

The Synoptic Gospels

Week 2

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Outline

The Genealogy

- Matthew

- Luke

- Special Problems

Infancy Narratives

- Common Themes

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Son of David

Matthew's genealogy clearly focuses on Jesus' role as the reigning king on David's throne. Notice:

- v.1—"the Messiah [Christos], the son of David"
- v. 6—"David the king"
- v. 16—"Who is called the Messiah [Christos]"
- v. 17—"from the exile to the Messiah [Christos]"

Matthew also uses David as one of his "hinges" in the genealogy: Abraham to David, David to the Exile, Exile to the Messiah.

14-Generation Cycle

Matthew uses the number 14 for the 3 cycles of generations. Since he's already highlighting special names, why not 12?

David's Name in Hebrew is דוד, where ד is the 4th letter and ו is the 6th, which means that the number $14=4+6+4= ד+ו+ד$ is David's number. Seems like numerology, right...?

RT France remarks on this numerical symbolism:

... it is well attested in Rabbinic circles, and the clear emphasis on David through the genealogy suggests it may be in Matthew's mind. If he did not do it deliberately, he would probably have been delighted to have it pointed out to him! (France, 80)

What Does this Teach Us?

Matthew is trying to call to his audience's mind that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning David:

- 2 Sam 7:16—Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever. [To David]
- Isaiah 9:6,7—For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD will accomplish this.
- Ezekiel 34:22,3—Therefore, I will deliver my flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another. Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.
- See also Isaiah 16:5, 40:11, Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Ezekiel 37:24; Zech 12:6ff.

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Luke's Genealogy

Luke's genealogy neither has the numerical structure nor does it exhibit the same explicitness of message. Here are some observations:

- Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, which links Jesus to all of humanity, not just the Jews. Some suggest that this is a reference to Christ as the Final Adam (cf. Rom 5:14ff; I Cor 15:22).
- The reproduction of a large part of the genealogies from Genesis call to mind the Seed imagery from Gen 3:15 and its universal appeal.
- Luke's genealogy placed after Jesus' baptism. A key part of John's baptism was to demonstrate that mere Jewish heritage was not enough for salvation. (More on this next week.)

These two emphases aren't incompatible. Matthew and Luke both make clear the special place of Israel (cf. Luke 2:22-24) and the ultimately global mission (Mt 28:18-20)

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Accounting for Differences

There are no doubt *more* names in Luke's account, but this is the easier issue to explain based on Matthew's dedication to memorization.

The more puzzling questions relate to deviations in the record.

Deviation Point	Matthew	Luke
Joseph's Father	Jacob	Heli
David's Son	Solomon	Nathan
Zerubbabel's Son	Abihud	Rhesa
Shealtiel's Father	Jeconiah	Neri

As expected, at each change, there is a long stretch of differences. How could we account for these?

Accounting for Differences

How could we account for these differences? Liefeld remarks:

To all this it must be added that we possess not a poverty but a plethora of possibilities. Therefore the lack of certainty due to incomplete information need not imply error in either genealogy. (Liefeld, 861-2)

Here are some options:

1. Given Matthew's special interest in David, most scholars argue that Matthew is following the *legal* royal line, as evidenced by the path through Solomon. This requires at least some adoptions (not the least, Joseph's adoption of Jesus).
2. Levirate marriage or other adoptive arrangements could account for the disparity in fatherhood.
3. Disparity in children is easily accounted for by brotherhood.
4. I Chronicles suggests that there is some adoptive path between Jeconiah and Zerubbabel (3:17-19); Could Rhesa be Shelomith's husband? (3:19)

Accounting for Differences

5. What genealogy Luke is tracking permits these possibilities:
- Luke follows Mary's line, biological or adoptive.
 - Pros: Luke focuses on Mary elsewhere. It is more plausible than a double adoption (Jacob-Joseph, Joseph-Jesus)
 - Cons: Genealogies almost never follow women. To this point: Luke, however, is speaking of a virgin birth, and we have no information as to how a genealogy would be reckoned when there was no human father. The case is unique. (Morris, 119)
 - Luke follows Joseph's biological line.
 - Pros: The name listed in Joseph, not Mary
 - Cons: Who cares about Joseph's biological line since Jesus is not his biological son?

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Titles for Christ

From even Jesus' childhood, the titles given to him are highly exalted:

- *Jesus*—This name means “The LORD saves,” and/or “I am your salvation” (Matt 1:21, 25; Luke 1:31, 2:21)
- *Immanuel*—“God is with us,” also links to Isaiah (Matt 1:23)
- *King of the Jews*—More exalted than it seems given the place that Israel plays in OT end-times prophecy (Matt 2:2)
- *Messiah*—Means “the anointed one,” (Matt 2:4; Luke 2:11)
- *Son of the Most High*—Highly exalted, used by demons as well...! (Luke 1:32)
- *Lord*—This is at least indicating superiority, but it is also the term used in LXX for YHWH (Luke 1:43, 76; 2:11)
- *Savior/Salvation*—The one has come to rescue people from sin: “save people from sins,” and “knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins” (Matt 1:21; Luke 2:11, 2:30)

Visitors

In both Matthew and Luke, there are visitors during Jesus' very early days. Did anything stand out to you in these episodes?

1. *Shepherds*

- The Shepherds are frightened by the angels which indicates that this sort of thing doesn't just happen in biblical narrative.
- The angel refers to Jesus as Savior, Christ, Lord and yet he is born in the lowliest of circumstances.
- The manger-birth foreshadows of the lack of reception for Jesus (Cf. Parable of Banquet)

2. *Magi*

- The Magi, gentiles, appear more interested in Christ than the priests/scribes. At the least, it is very peculiar that God would offer the Magi such special insight (2:1-3)
- The Magi worshipped Jesus! (2:11)
- Offering of gifts consonant with their view that he is King of Jews (cf. 2:2)

Visitors

What are some points of commonality?

- Both cases are extremely ironic from the stand point of the social order of 1st C Judaism: poor shepherds, gentiles who use divination(!) get to meet the young Messiah
- Both cases involve signs and wonders (angels, dreams, astrology...?!). Such displays leave no room for doubt about God's view the little Jesus!
- Both cases seem to have been initiated by God (star appearing to the magi, the shepherds receiving a special angelic visitation).

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Matthew's Use of the Old Testament

There is not a one-size-fits-all account of how Matthew cites the Old Testament. Let's look at how he uses them (in increasing order of difficulty):

1. Micah 5:2—Aside from some peculiarity of Matthew's translation, this the most direct and straightforward prophecy. A future king (who is very ancient!) will come from Bethlehem.
2. Hosea 11:1—Hosea is talking straightforwardly about Israel during the Exodus. Matthew consistently highlights Jesus' role as a *type* of Israel, especially during this part of its history.
3. Isaiah 7:14—Until you read the OT, this passage seems straightforward. However, there appears to be a natural fulfillment in the immediate context (Isaiah 8:1-10) which is also not obviously messianic! Many argue that there is a thread that runs from Ch. 7 into the obviously messianic Ch.9 so that Jesus is the more full, eschatological fulfillment of *Immanuel*.

Matthew's Use of the Old Testament

4. Nazarene???—This one is mainly mysterious because there is nothing that fits this citation word-for-word. The best guess is that Matthew is connecting the name of Jesus' hometown (Nazareth contains the root word for 'branch') with the 'branch' prophecies (Isaiah 11:1, 53:2; Jeremiah 23:5).
5. Jeremiah 31:15—This reference is far from straightforward. The original passage mentions a city Ramah, not Bethlehem, and is primarily about the exit of Jerusalem during Babylonian exile. Most scholars view this as another typological fulfillment, especially since the subsequent context in Jeremiah following this predicts a time when the weeping will stop and the new covenant will come.

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The Temple Episodes

What do we learn about Jesus from these three episodes in the temple:

1. *Simeon*
2. *Anna*
3. *The Boy Jesus*

The Temple Episodes

What do we learn about Jesus from these three episodes in the temple?

1. *Simeon*

- Jesus is the Messiah
- Jesus is the salvation for Israel and the whole world
- Jesus will be a divisive, polarizing figure, reaching into his own family.

2. *Anna*—Jesus would bring about the redemption of Jerusalem.

3. *The Boy Jesus*

- Jesus clearly signals an awareness of his identity even at this early stage. (Note the contrast between the referents of Mary's "your father" and Jesus' "my father")
- In spite of this Jesus obediently went home (2:51) signaling the way that Jesus' humility runs in tandem with his exalted identity.

Point? Jesus' identity is explicit from the very beginning to the godly.

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