

The Son of David

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Matthew calls Jesus "the son of David" because Jesus fulfills God's promise of a future king who establishes God's kingdom on earth.

Introduction

Michelangelo was a famous painter and sculptor. His most famous sculpture is "David," which resides in the city of Florence in Italy. Michelangelo's David is 17 feet tall.

It's entirely possible that Michelangelo never meant for people to be able to look at David's face head-on. Viewing him from below, as almost everyone does, David appears to have a calm expression on his face.

But when one looks at David face-to-face, he has an expression of concern, or maybe anger. That is because he is about to do battle with Goliath in the most famous underdog story of all time.

It seems that many artists and sculptors place hidden images in their works. You would never know it unless someone pointed it out to you. For example, the "Mona Lisa" by Leonardo da Vinci is one of the most famous paintings of all time. Not long ago, members of Italy's National Committee for Cultural Heritage reported that—when viewed under a microscope—the letters "L" and "V" are visible in one of her eyes. There are some other less-decipherable letters in there as well. Could it be that Leonardo da Vinci signed his name in one of her eyes in microscopically small letters?

It seems to me that this is what Matthew was doing in the opening verses of his Gospel. In his genealogy of Jesus, Matthew referred to Jesus as "the son of David." Matthew was showing that there is a portrait of the royal Messiah that the people were longing for, but that there was a hidden message within it. Jesus was not the Messiah that the people expected. But Jesus was the Messiah that God intended to send them all along.

Matthew began his Gospel with these words, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.” The Greek word for “Christ” (*Christos*) means “anointed” or “an anointed one.” It is the equivalent of the Old Testament Hebrew word “Messiah,” which means the same thing.

In modern Bible translations, “Messiah” is often used when the term functions as a title (that is, the Messiah), and “Christ” is used when the term functions as a name (that is, Jesus Christ).

One commentator points out, “Matthew here states at the outset what he will develop and demonstrate through his Gospel, that Jesus was the expected Messiah, of the royal line of David, with the rightful claim to the title ‘King of the Jews’ ” (Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992], 5).

In today’s lesson, we are going to see that Jesus, “the son of David,” is the Messiah who is the King of the Jews.

Scripture

Let’s read [Matthew 1:1-17](#):

¹ 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.

Lesson

In [Matthew 1:1-17](#), we learn that Matthew calls Jesus "the son of David" because Jesus fulfills God's promise of a future king who establishes God's kingdom on earth.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Jesus Fulfills God's Promise
2. Jesus Establishes God's Kingdom

I. Jesus Fulfills God's Promise

First, let us examine how Jesus fulfills God's promise.

Matthew began his Gospel with these words, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" ([Matthew 1:1](#)).

The first thing Matthew wanted his readers to know is that Jesus was "the son of David." The name "David" occurs 39 times in all four Gospels. The Gospel authors want their readers to understand who David was because if the readers did not understand who David was, they would not understand Jesus.

So, let us go back and learn a little about David.

You may remember that David became king after Saul. God chose David to be king over his kingdom. David conquered all the enemies who opposed God and his people.

I have mentioned this before but David never lost a battle. He won every war that he fought against the enemies of God.

Eventually, relative peace came to the land. And David moved into the capital city of Jerusalem. Things were looking good for the people of God.

David built himself a beautiful house, that we would call a palace. He lived in it and ruled from it. We read of David in [2 Samuel 7:1-3](#):

¹ Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, ² the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” ³ And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

One pastor said that Nathan is like a lot of ministers. If some wealthy person came to the minister and said, “I want to make a huge donation to the ministry,” what do you think the minister would say? “Go ahead! I am sure that the Lord is with you!”

Nathan was probably thinking that God was blessing David. The people of God were beginning to experience peace. They were settling down as a nation. David had a beautiful palace. And so it was appropriate that a house—that is, a temple—be built for the worship of God.

“But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan” ([2 Samuel 7:4](#)). God told Nathan that he did not want David to build him a temple. Why not?

Later on, we learn that it was because of the warring intentions of David’s surrounding enemies that still needed to be held off, and full peace would not come until David’s son Solomon became king (cf. [1 Kings 5:3](#)).

But then God made an astonishing promise to David. We read in [2 Samuel 7:12-16](#):

¹² “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. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

Instead of David building a house—that is, a temple—for God, God was going to build a house—that is, a dynasty, a kingdom—for David. God promised David that one of his offspring would become king and reign forever on the throne.

David eventually died. His son Solomon became king. Matthew records some of the genealogy from David onwards in [Matthew 1:6b-7](#), “And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,” and on and on.

Eventually, there was the deportation to Babylon, which is also known as the exile to Babylon. Matthew continued with David’s descendants in [Matthew 1:12](#) “And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,” and continued down to verse 16, where we read, “and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.”

You may know that the Gospels contain two genealogies of Jesus. One is given by Matthew and the other is given by Luke. Luke essentially traced Jesus’ biological descent to Mary, whereas Matthew traced Jesus’ legal and royal descent to Joseph.

So, Jesus was the royal, legal, and covenantal descendant of King David. Throughout his ministry, Jesus was referred to as “the son of David.” The expression “the son of David” is used 16 times in the Gospels in reference to Jesus.

You know that Jesus never married and never had any children, contrary to Dan Brown’s assertions in *The Da Vinci Code*. To ensure that no one else claimed to be a descendant of King David, all the genealogical records were destroyed in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. So, there is no one today—or for the last 2,000 years for that matter—who can claim to be a descendant of King David.

The point is that God fulfilled his promise of sending a king who will sit on the throne of David. That king is Jesus. He is the only legitimate one who can sit on the throne of King David.

In Bunyan's great allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the incident is related about how Christian decides to leave the Main Highway and follow another Path that seemed easier. But this Path leads him into the territory of Giant Despair who owns Doubting Castle.

Eventually, Christian is captured by Giant Despair and kept in a dungeon. He is advised to kill himself. The Giant said there was no use trying to keep on with his journey. For the time being, it seemed as if Despair had really conquered Christian. But then, Hope, Christian's companion, reminds him of previous victories. So it came about that on Saturday about midnight they began to pray, and continued in prayer until almost morning.

Now a little before it was day, good Christian, as one half-amazed, broke out in passionate speech, "What a fool am I thus to lie in a stinking Dungeon, when I may as well be at liberty. I have a Key in my bosom called Promise that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle."

Then said Hopeful, "That's good news. Good Brother, pluck it out of thy bosom and try."

Christian did, and the prison gates flew open.

God made a promise to David one thousand years before the birth of his offspring, Jesus. God fulfilled his promise in Jesus.

Most of the people at the time of Jesus' birth were stuck, as it were, in Giant Despair's Doubting Castle. They were gripped by fear and disillusion. They wondered whether God was ever able to do anything. But God kept his promise, and Jesus was the key to the fulfillment of God's promise. Sadly, most people at that time did not take hold of God's key and find liberty in Jesus.

But what does the birth of Jesus mean for us today? How does God's fulfillment of his promise in sending Jesus impact you and me today?

II. Jesus Establishes God's Kingdom

And second, let us see that Jesus establishes God's kingdom.

At the time of Jesus' birth and life, the people of God were longing for God to send his Messiah. They wanted someone who was God's anointed. But they were expecting a liberator from Roman oppression. They were expecting a military man who would raise an army and get victory over the Romans.

Jesus was indeed God's Messiah. But he was not the Messiah that the people were expecting. He did not come to liberate them from military and political oppression. Jesus came to liberate them from spiritual oppression.

When Jesus was standing before Pilate after his betrayal, Pilate was trying to figure out what Jesus had done. Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world" ([John 18:36](#)).

Jesus' kingdom is spiritual. He is waging war against Satan and the forces of his kingdom. Jesus is winning people to himself out of the kingdom of Satan. He is transforming them by his power. He is ruling in their hearts. And one day, when history finally comes to an end, Jesus will expel Satan and all those who belong to him to hell forever, and Jesus will set up his kingdom on earth with all of those who belong to him.

Interestingly, all four Gospel authors record that when Pilate finally ordered Jesus to be crucified, he also had the charge written against Jesus placed on the cross above Jesus' head. Do you know what it read?

It read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" ([Matthew 27:37](#); cf. [Mark 15:26](#); [Luke 22:38](#); [John 19:19](#)).

When the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written" ([John 19:21-22](#)).

We know that Jesus is the eternal king because three days after his crucifixion God the Father raised Jesus back to life again. This was the Father's divine stamp of approval on Jesus' life and work.

We often think of Jesus as the Savior of sinners. He is indeed the Savior of sinners.

But Jesus is also King. What does mean practically that Jesus is the eternal king who sits on the throne forever and ever?

Let me just mention a few things.

First, because Jesus is the eternal king, he is the only hope for the world. If Jesus was only a Savior, he would save sinners here and there and everywhere. That would be wonderful. However, we would all be saved as individuals. Our salvation would be individualistic.

But, Jesus is more than a Savior. He is the eternal king with an eternal, universal kingdom. Jesus rules over the entire world. One day, he will send Satan and all unbelievers to their eternal destiny. He will set up his eternal rule here on the new earth.

As king, Jesus will do what David began to do but did not complete. Jesus will bring complete peace to all people. He will bring prosperity to all people. He will eradicate sin from all people. He will make this new world a wonderful place for all who submit to his kingship.

Second, because Jesus is the eternal king, we must obey him. In our country, we have a President and we are citizens of this country. If the President walked into our community, we would respect him and listen to him. But we would not necessarily obey him.

On the other hand, if we lived in a country that had a king, we would not be citizens but subjects of the king. If the king walked into our community, we would not only respect him and listen to him, but we would have to obey him as well.

Sometimes people say, “Well, I have tried Christianity and it doesn’t work for me.” Pastor Tim Keller says,

When you say, “I tried Christianity. It didn’t work,” almost always that means, “There were some nonnegotiable things I want in my life. I want happiness. I want health. I want to be married. I want to be this. I want to be that. Christianity didn’t give it to me.” What that means is, “I obey God if... I obey God conditionally,” which is not obedience at all. That’s not obeying God. That’s using God (Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* [New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church], 2013).

Kings must be obeyed.

Third, because Jesus is the eternal king, we can pray boldly. Jesus is not some local god. He is not some local deity. He is sovereign over the entire universe. He created every single atom. He created everything. He has power over everything. So, when you come to Jesus, pray boldly.

John Newton wrote a wonderful hymn regarding prayer. The hymn is called, “Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare.” The word “suit” does not refer to clothing but to a lawsuit. The second stanza of this wonderful hymn is as follows:

Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.

And finally, because Jesus is the eternal king, we can anticipate his return. Jesus is coming back again. After Jesus’ resurrection, he spent forty days with his disciples. Finally, he gathered them together at the Mount of Olives. He told his disciples that the Holy Spirit was going to come upon them and that they were to spread the good news of the gospel to the end of the earth ([Acts 1:8](#)). Then, we read in [Acts 1:9-11](#):

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Early in 1942, General Douglas MacArthur had to evacuate from the Philippines because of the invading Japanese Army. Before he left, he vowed, “I shall return.” Over the next two and a half years, he constantly repeated his promise to return to the Philippines. This was finally accomplished on October 20, 1944. A short while later, General MacArthur did a radio broadcast in which he announced, “People of the Philippines, I have returned!”

One day, Jesus is going to return to earth and say, “People of God, I have returned!”

Because Jesus is the eternal king, we can anticipate his return.

Conclusion

Because Jesus is “the son of David,” let us surrender ourselves wholeheartedly to his kingship over our lives.

A. W. Tozer once wrote, “The man who surrenders to Christ exchanges a cruel slave driver for a kind and gentle Master whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light” (A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* [Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 2006], 98).

If you are not a Christian, your cruel slave driver is Satan. You may not think he is but eventually, you will discover what a monster he is. Abandon Satan now! Repent of your sin. Trust in Christ.

And if you are a Christian, your gentle Master is the Son of David, the eternal King, whose kingdom shall never end. Surrender to him daily, and you will discover great joy and delight in serving your king. Amen.