

MATTHEW

Chapter 1

The Genealogy of Jesus

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, ⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, ⁸ and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰ and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. ¹² And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵ and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

1:1–16 The types of people mentioned in this genealogy reveal the broad scope of those who make up the people of God as well as the genealogy of Jesus. (CSB)

The opening line of the Gospel speaks volumes about what will come in the pages that follow. The first point is that here begins a narrative about a specific man: Jesus. As obvious as this might seem, this point needs emphasis and repetition. It is not some revealed abstract concept or some mysterious idea that the evangelist takes in hand to communicate to his hearers/readers. It is the account of the words and deeds of a man, Jesus of Nazareth. In him, whose very name evokes the saving purpose (1:21) for his origin and his ministry in Israel, God has come near and in a new way begun the last days of judgment and salvation for Israel and for all people. Matthew begins his Gospel with an account of “the origin of Jesus.” At the beginning he prominently displays three “titles” that say much (though not everything!) about the significance of Jesus. (CC)

The Messiah would be a physical descendant of King David. So Matthew begins his Gospel by documenting the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, who was known to everybody in the land of the Jews, was descended from David. Joseph, Jesus’ legal father, was a direct descendant of David. Luke traces Jesus’ genealogy through Mary’s line all the way back to Adam and Eve. (PBC)

1:1 book – Βίβλος γενέσεως—This question immediately emerges: To what does βίβλος refer? Is the “book” the entire Gospel of Matthew? That seems unlikely, since the Gospel proclaims so much more than just the “origin” of Jesus Christ. Is it the genealogy of 1:2–17? Since the noun γένεσις is repeated in

1:18, where it introduces the account of the virgin conception and birth of Jesus in 1:18–25, it would be too narrow to see this phrase in 1:1 as a reference only to 1:1–17. It must extend at least through the end of chapter 1. In light of the overall structural analysis of the Gospel, the phrase probably refers to 1:1–4:16, the first major section of the narrative. In this first section, the Gospel answers the question Whence Jesus Christ? by affirming that he is from God, born of the Virgin by the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the Scriptures of Israel and come as Israel’s true King and Messiah. (CC)

This is a written document, often rolled up as a scroll (cf. Lk. 4:20). The book as we know it today (bound pages; Latin codex) was an emerging technology at this time. (TLSB)

Genealogy – The noun γένεσις can mean “birth,” as most translations render it in 1:18, but for it in 1:1 most prefer “genealogy” (RSV, ESV, NIV, NASB, NKJV; cf. “generation,” KJV). However, the first major section of the Gospel (1:1–4:16), especially 1:1–17 and 1:18–25, focuses on the “origin” of Jesus and scarcely narrates at all the circumstances of his birth. Thus, there is precious little actual “birth narrative” in Matthew’s Gospel. The actual birth of Jesus is referred to only by a dependent clause in 1:25 and a genitive absolute in 2:1. This commentary renders γένεσις as “origin,” which is an apt translation for it in both 1:1 and 1:18. (CC)

Jesus – Personal name meaning “the Lord is salvation.” In verse 21 the angel explains the name to Joseph, “He will save His people from their sins.” By people is not just meant “Jews” but all people including us. (TLSB)

Christ – the Hebrew word Messiah and the Greek word Christ both mean “the anointed – or chosen – one.” (LL)

Χριστοῦ—In the translation I have set off “Christ” as the first of three titles, for that is what it is, as its use in 1:16–17 makes clear. Matthew will tell of the origin of Jesus, who is Christ. The term derives from χρίω, “to anoint,” which in the LXX often translates מָשַׁח (e.g., LXX Ex 28:41; Lev 6:13 [ET 6:20]; 1 Sam 16:12–13). χρίστος almost always translates מָשַׁח (e.g., LXX Lev 4:5; 1 Sam 24:7 [ET 24:6]; Ps 2:2), and both mean “anointed.” Hence “Christ” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah.” (CC)

Matthew will make clear that Χριστός in 1:1 is a *title* by repeating the term in 1:16 (“Jesus ..., the one who is called Christ”) and especially by using the title alone at 1:17 (ὁ Χριστός, “*the* Christ”). At times in the NT, the phrase “Jesus Christ” can seem to function almost as a compound name, but here, at the beginning of the Gospel, “Christ” is the first of three titles that stand in apposition to the name “Jesus.” (CC)

The precise term χριστός (“anointed” or “anointed one”) occurs some fifty times in the LXX [The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and used by the early Church. The Septuagint is also called the translation of the seventy because tradition states that the Septuagint was translated by seventy. In academia, the Septuagint is often abbreviated as LXX (the Roman numeral for seventy) in honor of this tradition.], where it can refer to anointed priests (Lev 4:5, 16) or all the people of Israel (1 Chr 16:22 || Ps 104:15 [MT/ET 105:15]; Hab 3:13). Most often it refers to the kings of Israel and/or Judah with a special emphasis upon David himself (1 Sam 2:10; 16:2; 24:7 [ET 24:6]; Ps 2:2; Lam 4:20). Once Cyrus of Persia is named the Lord’s χριστός (Is 45:1), and only once in the OT is the promised end-time Deliverer named χριστός (Dan 9:26). The same diverse use of the term shows itself in the literature of the late Second Temple period [This temple stood from 516 BC to 70 AD. It replaced Solomon’s temple {1st Temple}] see 2 Macc 1:10; Sirach 46:19). Just as there is a generally heightened sense of end-time speculation in much of the literature of that period, there is also a more prominent use of the title Χριστός or its equivalent to refer to the end-time agent by whom God

would save his people, however that salvation was envisioned. In the context in which Jesus' ministry takes place, the term would have been known. The Jewish people were looking for a Messiah. (CC)

Yet two points call for clarification and emphasis at this point. First, it must be stated with utmost emphasis that Judaism's documents in this period show a *diversity* of end-time expectation about the coming of a Messiah figure. One still hears at times from Christian pulpits and in Bible classes, "All that the first-century Jews wanted was an earthly Messiah to drive out the Romans." That simplistic assessment does not reflect the varied evidence we now know. It assumes that there was a monolithic understanding of the coming of "Messiah" in first-century Judaism. Such an assumption is quickly dashed through reading the literature of the period, or through a careful look at Mt 16:13–16. There the disciples' initial response to Jesus' query, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" reveals a variety of expectations and understandings of Jesus himself. There are both common themes and wide-ranging diversity when one examines "what kind of Messiah" the Jewish people were expecting. It is clear that they hoped for the restoration of their sovereignty in the Promised Land and that the idolatrous Romans would be driven out when God came to save his people. But some also hoped for a Messiah who would "gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness" and who would "be compassionate to all the nations (who) reverently (stand) before him" (Pss Sol 17:26, 34). (CC)

Nor was their hope "merely" for the earth. We also read of a universal resurrection and judgment of both the evil angels and the oppressive power of wicked earthly kings (*1 Enoch* 47–55). That God and/or the anointed deliverer would come and enact salvation and judgment on the earth and in the land of Israel is a given for first-century Judaism. But that is merely the theology of the Scriptures, which proclaim that God the Creator comes down to his creation in judgment and salvation. However confused the messianic expectations of Judaism were, they were often right about the *arena* (i.e., the creation, including the earth!) and the *scope* (i.e., universal) of sin and salvation. (CC)

Too often modern Christians think of God's salvation and of his *final* goal for redeemed humanity in terms of "vertical ascent" and even "escape from creation." But if God is the Creator of all, then he is also the Re-creator of all, and this creation is the place where his salvation has been and will be accomplished. So, then, although there was a marked diversity of messianic expectation in the time of Jesus, the biblical emphasis upon a creational salvation was a clear and lively part of that hope. (CC)

In the second place, to understand the theology of Matthew's Gospel (and of the NT in general), one must remember always that the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth is everywhere painted in eschatological colors, and in this regard Matthew is reflecting also the Jewish background for Jesus' ministry. That is, for many in Judaism, the coming of the Christ (or however the awaited Agent of divine salvation was named) would usher in the Last Day, the consummation of the present evil age, the goal of history. Accordingly, when Matthew names Jesus as the "Christ" here in 1:1, he means to say that the final day has drawn near in some sense; that is how first-century Jews would have understood this title. Once again, there is no little diversity in how the literature of Judaism describes that day. Nevertheless, many of the Jews believed that sin and death had so corrupted human history and existence that God needed to come and vanquish Satan and bring the present evil age to an end and begin the new age of salvation. (CC)

Against that background of end-time expectations, for Matthew to name Jesus as "Christ" signifies crucial things about him. First, God has chosen and anointed *this man* to bring about judgment and salvation on the earth. Second, the new age of salvation *has begun*, and Jesus is the one chosen by God to accomplish that salvation. But a third point must be emphasized: the kind of "Christ" that Jesus has come to be and the nature of the last days ushered in by his ministry will not conform to the expectations of the Jewish people. (CC)

Those last three points ring out as particularly important in the modern context as well. In an age of increasing religious pluralism, where truth is deemed relative and diversity is the greatest prize, Matthew's Gospel proclaims that Jesus and none other is the one whom the Father has anointed as Savior. In addition, the world ever and always resists the kind of Messiah that Jesus has come to be, namely, one who comes to the helpless in order to save them from their sin (see 1:21), not merely to assist or advise them how to improve or to enrich their lives with fulfillment. Yet this is the only "Christ" there is, and he is the Jesus in whom the church rejoices and whom the church is ever to offer to the world. (CC)

the son of David. A Messianic title found several times in this Gospel (in 1:20 it is not a Messianic title). (CSB)

Jesus was a descendant of King David, from whose family the Messiah was to come. (TLSB)

Jewish readers listen carefully for news about the promised Messiah from David's royal line. They have waited a long time and want to learn as much as possible. (LifeLight)

Given the OT's view of the king as God's "anointed," this second title has some theological overlap with the declaration that Jesus is "Christ." "Son of David," however, specifically evokes what might be the dominant strain of messianic expectation in both the OT and in Second Temple Jewish literature. The spring from which the expectation flowed is God's promise to David that a Son from his royal line would "build a house" for God's name, and God would establish his throne so that he would rule over the people of God forever. This king would be God's "Son," and God would be his "Father" and never withdraw his favor from him (2 Sam 7:12–16 || 1 Chr 17:11–14). Although David's immediate son Solomon, who enjoyed a long and peaceful reign and built the temple, clearly was an aspect of the fulfillment of that promise, the subsequent history of the kings of Israel and Judah makes abundantly clear the need for a greater fulfillment of the promise to David. Thus, through prophet and psalmist the hope for a greater "David" remained alive, and Israel continued to look forward to the fulfillment of what God had promised David. (CC)

Some Second Temple Jewish literature reiterated and also augmented this longing for one who would be established forever on the throne of David. Both in the Qumran literature and in the OT Pseudepigrapha, the hope lived on that one from the line of David would come to intervene in the lives of God's people Israel. (CC)

Matthew proclaims Jesus as Son of David, and that more extensively than the other canonical Gospels. As with "Christ," this title looks back to the OT and specifically to the promise made in 2 Sam 7:12–16. As Matthew will make clear in his narrative, however, Jesus' identity as the Son of David does not meet the expectations of the majority of the Jews or of their religious leadership. During Jesus' time in Jerusalem, the city of David, the misunderstanding of both crowds and religious leaders leads to conflict that rises to a deafening pitch (Matthew 21–23). Yet this Son of David is rightly acclaimed by persons who stand at the margins of power, influence, and learning: children (21:15), blind people (9:27–31; 20:29–34), and even a Canaanite woman (15:21–28)! Even though his own did not rightly acknowledge him, Jesus the Christ is the true Son of David and King of the Jews. (CC)

The particularity of Jesus' mission is a theme that shows itself repeatedly in Matthew's Gospel, and it deserves mention in the discussion of "Son of David." Jesus the Christ is the one who has come in fulfillment of the promises to a particular people, promises that were given in a particular set of writings. Matthew proclaims Jesus as the one who comes in response to God's promises to Israel. The faithfulness of God pertains to a certain set of promises: those found in the OT that are now fulfilled in Jesus. The Good News of Jesus is for the Jew first (Rom 1:16), for during his earthly ministry, Jesus was not sent except to the lost sheep that were the house of Israel (Mt 15:24). That the promises, however, will apply

also to the Greek (Rom 1:16) and to all the nations will become clear (Mt 28:19) and is anticipated already here in Mt 1:1 (see below on “Son of Abraham”). (CC)

the son of Abraham. Because Matthew was writing to Jews, it was important to identify Jesus in this way. (CSB)

Abraham was the father of the Israelites, through whom all nations were to be blessed. This blessing is realized in Jesus. Moses was another important name to Jews. (TLSB)

In a very real sense, the third “title” in 1:1 is not a title at all. There seems to be no evidence that “Son of Abraham” ever was a messianic title in the OT or in Second Temple Judaism. There are perhaps three reasons why Matthew’s opening verse names Jesus the “Son of Abraham.” The first reason is structural. Since Matthew is about to proclaim, by means of his genealogy, that Jesus is the goal and high point of the history of God’s dealing with his chosen people Israel, Matthew identifies Jesus by the phrase “Son of Abraham” as a transition into the genealogy that begins with “Abraham begat Isaac” (1:2). It is entirely fitting for the genealogy to begin with Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel. (CC)

The second reason is that Matthew is likely writing for an audience that largely consists of Jewish people, who could identify with Jesus as a “Son of Abraham” because they too were sons of Abraham (cf. Acts 13:26, but also Mt 3:9). (CC)

Third and most importantly, however, we see here already the first of a number of intriguing indications in Matthew’s Gospel that this Jesus, who summarizes *Israel’s* history and who fulfills *Israel’s* Scriptures and who embodies *Israel’s* hope for end-time deliverance through One who is “Christ” and royal “Son of David,” has also come *for the salvation of the Gentiles*. God’s dealings with Abraham began with the promise of Gen 12:1–3 and included this declaration: “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” The inclusion of foreigners in the genealogy (see Rahab and Ruth the Moabitess in Mt 1:5) of this “Son of Abraham” will be another indication that he has not come for Israelites only. (CC)

It should be emphasized that the Gospel of Matthew only hints at the outreach to the Gentiles; it does not really come to much explicit expression until the concluding and climactic Great Commission (28:16–20), though see also 24:14, a statement by Jesus that projects out into the time *after* his death and resurrection. In emphatic and repeated ways in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is the Messiah of *Israel*; he is the royal Son of *David*. However, already in God’s first choosing of Abraham, there was the promise of blessing for “all the nations,” as Matthew affirms (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in Mt 24:9, 14; 25:32; 28:19). Thus we have here already in 1:1 the Matthean counterpart to what St. Paul makes much more explicit in Gal 3:6–18, where he teaches that Christ is himself the collective singular “Seed” of Abraham, in order that Abraham’s blessing might come to all the collective “seed” of God’s people—including the Gentiles! (CC)

Thus in this early and sole NT mention of Jesus as “Son of Abraham,” Matthew hints at that mission to the Gentiles, even as he makes his transition to the ordered genealogical summary of the history of the people of God. (CC)

1:2 was the father – Those OT genealogies sometimes skip multiple generations. Both הוֹלִיד and γεννάω can refer to fathering a line of descendants, and the descendant named may be several generations later than the named father. (CC)

Greek has “beget” instead of “was.” – ἐγέννησεν—This aorist indicative active is repeated thirty-nine times in the genealogy in Mt 1:2–16a with fathers as subjects, meaning to “beget” (BDAG, 1) or “to father” a child. Four times (in 1:3, 5, 6) it takes the preposition ἐκ with the mother “from” or “by” whom the father begets a descendant. The verb corresponds to the Hiphil of (הוֹלִיד) לָדָה, “to beget,” used in

genealogies in Ruth 4:18–22 and 1 Chronicles 2–9, which can take the preposition $\kappa\alpha\iota$ (“from”) attached to the wife (1 Chr 8:11). Those OT genealogies sometimes skip multiple generations. Both $\delta\alpha\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota$ and $\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon\omega$ can refer to fathering a line of descendants, and the descendant named may be several generations later than the named father. (CC)

There are three groups of 14. The first 14 are in verses 2-6. The Jews were proud of their forefather Abraham, and they were familiar with God’s promises to him. They were looking for a Messiah to be born of Abraham’s descendants. Unfortunately, their concept of the Messiah became badly distorted over the centuries, so that they were looking for a political Messiah, one who would literally rule on David’s throne and reestablish a mighty nation in Israel. But that was not the kind of Messiah God had promised. (PBC)

The second list of 14 includes some familiar names, for these men were all kings of Israel and/or Judah. (PBC)

The final listing of 14 names leads to Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus. (Lifelight)

God’s time has come: 7, which in the Bible is the number of completion, times 2 equals 14. It all signifies the fulfillment of promise. Also, some Hebrew letters doubled as numbers; the Hebrew consonants in David’s name (D = 4, V = 6, D = 4) add up to 14. Perhaps this also symbolizes that the Son of David had now arrived on the scene. (LifeLight)

Why does Matthew begin his Gospel with such a genealogy, and what is he wanting thereby to communicate? As the textual notes have shown, the threefold repetition of fourteen generations is the result of Matthew’s own purposeful editing. Scholars have directed their attention toward the significance of the number fourteen. In addition, the presence of the four women (or five, if Mary is counted) in the list of generations has also generated intense interest from the very earliest period of Christian exegesis up to the present. Furthermore, there is the important historical question of the relationship of Matthew’s genealogy to the genealogy in Luke 3. (CC)

Before surveying these important questions, however, we should remember that genealogies in the ancient world played important functions in portraying the person whose genealogy is at hand. In the case of OT genealogies, such lists could communicate something about the status of the person in view, as well as show the connection between that individual and the whole of the community. We moderns may tend to see a genealogy such as Mt 1:2–17 as simply a source of information. For Matthew himself and his original readers, however, the tripartite lists of Jesus’ ancestors communicates something important about Jesus himself. (CC)

The genealogy in 1:2–17 proclaims that the history of God’s people Israel has moved toward a goal. It has been a checkered history, marked sometimes by faithfulness to God, but more often by faithlessness. Yet the events were guided and ordered: “fourteen . . . fourteen . . . fourteen.” God, not the mere human characters, has directed the affairs of Israel toward their climax. Jesus, who is rightly called the Christ (1:16; see also 1:1, 17), is the goal of that entire history. Before offering even one OT citation, Matthew communicates by means of Jesus’ genealogy the crucial concept of “fulfillment.” To his first-century Jewish readers (be they Christians or not), this is a powerful claim. The genealogy is “a structuring of Israelitic history with a culmination in the dawn of the Messianic age in Jesus.” And to his twenty-first century readers (be they Christians or not), the same claim has power. There is a unity to the Testaments, a unity that consists in the Man Jesus who is called Christ. All that *preceded* Jesus finds its meaning in him. And since Jesus both brings in the reign of God now and will usher it in finally in power at the end of this age, all that in history follows the story of his ministry receives its significance only by being rightly related to him. Jesus is the center of human history. (CC)

A worldview is presupposed in this presentation of Jesus by Matthew that should be highlighted, for it is not necessarily the worldview of moderns, be they North Americans or others. Matthew here proclaims Jesus in terms that are both *corporate* and *creational*. It matters to Matthew that Jesus is the goal of the history of a *people*. Although God deals with humans as individuals, human beings also belong to a larger community; we are individuals, but we are not isolated individuals. So God's dealings were with a people, Israel, and with its kings. This means the salvation that God offers in Jesus is salvation into a corporate identity, into a people that will be constituted as the true and new Israel in Jesus. (CC)

Moreover, Matthew's genealogy of Jesus assumes that God's interaction with humans takes place in the created world, in history. This person, Jesus, comes to save and judge; the historical narrative that is the First Gospel depicts this ministry. Matthew's Gospel ends with the promise that Jesus will be with his church, beginning with the apostles, as they carry out the work of making disciples through Holy Baptism and the teaching of Jesus' doctrine (28:19–20). That same One will come again as the judge of the living and the dead. The Gospel of Matthew does not depict salvation as an otherworldly matter. Salvation occurs in history, is received in history by faith, and will reach its final expression also here in this creation over which God in Christ will perfectly restore his gracious reign at the consummation of the age. (CC)

1:3 Tamar – She was the daughter-in-law of Judah; possibly a Gentile. Cf. Gen. 38. Tamar is none of four mothers mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus, none of whom were typical Judean women – a sign of God's grace to all people. (TLSB)

1:4 Amminadab. Father-in-law of Aaron (Ex 6:23). (CSB)

1:5 Rahab. See Jos 2. Since quite a long time had elapsed between Rahab and David and because of Matthew's desire for systematic organization, many of the generations between these two ancestors were assumed, but not listed, by Matthew. (CSB)

This Gentile prostitute aided the Israelites who spied on Canaan before the conquest. (Joshua 2:1-21). After Jericho was destroyed, Rahab and her family lived with the Israelites, and she became an ancestor of the Messiah. (TLSB)

1:6 wife of Uriah – This was Bathsheba with whom David committed adultery. (TLSB)

1:8 Jehoram the father. Matthew calls Jehoram the father of Uzziah, but from 2Ch 21:4–26:23 it is clear that, again, several generations were assumed (Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah) and that “father” is used in the sense of “forefather.” (CSB)

1:11 Josiah the father. Similarly, Josiah is called the father of Jeconiah (i.e., Jehoiachin; whereas he was actually the father of Jehoiakim and the grandfather of Jehoiachin (2Ch 36:1–9). (CSB)

Deportation to Babylon – Many of the Israelites (brightest and best) were deported to Babylon when Babylon captured and destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BC. This humbling experience was one of the most significant events in Israelite history. (TLSB)

1:12 Shealtiel the father. Actually the grandfather of Zerubbabel (1Ch 3:17–18). (CSB)

1:16 Matthew does not say that Joseph was the father of Jesus but only that he was the husband of Mary and that Jesus was born of her. In this genealogy Matthew shows that, although Jesus is not the physical son of Joseph, he is the legal son and therefore a descendant of David. (CSB)

Husband of Mary – Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus but the stepfather. (TLSB)

Christ – This genealogy demonstrated that Jesus had the proper ancestors to be the Christ, though His claim was denounced as blasphemy by the Jewish high priest (26:63-65). This genealogy demonstrated that Jesus had the proper ancestors to be the Christ, though His claim was denounced as blasphemy by the Jewish high priest (26:63–65). John Wycliffe: “He was without beginning, and without ending, and in his manhood begotten and not made” (*TT*, p 279). (TLSB)

1:17 *fourteen generations ... fourteen ... fourteen*. These divisions reflect two characteristics of Matthew’s Gospel: (1) an apparent fondness for numbers and (2) concern for systematic arrangement. The number 14 may have been chosen because it is twice seven (the number of completeness) and/or because it is the numerical value of the name David. (CSB)

Matthew did not list every generation in this family tree but rather created a three-part structure that communicates a sense of completeness and fulfillment. The birth of the promised Messiah marked the end of the OT. (TLSB)

1:1–17 In the genealogy of Jesus Christ, Matthew makes no effort to hide sinners and scandals. Instead, he highlights them. Jesus’ ancestors include prostitutes, adulterers, violent men, and other sinners of all descriptions. Though this might surprise us, the truth is that there were no people other than sinners to make up His genealogy. Jesus’ ancestors needed a Savior just as much as we do. If God, in His grace, can use such flawed and sinful people, how much more can He bless and use sinners who witness the Messiah’s sinless sacrifice and believe in Him today! • Lord Jesus Christ, thank You for including me, a sinner, among those whom You came to save. Amen. (TLSB)

The Birth of Jesus Christ

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

1:18-25 Matthew’s genealogy (1:2–17) has begun to answer the question “Whence Jesus Christ?” Its answer is that Jesus comes as the fulfillment of a history, the goal of God’s dealings with the sons of Abraham, the nation of Israel. Jesus the Christ issues forth from God’s faithfulness to a faithless people as that divine mercy has marched the course of the generations toward the coming of the Anointed One. (CC)

Matthew continues to answer the question of Jesus’ origin in 1:18–25. This is quite clear from the opening words of the unit: “Now *Jesus Christ’s* origin was of this sort” (1:18). The paragraph contains three primary theological movements. First, the text’s structure contrasts the ways that human beings think and behave with the unexpected way in which God puts his plan to save into action. That same contrast is evident in the difference between Joseph’s initial intent to divorce Mary versus his believing

response once God's plan is made known to him. Second, the unit highlights the naming of the child: he is "Immanuel" (1:23), but receiving even more emphasis is "Jesus" (1:21, 25), the proper name that God himself (through his angel) assigns to the child miraculously conceived in the Virgin Mary. Third, by means of the first explicit OT citation (Is 7:14 in Mt 1:23), Matthew invites his readers/hearers to reflect on the relationship between God's ways of judgment and salvation in Israel's history and those ways that have now come to fulfillment in Jesus the Christ, Immanuel, "God is with us" (1:23). (CC)

The text's structure consists of the introductory clause of 1:18a followed by three sections: 1:18b–19; 1:20–23; and 1:24–25. These sections narrate in turn (1) weak human intentions and fallible human wisdom regarding the origin of Jesus (1:18b–19); (2) God's truth and purpose regarding Jesus' origin (1:20–23); and (3) Joseph's trusting human response to God's revealed plan in this Jesus (1:24–25). (CC)

1:18 *Jesus Christ* – Christ means Anointed One. This points to the incarnation of "the Christ."

pledged to be married. There were no sexual relations during a Jewish betrothal period, but it was a much more binding relationship than a modern engagement and could be broken only by divorce (see v. 19). In Dt 22:24 a betrothed woman is called a "wife," though the preceding verse speaks of her as being "pledged to be married." Matthew uses the terms "husband" (v. 19) and "wife" (v. 24) of Joseph and Mary before they were married. (CSB)

to be with child – εὑρέθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα—The feminine participle ἔχουσα, with Mary as referent, expresses indirect discourse, that is, the content of what Joseph found, literally, "it was found that she was possessing [a child] in the womb." If expressed in active voice, it would read, (CC)

Mt 1:18b–19 shows Joseph's perception of the situation and his pious, yet uninformed, decision. Mary "was found" (presumably by Joseph) to be pregnant with the result that righteous and compassionate Joseph decided to cancel the legal marriage created by their betrothal. This is the natural human evaluation of the "origin" of Jesus Christ. Since his origin is not from Joseph, Mary's betrothed, it must have been from a sinful union between Mary and another man. Ironically, although the narrator has informed the hearers/readers that Mary is pregnant "from the Holy Spirit," Joseph can act only on the basis of his own logical understanding of the child's origin. Joseph's plan to divorce Mary discreetly "would leave both his righteousness (his conformity to the law) and his compassion intact." Joseph is, for the right reasons, about to do the wrong thing, but God intervenes. (CC)

The Law called for a betrothed woman to be stoned if she was guilty of adultery (Deut. 22:23-24). (TLSB)

From the Holy Spirit – εἶπεν αὐτὴν ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσαν, "he found that she was pregnant" (cf. Mt 12:44; 24:46). ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου—From the ensuing verses it is clear that Joseph was not aware of this cause of her pregnancy. Matthew's readers/hearers, however, learn it from the beginning of this passage, and so it is set off in the translation with parentheses. (CC)

To a Jewish audience this was important because no sexual relations are permitted during a Jewish betrothal, although the engagement could only be broken by divorce.

1:19 *righteous.* To Jews this meant being zealous in keeping the law. (CSB)

Unwilling to put her to shame – δίκαιος ὢν καὶ μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν δειγματίσαι—With others, I take the predicate position participles ὢν and θέλων to have causal force, so they are both translated with "because." Joseph purposed to do what would have been right if his assumption that Mary had committed

adultery had been right; he was acting for the right reason (“because he was a righteous man”; see further the commentary). But ironically, in this case it would have been the wrong thing to do! (CC)

By Jewish law Joseph had the right to bring his fiancée before a court of law to prove her infidelity, which could result in her being stoned to death (Deut 22:23-24). Or he could break the marriage contract by divorcing her quietly. He has much to agonize over because he loved Mary and was a just man.

divorce her quietly. He would sign the necessary legal papers but not have her judged publicly and stoned (see Dt 22:23–24). (CSB)

By Jewish law he had the right to bring his fiancée before a court of law to prove her infidelity; this could result in her being stoned. Or he could break the marriage contract by divorcing her quietly. (LL)

ἐβουλήθη λάθρα ἀπολῦσαι αὐτήν—Joseph would have had to divorce (ἀπολῦσαι) Mary because she was betrothed (μνηστευθείσης, 1:18) to him. According to Jewish custom, betrothal was a legally binding relationship that was the first stage of marriage. However, the marriage was consummated only after the betrothal period was completed. For a virgin, betrothal usually lasted for about one year. In the Mishnah, both *Ketuboth* 5:2 and *Nedarim* 10:5 mention a period of up to twelve months for a virgin and thirty days for a widow. During this time “the betrothed girl was legally the man’s wife even though she was still a virgin, since the marital relation did not begin until the nuptial ceremony. The betrothal could be abrogated only by a formal written divorce or death.” (CC)

Ironically, although the narrator has informed the hearers/readers that Mary is pregnant “from the Holy Spirit,” Joseph can act only on the basis of his own logical understanding of the child’s origin. Joseph’s plan to divorce Mary discreetly “would leave both his righteousness (his conformity to the law) and his compassion intact.” Joseph is, for the right reasons, about to do the wrong thing, but God intervenes. (CC)

In Joseph’s well-meaning incomprehension, we have the first glimpse of a powerfully important theme in Matthew’s Gospel, namely, that in order for human beings to know the ways of God and his Christ, those ways must be *revealed* to them. They cannot attain to this knowledge and faith by their “own reason or strength.” Whether it is the difference between those who did not repent at Jesus’ miracles and those who did (11:25–28) or those on whom the seed of the Word falls in vain and those in whom the seed bears fruit (13:1–9), what makes the difference is that humans fail to understand unless God *reveals* his purposes to save in Jesus. That revelation, moreover, possesses the power to evoke a trusting response in men and women, as Joseph will show in 1:24–25. (CC)

1:20-23 The text’s next section (1:20–23) comprises the “counter move” of the text, as divine perspective suddenly supplants human understanding. God’s intervention and proclamation come to the reader from two “voices”: the angel’s words in Joseph’s dream and the OT citation to which Matthew’s readers/hearers are privy. (CC)

The angel’s words connect this text to the preceding context in two ways. First, the angel addresses Joseph as “son of David” (1:20), signaling that the royal line of David the king, presented in the genealogy (1:2–17) of Jesus, “Son of David” (1:1), has come down to this pious descendant and heir of David, Joseph. Because the heir of David will take Mary as his wife even though the child in her womb is not his own, this will bring Jesus into the royal line of David. The second connection with the preceding context is the emphasis on God’s perspective and guidance. The symmetry of Matthew’s genealogy (three sets of fourteen generations, 1:17) has already suggested that the God of Israel has been bringing the nation’s history to its climax in the One who is called “Christ” (1:1, 16). God’s guidance and intervention

continue in the text at hand as the angel announces to Joseph the true origin of the child within Mary, Joseph's virgin wife. (CC)

The angel communicates to Joseph both the origin (1:20) and the name (1:21) of the child. The child comes from no human father; the source is the Holy Spirit. This does not imply that the *Spirit* is to be regarded as the Father of Jesus. As Matthew will make clear in his Gospel, God is the Father of Jesus. The comments of Sánchez Merino are pertinent here, although he is initially referring to Lk 1:35:

The Spirit is neither the mother nor the father of the Son. Mary is Jesus' mother, God his Father. As an act of God's Spirit, however, the conception of "Emmanuel" (= "God with us") in the virgin ... directs us to Jesus' divine origin from the heavenly Father in that Jesus has no biological father (e.g. [Mt] 1:16, 2:11, 13). ... And yet the Spirit mediates the Father-Son relation in the economy of salvation, for the holy child Emmanuel is the messianic Son of God for us by means of the creative, fresh power in history of God's eschatological Spirit. (CC)

Chrysostom registers appropriate awe and modesty at the role of the Spirit in Jesus' conception:

Nor think that thou hast learnt all, by hearing "of the Spirit"; nay, for we are ignorant of many things, even when we have learnt this; as, for instance, how the Infinite is in a womb, how He that contains all things is carried, as unborn, by a woman; how the Virgin bears, and continues a virgin. How, I pray thee, did the Spirit frame that Temple? How did He take not all the flesh from the womb, but a part thereof, and increased it, and fashioned it? ... Therefore that He was of us, and of our substance, and of the Virgin's womb, is manifest from these things, and from others beside; but how, is not also manifest. Do not either thou then inquire; but receive what is revealed, and be not curious about what is kept secret. (CC)

Moreover, the child's purpose is revealed in the name given to him by God through the angelic messenger. The child's name will be "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς, 1:21), a Greek form of the ancient Hebrew name "Joshua" (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), which means "Yahweh/the LORD is salvation." The reader of the Greek is expected to recognize the Semitic play on the noun "salvation," since the following clause gives the reason why (γάρ) this will be his name: "He himself will *save* his people from their sins." Name and purpose go together; identity and work go hand in hand. From this point in the narrative, the very name "Jesus" will evoke the purpose for which this Jesus has come: the purpose of God saving his people from sin—from their own sins. (CC)

How and to what extent will Jesus save? Clearly, by his ransom-death (20:28) and his outpoured blood (26:28) on behalf of and in the place of "many," Jesus will pay the price needed to forgive. But there is more. Not only does God purpose to *forgive* sins, that is, remove the guilt of sin, but Jesus will also *save* people from their sins. As the remarkable citation of Is 53:4 in Mt 8:17 shows, salvation from sin entails healing and full eschatological restoration (see the commentary on 8:17 and also on 4:23–24; 9:1–7). In that sense, one must always keep in mind that there is an "already" and a "not yet" to the salvation from sin that Matthew's Gospel proclaims and that believers in this Gospel receive. The full salvation from sin awaits the day when this Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. For Jesus comes not to save just the souls of his people from their sins. He comes to save his people—body and soul—from their sins. (CC)

Jesus is conceived within Mary "from the Holy Spirit" (1:18, 20). Is a part of Matthew's message in 1:18–25 the truth that by Jesus' virginal conception from the Holy Spirit, he is also revealed as the Son of God, the God-man of classic creedal Christianity? Yes! But that truth is still muted in 1:18–25, for Matthew intends to communicate a particular message by proclaiming Jesus as Son of God. In this Gospel, Jesus' identity as the Son of God first emerges explicitly in 2:15 and then is emphasized and repeated in 3:13–17 and 4:1–11. For Matthew, Jesus' identity as Son of God involves Jesus' deity to be

sure. In Matthew 1–2, however, Jesus, Son of God, is the stand-in, the representative, and even the substitute *for the nation Israel*, who is God’s “son” (Ex 4:22; Deut 8:5; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1, quoted in Mt 2:15). Jesus will show his perfect Sonship in perfect obedience to the Father’s plan to save. This commentary will revisit this “Son of God” Christology as the pertinent texts come under consideration. (CC)

The importance of the name “Jesus” emerges when we recognize that Matthew ends this unit by explicitly describing Joseph’s obedient response to the angel’s command to name the child “Jesus” (1:25). This saving personal name is (literally) the chapter’s last word! Yet before considering the conclusion of the text, the second name, “Immanuel” (1:22–23), must receive attention, along with important issues about its context. After the angel’s words give God’s perspective in 1:20–21, additional divine perspective emerges through the OT citation from Is 7:14. The child Jesus has origin in no human father, for he is born of a virgin, as the OT has foretold. As the first textual note on Mt 1:23 argues, Matthew’s wording of his quotation of Is 7:14 shows no theologically significant deviations from the LXX or the MT since *παρθένος*, “virgin,” is a valid rendering of *הַלְוָיָהּ*, “virgin maiden.” Now we must take in hand some of the complexities of Isaiah’s prophecies and the meaning both of Is 7:14 in its original context as well as Matthew’s proclamation that this verse is fulfilled in Jesus’ conception within the Virgin Mary. (CC)

Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew’s Context – In citing Is 7:14 in the first chapter of his Gospel, Matthew proclaims that the Immanuel promise that applied to the eighth century and also extended beyond that time into the future of God’s people has now come true. Although Matthew certainly does believe that Jesus fulfills some OT passages typologically, that is not what is happening in Mt 1:23 with his citation of Is 7:14. The threat to Judah in the eighth century was great. Yet after the Syro-Ephraimite coalition and even the Assyrian Empire had come and gone, still there was darkness over the people. God’s promise of light in Galilee of the Gentiles still awaited fulfillment (Is 8:23–9:6 [ET 9:1–7]). Matthew is proclaiming that fulfillment now in Jesus. (CC)

Is there any real indication that Matthew understood Is 7:14 as I have set forth here, that is, as a part of a progressive prophecy that comes to fuller expression in Is 8:23–9:6 (ET 9:1–7)? Indeed there is! We have been considering Matthew’s first explicit OT fulfillment citation, which is from Is 7:14, which in turn is the first “Immanuel” reference in its larger section of Isaiah. Now look ahead to Matthew’s fifth explicit OT fulfillment citation, which brings the first major section of the Gospel (1:1–4:16) to a close. The fifth citation comes from the end of this same section of Isaiah: the promise of light shining in the darkness, in Galilee of the Gentiles (Mt 4:12–16, drawing on LXX Is 8:23–9:1 [ET 9:1–2]). *Matthew has bracketed his narrative’s first major section with two citations from the “Immanuel” section of Isaiah.* Matthew recognizes that the promise of the Child born of the virgin, the promise that was connected to but *not* fulfilled in the birth of “The-Spoil-Speeds-the-Prey-Hastens,” has finally come true. In Jesus, God is with his people to deliver them and to bring light to the nations. (CC)

The house of David in the eighth century BC did not accept God’s offer of a sign, nor believe in the significance of the Child who was promised in Is 7:14. By contrast, Matthew presents Joseph as the descendant and heir of David who *does* accept God’s offered sign and who *does* believe what God declares about the Child present in the Virgin Mary’s womb. Matthew’s readers/hearers are invited to believe as well! For all who believe the message of Matthew’s Gospel, the Child will be known as “God is with us” (Mt 1:23, quoting Is 7:14). At the ending of the Gospel, as is widely recognized, Matthew repeats and broadens the promise. By saying “I am with you always” (28:20), Jesus affirms that he will be “God is with us.” He will be with his disciples as they make other disciples through baptizing and teaching, even to the consummation of the age. (CC)

What are the Christological and soteriological implications, then, of Jesus being Immanuel, “God is with us”? Matthew is proclaiming Jesus as “the embodiment of all the salvific power found in the divine

biblical [i.e., OT] assertion, ‘I am with you.’ ” The role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ virginal conception underscores that Jesus *is* God’s saving presence, for the Spirit is often associated with the OT promises of God’s presence. Latent here in this early unit in Matthew’s Gospel is the truth that the Nicene Creed faithfully confesses about Jesus of Nazareth: he is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.” (CC)

Yet 1:18–25 does not give primary place and prominence to the name “Immanuel,” as important as that OT citation is for understanding the significance of Mary’s Child. Rather, after God has intervened and revealed the true origin and purpose of the Child, the text returns to the name “Jesus.” God’s presence with his people cannot be known apart from this Jesus whom the narrative ultimately will proclaim as the Crucified and Risen One. (CC)

1:20 *behold* – ἰδοῦ—This aorist imperative middle second person singular of ὁράω, “to see,” functions as an interjection and is a favorite word of Matthew, who uses it sixty-two times. It emphasizes the point about to be made, and in some pericopes it is an obvious structuring device. Here it sets up a contrast between Joseph’s plans and those of God. (CC)

An angel of the Lord – ἄγγελος κυρίου—Is this “the Angel of the LORD,” the מַלְאָכִי הַיְהוָה of the OT? The answer cannot be given merely on the basis of grammatical considerations. “The Angel of the LORD” is prominent in some OT passages that repeatedly refer to this figure. In each of these texts except Numbers 22, the LXX translates at least the initial mention of the מַלְאָכִי הַיְהוָה by ἄγγελος κυρίου, with both nouns lacking an article. Thereafter in these texts, most references to this figure are rendered ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου, a usage which, as Wallace suggests, is probably anaphoric, the article reaching back to the initial mention of ἄγγελος κυρίου. This same phenomenon occurs here in Matthew: the initial mention of the angel is anarthrous (1:20), and the second reference is arthrous (1:24). So, purely on grammatical grounds, the angel here in Mt 1:20 could be the OT figure of the מַלְאָכִי הַיְהוָה. (CC)

However, two other factors speak decisively against making this identification. The first is that Matthew 1 shows no trace of the “vacillation” between the angelic figure and God himself that is so prominent and striking in the OT texts cited. (Neither does Mt 28:1–8, with an “angel of the Lord” in 28:2.) There is no uncertainty in Mt 1:18–25 over the question “Who is speaking, a created angel or the Lord himself?” It is the holy angel who speaks to Joseph. The second factor would be the Christological implications of the מַלְאָכִי הַיְהוָה. Conservative interpreters have identified the OT “Angel of the LORD” as the preincarnate Son, or at least have declared the מַלְאָכִי הַיְהוָה to be a true divine epiphany of Yahweh himself. This Christological or theophanic dimension is utterly absent from Mt 1:18–25, where an angelic messenger of the Lord speaks about the coming birth of God’s Son and in no way identifies himself with the Christ whose birth he announced. This second factor also militates against identifying the “angel of the Lord” in 2:13 and the one in 2:19 as the OT figure. (CC)

in a dream. The phrase occurs five times in the first two chapters of Matthew (here; 2:12–13, 19, 22) and indicates the means the Lord used for speaking to Joseph. (CSB)

This was a common means of revelation in the OT, especially in the story of the patriarch Joseph (Gn. 37–50). (TLSB)

son of David. Perhaps a hint that the message of the angel related to the expected Messiah. (CSB)

The angel’s words connect this text to the preceding context in two ways. First, the angel addresses Joseph as “son of David” (1:20), signaling that the royal line of David the king, presented in the genealogy (1:2–17) of Jesus, “Son of David” (1:1), has come down to this pious descendant and heir of David, Joseph. Because the heir of David will take Mary as his wife even though the child in her womb is

not his own, this will bring Jesus into the royal line of David. The second connection with the preceding context is the emphasis on God's perspective and guidance. The symmetry of Matthew's genealogy (three sets of fourteen generations, 1:17) has already suggested that the God of Israel has been bringing the nation's history to its climax in the One who is called "Christ" (1:1, 16). God's guidance and intervention continue in the text at hand as the angel announces to Joseph the true origin of the child within Mary, Joseph's virgin wife. (CC)

take Mary home as your wife. They were legally bound to each other, but not yet living together as husband and wife. (CSB)

μη φοβηθῆς παραλαβεῖν Μαρίαν τὴν γυναῖκά σου.—The verb παραλαμβάνω usually means "take, take along." In this context, however, it is virtually certain that this verb in 1:20, 24 refers to the action of Joseph that would be the next step after betrothal, namely, "to take" Mary "into his home" and begin to live with her as her husband, although Joseph did not yet consummate the marriage (1:25). (CC)

The syntactical relationship between the two accusative nouns "Mary" and "wife" is complex. One way to understand the syntax would take one accusative noun as the object of the verb and the other as a further complement to the object (also known as the predicate accusative). If that were the case here, the proper name "Mary" would be the object of the verb according to Wallace. The translation would then be, "Do not be afraid to take into your home Mary *as* your wife." Two factors make this view unlikely, however. The first is that the second accusative noun is arthrous, τὴν γυναῖκά σου; normally, the complement (or predicate accusative) in such constructions will be anarthrous. The second factor is the general context, where, as 1:24 affirms, Mary is already regarded as Joseph's wife even though they have not sexually consummated their union (as 1:18 and 1:25 declare). (CC)

Given the word order, with the proper name "Mary" immediately after the infinitive, the translation above reflects the view that "Mary" is the direct object of the infinitive and "your wife" is standing in apposition to "Mary": "Do not be afraid to take into your home Mary, your wife." ((CC)

what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. This agrees perfectly with the announcement to Mary (Lk 1:35), except that the latter is more specific. (CSB)

τὸ ... γεννηθὲν—This is, literally, "the thing that has been begotten." The neuter substantive participle probably reflects the grammatical gender of τὸ βρέφος, which can refer to a "child" in utero (e.g., Lk 1:41, 44) or after birth (e.g., Lk 2:12, 16; 18:15; 1 Pet 2:2). (CC)

1:21 *Jesus...save his people* – αὐτὸς γὰρ σώσει—The nominative use of αὐτός is emphatic ("he *himself* will save"). There are twenty-one nominative uses of αὐτός in Matthew, all having an emphatic function; see, for example, 3:11; 8:24; 16:20. (CC)

John Chrysostom: "[Matthew] darkly signified the Gentiles too. For 'His people' are not the Jews only, but also all that draw nigh and receive the knowledge that is from Him" [NPNF1 10:26]. (TLSB)

Moreover, the child's purpose is revealed in the name given to him by God through the angelic messenger. The child's name will be "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς, 1:21), a Greek form of the ancient Hebrew name "Joshua" (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), which means "Yahweh/the LORD is salvation." The reader of the Greek is expected to recognize the Semitic play on the noun "salvation," since the following clause gives the reason why (γάρ) this will be his name: "He himself will *save* his people from their sins." Name and purpose go together; identity and work go hand in hand. From this point in the narrative, the very name "Jesus" will evoke the purpose for which this Jesus has come: the purpose of God saving his people from sin—from their own sins. (CC)

1:22 *all this took place* – τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν—There is no need to take the perfect indicative γέγονεν as simply aoristic. Rather, in this first occurrence of Matthew’s OT citation formula (see the next textual note), the perfect is somewhat emphatic. Matthew is stressing for the reader that “this whole thing,” referring to the “origin” (γένεσις, 1:1, 18) of Jesus Christ with its enduring result for the reader, “has happened” in order to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet. (CC)

Matthew may also be offering an opening bracket, which is matched with a closing bracket in 26:56 as part of Jesus’ statement to those arresting him: “But this whole thing has happened [τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν] in order that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled” (26:56). Such a connection between 1:22 and 26:56 underscores Matthew’s strong emphasis that Jesus’ entire life and ministry takes place in fulfillment of the OT. (CC)

fulfill. Twelve times (here; 2:15, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9) Matthew speaks of the OT being fulfilled, i.e., of events in NT times that were prophesied in the OT—a powerful testimony to the divine origin of Scripture and its accuracy even in small details. In the fulfillments we also see the writer’s concern for linking the gospel with the OT. (CSB)

ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος—This the first of ten times where Matthew introduces an OT citation with his distinctive formula that uses the passive of πληρῶω with the substantive participle τὸ ῥηθὲν as the subject: “that what was spoken . . . might be fulfilled.” Mt 3:3 also comes very close to this expression, although there John the Baptist is not spoken of as one who *fulfills* the Scripture. Matthew reserves the important verb πληρῶω, “fulfill,” for Jesus alone. (CC)

Commentators sometimes note that ὑπό plus the genitive (here ὑπὸ κυρίου) refers to an ultimate agent, while διά plus the genitive (διὰ τοῦ προφήτου) refers to an intermediate agent. It should not be thought, however, that each of those prepositions in itself always carries that respective force. Rather, it is the distinctive use of both prepositions in the same context that nails down the point. The Lord is the ultimate source of the prophecy; the prophet is only the intermediary who delivered the message to Israel. (CC)

1:23 This is the first of at least 47 quotations, most of them Messianic, that Matthew takes from the OT. (CSB)

Note on Is. 7:14 – A figurative way of predicting that within nine months it will be so evident that God is with his people that she will name her son Immanuel, which means “God is with us.” By the time he reaches the age of discretion (“knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right,” v. 16) the enemy will have given up the design of conquest and will have been laid waste by the Assyrian empire (vv. 16–17). The Hebrew word *‘almah* occurs six times in the OT and in each case refers to a young woman of marriageable age who is still in the state of virginity (Ge 24:43; Ex 2:8; Ps 68:25; Pr 30:19; SS 1:3; 6:8). Mt 1:23 understood the woman mentioned here to be a type (a foreshadowing) of the Virgin Mary. *Immanuel.* † The name “God is with us” was meant to convince Ahaz that God could rescue him from his enemies. See Nu 14:9; 2Ch 13:12; Ps 46:7. “Immanuel” is used again in 8:8, 10, and it may be another name for Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (8:3). If so, the boy’s names had complementary significance (see note on 8:3). Jesus was the final fulfillment of this prophecy, for he was “God with us” in the fullest sense (Mt 1:23; cf. Isa 9:6–7). See Hos 11:1; Mt 2:15 for another example of God’s direction of Israel’s history in such a way as to let the event foreshadow what he would do in the life of his incarnate Son. (CC)

Immanuel which means God with us – This is quote from Isaiah 7:14. The incarnation of Jesus is central to salvation. It means that Christ is really “with us” to take our place.

μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός—This is most likely a verbless clause, “God is with us,” rather than a Greek phrase that could be translated as a noun with a relative clause, “the God who is with us.” If Matthew had wanted to express the latter, he could have written ὁ θεὸς μεθ' ἡμῶν, or ὁ μεθ' ἡμῶν θεός, or ὁ θεὸς ὁ μεθ' ἡμῶν. (CC)

ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ—The text form of this, Matthew’s first explicit OT citation, has occasioned much discussion. The Masoretic Text of Is 7:14b reads, “Look, the virgin maiden [הַלְעֲוִיָּה] (will be) pregnant [adjective, הַרְהָ] and be bearing [feminine singular active participle, תִּלְדֶּה] a son, and she will call [תִּקְרָא] his name Immanu-El.” The LXX rendering is “Look, the virgin [ἡ παρθένος] will be pregnant, and she will bear a son, and you [singular] will call [καλέσεις] his name Immanuel.” Matthew follows the LXX closely, with the one exception of the verb at the end of the verse, where he has “they will call” (καλέσουσιν). (CC)

The hermeneutics and theology of this citation will receive attention in the commentary proper. The following notes here are offered with regard to two aspects of the text form: (1) the choice of ἡ παρθένος for הַלְעֲוִיָּה and (2) the person and number of the verb “call” at the end of the citation. (CC)

Some scholars criticize Matthew for “conveniently” using the LXX’s rendering, ἡ παρθένος, of the MT’s הַלְעֲוִיָּה in order to find an OT proof text for the virginal conception and birth of Jesus. This criticism asserts that παρθένος, which normally means “virgin,” is not a valid translation for the Hebrew הַלְעֲוִיָּה. This Hebrew noun, however, only occurs nine times in the OT, and two of these occurrences seem not to be pertinent (the plural seems to be a musical term in Ps 46:1 [the superscription in English translations] and 1 Chr 15:20). Of the remaining seven, four times the LXX renders the Hebrew noun as νεᾶνις, “young woman” (Ex 2:8; Ps 67:26 [MT 68:26; ET 68:25]); Song 1:3; 6:8), once as νεότης, “youth” (Prov 30:19), and twice as παρθένος, “virgin” (Gen 24:43; Is 7:14). With such a small base of data, it is difficult to assert that the LXX’s rendering in Is 7:14 is somehow anomalous or invalid, or that there is a “normal” Greek translation for the Hebrew term. What, however, do the various Hebrew and Greek terms mean, and what semantic difference is there between them? (CC)

One must be cautious here by not quickly asserting a technical or unchanging meaning for individual words. For example, it is clear enough from the narrative of Genesis 24 that Rebekah is regarded as an acceptable candidate for becoming a wife for Isaac, that is, she was a virgin as well as a relative. In the Hebrew of Genesis 24, she is described as a “woman” (אִשָּׁה, Gen 24:44), a “young woman” (נַעֲרָה, 24:16a), a “virgin” (24:16 בְּתוּלָה), and a “virgin maiden” (24:43 הַלְעֲוִיָּה). The LXX account of Genesis 24 translates *all* of the last three Hebrew nouns in the same way: with παρθένος. This would seem to indicate some flexibility when it comes to the meaning of παρθένος, or perhaps more likely the translator’s willingness to allow the contextual connotations to guide to a more precise translation of a generic Hebrew term (such as נַעֲרָה). One only needs to read lexicon entries to see that; the context determines which of a word’s many possible meanings is intended in a particular case, and context can cause the meanings of individual words to shift. (CC)

Some argue that בְּתוּלָה (e.g., Gen 24:16; Ex 22:15–16), and not הַלְעֲוִיָּה (Is 7:14 et alii), is the Hebrew term that means “virgin.” However, it would be wrong to presume that Hebrew (or any language) could have only one term meaning “virgin.” Granted, בְּתוּלָה usually does denote a “virgin.” Yet we are hard pressed to explain why the biblical writers occasionally felt the need to further delineate a בְּתוּלָה as one “who has not known a man” unless בְּתוּלָה could possibly have a more general meaning, such as “young woman.” If it always and exclusively meant “virgin,” that would result in an odd sort of redundancy in Gen 24:16 and Judg 21:12. Why would an author say that a woman was “a virgin who had not known a man”? How could there be virgins who *had* known men? (CC)

With regard to *הַלְמָעָה*, the term in Is 7:14, it clearly does refer to a virgin in at least two of the six other passages: Rebekah in Gen 24:43 and Miriam as a girl in Ex 2:8. The plural in Ps 68:26 (ET 68:25) and Song 1:3; 6:8 may well mean “virgins.” The only passage in which its meaning can really be disputed is Prov 30:19, but that verse may well refer to “the way of a man with a virgin” whom he is courting. None of the seven OT passages with *הַלְמָעָה* give any reason to conclude that it cannot mean “virgin.” Thus Davies and Allison rightly comment that the Hebrew noun *הַלְמָעָה* is “a little used word generally carrying the implication of virginity.” (CC)

In terms of the lexical data, then, it should not be said that the LXX’s *παρθένος* is a mistranslation of the MT’s *הַלְמָעָה* in Is 7:14. The Hebrew noun *הַלְמָעָה* clearly can mean “virgin maiden” and as such is closely related to *הַתְּלִמָּה*, which also normally (but not necessarily) means “virgin.” The Greek term *παρθένος* is a perfectly acceptable translation for *הַלְמָעָה* in Is 7:14, and Matthew’s use of *παρθένος* in his Greek quotation of Is 7:14 does not involve some sort of semantic error. The female referred to in Is 7:14 is a virgin maiden. This is fitting, since her bearing of the child will be a *sign* that “the LORD himself will give” (Is 7:14). (CC)

The second issue in the text of Is 7:14 as cited in Mt 1:23 involves the final verb of the citation. Matthew writes *καλέσουσιν*, “they will call his name ...” The LXX has the second person singular *καλέσεις*, “you [either masculine or feminine] will call ...” The MT verb form is *תִּקְרָא*, which poses some interesting challenges. Morphologically, this would be the normal form of the Qal second feminine singular perfect of *קָרָא* with *waw* consecutive, “and you [feminine singular] will call.” This may be the way that the LXX is understanding the form, although the Greek *καλέσεις* does not specify whether the subject of the verb is masculine or feminine. (CC)

However, in the immediate context, Isaiah clearly has been speaking to “the house of David” (Is 7:2) in the person of King Ahaz, not to any woman who would name the child. Rather, he has been speaking in the third person *about* the virgin who would bear the child. Therefore, the Hebrew grammars and most scholars take the MT’s Hebrew verb form as an archaic *third* feminine singular perfect with *waw* consecutive: “and *she* will call.” (CC)

To further complicate the picture, one of the Isaiah texts found at Qumran has the reading *וְקָרָא*, which could be pointed as a Pual perfect, “and it [his name] shall be called,” or as a Qal perfect, “and he/one shall call.” (CC)

Given the uncertainties and multiple possibilities of translation (even of the consonantal MT), it seems proper not to make too much of Matthew’s apparently unique reading, “they will call.” As the commentary on subsequent OT citations will show, there are clear cases in which Matthew has offered the wording of an OT passage in such a way as to make purposeful connections with other aspects of his Gospel’s theology. But in this case, caution is appropriate. Some have suggested that perhaps the “they” of Matthew’s text refers to the people whom Jesus will save from their sins—those who, at the end of the Gospel and beyond, believe that Jesus is with them to the end of the age. This may well be correct. (CC)

This caution in attaching theological significance to Matthew’s reading “they will call” offers an opportunity for a general caution about the work of comparing the text forms of Matthew’s OT citations with the texts of the MT and the LXX. The work of establishing and comparing these text forms is an important endeavor that requires enormous patience and learning. One soon learns that the field of textual criticism is itself undergoing significant changes and that *certainty* regarding matters like the text of the Septuagint may be more elusive than the impression that is sometimes given. In addition, one should never forget the historical, human circumstances under which the divinely inspired—but still human—authors of the NT operated. Their copies of the OT were almost certainly in scroll form. There may well

have been times when they cited the OT in their writings from memory, rather than directly looking at a reference while writing and copying. (CC)

Therefore, one should be slow to make much of small matters and quick to remember that some decisions regarding the “original text” used by an author must remain somewhat conjectural. As such, perceived variations in the OT text cited by Matthew do not always offer a foundation broad enough to support significant theological conclusions. In my examinations of the text form of Matthew’s OT citations, I shall attempt to focus on relatively certain and significant data when drawing conclusions about Matthew’s *theological* purposes for citing the OT when and how he does. (CC)

1:24-25 The text’s third and final section (1:24–25) reveals that Joseph, the “righteous” (1:19) son of David (1:20) in contrast to wicked King Ahaz, believed God’s prophecy and obeyed the divine command. Joseph believed the angel, and the reader believes both the angel and the OT. Joseph got up and did as he was commanded. His faith in God’s interpretation of the events is shown by his about-face, doing what he earlier feared to do (“Do not be afraid to take into your home Mary, your wife,” 1:20); so “He took his wife into his home” (1:24). With one last flourish to reinforce the message that Jesus’ origin is not from a human father, the text emphatically states that Joseph *continued* not to know (οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν, 1:25) Mary sexually. The last weight of emphasis falls upon the salvific name: “And he called his name Jesus” (1:25). (CC)

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In contrast to King Ahaz, who doubted Isaiah’s prophecy, Joseph showed that he believed the word of the Lord. (TLSB)

1:25 *knew her not until she had given birth* – καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτήν ἕως οὗ ἔτεκεν υἱόν—The conjunction καί is adversative, contrasting this clause with what went before; “but” is the proper translation. For this use of καί, see 11:17, 19 (last occurrence); 14:13; 17:16 (last occurrence); 21:30; 22:3 (last occurrence); 23:3 (last occurrence), 37 (last occurrence); BDF, § 442.1. (CC)

The imperfect indicative ἐγίνωσκεν is noteworthy. By it the narrator leaves no doubt in the reader’s mind regarding Jesus Christ’s origin: it is from God and not from man. Joseph plays no active role in the origin of Jesus, since he “continued not knowing” Mary “until she gave birth to a son.” (CC)

Matthew’s Gospel contains a number of sentences whose negated main verb is qualified by an “until” (ἕως) clause. One sentence even has *two* such clauses; see the note at 5:18. The questions naturally arise: (1) Does the “until” clause postulate a time beyond which the reversal of the main clause will actually occur? Or (2) is the “until” clause merely a way of saying that the main clause will remain true permanently? The specific question here in 1:25 is whether or not the verse implies that Joseph *did* begin to know Mary *after* she bore Jesus. The answer for any given example can only be based on the context, and not on the grammar alone, for in terms of grammar there are examples of precisely parallel “until” clauses on either side of this semantic fence; compare 17:9 (expected reversal of main clause) and 23:39 (no expected reversal of main clause). In light of 13:55–56, understood according to its most natural reading, the answer here for 1:25 would seem to be yes: Joseph did begin to know Mary after she had given birth to Jesus. (CC)

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Prayer. O Holy Spirit, strengthen my faith, and fill me with joy as I reflect on the miracle of Christ's birth. Amen (TLSB)