

## Jesus of Nazareth – Messiah for Jew and Gentile

Mt 1:1-17 (text)

22 December 2019, Reformed Church of Wainuiomata 10:30 am  
(Put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

### Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The New Testament says that Jesus of Nazareth is *the Son of God*,<sup>1</sup> that *He is the image of the invisible God*,<sup>2</sup> and that in Him *the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form*.<sup>3</sup> Yes, the New Testament says that Jesus of Nazareth, was/is the long-promised Jewish Messiah and the Saviour of the world, and that He was/is not just fully *man*, but also fully *God*!

Wow! See the high stature of Jesus? Is that also how *you* see Him?

Do you realise that the majority of people on earth do not believe that?

In fact, even the majority of *Jews*, into whose nation Jesus was born, do not believe that!  
Why?

Well, here is what they say, “For at least the following five reasons, we do not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah:

Jesus did not fulfil prophecies to build the Third Temple,<sup>4</sup>

He did not gather the Jews back to Israel<sup>5</sup>,

He did not bring world peace,<sup>6</sup>

He did not unite all human beings under the God of Israel.<sup>7</sup>

Besides, according to our Jewish tradition, there were no prophets after Malachi.”<sup>8</sup>

Wow! How shocking!

How is it possible that Jesus’ own people rejected Him?

Well, gauging by the points Judaism has raised against Him, it is clear that the “revolution” Jesus has begun, is not the one they wanted. You see, they wanted a revolution of *swords* and *chariots*, but His is a revolution of that which ultimately counts and cuts to the core, i.e. *a revolution of the heart*!<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lk 1:32, 35

<sup>2</sup> Col 1:15,

<sup>3</sup> Col 2:9

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 37:26–28

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 43:5–6

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 2:4

<sup>7</sup> Zechariah 14:9

<sup>8</sup> My adaptation of: “A central tenet of Judaism is the absolute unity and singularity of God, and the worship of a person is understood as a form of idolatry. Therefore, Judaism rejects the idea of Jesus being God, or a mediator to God, or part of a Trinity. It holds that Jesus is not the Messiah, arguing that he neither fulfilled the Messianic prophecies in the Tanakh nor embodied the personal qualifications of the Messiah. Jews argue that Jesus did not fulfill prophecies to build the Third Temple (Ezekiel 37:26–28), gather Jews back to Israel (Isaiah 43:5–6), bring world peace (Isaiah 2:4), and unite humanity under the God of Israel (Zechariah 14:9). Furthermore, according to Jewish tradition, there were no prophets after Malachi, who delivered his prophecies in the 5th century BC.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus#Jewish>).

<sup>9</sup> “Even many of his own people eventually became disappointed with the revolution that he would bring, because it was a revolution of the heart, not one of swords or chariots” (Wilkins, M. J. (2004). *Matthew* (pp. 53–71). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House).

Yes, what the Jews wanted of their Messiah, was...

That He should *literally* build a physical third temple of *stone*; not a spiritual temple – the *Church*!

That He should *literally* gather all Jews back to the *land* of Israel; not gather a spiritual Israel into His Kingdom.

That He should bring lasting *political* peace here on this earth!

So, the Jews missed their own Messiah, for they kept looking at Him in an under-the-sun way (in a this-world manner).

Dear Wainui member, who do *you* say Jesus is?

Do you, at times, *doubt* that He is who He said it is?

If so, then you and I need to take a good look at our Bible text of this morning!

After all, why (for what purpose) did Matthew (inspired by the Holy Spirit) write this passage?

Well, it was to, by God's grace, awaken faith in hardened hearts (and strengthen faith in doubting hearts) so that they will see & believe Jesus of Nazareth *was/is indeed the long-promised Messiah*, the Eternal King and Saviour of Jew and Gentile!

Here are three points:

- Messiah for the Jews
- Messiah for the Gentiles
- Messiah for You

### **Messiah for the Jews**

My brother & sister, who wrote the Gospel of Matthew?

You might say, "What a strange question!" "Of course, it is Matthew!"

But did you know that nowhere in the Bible does it say that *Matthew* wrote this Gospel?

Indeed, how different the letters of Paul in which Paul himself clearly states that he was the author of those letters!

You see, it was not until 125 A.D. that, at the start of this Gospel, the Church added the words, "*(The Gospel) according to Matthew.*"<sup>10</sup>

Well, long story short: Respected conservative Bible scholars have all argued in favour of Matthew's authorship of this Gospel.<sup>11</sup>

And they have based one of their reasons on our text (yes, on Mt 1:1-17).

You see, Matthew was a tax collector. And, as tax collector, he could have known at least two languages, if not three – yes, even Greek, the language in which we have the earliest copies of this Gospel.

Besides, as tax collector, Matthew would have been very familiar with lists – yes, lists of names, genealogical lists like the one of our text! After all, tax collectors in that culture needed to know who was the son of whom, and who inherited what!

Thus, for Matthew (more than anyone else) it would have been fairly easy to, from lists he already had at his disposal, draft the genealogical list of Jesus!

Anyway, look how our text starts!

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g. Hendriksen, W. 2004. Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew (In: Hendriksen, W. ed. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Book House. p.92-97).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hendriksen (ibid:95-97)

It says (in Mt 1:1), “*The record of the genealogy<sup>12</sup> of Jesus Christ (most English versions).” The NASB reads, *The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah...*”<sup>13</sup>  
What’s the significance of that?*

Well, that Jesus’ surname was not *Christ* (or *Messiah*), for His surname was most likely “Bar Joseph” (i.e. Son of Joseph).

So, *Christ* (or its Hebrew version *Messiah*) was Jesus’ title!

But what a title!!

I mean, every indication is that Matthew wrote his Gospel first & foremost to the Jews! And every Jew knew exactly what *Messiah* (Hebrew *Mashiah* or Greek *Christos*) meant! They knew it meant “The Anointed One” – i.e. that long-promised Anointed One who would come to save God’s people; that Anointed One who would be King forever on David’s throne!

See why we say that the *goal* of our passage is to, first & foremost, awaken faith in the hearts of the *Jews* so that they would see and believe that Jesus of Nazareth is their Messiah (their Christ; their Anointed One)?

But look how Matthew now continues with more Jew-persuading words! Yes, look how Matthew now calls Jesus the *Son of David*!?

In other words: “Dear Jewish audience, do you remember what God promised our great forefather David (in 2 Sam 7)? Yes, do you remember that God told David that, from David’s own body would come a king who would sit forever on David’s throne!?! Well, this Jesus of Nazareth – it is He!”

What next?

Well, next, Matthew says again something that would make every Jewish heart beat faster! You see, now he also calls Jesus, “the Son of Abraham!” In other words: “Dear Jews, do you remember our forefather Abraham?” “Do you remember how God made a covenant with him that God would make him into a great nation, and that God would bless all nations of the earth through him?” “Well, in Messiah Jesus, the time for these blessings has arrived!”

Now? What does Matthew do next?

Well, now he gives a long list of Jesus’ ancestors!

You ask, “What for?”

My brother & sister, in general, modern Westerners (that’s most of us) are not interested in long lists of ancestors!

Indeed, for most of us *reading through this genealogical list in Mat 1* is no different to *reading a long, boring, list of names* from the telephone directory.

I’m sure most young people in our culture know only the names of their parents and

grandparents. Perhaps a few might know the names of their great-grandparents – that’s it!

So, why did Matthew give such a long list of Jesus’ ancestors?

Well, for two reasons!

Firstly, to show that Jesus was/is a real *historical* figure!

Here’s an illustration: You see, just the other day I heard the story of a missionary lady who worked for the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

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<sup>12</sup> dʒi:nɪˈalədʒi

<sup>13</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (Mt 1:1). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

She went to bring the Gospel to a remote tribe that still could not read or write, which means they did not yet have any books or documents written in their own language.

Well this lady learned their language. Then she taught them how to read and write in their own language.

Then she translated the Gospel of Matthew into their language! But, in doing that first translation, she did not include chapter one of Matthew, because her goal was to get that tribe quickly into the “meatier” parts of the Gospel!

And great was her joy when, after ten years of living with that tribe, the first copies of her translation got delivered by truck!

However, great was her disappointment when the tribe showed more interest in the truck than in the Gospel of Matthew!

Well, next, she printed a second publication – this time it *included* chapter one of Matthew! And, when the first copies came off the printers, she gave one to the tribal chief!

What happened the next day?

Well, having read Mat 1:1-17, the chief called her to his hut and said, “I see this Jesus about whom you have told us for the last ten years – I see that He had a whole long list of ancestors!”

“O yes,” said she!

“What?” said he, “Do you then want to tell me this Jesus was a *real* man who *really* lived here *in our world*?”

Said she, “Of course, He was!”

My brother & sister, it was at that moment – yes after more than ten years of having heard the Gospel – that, by the grace of God, this seemingly boring chapter in Matthew’s Gospel moved the tribal chief to receiving Jesus as his Saviour and Lord! But that’s not all! You see, soon the whole tribe came to faith in Jesus Christ!<sup>14</sup>

Well, that’s the first reason why Matthew gave us Jesus’ genealogical list – i.e. so that his readers (you & I) can see that, with Jesus, God *entered man’s history*! Jesus was/is a real historical figure!

What’s the second reason?

Well, to point out to the Jews that Jesus was of noble descent.

Sadly, and to some degree, that was the same reason why the Free University of Amsterdam (Netherlands), on their enrolment forms (and as recently as the late 1950’s), still asked students regarding their fathers’ social standing in life!<sup>15</sup>

They wanted to know whether their students came from an academic/learned background. I guess the university authorities (sad, as it sounds) must have thought that young people from such homes would do better in their studies than student from non-academic background!

Well, it was certainly for the purpose of awakening faith in the hearts of his fellow Jews, that Matthew pointed out to them that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed from the line of King David and of Abraham!

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<sup>14</sup> Illustration borrowed & adapted from RC Sproul’s audio sermon on Mt 1:1-17 for which cf.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/jewish-look-jesus/>

<sup>15</sup> Illustration borrowed & adapted from RC Sproul (ibid)

And so, how awesome this list would be for the Jew who cared to read it! After all, what would he see? Well, that Jesus fits the promises made by God to Abraham and King David that, out of their own offspring, would come the eternal King and Saviour!

Well, let's have a very brief look at this list of names...

My brother & sister, have you ever noticed how this list differs from the one given by Luke (in Lk 3:23-38)?

Of course, the first obvious difference is that whereas Matthew begins Jesus' genealogical list with *Abraham*, then works his way down in history towards Jesus, Luke *starts* his list with *Jesus*, then works his way back *past Abraham* all the way to Adam – an indication that whereas Luke writes his Gospel with a Gentile audience in mind (yes, all who are descendants of Adam), Matthew writes his Gospel having in mind, first & foremost, Jews (yes, all who are descendants from Abraham).

The second difference you might have noticed is that Matthew's list tells us that a man called *Jacob* was the father of Mary's husband, Joseph! Yes, in v.16, Matthew literally says that ***Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born...***!

However, *Luke's* list does not say that Joseph's father was *Jacob*. No, it literally says:

***“Jesus was..., the son, so to speak, of Joseph, of Eli!”***<sup>16</sup>

See?

So, the question is now, “But whose son was Joseph then?” “Was he Jacob's son or Eli's son?”

My brother & sister, did you notice that whereas Matthew's list says, “Jacob *begat* Joseph,” Luke's list simply says, “Joseph was *of* Eli”?

See?

Luke does not say that Joseph was the *son* of Eli. Nor does he say that Eli *begat* Joseph. He simply states that Joseph was *of* Eli, which has made Bible scholars conclude that Eli must have been Joseph's father-in-law – i.e. *Mary's dad*! That's the only way Joseph could have been *of* Eli – meaning “of Eli's *family*!”

“Thus,” concluded some scholars, “what Luke has given us is a list of Jesus' ancestors *through His mother Mary* – with the implication that also Mary was from David's line!”

“And what *Matthew* has given us is Jesus' ancestors through His legally adopted earthly father, Joseph!”

What is more, it seems that whereas Matthew's list follows the names of the *kings* in Jesus' ancestry, Luke's list gives us followed the mere *biological* line of Jesus' ancestry!<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In Greek, “...ὡν υἱός, ὡς ἐνομιζέτο, Ἰωσήφ τοῦ Ἠλί” (Some editions also read Eli, Heli, i.e. Ἠλί, Ἠλεῖ; Ἠλί; cp. e.g. 1 Km 1:3; 2:12, 20, 22; 3 Km 2:27. — In Jos., Ant. 5, 340f al. Ἠλ[ε]ίς, gen. Ἠλεῖ 5, 341; 350) **Eli (Heli)**, the father (or, acc. to some, the grandfather) of Joseph, in the genealogy of Jesus **Lk 3:23**. — M-M. s.v. Ἠλεῖ (Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 435). Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

<sup>17</sup> Also, of great importance is that Matthew's list, right through, uses the word “begot” (e.g. Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob), when it comes to Joseph (Mary's husband) it does not say, “begot.” No, it simply says, “Joseph the husband of *Mary*, of whom (Mary) Jesus was born...” In the Greek text “of whom” (ex hēs, ἐξ ἧς) is in the feminine gender. Thus, “of whom” refers to Mary *of whom* Jesus was born!

Well there's one more thing that stands out from Matthew's list, i.e. that Matthew has left out certain names so that he could end up with three sets of fourteen names – after all, this makes it easier to memorise this list<sup>18</sup> (as people did do in those days).

You ask, "But why fourteen?" After all, fourteen was not an important number, like three or seven or twelve!?

Well, it seems that Matthew took the number value of David's name. You see, every letter in the Hebrew alphabet had a specific numeric value. In the case of David's name, the value of "d" is four, and the value of "v" is six. Thus, if you take the consonants in David's name (i.e. Dvd), you end up having four plus six plus four, which comes to fourteen!<sup>19</sup>

Thus, how much easier now for the Jew who wanted to memorise this list. All he had to remember was that the number of the name David was fourteen, and that he had to memorise the name of fourteen kings from Abraham to David; then, again, fourteen names from David to the Babylonian Exile; and then, again, fourteen names from the Babylonian Exile to Jesus!

My brother & sister, can you see why Bible scholars have said that Matthew wrote his Gospel mainly with Jews in mind? There are so many words, phrases and structures in Mt 1:1-17 which needed no explanation for the Jew of those times!

But, surprise!

This list was not just designed with Jews in mind – which brings us to the very short point 2...

### **Messiah for the Gentiles**

My brother & sister, there are clear pointers to the fact that Matthew (in the Holy Spirit) also wanted the Gentiles (non-Jews) to read His Gospel and, by God's grace, believe in Jesus Christ – or have their faith in Him strengthened.

You see, normally the ancient Jews would not include the names of women in their genealogical lists.<sup>20</sup>

But look! Apart from the name of *Mary*, Matthew has included the names of four other women!

But there's something even more significant about these four women – i.e. they are all from Gentile (non-Jewish) background!

Here they are:

- Tamar who in all likelihood was a Canaanite;
- Rahab who was a Canaanite of Jericho

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<sup>18</sup> "Such omission was common in the ancient world, primarily to make a genealogy easy to memorize..." (cf. Wilkins, M. J. (2004). [Matthew](#) (pp. 53–71). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House).

<sup>19</sup> "The number fourteen may even be a subtle reference to David, because the numerical value of the Hebrew consonants of his name is fourteen (d w d = 4+6+4). The Jewish practice of counting the numerical value for letters is called *gematria*" (Wilkins, M. J. (2004). [Matthew](#) (pp. 53–71). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House).

Gematria – **Origin** Mid 17th century from Aramaic *gīmaṭrēyā*, from Greek *gēometria* (see geometry) (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/gematria> ).

<sup>20</sup> "Genealogies need include only men (those in 1 Chron exemplify this pattern), so the unexpected appearance of four women draws attention to them" (Keener, C. S. (1997). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, Mt 1:1–2). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).

- Ruth (great-grandmother of King David). And she was a Moabite – which is very significant! After all, did not God’s law say that no Moabite was to enter the assembly of the LORD (Dt 23:3)?<sup>21</sup>
- Then there was also Bathsheba who seems to have been from Hittite background (for her first husband, Uriah, was a Hittite).

Why did Matthew include these women?

Why did he not include the names of some of Israel’s real matriarchs like, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel? I mean, Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel were barren, but the Lord opened their wombs! What a great message that could have sent to God’s people! But no, Matthew included the names of four *Gentile* women – each one of whom had scandalous backgrounds!

Why did Matthew do this?

My brother & sister, whatever Matthew’s motive was, God is able to use the names of these four women of Jesus’ Ancestry to say to the world, “Look! Salvation is not just for the Jews!” “No, as I have promised Abraham,<sup>22</sup> it’s also for the Gentiles (non-Jews); yes, for people from all nations on the earth!” “For, look, I, the Sovereign Lord, am able to save even the Gentiles – yes, I can save (and renew the hearts & lives) of even people from scandalous background!” “I can include even such as these in my eternal plan – yes, even members of the Reformed Church of Wainuiomata!”

My brother & sister, how beautiful: Through these four women, God shows us that at times when *Israel* was unfaithful, God was able to, even through *Gentiles*, preserve the Messianic line!<sup>23</sup>

So, what is the overriding message of our text (Mt 1:1-17)?

Here it is: 1) that everyone who hears the words of our text (you & I?) will see that, by His genealogy, Jesus *is* the long-promised Messiah; and 2) that we will “understand that God is faithful to His covenant promises to Israel and all nations. With the birth of Jesus Christ/Messiah, the dawning of salvation has arrived for all people regardless of ethnicity, gender, or status!”<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, “God can use anyone – however marginalised or despised – yes, even you & me, to bring about His purposes.”<sup>25</sup>

Well, this brings us to the ultra-short last point...

### Messiah for You?

Dear Wainui member (Dear visitor), our text has shown us that Jesus of Nazareth, is indeed the Messiah, the Saviour of the Jews and of the Gentiles!

<sup>21</sup> Dt 23:3, ***No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation.***

<sup>22</sup> cf. Gn 22:18, “...***and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.***”

<sup>23</sup> “These women each represent a crucial period in Israel’s history when a Gentile displayed extraordinary faith in contrast to Jews who lacked courage and faith: Tamar versus Judah’s disloyalty, Rahab versus the desert generation’s faithlessness, Ruth versus the unfaithful Israelites at the time of the judges, and Uriah versus David’s sinfulness with Bathsheba. The messianic line was preserved, even through Gentiles, when Israel was unfaithful” (Wilkins, M. J. (2004). [Matthew](#) (pp. 53–71). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House).

<sup>24</sup> Well-said words of Wilkins (ibid)

<sup>25</sup> Wilkins (ibid)

Question: Is He also your Saviour and Lord?  
Have you received Him in faith?  
Do you have a personal relationship with Him, your Lord?  
Do you love His Word?  
Do you talk to Him?  
Do you thank Him?  
Do you tell others (Jews & Gentiles – friends & foreigners) about Him?  
Look again at our text! See, and believe!

AMEN (2918 words excluding footnotes)