

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 7, Introduction to Matthew

© 2024 Dave Mathewson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. David Mathewson presenting New Testament History and Literature, lecture 7, The Introduction to Matthew.

All right, let's go ahead and get going. Welcome. What I want to do today is finally start to get into the specific New Testament text themselves and we'll follow the canonical order starting with Matthew through Revelation. We're not going to follow the order in which they're written, but the order in which they occur in the New Testament.

So, we'll start today by looking at Matthew, and before we do that, let's open with prayer.

Father, we stand before you to listen to your word as we analyze it with our minds, I pray that Lord we'll continue to hear you speak to us through it, recognizing that what we have is a document that is produced in and requires to be understood in light of its original historical context, yet a document that still continues to function as the word of God for your people today. So, with that in mind, we bring all that we are, our thinking abilities, and our analytical abilities, but also, we desire to hear the text as your word. And I pray that we'll be able to grasp a little bit of what that means today. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

All right, before we look at the specific Gospels, and particularly the Gospel of Matthew, as we said, it's important to understand that in reading the New Testament, the primary background, or we might say foreground, for hearing and reading the New Testament is undoubtedly the Old Testament. The New Testament, despite the word new, is not something that is discontinuous with the Old Testament, but we said earlier on in the semester, that the New Testament stands in relationship to the Old, not as something superior, not as something brand new or unheard of before, but it stands in relationship to the Old as promise and fulfillment.

The New Testament must be seen as the climax and fulfillment of the story begun in the Old Testament. So, it's not as if the Old Testament story ran its course and it was over, and then God began to tell a new story centering around Jesus Christ and the church and his apostles, et cetera, but instead, the New Testament is simply a continuation of the final chapter of the story that began in the Old Testament. So, it's important to maybe have just a very, very painfully brief summary of the story that I'm convinced particularly Matthew would have assumed as he wrote his gospel.

So, what story would they have told themselves based on the Old Testament? The first part of the story is that Israel is still in exile because of sin. If you remember from your Old Testament survey, because of sin and idolatry, God allowed nations, mainly the Assyrians and Babylonians, to come in and take away Israel, God's people, and cart them off into exile as punishment for their sins. And although they returned physically to the land, there were at least still many Jews who considered themselves still in exile.

And that would have become even more prominent now with the Roman Empire taking everything over again. Remember, everything now that we read in the New Testament is written in the context of Roman rule. The Romans rule everything.

They're the world power. And so most Israelites would have told themselves a story based on the Old Testament that they were still in exile, waiting to be delivered from that because of sins. The second part of the story then is that although Israel is in exile, God will one day soon intervene to set things right, to make everything right, to rescue his people, Israel, and to set them free.

That is, God would keep his promises, the long-awaited promises he made to Abraham, that he made to David, the promises that the prophets reiterated from the Old Testament, all of those would one day come to fulfillment when God intervened to set things right, not only among Israel but the entire cosmos. And finally, in this way, God would also eventually bring salvation to the entire world. So, it was through the restoration of Israel as God's people that, consistent with the promise God made to Abraham, remember what God said to Abraham, I will bless you and I will make you a blessing, and ultimately all the nations of the earth will be blessed through you.

So, through the restoration of Israel, God's people, then salvation could spread to the entire earth. And so, this was the story that was waiting to be fulfilled. What all four Gospels have in common is they find that the conclusion to this story and the fulfillment of this story takes place in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, let's start with the first Gospel, the Gospel of a tax collector. So, first of all, who is the author of Matthew? What I want to say about the authorship of Matthew kind of relates to all four Gospels, and that is when you open your English Bibles and you find the titles, the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Mark, the Gospel according to Luke, Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not originally write that. Usually, Gospels were anonymous, that is, a narrative was anonymous.

You did not have the name of the person writing it somewhere in the text, as you do with Paul's letters where he identifies himself. But the Gospels were technically anonymous. They did not include the name of the author.

So those titles, according to Mark, according to Matthew, the Gospel according to John, and the Gospel according to Luke, were actually later additions by the church. As the church gathered these Gospels together and recognized them as Scripture, as canon, a canonical Scripture, they attributed these titles to the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. However, without going into detail, that doesn't mean that they're unreliable.

There's very good reason to trust these titles as reliable indicators of who the authors were. Most of these titles were attached quite early to the Gospels. It's not as if three, four, five, six hundred years later they got attached.

They were actually attached very early in some of the earliest evidence we have of the church fathers. They attribute this Gospel to Matthew or the Gospel to Mark. We already said that Mark, tradition has it that Mark was known as the interpreter of Peter's Gospel.

And so, Mark's Gospel is a reflection of Peter's teaching and Peter's preaching. So, I just want you to know that the titles that you have in your Gospels were not written by the Gospel authors. Instead, they were attributed to the Gospels later on by the church.

But there's good reason to take those seriously as accurate accounts of who it was that wrote the Gospels. Matthew, as the title implies, Matthew, you actually read about him in the Gospels, Matthew was a tax collector that Jesus called to be one of his disciples, one of his followers. Now when we read Matthew, one of the key features of Matthew, and I don't intend to talk about this with all the Gospels or all the writings.

I'm not into outlines just for the sake of outlining a book. Sometimes they help us to kind of have a summary of the content of each section. But the main thing that's helpful for me about outlines is when they give you a clue about the structure and the development of the book.

What does an outline say about the way the book is put together and the way it develops? One of the key structural features of Matthew is that Matthew, unlike the other Gospels, and again, what we want to do as we go through the four Gospels, I'm mainly interested in looking at what is distinct and unique about each of the Gospels. And by that, I don't mean that's the only important thing, what's unique. But one way to look at Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is to focus on what they have that distinguishes them from each other.

So, as we work through Matthew, we want to know what Matthew includes that's distinct or that he has that he emphasizes that is not in the other three Gospels or at least not to the same extent as Matthew does. One of the unique features is the way

Matthew has put his Gospel together. That is, in the plan of Matthew, Matthew has put his material together in a way that stresses five main discourses or five main blocks of the teachings of Jesus.

And they look like this. The first block of discourse, the first main, if you have a red-letter Bible, the entirety of these sections would be in red letters. I won't talk right now about what I think about red letter additions.

You can ask me later. But these are meant to represent the fact that Matthew seems, unlike the other Gospels, Matthew seems to present Jesus as teaching lengthy blocks of discourse on five occasions. The first one is fairly well known to you, the Sermon on the Mount.

The other one in chapter 13 is a long string of parables that Jesus taught to explain what Jesus comes teaching the kingdom of God, what does that mean? And if Jesus is teaching the kingdom of God, why are the Romans, why is Caesar still on the throne? Why are the Romans still in control? Jesus tells a series of parables that answer that question. And then to skip to the last one, the last and fifth one in chapters 23 through 25 is Jesus' teaching about the end times when Christ will return to judge Israel, to judge the nations, to set up his kingdom in something often known as the Olivet discourse or the eschatological discourse. But a lengthy teaching on Jesus' return to judge the world and to provide salvation for his followers.

And there's a series of parables, you probably know the parable of the sheep and the goats. That parable occurs in this block of teaching. So, Matthew sets up his gospel according to five blocks of teaching.

And what happens at the end of each of these five, when you read Matthew, one thing that indicates that Matthew's intentionally doing this is at the end of each of these five blocks of discourse, Matthew ends by saying, that when Jesus finished these sayings, or when Jesus finished saying these things. And then Matthew will launch into another section and eventually include another lengthy discourse. And then at the end of chapter 10, when Jesus finished saying these things.

And then another block of teaching, another block of discourse, and when Jesus finished saying these things. So, Matthew clearly intends to present Jesus as teaching on five occasions in rather lengthy blocks of discourse. There have been various suggestions as to why that is.

One person said that these five blocks of discourses represent Jesus as teaching or presenting a new law like Moses. Remember the first five books of the Bible, hopefully, you recall the word Pentateuch, the term referring to the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Some

would suggest these five blocks are meant to portray Jesus as a new bringer of the law like Moses.

Just as we have five books of Moses, now we have five teachings of Jesus. That probably is not quite correct. I don't know if Matthew is trying to present Jesus as a new giver of a new law like Moses.

I think he does, as we'll see, he does present Jesus as one like Moses. But at the very least, we can say Matthew intends to present Jesus as a teacher, as one who comes to teach and to instruct by presenting Jesus as teaching in these five blocks of discourses. And again, you'll find in John, John also has lengthy teachings of Jesus, but none of the other Gospels are structured along the lines of these main five blocks of discourse, these lengthy teachings of Jesus.

So that's a key feature of the book of Matthew. When we start to look at the text of Matthew itself, when we start to look at the book of Matthew, and then we'll broaden back out later on and ask, why in the world did Matthew write this Gospel anyway? Again, did Matthew just sit down one day and decide he needed to write a life of Christ or something that 21st-century students at College could study in New Testament Survey, or was there some specific reason, perhaps, or reasons why Matthew felt it necessary to write this Gospel? I'll make a few suggestions about that after we've looked at some of the details. But first of all, look at the very first verse of Matthew because it actually tells us quite a bit about what he intends to do, and how he tends to answer the, complete story.

Remember the story that people would have been telling themselves, Israel is still in exile because of sin, but God will one day intervene to set the world right, mainly by saving his people Israel, keeping his promises to Abraham, to David, all his covenant promises with Israel, that God will set things right, and through that, ultimately God will save the entire world. Now how does Matthew answer that? Starting with chapter 1 and verse 1, an account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. That introduction is important for at least two reasons.

Number one is Matthew introduces what his Greco-Roman biography is going to be about. It's going to be about Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The term Messiah, as you know, the term Messiah goes back to the promise that God made to David.

God promised David that there would be a king who would sit on the throne and rule over Israel, a son of David who would come along, and way back in the Old Testament, in 2 Samuel, God promised that David's kingdom would have no end. There would always be someone sitting on the throne, and the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel picked up on this. They understood a time when God would return to deliver his people, and that would include a son in the line of David sitting on the throne.

Now with Matthew saying this is a book about the Messiah, he immediately connects his book with the Old Testament promises of a coming messianic king, who would now rule over Israel. Now the problem that we're going to have to look at a little bit later, the problem is, how can that be? How can that be with Caesar on the throne? How can that be when Rome is in charge of everything? How can Jesus, this Jesus of Nazareth, how can he be this Messiah, this awaited king, in fulfillment of these Old Testament expectations, when they seem contradicted by reality? Because Rome is in control, and Caesar is on his throne. So, Jesus is the Messiah, the son of David, and that clearly ties this person, Jesus Christ, back to the Old Testament promises of a coming Davidic king.

Again, starting with 2 Samuel, the promise God made to David, that there would always be a son sitting on his throne, his throne would last forever, into the prophets. You remember the text that we quote at Christmastime, a son will be born, his name will be mighty God, wonderful counselor, etc., etc., but it goes on and says, that he will sit on David's throne and rule the nations in righteousness forever. So, the prophets anticipated a day when the promises of God, that a coming king in David's line would eventually emerge, and now the author of Matthew clearly indicates that this Jesus now is the answer to that question or the fulfillment of those promises.

But there's more, not only is he the son of David, in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of a Davidic king, but he's also the son of Abraham. Now why is that important? Why not the son of Moses, or the son of Isaac, or the son of Daniel, or the son of Isaiah or Jeremiah? There are other important figures in the Old Testament. Why Abraham? What does Matthew intend to indicate by saying that Jesus is the son of Abraham? So what? Or why not Noah? Or Adam, who could have gone all the way back to the beginning.

Why Abraham? What do we know about Abraham in the Old Testament that might help us to understand why Matthew would want to present Jesus as the son of Abraham? God had made a covenant with Abraham, and what was that covenant about? You're exactly right. He would be a great nation, Abraham would be blessed, and a great nation would emerge from him, and you're right, the descendants would be more numerous than the stars of the sky and the sands of the seas. In other words, the Israelite nation would emerge from this one person, Abraham.

But there's more. What else in addition to that? I think to expand out into the world is to be a great nation of God that Jesus himself was supposed to spread out into the world to kind of reform the nation. Alright, so ultimately, you're exactly right, all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham.

So, Abraham is promised back in Genesis 12, this is where the Abrahamic covenant begins, as you mentioned. In chapter 12, God promises that Abraham will make him a great nation and a great name, but ultimately, all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him. So, by calling Jesus the son of Abraham, not only is Jesus the answer to the salvation of the Jews, but remember our story that the Jews are still in exile and they're waiting for a time when God intervenes to set things right and rescue people.

Not only will Jesus Christ answer that and be the solution to the Jewish problem of their sin and exile, but now by linking Jesus with Abraham, Jesus will also be the means by which salvation will extend to the entire world. If Matthew had just said Jesus is the son of David, it could have easily been understood, well, here's the Jewish Messiah come to save his people Israel. But by linking him with Abraham, Jesus is now the one who will not only save Israel, he will save all the nations of the earth, Gentiles as well.

And one of the things we're going to see about Matthew very quickly is that Matthew more than any of the other Gospels consistently portrays Jesus as saving Gentiles, not just the Jewish constituency. So, the very first verse is important for understanding the rest of the narrative, that Matthew intends to portray Jesus as the son of David, the king, not just for Israel, not just in fulfillment of the promises to Israel, but in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham that salvation would eventually go to the ends of the earth, to all the nations of the earth. So, Jesus is the Messiah not just for Jews, but for Gentiles as well.

Now the genealogy that follows, remember verse 1 begins an account of the genealogy. Now if you're like me, you naturally would want to skip through that and find where the real narrative begins. But this genealogy was of utmost significance for a number of reasons, primarily because it demonstrated that Jesus legally had the right to sit on David's throne.

The genealogy attempts, the primary function of it is to demonstrate that Jesus has the legal right to sit on David's throne as the adopted legal son of Joseph, who was biologically a descendant of David. So, Jesus, although he's not physically, as we'll see in Matthew 1 and 2, Jesus was not physically a son of Joseph. Mary conceives apart from normal relationships with Joseph.

Jesus is not physically and biologically a son of Joseph, but legally he is when Joseph names him. And so legally, Jesus has the right to sit on David's throne as a son of David, in the line of David. And so, this genealogy is of utmost importance.

Even the way it's structured, the genealogy is broken into three sections of 14 generations. Now that might not seem significant to us, but as I understand, the number 14 is actually the number of the Hebrew letters for the name David. So

again, Matthew is very artistically building a case for showing Jesus is the true messianic king, the son of David.

But not just for Jews, through Abraham, he's the Messiah for Gentiles as well. So, the genealogy is very significant in establishing Jesus' right to sit on David's throne. As I said, one of the most characteristic features of Matthew is the Gentile emphasis.

We'll see that in just a moment. But what I mean by that is there are a number of places where Matthew includes references to Gentiles responding to Jesus that you don't find in the other Gospels. And we'll look at a couple of those questions.

Yeah, this may be an abbreviated list. There's nothing to think that, you know, Matthew had to include every single last person. He may have intentionally structured this way to emphasize the three numbers, three 14s, again, to bring out the emphasis on David.

Notice the mention of exile in the genealogy too. So, Jesus has come to bring the exile to an end. All the stories that Israel was telling itself are now reaching its fulfillment and its conclusion.

For example, we'll look at a specific example of how Gentiles responding to Jesus are included in Matthew in a way you won't find anywhere else. But this is a rather interesting story. In Matthew chapter, I think it's chapter 8 that I want.

In Matthew chapter 8 or, here it is, chapter 8, a very common Jewish metaphor for what would happen when God came and restored his people and saved his people was a banquet. That is, the imagery of eating a meal or having a banquet was a common metaphor for what would take place when God visited his people, restored them, and provided salvation. And notice in one of Jesus' teachings, notice what he does with this image of a banquet.

He says, When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who follow, so here's what Jesus says, Truly I tell you, in nobody in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you that many will come from the east and the west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Now this idea of coming from the East and the West, basically Jesus is saying not only Jews but Gentiles will sit at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

That would have been unthinkable to a Jew in the first century. That this banquet, this banquet in the future representative of God restoring his people, it would have been unthinkable that anybody else but Jews would sit at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now Jesus envisions a time when Gentiles, people from the East and the West all over, will come to this banquet that most Jews would have felt was reserved for them.

And now this banquet, again it's kind of a metaphor for God in the future coming to save his people and set up his kingdom. Unthinkable that anyone but Jews would participate in that. But now Jesus has Gentiles sitting at the table alongside of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Again, that's something you don't find in the other Gospels. Something that Matthew seems to want to emphasize. And that happens numerous times throughout the Gospels.

You find, how does Matthew's Gospel end? It ends with Jesus saying, All authority has been given me in heaven and earth. Therefore, go and make disciples, not of all Jews or Israelites, but of all the nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Teaching them to do all I command. So, the Gospel ends with a call to evangelize the whole nations. That is, this coming king, this Messiah, this Jesus in the line of David is meant to provide salvation and rescue not just for Jews, but for Gentiles as well.

So, the Gospel of Matthew ends with a call to preach this Gospel to all the nations, not just Israel. But one of the most intriguing examples of Gentile inclusion, as well as a couple of other things, is the account in chapter 2 of the wise men, or magi, coming to visit Jesus. Now, we looked a little bit at this in connection with the Christmas story, but again, this is a feature that none of the other Gospels have.

Only Matthew and Luke have a record of Jesus' birth, but Luke has the shepherds come and visit Jesus, and Matthew, interestingly, doesn't. Instead, Matthew has the wise men, or the magi, come and visit Jesus. Luke says nothing about them.

Now, that doesn't mean that Luke didn't know about them, or Matthew didn't know about the shepherds. At the most, it meant that it really wasn't relevant for their purposes. Remember, the writers of the Gospels are selective.

They're not giving you a detailed account of everything that happened to Jesus and everything he did and said. They only include the information that communicates their purpose. So, Matthew includes the story of the wise men or magi.

Why did he do that? First of all, it's important to understand who the magi were. The magi were understood as astrologers, probably from Persia or Babylon. That is, they studied the stars.

They would have also had access to the Old Testament, no doubt. And in connection with that, then, again, there are explanations as to how we can understand the star. Maybe at some point, we can talk about that.

But my emphasis now is going to be to focus on, what is the story doing. So, the magi follow this star, these astrologers, and they come to Bethlehem, and they worship Jesus. What is significant about that, primarily, is these magi, not only are they astrologers, they are foreigners. They are Gentiles.

And you can almost see the intrigue or the comedy in the narrative. When you read the fact that the first stopping point of the magi was the city of Jerusalem. And what you don't know is, Bethlehem was basically right out of Jerusalem's back door.

It was a rather insignificant city. And it's intriguing. I think the intentional comedy in this is these Babylonian astrologers travel a long way and over a long period of time to get to Bethlehem.

Yet, it's interesting, that Herod and the other people in Jerusalem don't even go out their back door and go the short distance to Bethlehem. Instead, Herod, interestingly, tells the wise men, Go find this child, and when you find him, report back to me. Why couldn't Herod himself go? Bethlehem is just out the back door.

Yet, these foreigners, Gentiles, travel a considerable distance over a considerable period of time to come visit Jesus. When, again, those who knew better, the Jewish leaders and Herod, didn't even bother to go the short distance to Bethlehem to worship Jesus. So, again, Matthew begins.

Matthew chapter 2 begins with a story of Gentiles, instead of Jews, Gentiles, that come and worship Jesus. However, there's more going on in this story. And, actually, I want to also include chapters 3 and 4 in just a moment.

But, there's more going on in this story with the wise men coming to visit Jesus. But, also, what happens right after... Remember, right after the record of Jesus' birth, Matthew, like the other writers, jumps right into Jesus' adult ministry. He tells us nothing about what happened between Jesus... Jesus is probably between 1 and 2 years old, or Matthew 2. But, then, in the next chapter, Jesus is an adult.

So, the gospel writers, again, they're not trying to give us a detailed biography of everything Jesus did and said, but they're being selective. Now, what happens next? Interestingly, Jesus... After Jesus... After His birth in Bethlehem, you'll remember one interesting event because Herod... We'll go back and talk about Him. Because Herod tries to kill Jesus and all the other baby boys in Bethlehem, Jesus' parents flee to Egypt and then, eventually, they come back.

And then, the next thing we know, Jesus jumps into His adult ministry. And the first thing that happens is Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River and then, the very next event, is He goes into the wilderness to be tempted. So, Jesus is born.

He flees Herod. He goes to Egypt. He runs for His life.

He's preserved in Egypt. He comes out of Egypt. Then, He begins His adult ministry.

He is baptized in the Jordan River. And then, He goes into the wilderness to be tempted. Now, what are we to make of all this? Again, what is Matthew doing? First of all, I am convinced in chapter 2, and this is under Old Testament background, chapter 2 through chapter 4, Jesus is being presented as the new Israel.

Now, what is interesting in chapter 4, in the baptism and the temptation of Jesus, notice the parallel. What happened? Interestingly, there's a recurring story going through the Old Testament into the New. It starts with Adam and Eve, who were tempted and they succumbed to the temptation and they sinned in the Garden and were exiled from the Garden of Eden.

Now, Jesus then chooses the nation of Israel. This goes to the promise God made to Abraham. He makes His promise, the covenant with Abraham, that He would make Him a great nation.

And that is the nation of Israel. So, God chooses the nation of Israel. Like Adam, He chooses Adam to be His people, creates Adam to be His people, and enters into a relationship with them.

Like Adam, Israel is God's people. They are tempted, they sin and they also are exiled from their land. So, it's kind of strike two.

If Adam failed to be the person God intended him to be, to fulfill His intention, then God chose Israel to fulfill the intention of His creation that Adam and Eve failed to do. But Israel didn't fare any better. They sinned and they also were exiled.

So now, Jesus comes along. What's going on in the temptation? In Matthew chapter 4, when Jesus is tempted by Satan. Basically, where Adam and Israel failed, now Jesus is tempted, yet He passes the test.

He does not sin and give in, but He passes the test. And therefore, He is the one who is able to bring Israel, He's able to bring salvation to Israel and bring salvation to all nations. Why? Because He is the one who brings humanity to its true destiny.

He's the one who brings humanity to the intention that God created it for all the way back in Genesis chapter 1. So, by recording Jesus' temptation, it's not just a nice story of how Jesus didn't sin and how Jesus resisted temptation and so should we, but it's a story of how... Again, think back to the fact that Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew, is the conclusion of the story begun in the Old Testament. Jesus, the cycle that begins

with Adam being tempted and sinning and exile, Israel tempting and sinning and exile, Jesus breaks the cycle by being tempted like Adam and Israel, but unlike them, He does not give in. So, Jesus then is qualified to be the true Son.

Adam wasn't, Israel blew it, but Jesus is qualified to be the true Son of God and to provide salvation for Israel and for all the nations of the earth. So, the first element of the Old Testament story is Jesus is being portrayed as the new Israel. He is fulfilling the destiny of Israel.

Israel was supposed to be a light to all the nations. It was through Israel, Genesis 12, that blessing would go to all the nations, yet they failed, they sinned. Now, Jesus comes along as the true Israel, and He passes the test, and it's through Him that blessing now will come, salvation will come to all the nations.

That's why Matthew ends with the call to make disciples of all nations. Why? Because Jesus has brought to fulfillment what Israel and Adam were supposed to do, yet they did not because of sin. So, the first part of the Old Testament story that Matthew fulfills is Jesus is the new Israel.

He fulfills the destiny of Israel. What Israel was supposed to do to be a light to all the nations, now Jesus accomplishes. Second, Jesus is portrayed as a new Moses.

Now, you would have to be a very inattentive reader to read Matthew 2 and not see what's going on. How is Jesus presented as a new Moses in Matthew 2? Again, He never comes out and calls Him Moses, but what in Matthew 2 leads you to think that Matthew wants to... Again, these are all threads. It's as if Matthew is gathering all these threads from the Old Testament, all these stories, weaving them together and showing how they come to a climax in Jesus Christ.

So, Jesus is the new Israel, but now Matthew wants to say He's also the new Moses. He also fulfills and is the ideal of what Moses anticipated and was bringing to the people. In rescuing the people from Egypt and saving the people from Egypt, Jesus is now doing something in a greater way than even Moses.

He's a new and greater Moses. How does Matthew accomplish that in Matthew 2? Yep, very good. Notice, that Jesus goes to Egypt and then Matthew quotes that text.

This took place to fulfill what was spoken in the prophet, Out of Egypt I have called my Son. Which in the Old Testament context, that's a quote from Hosea, the prophet Hosea. In this context, it's referring to God delivering Israel.

Israel was God's Son. Read the book of Exodus. God calls Israel His Son.

So, originally that text referred to God saving and calling Egypt His Son out of Israel. Now, by calling Jesus His Son, Jesus is seen as kind of a new Moses bringing about a new Exodus. What else in this story leads you to think that there are a couple of other things, that Jesus is being portrayed as one like but greater than Moses? Good, yes.

Yes, you can't miss the fact that Jesus is born and he's rescued from the attempts of a foreign king to kill all the baby boys. Go back and read the book of Exodus. A foreign king, Pharaoh, in an attempt to deal with Israel, tried to exterminate all the baby boys.

And so, this is, it's as if, it's as if Matthew is trying to get your attention and get you to draw connections back to the Old Testament. Jesus is also one like Moses. He escapes the attempt of a foreign king to kill him, so that like, in the same way Moses delivered and rescued his people, now Jesus has come to deliver and rescue his people in a greater way.

So, Jesus is portrayed as a new Moses. There's one more, there's probably several. Jesus is also portrayed as the light of the nations.

One of the most significant Old Testament prophets is the prophet Isaiah. And what Isaiah does is, again, he is addressing the problem of Israel. Israel is now in exile.

Isaiah was written to address the problem of Israel being carted off into exile. And now he, now Isaiah addresses a time when one day God will come and rescue his people from exile and restore them. He will set up his kingdom.

He will, he will, he will bring about a new creation. And more than that, God will not only restore his people Israel, but he will bring people from all the nations to participate in this salvation that God will provide for his people. So, Isaiah is important because Isaiah anticipates a time when Gentiles will also come to worship in Jerusalem.

They will come to experience this salvation that God will one day provide in the future. Now, one interesting passage, and first of all, let me just remind you of the story of the wise men. These Magi, first of all, they are important dignitaries.

Very important dignitaries, important people from a foreign Gentile country. And they come by following the light of the star. They come to Jerusalem to worship Jesus Christ.

Well, eventually Bethlehem, but they start at Jerusalem. So again, you have these foreign dignitaries, these important individuals, foreigners, Gentiles, who follow the light of a shining star that brings them to Jerusalem where they worship the king and

they give him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Keep that story in mind and listen to Isaiah chapter 60.

Again, this is a prophecy of Isaiah, what God would one day do when he brings salvation to his people, Israel, and restores them. They're in exile, but one day God will restore them and bring salvation to his people and a new creation and establish his kingdom. This is Isaiah chapter 60 if I can find it here.

Here it is. I'll just read a few verses. Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the people, but the Lord will arise upon you and his glory will appear over you. Nations, Gentile nations, shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around.

They all gather together. They come to you. Your son shall come from far away.

Your daughter shall be carried in the nurse's arms. Then you shall see and be radiant. Your heart shall rejoice because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you and the wealth of the nations, the Gentiles, will come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you. The young camels of Midian, Ephah, and those of Sheba shall come. These foreign kings, shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

So that's enough. So, what's going on in Matthew chapter 2? Is with these kings, I'll use the word kings. They're not technically kings, but they're dignitaries.

With these kings, foreigners, following this dawning light of the star and coming to Jerusalem and giving gifts of gold and frankincense and worshipping Jesus, basically what Matthew's saying, this promise restoration of Isaiah 60 is already being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. So, the kingdom is underway. All the promises of the Old Testament are now coming to fulfillment.

This promise of a time when God, promised by Isaiah when God would intervene and rescue His people and bring them salvation, bring a new creation, set up His kingdom, that has already arrived, and that's demonstrated by the fact that you have these foreign dignitaries, Gentiles, traveling by the light of the star and coming to worship in Jerusalem and giving their wealthy gifts of gold and frankincense. So basically, this is kind of Isaiah 60 being retold and being acted out and fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ. So again, this isn't just a nice Christmas story, but it's meant to take you back to the Old Testament and get you to see that Matthew's story is a continuation of the story of the Old Testament.

Not only Israel's story and Moses' story but the prophet Isaiah's story of a time when God will restore His people. So, do you see what Matthew's doing? He's, although recording actual events, crafting it in a way so that you don't miss the picture. What's going on with these wise men is not something that makes a nice nativity scene, but it's meant to recall Isaiah chapter 60.

Here comes the fulfillment of Isaiah 60. God is now acting in this infant in the manger. God is now acting to bring about the promised restoration that He foretold through Isaiah.

When the nations would come and worship and bring gifts in response to the dawning light of God's salvation. So, Matthew's saying here it is in this story of the birth of Jesus Christ. There are other threads that we could unravel in chapter 2 that again show that Matthew, it's as if he's taken all these strands from the Old Testament and bundled them all up showing how they find their climax in the person of Jesus Christ.

You really can't read Matthew's story unless you have one ear attuned to the Old Testament. You have to listen to both at the same time. Because Matthew is not just telling a distinct story, he's telling the continuation of a story that he assumes you know from the Old Testament.

All right, any other questions so far about the birth narrative, especially chapters 2-4 and the function of it? All right, let's move on to just, we'll briefly begin to talk about the first main block of teaching in Matthew. I don't intend to talk about all of them, we'll just touch on a couple of them. But the first one is the well-known Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5-7.

The first thing you need to understand about the Sermon on the Mount is to understand a little bit about its context. You can't just start reading at chapter 5 and verse 1. Instead, you need to understand more broadly what's going on and basically what we've talked about in chapter 2. The transforming kingdom of God has now arrived. The kingdom that Isaiah promised, the salvation that God has promised has now arrived in the person of Jesus Christ.

So that is the context for the kingdom, or for the Sermon on the Mount. You need to understand the Sermon on the Mount is taught in response to the fact that Jesus Christ has already brought this long-awaited kingdom. This powerful, all-transforming kingdom has now arrived and now, in light of that, Jesus begins to teach in Matthew 5-7.

That makes a big difference in the way you understand the Sermon on the Mount. It's not just a contextual sermon that someone just started preaching off the top of

their head. But Jesus is assuming, and Matthew's assuming, that everything that's happened up until chapter 5 is necessary for understanding chapters 5-7.

That is, Jesus has now, in fulfillment of the Old Testament, has now brought salvation. He's now acted to redeem and rescue his people. The all-pervasive and all-transforming, powerful kingdom is now present and active in the person of Jesus Christ.

And now, in light of that, Jesus begins, Matthew begins his first block of teaching in Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount. Now, how should we understand the Sermon on the Mount? First of all, what that means for understanding it is, that Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5-7, is not primarily meant as a program for transforming society, nor is Matthew primarily... A very common way Matthew is treated is that the main purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is so that when you read it, you just react in despair. And you say, there's no way I could ever keep this.

There's no way anybody could ever do this. And the purpose of the sermon, then, is to push you to faith in Christ and to trust in Jesus for salvation. So, it's kind of like placing a yardstick and seeing you don't measure up.

And so, the only option is to drive you to Jesus. And by trusting in Jesus for your salvation, you realize that the sermon is meant to show you, I can't do it myself. I can't live a life good enough that would merit God's salvation.

So, the sermon is simply there to show that you don't measure up and you fall short, and hopefully, then, to turn you and push you to rely on Jesus' grace and to trust in faith in Christ's provision for salvation. However, what the context suggests is actually the Sermon on the Mount is meant to demonstrate how God's people are to live. Those who have entered God's kingdom, those who have experienced the powerful, transforming work of God's kingdom, this now is the kind of life that they should live.

So, I take it the Sermon on the Mount is not just an ethic for all society. It's only for those who have entered God's kingdom, who have entered a relationship with Jesus Christ. Nor is it meant as a measuring stick to show us that we fall short and we fail.

No, it's meant as an ethic, as a teaching, as instruction for how God's people who have entered His kingdom, who have experienced the transforming power of God's kingdom, this is how they should live. So, I think that's how we need to, first of all, understand the Sermon on the Mount. It's teaching for God's people that Matthew and Jesus expect that God's people will follow in obedience because they have experienced the transformation of God's kingdom.

They have entered God's kingdom. They have experienced the reign and rule of God in their lives. Now the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 spells out how they should respond to that and how they should live in light of that.

Now the sermon begins with a very interesting statement in Matthew 5-17 that says, Jesus says, I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. And this kind of is, in a sense, this is kind of an introduction to the rest of the sermon. Now what does Jesus mean by that? Usually, we've taken it to mean, Jesus came not to abolish the law but to keep it perfectly.

That is, Jesus came to obey the law and keep it perfectly. He modeled what it looked like to respond in perfect obedience to the law. And I don't doubt that, but I don't think that's what Matthew is saying.

When he says, Jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it, we need to understand the word fulfill in the same way that Matthew used it in the Christmas story we were talking about. The idea of fulfillment is this. It's not that Jesus came to keep the law perfectly, though I agree he did that, but that's not what Matthew's emphasizing.

When Matthew says Jesus came to fulfill it, the idea is, fulfillment means that Jesus is the goal of what something pointed to. So, what that means with the law, Jesus' teaching, what Matthew's saying when Jesus says, I've not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it, Jesus' teaching is the true goal to which the law was pointing. Jesus' teaching is the true intention of the law.

So, Jesus' point is not that, and Matthew's point is not, therefore we have to obey the Mosaic law word for word, but instead, Jesus is saying that now my teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is actually the true intention and true goal of the law. In that Jesus' teaching is the goal that the law was pointing to, Jesus can be said to fulfill it. Now, to jump ahead, at the very end of Matthew's gospel again, the so-called, remember the Great Commission? What does Jesus tell his disciples to do? To baptize, to go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them what? The law of Moses? What are his disciples to teach the nations? The law? The Ten Commandments, the laws of sacrifices, all the laws you find in Moses, what does Matthew say? Jesus is there to teach everything that Jesus has commanded them.

In other words, the center of God's, the expression of God's will for his people is now no longer the law of Moses, but now something greater has come, one greater than Moses has come, Jesus Christ. And now the center of God's will for his people is no longer found in the law of Moses, it is found in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ. So that's why at the end of the gospel, Matthew says, go make disciples of all nations, teaching them to do all that I have commanded you.

Because Jesus' teaching is the true fulfillment and goal of what the Old Testament law was pointing to. So, the Sermon on the Mount, then, is to be seen as this is God's will for his people. For those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ, who have entered into a relationship with Christ, entered the kingdom, and experienced God's rule in their lives, the transforming power of the kingdom, this is how they are to respond to that, rather than the Mosaic law.

Now remember, you can see something's going on here. Way back at the beginning of the semester, we raised a question, and that is, most Jewish groups would have been asking the question, what does it mean to be God's people? What is the identifying mark of the people of God? Most Jews would have responded with a number of things, but one of them would be obedience to the law of Moses. And now Jesus comes along and says, no, instead it's obedience to me.

My teaching is what the Mosaic law was really pointing to. So, it's no longer the Mosaic law. Now everything revolves around the person and teaching of Jesus Christ.

And that's what the Sermon on the Mount is about. It's an example of Jesus' teaching and what it means to live as God's people who have entered this kingdom, who have experienced this long-awaited kingdom, promised in the Old Testament, and now fulfilled in the person of Christ. On Wednesday we'll look at a couple more details of the Sermon on the Mount.

This is Dr. David Mathewson presenting New Testament History and Literature, lecture 7, The Introduction to Matthew.