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Session 7 - Introduction to Matthew

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Let's talk about the Gospel of Matthew. You've probably thought of it as, you know, a biography of Jesus. But what if I told you it's something more? That it's actually a hidden blueprint, a literary masterpiece designed to build an airtight case for one huge, monumental idea? Well, let's dive in and see if we can crack the code.

So that's really the question we're tackling here. Is Matthew just a straightforward biography, or is it a complex, almost coded argument designed to prove a single massive point? See, the author isn't just telling you what happened. He's carefully, meticulously arranging every detail to answer the biggest questions his audience was wrestling with.

Now, to really get what Matthew's doing, we have to put ourselves in the shoes of his original audience. For a first-century Jew, their national story felt like a movie that just stopped right at the cliffhanger. And understanding that feeling, that constant anticipation, is the absolute key to unlocking Matthew's message.

Their whole world was shaped by three core beliefs. First, even though they were physically back in their land, they felt like they were still in exile. They were living under Roman rule, and they saw this as a consequence of their past sins.

Second, they were desperately waiting for God to step in and finally set things right, just like the prophets had promised for centuries. And third, this is a big one. They believed this divine rescue of Israel would somehow, some way, bring salvation to the entire world.

That was the cliffhanger they were living through every single day. Okay, so here's our first major clue in Matthew's blueprint. When you actually look at how the book is put together, you find something totally unique, something none of the other gospel writers do.

He uses a deliberate five-part structure. That's the magic number five. Matthew organizes his entire book around five major blocks of Jesus' teachings, like the Sermon on the Mount.

And just to make sure we don't miss it, he ends each of these five sections with the exact same phrase when Jesus had finished saying these things. It's like a deliberate little signpost for his readers. So why five? Well, for any Jewish reader, that number would have been a giant flashing neon sign.

It would immediately make them think of the five books of Moses, the Torah, the absolute foundation of their faith. Matthew's structure is this powerful unspoken claim. He's saying, pay attention, Jesus is a new Moses, delivering a new authoritative teaching for God's people.

But here's the thing: Matthew doesn't bury his main point, not at all. He puts his entire thesis for the whole book right up front, in the very first sentence. Everything else that follows is just supporting evidence.

And there it is, Matthew 1 verse 1, an account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. This isn't just some casual introduction; it's a mission statement. And those last two titles, son of David and son of Abraham, those are the two pillars his entire argument is going to rest on.

So what do these titles actually mean? Well, son of David was a direct link to the ancient promise of a messianic king, a king from the line of David who would finally come and rescue Israel. For his original audience, this was basically Jesus's royal resume. But Matthew doesn't just stop there.

By also calling Jesus the son of Abraham, he blows the doors wide open on this mission. You remember God's promise to Abraham, right? That through him, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. So right from the opening line, Matthew is signaling that this story, it isn't just for Israel.

This story is for the whole world. So with his thesis laid out, Matthew spends the rest of the book providing the proof. And he does this by masterfully weaving events from Jesus's life together with ancient prophecies, showing time and time again that Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's entire story.

Let me show you a really famous example. Just listen to this prophecy from the book of Isaiah written hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. It talks about a future time of salvation when Gentile nations and their kings would follow a great light, come to Jerusalem, and offer gifts of gold and frankincense.

Okay, got that in your head? Now, this is where Matthew's method is just brilliant. He tells us the story of the Magi, the wise men. And just look at the details.

They are Gentile dignitaries, basically kings. They follow a shining light, the star. They come to worship the new king in Jerusalem, and they present him with gifts of gold and frankincense.

You see what he's doing? Matthew isn't just telling a nice Christmas story. He's shouting that the age of salvation prophesied by Isaiah has finally arrived in this child. But there's another layer to this, and even deeper.

Matthew also portrays Jesus's life as a kind of reenactment, a do-over, if you will, of the stories of both Israel and Moses. He's showing how Jesus succeeds right where they fell short. Just look at these parallels here.

A wicked king orders the death of baby boys. Happened to Moses; it happened to Jesus. Jesus's family flees to Egypt and then comes back out, which is a perfect echo of the nation of Israel.

Matthew even quotes a prophecy about Israel and applies it directly to Jesus. Out of Egypt, I called my son. And think about this.

While Israel was tested in the wilderness for 40 years and failed, Jesus is tested for 40 days and succeeds. Matthew is building this systematic case that Jesus is the true Israel, the

faithful son who finally gets it right. So when you start putting all these pieces together- the five-part structure, that thesis in verse one, the fulfillment of all these prophecies, and the retelling of Israel's story- a really clear picture starts to emerge.

Matthew's ultimate goal is to show how this story, which began with Israel, was always, always destined to break beyond its borders. And this, this is the grand finale. The whole book builds to this moment.

Jesus's final command, what we call the Great Commission. He doesn't tell them to go back and focus on Israel. No.

He says, go and make disciples of all the nations. This is the ultimate fulfillment of that son of Abraham title from the very first verse. The rescue that started with Israel has now become salvation for the entire world.

So the next time you open the gospel of Matthew, remember the blueprint. You're not just reading a collection of stories. You are reading a meticulously crafted argument, a literary masterpiece designed to prove that in Jesus, the old story found its ending and a new story for the whole world began, which leaves us with a final question.

How does seeing the blueprint change the way you read the story?