Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Matthew Chapter One, Verse One – Week 45

The Bible through the Good News of Matthew

Day 308. Preamble

The Gospel (or "Good News") of Matthew has traditionally been ascribed to the Apostle Matthew, one of Jesus' first disciples. It was probably written between 40 and 100 AD, with most scholars dating it to after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. This puts its writing anywhere between seven to 67 years after the death of Christ – well within the timeframe to ensure its facts were verifiable by contemporaries of Christ or their close associates, as well as being able to be challenged by those who sought to discredit the small movement of Followers of the Way of Christ.

Over 50% of Matthew is in common with Mark, about 23% is in common with Luke, and the rest is unique to Matthew.

When Matthew was written, Christianity was still a sect firmly within Judaism (though with increasing numbers of gentile converts), as opposed to the separate religion it has since become. Reinforcing this, Matthew rarely (if ever) explains Jewish customs, as his audience would have understood these implicitly. This includes the church structure (temple and synagogue), daily customs, and the Jewish law. For Matthew, Christianity was not divorced from Judaism – rather, it was a Judaism which understood that the Messiah had come and God's Kingdom was underway.

Like any good Jewish disciple of his day, Matthew knew the scriptures (what we now call the Old Testament and the Apocrypha) very well. There are many allusions or references to the scripture throughout his writing, which we will use to try to draw out the full meaning which his immediate readers / listeners would have broadly grasped. Once we have a better understanding of what it meant to them then, we can explore in better light what Matthew's gospel means for us now.

Unless otherwise stated, the translation listed at https://netbible.org/bible was used for this study.

In reading a document from a different culture or time period, how helpful is it to know some of the context? Other than what is mentioned above, what would you find helpful to understand regarding the Gospel of Matthew, or other biblical writings?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 309: The beginning

This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

In the original Greek, the above sentence reads *"Genesis of Jesus Anointed Son of David Son of Abraham"*.

This immediately brings an important book of scripture to mind.

Ummm… what book?

Sorry – the book of Genesis, or "Beginning". The bible starts with the book of Beginnings. Genesis goes through God's dance of creation, culminating in humanity, through archetypal human faults or sins, through the beginnings of the history of God's people, the Israelites. The book of Genesis gets its name from the first word in it, which is "Genesis." If the same convention had been held, Matthew would also be called "Genesis," the main difference being that Genesis was written in Hebrew while Matthew was written in Greek. Matthew therefore signals that this is a momentous book he is writing, a book of the beginning of something important.

What could be so important that Matthew is equating his book with the one which describes the beginning of all there is?

Share with your thoughts fellow explorers.

Day 310: It's all in the name.

This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

His name wasn't actually Jesus Christ.

WHAT?

At no time did Mary, his mother, say, "Jesus Christ, go clean your room." Or "Jesus Christ …" anything.

Mine did, to me …

Knowing your name is nowhere near "Jesus Christ", I suspect that's a very different context!

Well … yes. WHAT DO YOU MEAN HIS NAME WASN'T JESUS CHRIST? Is He a lie?

No, He's not a lie – He's the truth! However, His name did get changed over the years. Let me explain. It's all to do with context. Bear with me here:

Jesus is the English transliteration of the Latin name Iēsous (pronounced Hey-zeus), a transliteration of the Greek Ἰησοῦς (pronounced Hey-Sooss), itself a transliteration of the Hebrew name Yeshua (pronounced Yes-shoo-a) or in Aramaic Y'shua (pronounced Why-shu-wa). It is related to another Biblical name: Joshua.

The Hebrew name Yeshua means *'salvation'*. This is a shortened form of the Hebrew name Yehoshua (Yeah-Ho-shoo-a), which is Joshua in English and means 'the Lord saves', 'the Lord is salvation' or 'the Lord will save' (all tenses are in place).

What was Jesus called? It probably depended on who He was talking to, as Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic were all common where He lived. He could have easily gone from being addressed as Iēsous to Ἰησοῦς to Yeshua to Y'shua. Thus, in His own home speaking Aramaic, Jesus was probably called "Why-shu-wa." In the broader country, speaking Hebrew, it was "Yes-shoo-a." Among the Greek-speakers, it became "Hey-Sooss," while among the Romans (Latin) it was "Hey-zeus." English took "Hey-zeus" from the Latin until the 1600's. The "J" sound came with changes from Middle English into Modern English, which is when "Hey-zeus" changed to "Jey-zeus" and then, "Jesus". If He was born here, today, we may have called Him "Josh".

What does it matter that "Jesus" was pronounced (and spelled) differently during His time on earth compared with today?

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 311: It's all in the name (continued)

This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

And "Christ" wasn't His last name.

Oh Lord – save me now.

He didn't have a family name. Contemporaries would have called him Yeshua Bar Yehosef or Yeshua Nasraya. (That is "Jesus, son of Joseph" or "Jesus of Nazareth.")

Christ is from Old English *Crist*, from Latin *Christus*, from Ancient Greek *Χριστός* (Khristós), which meant "the anointed one", a translation of the Hebrew word māšīaḥ, (Ma-shee-a) "anointed") (whence comes the English *messiah*). Yeshua Hamasiah translates as 'Jesus the Messiah' or 'Jesus the Christ'

According to parts of the Old Testament (mainly the prophetic parts), "**the** anointed one" refers to the one who God selects to inaugurate and bring in His kingdom. It is a loaded term with many nuances (see Isaiah chapters 2, 9, 11, 40-55, 59; Psalm 110; Zechariah chapters 3, 9, 12, 14; Jeremiah chapters 23, 30, 33, 48, 49; Ezekiel chapter 38; Hosea chapter 3; Micah chapter 4; Zephaniah chapters 3 and 14; Daniel chapter 7).

He is both priest-of-priests and king-of-kings. He is the one who brings Israel to the new covenant with God, to do life-affirming redemptive deeds, take on the sins of the people and suffer in their place, rule forever at the right hand of God, be the Son of God, the Son of Man, the sacrificial lamb, be the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace, be our redeemer and the righteous sufferer, a light for the nations, the new shepherd who cares for His sheep, who lays down His own life for the sheep, who guides us through our dark valleys, who is the life of the world.

What are you trying to tell me?

"Christ" wasn't a name – *it was a title*. Just like Julius Caesar – "Caesar" was his title, not his name. "Christ" was a title pregnant with meaning from the scripture of Matthew's time.

This opening sentence is not about any Jesus (the name was rather common actually), it's about **this** Jesus – the one anointed by God to bring in His kingdom. It is about a specific person at a specific place in a specific time.

How does understanding the above information enhance how you approach the book which will follow?

Share your thoughts with your fellow disciples.

Day 312: Credentials

This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

The descent from David and Abraham was critical. In 2nd Samuel 7:12-16, Nathan the prophet told King David, "I will raise up your descendant, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and I will make his dynasty permanent. I will become his father and he will become my son. When he sins, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings. But my loyal love will not be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will stand before me permanently; your dynasty will be permanent.'"

It was through King David's house that the Messiah will come – and it is through Abraham that God blesses all of humanity (Genesis 12:1-3, 15:17-20, 17:1-14) and creates His people, Israel, the ones who "wrestle with God" (which is what Israel means) and who will be His light to all the nations (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6, 60:3).

Therefore, taking into account what we have learned from the scriptures we now call the Old Testament, Matthew 1:1 could mean, "The new beginning through 'Salvation', the anointed Priest-of-priests and King-of-kings, the one destined to put in place the eternal Kingdom of Israel which will bless all humanity and be the light to the nations."

Has your understanding of the book of Matthew changed between Day 308 and Day 312? Explain how it has or hasn't.

Share your experience as you desire.

Day 313: Understanding

Hello … it took us four days to get through verse 1 of chapter 1. Is this the "never-ending bible study?"

Yes.

What? I was being sarcastic!

You were – and while THIS bible study will end, as shared earlier one of the disciplines of a disciple of Christ is ongoing study of the bible, through daily reading and reflection, whether it be Lectio Divina or a different method. Our current method is seeking increased understanding, even, if possible, as much understanding as Matthew had when he wrote the book. In fact, it is the aim of this bible study that we shall cover a great deal of the entire bible, all through the lens of Matthew. You don't have to read all the other (non-Matthew) references given in the study, but I encourage you to do so as it will help inform your understanding and opinion. Regardless if you read all the other references not, this study will take a bit of time.

I see.

And, once we're done, hopefully you will continue with the rest of the bible, for the rest of your earthly life.

I see.

Hopefully, it will even give you joy, and you will celebrate it (as per Day 305).

So, seeking understanding is an ongoing journey that is understood to never end?

You understand!

Try and find 15-30 minutes each day that you can spend reading and meditating on scripture. You may find it helpful to keep a journal of your reading, your understanding and questions, and what you feel God is saying to you through it. This is useful for both Lectio Divina and Bible reading for intellectual understanding. What do you feel about daily scripture reading? Do you have any concerns or questions regarding the approach being taken in this bible study specifically?

Share your thoughts with your fellow Explorers in Christ.

Day 314: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God.