

## **Dr. David Turner, Matthew**

### **Lecture – 1B – Introduction to Matthew II: Major Themes**

Greetings and welcome to lecture 1B, Introduction to Matthew 2, the major themes of Matthew. This is David Turner, and I hope you survived that last lecture. That one was not an easy one to listen to, a lot of details in there that tend to be sort of boring.

That's the type of lecture I would recommend you listen to over and over again, especially if you have problems with insomnia. I guarantee you it will cure it. Hopefully, you will find Lecture 1B a bit more to your liking. We are moving from some of the pretty much unanswerable questions about the exact knowledge of the historical origins of Matthew to the major themes that we observe as we read this gospel.

It is difficult to select and to summarize the major themes of this gospel in a brief 25 or so minute lecture, but we'll give it a shot, and we believe the following ones are indeed crucial and you need to have your ears ready to hear these things as you continue with this class. One thing that is clearly a crucial matter to Matthew is the relationship of Jesus to the Old Testament. Matthew's pervasive use of the Old Testament is one of the major reasons why the Jewish orientation of this gospel is noted by so many interpreters.

In fact, the prevalence of this intertextuality calls into question the very notion of a so-called Old Testament in Matthew's theology. If Matthew Jesus came not to abolish but to fulfill the law and the prophets, 517, it's doubtful that Matthew conceived of the Jewish scriptures as old, at least in the connotative senses as antique, outmoded, or quaint. Instead, Matthew viewed both the historical patterns and the prophetic oracles of the Hebrew Bible as filled with ultimate significance through the ministry and teaching of Jesus.

In addition to the numerous informal allusions, which are very difficult to count, there are around 50 formal quotations. When we speak of the difference between allusions and quotations, just think for a moment about the difference between chapter 1 and chapter 2. In the genealogy in chapter 1 up through verses 17, there are no direct quotations of any verse of the Hebrew Bible, but the whole thing is permeated with allusions to the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. So, allusions are very difficult to count.

Formal quotations are easier, and there are around 50 of them in this gospel; we have listed them for you in your supplemental materials. You should be following

along on page 5 with your lecture outline. And now look at pages 6 and 7, where we have summarized the specific quotations or citations of the Old Testament in Matthew.

Notice in the left-hand column, the letter M in parentheses, for many of them sometimes J, and others. In the middle column, notice the asterisk, the number sign there. These symbols are explained at the bottom of page 7. They have to do with who exactly in the narrative was referring to the Old Testament and how it was being quoted.

So these 50 formal quotations may be categorized in various ways, such as by introductory formula, such as the phrase, in order that it might be fulfilled, or the phrase, that it is written. Or by the speaker, whether it is something that Jesus himself is quoted as saying, or whether it's something that Matthew himself adds as an editorial comment, etc. The commentary, the class that is, will deal with each of Matthew's citations of the Old Testament individually.

There is a convenient summary of these here on pages 6 and 7 of your notes. And this is something that hopefully you may have the opportunity to consult as you look into this later on. So, from Matthew's distinctive use of the Old Testament, we move next into Matthew's Christology.

Matthew's Christology is, of course, dependent upon his understanding of the Old Testament. Indeed, it is from the Old Testament, which may not even be called the Old Testament. Perhaps the Hebrew Bible would be better.

But Matthew gets his view of Jesus by looking at the Old Testament in light of Jesus, and at Jesus in light of the Old Testament. Matthew uses the Old Testament to demonstrate to his readers that the person, ministry, and teaching of Jesus are rooted in the history, ethics, and prophecies of Israel's Scriptures. The following major titles or descriptions of Jesus are presented here in the order that you find them in the Gospel of Matthew.

Some additional studies on this would be France's book, *Jesus in the Old Testament*, published in 1989. The first title that you come across in Matthew to describe Jesus is that he is indeed the Messiah, or in English, the Christ. Jesus is called the Messiah from the very first verse of Matthew, at the end of the genealogy, and at the beginning of the description of the circumstances of his birth in 118.

This cluster of references to Jesus as the Messiah strongly links Jesus to Israel's history and hopes. It is certainly the key to the identity of Jesus in Matthew. A Messiah is literally one anointed by God for special service or office.

See in the Old Testament, for example, 1 Samuel 9:15, 10:1, 16:3, verses 12 and 13 of chapter 16 as well. Notice also Exodus 28, verse 41, 1 Chronicles 29:22, Isaiah 45:1, and many other passages as well. Most significantly for Matthew, the term occurs as a royal title in some Old Testament texts such as 1 Samuel 24:6, 2 Samuel 1:14, and Psalm 2:2. But the Christian notion of a lowly, suffering, and eventually crucified Messiah was evidently foreign to the Judaism of Jesus' day.

Even John the Baptist had doubts about Jesus being the Messiah, Matthew 11, verses 2 and 3. But through divine revelation, Peter was enabled to strongly affirm it, in chapter 16, verse 16. At that time, 1620, the disciples were told not to tell others that Jesus was the Messiah, evidently to forestall the growing opposition to Jesus' ministry. Another cluster of references stressing Jesus as the Messiah occurs in Matthew's description of the Passion Week in Jerusalem.

Jesus' clashes with the Jewish leaders culminate in an episode which stresses Jesus' Davidic-Messianic connections, chapter 22, verse 41. In contrasting his own view of spirituality with that of the Jewish leaders, Jesus affirms that no one except the Messiah should be called Master in 2310. In his answer to the disciples' question about the signs of his return, Jesus warns them not to believe in counterfeit Messiahs (chapter 24, verses 23 to 26).

At his hearing before the Jewish council, Jesus' affirmative answer to the high priest's question as to whether he was the Messiah takes the language of Daniel 7:13. This is in 2663. But this citation of Daniel 7, verse 13, only leads to mockery in 2668.

Later, Pilate alludes to the fact that Jesus was called Messiah by some when he offers to release Barabbas in chapter 27, verses 17 and 22. Of course, in Matthew, the Messiah is crucified, but he is raised and given all authority, 2819, an allusion to Daniel 7, verses 13 and 14, which recalls Jesus' use of the language of that text in 2664. It is this exalted Messiah who sends the disciples out to disciple the nations.

Perhaps the key to Matthew's distinct view of Jesus as Messiah is the linkage of Messiah to Son of God in two key passages, 1616 and 2664. This will be discussed next, or a little bit further down, under the heading of Son of God. Next, Jesus as the Son of David.

This title occurs more frequently in Matthew than in the other Gospels. Matthew identifies Jesus as the Son of David immediately after identifying him as the Messiah in 1.1, and Matthew quickly establishes and emphasizes Jesus' Davidic lineage in the infancy narrative. Look at chapter 1, verses 6, 17, and 20.

Subsequent uses of the title Son of God occur on the lips of all those who call on Jesus to heal them, such as 9:27, 15:22, 20:30 and 31. On another occasion, a healing

leads the crowds to wonder whether Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah, 12:23. Here, one term seems to be tantamount to the other.

These texts, which connect Jesus' Davidic lineage with healing, demonstrate that Jesus uses his royal authority to help, not to oppress the needy. At Jesus' triumphal entry in 21.9, the crowd shouts praise to God for Jesus the Son of David, echoing the language of Psalm 118, verses 25 and 26. Later that day, Jesus' acceptance of this praise becomes the occasion for the indignation of the Jewish leaders against him, 21.15. When the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders escalates during the Passion Week, Jesus' final disputation with those leaders is put in terms of the identity of the Messiah as the Son of David, 22:41-45. Here, Jesus cites Psalm 110, verse 1, to affirm that David's son is also David's Lord, asserting that the Son of David is also the Son of God.

Matthew's use of the Son of David motif stresses Jesus' Messianic credentials to heal and to rule. This stress seems to be rooted in such Old Testament texts as 2 Samuel 7:14 and following, Psalm 2, Psalm 89, Isaiah 9, verses 6 and 7, 11:1 and following, and Jeremiah 23, verses 5 and 6. Jesus, as the Davidic Messiah, inherits the promises God made to David, and he brings God's rule to bear upon Israel. A third Christological title, the Son of Abraham.

Jesus' title, Son of Abraham, occurs immediately after his identification as the Messiah, the Son of David, in 1:1. In itself, the title evidently does not have Messianic implications. The ensuing genealogy stresses Jesus' Abrahamic lineage in chapter 1, verses 2 and 17, not simply to show Jesus' Jewish roots, but to portray Jesus as the one who culminates God's plans, which originated in Abraham. One should also note John the Baptist's warnings that the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism should not rely on their Abrahamic origins, 3.9. For John, repentance, not descent from Abraham, was required to avoid the coming judgment, 3.8-10. This theme is furthered by the response of Jesus to the remarkable faith of the Roman officer in 8:10-12. Gentiles like this officer, not Jews like those leaders who came to John, would share in the great eschatological banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Again, ethics, not ethnicity, is the issue. It is not that Matthew was excluding Jews as a whole from God's eschatological blessings, but that Matthew was stressing the need of all humans, Jew and Gentile alike, to believe in Jesus. Matthew's mentions of Abraham remind us of God's call of Abraham, the promise that in Abraham all nations would be blessed in Genesis 12, and the near sacrifice of Abraham's only son, Isaac, in Genesis 22.

Evidently, the promise to Abraham would not be totally fulfilled in the present world, because Jesus took this promise to imply that there would be a resurrection of the dead in chapter 22, verse 32. Compare Exodus 3:6. A fourth title of Jesus is

Emmanuel. The significance of Jesus as God with us is developed through the citation of Isaiah 7:14 in chapter 1, verse 23.

Compare also Isaiah 8:8 and 10. This crucial passage looms large in Christian theology of the virgin birth, really, more accurately, the virgin conception of Jesus. Matthew's closing portrayal of Jesus' promise to be with the disciples until the end of the age forms a literary inclusio, or sometimes called inclusion, with 1.23, in which the presence of God in the person of Jesus is stressed at both the beginning and the end of the narrative and forms a sort of a bookends for the whole book.

Another instance of this motif of Jesus being with the disciples is in chapter 18, verse 20, where he promises to be with them during the serious matter of church discipline. A fifth title of Jesus is that he is the king. The arrival of the wise men in Matthew 2 in search of the newborn king of Israel sets in motion a story of conflict between God's true ruler and the evil pretender Herod.

Matthew understands Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem near the end of his life as the act of a king, since he cites Isaiah 62:11 to that effect. Jesus' prediction of future judgment portrays him as the enthroned son of man, chapter 25, verse 31, a king who separates the blessed from the cursed, 25:34, 40, and 41. At his hearing before Pilate, Jesus accepts Pilate's question as a true statement of his kingship, 27:11. Then he endures the soldiers' mocking use of the title, 27:29, and Pilate's evidently sarcastic reference to it on the signboard placed over his head on the cross, 27:37. Even the Jewish leaders mock Jesus' kingship, 27:42. But after his resurrection, he is given all authority, and he sends his apostles out into the world as their exalted king, 28:18. Compare 26:64 in Daniel 7:13 and 14.

A sixth term for Jesus, and perhaps the most important in the gospel, is son of God. Some would argue that son of God is the preeminent title of Jesus in Matthew, Jack Kingsbury, for example. With such Old Testament texts as Psalm 27 and 89:27 as likely background, Matthew presents Jesus as the virginally conceived son who uniquely signifies the presence of God with his people, 1.23. Compare Isaiah 7.14. Jesus' sojourn in Egypt recapitulates the history of Israel, 2.15. See Hosea 11.1. At his baptism, Jesus is endorsed as the Father's beloved son, and he is endowed with the spirit for ministry, 3:17. Compare Isaiah 42:1. But soon Satan challenges this endorsement when Jesus is led by the spirit into the wilderness and asked by Satan whether he is truly the son of God.

Through relying on the scriptures, Jesus is enabled to vanquish Satan, and he recapitulates Israel's wilderness wanderings victoriously, 4:3 and 5. He does not succumb to the temptation to manifest his unique sonship by spectacular acts. Rather, he shows that divine sonship is shown by submission to the will of the Father. Jesus' divine sonship is also shown in Matthew through his authority over evil spirits and the weather, 8:29 and 14:33. This authority is shared only by the Father

and the Son, who is the sole agent through whom people may come to know the Father, 11:27. This is recognized by Jesus' apostles who, through Peter, acknowledge that he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, in 16:16. This linkage of the titles Messiah and Son of God is quite significant, although Peter still has a lot to learn about divine sonship as submission to the Father, 16:22, .23. Soon afterward, Jesus' transfiguration demonstrates to his disciples that as God's son, his word alone must be heeded.

As Jesus' conflict with the Jewish leaders worsens, Matthew portrays through parabolic imagery the rejection of God's unique son by the Jewish leaders, 21:33 and following, 22:2 and following. At the end of their disputes, Jesus' allusion to Psalm 110.1 indicated to their chagrin that his sonship was both Davidic and divine, 22:45. At his trial before the high priest, Caiaphas asks Jesus whether he is the Messiah, the Son of God, echoing, ironically, the testimony of Peter, 26.63. Compare 16.16. Jesus' reply to Caiaphas ominously cites Daniel 7.13's words about the coming of the Son of Man. The irony continues at Jesus' crucifixion, where the mockery of the criminals and the Jewish leaders contrasts with the confession of the Roman soldiers.

Both the mockers and the confessors refer to Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, 27:40, 43, and 54. Yet another title for Jesus in Matthew is the term Lord. Matthew's use of this title for Jesus occurs against the background of the use of the term in Greco-Roman times, ranging from a polite greeting to a human superior, sort of like our term Sir, to a term for the Roman emperor who was thought to be divine.

The term occurs around 6,000 times in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, as a translation of the Hebrew Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh--Yahveh, sometimes pronounced Jehovah. To Jews, this is the sacred Tetragrammaton, the name of God which will not be pronounced. When they read this in the Hebrew Bible, they simply say Adonai, the word for Lord, or they say Hashem, the name, which will not be uttered.

Matthew is not at all hesitant to apply this term Lord, kurios, to Jesus. Matthew 3.3 cites Isaiah 40:3, applying to Jesus a passage originally referring to Adonai, Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh. In Matthew 7:21 and 22, compared 25:37, and 44, Jesus is addressed as Lord in his capacity of eschatological judge.

Frequently, those designed to be healed address Jesus as Lord. You can find those passages; there are many of them, and the disciples frequently refer to him as Lord. Check that out, too, with the concordance.

At times, Jesus calls himself Lord, as when he warns his disciples that if he, their Lord, is called the Prince of Demons, it will be worse for them, his servants. Chapter 10, verses 24 and 25. Jesus expresses his authority over the Sabbath law by referring to himself as Lord of the Sabbath in 12:8. He describes himself as Lord when he sends

the disciples to get a donkey and its colt for the triumphal entry, instructing them to tell objectors the Lord needs them in 21:3. He describes his return as a coming of the Lord, chapter 24, verse 42.

The ambiguity of this term means that we must look at each of its usages in context. At times, it carries contextual overtones of Jesus' divinity, while at other times, it is merely a respectful way of addressing Jesus. Another term for Jesus in Matthew is the term teacher.

In Matthew, the disciples never call him teacher. Rather, this term is nearly always reserved for addresses to Jesus by those who don't believe in him, such as the teachers of the religious law, the Pharisees, the tax collectors, the supporters of Herod, and the Sadducees. Many passages such as 8:19, 9:11, 12:38, 17:24, 19:16, and 22:16. On three occasions, Jesus calls himself teacher, 10:24, 25, 23:8, and 26:18. So it must be noted that for Matthew, there is nothing necessarily sinister in the use of the term.

But for Matthew, Jesus is so much more than merely a teacher. So those who call him that are found guilty in the context of, if you pardon the expression, damning Jesus with faint praise. A quite crucial term for Jesus in Matthew is the term son of man.

The Gospels use this expression more than any other to refer to Jesus, and it is found, with only one exception, John 12:34, in sayings ascribed to Jesus. The expression is found over 100 times in the Old Testament, more than 90 times in Ezekiel alone. It most often describes frail, finite humanity in contrast to the awesome God.

It often occurs in synonymous parallelism with the term man, such as Numbers 23:19, Psalm 8:4. It is a term used throughout Ezekiel when Ezekiel is addressed by God. Compare with that Daniel 8:17. Matthew uses this term son of man 30 times, but with three primary nuances. First, son of man occurs in passages which stress Jesus' suffering and humility.

As son of man, he has no place to lay his head, 8:20. He is called a drunk and a glutton, 11:19. He will be in the heart of the earth for three days and nights, 12:40. While he is on earth, people think he is merely a prophet, 16:13.14, and the story of his glorious transfiguration will not be told until after his resurrection, 17:9. He will be mistreated and suffer just like John the Baptist did, 17:12, even to the extent of being betrayed by a close associate, 17:22, 20:18, 26:2, and 26:24 and 45. Despite this treatment, he will serve others and give his life a ransom for many, 20:28. The Old Testament background for this term may be the many passages that use the term to describe humanity in general and a prophet in particular. Second, son of man occurs in certain passages which stress Jesus' present power and authority. Thus, he

has authority on earth to forgive the paralytic sins, and he heals them in order to demonstrate this authority in 9.6. As son of man, he is lord of the Sabbath, 12:8, yet his authority is so controversial that he is slandered by his enemies, 12:32. His ministry plants the seed of the authoritative kingdom message, 13.37. Third, the term occurs in passages which focus on Jesus as the glorious coming king.

He will send his angels to remove sinners from his kingdom, 13.41, as he comes in the glory of his father to judge all people, 16.27.28, 24.27, 30.37.39, 25.31, 26.64. At the time of his glorious kingdom, his followers will also be abundantly rewarded, 19.28, but they must first be on constant alert for his unexpected return, 24.44. The background for the second and third uses of the term to stress Jesus' present authority and glorious return is no doubt Daniel 7:13, to which Jesus alludes in 26.64. The context of Daniel 7:13 involves a judgment scene in which God, pictured as the ancient of days, delivers the rule of the earth to the son of man, who, with his people prevails over his enemies and rules the earth. There are also overtones of Daniel 7:13 and 14 in the language of the Great Commission in 28:18 through 20. This duality of present and future nuances involving both the authority exercised by Jesus during his earthly ministry and the glorious authority he will exercise at his return is crucial for one's understanding of Matthew's kingdom of heaven.

There are additional titles for Jesus and Matthew, but we must leave them aside for the time being and move on to Matthew's distinct term, the kingdom of heaven. While Matthew does speak of the kingdom of God once in a while, 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, and 43, his unique term kingdom of heaven occurs 32 times. Some interpreters attempt to distinguish between the expressions kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven, but this is untenable for at least two reasons.

First, a comparison of parallel synoptic text indicates that Matthew often uses the expression kingdom of heaven when Mark or Luke use the expression kingdom of God. To see this, compare Mark, excuse me, compare Matthew 13:31 with Mark 4:30, Matthew 19:14 with Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17. Second, Matthew's terminology is likely due to the association of heaven as God's realm with God himself. The prominence of this association in Daniel is perhaps a background for this.

Look at Daniel 2:18 and 19:28, 37, 44, Daniel 4:34, 35, 37, Daniel 5:23, Daniel 12:17. This is a figure of speech called metonymy, and it's likely occasioned by reverence for the name of God in Matthew's Christian Jewish community, as in Luke chapter 16, verses 18 and 21. Generally, the kingdom of heaven refers to the nearness or even presence of the rule of God in the person works and teaching of Jesus, 3:2, 4:17, 10:7, and many other passages. There are times, however, when it applies or clearly describes the future reign of Jesus upon the earth, such as 6:10, 13:38-43, 25:34, and 26:29.



Perhaps the best way to describe the dynamic nature of God's reign is to say that it has been inaugurated at Jesus' first coming and will be consummated when he returns. Matthew characterizes the preaching of Jesus, John, and the apostles as being centered on the kingdom, 3:2, 4:17, 10:7. References to the present experience of the kingdom frame the Beatitudes, 5:3 and 5:10, which otherwise speak of future kingdom blessings. Many other references to the kingdom are found in Matthew's gospel, and if you get a concordance, you'll be repaid by that type of study.

The next key theme in Matthew is the theme of conflict, and due to lack of time, we can't develop this in depth. However, notice even at the beginning when Jesus is an infant, Herod is out to get him in chapter 2. As John the Baptist does his ministry, there is much conflict between him and the Jewish leaders. So it is with Jesus, culminating in the awful denunciations of chapter 23.

Does Matthew's emphasis on this conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders involve and incite anti-Semitism? There can be no doubt that Christian anti-Semites have used Matthew to promote an anti-Semitic agenda, but this was certainly not Matthew's purpose. Most likely, Matthew was a Jew and was writing to Jews who believed that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. These Christian Jews were evidently in a heated religious conflict with non-Christian Jews, but sectarian conflict was common during the time of Second Temple Judaism.

No doubt, Matthew's agenda was to refute the non-Christian Judaism of the Jewish establishment, whether Matthew is placed before or after the 70 C.E. destruction of Jerusalem. But the situation is a religious dispute between Jews, not a Gentile polemic against the Jewish race. Christians must acknowledge with shame the fact that Matthew has been misused by anti-Semites, but it is anachronistic to interpret Matthew as a Gentile Christian polemic against the Jews.

Finally, to conclude the tape, the church and the Gentile world mission. The Gospel of Matthew, which is often truly described as the most Jewish of the Gospels, is the only gospel to use the word church for the community of Jesus' disciples. From the beginning, Matthew begins to make it clear that the community of Jesus' disciples is formed from unexpected sources, such as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba in chapter 1, the wise men in chapter 2, the Roman officer in chapter 8, the Canaanite woman in chapter 15, and the Roman soldier in chapter 27.

All these episodes from the narrative collectively influence Matthew's original Jewish readers to expand their vision of the people of God. It is not that they are to abandon their fellow Jews, but that the message of the kingdom must be taken to all the nations. Jesus' final commissioning of His disciples is based on His now exalted status.

Having received all power, He sends the eleven to the nations to make disciples of all who will obey His commands, and He arms them with the promise that He will be with them all the days to the end of the age. The universal scope of this commission is daunting, but it can be accomplished if the disciples remember that their Messiah, like the victorious Son of Man in Daniel 7, has received universal authority. As they complete the arduous task of teaching future disciples to obey all of Jesus' commands, He will constantly be with them until the end.