

3 Things You Should Know about Matthew's Gospel

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The first verse in Matthew's gospel tells us three important things about Jesus that sum up a great deal of what follows.

1. Matthew is about Jesus, the Christ.

Matthew is a book about Jesus “the Christ,” that is, the promised Anointed One of the Old Testament, the Messiah (1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 2:2; Dan. 9:25; see also Matt. 1:16–18; 2:4; 16:16, 20; 22:42; 23:8–10). Matthew's gospel continues the story of salvation revealed in the Old Testament and is, most appropriately, our doorway into the New Testament. Matthew repeatedly refers to the Old Testament, even writing in its style.¹

Matthew is, however, more than just a continuation of that story; it is its fulfillment—a point that is made with great emphasis. Ten times Matthew points out that what happened in the life of Jesus is the fulfillment of what the prophets had spoken (Matt. 1:22; 2:15; 2:17; 2:23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9). Similarly, there are ten miracles in chapters 8–9 that demonstrate Jesus has complete power to bring His people the healing and salvation promised by the prophets (Matt. 8:17, citing Isa. 53:4; cf. Isa. 35:5). Matthew highlights this by his distinctive way of reporting on Jesus' miracles, “healing every disease and every affliction” (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 10:1). It was not enough for him just to say, “every disease and affliction,” for he wanted to underscore that nothing could thwart His power—so, he repeats the adjective twice, “healing every disease and every affliction.” By the frequent use of the name “son of David” in connection with healings done by Jesus (Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30), he shows that His kingdom is one of complete blessing and deliverance for His people. Truly, He is the anointed Servant (Matt. 12:18–21, citing Isa. 42:1–3), the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, the fulfillment of all that the prophets foretold.

2. Matthew is about Jesus, the son of David.

Jesus Christ is also the promised son of David, the One whose kingdom would have no end (2 Sam. 7:13; Ps. 89:3; Isa. 9:7). Matthew provides His royal genealogy (Matt. 1:2–17), tracing His descent in three stages from Abraham to David, from David to Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon, and then from Jechoniah down to Joseph the son of David, who was the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born. By taking special notice of the deportation to Babylon, which he mentions twice (Matt. 1:11, 12),

¹ For example, Matthew uses the Greek word *idou* more than sixty times. It appears more than one thousand times in the Greek Old Testament and is commonly translated in English (KJV, ESV, etc.) as “behold,” but occasionally other words are used. Luke writes in a similar way, but Mark and John do not use it so frequently. Readers of the NIV beware: this English version frequently omits the word because it is not a common way for us to speak today. But Matthew and the Old Testament do speak that way: it is one of the ways the Bible puts emphasis upon a point. Matthew thus demonstrates how deeply the language of the Old Testament had permeated his soul. Notice that his first use of it (1:20) comes just before a quotation from the Old Testament that also uses it (1:23). NIV omits the word in both places.

Matthew shows that God's promises to David did not come to an end with the deportation to Babylon. Matthew has thus picked up on the final words of 2 Kings, which tell us that the line of David (despite the slaughter of Zedekiah's five sons) was preserved during the exile to Babylon through Jechoniah (also called Jehoiachin; Jer. 24:1; 2 Kings 24:6–17; 25:27–30). Second Kings ends by anticipating the Messiah's reign, telling us that Jehoiachin was released from prison and given a seat above all the other kings who were in Babylon. Matthew ends with the fulfillment of that passage, showing that Jesus the son of David is given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).

3. Matthew is about Jesus, the son of Abraham.

Matthew tells us that Jesus is the son of Abraham, by which he means not merely that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham, but that He is the promised seed of Abraham, the One in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 22:18; 26:4). This "all nations" reach of the salvation that Jesus brings is very subtly introduced in the genealogy (Matt. 1:2–6) by mentioning four women: three of whom are gentiles (Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth) and the last of whom is the wife of a gentile (Uriah the Hittite, 2 Sam. 11:3). Then, after the birth of Jesus, we find that God has summoned gentile wise men by a star to come worship the One who is born the King of the Jews (Matt. 2:1–12, alluding to Isa. 60:1–7). When it comes time for this King to begin His public ministry, it is done in "Galilee of the Gentiles" for it is an "all nations" salvation that He brings (Matt. 4:12–17, fulfilling Isa. 9:1–2).

Among Jesus' very first miracles are the healing of a Roman centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5–13) and later a Canaanite woman's daughter who was severely oppressed by a demon (Matt. 15:21–28). The feeding of the four thousand (which Mark 7:31 indicates was in the Decapolis on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee) shows that Jesus did among the gentiles what He had done for the Jews in the feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14:13–21; 15:32–38). In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus reveals that the gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the nations before the end would come (Matt. 24:14). The book concludes with Jesus' command that His Apostles should make disciples of all the nations, which points us to the consummation of the promise made to Abraham (Matt. 28:18–20).

Jesus is the Christ, the son of David, and the son of Abraham—these are three things you should know about the Gospel According to Matthew.