

The Credentials for the Christ

Matthew 1:1, 18-25

INTRO:

Matthew's Gospel opens by announcing that is giving us the genealogy of "**Jesus the Messiah**" — that is, the Christ. The opening sentence signals the theme of this Gospel:

the Messiahship of Jesus.

This is still an important issue today. If Jesus is **not** the Christ, we are calling him by the wrong name and . . . *we are following something much less than we thought!* It is one thing to call ourselves *Christians* if Jesus is indeed the Messiah and quite another if he is just another human being.

So what is the evidence, as Matthew sees it, for believing that Jesus is the Christ? What are his credentials?

ME:

I had a bit of a flashback to Numbers and Chronicles and all those lists of names we have just read in the Hebrew Bible portion of our Bible in 90 days program. But it past quickly. *Then I recalled I had just read the prophets predict what we read in today's passage!*

YOU:

If you have been reading the Bible in 90 days, **did this passage send you back to the cumbersome readings from a month ago? Or, did you just relish the fact that you were reading in the Gospels?** I am not belittling the Hebrew Bible in the least. But having just read it, I am ready for Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. If you have been reading, you are probably ready too. So let's hear from God through a guy called Matthew:

Let's open ourselves to God in prayer first...

GOD:

Matthew 1:1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means,

“God is with us.” 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, 25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

WE:

I don't know if you noticed, but I did not read the genealogy itself. It's there for you to read if you would like, but it was not necessary for me to read it now. But let's think about the genealogy as it relates to the ***Credentials for the Christ.***

I. The witness of his genealogy.

Matthew's first argument is one that might not seem to matter much to most of us. It was, however, top priority to his Jewish audience. Whatever else Matthew was going to say about Jesus, the case was lost unless it could be proved that Jesus came from the Davidic line. That is why the Gospel begins with a genealogy.

Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience in the first century, so the genealogy was the only place for him to begin. This is exactly why the end of the first sentence is: ***“the son of David, the son of Abraham.”***

The Messiah must be from the line of Abraham—that is be a Hebrew—but he MUST be a “son of David”

He must be a member of the royal family. This is also why when an angel appears to Joseph he calls him not “**Joseph the son of Jacob,**” which was his immediate name, but “**son of David.**” This places him in the Davidic line.

So we have the genealogy as our first piece of evidence. Now we move on in Matthew’s case to:

II. The witness of the Hebrew Bible.

If Matthew has a catchphrase, it is definitely some form of how verse 22 ends:

“All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the lord through the prophet.”

We will see some form of that phrase again three times in the second chapter. We will see it several more times throughout Matthew’s Gospel. It seems the author is very anxious too make the point at the start, as if to get our attention early that we might read the rest of the story with this understanding in mind.

Specifically the Jews believed that the Christ had been predicted through the prophets that we have just read in the Bible in 90 days program. *We read these just a week or so ago!* This is why Matthew makes almost constant reference to such instances so we will know that the prophecies are indeed being fulfilled in this particular person. By the end of his Gospel,

Matthew has gathered a large body of evidence from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Matthew then moves on to another item in the evidence collection.

III. The witness of the very person of Jesus.

This might just be the greatest witness of all, both to those eyes who saw him two thousand years ago and to us today. The witness of Jesus' own person. It is of many parts. Of course, we think of his miracles. But they are not enough, as we could compare him to others of those days who also seemingly had impressive miracles. There is the quality of his character, with such a **balance** and **beauty** that people of all faiths, even no faith at all, see him as the model of greatness. There is even his own testimony, when Peter finally identifies him as the Christ and Jesus accepts the designation in [Matthew 16:13-17](#). There is the wonderful majesty of his death and all the signs surrounding it, which make it more, far more than a simple martyrdom. And there is, at the end, (or the beginning?), the witness of his resurrection. This is a victory that more than reverses the curse that had smothered the human race ever since Eden.

Take a moment and add all these up together. If we do so, we will see the sum total of them is that we simply must name him our Lord and Christ.

What other title would be enough for such a one as Jesus?

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

We believe Jesus was the messiah because of his genealogy, the Hebrew Scriptures, and his words and actions.

YOU:

CLOSE:

On Ash Wednesday, Scott Honaker shared a brief and powerful message with us. I got a little worried when he began telling us about a Lutheran World Federation statement from 1963! But God spoke through that statement in the mid 60's and in that mid-week Ashen service. The Lutheran World Federation said this:

“The person of today no longer suffers under the wrath of God, but under the impression of God’s absence; he no longer suffers under his sin, but under the meaninglessness of his existence; he no longer asks about the graciousness of God, but about the reality of God.”

They said that 50 years ago! **Has it changed at all since then?** I think it has as post-modernism has caused many more to question God’s presence and reality.

Is God absent for you? Is God real? What is it you need from God to experience him?

The following Buddhist poem, in the form of a "waka," was written in the 12th century by Saigyō Hoshi after he visited a Shinto Grand Temple:

*Gods here?
Who can know?
Not I.
Yet I sigh
and tears flow
tear on tear.*

Notice the author's honest longing for true knowledge of God. He yearns to experience God and God's presence but he can't know for sure. We see, though, in Matthew, that God has revealed himself in the presence and person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus the Messiah, in Jesus the Christ, we can know that **Emmanuel** — God is with us.

Let *say* it together, let's *pray* it together ... before we 🎵 it together:

**Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called
Emmanuel. God with us, revealed in us, his name is
called Emmanuel.**