

# Jesus in the Gospels

## WEEK TWO

In order to authenticate Jesus of Nazareth to the Jewish mind as the rightful Messiah foretold by the law, the prophets, and the writings (Tanakh), the Gospel authors had to establish Jesus' humanity, His Jewishness, His right to rule as God's eternal King, and His divine nature as God. Matthew and Luke carry much of this weight in terms of solid biblical and historical proofs through Jesus' genealogies and origins in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth, linking the historical details of His early years as fulfillment of that which was foretold by the prophets in the Tanakh.

The first four chapters of Matthew's Gospel take us through Jesus' genealogy, His virgin birth, the divinely inspired witnesses of magi from the east and John the Baptist, as well as Jesus' baptism, testing in the wilderness, and His initial days of ministry with His first disciples. Matthew demonstrates specific ways Jesus' preparation fulfilled a number of prophetic passages about the Messiah.

### **What Price the Uniqueness of Jesus?**

*To wrench Jesus out of his Jewish world destroys Jesus and destroys Christianity.*  
by Anthony J. Saldarini

“To wrench Jesus out of his Jewish world destroys Jesus and destroys Christianity, the religion that grew out of His teachings (*although we know He did not come to start a new religion but to fulfill the promised hopes of God's covenant to His people Israel, for their salvation and the salvation of the world*). Even Jesus's famous role as Christ is a Jewish role. If Christians leave behind the concrete realities of Jesus's life and of the history of Israel in favor of a mythic, universal, spiritual Jesus and an otherworldly Kingdom of God, they then deny their origins in Israel, their history, and the God who has loved and protected Israel and the church. They cease to interpret the actual Jesus sent by God and they remake Him in their own image and likeness. The dangers are obvious. If Christians wrench Jesus out of his naturally historic and ethnic place within the people of Israel, they open the way to doing equal violence to Israel, the place and people of Jesus. This is a lesson of history that still haunts us all.”

## Jesus' Preparation: Matthew 1-4

### I. Chapter 1

#### A. 1:1 - The names given to Jesus speak of His messianic qualifications

1. Jesus is English from the Greek *Ἰησοῦς* from the Hebrew *Yeshua* which means "salvation" or "the one who saves".
2. Christ is English from the Greek *Χριστός* from the Hebrew *Mashiach* (transliterated in English as "Messiah") which means "anointed one" or "poured upon one". Priests and kings in the Tanakh were ordained by anointing with oil, a symbol of their being "chosen" by God.
3. Christ is not Jesus' last name, but a Messianic title of the One chosen by God to bring salvation to humanity and redeem the created order (Daniel 9:24-26; Isaiah 11:1-2; Isaiah 53 and 61).
4. Jesus directly links the Messianic anointing of Isaiah 61:1-2a to Himself in Luke 4:16-21. "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (lit. *in your ears*).

#### B. 1:1 - Matthew immediately identifies Jesus as the descendant of David and Abraham, requirements for the Messianic lineage.

1. As a son of Abraham He is a Jew by birth and qualified to be the redeemer promised to the Jewish people and the blessing God promised through Abraham that would come to all nations (Genesis 12:3).
2. As a son of David He is the rightful heir to David's "eternal throne" which God promised one of his descendants would rule (2 Sam 7:8-13).
3. These two links from Matthew provide initial ancestral proof needed for his Jewish readers to believe that Jesus is qualified to be the promised King Messiah.

#### C. 1:2-16 - Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus' legal line through His step-father Joseph while Luke's genealogy follows Jesus' biological line through Mary, echoing the Genesis 3:15 "seed of a woman" prophecy.

1. (1:17) 14 generations x3 is a Davidic emphasis. In ancient Hebrew each letter of the alphabet had a corresponding number. The numeric values of the number 14 may be expressed as 3 Hebrew letters: D/dalet=4, V/vav=6, D/dalet=4 (or DVD - "David")
2. (1:18-25) Jeconiah's inclusion in Matthew's genealogy is proof that Jesus could not be Joseph's natural son (Jeconiah's line was cursed in Jeremiah 22:24-30 and cut off from the right to sit on David's throne). Matthew follows this genealogy immediately with the account of the virgin birth to provide a solution to this legal problem. In other words, look to Mary's lineage, not Joseph's. Luke provides Mary's lineage, which traces back to David's son Nathan, not Solomon (Jeconiah's line).
3. Matthew 1:1 and Luke 3:38 provide a 4 part picture of the messianic person. As the "Son of David" Jesus is King. As the "Son of Abraham" Jesus is a Jew. As the "Son of Adam" Jesus is a man. As the "Son of God" Jesus is God. Jesus is the Jewish

God-Man King. (See article below “The Genealogy of the Messiah” by Arnold Fruchtenbaum.)

4. (1:3, 5, 6, 16) Matthew lists 5 women, unusual for Jewish genealogies. 4 are Gentiles and 3 have a past associated with sexual sin. Here Matthew makes clear that the blessing of the Kingdom and salvation through Messiah has never been just for the Jews but for all of humanity. Jesus has come to save sinners.
  - Tamar the Canaanite intentionally committed incest with her father-in-law, Judah (Genesis 38). Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute (Joshua 2). Bathsheba, possibly a Hittite, committed adultery with King David (2 Samuel 11).
  - Ruth was a part of the cursed Moabites who were not allowed to participate in the covenant because of their opposition to God’s people (Deuteronomy 23:3).
- D. **1:18-19** - Joseph and Mary were “engaged” or “erusin”, the 2nd step of a 3 step Jewish marriage process. The penalty for sexual immorality during this process was stoning to death (Deuteronomy 22:13-21) or putting away the adulterous wife by obtaining a “get” or “bill of divorce” (Deuteronomy 24:1 - sefer kerithuth).
  1. Step 1: “shiddukhin” was the “arrangement” of marriage at a young age by the fathers.
  2. Step 2: “erusin” was the “engagement” of the young couple where the “Ketubah” was signed, making their public declaration as binding as a legal marriage, except they abstained from sexual relations for a year while they prepared. This could only be broken by a “Get”/“Sefer Kerithuth” (say'-fer ker-ee-thooth') or “bill of divorce”.
  3. Step 3: “nisuin” was the “marriage”. The bridegroom would finish preparations of their home and then come to the bride’s house to carry her away to the ceremony.
  4. “Mary” comes from the Hebrew “Miriam” and the root “Meri” meaning “bitter, rebellious, or obstinate.” Yet she says in Luke 1:38, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”
- E. **1:18-24** - Matthew’s narrative is from Joseph’s perspective.
  1. Compare Luke from Mary’s perspective.
  2. The virgin birth through Mary is the first evidence of the fulfillment of prophetic Scripture in Isaiah 7:14 (Heb. “alma” is flexible to cover young maiden or virgin, whereas “betulah” means virgin. Compare references to Rebekah in Gen 24:16, 43).

## II. Chapter 2

- A. **2:1** - “Wise men from the east”
  1. Most likely astrologers from the province of Babylon.
  2. Did they have knowledge of Jewish theology/prophecy because of influence from Daniel’s writings? Were they Babylonians or Gentile converts who were educated in both cultures and searching for Messiah? The response in verse 11 “They bowed down and worshipped Him” would be only to God, not just a king.

3. The star's movements in 2:9 indicate not a celestial body but possibly the "Sh'chinah" (glory) of God that appears at many dramatic events in biblical history.
- B. **2:1-8** - Herod trusts the prophecies are true, yet still fights against their fulfillment, showing his willful rebellion against the God of Israel (Psalm 2:1-3, 10-12; Matthew 27:18; 2 Peter 3:5; John 15:23-25). This theme of willful rebellion against Jesus as the Messiah King can be seen in Israel's religious leaders (Mark 12:7-12; Matthew 28:11ff).
- C. **2:1, 14-15, 23** - Bethlehem to Egypt to Nazareth.
1. Bethlehem, just 5 miles south of Jerusalem, is the city of King David. "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).
  2. Egypt - "Out of Egypt I called My son." (Hosea 11:1)
  3. Nazareth - Not mentioned in the Tanakh
    - To be called a "Nazarene" was to be called a *despicable man*, a man from whom no good was to be expected, and to whom no respect was to be paid.
    - Not foretold by any one prophet, but echoed in the general message of the prophets, that the Messiah should be despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:2-3), a worm and no man (Psalm 22:6-7) and that he should be a reproach, a shame, and a stranger to his brothers (Psalm 69:7-8).
- D. Repetition of the word "dream": divine influence over the events of salvation history.
1. 1:20 - an angel of the Lord speaks to Joseph in a dream about Mary and how the Child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.
  2. 2:12 - wise men are warned in a dream not to return to Herod.
  3. 2:13 - an angel of the Lord warns Joseph to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus.
  4. 2:19 - an angel of the Lord instructs Joseph to return to Israel.
  5. 2:22 - Joseph warned in a dream not to move to Judea but to Galilee.

### III. Chapter 3

- A. **3:1-17** - Two-Fold witness to Jesus the Messiah.
1. John the Baptist - In order to give authority to John the Baptist's witness to Jesus, Matthew first validates John the Baptist's ministry as a fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1).
  2. The Divine Voice - God's audible "voice from heaven" acted as a 2nd public testimony at that time to establish Jesus' identity and the purpose of His ministry.
- B. Two-Fold purpose of Jesus the Messiah (John's Gospel).
1. Salvation from Sin - "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

- **Romans 3:24-25** gives us the specifics of what happened when Jesus died to save sinners: "...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed..."
  - Atonement - a substitutionary sacrifice offered to "propitiate" or pay the just penalty for someone. In essence, the sacrifice takes their place and "covers" them so that they are protected from the penalty their sins deserve. The idea of atonement or propitiation also carries the sense that the two parties are put back together (God and man), redeeming the effects of being separated by sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:17; 1 Peter 3:18)
  - Justification - to declare as righteous. God justifies someone when He imparts the righteousness of Jesus Christ to their legal "account" because of faith in Him. This righteousness brings peace between God and the person because the wrath of God towards them because of sin has been removed from over their life. (Romans 4:5-8; 5:1-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
  - Redemption - to "buy out of" or purchase a slave's freedom. This is the overarching effect of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His righteousness being imputed to us (put legally into our account at the moment of faith as well as "inside" of us so that it can be worked out through the process of "sanctification"). There are many benefits to our debt being paid and being set free from sin and death: eternal life (Rev 5:9-10), forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7), righteousness (Rom 5:17), freedom from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13), deliverance from sin's bondage (Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 1:14-18), adoption into God's family (Gal 4:5), peace with God (Col 1:18-20), and the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20).
  - None of this is earned through works of the law or self-righteousness, but given as the free gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. We experience more and more of these free gifts as we come to accept, believe fully and walk out what He has already completed for us in His death and resurrection.
2. "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33).
- Jesus, John the Baptist, the early apostles, and the Gospel writers viewed Holy Spirit baptism as fundamentally necessary to the mission of the Messiah. It was never an option or side-note.
  - John 14-16 and Acts 1-2, 10, 19 put Holy Spirit baptism as the primary thrust and focus of the fledgling church, the event/gift which would empower and make fruitful what Jesus began to do and teach. This makes it abundantly clear that salvation from sin only clears the way for the Holy Spirit to come in and abide. The two events are both sides of the same coin of redemption. Without salvation from sin (the new birth) there is no beginning, but without Holy Spirit baptism there is no preservation or empowerment of what was started.
  - To those who do not believe Holy Spirit baptism is a subsequent event to faith in Jesus Christ, I point to Acts 19:1-7 as well as Jesus' words in John 7: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers

of living water.” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:38-39).

## IV. Chapter 4

### A. 4:1-11 - Prepared by testing.

1. Led by the Spirit into the wilderness - Spirit-led not Satan-led. This testing is designed and administrated by God, not by Satan. God is sovereign in our lives.
2. Satan - not a Christian idea, but a biblical reality. Satan’s primary role biblically as the “father of lies” (Jn 8:44) has been to seduce people, accuse them before God, and bring torment, death and destruction. (Job 1, Zechariah 3, Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28)
3. 40 days and 40 nights of fasting - links the testings of Moses (Exodus 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) as the representatives of the giving of the law and the first of the prophets. After several days of fasting the initial hunger pains subside and the body is strong. However, after about 40 days, intense hunger pains return as the body shifts into a mode of consuming its own tissue to survive, causing intense starvation pains.
4. (4:3) Conditional clause in Greek better reads “Since you are the Son of God...”, not “if”. Satan was not tempting Jesus to prove His identity (Matt 3:17) but to use His power to satisfy the intense physical starvation pains he felt after 40 days of fasting, thereby meeting His own need apart from the perfect will and timing of the Father.
5. 3-part temptation mirrors **1 John 2:16**: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”
  - 1. Stone to bread - temptation to meet a physical need prematurely (outside the Father’s perfect will/timing)
  - 2. Jump from temple - temptation to prove His identity to Israel prematurely and in the wrong way (outside the Father’s perfect will/timing).
  - 3. Exchange worship for a kingdom - temptation to get His Psalm 2 inheritance prematurely and without having to go through Calvary (outside the Father’s perfect will/timing).
  - We sin when we agree with Satan’s enticement to have a “good” thing in a wrong way at a wrong time.
6. Jesus’ response to each temptation was to expose deceit to the light of truth from God’s Word.
7. The rabbis of Israel knew God’s Word was the weapon through which Satan was defeated. “The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel, My children, I have created the evil impulse, and I have created the *Torah* as an antidote to it; if you occupy yourselves with *Torah* you will not be delivered into its power. ...a Sage from the

school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: My son, if this wretched one, the evil inclination, encounters you, pull it into the study hall, i.e., go and study Torah. If it is a stone it will melt, and if it is iron it will break, as it is stated with regard to the Torah: “Is not My word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29). (Tractate Kiddushin 30b)

8. Jesus’ success against Satan’s temptations qualify Him as the sinless Redeemer of Hebrews 4:15 and the second Adam of Romans 5 worthy to reconcile man to God by His righteousness and perfect obedience.

B. **4:12-25** - a quick overview of Jesus ministry approach.

1. Message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven has come near.” (same as John)
2. Leadership: rabbinical style, taking on disciples to learn His teachings.
  - disciples NOT from the seminaries of Jerusalem but fishermen from around the Kinnereth (from Hebrew *kinor* for “harp” because of its shape like a harp).
  - disciples would have received the mandatory training of any Jewish boy growing up in ancient Israel in Torah.
  - In the Mishnah, Rabbi Jehudah, the son of Tema, maps out the different periods of the ancient Jew’s life, which helps us understand expectations on how children were brought up and what the disciples likely knew as young men in their late teens or early twenties.

“At five years of age, reading of the Bible; at ten years, learning the Mishnah; at thirteen years, bound to the commandments; at fifteen years, the study of the Talmud; at eighteen years, marriage; at twenty, the pursuit of trade or business (active life); at thirty years, full vigour; at forty, maturity of reason; at fifty, of counsel; at sixty, commencement of agedness; at seventy, grey age; at eighty, advanced old age; at ninety, bowed down; at a hundred, as if he were dead and gone, and taken from the world.” (Mishnah, Aboth. v.21)
3. Ministry: itinerate preaching that demonstrated the authority of the Kingdom of God by healing sick people and casting out demons. The response of the people was immediate, widespread, and numerous.

**HOMEWORK:** Read Matthew 5-7. Circle or underline repeated words that emerge as key themes.