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The Gospel According to Matthew

December 10, 2017

Scripture Reading: Matthew 9:1-13

This morning, during this Christmas season, we begin our study through the Gospel According to Matthew. The word “gospel” has a basic meaning of “good news” but it also became a kind of “literary genre” (a type or category of literature) which we apply to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. While we certainly find the gospel message proclaimed in the Gospels, more precisely the word “Gospel” as applied to these books means something like “a selective account of the life of Jesus Christ.”

Gospels in other words are not the same as a *bibliography*. Their main purpose is not to record and tell about the entire life of Jesus as a typical biography would. Matthew and Luke for instance give accounts of the birth of Jesus, though with different

emphases, while Mark and John do not:

Mark 1:1-4 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (2) As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, (3) the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" (4) John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

So each one of the four Gospels then come at the life and ministry of Christ differently. Sometimes you will find an account in one that is not included in any of the others. And when more than one does include the same record of an event in Jesus' life, it often will record it in a bit of a different way, either with more detail or less.

This is all done for the author's specific purpose. To emphasize the particular facet of the multi-faceted Savior. Also, because we have these 4 Gospels, it is a basic study habit when reading them to compare them. A parallel account will often shed light on the one we are studying.

Alright then, what do we know about the author of the Gospel of Matthew? We just read about him in the Scripture reading from his own Gospel, but note the details Mark adds:

Mark 2:13-16 He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. (14) And as he passed by, he saw **Levi the son of Alphaeus** sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (15) And as he reclined at table **in his house**, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. (16)

And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

A Luke as well:

Luke 5:27-32 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." (28) **And leaving everything**, he rose and followed him. (29) **And Levi made him a great feast in his house**, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. (30) And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (31) And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. (32) I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

What then are the facts we have here about Matthew?

- He was a Jew, also known as Levi
- He was a tax-collector and therefore a despised man in Jewish society, viewed as a traitor doing the work of Rome.

These tax-collectors were often anything but honest. You recall another tax-collector called by Christ named Zacchaeus. We are told that as he repented, he repaid multiple times over all who he had defrauded.

- He left everything when Jesus called him to follow, and he was undoubtedly wealthy.
- Like Zacchaeus, Matthew was incredibly grateful to Christ, as shown by his preparation of a “great feast” in his house.
- Matthew was one of the 12, an apostle:

Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, (19) and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

- Matthew was a very grateful man who understood the grace of God shown him in Christ. Consider this as shown by his own words where he gives the same list of the 12 as both Luke and Mark-

Matthew 10:1-4 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. (2) The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; (3) Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and **Matthew the tax collector**; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; (4) Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Luke 6:13-16 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: (14) Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, (15) and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, (16) and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Mark 3:16-19 He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); (17) James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); (18) Andrew, and Philip, and

Now, listen to this important observation from my favorite Bible study reference book, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* where Craig Blomberg tells us:

“The Hebrew Scriptures...permeate Matthew’s Gospel. Approximately 55 references...compared to about 65 for the other three canonical Gospels put together. About 20 of these texts are unique to Matthew. Twelve times Matthew speaks explicitly of a passage or theme of Scripture being “fulfilled”....Virtually every major theological emphasis of Matthew is reinforced with OT support...

The reasons for the pervasiveness of the Jewish Bible in Matthew does not take long to discover. According to uniform early church tradition, the author of this Gospel was Levi, also known as Matthew, a member of Jesus’ band of 12 apostles and a converted tax-collector....Even though he had gone to work, indirectly at least, for the occupying Roman forces, he remained Jewish. His elementary school education and subsequent synagogue attendance, even if abandoned at some point in his adult life, would have steeped him in the contents and interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures....

Most likely Matthew’s audience was also predominantly Jewish Christian, living perhaps around Syrian Antioch....Jewish Christians remained passionately concerned to continue trying to convince their unconverted family members and close friends that

Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and that following Him was the way to constitute the new true – or freed – Israel. Thus Matthew could simultaneously emphasize the uniquely Jewish stages of Christ’s mission..., depict all of the links with the Jewish Scriptures, and highlight distinctively Jewish theological categories in his editorial emphases, including Jesus as the Son of David and messianic king and discipleship as practicing righteous living as the fulfillment of the Law.”

“Even Matthew’s canonical placement highlights his links with Jewish Scriptures....most scholars agree that Mark’s finished Gospel predated Matthew’s....Why then was Matthew put first...? Doubtless, one answer is because of Matthew’s clearest and most frequent links back to the Old Testament....Of the 4, Matthew helped form the transition between old and new most smoothly.”

So what then do we see as at least a major theme and purpose in Matthew? To show us that Jesus is the One pointed to by the Old Testament, that He is the promised Messiah, Son of Abraham, Son of David, that He fulfills the OT prophets or that it is in Him that those prophecies will be fulfilled. To embrace Jesus Christ by faith is to become a true Israelite.

John 1:10-12 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. (11) He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (12) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

The Geneological Credentials of the Messiah

Matthew 1:1-17 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

(2) Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
(3) and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,
(4) and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,
(5) and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,
(6) and Jesse the father of David the

king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,
(7) and Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, (8) and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, (9) and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, (10) and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah,
(11) and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

(12) And after the deportation to Babylon:
Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, (13) and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud,
and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor,
(14) and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud,
(15) and Eliud the father of Eleazar,

and Eleazar the father of Matthan,
and Matthan the father of Jacob,
(16) and Jacob the father of Joseph the
husband of Mary, **of whom** Jesus was
born, who is called Christ.

(17) So all the generations from
Abraham to David were fourteen
generations, and from David to the
deportation to Babylon fourteen
generations, and from the deportation
to Babylon to the Christ fourteen
generations.

There is no doubt far more in this
genealogy than I know. I suspect that
the Jews, if they weren't willfully
blind, would have seen its significance.
Genealogical records were important
to them –

- The tribal divisions in Israel
required it
- The Levitical priesthood required
it
- The Messiah was to come from
the tribe of Judah and of the
kingly line of David

And so Matthew's genealogy, derived
from the Old Testament history and
from more records contemporary to his
day, was a HUGE flashing sign –
Jesus, this One, this is the Messiah.
Here are a few more observations
about its importance from Craig
Blomberg:

“As a descendant of David, Jesus
comes as an Israelite king; as a
descendant of Abraham, he will bless
all the nations of the earth.”

Again:

“Jesus' genealogy selects just enough
ancestry (“begat” can mean “was an
ancestor of”) to create three series of
14 names....More interesting than the
men are the women in Jesus' genealogy.
Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and
Bathsheba (Uriah's wife) were
Gentiles but also women who were
under suspicion, rightly or wrongly, of
illicit sexual relations. Mary was not a
Gentile, but she did experience the
stigma of a conception out of wedlock,
shrouded in suspicion among those
who did not believe the story of a
virgin birth.”

There is another small yet significant
detail regarding the listing of Mary in
the genealogy. Many languages,
including Greek, have what is called
“gender.” English does not so our
translations do not show us details
sometimes. This is such a case,
although if you look carefully in the
English you will see a difference:

Matthew 1:14-16 and Azor the father
of Zadok, and Zadok the father of
Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud,

(15) and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, (16) and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

See it repeatedly – X the father of Y. The father of. But notice that at the end of the list when we arrive at Christ, the repeated formula changes – “Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born...”.

It is the “of whom” that reflects the Greek Matthew uses the *feminine* form of this reflexive pronoun “of whom.” By this we know that the “of whom” that Jesus was born is not Joseph, but Mary. Thus we have the virgin birth in this genealogy.

Why does Matthew make it a point to structure the genealogy around this “14 generations” outline? I don’t know. I have heard various theories, but none seem certain. Matthew had a purpose and no doubt it was understood by the Jews. Could it reflect this? –

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

That is, perhaps what Matthew is pointing out is that it should be expected that the Christ would be born

in Matthew’s day since the past history of God’s redemption of His people occurred at these intervals?

- God appeared to Abraham to call a people for Himself out of the world
- God appointed His chosen King (David) 14 generations later
- Now, Messiah has come 14 generations after David.

I think it is also good for us at this point to look at Jesus’ genealogy as it is given to us by Luke. You immediately notice a big difference from the one in Matthew:

Luke 3:23-38 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, (24) the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, (25) the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, (26) the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, (27) the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, (28) the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, (29) the son of Joshua, the son of

Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, (30) the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, (31) the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, (32) the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, (33) the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, (34) the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, (35) the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, (36) the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, (37) the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, (38) the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

See it? Luke's record is inverted from Matthew's. That is to say, it begins with Jesus rather than ending with Him and goes backward in time, clear to Adam! Here are some comments on the differences between the two lists and possible reasons for those differences: [From Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry]

Both Matthew 1 and Luke 3 contain genealogies of Jesus. But there is one problem--they are different. Luke's genealogy starts at **Adam** and goes to **David**. Matthew's genealogy starts at **Abraham** and goes to **David**. When the genealogies arrive at David, they split with David's sons: **Nathan** (Mary's side?) and **Solomon** (Joseph's side).

There are differences of opinion with two main options being offered. The first is that one genealogy is for Mary and the other is for Joseph. It was customary to mention the genealogy through the father even though it was clearly known that it was through Mary.

"The second thing is that this genealogy differs in significant ways from the genealogy in Matthew. Why? Most Bible scholars believe that Luke gives the genealogy of Mary (who was also of the royal Davidic line), while Matthew traces the family of Joseph. Thus by both His mother and His earthly father, Jesus had a right to the throne of Israel."

"Luke paused from his narrative to give Christ's genealogy. While Matthew traced Christ's lineage through Joseph, his legal father (see Matt. 1:1-17), Luke traced it through Mary, beginning with Mary's father, Heli. (Men in ancient

times often regarded their sons-in-law as their own sons.) The lineages of Mary and Joseph converge at King David (compare 3:31 with Matt. 1:6).

"Those who take the latter opinion, that we have here the line of Mary, as in Matthew that of Joseph—here His real, there His reputed line—explain the statement about Joseph, that he was "the son of Heli," to mean that he was his son-in-law, as the husband of his daughter Mary (as in Ru 1:11, 12), and believe that Joseph's name is only introduced instead of Mary's, in conformity with the Jewish custom in such tables. Perhaps this view is attended with fewest difficulties, as it certainly is the best supported."

Notice that Luke starts with Mary and goes backwards to Adam. Matthew starts with Abraham and goes forward to Joseph. The intents of the genealogies were obviously different which is clearly seen in their styles. Luke was not written to the Jews, Matthew was. Therefore, Matthew would carry the legal line (from Abraham through David) and Luke the biological one (from Adam through David). Also, notice that Luke's first three chapters mention Mary eleven times; hence, the genealogy from her. Fourth, notice Luke 3:23, "And when He

began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being supposedly the son of Joseph, the son of Eli," This designation "supposedly" seems to signify the Marian genealogy since it seems to indicate that Jesus is not the biological son of Joseph.

Let's conclude today then by reading the rest of this first chapter:

Matthew 1:18-25 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. (19) And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

(20) But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (21) She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

(22) All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: (23) "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God

with us).

(24) When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, (25) but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Immediately then in this first chapter, Matthew calls all of us to faith in Christ. This is the One. Here is the Messiah for Israel and here is the only Savior for Jew and Gentile. He is Immanuel. He is GOD with us, tabernacling in a new Temple. Over and over again Matthew will show us that Jesus of Nazareth is the One to whom the OT Scriptures have been pointing all along.

Matthew 1:21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Acceptance or rejection of this One is the pivot point upon which every human being's eternal destiny rests. We must be wise as the Magi were:

Matthew 2:2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."