

Matthew's Jesus Christ

(notes taken from a lecture by Dr. Peter Leithart)

I. Matthew writes his gospel account patterned after the Old Testament

1. Beginning of Matthew

- Matt.1:1 "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ..."
- The phrase "book of the genealogy" is literally "book of genesis" (gk: *biblos geneseos*). Matthew is writing of a new genesis, a new creation through Jesus Christ. This phrase is also used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew word "generations", in Gen. 2:4,5:1. This word introduces descendants or offspring (even in Gen.2:4). However, even though Jesus did not have any offspring, Matthew understand the Christ is before all things. This the "book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ" in a double sense. He ushers in God's new creation and that he is origin of all things. Matthew also alludes to Jesus as the end of all things, because this new "book of genesis" ends Jesus Christ in Matt.1:16. Matthew is pointing out that Christ is the Alpha and Omega.

2. Ending of Matthew

- In the Hebrew Bible (i.e. the Old Testament) it actually ends with II Chronicles, not Malachi. At the end of II Chr. King Cyrus commission the Hebrews to return to build the temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus says "all the kingdom of earth" God has given him. Cyrus seeks to "build Him a house".
- Jesus is the Greater Cyrus. He commissions His disciples from Jerusalem to the world. Jesus commissions them to build God's temple, or kingdom, throughout the world. Jesus is "given all authority in heaven and on earth", all of which were created in Genesis 1:1. Christ as come to bring heaven and earth back into harmony.

II. Five Discourses & Five Fulfillments In Jesus' Ministry

1. New Moses Giving the Law (ch. 5 – 7)

- Sermon on the Mount
- Jesus sits down (5:1) like a teaching rabbi of the time.
- ends with "when Jesus had ended these sayings" (7:28)

2. New Moses Commissioning Conquest of Mercy & Healing (ch. 10)

- Moses commissioned the 12 tribes of Israel while on the east side of the Jordan.
- Jesus commissions His 12 apostles in their ministry to local Israel
- ends with "when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples" (Matt. 11:1)

3. New Solomon (ch. 13)

- parables of the kingdom are wisdom literature; riddles like Solomon's proverbs.
- Christ the King is speaking of His kingdom
- "a greater than Solomon is here" (12:42) leads in to the New Solomon section
- ends with "when Jesus had finished these parables" (Matt. 13:53)

+ Christ begins to separate from Israel in chapters 14-17

- After Solomon the kingdom was divided. In the days of Elijah, God began to focus on the remnant of Israel & the prophets gathered around Elijah
- With His disciples Christ creates an Israel within Israel, like the prophets did with the remnant within old Israel.

4. New Elisha (ch.18)

- John the Baptist was “Elijah” (Mt.11:14), who was killed in Matt.14.
- Jesus is the New Elisha, who came after “Elijah”.
- Like a Prophet, Christ warns of those who cause an offense.
- Jesus’ prophetic challenge to His “new Israel” is that they must forgive each other.
- ends with “when Jesus had finished these sayings” (Matt. 19:1)

5. New Jeremiah (ch.23-25)

- “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets...” (Matt.23:37)
- Like Jeremiah, Christ pronounces woes on Jerusalem, and in chapters 24-25 Christ mainly proclaims Jerusalem’s destruction.
- Jeremiah warned of invading Gentile empire, so does Christ
- ends with “when Jesus had finished these sayings” (Matt.26:1)

III. The New Exile & New Return

After Jeremiah, the nation of Israel went into exile. In the death of Jesus we see a new and greater exile – which He experiences on the cross in being separated from His Father. As Israel also returned to the land, even so Jesus returns from exile in the resurrection. The entire “exile and return” theme is embodied in the death and resurrection experience of Jesus Christ.

IV. Israel & Israel’s God

1. Jesus *is* Israel, in the sense that He lives out Israel’s history during His earthly ministry. He embodies Israel’s history, climatically in his exilic death and restorative resurrection. Jesus is the Ultimate Israel, the Wise Servant (Pr.17:2) and Wise Son of God (Hos.11:1,Is.44:21)

2. Jesus *is* Israel’s God. God is so intent on saving Israel that He becomes Israel to redeem Israel. This helps us appreciate the fullness of the incarnation. God became man, so that he would embody Israel in the person of Christ.

3. Jesus is the beginning and the ending of Israel’s history – as demonstrated in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus Christ. For Matthew the new “book of genesis” (Matt. 1:1) begins with Jesus and it ends with Jesus in Matt. 1:16. Alpha & Omega. First and last name mentioned.

4. Israel repeats its own history as it responds to Jesus. Israel, again, rejects Jesus’ ministry like it rejected the Moses, Solomon, Elisha, and Jeremiah.

5. God is *stubbornly loving*. After each rejection, the Lord comes back with more servants and messengers. Even after rejecting Jesus, He comes back with a resurrection. God’s love is very unnerving. He keeps coming back in Matthew’s gospel after they continually reject Him.

Leithart’s lecture fits in with the follow quote by Dr. Richard Hays:

“At the same time, however, Jesus also ‘fulfills’ the Torah (Law), in the sense that his life is the typological completion of numerous Old Testament prophecies and stories. Matthew, distinctively among the evangelists, repeatedly offers authorial asides to the reader, declaring that various events in Jesus’ career happened in order to fulfill what the prophets had spoken....Reality has an orderly pattern: no loose ends are left dangling, because Jesus the Messiah has tied them all up.”

The Moral Vision of the New Testament, pg. 96.