

The Gospel of Matthew

by A.W. Pink

Matthew's Gospel presents Christ as the Fulfiller of Old Testament promises, emphasizing His connection to Israel's throne and land, and foreshadowing His rejection by the Jews and acceptance by the Gentiles.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 1:1, Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 5:1-2, Matthew 12:23, Matthew 15:24, Matthew 22:2, Matthew 28:18, Romans 15:8-9

Topics: "Fulfillment of Prophecy", "The Kingdom of Heaven"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the significance of Matthew's Gospel as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, highlighting its Jewish character and its role in presenting Jesus as the Messiah and King of Israel. He notes that Matthew's frequent use of the term 'fulfilled' underscores the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, and the genealogy establishes Christ's rightful claim to the throne of David. Pink explains that Matthew's Gospel is essential for understanding God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles, illustrating the consequences of Israel's rejection of Christ. The sermon also discusses the importance of repentance and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is central to Jesus' ministry as depicted in Matthew. Ultimately, Pink portrays Matthew as a dispensational Gospel that reveals the transition from the Jewish theocracy to the Church.

Transcript

Why Four Gospels?

1. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Matthew's Gospel breaks the long silence that followed the ministry of Malachi the last of the Old Testament prophets. This silence extended for four hundred years, and during that time God was hid from Israel's view. Throughout this period there were no angelic manifestations, no prophet spake for Jehovah, and, though the Chosen People were sorely pressed, yet were there no Divine interpositions on their behalf. For four centuries God shut His people up to His written Word.

Again and again had God promised to send the Messiah, and from Malachi's time and onwards the saints of the Lord anxiously awaited the appearing of the predicted One. It is at this point Matthew's Gospel is to present Christ as the Fulfiller of the promises made to Israel and the prophecies which related to their Messiah. This is why the word "fulfilled" occurs in Matthew fifteen times, and why there are more quotations from the Old Testament in this first Gospel than in the remaining three put together.

The position which Matthew's Gospel occupies in the Sacred Canon indicates its scope: it follows immediately after the Old Testament, and stands at the beginning of the New. It is therefore a connecting link between them. Hence it is transitionary in its character, and more Jewish than any other book in the New Testament. Matthew reveals God appealing to and dealing with His Old Testament people; presents the Lord Jesus as occupying a distinctively Jewish relationship; and, is the only one of the four Evangelists that records Messiah's express declaration, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (15:24).

The numerical position given to Matthew's Gospel in the Divine library confirms what has been said, for, being the fortieth book it shows us Israel in the place of probation, tested by the presence of Messiah in their midst. Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as Israel's Messiah and King, as well as the One who shall save His people from their sins. The opening sentence gives the key to the book-- "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."

Seven times the Lord Jesus is addressed as "Son of David" in the Gospel, and ten times, altogether, is this title found there. "Son of David" connects the Saviour with Israel's throne, "Son of Abraham" linking Him with Israel's land--Abraham being the one to whom Jehovah first gave the land. But nowhere after the opening verse is this title "Son of Abraham" applied to Christ, for the restoration of the land to Israel is consequent upon their acceptance of Him as their Saviour--King, and that which is made prominent in this first Gospel is the presentation of Christ as King--twelve times over is this title here applied to Christ.

Matthew is essentially the dispensational Gospel and it is impossible to over-estimate its importance and value. Matthew shows us Christ offered to the Jews, and the consequences of their rejection of Him, namely, the setting aside of Israel, and God turning in grace to the Gentiles. Rom. 15:8,9 summarizes the scope of Matthew's Gospel--"Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy."

Christ was not only born of the Jews, but He was born, first, to the Jews, so that in the language of their prophet they could exclaim, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given" (Isa. 9:6). Matthew's Gospel explains why Israel, in their later books of the New Testament, is seen temporally cast off by God, and why He is now taking out from the Gentiles a people for His name; in other words, it makes known why, in the present dispensation, the Church has superseded the Jewish theocracy.

It supplies the key to God's dealings with the earth in this Age: without a workable knowledge of this first Gospel it is well-nigh impossible to understand the remaining portions of the New Testament. We turn now to consider some of the outstanding features and peculiar characteristics of Matthew's Gospel. The first thing which arrests our attention is the opening verse. God, in His tender grace, has hung the key right over the entrance. The opening verse is that which unlocks the contents of this Gospel--"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."

The first five English words here are but two in the Greek-- "Biblos geneoseos." These two words indicate the peculiarly Jewish character of the earlier portions of this Gospel, for it is an Old Testament expression. It is noteworthy that this expression which commences the New Testament is found almost at the beginning of the first book in the Old Testament, for in Gen. 5:1 we read, "This is the book of the generations of Adam." We need hardly say that this word "generation" signifies the history of."

These two "books"--the book of the generation of Adam, and the book of the generation of Jesus Christ--might well be termed the Book of Death and the Book of Life. Not only does the whole Bible center

around these two books, but the sum of human destiny also. How strikingly this expression, found at the beginning of Genesis and the beginning of Matthew, brings out the Unity of the two Testaments! In the book of Genesis we have eleven different "generations" or histories enumerated, beginning with the "generations of the heavens and the earth," and closing with the "generations of Jacob"--see 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2--thus dividing the first book of the Bible into twelve sections, twelve being the number of Divine government, which is what is before us in Genesis--God in sovereign government.

From Exodus to Daniel we find government entrusted, instrumentally, to Israel, and from Daniel onwards it is in the hands of the Gentiles; but in Genesis we antedate the Jewish theocracy, and there government is found directly in the hands of God, hence its twelve-fold division. Twice more, namely, in Numbers 3:1 and Ruth 4:18, do we get this expression "the generation of," making in the Old Testament thirteen in all, which is the number of apostasy, for that is all the Law revealed!

But, as we have seen, this expression occurs once more (and there for the last time in Holy Writ) in the opening verse of the New Testament, thus making fourteen in all, and the fourteenth is "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ." How profoundly significant and suggestive this is! Fourteen is 2×7 , and two signifies (among its other meanings) contrast or difference, and seven is the number of perfection and completeness--and what a complete difference the Coming of Jesus Christ made!

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). These titles of our Saviour have, at least, a threefold significance. In the first place, both of them connect Him with Israel: "Son of David" linking Him with Israel's Throne, and "Son of Abraham" with Israel's Land. In the second place, "Son of David" limits Him to Israel, whereas "Son of Abraham" is wider in its scope, reaching forth to the Gentiles, for God's original promise was that in Abraham "shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).

In the third place, as Dr. W. L. Tucker has pointed out, these titles correspond exactly with the twofold (structural) division of Matthew's Gospel.¹ Up to 4:16 all is Introductory, and 4:17 opens the first division of the book, reading, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." This section treats of the Official ministry of Christ and presents Him as "the Son of David." The second section commences at 16:21 and reads, "From that time forth Jesus began to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

This section treats, primarily, of the Sacrificial work of Christ, and views Him as "the Son of Abraham," typified, of old, by Isaac--laid on the altar. Having dwelt at some length on the opening verse of our Gospel, we may next notice that the remainder of the chapter down to the end of verse 17 is occupied with the Genealogy of Jesus Christ. The prime significance of this is worthy of our closest attention, for it fixes with certainty the character and dominant theme of this Gospel.

The very first book of the New Testament opens a long list of names! What a proof that no uninspired man composed it! But God's thoughts and ways are ever different from ours, and ever perfect too. The reason for this Genealogy is not far to seek. As we have seen, the opening sentence of Matthew contains the key to the book, intimating plainly that Christ is here viewed, first, in a Jewish relationship, fully entitled to sit on David's Throne. How then is His title established?

By showing that, according to the flesh, He belonged to the royal tribe: by setting forth His Kingly line of descent. A King's title to occupy the throne depends not on the public ballot, but lies in his blood rights. Therefore, the first thing which the Holy Spirit does in this Gospel is to give us the Royal Genealogy of the Messiah, showing that as a lineal descendant of David He was fully entitled to Israel's Throne. The Genealogy recorded in Matthew 1 gives us not merely the human ancestry of Christ, but, particularly, His royal line of descent, this being one of the essential features which differentiates it from the Genealogy recorded in Luke 3.

The fundamental design of Matthew 1:1-17 is to prove Christ's right to reign as King of the Jews. This is why the genealogy is traced no further back than Abraham, he being the father of the Hebrew people. This is why, in the opening verse, the order is "Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," instead of "the Son of Abraham, the Son of David" as might be expected from the order which immediately follows, for there we start with Abraham and work up to David. Why, then, is this order reversed in the opening verse?

The answer must be that David comes first because it is the Kingly line which is here being emphasized! This also explains why, in verse 2 we read "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren." Why should Judah alone be here singled out for mention from the twelve sons of Jacob? Why not have said "Jacob begat Reuben and his brethren"? for he was Jacob's firstborn." If it be objected that the birthright was transferred from Reuben to Joseph, then we ask, why not have said "Jacob begat Joseph"? especially as Joseph was his favorite son.

The answer is, Because Judah was the royal tribe, and it is the Kingly line which is here before us. Again: in verse 6 we read, "And Jesse begat David the King: and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah." Of all those who reigned over Israel whose names are here recorded in Matthew 1, David is the only one that is denominated "King," and he, twice over in the same verse! Why is this, except to bring David into special prominence, and thus show us the significance of the title given to our Lord in the opening verse--"the Son of David."

There are many interesting features of this Genealogy which we must now pass over, but its numerical arrangement calls for a few brief comments. The Genealogy is divided into three parts: the first section, running from Abraham to David, may be termed the period of Preparation; the second section running from Solomon to the Babylonian captivity, may be called the period of Degeneration; while the third period, running from the Babylonian captivity till the Birth of Christ, may be named the period of Expectation.

The numeral three signifies, in Scripture, manifestation, and how appropriate this arrangement was here, for not until Christ appears is God's purpose concerning Abraham and his seed fully manifested. Each of these three sections in the Royal Genealogy contains fourteen generations, which is 2×7 , two signifying (among its slightly varied meanings) testimony or competent witness, and seven standing for perfection. Again we may admire the consonancy of these numerals in this genealogy of Christ, for only in Him do we get perfect testimony--the "Faithful and True Witness."

Finally, be it observed, that 14×3 gives us 42 generations in all from Abraham to Christ, or 7×6 , seven signifying perfection, and six being the number of man, so that Christ--the forty-second from Abraham--brings us to the Perfect Man!! How microscopically perfect is the Word of God! "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. 1:16). Matthew does not connect Joseph and Jesus as father and son, but departs from the usual phraseology of the

genealogy so as to indicate the peculiarity, the uniqueness, of the Saviour's birth.

Abraham might beget Isaac, and Isaac beget Jacob, but Joseph the husband of Mary did not beget Jesus, instead, we read, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (1:18). As Isaiah had foretold (7:14) seven hundred years before, Messiah was to be born of "the virgin." But a virgin had no right to Israel's throne, but Joseph had this right, being a direct descendant of David, and so through Joseph, His legal father (for be it remembered that betrothal was as binding with the Jews as marriage is with us) the Lord Jesus secured His rights, according to the flesh, to be King of the Jews.

Coming now to Matthew 2 we may observe that we have in this chapter an incident recorded which is entirely passed over by the other Evangelists, but which is peculiarly appropriate in this first Gospel. This incident is the visit of the wise men who came from the East to honor and worship the Christ Child. The details which the Holy Spirit gives us of this visit strikingly illustrate the distinctive character and scope of Matthew's Gospel. This chapter opens as follows, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him."

Notice, these wise men came not inquiring, "Where is He that is born the Saviour of the world?", nor, "Where is the Word now incarnate?", but instead, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" The fact that Mark, Luke and John are entirely silent about this, and the fact that Matthew's Gospel does record it, is surely proof positive that this First Gospel presents Christ in a distinctively Jewish relationship. The evidence for this is cumulative: there is first the peculiar expression with which Matthew opens-- "the book of the generation of," which is an Old Testament expression, and met with nowhere else in the New Testament; there is the first title which is given to Christ in this Gospel-- "Son of David;" there is the Royal Genealogy which immediately follows; and now there is the record of the visit of the wise men, saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

Thus has the Spirit of God made so plain and prominent the peculiarly Jewish character of the opening chapters of Matthew's Gospel that none save those who are blinded by prejudice can fail to see its true dispensational place. Thus, too, has He rendered excuseless the foolish agitation which is now, in certain quarters, being raised, and which tends only to confuse and confound. But there is far more in Matthew 2 than the recognition of Christ as the rightful King of the Jews.

The incident therein narrated contains a foreshadowment of the reception which Christ was to meet with here in the world, anticipating the end from the beginning. What we find here in Matthew 2 is really a prophetic outline of the whole course of Matthew's Gospel. First, we have the affirmation that the Lord Jesus was born "King of the Jews;" then we have the fact that Christ is found not in Jerusalem, the royal city, but outside of it; then we have the blindness and indifference of the Jews to the presence of David's Son in their midst--seen in the fact that, first, His own people were unaware that the Messiah was now there among them, and second, in their failure to accompany the wise men as they left Jerusalem seeking the young Child; then we are shown strangers from a far-distant land with a heart for the Saviour, seeking Him out and worshipping Him; finally, we learn of the civil ruler filled with hatred and seeking His life.

Thus, the incident as a whole marvelously foreshadowed Christ's rejection by the Jews and His acceptance by the Gentiles. Thus do we find epitomized here the whole burden of Matthew's Gospel, the special purpose of which is to show Christ presenting Himself to Israel, Israel's rejection of Him, with the

consequent result of God setting Israel aside for a season, and reaching out in grace to the despised Gentiles. Next we read, "And when they were departed, behold the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him" (2:13).

Observe that it is Joseph and not Mary that figures so prominently in the first two chapters of Matthew, for it was not through His mother, but through His legal father that the Lord Jesus acquired His title to David's throne--compare Matthew 1:20, where Joseph is termed "son of David"! It should also be pointed out that Matthew is, again, the only one of the four Evangelists to record this journey into Egypt, and the subsequent return to Palestine. This is profoundly suggestive, and strikingly in accord with the special design of this First Gospel, for it shows how Israel's Messiah took the very same place as where Israel's history as a Nation began!

"But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young Child's life. And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel" (2:19-21). Once more we discover another line which brings out the peculiarly Jewish character of Matthew's delineation of Christ. This is the only place in the New Testament where Palestine is termed "the land of Israel," and it is significantly proclaimed as such here in connection with Israel's King, for it is not until He shall set up His Throne in Jerusalem that Palestine shall become in fact, as it has so long been in promise, "the Land of Israel."

Yet how tragically suggestive is the statement that immediately follows here, and which closes Matthew 2. No sooner do we read of "the land of Israel" than we find "But" as the very next word, and in Scripture, "but" almost always points a contrast. Here we read, "But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (2:21-23).

Nazareth was the most despised place in that despised province of Galilee, and thus we see how early the Messiah took the place of the despised One, again foreshadowing His rejection by the Jews--but mention of "Nazareth" follows, be it observed, mention of "the land of Israel." Matthew 3 opens by bringing before us a most striking character: "In those days"--that is, while the Lord Jesus still dwelt in despised Nazareth of Galilee--"came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea."

He was the predicted forerunner of Israel's Messiah. He was the one of whom Isaiah had said should prepare the way for the Lord, and this by preparing a people to receive Him by such time as He should appear to the public view. He came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), to do a work similar in character to that of the yet future mission of the Tisbite (Matt. 4:5,6). John addressed himself to the Covenant people, and restricted himself to the land of Judea. He preached not in Jerusalem but in the wilderness.

The reason for this is obvious: God would not own the degenerate system of Judaism, but stationed His messenger outside all the religious circles of that day. The "wilderness" but symbolized the barrenness and desolation of Israel's spiritual condition. The message of John was simple and to the point--"Repent ye." It was a call for Israel to judge themselves. It was a word which demanded that the Jews take their proper place before God, confessing their sins. Only thus could a people be made ready for the Lord, the

Messiah.

The Call to Repentance was enforced by a timely warning--"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Observe, "Repent ye" not because "the Saviour is at hand," not because "God incarnate is now in your midst," and not because "A new Dispensation has dawned;" but because "the Kingdom of Heaven" was "at hand." What would John's hearers understand by this expression? What meaning could those Jews attach to his words? Surely the Baptist did not employ language which, in the nature of the case, it was impossible for them to grasp.

And yet we are asked to believe that John was here introducing Christianity! A wilder and more ridiculous theory it would be hard to imagine. If by the "Kingdom of Heaven" John signified the Christian dispensation, then he addressed those Jewish hearers in an unknown tongue. We say it with calm deliberation, that if John bade his auditors repent because the Christian dispensation was then being inaugurated, he mocked them, by employing a term which not only must have been entirely unintelligible to them, but utterly misleading.

To charge God's messenger with doing that is perilously near committing a sin which we shrink from naming. What then, we ask again, would John's hearers understand him to mean when he said, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"? Addressing, as he was, a people who were familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures, they could place but one meaning upon his words, namely, that he was referring to the Kingdom spoken of again and again by their prophets--the Messianic Kingdom.

That which should distinguish Messiah's Kingdom from all the kingdoms that have preceded it, is this: all the kingdoms of this world have been ruled over by Satan and his hosts, whereas, when Messiah's Kingdom is established, it shall be a rule of the Heavens over the earth. The question has been raised as to why Israel refused the Kingdom on which their hearts were set. Did not the establishing of Messiah's Kingdom mean an end of the Roman dominion? and was not that the one thing they desired above all others?

In reply to such questions several things must be insisted upon. In the first place, it is a mistake to say that Israel "refused" the Kingdom, for, in strict accuracy of language, the Kingdom was never "offered" to them--rather was the Kingdom heralded or proclaimed. The Kingdom was "at hand" because the Heir to David's throne was about to present Himself to them. In the second place, before the Kingdom could be set up, Israel must first "Repent," but this, as is well known, is just what they, as a nation, steadily refused to do.

As we are expressly told in Luke 7:29,30. "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." In the third place, the reader will, perhaps, see our meaning clearer if we illustrate by an analogy: the world today is eagerly longing for the Golden Age. A millennium of peace and rest is the great desideratum among diplomats and politicians.

But they want it on their own terms. They desire to bring it about by their own efforts. They have no desire for a Millennium brought about by the personal return to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Exactly so was it with Israel in the days of John the Baptist. True, they desired to be delivered from the Roman dominion. True, they wished to be freed for ever from the Gentile yoke. True, they longed for a millennium of undisturbed prosperity in a restored Palestine, but they did not want it in GOD'S terms.

The ministry of John the Baptist is referred to at greater or shorter length in each of the four Gospels, but Matthew is the only one who records this utterance "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." To ignore this fact is to fail in "rightly dividing the Word of truth." It is to lose sight of the characteristic distinctions which the Holy Spirit has been pleased to make in the four Gospels. It is to reduce those four independent delineations of Christ's person and ministry to a meaningless jumble.

It is to lay bare the incompetency of a would-be-teacher of Scripture as one who is not a "scribe who is instructed unto the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:52). John's baptism confirmed his preaching. He baptized "unto repentance," and in Jordan, the river of death. Those who were baptized "confessed their sins" (Mark 1:5), of which death was the just due, the "wages" earned. But Christian baptism is entirely different from this: there, we take not the place of those who deserve death, but of those who show forth the fact that they have, already, died with Christ.

It is beyond our present purpose to attempt a detailed exposition of this entire Gospel, rather shall we single out those features which are characteristic of and peculiar to this first Gospel. Accordingly, we may notice an expression found in 3:11, and which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament outside of the four Gospels, and this is the more remarkable because a portion of this very verse is quoted in the Acts. Speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees who had "come to his baptism," but whom the Lord's forerunner quickly discerned were not in any condition to be baptized; who had been warned to flee from the wrath to come, and therefore were in urgent need of bringing forth "fruit meet for repentance" (in their case, humbling themselves before God, abandoning their lofty pretensions and self righteousness, and taking their place as genuine self-confessed sinners), and to whom John had said, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto (not God, be it noted, but) Abraham" (v. 9); to them John announced: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Spirit and fire."

In Acts 1, where we behold the risen Lord in the midst of His disciples, we read, "And, being assembled together with them, commended them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (vv. 4,5). His forerunner had declared that Christ should baptize Israel with "the Holy Spirit and fire," yet, here, the Lord speaks only of the disciples being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Why is this? Why did the Lord Jesus omit the words "and fire"? The simple answer is that in Scripture "fire" is, invariably, connected with Divine judgment. Thus, the reason is obvious why the Lord omits "and fire" from His utterance recorded in Acts 1. He was about to deal, not in judgment but, in grace! It is equally evident why the words "and fire" are recorded by Matthew, for his Gospel, deals, essentially with Dispensational relationships, and makes known much concerning End-time conditions.

God is yet to "baptize" recreant Israel "with fire," the reference being to the tribulation judgments, during the time of "Jacob's Trouble." Then will the winnowing fan be held by the hand of the rejected Messiah, and then "He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner: but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12). How manifestly do the words last quoted define for us the baptism of "fire"! The silence of the risen Lord as to the "fire" when speaking to the disciples about "the baptism of the Spirit," has added force and significance when we find that Mark's Gospel gives the substance of what Matthew records of the Baptist's utterance, while omitting the words "and fire"--"There

cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:7,8). Why is this? Because, as we have pointed out, "fire" is the well-known symbol of God's judgment (often displayed in literal fire), and Mark, who is presenting Christ as the Servant of Jehovah, was most obviously led of the Spirit to leave out the words "and fire," for as Servant He does not execute judgment. The words "and with fire" are found, though, in Luke, and this, again, is most significant.

For, Luke is presenting Christ as "The Son of Man," and in John 5 we read, "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man" (v. 27). How strikingly, then, does the inclusion of the words "and fire" in Matthew and Luke, and their omission in Mark, bring out the verbal inspiration of Scripture over the instruments He employed in the writing of God's Word! The closing verses of Matthew 3 show us the Lord Jesus, in marvelous grace, taking His place with the believing remnant of Israel: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him" (3:13).

John was so startled that, at first, he refused to baptize Him--so little do the best of men enter into the meaning of the things of God --"But John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" (3:14). Observe once--more, that Matthew is the only one of the Evangelists which mentions this shrinking of the Baptist from baptizing the Lord Jesus. Appropriately does it find a place here, for it brings out the royal dignity and majesty of Israel's Messiah.

As to the meaning and significance of the Saviour's baptism we do not now enter at length, suffice it here to say that it revealed Christ as the One who had come down from heaven to act as the Substitute of His people, to die in their stead, and thus at the beginning of His public ministry He identifies Himself with those whom He represented, taking His place alongside of them in that which spoke of death. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him attested Him, indeed, as the true Messiah, the Anointed One (see Acts 10:38), and the audible testimony of the Father witnessed to His perfections, and fitness for the Work He was to do.

The first half of Matthew 4 records our Lord's Temptation, into which we do not now enter. The next thing we are told is, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulon and Naphtali" (4:12,13), and this in order that a prophecy of Isaiah's might be fulfilled. And then we read, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (4:17).

It would seem that the words "from that time" refer to the casting of the Baptist into prison. John's message had been, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3:2), and now that His forerunner had been incarcerated, the Messiah Himself takes up identically the same message--the proclamation of the Kingdom. In keeping with this, we read, "And Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel (not, be it noted, the "Gospel of the Grace of God"--Acts 20:24; nor "the Gospel of Peace"--Eph. 6:15; but "the Gospel") of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (4:23).

Our Lord's miracles of healing were not simply exhibitions of power, or manifestations of mercy, they were also a supplement of His preaching and teaching, and their prime value was evidential. These miracles, which are frequently termed "signs," formed an essential part of Messiahs credentials. This is established,

unequivocally, by what we read in Matthew 11. When John the Baptist was cast into prison, his faith as to the Messiahship of Jesus wavered, and so he sent two of His disciples unto Him, asking, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" (11:2).

Notice, carefully, the Lord's reply, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them" (11:4,5). Appeal was made to two things: His teaching and His miracles of healing. The two are linked together, again, in 9:35--"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people."

And, again, when the Lord sent forth, the Twelve, "But go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give" (10:6-8). Miracles of healing, then, were inseparably connected with the Kingdom testimony. They were among the most important of "The Signs of the times" concerning which the Messiah reproached the Pharisees and Sadducees for their failure to discern (see Matt. 16:1-3).

Similar miracles of healing shall be repeated when the Messiah returns to the earth, for we read in Is. 35:4-6, "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you (i.e., the godly Jewish remnant of the tribulation period). Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."

It should be diligently observed that Matthew, once more, is the only one of the four Evangelists that makes mention of the Lord Jesus going forth and preaching "The Gospel of the Kingdom," as he is the only one that informs us of the Twelve being sent out with the message to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." How significant this is! and how it indicates, again, the peculiarly Jewish character of these opening chapters of the New Testament!

As the result of these miracles of healing Messiah's fame went abroad throughout the length and breadth of the Land, and great multitudes followed Him. It is at this stage, we read, "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them" (5:1,2). We are tempted to pause here, and enter into a detailed examination of this important, but much misunderstood portion of Scripture--the "Sermon on the Mount."

But we must not depart from the central design of this book, hence a few words by way of summary is all we shall now attempt. The first thing to be remarked is that "the Sermon on the Mount" recorded in Matthew 5 to 7 is peculiar to this first Gospel, no mention of it being made in the other three. This, together with the fact that in Matthew the "Sermon on the Mount" is found in the first section of the book, is sufficient to indicate its dispensational bearings. Secondly, the place from whence this "Sermon" was delivered affords another key to its scope.

It was delivered from a "mountain." When the Saviour ascended the mount He was elevated above the common level, and did, in symbolic action, take His place upon the Throne. With Matthew 5:1 should be compared 17:1--it was upon a mountain that the Messiah was "transfigured," and in that wondrous scene we behold a miniature and spectacular setting forth of "the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (see 16:28). Again, in 24:3, we find that it was upon a mountain that Christ gave that wondrous prophecy

(recorded in 24 and 25) which describes the conditions which are to prevail just before the Kingdom of Christ is set up, and which goes on to tell of what shall transpire when He sits upon the Throne of His glory.

With these passages should be compared two others in the Old Testament which clinch what we have just said. In Zech. 14:4 we read, "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives," the reference being to the return of Christ to the earth to set up His Kingdom. Again, in Psalm 2 we read that God shall yet say, in reply to the concerted attempt of earth's rulers to prevent it, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy Hill of Zion."2 The "Sermon on the Mount" sets forth the Manifesto of the King.

It contains the "Constitution" of His Kingdom. It defines the character of those who shall enter into it. It tells of the experiences through which they pass while being fitted for that Kingdom. It enunciates the laws which are to govern their conduct. The authority of the King is evidenced by His "I say unto you," repeated no less than fourteen times in this "Sermon." The effect this had upon those who heard Him is apparent from the closing verses, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes" (7:28,29).

Another line of evidence which brings out Christ's authority (ever the most prominent characteristic in connection with a King), which is very pronounced in this Gospel, is seen in His command over the angels. One thing found in connection with kings is the many servants they have to wait upon them and do their bidding. So we find here in connection with "the Son of David." In Matthew 13:41 we read, "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."

Observe that here these celestial servants are termed not "the angels," but, specifically, "His angels," that is, Messiah's angels, and that they are sent forth in connection with "His Kingdom." Again, in 24:30,31 we read, "And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (this, at His return to earth to establish His Kingdom). And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

And, again in 26:53, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to (better, "ask") My Father, and He shall presently (immediately) give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew, be it particularly noted, is the only one that brings out this feature. Still another line of evidence of the Kingly majesty of Christ should be pointed out. As it is well known, kings are honored by the homage paid them by their subjects. We need not be surprised, then, to find in this Gospel, which depicts the Saviour as "the Son of David," that Christ is frequently seen as the One before whom men prostrated themselves.

Only once each in Mark, Luke, and John, do we read of Him receiving worship, but here in Matthew no less than ten times! See 2:2,8,11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9,17. Coming now to Matthew 10 (in 8 and 9 we have the Authentication of the King by the special miracles which He wrought), in the opening verses we have an incident which is recorded in each of the first three Gospels, namely, the selection and sending forth of the Twelve. But in Matthew's account there are several characteristic lines found nowhere else.

For instance, only here do we learn that when the Lord sent them forth, He commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (10:5,6). Perfectly appropriate is this here, but it would have been altogether

out of place in any of the others. Notice, also, that the Lord added, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." How the connection in which this expression is found defines for us its dispensational scope!

It was only to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel" they were to say "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand"! In Matthew 12 we have recorded the most remarkable miracle the Messiah performed before His break with Israel. It was the healing of a man possessed of a demon, and who, in addition, was both dumb and blind. Luke, also, records the same miracle, but in describing the effects this wonder had upon the people who witnessed it, Matthew mentions something which Luke omits, something which strikingly illustrates the special design of his Gospel.

In the parallel passage in Luke 11:14 we read, "And He was casting out a demon, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the demon was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered," and there the beloved physician stops. But Matthew says, "And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?" (12:23). Thus we see, again, how that the bringing out of the Kingship of Christ is the particular object which Matthew, under the Holy Spirit, had before him.

In Matthew 13 we find the seven parables of the Kingdom (in its "mystery" form), the first of which is the well known parable of the Sower, the Seed, and the Soils. Both Mark and Luke also record it, but with characteristic differences of detail. We call attention to one point in Christ's interpretation of it. Mark reads, "The Sower soweth the Word" (4:14). Luke says, "Now the parable is this: the Seed is the Word of God" (8:11). But Matthew, in harmony with his theme says, "Hear ye therefore the parable of the Sower.

When anyone heareth the Word of the Kingdom" etc. (13:18,19). This is but a minor point, but how it brings out the perfections of the Holy Writ, down to the minutest detail! How evident it is that no mere man, or number of men, composed this Book of books! Well many we sing, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word." In Matthew 15 we have the well known incident of the Cananite woman coming to Christ on the behalf of her demon-distressed daughter.

Mark also mentions the same, but omits several of the distinguishing features noted by Matthew. We quote first Mark's account, and then Matthew's, placing in italics the expressions which show forth the special design of his Gospel. "A certain woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way: the demon is gone out of thy daughter" (Mk. 7:25-29). "Behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon. But He answered her not a word (for, as a Gentile, she had no claim upon Him as the "Son of David").

And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs, which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matt. 15:22-28).

In the opening verse of Matthew 16 we read of how the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Christ tempting Him, and desiring that He would show them a sign from heaven. Mark and Luke both refer to this, but neither of them record that part of our Lord's reply which is found here in verse 2 and 3-- "He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering.

O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the Signs of the Times?" The "signs of the times" were the fulfillment of the Old Testament predictions concerning the Messiah. Every proof had been given to Israel that He was, indeed, the promised One. He had been born of a "virgin," in Bethlehem, the appointed place; a forerunner had prepared His way, exactly as Isaiah had foretold; and, in addition, there had been His mighty works, just as prophecy had fore-announced.

But the Jews were blinded by their pride and self-righteousness. That Matthew alone makes mention of the Messiah's reference to these "Signs of the Times" is still another evidence of the distinctively Jewish character of his Gospel. In Matthew 16:18 and 18:17 the "church" is twice referred to, and Matthew is the only one of the four Evangelists which makes any direct mention of it. This has puzzled many, but the explanation is quite simple. As previously pointed out, the great purpose of this first Gospel is to show how Christ presented Himself to the Jews, how they rejected Him as their Messiah, and what were the consequences of this, namely, the setting aside of Israel by God for a season, and His visiting the Gentiles in sovereign grace to take out of them a people for His name.

Thus, are we here shown how that, and why, the Church has, in this dispensation, superseded the Jewish theocracy. In Matthew 20 we have recorded the parable of the Householder, who went out and hired laborers for His vineyard, agreeing to pay them one penny for the day. Matthew is the only of the Evangelists that refers to this parable, and the pertinency of its place in his Gospel is clear on the surface. It brings out a characteristic of the Kingdom of Christ. The parable tells of how, at the end of the day, when the workers came to receive their wages, there was complaining among them, because those hired at the eleventh hour received the same as those who had toiled all through the day--verily, there is nothing new under the sun, the dissatisfaction of Labor being seen here in the first century!

The Owner of the vineyard vindicated Himself by reminding the discontented workers that He paid to each what they had agreed to accept, and then inquired, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own?" Thus did He, as Sovereign, insist on His rights to pay what He pleased, no one being wronged thereby. In Matthew 22 we have the parable of the wedding feast of the King's Son. A parable that is very similar to this one is found in Luke's Gospel, and while there are many points of resemblance between them, yet are there some striking variations.

In Luke 14:16 we read, "Then said He unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many." Whereas, in Matthew 22:2 we are told, "The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain King, which made a marriage for His Son." At the close of this parable in Matthew there is something which finds no parallel whatever in Luke. Here we read, "And when the King came in to see the guests, He saw there a guest which had not on a wedding garment: And He saith unto him, Friend, how comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?"

And he was speechless. Then said the King to His servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth" (22:11-13). How this brings out the authority of the King needs scarcely to be pointed out. The whole of Matthew 25 is peculiar

to this first Gospel. We cannot now dwell upon the contents of this interesting chapter, but would call attention to what is recorded in verses 31 to 46. That the contents of these verses is found nowhere else in the four Gospels, and its presence here is another proof of the design and scope of Matthew's.

These verses portray the Son of man seated upon the throne of His glory, and before Him are gathered all nations, these being divided into two classes, and stationed on His right and left hand, respectively. In addressing each class we read, "Then shall the King say" etc. (see verses 34 and 40). There are a number of items concerning the Passion of the Lord Jesus recorded only by Matthew. In 26:59,60 we read, "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus, to put Him to death.

But found none. At the last came two false witnesses"--two, because that was the minimum number required by the law, in order that the truth might be established. It is interesting to note how frequently the two witnesses are found in Matthew. In 8:28 we read, "And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with demons"--compare Mark 5:1,2, where only one of these men is referred to. Again in 9:27 we read, "And when Jesus departed thence two blind men followed Him" etc.--compare Mark 10:46.

In 11:2 we are told, "When John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples." Finally, in 27:24 we find Pilate's testimony to the fact that Christ was a "just man," but in 27:19 we also read, "His wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man." And this, as well as the others cited above, is found only in Matthew. Again, in 26:63,64 we find a characteristic word omitted and said unto Him, I adjure thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Here only are we told that the guilty Jews cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (27:25). And again, Matthew is the only one that informs us of the enmity of Israel pursuing their Messiah even after His death--see 27:62-64. The closing chapter of this Gospel is equally striking. No mention is made by Matthew of the Ascension of Christ.

This, too, is in perfect accord with the theme and scope of this Gospel. The curtain falls here with the Messiah still on earth, for it is on earth, and not in heaven, that the Son of David shall yet reign in glory. Here only is recorded the Lord's word, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (28:18)--for "power" is the outstanding mark of a king. Finally, the closing verses form a fitting conclusion, for they view Christ, on a "mountain," commanding and commissioning His servants to go forth and disciple the nations, ending with the comforting assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the Age."

ENDNOTES:

1. Dr. Tucher calls attention to the literary divisions of Matthew's Gospel: the dispensational break occurring at the close of chapter 12.

2. In marked contrast from Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" is Luke's "Sermon in the Plain"--6:17 etc. How significant and appropriate! Luke presents the Lord Jesus as "Son of Man," born in a manger, and entering into the sorrows and sufferings of men. How fitting, then, that here He should be heard speaking from "the Plain" - the common level, rather than from "the Mount," the place of eminence!

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