in fact, He even puts them in His family tree.”⁴

You see, I think the biggest thing that this genealogy tells us is that no matter how great we have sinned, Jesus is a greater Savior. That no matter how we have failed or what black marks we have on our record, Jesus will accept us and save us from our sins. He will take our pain, and our hurt, and our messed up lives and make us new. He will add us to his family tree. And he will do it willingly and joyfully. Not only that, but He will use us greatly to further His purposes here on earth.

The author of this Gospel knew this, didn't he? Matthew, the hated and ostracized tax collector knew from firsthand experience that Jesus came to save sinners. He came to seek and to save the lost. And aren't you thankful that He did?

Now, before we are done, I'd like to go one step further. And I want to do so by quoting Martin Luther one more time. Luther followed up his quote about the family tree with this:

*Now if the Lord does that here, so ought we to despise no one...but put ourselves right in the middle of the fight for sinners and help them.*⁵

I want you to know brothers and sisters that one of my greatest desires for Harmony Bible Church is that we would be people who fight for sinners the way that Jesus does. That we would be a church who welcomes people of every background and problem and sin with open arms. That we won't be afraid to get our hands dirty but will be willing to be a church that is a little messy. That our community will view us, in part, as a hospital for broken and needy souls. That people will be comfortable walking through our doors because they know this is a place where they will be loved. That we will be willing to speak the truth and call sinners to repentance, but that we will do so out of love and humility for the purpose of seeing people restored to a relationship with God. That out of our understanding of what Jesus has done for us we will be willing to do the same for others. You see, everyone is in need of a savior, including you and me, but no one is beyond saving, including everyone in our community and world.

⁴ Ibid, p, 11.

⁵ Ibid, p. 12.

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