

Sermon Outline

“Introducing the Gospel of Matthew,” Matthew, Part 1 – Matthew 1:1-17

Robin Boisvert – May 6, 2012

Introduction

1. At the center of the Christian faith is the life, teaching and mighty acts of Jesus of Nazareth, a 1st century Jew. Without him as the foundation, there would be no Christianity and no Church. So where do we learn about this amazing person? Apart from a few references by ancient historians, we learn all that we know about Jesus in the portion of the Bible called the New Testament, particularly the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
2. Like other gospels, Matthew is a combination of literary genres – biographical and historical.
 - a. Matthew is biographical in that it tells the story of the life of Jesus. Matthew begins with Jesus’ birth. But most of the story is about his three years of public ministry that began when he was around 30 years old. And like other gospel writers, Matthew puts an important emphasis on the last week of Jesus’ life, especially the last 24 hours.
 - b. Matthew is also historical. Some have claimed that Matthew is historically unreliable because of some discrepancies with other gospel accounts. However, ancient writers were not as concerned with our 21st century desire for strict chronology. Instead, they would often arrange their materials topically to make and drive home a point. That is what Matthew did. When we understand these ancient practices, many of the supposed discrepancies disappear.
3. Why study Matthew? As a church we desire to know Jesus better. We desire to see and savor Jesus as our ultimate joy and treasure. Through the illumination and work of the Holy Spirit, taking an extended and sustained look at Jesus will help us to grow in our love and passion for Jesus and our commitment to follow him regardless the cost.

A Story of Continuity

1. The Bible has been described as Promises Made (in the Old Testament) and Promises Kept (in the New Testament). Matthew continues the story of the Old Testament, the story of God’s promises to Israel and the Jewish people, and shows how those promises are fulfilled in Jesus.
 - a. In Matthew, we repeatedly encounter phrases like, “that it might be fulfilled,” “that what is written might be fulfilled,” “according to the Scriptures,” and “for so it is written by the prophet.” This shows the direct connection with the inspired writings of the Old Testament.



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- b. Matthew is the first book in the New Testament. As such, it is a bridge from the Old to the New Testament. The last book in the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) is Chronicles. And Chronicles begins with a genealogy. The first book in the New Testament is Matthew, which also begins with a genealogy. The only two books in the Bible that begin with genealogies are Chronicles and Matthew. Coincidence? No, Matthew is a bridge connecting the Old with the New.
 - c. Matthew is also described as a tree. This tree has its roots in the Old Testament, but spreads its branches into the New Testament and into the Church Age, that carries on the redemptive work of God in the gospel message of Jesus Christ.
 2. Continuity is also depicted in Matthew's genealogy. In the very first verse, Jesus is called the son of Abraham and the son of David. Matthew begins by linking Jesus Christ with the two most illustrious figures in the history of Israel – David and Abraham.
 - a. The title "son of David," which is used often in Matthew, is the title associated with the Old Testament Messiah or Christ (as it is translated in Greek). In the first century, the Messiah was understood mainly as a political deliverer. A "son of David" was expected, looked for and longed for by the Jewish people. He was the one who would deliver them from the uncircumcised Romans and restore the glory of Israel just like it once was in the days of David (see Isaiah 9:6-7).
 - b. There are some other details in this family tree that also speak to continuity. There are five women referenced or mentioned by name. In ancient times, women had very little status. It is noteworthy that Matthew included them. And the women themselves are controversial. Tamar willingly committed incest with her father-in-law, Judah. Rahab was a prostitute. Ruth was a Gentile. Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, was the one with whom David committed adultery. And lastly there is Mary. She is also controversial, not because of anything she did wrong, but because her situation calls for more explanation. The birth of Jesus Christ, son of Abraham, son of David, is also the birth of the Son of God. By including these women, Matthew whispers that God's plan of redemption continues. But it is not just for the Jews. It is for all of mankind – for men and women, for sinners, for the marginalized of society and for Gentiles.
 3. All this is about continuity with Israel and the Old Testament religion of the Jewish people. The foundation of the church is the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.

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A Story of Conflict

1. There is tension and conflict in Matthew. From almost the very beginning of the story, even while a baby, there are those who want to kill Jesus. There is opposition from Satan and from demons. The crowds that are thrilled with him at first eventually turn against him. His own disciples for the most part don't get it and at times oppose him. There is conflict with the mighty Roman Empire that will lead to his death by crucifixion. But most of all, there is conflict with the religious leaders of Israel.
2. Jesus is a polarizing figure. He draws adherents and followers. But he also provokes opposition. In the development of this conflict in Matthew's gospel, people are called to choose sides.
 - a. Today is no different. We are called to choose sides. Will you follow Him, or will you oppose Him? "Whoever confesses (acknowledge) me before men, I also will confess (acknowledge) before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men I also will deny before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

A Story of Comfort

1. At the beginning of the story we read that Jesus' name means "God with us." "'She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, *God with us*)" (Matthew 1:21-23).
2. And at the end of the story, we read similar words, "... and behold, *I am with you always*, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).
3. "*God with us*," "*I am with you always*." Is there anything that could be more comforting than to have God's abiding and eternal presence with us?
 - a. Right in the middle of the Gospel of Matthew is the most wonderfully gracious and tender invitation that could ever be extended, which Jesus offered then and still offers today, "Come unto me all you who labor (weary) and are heavy laden (burdened) and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).
 - b. There is no better, no more blessed, no greater comfort than the comfort that comes when God is with us. And God *is* with you when you believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son.

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Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Matthew 1:1-17.
2. How is Matthew a “story of continuity”? How are the promises made in the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus?
3. What is the significance of including references to five women in Matthew’s genealogy? What does this whisper about God’s ongoing plan of redemption?
4. How is Matthew a “story of conflict”? How does Jesus’ polarizing life and claims require we choose sides?
5. What comfort do you receive from knowing that Jesus is always with us?
6. In what one way would you like to grow in knowing, loving and following Jesus more?