

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Session 4, Introduction to Matthew, Matthew 1 6-min. Video Overview

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Alright, let's dive in. For centuries, the Gospel of Matthew has been one of the most studied texts in history. But what if I told you that underneath its familiar stories, there is a hidden blueprint—a deliberate design that leads the reader to one very specific and kind of shocking conclusion? Today, we're going to uncover that hidden design.

So many of us know these words—they're the grand finale of Matthew's Gospel, famously called the Great Commission. It's the final instruction, the ultimate call to action, and as you'll see, it's the very destination the entire book has been driving toward. And right there, that's the central puzzle.

Matthew's Gospel is so deeply rooted in Jewish culture and scripture, so this final, explosive command to go to all nations, to the non-Jewish world, it can feel like it comes out of nowhere, right? Almost like a plot twist. So how did we get here? To solve this, we've got to play detective. And our investigation starts, well, in a pretty unexpected place—the very first chapter.

Yep, a long list of names. We're going back to the beginning, to a genealogy, to find our first major clue. Right off the bat, Matthew's genealogy just shatters the expectations.

You see, a typical Jewish genealogy at the time was all about proving one thing—the purity of the male bloodline. But Matthew? He does the complete opposite. He throws women into the mix, which was super unusual.

And the specific women he picks? Wow, that's even more of a statement. So who are these women? Are they the big names you'd expect, like Sarah or Rebecca? Nope, not at all. We get Tamar and Rahab, who were both Canaanites.

We get Ruth, a Moabite, from a nation literally excluded from Israel's assembly. And then there's Bathsheba, who is deliberately linked not to King David, but to her first husband, Uriah the Hittite. See the pattern here? Every single one of them has a strong Gentile or non-Jewish connection.

This is our first clue, hidden in plain sight. But okay, one clue isn't enough to build a case, right? But what we're about to see is that this little detail in the genealogy? It's not a one-off. It's the start of a breadcrumb trail that Matthew leaves for us all the way through his story.

And man, this pattern just keeps showing up. In chapter 2, who's the first to worship the newborn king? Not the insiders, but Gentile Magi from the east. Then in chapter 8, a Roman centurion, a soldier from the occupying army, has his faith praised above anyone in Israel.

Later, it's a Canaanite woman who's commended. And get this, at the very end, at the cross, who are the first to confess Jesus is the Son of God? The Roman soldiers who just executed him. It's relentless.

The evidence is just overwhelming, isn't it? I mean, time and time again, at these huge, pivotal moments, Matthew puts non-Jews right in the spotlight. He highlights their faith, their inclusion. This is no accident.

It's a deliberate, powerful theme he's weaving into the very fabric of the story. So now, with this pattern lopped in, we can finally see why he's doing it. He's been setting the stage this whole time for his grand finale.

That final command back in chapter 28? It's not a surprise anymore, is it? It's the inevitable climax of the whole blueprint. The Great Commission isn't just a nice way to end the book. It's the master key that unlocks the entire thing.

For a community that was probably wrestling with its own identity, Matthew is making a huge point. God's plan was always, always bigger than they thought. And when you look closely, you see it's a really specific, three-part mission.

The big command is to make disciples. And Matthew tells them exactly how to do it. It's a three-part mission.

Going, baptizing, and teaching. So let's break that down, because each one of these is the payoff for a theme he's been building from the start. Okay, first up, going to all nations.

Well, this is it. This is the final, crystal clear statement of that theme we've been tracking this whole time. It's the payoff for putting those Gentile women in the genealogy, for the Magi, for the Centurion.

The mission was always meant to break beyond the borders of Israel. Next, baptizing. This also wraps up a huge theme.

The instruction is super specific. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Placing the Son on the same level as the Father and the Spirit is an absolutely massive claim to divine authority.

This is the same authority Jesus has been showing over everything—sickness, nature, even sin—throughout the whole story. It's a declaration that his power is universal. And finally, teaching.

This isn't just a vague, go teach some stuff. No, it's a direct command to build a whole new kind of community based on the specific instructions Jesus gave. You know, all those big teaching blocks in the gospel, like the Sermon on the Mount? That's what he's talking about.

It's about teaching a radical new way of life for this new, global kingdom. So what's the big deal about finding this blueprint? Well, it totally changes how we read not just this text, but maybe any text. It shows us how powerful it is to pay attention to the structure, to the architecture of a story.

You know, the New Testament scholar Dr. Craig Keener puts it perfectly. He says the mission to the wider world isn't some kind of afterthought or a last-minute addition. It's the destination Matthew had in mind for his audience from the very first sentence.

So here's the bottom line. Great stories often have this kind of hidden architecture. The clues planted in the beginning? They're often the key to unlocking the end.

And once you learn to spot these patterns, the ending isn't a surprise anymore. It's the logical, satisfying completion of a masterful design, and it just unlocks a much, much deeper layer of meaning. And that really leaves us with one final thought.

If a blueprint this detailed is hiding in plain sight in a text as famous as Matthew's gospel, what other incredible designs are just waiting for us to discover in the books, the movies, and the stories we think we already know inside and out?