

# The Credentials of the King

📖 Matthew 8:1-11:1

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If you were confused after last week's lesson don't worry about it. As I mentioned, you're supposed to be a little confused. Certainly John the Baptist was a little confused. As long as you understand that Jesus is the King and the kingdom is 'at hand' and being legitimately offered to the nation Israel then you're in a good position. This is what so many fail to understand and consequently they confuse Israel with the Church. What we have to grasp is that as far as the OT Jewish worldview was concerned in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, they expected that during Daniel's fourth kingdom, the little horn, would come and exert his authority and persecute Israel but that the Son of Man would break into history and rescue them, establishing the eternal kingdom. That's their worldview and that's the way they were looking at it. They didn't know anything about a Church. The Church was a mystery until Jesus first mentioned it in Matt 16:18 and that's quite a while from where we are in the earlier chapters of Matthew. At this time the kingdom was still 'at hand' and the offer was still on the table!

We move to Matthew 8 tonight and this takes us into a new section so let's review. What is the one word that summarizes the character of this book? Jewish. Matthew is so Jewish it hurts. You have to virtually become a token Jew to understand Matthew. From the Davidic genealogy right at the start we see it is Jewish to the core. From the words and expressions we see it is Jewish. From the lack of clarification of Jewish customs we see it is Jewish. From the high number of OT quotations relative to the other gospels we see it is Jewish. So there is abundant evidence throughout that Matthew intended his gospel to be read by Jewish believers. And from earliest times these observations have convinced commentators that it was written to Jewish believers.

Why? Why would Matthew write a gospel to Jewish believers? Surely Matthew didn't sit down one day and say, "Hmm, I'd like to write a book about x." It's my opinion that the NT authors sat down to write their books in order to meet a need. That's why you write a book; because there's a need. What need could Matthew be addressing? Some need of Jewish believers. When did he write? When did these Jewish believers live? Scofield says as early as AD37. I don't see it that early but I do see it early, about AD50. What was going on in AD50? The Church had formed 17 years before in AD33 on the Day of

Pentecost. Who formed the nucleus of the Church as it began? Jews. The Church on the day of Pentecost was 100% Jewish. What need are they going to have when they get back to their Jewish ghettos throughout the Mediterranean world? To explain to their Jewish kinsmen that Jesus is the King. What is going to be the chief objection by all their Jewish kinsmen in all the Jewish ghettos? Still the chief objection even today! "If Jesus is the king where is His kingdom?" And therein I think we find the key to the purpose of the book. Matthew doesn't tell us explicitly his purpose. Sometimes a NT author tells you his purpose. Luke tells you he set out to write a chronological account. John tells you he wrote to evangelize. Matthew doesn't tell you. He just writes. So how do we know Matthew's purpose? We consider the time it was written and the need those addressed might have and then we read to see how the book might meet that need. The time was AD50, the need was for the early Jewish believers to answer the objection that if Jesus were the king then where is the kingdom; we read and find what? *That Jesus has all the credentials of the king but the nation Israel was not spiritually prepared to receive her king and therefore rejected the king. In light of the rejection the kingdom program has now been put on hold and in the interregnum there is this new thing, the Church. After the Church Israel will repent and the kingdom will come.* Matthew is a transitional book. It explains why there is a transition. Acts is a transitional book too. It describes the transition. But Matthew is the most important NT book because it explains why there is going to be a transition. Israel rejected her King. In light of that, transition now to a heretofore unknown entity called the church. This gives us the overall structure for the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew in chapters 1-11 is presenting Jesus as the King. Matt 12 the rejection of the king. Matt 13-28, the postponement of the kingdom.

What shows that Jesus is the king in Matt 1-11? He has the credentials of the King. Let's review the credentials so far. In Matt 1:1-17 what credentials does Matthew put forth? He has the genealogy of the King. Jesus is a lineal descendant of David through Solomon via Mary. What credentials in Matt 1:18-2:23? His birth fulfills prophecy related to the King. Jesus is virgin born, in Bethlehem of Ephrathah, comes out of Egypt following the pattern of the nation and grows up in the despised town of Nazareth. In Matt 3:1-12 what credentials? He is preceded by a prophet. A prophet always precedes a Jewish king. Jesus is preceded by John. What credentials in Matt 3:13-17 at the baptism? Jesus is divinely approved by God in heaven. A voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." What credentials in Matt 4:1-11, the temptations? He has the character of the king. He's impervious to temptation. Temptable but impervious to the temptations. What credentials in Matt 4:12-17, the beginning of His ministry? He follows royal protocol of the king, allowing the forerunner to complete his work before coming out publicly. What credentials in Matt 4:18-25? He has the authority of the king. He calls His disciples to implicit obedience. He is going around teaching in the synagogues and preaching the kingdom is at hand and healing every kind of disease. He is gaining popularity and large crowds are following after Him. There's a momentum building at this point. You want to see that Jesus

was initially very popular with the people. What credentials in Matt 5-7? He has biblical orthodoxy, certainly a necessity for the king. He's a true teacher of the Law in contrast to the false teachers. He makes prophecies of what's to come relative to their response to Him. What credentials do we see introduced in Matthew 8-9? The authenticating miracles of the king. If the king is really the king then what must he be able to create? Kingdom conditions. What is the kingdom like in the OT? How is it characterized? As a time of harmony between God, man and nature. What do the miracles show? That Jesus is able to bring in those conditions right here on earth. This is why premillennialism is the only view that makes sense. Jesus' miracles do not show that He can reign in heaven; they show that He can reign on earth. He is able to heal from disease, He is able to control nature, He is able to cast out demons. These are all things He did right here on planet earth. So He is showing that He is able to do all the things necessary to establish the kingdom on earth. So now do you see Matthew's purpose in writing these early chapters? He's presenting Jesus with all His Kingly credentials. And that's the purpose with the miracles too. Jesus didn't just do the miracles to be a nice guy. Jesus did the miracles to authenticate that He is the king because He has the ability to bring in the kingdom conditions right here on earth.

Now, before we get into it note the structural marker in Matt 7:28. This is a structural marker that Matthew uses five times, word for word in the Greek, to mark the end of a narrative-discourse section, "And it came about when Jesus had finished..." We find Matthew writing those exact words (*και εγενετο οτε ετελεσεν ο ιησους*) in 7:28, 11:1; 13:53; 19:1 and 26:1. Each one comes at the end of a discourse. Matthew is structured by selecting narrative relative to his argument in order to set the context for a discourse and at the conclusion of each discourse he writes those words. So in 8:1 we are entering a new narrative that will set the stage for the discourse in 10:1-11:1. Matthew is most well-known for his discourses. He gives us more of Jesus' teaching than any other gospel writer.

Now so far Matthew has been chronological. Everything from His genealogy through His birth, through His early life in Nazareth to His baptism by John, His temptations, the beginning of His public ministry in the Galilee, His calling of His disciples and early teaching have all been chronologically arranged up to this point. However, in this section, by comparisons with Mark and Luke, we find that Matthew has not arranged this material chronologically. This chart shows this and I've given you this chart so you should have it. Carson says, "Matthew does not purport to follow anything other than a topical arrangement, and most of his "time" indicators are very loose. This does not mean that Matthew's arrangement is entirely haphazard but that it is governed by themes."<sup>1</sup> So this section is thematic. That's what you want to catch. There's more here than just the miracles. Yes, the miracles all authenticate that Jesus is the King but Matthew has selected particular miracles and linked them together in order to teach a truth. How are they linked together? There are three groups of miracles. Matthew likes to group things. Remember how he grouped the genealogy into three groups of fourteen? He is known to group things

together. Here he has three groups of miracles. A group of three, another group of three and then a group of three or four, depending on how you take it. Under some of the miracles there are other miracle(s) viewed within the frame of the one primarily in view. But in the main there are three + three + four miracles, which equals a total of ten miracles. Each of the three groups is organized to teach a thematic truth. So the first three have a theme. The second three have a theme. The third four have a theme. What those themes are is highly debated.

To familiarize ourselves with some of the miracles, let's look at J. D. Kingsbury. Kingsbury was a Roman Catholic and he sees Matt 8:1-17 as Christological because 8:17 closes with a quote from Isa 53, "He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases." From that he took it that the healing of the leper, the healing of the Centurion's servant and the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, followed up by the quote from Isa 53 as all indicating a Christological emphasis. Matt 8:18-34 he saw as discipleship. The scribe that wants to follow him and another disciple and in both he challenges their priority system and what it costs to be His disciple. Then in Matt 9:1-17 he sees separation as the theme. The new wine doesn't go into old wineskins and that he says shows the need for Jesus' followers to separate from mainstream Israel, that these can't blend together. In the last section, Matt 9:18-34 he sees faith as the theme and faith is how you separate from mainstream Israel. So the way he sees it develop thematically is that in light of Christology, discipleship is demanded and discipleship will require separating from Israel and that separation is made on the basis of faith. So you can see how he is arguing thematically through the section and I'm just sharing this with you to get you acquainted with the section. I don't think his outline does justice to the text. It's forced, it's not natural, and it leaves some things out.

D. A. Carson is more inductive in his approach. He feels it's much more complex and there are many themes interwoven. He sees an emphasis on faith, discipleship, the Gentile mission, a diverse Christological pattern, all tied up with examples of His healing ministry. This is interesting to look at in terms of our approach because we can see these emphases too but what's missing? He lists a tapestry of themes; faith, discipleship, the Gentile mission, diverse Christological patterns. But what's not there? Why is there going to be a Gentile mission? What about the kingdom context? Why is there going to be a Gentile mission? Doesn't that relate to the kingdom offer being rejected by Israel? Yet Carson doesn't give the slightest attention to Israel's kingdom context. Why doesn't he do that? Carson isn't a dispensationalist, you see, and what do non-dispensationalists fail to see? Distinction between Israel and the Church. In all their writings you just see this blend. What you don't see is that the kingdom was being offered to Israel and in light of the predicted rejection the doors would open up to a Gentile mission. That would open everything up. He sees the Gentile mission but he doesn't see why. All he can see is salvation. That's another mark of non-dispensationalists. They see there is a Gentile mission so that Gentiles can enter into the one people of God, the true Israel, spiritual Israel which is the kingdom now. It's all a blur but what does this do the biblical covenants, the Abrahamic? The Mosaic? The

Davidic? It just washes them and all the earthly promises within them out? And in place of all that they inject this idea that all those who believe are just entering into this spiritual kingdom called heaven.

Now that downplays the entire thing that is happening here contextually. We're dispensationalists and that means that we put a high priority on context. Literal, grammatical-historical interpretation within context. And what this method yields when it's applied consistently is that the biblical covenants are describing a future earthly kingdom for Israel. But all that just gets washed out when you think solely in terms of salvation. You hardly read anything in non-dispensational writings about a future Israel on earth. They're all penned up around questions of salvation and there's a reason for that. That's their unifying approach. There's just one people of God and everything else is ancillary to that. We shouldn't get drawn into that. We should develop doxology as the purpose of history, the glory of God which finds its pre-eminent manifestation when? In the kingdom. So they are called Covenant Theologians but we're the real covenant people because we're the only ones that look at these covenants as literal covenants that culminate in a kingdom. Why do we insist the covenants are literal? Because they're contracts. Covenants are contracts and contracts have to be interpreted how? Literally. You can't put metaphor in a contract. Imagine your mortgage contract just being metaphorical. That's nonsense. So Carson's approach is right in mentioning the Gentile mission but it's weak because it's not framed within the kingdom and covenant context provided by literal hermeneutics. I see those as all intimately tied to one another. The literal hermeneutics give rise to the covenants promising a kingdom and the covenants as Israel-centered with Gentiles coming in to be partakers of the rich spiritual blessings provided by Israel's Messiah.

Now we come to Toussaint and you already know I like him. He's a dispensationalist and so he puts a high priority on the context. He sees that the miracles are not arranged by chronology and so he says it seems that Matthew had a thematic purpose for arranging them in the way he did. So he suggests that we try and find that purpose by looking at what? The context. Dispensationalists always go to the context. What's the context? The kingdom. Now I admit that this is not easy to see and most people just go in here and look at the miracles and they see no rhyme or reason to the miracles other than Jesus is being compassionate or showing His power or that He is God or something like that. That stuff is included, no doubt, but that doesn't account for why Matthew diverted away from his chronology. He's been giving us a straight chronology and later he's going to return to his chronology. That ought to leave you wondering, why all of a sudden did he depart from chronology when everything else he writes is chronological? There has to be a rhyme and a reason. This man isn't just randomly sticking stuff in here. He's making an argument.

Toussaint is trying to understand the miracles within Matthew's argument. What's Matthew's argument? The king has come and the kingdom offer to Israel is on the table but the kingdom offer is

going to be rejected and a mission to the Gentiles is going to open up only to be followed by a final restoration of Israel. He's trying to see these miracles as thematically related to and supportive of this argument. Let's see what he does with the first group in 8:1-17 and I like his arrangement but what I've done is refined a few things. So keep in mind that this is generally what Toussaint says but I've adapted it at points. If you want to see exactly what he says you'll have to reference his commentary. Basically he says that the first three miracles are Christ's healing relative to the kingdom program. What's the first miracle in 8:1-4? The cleansing of a Jewish leper. What's the point? Christ could cleanse the nation Israel if they would only come to Him. But they reject Him so what's the second miracle in 8:5-13? The healing of the Gentile centurion's servant. What's the truth? That the gospel would go to the Gentiles who have great faith. That leaves you wondering, is God done with Israel. What's the answer? The third miracle in 8:14-17, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. God's not done with Israel. He's going to heal Israel in the end and bring them into the kingdom. Do you follow? The kingdom program is that the offer to cleanse Israel, that offer is rejected and goes to the Gentiles who respond with great faith but in the end God will finally heal Israel.

Alright, second group of miracles in 8:23-9:8. This one is three miracles and he says these three illustrate **Christ's power to bring in the conditions of the kingdom**. What's the first miracle of this group in 8:23-27? The stilling of the storm. What's the point? Jesus could defeat all Gentile kingdoms. Gentile kingdoms are often symbolized by raging wind and waters (Dan 7:2). If Christ could control the elements of nature which symbolize Gentile kingdoms then He could bring in the kingdom. What's the second miracle of this group in 8:28-34? The casting out of demons? What does this teach? That Jesus can remove demons to establish kingdom conditions on earth. The demonic world is to be locked away during the kingdom (Dan 7:25-27). What's the third miracle of this group in 9:1-8? The paralytic is healed. But what did he say in verse 2? He didn't say, take up your bed and walk. He said your sins are forgiven. What does this teach? That Jesus could forgive Israel's sins such that they enjoyed freedom from sickness in the kingdom. In the kingdom Israel will be without sin and will therefore enjoy wellness (Isa 33:24). So do you see that these three show that Jesus has the capability of bringing in the conditions of the kingdom? He could defeat all Gentile kingdoms, He could cast out demons and lock them away and He could remove Israel's sins such that they don't get sick in the kingdom.

Finally, the third group of miracles in 9:18-35. And this is three or four miracles, depending on how you view the one about the hemorrhage of blood that occurs within the one about Jairus' daughter. Toussaint says that these miracles illustrate Christ's ability to finally restore Israel. What's the first miracle in this group in 9:18-26? The resuscitation of Jairus' daughter. Jairus was a Jewish ruler. What's the point with this miracle? Jesus is able to raise Israel or restore Israel to life. What's the second miracle in this group in 9:20-22? You'll see that this miracle is within or on the way to the first miracle. So really it was first since the other one hadn't happened yet. What is it? The woman with the hemorrhage for twelve

years touched his garment. What's the lesson? That if Israel will just have faith in Him they will be restored. What's the third miracle in 9:27-31? The healing of two blind men. What's the lesson with this miracle? That Israel is spiritually blind but ultimately Jesus will restore their sight. Finally, what's the fourth miracle in 9:32-34? The healing of a mute, demon-possessed man. What was the lesson here? That Jesus has power over everything. There is nothing too hard for Him. He can ultimately restore Israel despite all the odds stacked against them. So the third set shows that Jesus has the ability to restore Israel despite her spiritual condition if she will only have faith.

Now, I don't want you to think I'm allegorizing here. You may think I have generated a lot of creative art in my brain. I don't want to force this on you. You'll have to be convinced of this in your own mind. What I see that encourages me to go down this path is that this is the only section where Matthew is not chronological. When you read it, it sort of sounds chronological, like he just came down from teaching on the mount and boom, boom, boom, these three miracles occurred and then a break and boom, boom, boom, three more, etc.... But when you compare these with Mark you see that they are not chronological and some of these probably occurred before the Sermon on the Mount. So what Matthew seems to be doing is taking specific miracles and arranging them in a theological way. It's what we might call theological art. Some of you took art classes and your instructor had you look at all this art and interpret. And some of you looked at that art, if you were like me, and you thought, what? All I see is a red carpet with a donkey over there and a jar on a table and this means what? You have to get into the heads of these artists, understand who they were and what they were trying to communicate in their time and their place. And that's what I'm trying to do with Matthew.

I can't imagine that this guy just threw some miracles together. Matthew has a very definite argument and somehow the arrangement of these miracles furthers that argument. I think they relate to the kingdom. Not everyone is going to agree in the commentaries about the theological points Matthew is making and much of that is due to the fact that they're not dispensational and so don't read Scripture in a consistent literal fashion so you see the covenants as governing the course history takes culminating in a kingdom. But even other dispensationalists are reticent to see this thematic arrangement so I don't want to force it on you. What everyone sees is that Jesus can heal, Jesus has power and Jesus can restore. I don't think there's any debate there. I just feel that there has to be some explanation for Matthew diverting from the chronology. Somehow it has to further his argument. And if his argument is that Jesus is the King and the offer of the kingdom was on the table for Israel but they were to reject Him and there would be a postponement of the kingdom program then it seems valid to see that Matthew chose these miracles and arranged them in three groups, each in a particular order, to further that argument.

Did those who saw these miracles originally see these lessons? I don't know. I doubt it. We know from John 6 that the miracles were not just miracles for miracles sake but were to teach a lesson and that the people didn't catch it. That's when He multiplied food and the people were to learn a spiritual lesson from that but they seem only to go around looking for Him to get a free lunch. So, spiritually speaking, they were very dull. They weren't too quick on the uptake. Matthew, in hindsight, picks up these miracles and strings them together under the inspiration of the Spirit, in order, I think, to not only show that He is the King, a fact he clearly shows, but also to further his thematic argument. So, we'll get into each one in detail in the coming weeks and there's much, much more but I think that's enough to chew on tonight.

In conclusion, Matthew 8:1-11:1 is the second narrative followed by discourse. It falls in the section where Matthew is giving evidence that Jesus is the King. In this section Jesus is shown to have authenticating miracles that vindicate His right to rule as King. The miracles appear to be thematically arranged in three groups of three, three and four respectively, for a total of ten miracles. The first group of three miracles shows Christ's healing power by way of the kingdom program. Christ could cleanse the nation Israel but they were not willing and so the kingdom would be postponed. During this time the Gentiles would be healed as they responded by great faith. After these things He would heal Israel and bring her into the kingdom. The second group of three miracles shows Christ's power to bring in the kingdom conditions. He has the power to break the power of Gentile kingdoms. He has the power to cast out demons in order to establish the kingdom. He has the power to forgive sins and so give Israel perfect wellness in the kingdom. The third group of three or four miracles shows Christ's restoration of Israel from spiritual poverty. He has the restorative ability to raise Israel from the dead. He has the ability to restore Israel from spiritual blindness. He has the ability to do whatever is necessary to fulfill His covenant promises to Israel. It's a fascinating section of Scripture and we're going to see a lot of marvelous things but one of the things I hope you catch by Matthew's argument is the way he's able to bring theology and history together so that theology is not abstracted from history. That's an attestation to the sovereignty of God over history. Selah! Go think about that.

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 197.