

Dr. David Turner, Matthew

Lecture 2A – Matthew 1: The Birth of Jesus

Hello, this is David Turner. Welcome to lecture 2A. You have now survived lectures 1A and 1B, introductory lectures to Matthew.

Hopefully, those will be of some value to set the background for the content of the book, which we now begin to expound. You should have your supplemental lectures, supplemental materials open to pages 8 and 9, which will provide the framework for this present lecture. As we begin to think about Matthew 1 as it describes the genealogy and birth of our Lord Jesus, we want to think first of all about the titles in chapter 1, verse 1, and the Christology which is implied there.

While the word Jesus in chapter 1, verse 1, is obviously a personal name, the term Messiah or Christ should be viewed as a title which indicates Jesus' supreme role and office in God's plan. A study of this word in the concordance would be very helpful to you. Both Christos, the Greek word, and its Hebrew equivalent, Moshiah, are related to the ceremony of anointing a king or priest for office in recognition of God's approval.

Exodus 28, 1 Samuel 9 and 16, 1 Chronicles 29. In some Old Testament passages, the term the Lord's anointed is a title for a divinely endorsed king, such as 1 Samuel 24.6, 2 Samuel 1.14, Psalm 22, Daniel 9.24, perhaps. During intertestamental times, Messianic speculation flourished as Israel reflected on the prophetic hope of a restored Davidic monarchy.

Messianic hope was tied to Israel's longing for God's eschatological vindication and Israel's resulting freedom from Gentile domination. In Matthew, Christos is a key title that portrays Jesus as the one who fulfills the Old Testament historical pattern and eschatological promise. When Matthew joins the son of David, the son of Abraham, to the Messiah, Jesus' unique status is even more strongly stressed.

Son of David is frequently a Messianic title in Matthew. Use a concordance to find that. Drawing from such Old Testament material as 2 Samuel 7:11-16, the so-called Davidic covenant, and Psalm 91.

Son of Abraham occurs only here in 1:1, but Abraham is mentioned elsewhere in Matthew, check your concordance, as the prototypical Israelite whose eminent status in God's kingdom is unquestionable. The close connection of Jesus with Abraham may be contrasted with John's and Jesus' severance of the Jewish leaders from any connection with Abraham, 3:9 and 8:11. Perhaps Matthew's stress on the Gentiles, many places in this gospel, implies that in Jesus the promise is fulfilled that all nations will be blessed through Abraham. Now we move on to discuss the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1, verses 2-17.

After mentioning the Messiah, David, and Abraham in his title in 1:1, Matthew uses a chiasmic pattern in his genealogy to mention Abraham, David, and the Messiah. The structure of the genealogy is made clear by its summary in 1:17. It traces fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the exile in

Babylon, and fourteen generations from the exile to the Messiah. Modern readers should beware a tendency to dismiss the genealogy as a boring, irrelevant way to begin a book about Jesus.

If Jesus is to be the Messiah, he must be connected to David and Abraham, as 1:1 affirms, and the genealogy develops this connection. However, it's clear from 1:17 and from a comparison with Luke 3:23-37 that the genealogy does not purport to be an exhaustive or chronologically exact record of Jesus' family tree. While genuine historical information is provided, the purpose is primarily theological, not chronological.

The three sections of the genealogy pivot on King David and the exile to Babylon, as the two charts on page 9 make clear. David represents one of the highest points of the Old Testament narrative, and the exile represents one of the lowest points. It's likely that in Jesus, the son of David, Matthew sees one who will restore a new Israel from an exile even more deplorable than the one in Babylon.

Matthew has evidently chosen fourteen generations to structure his genealogy because David is the fourteenth name in the genealogy, and fourteen is the numerical value of David in Hebrew. Matthew's use of this numerical strategy, called *gematria*, stresses the centrality of David in Jesus' background, as well as the centrality of a greater son for great David. In the fourteen generations from Abraham to King David, Matthew demonstrates Jesus' sonship and aligns Jesus as Messiah with the historical outworking of the promise of God.

In the fourteen generations from David to the exile, Matthew recounts the decline of Israel under the judgment of God. And in the fourteen generations from the exile to the Messiah, Matthew traces the faithful purpose of God in fulfilling his promise despite the rebellion of his people. Bruner's *Christ* book makes the helpful suggestion that the genealogy may be visualized as a leaning capital N, and it's the basis for the chart on page nine.

Three issues in the genealogy call for more extended discussion. First, the matter of the number fourteen, then the reason why Matthew included the women in the genealogy, and finally, the relation of the genealogy in Matthew to that in Luke. The table on the bottom half of page nine in your supplemental materials displays the discrepancy in the use of the number fourteen.

It shows that only the second set of so-called fourteen generations actually has fourteen. The first and third sets actually have thirteen generations. Scholars have responded to this discrepancy in various ways.

One can come up with three sets of fourteen names in a couple of different ways if you stretch things a bit. But I don't think that any of these ways of doing it really make sense. You can look at the commentaries and see how some of them attempt to do that.

Bromberg remarks that ancient literary convention often alternated between inclusive first and third sets and exclusive second set rendering. If this is true, the shift between thirteen and fourteen is understandable. It's been suggested that the names were omitted due to errors in the transmission of the text, but there is no manuscript evidence for any omissions.

Gundry solves the problem in the third set by suggesting that Matthew counts Joseph and Mary as separate generations, but this breaks the literary pattern in 1:16 and seems to count the non-generation of Jesus by Joseph as a generation. And there are many other suggestions which are even less convincing. However, you handle this question, Carson makes a fine point in his commentary, page 68.

The symbolic value of the fourteens is of more significance than their precise background. Matthew certainly knew arithmetic as well as modern scholars do, but Matthew's literary conventions are ancient, not modern. By modern standards, Matthew's linear genealogy is artificial because it's not exhaustive.

Matthew has omitted three names which are found in 1 Chronicles 3:10-14 between Solomon and Josiah, and other omissions can also be noted. But it's not that Matthew has made a mistake since he didn't intend to work exhaustively and precisely. The fact that David is the 14th name in the genealogy, along with the symbolic significance of the number 14 as the numerical value of David's name, counting in Hebrew Daleth 4 plus Vav 6 plus Daleth David 6 more equals 14, explains the artificiality of this genealogy.

Now on to the matter of the women in the genealogy. The second feature of the genealogy that calls for comment is the inclusion of the women. It's generally acknowledged that women are seldom included in Jewish genealogies, which are usually patrilineal, that is, set up on the father.

For some exceptions, see Genesis 11:29, 22:20-24, 35:22-26, also 1 Chronicles 2 and 7. Several explanations have been proposed for the presence of the women, but none of them is totally convincing. Since the days of the church fathers, it's been proposed that Matthew includes women as prototypical sinners whom Jesus came to save. Thus, the women take their place in the narrative alongside the magi, the Roman centurion, the Canaanite woman, and others in Matthew who bear testimony to the grace of God.

A similar view has it that all these women were guilty of a scandalous sexual union. To be sure, Tamar and especially Rahab were guilty of such sins, but this does not seem to be the case with Ruth and Bathsheba. The Old Testament account of Bathsheba's adultery with David in 2 Samuel 11 appears to characterize her as the passive victim of David's aggression.

Ruth's nocturnal contact with Boaz in Ruth 3:13-19 is not a steamy scene of seduction, but involves a marriage proposal to a kinsman as enjoined in the OT law on kinsman-redeemer. Another problem here concerns Matthew's intent in listing these women alongside Mary, whose virtuous character is stressed. Unless Matthew intended these women to contrast with Mary, it makes little sense to mention them.

Another popular approach to this question asserts that all these women were Gentiles who typify Matthew's intent to stress that the gospel was for all the nations. This is shown repeatedly in the narrative and climactically at the conclusion of the book. Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth was a Moabite, and Bathsheba was evidently a Hittite like her husband Uriah.

Against this, it is argued that Jewish tradition generally viewed these women as virtuous proselytes, but their Gentile origins would not be thereby denied, and this would make

them even better prototypes of Matthew's stress on Gentile mission. The problem in relating these women to Mary remains, however, and if this view is adopted, it must be assumed that Matthew did not intend for these women to be typical of Mary. It appears that Matthew's inclusion of these four noteworthy and even notorious women in his genealogy has not yet been satisfactorily explained.

Certain elements of all the views have merit. Perhaps the main thing that should be said is that the presence of these women in the genealogy implies that Matthew's later stress on the universal world mission of the gospel and his later focus on true piety. God's grace in Jesus the Messiah reaches beyond Israel to Gentiles, beyond men to women, beyond the self-righteous to sinners.

In saving his people from their sins, Jesus is not bound by one's race or one's gender or even one's past scandal in life. Now I move to another area of the discussion in Matthew's genealogy, and it involves comparing it with Luke's. While Matthew's genealogy selectively and thus somewhat artificially traces Jesus' ancestors from Abraham on, Luke more comprehensively covers this ground from Jesus all the way back to Adam.

There are over 60 people mentioned by Luke who are not mentioned by Matthew. Luke has 21 pre-Abrahamic generations and 14 generations between Abraham and David, one more than Matthew's 14 so-called. Between David and Shealtiel, Luke has 21 generations to Matthew's 15.

From Shealtiel to Jesus, Luke has 20 generations to Matthew's 12. The syntax of the genealogies differs in that Matthew follows the A was the father of B pattern, whereas Luke utilizes the genitive of relationship, A was the son of B. The context differs as well. Matthew places his genealogy at the outset of his gospel, while Luke sandwiches his between his accounts of Jesus' baptism and temptation.

Matthew's 3 x 14 generation structure is transparent in his genealogy, but there's a great deal of debate over the possibility of a structure for Luke. Some people think he has an 11 x 7 type of structure there. As you look at the two genealogies, it was interesting to line them up side by side on a piece of paper and sort of list them and just see the differences.

The convergences and divergences are quite interesting. The divergence is more prominent than the convergence. Between Abraham and Jesus, Luke has 56 generations, and only 12 of these converge with Matthew's 42 generations.

Convergence occurs most frequently during the pre-monarchical period, and after that, there is much more divergence. Now we need to think briefly about the matter of historicity. Both these genealogies have their individual historical problems, and additional problems arise when they're compared.

People are mentioned in the genealogies who don't turn up in the Old Testament or anywhere else. People in one genealogy don't match up with people in the other. At this point, one's overall theological perspective informs exegesis.

Scholars who are skeptical of the historical accuracy of the Gospels tend to deprecate the historicity of the genealogies and totally despair overreaching anything approaching a

consensus on the problems. Such scholars see the genealogies as theological constructions with dubious historical moorings. There are, of course, others who prefer to remain in ignorance of the difficulties while proclaiming a faith that does not wish to be confused by the facts.

However, there is good reason to accept the historical reliability of the Gospels, and those who are committed to it, such as Craig Blomberg in his book *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, point to solutions which are plausible, although they don't totally satisfy us. When all is said and done, it's clear that the overall theological perspective of the interpreter is decisive. Evangelicals must admit that there are insuperable difficulties in fully resolving all the problems in the genealogies, but this doesn't amount to a capitulation of biblical authority.

While there's not sufficient evidence to solve all the difficulties, there is likewise insufficient evidence to falsify the biblical record. No doubt both genealogies are based on traditions available to Matthew and Luke, which they passed on in good faith. No doubt Matthew and Luke had distinct purposes in composing their respective genealogies, and neither of their intentions was to exhaustively summarize the biological lineage of Jesus.

With this in mind, many of the difficulties are more understandable, if not solvable. Difficulties and distinct purposes aside, both Matthew and Luke affirm Jesus' Abrahamic and Davidic ancestry, as well as his miraculous conception by the Virgin Mary. Another area of theological concern is the respective purposes of the genealogies in their literary contexts.

Matthew uses his genealogy primarily for Christological purposes to demonstrate the Abrahamic and Davidic ancestry of Jesus the Messiah, while showing him to be the fulfillment of God's promises. Additionally, the presence of the women, who are probably Gentiles, hints at Matthew's agenda for a universal mission to all the nations. Now we move from the matter of the genealogy in 1:12-17 to the use of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23. At the heart of the passage on the miraculous birth of Jesus, found in 1:18-25, is the citation of Isaiah 7:14 in 1:23. In Isaiah 7, King Ahaz of Judea is under threat of attack by the kings of Aram and Israel.

But God promises Ahaz that this threatened attack will not take place, and he invites him to ask for a sign to that effect. Ahaz refuses, but God supplies a sign anyway. The Virgin will give birth to a child.

Matthew's citation of this passage has given rise to three major interpretive approaches, which may be characterized as typological, predictive, and multiple fulfillment. A typological view stresses the immediacy of the sign to Ahaz, 7.14a and 16, and the possible fulfillments of Isaiah 7:14 in the near future of the Old Testament context, such as in Isaiah 8, verses 3 and 4, verse 8, and verse 10 and verse 18. Thus, Isaiah 7:14 is viewed as a sign to Ahaz, which was fulfilled during his days, and Matthew sees in the passage a historical pattern which comes to climactic fulfillment with Jesus.

A young woman in Isaiah's day conceived a significant son who served as a sign of deliverance to Ahaz in the house of David, Isaiah 7, verses 2 and 13. But much more significantly, a young woman in Matthew's day who was literally a virgin, conceived by the

Spirit a son of ultimate significance to the house of David, the house of Israel, and all the nations of the earth. In Isaiah's day, the son was a token of divine presence and deliverance.

In Matthew's day, the son was himself, God with us, the deliverer of his people. The second view, the predictive view, takes Isaiah 7:14 as foreseeing the eventual miraculous birth of the Messiah from a woman who was literally a virgin. Matthew interprets this predictive prophecy literally and views it as predicting the birth of Jesus and Jesus only.

Thus, the prophecy transcends the contemporary difficulties facing King Ahaz and points to a sign in the future. Nevertheless, the overwhelming significance of the sign transcends its temporal significance. Proponents of this view argue that the normal birth of a son from a young woman, as required in the typological view, would have little or no force as a sign to King Ahaz.

Additionally, they believe that only the predictive view does justice to the son's name, Emmanuel. The strength of the typological view is its focus on the historical context of the original prophecy, and the strength of the predictive view is its focus on the New Testament fulfillment. The third view, multiple fulfillment, attempts to draw from both of these strengths.

In this approach, the prophecy foresees not only a partial fulfillment in the days of Ahaz but also a climactic fulfillment in New Testament times. The human prophet Isaiah may not have fully grasped this, but after all, the prophecy is the Lord's and Isaiah is merely the messenger. Such a *sensus plenior*, or fuller meaning, was intended by the divine author, if not fully understood by the human author.

One shouldn't be dogmatic on this matter since each position has credible advocates and arguments. However, it seems to me that the typological view is best for several reasons. Time forbids us to go into those in depth.

Perhaps you'll have the opportunity to research this on your own later on. But in this typological view, which seems to me to be best, Matthew is reading Isaiah 7 as a disciple of Jesus the Messiah. Isaiah's prophecy comes to new significance.

Matthew didn't create the virgin birth narrative as a midrash or imaginative commentary on Isaiah 7. Neither did he view Isaiah 7 under inspiration as an intended prediction of Jesus' virgin birth. Rather, he saw the motifs of the oracle in Isaiah 7, particularly its stress on the house of David. Isaiah 7, 2 and verse 13.

Isaiah 9:7. Also a young girl giving birth to a son. 7:14 through 16; 8:3 and 4. And the presence of God with his people. This is crucial in 7:14, 8:8 and 8:10.

Matthew viewed all these in the light of the miraculous birth of the Messiah. He was obviously aware of these Isaianic motifs, as well as Isaiah's specific future predictions of the Messiah in the following context, such as Isaiah 9:1 through 7, which Matthew cites in 4:15 and 16. Isaiah 11:1 through 5, which also seems to be the background in Matthew.

Also, Isaiah 42, verses 1 through 4, cited in Matthew 12, verses 18 through 21. These motifs in Isaiah 7 and 8 anticipated and supported the message of Jesus the Messiah as Matthew

understood it and wished to communicate it. In Jesus the Messiah, the house of David culminated.

Mary's virginal conception of Jesus the Messiah amounted to an infinitely greater sign to Israel, and Jesus the Messiah was himself God with the nation of Israel. That Jesus is God with his people is a recurring theme in Matthew. Jesus is with his disciples when the storm strikes, and he saves them from it.

He is with them as they are received or rejected while preaching his kingdom. He is with them when they solemnly handle intractable offenders in his new community. Look at such passages as 8:23 to 27, 10:25, 40, 17:17, and 18:15 through 20.

He is also identified with their experiences as he views them as his own, his little brothers, if you will, in Matthew 25, verses 40 and 45. In fact, the final reference to the God with us theme concludes the gospel and creates an inclusio enveloping the entire gospel with this motif. As the church obeys its mandate to disciple all the nations, Jesus promises to continue his presence with the church all the days until the end of the age.

All of the complexities involved in the way Matthew 1:23 cites Isaiah 7:14 lead us into our next heading in our discussion, Matthew's understanding of fulfillment. It's commonly thought in lay circles that whenever you have the word fulfillment in the New Testament, a specific Old Testament predictive prophecy is alluded to as being fulfilled in a specific New Testament event. But a study of the material in Matthew, where the term fulfillment is used, will not support that idea.

In fact, you will find that sometimes fulfillment has to do with the ethics of the Old Testament, being fulfilled by the uprightness of Jesus. Sometimes there are historical patterns, as I just argued in Isaiah 7:14, which are brought to total fulfillment by the historical events in Jesus. And again, there is certainly predictive material that is fulfilled as well.

But in addition to the predictive notion, we have to also bring in the historical and the ethical. As far as ethical goes, you will need to think through such passages as the baptism of Jesus, where Jesus says that he is the one who fulfills all righteousness and commands John to baptize him. Similarly, at the end of Matthew in 23:32, in a very serious passage, Jesus points out that the upcoming crucifixion will be filling up the measure of the sin of the ancestors of Jesus' contemporaries.

A historical pattern of Israel's rejection of the prophets is fulfilled, if you will, brought to completion by their rejection of Jesus. Another passage that speaks in terms of ethics would be 5:17, where Jesus said he did not come to destroy, but to fulfill. He doesn't just say the prophets, which might make us think in terms of prediction, but he says he came to fulfill the law and the prophets, which is to say that he is the one who will fulfill the uprightness required by the Old Testament law by his holy life.

There are 13 other passages that you can identify in the preceding list that we provided of Matthew's use in the Old Testament, a couple of pages back in your supplemental materials. Notice the passages that are marked with an asterisk there, and you'll see them. There are 13 of them, 10 in Matthew's narrative comments and three from the words of Jesus.

They speak of fulfillment of the Old Testament in some fashion. Four out of these 10 occur in the infancy narrative just in Matthew chapters 1 and 2. Note those quickly with me. Matthew 1, verses 22 and 23 cites Isaiah 7:14, which we've argued is not a strict prediction of a future virgin-born Messiah, but a typological fulfillment.

Similarly, in Matthew 2:15, Hosea 11:1 is cited, which, it appears to me, is also a typological matter, where Jesus' trip to Egypt is a fulfillment of the historical pattern of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Matthew 2:17 cites Jeremiah 31:15, which personifies the nation of Israel at the Babylonian exile as Rachel weeping for her children who were dead. A similar yet much more significant weeping for dead children occurred when Herod ordered the slaughter of the babies from the region of Bethlehem.

But Jeremiah 31:15 does not appear to be a specific prediction. Matthew 2:23 speaks of the fulfillment of plural prophets in Jesus' move to the obscure village of Nazareth. It's very difficult to figure out exactly what Old Testament passages Matthew had in mind here, but again it seems most likely that there is a historical pattern that he has in mind.

Additional passages using fulfillment are Matthew 4:14, citing Isaiah 9:1 and 2, Matthew 8:17, citing Isaiah 53:4, Matthew 12:17, citing Isaiah 42:1-4, Matthew 13:35, citing Psalm 78:2, Matthew 21:4, citing a combination of Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 27:9, finding the fulfillment of Zechariah 11:12 and 13. On the lips of Jesus himself, there are three passages that speak this way. Matthew 13:13-15 alludes to Jeremiah 5:21 and Isaiah 6:9-10. The other two instances of Jesus speaking of Old Testament fulfillment occur in the same context in Matthew 26:54-56. Probably this is an allusion regarding the scriptures being fulfilled, having Zechariah 13:7 in mind, but it's not clearly stated there.

So you can look at these passages on your own, and they will certainly give you much food for thought. To conclude the discussion of Matthew's understanding of fulfillment, it has been established that Old Testament fulfillment in Matthew connotes ethical, historical, and predictive connotations, not just predictive. These categories are not discrete, but they overlap.

Individual fulfillments may contain elements of all three. At times, the ethical element is preeminent, such as in 3:15 and 5:17. At other times, fulfillment of Old Testament prediction is primary, 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 21:4, 26:54, and 56. But probably the most prevalent aspect of fulfillment in Matthew concerns the historical patterns, such as 1:22, 2:15, 17, 23, 13:14, 35, 23:32, and 27:9. Events in Old Testament redemptive history anticipate events in Jesus' ministry, and that Jesus fills them with new significance.

Even Jesus' opponents have their precursors in the Old Testament. By recapitulating these Old Testament events, Jesus demonstrates the providence of God in fulfilling his promises to Israel. As implied in the genealogy, Old Testament redemptive history is fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah, who is Abraham's son and David's son.

And now we'll conclude our lecture on Matthew 1 with a summary of this chapter. It's obvious even to the casual reader that each of the four Gospels begins uniquely. Mark begins in the most concise fashion and has the reader at the outset of Jesus' ministry by

chapter 1, verse 9. The Johannine prologue in 1:1-18 concerning the Word who became flesh sets the tone for many of the themes of John's Gospel.

Matthew and Luke alone contain material about Jesus' infancy and early years, though this material seldom overlaps. All four Gospels do, however, stress the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist before they launch the ministry of Jesus. Matthew's story of the origin of Jesus begins with a title in 1:1 and a genealogy in 1:2-17, which shows who Jesus is.

Matthew continues with the account of his miraculous birth in 1:18-25, which shows how Jesus entered the world. As Matthew's narrative goes on, Matthew follows with the events surrounding the arrival of the mysterious wise men, Jesus' sojourn in Egypt, and his return to Nazareth, showing where Jesus lived. This unique Matthean material leads into the shared story of John's ministry, 3:1-12, Jesus' baptism, 3:13-17, and Jesus' temptation, 4:1-11. All this paves the way for the beginning of his ministry, 4:12 and following, while introducing the reader to such crucial Matthean themes as the sonship of Jesus and his role in fulfilling the Old Testament.

This is the end of presentation 2A by Dr. David Turner on the Gospel of Matthew.