

How did Matthew choose to reveal the Messiah?

Read chapters one and two.

We know from the Gospel of Matthew and the way in which the author referred to the Hebraic Scriptures, that he was very much a scholar. So he starts at the beginning. The origin.

- Have a look at what your Bible has. It might not be obvious, depending on which translation you use, but it's worth looking at a few different ones.
- Where else does the origin occur in the Bible? (There are two places that I can think of).

We have the genealogy of Jesus set out in three lots of fourteen generations.

- How many generations before Joseph?
- Truth?

R. T. France writes that this can only be done with some difficulty and selectiveness, so it's not statistically correct but his workings about God and Jesus. I.e. his theological thoughts on what God's purpose was for his people.

- There are different puzzles in this genealogy – the number 14 three times over, and its accuracy to name but two puzzles, but it is clear that its purpose is to locate Jesus within the story of God's people. Jesus is not only the Messiah, but also the Son of David. Does your Bible have any notes about this?

Matthew then uses five different ways for his readers understand the importance of Jesus. France suggests that Matthew's Gospel contains different stories concerning the early childhood of Jesus because he was creating a carefully constructed argument from scripture and it is these particular incidents which enabled him to present it.

1. Joseph, Son of David accepts Jesus as His Son. (1:18-25) Jesus was adopted into the royal dynasty, because Jesus cannot be the Son of David through Mary. Compare this with Luke 1:26-38.
 - What Luke achieves by using angelic communication to Mary, Matthew achieves through angelic communication to Joseph. Matthew refers to the Greek translation of the Hebraic Scriptures by using Isaiah 7:14.

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” God is with us.
 - So God was with us, from his human adoption. Now read Matthew 28:20: I am with you always. Matthew brings his argument full circle – at the beginning of Jesus' life and at the end.

2. The King of the Jews born in the city of David (2:1-12)
Jesus was born in David's town – Bethlehem.
 - Two Scriptures – Micah 5:2 and 2 Sam 5:2 support this.

But Matthew takes this further. It's not just the geography of Jesus' birth that is important. If Bethlehem is important to the Jews for the line of David – and therefore the King of the Jews, then Matthew can use this in chapter 27, when Jesus is mocked as being the King of the Jews. So, like in No. 1 above, Matthew presents his argument: the beginning of Christ's life and his end.

3. God's Son brought out of Egypt (2:13-15)
Matthew's account is extremely brief and basic. He tells us nothing of the journey except that it began at night or how that time was spent. It explains how the Messiah avoided the infanticide but that is all.
4. The King tries to thwart God's purpose (2:16-18)
Herod's infanticide. Matthew tries throughout the Gospel to compare Jesus to Moses, so he may have used the infanticide by Pharaoh as a basis for his story here. Many scholars are not sure what to make of this story as there is no independent evidence of this massacre. R. T. France suggests that this lack of evidence doesn't mean it didn't happen, but perhaps that records for this particular atrocity were lost.
5. A Galilean Messiah (2:19-23)
Now that the danger is over, Joseph and his family can return – almost. And he shall be called a Nazorean. R. T. France writes this phrase represents the prophetic expectation that the Messiah would appear from nowhere and would as result meet with incomprehension and rejection. The prophets could not speak of Nazareth in the Old Testament because it didn't exist when they wrote their prophecies.. Nazorean is a derogatory term but it captured what some of the prophets had predicted – a Messiah who came from the wrong place, who did not conform to the expectations of Jewish tradition, and who as a result would not be accepted by his people.

The herald, the baptism, the testing.

Read chapter 3:

- Who is the herald?
- Is he significant to Jesus? Or insignificant?

Matt 3:1-12

The account of John the Baptist is designed to prepare the reader for the coming of the 'stronger one.' John himself is presented as the one who prepares the way and announces the Messiah's coming. He both fulfils

prophecy and that echo of the prophetic lifestyle and also his role as the last and greatest of the prophets and he utters a more immediate prediction of Jesus' Messianic role.

John the Baptist's role according to other independent accounts, is far more than what we see in the book of Matthew. There is a tendency for Christians to undervalue John. He's a person we get to know briefly and then drop because we've moved on...

- John represents a unique and distinctive prophetic tradition who deserves a prominent place in any account of the religious history of Palestine in first century.

Both John and Jesus have similarities in their lives: their careers run parallel in significant ways: both are popularly regarded as prophets, opposed by the Jerusalem authorities, eventually rejected and executed, but given burial by their disciples.

- The repentance symbolised in John's baptism was an essential basis for Jesus' future ministry, but could not by itself bring the 'salvation from sin' which was to be Jesus' unique role.

From my reading for this bible study it appears that water baptism was already occurring at the time of Jesus, but not as Christian baptism. That came later, as Matthew describes in 28:19. Matthew obviously feels that Christian baptism is important which is why we still have baptisms today, but possibly doesn't mention it in Jesus's ministry because they all took it for granted that baptism occurred.

Matthew 4:1-11.

This passage is also in Mark and Luke, though it is presented differently. Matthew and Luke record a three-point dialogue between the tempter and Jesus which explores more deeply the nature of the 'testing' involved. All three of Jesus' scriptural quotations come from Deuteronomy 6 to 8, the part of the address by Moses to the Israelites before the entry into Canaan in which he reminds them of their 40 years of wilderness experiences. It has been a time of preparation and of proving the faithfulness of their God.

In word and deed:

This section includes passages from chapters 4 to 16. We will miss out much on the section on Discipleship as I want to come back to that in week 6.

1. The founding of the Messianic community (4:18-22). We assume that they go where he goes. However, the stories from this point forward assume that there is much larger group of disciples than just the ones

mentioned in the text. They are the audience, witnesses and active helpers.

2. The Beatitudes, which we will come back to in week 6 show how Jesus' typical use of black and white categories cannot simply be converted into a set of rules and regulations for life in the real world. **The essence of life in the kingdom of heaven is in fact the direct opposite of a legalistic code.** The Beatitudes are intended as a guide for life.
3. Fulfilling the Law (5:21-47) Jesus goes beyond the outward observance of the Law to the thoughts and attitudes which underlie the action. Where the Law endeavoured to ease the human failure to maintain God's standards, Jesus goes to the root of the issue and challenges the actions themselves.
4. In action: (8:1 – 9:34)
Of the nine miracle stories which Matthew collated, six are paralleled in both Mark and Luke, one that is in Luke but not Mark and two are similar to stories which Matthew himself tells elsewhere, and which also have their parallels in Mark and Luke at these points. The process of compilation appears to be deliberate by Matthew, in particular by weaving together material that occurs in two separate sequences in Mark and Luke.

Matthew	Mark	Luke
8:1-4	1:4-45	5:12-16
8:5-13		7:1-10
8:14-16	1:29-34	4:38-41
8:18-22		9:57-60
8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25
8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39
9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26
9:9-17	2:14-22	5:27-38
9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56
9:27-31 (cf 20:29-34)	10:46-52	18:35-43
9:32-34 (cf 12:22-24)	3:22	11:14-15

Miracles of healing and restoration (Read 8:1-17).

The three individual accounts of the healing of people who for different reasons were from a Jewish point of view disadvantaged: the leper was an outcast because he was ill; the centurion was a Gentile, and the third patient was a woman.

So Jesus is portrayed as responding to all. He is holistic in his method. The leper is restored to normal society, while the Gentile and the woman, even if their status cannot be changed, have found not only physical healing but also

an acceptance with Israel's Messiah which they could not have taken for granted.

- Did you know that Peter had a wife? Not mentioned, but neither are any children.

Following Jesus (8:18-22)

Itinerant ministry. Mission. Not tied to one place. "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

This sounds a rather harsh judgement, but in essence Jesus is saying that this would be disciple isn't very committed. It's one of those situations that we come across time and again where Jesus takes a typical scenario and turns it on its head, and makes it impossible.

If the father had just died, the son could hardly be out at the roadside with Jesus; his place was to be keep vigil and preparing for the funeral. So, therefore, this would be a request for an indefinite delay of discipleship.

The cultural 'insensitivity' of Jesus' demand underlines the radical newness and supreme significance of the message of the kingdom of heaven. Compared with those who have found true life in the kingdom of heaven, those who remain outside are 'the dead.' It is a metaphor. A disciple's business is with life, not with death. This poses further questions about conversion and discipleship which we will look at later in the course.

Further demonstrations of authority, deliverance and discipleship are given in 8:23-9:34. Matthew demonstrates Jesus' power over a wide variety of threatening forces, natural and supernatural, and in the uncompromising demand which he makes on those who follow him.

But the overriding note is not one of inflexible power (c.f. Roman governance) but deliverance and joy, as people are set free from danger, disease, demonic powers and death, and called to share with Jesus in enjoying the the kingdom of heaven.

Next week we look at various responses to the Messiah.

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