

# OpenTheo

## The Genesis of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1)

November 9, 2019



### Alastair Roberts

In my new series on the Gospel according to Matthew, I discuss Matthew 1—Jesus's genealogy and birth.

Books advertised in this episode:

Davies and Allison's Matthew commentary (<https://amzn.to/2Nzx3La>)

Peter Leithart's Matthew commentary (<https://amzn.to/2rpowlr>)

Craig Keener's Matthew commentary (<https://amzn.to/36OZ21m>)

Erasmus Leiva-Merikakis's commentary (<https://amzn.to/2NwJPKq>)

David Turner's commentary (<https://amzn.to/32zlsA2>)

Stanley Hauerwas's commentary (<https://amzn.to/2Q5qUrY>)

Daniel Harrington's commentary (<https://amzn.to/33zWNwH>)

John Nolland's commentary (<https://amzn.to/2NVA5IH>)

Dale Allison, 'Studies in Matthew' (<https://amzn.to/2Q4yMtl>)

Patrick Schreiner, 'Matthew: Disciple and Scribe' (<https://amzn.to/2X02DVz>)

N.T. Wright, 'Jesus and the Victory of God' (<https://amzn.to/33zb6BN>)

Richard Hays, 'Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels' (<https://amzn.to/2WZm150>)

James Bejon on Jesus' Genealogy:

[https://www.academia.edu/38800380/Matthew\\_s\\_Genealogy\\_of\\_Jesus](https://www.academia.edu/38800380/Matthew_s_Genealogy_of_Jesus)

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## **Transcript**

Welcome back. Today I begin my series on the Gospel of Matthew. Before I begin, I thought I would give you a sense of some of the resources that I'll be drawing upon along the way.

It's good to have a wealth of commentaries as conversation partners to challenge you to look a bit more deeply, to be more aware of the lay of the land and the state of certain questions, and also to see some of the are available in interpretive routes that you can take. There are some commentaries that I will spend a lot of time with and I'll be reading almost all the way through. There are some I've already read all the way through that some I'll be dealing with in depth and other ones I'll be consulting from time to time.

The one I'll probably spend the most time with is Davies and Allison's three-volume commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. Really valuable work. It really gets into the depths.

It's not a conservative commentary but it's really worthwhile if you want to understand some of the questions and some of the interpretive issues. I would highly recommend this. It's been around for a while and for a reason.

Peter Lighthouse's two-volume commentary, *Jesus Israel*. It's just the second volume came out not too long ago. Highly recommended again.

Popular level commentary, accessible and gets into the typology in a way that few others do. Highly recommended. Craig Keener's *The Gospel of Matthew*.

Keener is always wonderful on background. His footnotes are a goldmine and I find Keener, he's generally going to draw back from some of the more typological forms of interpretation but he'll often register their existence, discuss them a little. He pushes back against them in some ways which can be very helpful for sharpening your thought on these sorts of issues.

If you are more inclined to a typological reading, read someone who isn't and they can

push you to strengthen your case in various ways. More generally I find if you want to understand the social, the rhetorical and other aspects of the background within the Gospels and within places like Acts, Keener's your guy. He's really helpful.

Erasmus Leibow Merakakis' commentary, *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word*. It's not something that I've worked through yet but is one I'm hoping to consult on many occasions as I go through. This is a commentary that was kindly purchased for me by one of my supporters so thank you very much.

It really makes a difference to have a number of these texts around and I do use them very thoroughly so you will hopefully be getting some of the value of these texts in the next few weeks and months as I go through this. Many of the insights of these authors will be coming out. So this is Turner's commentary on Matthew and then Daniel Harrington's commentary on Matthew.

Again this was kindly purchased for me by one of my supporters. Thank you so much. It really does help and I really hope that you'll get some of the value back.

Stanley Howell-Wass' commentary on Matthew in the Brazos series. It's not the one I've found to be the best in this series. I've found it helpful at points but it's not one I'll spend that much time with I don't think.

Richard Hayes' *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Absolutely invaluable if you want to see the art with which New Testament writers, particularly the Gospel writers, are using the Old Testament. It's a follow-up in certain ways to his *Echoes of Scripture in the letters of Paul* and it expands his reading backwards.

So if you've enjoyed either of those books this is a must-buy. It's a wonderful text. I've spent so much time in this and gotten so much richness out of it.

I also had the privilege of interviewing him which was published on the Theopolis website a while back. Highly recommend it. Richard Hayes is one of the New Testament scholars I've found to be the most helpful in just thinking about the literary art and the use of the Old Testament in the New.

Perhaps one of the books that has had the greatest impact upon me in my understanding of the Gospels N.T. Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God*. I first read this in the early thousands and it stayed with me ever since. I read it at a very early stage in my theological thinking and it really had such a formative effect.

If you want a Jesus that makes sense in the context of first century Israel N.T. Wright is a good place to first become acquainted with that. Now Wright has his problems and it's good to read some of his critics, particularly from the New Testament Guild, who will point out some of his limitations, particularly in his reconstruction of Jewish literature and things like that. I've really enjoyed as a pushback against some of the New Perspective

stuff John Barclay's work in Paul and the Gift and there's other good stuff out there.

But N.T. Wright, if you want to understand Jesus, he's a good person to go to. This is a book that I received recently that I'm looking forward to getting into. Matthew, Disciple and Scribe by Patrick Shriener is one that I haven't read yet but I'm looking forward to reading alongside my work here.

And then finally Dale Allison's Studies in Matthew. There are several other books that I'll be using. I think I mentioned Nolan's commentary but these are the ones that I'll be spending the most time with I suspect.

So to the text. The book begins perhaps on a strange note. We'd expect the New Testament to enter with a bang but it starts with a genealogy and if there were one thing that we maybe were brushing ourselves off at the end of the Old Testament, thrilling ride but just a few too many genealogies and then the New Testament begins right there with a genealogy.

It seems like a strange place to begin but it begins there for a reason. The first line of the book is one that calls back to the very outset of the biblical story. The book, quite literally, of the Genesis of Jesus Christ.

The son of David, the son of Abraham. Go back to the very beginning and the book of Genesis gets its name from a series of genealogies or a series of statements of the generations of particular people. Now if you start in Genesis chapter 22 verse 4 or go to 5 verse 1 you'll have the generations of the heavens and the earth and then generations of Adam but as you go through you'll see this expression recurring on several occasions in reference to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and these other figures that all have books of the generations of references to their generations.

So this is a familiar expression and Matthew is calling back to something that has gone beforehand. He's calling back in a way that places Jesus within this earlier story and this is important to notice. It's not just a reference to some previous text, a bare illusion.

It's something that helps you to situate Christ within a story. Again it's not just a bare series of names. Oh this is where Jesus finds his genealogy.

This is where Jesus fits within the story and I hope that will become a bit clearer as we go along. At the beginning of each one of the gospels in some way or other there is an allusion back to the book of Genesis. It's perhaps most clear within the gospel of John.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. Now that's the very beginning of the book of Genesis but here there is a reference to Genesis in the name Genesis. The book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ and that should have all sorts of connotations.

It shouldn't just be restricted to genealogy just referring to the verses that follow. There are connotations that would take into play account the birth of Jesus too. The same language used in verse 18.

So it's the book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ. What does that mean? It connects him back to the story of the first book of the Bible. It refers to the genealogy.

It refers to his birth. It refers to his coming more generally as a more general phenomenon which covers the whole story of the book. So I think this is an expression that has a number of different resonances and we shouldn't just restrict it to one.

Now another thing to notice here is that the book of Genesis begins the Old Testament but the Old Testament ends with the book of Chronicles. At the very end of the book of Chronicles you have a verse that should remind us of something and we'll see it particularly later on. Thus says Cyrus king of Persia the Lord the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.

Whoever is among you of all his people may the Lord his God be with him let him go up. Now we'll discuss this in more depth when we get to the end but this is something that is alluded to in the final verses of the book of Matthew in the Great Commission. So Jesus gives a Great Commission and at the end of second Chronicles Cyrus gives a Great Commission.

Now in the Old Testament in the Hebrew ordering second Chronicles is the last book so we have a sort of book ending of the story of Matthew with an allusion back to the first book Genesis and then an allusion to the end of the last book of the Old Testament. There's a sense in which there's a placing of Jesus within the context of the entire scope of redemptive history presented by the Old Testament. Jesus sums things up in himself in this movement from his Genesis to his Great Commission we see the entirety of the Old Testament history being recapitulated in some way or other and we'll get to that at some later point as we discuss things.

Now he's described not just as Jesus but as Jesus the Christ. He is the Messiah and so that expression Christ we can often see it almost as if you had Joseph and Mary Christ and they had a son called Jesus Christ as if it was his surname but it wasn't his surname it's a title Jesus the Messiah and as the Messiah he's the one who's the son of David and the son of Abraham. There's a great art to the way that Matthew organises his introduction.

He organises his introduction so there's a title it sets up everything that follows. Christ is introduced in a way that harkens back to the beginning of Genesis it also by the way harkens back to the beginning of Chronicles which begins with the genealogy so this is a new Chronicles you could read it as and as you go through you have these Jesus the

Christ the son of David the son of Abraham and the two key names in what follows are Abraham and David so the genealogy proper begins with Abraham and then runs in three cycles of 14 and David is another pivotal figure. It's a continuation of biblical history as we'll see there are figures represented in here that are not actually fathers of the people mentioned and sometimes not even mothers as well.

They are figures who are represented that give a sense of a plot not just a series of names begetting each other detached from the plot. There is a resume of biblical history being presented in this account not just a series of names so it's not just telling us who were Christ's ancestors it's giving us a sense of the history that has led to this point. Now Matthew probably draws upon first Chronicles for some of his genealogy as you look at some of the names that are mentioned here and look at the way that they're rendered within the Septuagint of Chronicles it makes sense that that was probably Matthew's primary source.

There is also a contrast between this and Luke not just in the names but also in the way that the ordering occurs. Luke starts from the end and then works back and then in the case of Matthew he starts at the beginning and works forward which is what we find in the Old Testament genealogies but in contrast to the Old Testament genealogies the most important name comes at the very end the name of Jesus it leads to Jesus so in some sense whereas in the Old Testament genealogies you start off with the most important ancestral figures and they work down through the line to find their children now you start with these figures and you're working towards the one who really matters the one who sums up this entire history within himself it demonstrates Jesus' proper lineage now this is important because Jesus presented not just as the son of Joseph but as the son of David he's the one who is the heir to the throne he's the one who's going to bear the identity of the Messiah the Christ likewise he's the son of Abraham and that connection between him and Abraham it's not just saying he's a Jew it's saying that he is someone who bears the legacy of Abraham he's going to carry forward this legacy he's going to be as it were the true Isaac the true son of Abraham and so that son reference he's the heir of Abraham and we see that playing out in places like Galatians where Paul emphasises the connection between Christ and the promise given to Abraham as we read this genealogy we'll also see the presence of interesting figures figures that maybe get our attention in different ways and they might give us a hint into the way in which Jesus is the true son of Abraham now there were at this time partial genealogical records of important figures held within the temple where they could be checked prior to AD 70 the destruction of the temple and so I think there was at the time that Matthew was writing some way in which to confirm these these names and these details Jesus is claiming or the claim here is that Jesus is a descendant and not just a descendant but the true heir of David he's the son of David not just a generic descendant among many thousands of descendants of David but the son of David the one that's going to bear his legacy and so it would have been possible I presume to check this up within the temple

to see whether it did bear out and we'll get into this in a bit more a bit more in a moment but the other question is that people can have is how this fits with Luke there are certain disparities even earlier on where they seem to be largely tracking with each other and then they go in a different direction now one way to read this would be to see this as the royal line some have suggested that as a way of reading it and I think there's some promise that also it might explain why certain figures are left out or jumped over because if you think about for instance the royal line of of England and the United Kingdom there are it follows a genealogical pattern but certain figures will be missed out because someone is on the throne while they pass away or something like that so there are ways in which we can maybe think of it that way I'm not going to discuss this in much more depth here because I don't want to go into too much of an aside but if you want me to get into this in more detail ask a question in my curious cat account and I'll try and give it some and focus it does demonstrate the proper proper lineage of Christ connects him with particular characters and then it gives you a sense of the key themes that will be played out now this is a structured genealogy there are in scripture a number of genealogies that have symbolism in the way that they are recounted there are certain numbers of people involved there are ways in which characters are divided according to particular numbers we can think about chapter 46 of Genesis and the emphasis upon the number 70 and 7 the 14 children of of Rachel and then the way that there are Gad is the seventh the 70 associated with Noah and there's clearly ways in which the genealogy has been ordered in a somewhat artificial way so it's not as if there weren't other ways of ordering this material but structured in a way where certain for instance grandsons will be included along with the sons to bring up the number to the right number but the point is that you see the symbolism of what's taking place I think Matthew's engaging in a similar sort of theological genealogy here he wants you to see something of the symbolism something of the significance of what's taking place in Christ Christ is not just coming in a line of people who are his pet his ancestors Christ is summing up a history and you're getting a sense of the plot as you go through this there's a movement first of all from Abraham to the genealogy so you read the son of Abraham Abraham was the father of Isaac etc it leads through and then it goes to David and then from David it goes to the deportation to Babylon and then from the deportation to Babylon to Christ so three sets of 14 but there are pivotal events that are led to so Abraham to David is a sort of ascending movement and then from David to the going to Babylon is a descending movement and then moving up from Babylon there's the movement towards Christ who brings the true deliverance from Babylon there are other ways that you might think about that numbering and I'll get into that in a moment a reference to people outside of the strict genealogy so think first of all many people have commented upon the women that are mentioned Rahab, Tamar, and Bathsheba and and Ruth these are not necessarily the figures that you'd expect to be mentioned in a genealogy of Israel who would you expect to be mentioned well Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah people like them but no you get a surprising list of characters now why these particular characters some have suggested that they have some sort of questionable sexual and they're associated

with questionable sexual actions in to some extent I think that might be pushing it a bit in the case of Bathsheba and Rahab perhaps and Ruth and Tamar again there are questions about those characters there's certainly unusual ways that they enter into the line Tamar's case was sleeping with her father-in-law Judah to bear a child and then in the case of Ruth the encounter with Boaz on the threshing floor but I think the most important thing is that these are all gentile women in some way or other Bathsheba may not be a gentile woman but she is married to a gentile and she's described here as the wife of Uriah not as Bathsheba but it focuses upon Uriah and Uriah is the Hittite so I wonder whether that is the emphasis that's taking place here that these are gentiles being brought into the line of the Messiah and so this inclusion of gentiles within the line of the Messiah anticipates the inclusion of gentiles in the children of the Messiah in those who will become his heirs as those who will be in him there's a preparation also here of the way for Mary Mary is also going to be a sort of anomalous woman in certain respects who doesn't fit in the regular categories just as Ruth and Tamar and Bathsheba and these characters come from outside and they are entered into the line of Israel in the same case with Mary Mary doesn't really fit in very clearly she's a virgin who conceives and bears a son she's not necessarily someone who's married into the regular line rather there's a sort of a strange series of events by which she has to come into the line first of all she's found to be with child then she's almost put away by Joseph and then there's this um dream where he's told to take her as his wife and then he does take her as his wife but after the child is born it seems like a strange series of events and so Mary's place again is one that emphasizes God's action in bringing certain people in God's action in using certain people God's action in particularly in this case apart from any human male involvement bringing his son into the world looking through the genealogy there are some discrepancies from other genealogies can think about the way that Aram appears within the Greek text rather than Ram now many translations that is just avoiding the translation we have Ram rather than Aram but it's one of those interesting discrepancies Amos is substituted for Amon and Asaph for Aesir again these are two kings that were had negative reputations is that the reason that their names were changed or is this just variants of spelling one interesting detail of the text which I'd highly recommend the work of James Bajor who's given some thought to this question is how this how how this can be reconciled with the curse that is placed upon Jehoiakim and Jehoiakim is told that in chapter 22 of Jeremiah as I live declares the Lord Lord though can I the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah with a signet ring on my right hand yet I would tear you off and give you into the hand of those who seek your life into the hand of those whom of whom you're afraid even into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and later on is this man Keniah the son of Jehoiakim a despised broken pot a vessel no one cares for why are he and his children hurled and cast into a land that they do not know oh land land land hear the word of the Lord thus says the Lord write this man down as childless a man who shall not succeed in his days but none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah so there's a curse pronounced upon him in chapter 22 of Jeremiah it seems odd that you would have Jeconiah or Jehoiakim the



son of Jehoiakim being part of this genealogy if that were the case it seems that that curse would rule out first of all Jeconiah having any children and he does seem to have children and then it would seem to rule out also that Christ could sit upon the throne if he were a descendant of Jehoiakim now in the theory put forward by James Berjon he suggests that there was an adoption event that took place first of all that Jehoiakim or Jeconiah was adopted by Josiah so there's an explanation there for the jump in the genealogy and then that Jehoiakim when he was in Babylon that he adopted Shield Hill and then that's explained that explains in part the differences between the ancestry of Shield Hill in the story of Luke and in the story of Matthew so in these cases it would be protection by means of adoption that Jeconiah is protected from the curse on his father by being adopted into the family of his grandfather as the son of his grandfather Josiah and in the case of Shield Hill Shield Hill preserves Jeconiah from the judgment by being an adopted son who is not subject to that same judgment and as the father of Zerubbabel that line continues on but through an act of adoption why 14? why separated into three sets of 14 generations? many have pointed out that it's the Gematria of David's name and David frames the genealogy so Gematria works by in Hebrew and Greek you have letters can be used to spell words but they can also be used as means to develop numbers so they're like the digits for numbers and as you add the numbers together in a particular person's name that can be give you a symbolic connection with them so we can think about Eliezer the servant of of Abraham in Genesis chapter 15 his Gematria is 318 that's how many fighting men David has in chapter 14 there are other cases where we see interesting things like this Gad's name associated with seven and he's the seventh place in a genealogy that focuses upon the number seven in chapter 46 of Genesis the Gematria of chapter 13 of Revelation the number that's associated with a man's name 666 now in all of these cases I think we're seeing that the New Testament and Old Testament writers did use Gematria from time to time and they did expect their readers to be careful and observant about particular numbers and here the number 14 is highlighted it's really foregrounded and that it should be a connection with David's name would make sense Jesus is the son of David so the connection with David's name as 14 and the 14 generations would make sense on that front also note that David is the 14th name in the list so not only is his name associated with the number 14 by Gematria it's also the 14th name in this list of 42 names and Christ is the one who will come as a new David now you can see this as a series of phases of history moving from waxing to waning now that's a suggestion some have put forward a sort of movement 14 years 14 generations moving up towards David 14 generations moving down towards Babylon 14 generations moving up towards Jesus now that's one way of reading it I think there's some promise to that at least in its rough outline the other thing to note is to verse 11 there is a symmetry there within that structure so they begin in Ur of the Chaldees and sort of area of Babylon Abraham is called and then it ends up with him going back to that it begins with a reference to Judah and his brothers and then ends with oh you have Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers and then Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers and so there are references to fathering a number of brothers at both the

beginning and the end of those two sections so maybe seeing this as an ascent and descent pattern might be helpful at this point other things to notice it's 7 times 2 and 14 is 7 times 2 so it's 2 weeks it's associated with the number of completion times 2 times 2 think about other significant numbers um times the number 14 occurs 14 years that Jacob serves for Rachel and Leah for the two ancestresses of Israel 14 years of plenty followed by 14 14 years of plenty and famine in the story of Joseph another instant is 14 years from Ishmael to Isaac these are the ones that come to my mind at least I'm sure there are many others but it might seem to be a significant period for those reasons alone even within Genesis that movement from call to Babylon and call from Babylon to exile in Babylon also is bookended by two childless figures the two figures that are described as childless in scripture first of all Abraham who had no child and sought a child from the Lord and was given had Ishmael and then Isaac and then in the second case Jeconiah or Jehoiakim who was judged and then Jeconiah who was judged in that way Jeconiah would have no son and that suggests that God worked in a miraculous way in most of these cases or a special way in the case of Abraham and Jeconiah other things it's 6 times 7 so 42 is 6 times 7 or 3 14s is 6 times 7 which presents Christ as the one who brings in the 7th week which will lead to jubilee now that's another possible reading think about it in terms of other aspects of numerology what is a time times and half a time one year plus two years plus half a year three and a half years it's a split week of years and it is 42 months so maybe that's connected maybe this is a split week of years and Christ is going to set it right there is certainly that sense in it there's a movement of ascent and then descent and then ascent again leading to culminating in Christ Christ is the one who brings in the second cycle of ascent just as David brought in the first cycle of ascent other things to notice Jesus comes at the fullness of time so this sense of a 14 pattern suggests that Jesus comes right at the right moment and so there are people who lead up to Christ and then Christ comes just on time this is not an accidental coming this is not just a series of names that led to Christ and Christ happened to be a particular point in the story no Christ is one who comes to culminate a particular pattern he's the one who comes in a particular pattern and so there's a fulfillment of Israel's history at this period now it's a period periodization of the genealogy is presenting it in a more narrative format so it's not just a list of names but certain periods of history leading towards the coming of the Christ and at the very end of it you have the character of Jacob with a son called Joseph and that should get our attention in the Old Testament there is another Joseph who has a father called Jacob and he has dreams and leads his people into Egypt and sure enough this Joseph is the son of Jacob who has dreams and leads his people into Egypt there seems to be some sort of symmetry here there is no we can think about the ways that pagan mythology would talk about the gods impregnating women and the way that the gods would have relations with women in different situations think about stories of Zeus and other things like that but there's nothing of that type here rather what we have is Mary being pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit she's betrothed to a man called Joseph and before they have come together she's found to be with child by the Holy Spirit now she was probably around 14 at this time she

would have probably been betrothed to Joseph with an arrangement with their parents and it would have been with their consent but it would have been very much an arranged situation Joseph probably would have been around 18 to 20 or something like that and so this is quite an amazing situation this is not a this is a young teenage girl being given this responsibility of bearing the son of God as he comes into the world it is a remarkable story this story is told from Joseph's perspective in Luke it's Mary's perspective that is told in this story here Joseph and the significance of Joseph in the story is seen in clearer relief we often ignore the importance of Joseph as a character but God gave his son to a betrothed woman and to a betrothed couple I believe God wanted his son to have a father not just a mother and Joseph can often be left out of our accounts we talk a lot about Mary but Joseph is hugely important too and certainly within this passage and the passage that follows he's very much one who's given instructions concerning Christ he's the one that's going to be defending Christ he's the one that's going to be leading him into safety and ensuring that he is not killed by Herod and others so there is a significance to Joseph's character that's worth reflecting upon he's also described as a righteous man who does not put away who does not put Mary to an open shame but is minded to put her away quietly and so this is a situation where he believes that Mary has been unfaithful to him but he is not one to take the full measure of the law and that's a good reminder that there are legal sanctions for certain sins that does not mean that the proper righteous thing to do is to seek the full measure of those sanctions there are times when the righteous thing is to avoid putting people to a shame and in this case that's what we see another contrast with the sort of narratives that we have surrounding the mythological narratives surrounding the gods consorting with human women is that this is just a very commonplace narrative this is a narrative that apart from the remarkable thing that's taking place takes place in a very human and natural way Joseph is having the same sort of questions as any man might have in this sort of situation Mary too and so this is a regular day in the life of people in Judah apart from this remarkable thing that's happening in their midst but everything else is this is in the heat and dust of first century Israel that this is taking place first century BC this is not something that is some weird mythological space that this occurs in and the way that it's described actually brings home to us just how much of a real world historical context this is occurring within betrothal was a lot more serious in this context it was seen as a sort of preliminary stage to marriage it wasn't just there was already a commitment a sense of a vowed commitment between the two and so breaking this was a very serious thing to do Jesus name is given to Joseph by the angel of the Lord who appears to him in a dream and the name Jesus is one that connects Jesus with previous characters in Old Testament history Moses is succeeded by Joshua whose name is translated as Jesus within Greek we also see Elisha who if you think about the similarity of Joshua or Yeshua and Elisha they're both talking about God or Yahweh as savior and now we see Jesus playing on the same meaning and Moses was succeeded by Joshua Elijah was succeeded by Elisha and Jesus is going to be the one who's going to lead a new entrance into the land and so the name is significant he's going to save his people from their sins now this

is not just individual salvation this harks back to the whole plot that's being laid out in embryo Matthew has presented us with the story of Israel this is a sort of resume of the story of Israel these 14 generations tell in an encapsulated form the entire history of Israel from Abraham their ancestor to the present situation in time and Jesus is the one that's coming to save Israel from their sins and that his people is the people of Abraham and his savior saving of them from their sins is his saving of them from all this messy genealogy all the messy events that were part of that story all the messy ways in which they failed the ways in which they were finally brought down into Babylon he's going to bring them up and lead them into the fullness of deliverance the chapter ends with the prophet Isaiah's statement behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they call his name Emmanuel this harks back to chapter 7 verse 14 of the book of Isaiah now it's a surprising thing because in that context it seems to be referring to a son of Isaiah most likely himself that's a sign for that generation and here I think we should probably think about the way that Matthew uses the Old Testament more generally when he's talking about a statement being fulfilled he's not necessarily saying this statement was directly prophesying this but rather he's recognizing that this is the fulfillment the way in which that statement was pointing forward to something in its own time but that event in its own time was pointing forward to something even more ultimate Matthew is presenting Jesus as the one who sums up the history of Israel and so just as he sums up the history of Israel all these events that occur in the past of Israel all these prophecies ultimately find their fulfillment in him we'll see a similar thing in the next chapter as the statement about out of Israel I've called my son or out of Egypt I've called my son which clearly refers to the original exodus is related to Christ not because that statement was really contrary to what everyone thought related to Jesus and that's we're going to have to have an exegetical argument about what Hosea meant no we know that Hosea referred to the original exodus in that statement but the point is that that original exodus was always straining and pointing forwards to something beyond it and likewise here that that statement of is one that ultimately looks forward to and is fulfilled in Christ so Matthew's use of the Old Testament is subtle and we've already seen that at the outset Matthew's story is now rooted very firmly within an ongoing narrative Christ is situated in something grounded in a story that has preceded him this is a story that begins with the very beginning in Genesis and that's where Matthew begins the book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ it's a story of Israel that runs from Abraham onwards and Jesus is the son of Abraham it's a story that presents this messianic line or the line of David and David Jesus is the son of David and David is a central name and organizing principle for the entire genealogy that leads to Christ himself and then at the end of the genealogy we find a figure like Joseph the son of Jacob who again harks back to that very early story reminding you of what has gone before and what is going to be played out again there are the notes of Israel's history being played again and as you hear those notes you should recognize all that Christ represents Christ is not just this odd figure that comes down from the blue Christ and his incarnation is something that comes from a vast history that proceeds now when we think about the incarnation of Christ we tend to think

about a punctillion moment in time when Christ was conceived within the womb of Mary and yet that's not quite what's taking place in Matthew I think I think Matthew presents the incarnation of Christ as something that is connected with something that has gone before Christ is taking flesh but it's not just any old human flesh it's not just flesh that happens to be descended from Abraham Isaac and Jacob rather God was forming this whole people throughout the entirety of their history to lead to Christ Christ is the name that sums up this great genealogy he's the one that's going to sum up the history of Israel the history of the children of Abraham and as we read through the book of Matthew I think it will become very clear that this is part of Matthew's intent that Matthew wants you to see who Christ is and see him against all of this backdrop and as you see Christ against this backdrop you'll see that this backdrop is taken into Christ that Christ is the one who fulfills the destiny of Israel he's the one who is the true son of Abraham he's the Christ he's the son of David when Joseph woke from sleep he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him he took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son and he called his name Jesus tomorrow I'll be back to discuss chapter two of the gospel of and hopefully explore some of the ways in which the birth of Christ is and the early events in his nativity are described in Matthew and some of the symbolism that's taking place there thank you very much for listening if you have any questions please leave them on my Curious Cat account if you'd like to support this and other podcasts like it please do so using my PayPal my Patreon accounts or by buying me books on Amazon for my research thank you very much and God bless