

Week 1:

Why the Gospels matter

Matthew 1 and 2: Old and New Bibles are connected

In a theology sense, we should respect the placing of the books in the Bible. In the Old testament, the Bible places each book in chronological form. They are also grouped in themes. There is the Pentateuch (Greek for five books) the first five books of the Bible. This can also be called the Torah (the law, teachings, or instruction). Why care about theology? Just tell me what it says or means. To the average person that seems clear. Should the average person know what the verses and words mean or should the only hear what they want to hear? Should the speaker make up what it means in the Bible like in a cult?

Matthew is placed in the same way. Why is it first? I feel that this gospel book is a template for Christian living. We shall see in this series how Matthew is training us to be strong in our faith and knowledge. The four gospels are like the Torah. They give history. They teach. There is story. Interestingly enough, they also show how God interacts with people just like the Old testament did. Matthew is far more than just a story. We peer deeper into the mind and heart of God than ever before. Why was the Bible written?

Matthew 1:16 “and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.”

Genesis 2:4 “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.”

Theology means *the study of the nature of God*. That is what we get in sermons, Christian music, and religious literature. Those words and songs flow from the study of the word of God. We, the listeners, gain God’s perspective by the work done through pastors, writers and musicians. We participate in theology whether we know it or not. The Gospel of Matthew is Old Testament theology. Matthew begins by asking the important questions.

1. Why should we believe Jesus matters to God?
2. Why Jesus matters to Jewish heritage?
3. Why Jesus matters to history and the future?

I put chapter 1 and 2 together because it’s history like the Pentateuch of old. Matthew is beginning by pointing us towards the past. These first two chapters tell us how we got here. How Jesus began. For some, this is new. Jesus did not begin as a baby. Jesus began in the beginning just as creation

began. The prophets said so. They claimed the ancient one would come. They said the line of David would endure. Each gospel gives us a little bit different perspective of the same story. We get to know people by what they do and sometimes by their history. We get a complete picture. This series will help us see the picture of Jesus that Matthew was painting. Why should the Gospels matter to you?

Matthew 1:22 **“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet.”**

Jerimiah 22:29 **“O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD!”**

Jerimiah 23:5 **“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”**

Matthew is considered a Jewish book. All the books in the New Testament are dated by the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Old testament has points in time too that they honor like the Babylonian captivity of 587 BC. The Babylonian point in time is important because the Bible was translated from old Hebrew into Greek at that time to save God’s word. Matthew was most likely written after the fall of Jerusalem because of some of the words and themes. There is no solid reason to prove when it was written. Yet, I wonder if Matthew wrote it at that time period to save the Story of Jesus.

The themes in this book are Jewish. Why write to Romans or Asians using Jewish themes? This book uses those themes to pull on the knowledge and heart strings of the readers. Most likely Jewish readers. We have prophesy, Jewish lineage, sons of Abraham, line of David, and Messiah. All of these terms mean something important to the Jewish community.

I could see this book also being written to Gentiles (everyone else) or for the Jewish people to accept these gentiles. There are certain hints that this is a message for or about the gentiles. In those days, they had clicks and groups that considered themselves inclusive only. We have those types today. There are democrats and republicans to name a few. In that day, there were Samaritans, Pharisees, and dysphoria Jews as examples. So, is this book of Matthew written for Jews because it speaks of Jewish things, or is it more than that?

This book certainly speaks to the Gentiles. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus commands the disciples to preach the words to all nations. Nations in Greek could be denoted as gentiles. Paul uses the same word in Galatians 2:8 but it’s translated Gentiles. The four-woman found in the genealogy of Jesus are from gentile background. It’s possible these women were famous in the gentile community, so they are highlighted. Either way, something beyond the Jewish community is being communicated.

Finally, Matthew is part of a bigger family called the Synoptic gospels. Synoptic means *general view*. About 97% of the words of Mark are found in Matthew. About 88% of the words in Mark are found in Luke. 235 verses in Matthew are similar in Luke. They are similar stories, similar themes, and

similar words. John has some similar stories but it mostly stands alone. Matthew is big. It's maybe a template for the others. That is a discussion on its own. Whose Gospel was first? Either way, the story of Jesus is a revelation story continuing what the book of Genesis began.

Matthew 1:1 **"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham."**

Matthew 2:1 **"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem."**

Genesis 1:1 **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."**

Read through Chapters 1 and 2 for next week. For extra reading, read Genesis 1. All things like Jesus and the earth have beginnings.

1. Matthew opens just as Genesis opens. In Genesis 1:1. It can be called the genealogy of God creating the heavens and the earth. Genesis 5:1 is the genealogy of Adam. Later in Genesis 10:1 we have the Genealogy of Noah. Matthew is opening by saying this theme of new beginnings is still happening. It also continues a theme that God did and is still doing it. A big theme of the Bible is beginnings and endings. Matthew opens with genealogy but ends with the end of the ages.

Matthew 1:1 **"An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham."**

Genesis 1:1 **"In the beginning when God created[a] the heavens and the earth."**

Matthew 28:20 **"and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

2. Oh, my goodness a genealogy!! I hate those things. That is what many people say: boring!! I hope to change your mind. Think of them this way. God forgets nobody. Matthew intentionally gives us a genealogy because this one matters to Jewish people. This line begins with Abraham. He was promised by God that his descendants would outnumber the stars. That his lineage would continue. Matthew says Jesus is that continuation.

Secondly, Matthew is pointing out that God's covenant with King David is secure. A royal king is still alive in his line promised to his descendants. Jesus is that King. One other note is that God said in Exodus 3:15 **God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' "This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.** The Jewish community put a huge importance in this verse. Matthew was smart to begin his Gospel this way.

Matthew 1:16 **"and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.**

Genesis 13:16 **"I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted."**

Clearly, Matthew wants the readers to see the old testament connection. Jesus is not born by random chance or by mistake. God had a plan. The prophets we not just spouting prophesy because it's fun to predict the future. Sprinkled throughout the Old Testament are hints that God would provide. He always did and always will. Like I said, God created in the beginning. That work never stopped. Jesus is the continuation of God working with creation.

3. I believe Matthew was either making a point to the Jewish people to open their hearts or to the Gentile community to open theirs. Either way Jesus said he came to seek and save the lost. It's everyone. Matthew points out that God did not exclude or favor any one people type. The Jewish community might hold special importance to God but he loves and accepts all people. Isaiah 7:14 tells us **"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."** The readers of Matthew were waiting for the Messiah. Matthew (the book) is really an argument that Emanuel and the Messiah are here in the form of Jesus. Basically, it's literally God is with us. Emanuel is a title or term as opposed to a given name like Jesus. Matthew 1:23 **"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."** The God with us "Emanuel" is this Jesus.

People get hung up on names. They get hung up on timelines and geography. That is why Matthew addresses some of those things by placing Jesus in Egypt and Nazareth. The name Jesus means rescuer or deliverance. God used names for himself to show a side of him like Yahweh (I am or I exist) or Elohim (God or creator). In a way there are many names of Jesus. His last name is not Christ. The Christ or Messiah is another name or title. We will read of Jesus being called the Son of Man or prince of peace. These are all references pointing back to the Old testament.

4. Four women are mentioned in the lineage of Jesus. That is by no mistake. They are not of the Jewish line. They were considered sinners as gentiles like Ruth. Ruth gleaned the wheat from outside the Jewish fields. She was a gentile. The women were sinners by some of the acts they did like the adultery of Bathsheba. God clearly includes women in his plans. They clearly are important to him in the plan of redemption. Matthew clearly attaches woman to the line of Jesus. These thoughts make this Gospel controversial in the time of Matthew. Women, gentiles, and unwed births were frowned upon as unimportant and scandalous. So scandalous, that he does not even mention Bathsheba by name. Matthew introduces Jesus as someone who will shake this planet like the coming Messiah was supposed to.

Matthew 1:6 **"and Jesse the father of King David, and David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah."**

Genesis 3:15 **"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."**

What does it mean?

I have a set of lessons (13) that walk you through a look at God in the Old Testament. As I studied Matthew's book, I realized that he is using the knowledge of God in the Old Testament to make his case for Jesus. The Jewish terms like Emanuel come up. The words Christ, Messiah, and Son of Man mean little to those of us outside the Jewish religion. We are the gentiles. Matthew is making a case for the Christ. He believes Jesus is that Christ. If Jesus is that person then the term *God is with us* applies to Jesus.

The Bible is either true or just a book. That is up to you. The facts say that it is an old book. There is little proof that God is real in terms of science. Yet, some scientific facts rely on archeology. Events in the Bible have been discovered in archeology like a big flood or crucifixion. None of these things prove that God exists. Yet, many cultures and Gods have disappeared in history. The Jewish God remains. That God is even older than the Muslim religion by thousands

of years. A test of time might say that a restaurant or product is good. You don't stay in business if your bad. Why is the Bible and the Jewish God still in business?

It might mean that something good came out of the belief in God. There might have been a Jesus. If God has lasted in story for all these years, something must be significant about it. Other cultures, beliefs, and religions have passed away, yet this Jewish God remains. Matthew is all about a theme: God is still involved in creation. Matthew is all about linking the old God of the Bible to Jesus. This book called Matthew is a link to gentiles, Jews, and Jesus. Jesus is the link to God the Father and this Holy Spirit. Once you begin to see a pattern in Matthew and the entire Bible, nothing will ever be the same. You will look at historical time and this planet differently. Everything is connected.

Finally, this is a Christian template. As we go through the book of Matthew, see how he builds faith through this Jesus story. Matthew begins with history. Then he makes a case for Jesus. Throughout this book is theology of why God sent Jesus. We see ourselves in the lives of the disciples. Jesus teaches us what heaven, the kingdom of God, and end of times look like. This is a work book on living the Christian life. We see it through the disciples, the religious rulers, and the life of Jesus. The Gospels are more than just stories of Jesus.