

GENESIS

AUTHOR

Although the author of Genesis is not identified in the book, its integral part in the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) suggests that the author of these five books was the same person. The books of the Pentateuch give evidence of unity through their common plot, theme (divine promises), central figure (Moses), and literary interconnections. Jewish and Christian traditions attribute the Pentateuch to Moses, whose life paralleled the events of Exodus—Deuteronomy (see 2Ch 23:18; Lk 16:29,31; Ac 28:23).

Passages in Exodus—Deuteronomy testify that Moses authored diverse materials (Ex 17:14; 24:4-8; Nm 33:2; Dt 31:9,22). Although we cannot be certain about the contents of the “book of the law [of Moses]” (Jos 1:7-8; 8:31; 23:6; 2Kg 14:6), its association with Moses established a “psychology of canonicity” that set the pattern of divinely authoritative writings (Nm 12:6-8; Dt 18:15; 34:10). Scholars have usually recognized that minor post-Mosaic contributions must exist in the Pentateuch, such as the report of Moses’s death (Dt 34). Some have contended that the first-person (“I”) sections were written by Moses and that another author set them in a third-person (“Moses”) narrative frame. Prior to the nineteenth century, the consensus remained that Moses wrote the essential whole, probably during the wilderness sojourn.

THE RELIABILITY OF GENESIS

Since the events of Genesis preceded Moses, this raises the question of where he got his information. For most of the Christian era, the principal explanation was divine revelation coupled with the availability of written records, such as genealogies and stories.

Gradually, though, by the nineteenth century, a new consensus arose among “critical” scholars. They believed that the Pentateuch was the product of a series of unnamed Jewish editors who progressively stitched together pieces of preexisting sources dating from the tenth to the sixth centuries BC. Instead of being Mosaic, the Pentateuch was viewed as a mosaic. Such scholars today often view the stories in the Bible’s first five books as fabrications conceived hundreds of years after the supposed events, perhaps during the exile.

There is significant evidence, however, that Genesis reflects the political and cultural setting of the second millennium BC. The structure and contents of chapters 1-11 generally parallel the Babylonian epic *Atrahasis* (ca. 1600 BC). Social and religious practices among the patriarchs correlate better with the earlier period than with the first millennium BC. For example, Abraham’s marriage to his half-sister Sarah was prohibited under the Mosaic law (20:12; Lv 18:9). It is unlikely that the Jews of the exilic period would have fabricated offensive events or preserved such stories unless these were already well-entrenched traditions. Also the prevalent use of the *EI* compounds for the name of God (e.g., God Almighty—*EI Shaddai*, 17:1) in Genesis contrasts with their virtual absence in first-millennium BC texts. The tolerant attitude toward Gentiles and the unrestricted travels of the patriarchs do not suit the later setting. The evidence, when considered as a whole, supports the position that Genesis remembers authentic events.

GENESIS AND ANCIENT MYTHS

The parallels between chapters 1-11 and creation and flood myths have elicited the question, Is the Bible merely a Hebrew version of myths about beginnings?

When weighing the importance of parallels, these principles should be kept in mind. First, not all parallels are equally significant, since minor ones can be attributed to common content. Second, the identity of who is borrowing from whom cannot be definitively concluded. Often it is best to assume a universal memory as the source. Third, the functions of the stories are much different. For example, the flood story of the Babylonian *Gilgamesh Epic* is incidental to the main idea of telling how Gilgamesh sought immortality. In the Bible, by contrast, the flood narrative is central to the development of the theme.

That the Bible's theology is divergent from the polytheism of antiquity argues against the Bible's dependence on sources from other cultures. The author of Genesis was aware of the cultural context of the nations and often crafted his accounts to counter the prevailing view. The historical framework of chapters 1-11 (e.g., "these are the records of," 2:4; 5:1) and the genealogies (chaps. 4-5; 10-11) indicate that the author presented a historical account, not a literary myth.

THE CREATION

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.^a

²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. ³Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

⁶Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water." ⁷So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸God called the expanse "sky."^b Evening came and then morning: the second day.

⁹Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so. ¹²The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³Evening came and then morning: the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for seasons^c and for days and years. ¹⁵They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night—as well as the stars. ¹⁷God placed them in the

TWISTED SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:1-2

Some religions of the world believe God formed the world from pre-existent matter rather than creating it from nothing. Some also believe there to be a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. These verses however indicate God created the world from nothing, *ex nihilo*. Belief in creation from nothing is the historic Christian understanding of Genesis 1:1-2 and has the full weight of the text behind it. Similarly, there is no textual reason to believe in a gap of time between 1:1 and 1:2. In similar fashion, this passage also speaks against any type of evolutionary understanding of the origins of the universe.

expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, "Let the water swarm with^d living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹So God created the large sea-creatures^e and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." ²³Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man^f in^g our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the

^a1:1 Or *created the universe* ^b1:8 Or "heavens." ^c1:14 Or *for the appointed times* ^d1:20 Lit *with swarms of* ^e1:21 Or *created sea monsters* ^f1:26 Or *human beings*; Hb *adam*, also in v. 27 ^g1:26 Or *as*

1:1 The Hebrew word for "God," *Elohim*, is grammatically plural but does not indicate a numerical plural (i.e., "gods"). Hebrew uses the plural form to indicate honor or intensity, sometimes called the "plural of majesty." The pairing of a singular adjective (Ps 7:9) or verb (Gn 20:6) with *Elohim* shows that the

one God is intended. From the Israelite standpoint the oneness of the true Deity is never in question. In Dt 6:4 "The LORD," that is, *Yahweh* the God of Israel, is called "our *Elohim*," and declared to be "one."

1:14-18 The lights were "signs" that mark off time periods. They were not

to be heeded as astrological signs, correlating heavenly movements with events on earth. The worship of heavenly bodies is condemned (Dt 4:19). **1:26-27** "Let us make . . ." (3:22; 11:7; Is 6:8) does not indicate multiple gods. Such a view would be inconsistent with the singular "his own image" (Gn 1:27;

ARE THE DAYS OF GENESIS TO BE INTERPRETED LITERALLY?

by Ted Cabal

This question has stoked controversy among conservative Christians in recent times, but it has proved to be of little interest to theistic evolutionists (those who accept evolution as God's mechanism in creation) and those rejecting Genesis as God's inerrant Word. The debate has been primarily between young- and old-earth creationists, who believe that God literally created the various kinds of living things (as opposed to the common descent of Darwinism). Both sides hold that humans have not descended from other species, and both reject the atheism and macroevolutionary theory of neo-Darwinism.

The two creationist camps, however, differ in interpreting the creation days of Genesis. If the days were consecutive 24-hour periods, and if the earth was created on the first day, then calculations based on biblical genealogies reveal that the earth was created only thousands of years ago. If the days were either of indeterminate length or nonconsecutive, then the Bible does not reveal when the earth was created. Interestingly, both sides agree that the genealogies reveal that Adam and Eve were specially created only thousands of years ago.

Young earth creationists (YCs) interpret the days as 24-hour, consecutive periods for reasons such as the following: (1) The days in Gn 1 are consecutively numbered and comprised of an "evening and morning." (2) Exodus 20:8-11 commands a literal week of six days of work and one day of rest based on God's original creation/rest week. The two weeks would seem, then, to be of equal duration. (3) According to Rm 5:12, "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin," but old-earth creationism would have animal death entering the world before the sin of Adam and Eve.

Old earth creationists (OCs) argue against 24-hour creation days for reasons such as these: (1) The Hebrew word for "day" (*yom*) is used in different ways in the creation account. For instance, Gn 1:5 refers *yom* only to daytime (daylight), not nighttime. Also, Gn 2:4, literally translated, speaks of "the *yom* that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens." (2) God's rest on the seventh "day" has no evening and morning (Gn 2:2-3), and Heb 4:3-11 portrays this same Sabbath as continuing to the present time. (3) Adam could not have named all the birds and animals in 24 hours according to Gn 2.

Both sides believe they have strong arguments favoring their interpretation and rebutting the other side. And historically, debate regarding biblical interpretation has often led to a clearer understanding of God's Word. But it is also highly debatable whether this issue merits the rancor and division often attending it. Some YCs accuse OCs of compromising the Bible with evolutionary science. Some OCs charge YCs with undermining biblical credibility by generating a false conflict between science and the Scriptures.

Happily, one thing is not debatable among those who believe the Bible: even if the correct interpretation of the creation days is not readily apparent in the present generation, the Bible can be trusted in every way. Debates about biblical interpretations should not be interpreted as the failure of Holy Scripture.

TWISTED SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:26-27

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as the Mormons, believe these verses teach the physical nature of God, that he exists in a physical form. Historically, the Christian church has believed God to be a spiritual being, not a physical one. Genesis 1:26-27 are commonly interpreted by biblical scholars and theologians as God giving human beings reasoning ability, emotions, communication skills, relational ability, etc. Texts like John 4:24 clearly teach God is a spiritual being.

livestock, the whole earth,^a and the creatures that crawl^b on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in^c the image of God; he created them male and female.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls^d on the earth.”

²⁹ God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you,³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given^e every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

^a1:26 Syr reads sky, and over every animal of the land ^b1:26 Or scurry ^c1:27 Or man as his own image; he created him as ^d1:28 Or and all scurrying animals ^e1:30 I have given added for clarity ²:2 Sam, LXX, Syr read sixth ²:2 Or ceased, also in v. 3 ²:3 Lit work that God created to make ²:4 Lit creation on the day ²:5 Or earth

see 5:1-2). Ancient theories of the universe’s origin typically explained creation as the outcome of sexual cohabitation between male and female deities or of a battle between a deity and a hostile entity. The Bible uniformly affirms that God is asexual with no corresponding female consort. God made the universe by his authoritative speech, not by battling deities. Gn 1 was written in part to show that the view of the physical world current at that time (i.e., that physical objects represented the work of various deities) was wrong. The cosmos is inanimate and entirely under the control of the one God. Plural and singular forms are combined in 1:26-27 (see “the Spirit of God,” v. 2), reflecting God’s unity and yet his fullness. Subsequent scriptural

revelation develops this further.

Although humans are created in the “image” and “likeness” of God (the terms are essentially synonyms; see 5:3), it does not follow that God has a body. “Image” or “likeness” often refers to a physical representation of something that may be non-material. Humans were created to serve as God’s representative to govern the earth. **2:2-3** “Rested” (Hb *shabat*) does not imply fatigue but means only “ceased.” God stopped because his work of creation was complete.

2:4-26 Chapter 2 is a second creation account only in the sense that it gives a more detailed accounting than chap. 1, not a contradictory one. While chap. 1 provides a general description, chap. 2 is specific. Twofold accounts were

2 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. ²On the seventh^f day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested^g on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.^h

MAN AND WOMAN IN THE GARDEN

⁴These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation. At the timeⁱ that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,⁵ no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land,^j and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. ⁶But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground.⁷ Then

TWISTED SCRIPTURE

Genesis 2:7

According to modern-day psychics, this “breath of life” enables humans to exhibit supernatural abilities. Most people, however, do not know how to tap into this power. Such a bizarre conclusion cannot be derived from the text. A better interpretation is that the “breath of life” is simply the animating force of the body.

the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

common in ancient theories of creation (e.g., the Babylonian story of Atrahasis). The differences in the order of creation events are due to each narrative’s distinct purposes. The first gives a loosely chronological account, gathering creation events into a discernible pattern to show the symmetry of creation’s purpose. The second is topical, focusing on the sixth day by expanding on the creation of man and woman. Gn 2 presupposes chapter 1 and does not duplicate all the creation events.

2:7,21-22 The creation of the first man and woman is not myth. The author of the account intends to portray a historical event. The first man (Hb *adam*) is treated in genealogies as a historical individual named “Adam”

CAN EVOLUTION EXPLAIN ETHICS?

Mark Linville

Charles Darwin thought that the universal human tendency to think in terms of moral rightness and wrongness, and our wide agreement on the immorality of acts like rape or genocide, could be explained by the evolution of the human species. Given the circumstances of survival and reproduction, he theorized, some behaviors are more adaptive than others; thus, any instinct that prompts adaptive behaviors is favored by natural selection. The flight instinct removes prey from the clutches of predators, increasing the chances that the pursued creature will live to reproduce. Social animals such as bees, wolves, and people come equipped with sets of social instincts that prompt cooperation with the hive, pack, or tribe. The success of the more cooperative group, whether it is competing with other tribes, hunting, or gathering, tends to promote the survival and reproduction of its individual members. To the extent that such cooperative and adaptive behavior is genetically fostered, he believed, it tends to be passed on to offspring: natural selection at work on the human psyche.

True, bees seem programmed automatically to act from purely social instincts, but any social animal also endowed with intellectual powers—like those at work in people—would be capable of *reflection* upon those instincts, too. The female wolf instinctually cares for her cubs without moral reflection because of the evolutionary advantage of such instinctual behavior. The human mother, however, is driven by a similar instinctual impulse that is bolstered by the sense that it would be wrong of her to abandon or neglect her babies: she has a conscience. For Darwin, what is called “conscience” is merely the product of social instincts plus a capacity for rational reflection. In his estimation, then, human morality is the product of natural selection shaping and honing human psychology—which is also influenced by individuals interacting with the circumstances of human culture over the eons.

All of this may explain why people have come to believe that there are such things as right and wrong acts, but it utterly fails to explain how there could actually be an objective difference between right and wrong. Indeed, the explanation undermines those beliefs, because given the supposed circumstances of evolution, humans would have believed them whether true or false. Darwin’s theory requires that our moral sense—and its dictates—evolved simply because the behavior it encourages is adaptive.

Whether the resulting moral beliefs are also true is beside the point. This has led some proponents of Darwin’s account to observe that ethics is “an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate.”

What is missing from Darwin’s theory is any reason for thinking that, in addition to being adaptive, human moral faculties aim at producing moral beliefs that are true as they would be were they designed for the purpose of establishing moral truth within the fiber of society. Without that background assumption, which is the sort afforded us in the Genesis creation account, we should all be moral nihilists. In short, when combined with an atheistic outlook, Darwin’s theory does not explain ethics; it explains it away.

MATTHEW

AUTHOR

Nowhere does the first Gospel name its author. Though the title, “According to Matthew,” was probably added early in the book’s history, most likely around the beginning of the second century, the book was not quoted as Matthew’s Gospel until Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon, did so around AD 180. Earlier documents quoting Matthew (going back to the same period as the title or earlier) do not name the Gospel from which the quotes came.

According to the sources available, the early church was in unanimous agreement that the apostle Matthew was the first to write a Gospel and that he originally did so in Hebrew (or Aramaic). Irenaeus was the first to explicitly claim this, and it was repeated thereafter with relative frequency. The claim seems to stem, at least in part, from Papias, a bishop in Asia Minor, writing around AD 130.

The fourth-century church historian Eusebius cited Papias as affirming that Matthew arranged Jesus’s sayings in Hebrew or Aramaic and each interpreted them as best he could. This sentence from Eusebius has provoked considerable scholarly debate. Was Papias saying that Matthew wrote a Gospel or merely that he wrote an orderly collection of Jesus’s sayings? Was he claiming Matthew wrote in Hebrew (or Aramaic) or in Greek with a Semitic flavor? Did people try to translate Matthew’s work into Greek? At one end of the spectrum, Papias may have been saying that Matthew arranged, in Hebrew, the sayings of Jesus (or perhaps just Old Testament testimony about Jesus). At the other end of the spectrum, Papias may have been talking about a complete Gospel account, such as the Gospel of Matthew that we know. Certainly the church fathers understood the latter to be the case, and Jerome who translated the Bible into Latin (ca 380) even insisted that he was given access to the Hebrew original possessed by the Nazareans, a Jewish-Christian sect.

The problem for modern scholarship is that Matthew’s Gospel shows few signs of having been translated into Greek from an earlier Semitic text. It appears much more likely to be an original Greek composition. Scholars thus disagree over whether Papias was wrong to insist on a Matthean Hebrew original or whether he was correct but was referring to something written in Hebrew that was different from our first Gospel. (Other church fathers besides Jerome reported a Hebrew Gospel existing in their day associated with Jewish Christians. They agreed that it was in many respects different from the biblical Matthew, though connected with that apostle.) If the latter is the case, our first Gospel was either not written by Matthew or is a second work written by him, this time in Greek. It could be that Papias confused the two works and assumed one was the basis for the other.

The best evidence from the Gospel itself that Matthew was its author is that only in this Gospel is Levi the tax collector (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27) identified as the apostle Matthew (Mt 9:9; 10:3). At the very least, this suggests the author presents Matthew’s witness. The Gospel also contains clear evidence that the author possessed a strong command of both Aramaic and Greek, something that would be a prerequisite for most tax collectors. Furthermore, the author of Matthew used the more precise term *nomisma* for the coin used in the dispute over tribute (Mt 22:19) than Mark’s and Luke’s *dénarion* (Mk 12:15; Lk 20:24). This linguistic specificity strongly implies that the author was

conversant in the fine details of money and finance, a point that would lend credence to the proposition that the author was a tax collector.

Nevertheless, most critical scholars still reject Matthean authorship of the first Gospel. Some argue that an apostle and eyewitness of Jesus's ministry would not have used a secondary source, yet the first Gospel relies on Mark for much of its material. Others claim that the perspective of the book shows a fuller development of traditional material and of relations with the Jews than one might expect in an early Gospel.

Neither of these objections is telling. One could just as easily speculate that Mark's Gospel, associated as it was with Peter, had gained so much acceptance as the first accurate narrative of Christ's life that Matthew saw no need to disregard it in compiling his own Gospel. Another objection to Matthean authorship is the highly developed relationship between Jews and Gentiles. The same can be said for Paul's letters, which are indisputably from the apostolic age. Thus there is no compelling reason to overturn the unanimous external evidence associating the first Gospel with the apostle Matthew.

DATE

Matthew was quoted by the church father Ignatius around AD 110 (perhaps fifteen years earlier in *1 Clement*) and thus could not have been written much later than about AD 90. Most critical scholars opt for a date not much earlier than that for the same reasons that lead them to deny Matthean authorship. Because Matthew seems to betray knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, any date before AD 70 is presumed impossible.

But besides prejudicially disallowing that Jesus could have predicted Jerusalem's fall, the evidence for "prophecy" after the fact is not as clear as some suggest. First, the words of Christ (Mt 22:7; 24:15) are so general that one could easily understand them as indicating *no* knowledge of the actual destruction of Jerusalem. Second, certain episodes in Matthew give pre-AD 70 perspectives that would at least require clarifying comment from the Gospel writer if the temple had already fallen (e.g., the discussion of the temple tax in 17:24-27). There is no reason, therefore, that the Gospel could not have been written before AD 70. Irenaeus reported that Matthew was written while Peter and Paul preached at Rome, placing at least early versions of the Gospel in the AD 60s, assuming Irenaeus had a reliable tradition. The precise date of the writing of Matthew is uncertain, but some time in the 60s is not unreasonable.

THEMES

Each Gospel, though broadly compatible with the others, emphasizes something different about the significance of the life and ministry of Jesus. For Matthew, that significance clearly lies in Jesus's status as the promised messianic son of David, the king of Israel. Several features of the Gospel are related to this primary theme. Foremost is Matthew's citation of Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Matthew is often faulted for taking these "prophecies" out of context and misapplying them. However, his practice must be understood in terms of the conventions of first-century citation generally, and the charge is less appropriate than is often thought (see the notes, esp. 2:15). Other features related to the theme of Jesus as promised King include long teaching discourses in which the word of Jesus becomes a new law for the church, a confession of Jesus as the Son of God in divine (as opposed to merely messianic) terms, and an extension of kingdom promises from the Jews to the Gentile nations in fulfillment of the covenant with Abraham.

For more on the similarities and distinctions between Matthew and the other Gospels, see the Introduction to Mark.

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID

- ² Abraham fathered^a Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,
- ³ Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram,
- ⁴ Aram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,
- ⁵ Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse,
- ⁶ and Jesse fathered King David.

FROM DAVID TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

- David fathered Solomon^b by Uriah's wife,
- ⁷ Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa,^c
 - ⁸ Asa^c fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram,^d Joram fathered Uzziah,
 - ⁹ Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,

- ¹⁰ Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon,^e Amon fathered Josiah,
- ¹¹ and Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

FROM THE EXILE TO THE CHRIST

- ¹² After the exile to Babylon Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,
- ¹³ Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor,
- ¹⁴ Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud,
- ¹⁵ Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob,
- ¹⁶ and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Christ, fourteen generations.

^a1:2 In vv. 2-16 either a son, as here, or a later descendant, as in v. 8 ^b1:6 Other mss add *King* ^c1:7,8 Other mss read *Asaph* ^d1:8 = Jehoram ^e1:10 Other mss read *Amos*

1:1 In identifying Jesus as Son of David and Son of Abraham, Matthew linked Jesus to the Davidic messianism of the OT. This connection is suggested in the Davidic covenant (2Sm 7:12-16; Ps 89:29) and explicitly expressed in the Prophets (Is 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Jr 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:14-26; Ezk 34:20-24; 37:24-28; Hs 3:5; Am 9:11; Zch 3:8). Matthew also linked Jesus to the Abrahamic covenant (Gn 12:1-3; 22:18), in which God promised to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham's seed. The two covenants are brought together in Ps 72:17 (Mt 28:19). Jesus's Davidic descent was not a theological invention of the early church. It was attested as early as Paul (Rm 1:3) and in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 7:14). Furthermore, Jesus's immediate family, which was prominent in the early church, would have had to accept the claim. The *Talmud*, a collection of Jewish rabbinical writings, repeatedly

charges Jesus with being born out of wedlock, for example, to Pandera a Roman soldier, so this is a polemic against Jesus's lineage. But there is no polemic against Mary's or Joseph's lineages.

1:2-16 There is evidence that first-century Jews kept genealogical records (for example, the Jewish historian Josephus referred to public registers as sources of some of his information). Matthew's genealogy emphasizes Christ's royal lineage, while Luke's focuses on his biological lineage. For more about the differences between the genealogies, see note on Lk 3:23-38.

1:17 Matthew omitted several names in his genealogy in order to maintain a three times fourteen generation structure (Gk *egennesen*, translated "fathered," indicated ancestry, not actual fatherhood. "All the generations" must then

be taken to imply "as summarized here.") Matthew was emphasizing Jesus's birth as a culminating moment in Israel's history. The third set of "fourteen" has only thirteen names, unless one counts Jeconiah a second time (or the second set has fifteen, if one begins it with David). Perhaps Matthew reflected the common feeling of his time that Jeconiah could be considered both a preexilic and a postexilic figure (2Kg 24:8-12; 25:27-30). David is the central figure in the lineage of Jesus. When the consonants of his name are added, the sum is fourteen; hence, the importance of the number fourteen to Matthew. David is the fourteenth entry in the genealogy.

Luke has a different genealogy of Jesus that traces his ancestry all the way back to Adam. See note on Lk 3:23-38 for an explanation of the differences between these two genealogies.

THE NATIVITY OF THE CHRIST

¹⁸ The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged^a to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,^b which is translated "God is with us."

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her ²⁵ but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son.^c And he named him Jesus.

WISE MEN VISIT THE KING

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where

is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him."^d

³ When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Christ would be born.

⁵ "In Bethlehem of Judea," they told him, "because this is what was written by the prophet:

⁶ And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah: Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."^e

⁷ Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him."^f

⁹ After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him.^g Then they opened their

^a1:18 Or betrothed ^b1:23 Is 7:14 ^c1:25 Other mss read to her firstborn son ^d2:2 Or to pay him homage ^e2:6 Mc 5:2 ^f2:8 Or and pay him homage ^g2:11 Or they paid him homage

1:18-25 This passage, unique to Matthew, shows the exemplary character of Joseph. He did not question the angel's explanation for Mary's pregnancy. He obeyed without question what the angel told him to do, going ahead with his plans to take Mary as his wife.

1:22-23 Matthew cited the Greek version of Is 7:14 virtually verbatim, including the Greek word *parthenos* ("virgin"). The underlying Hebrew word, *almah*, means something like "a marriageable girl." It probably always refers in the OT to virgins (Pr 30:19 has been suggested as a counterexample, but it is not obviously such). Is 7:14 was a prophesied sign to Judah's King Ahaz that an impending military crisis would be averted by God. The prophecy received an immediate fulfillment in Isaiah's own son (Is 8:1-4), but that son was a "sign" of a greater fulfillment (Is 8:18), and the prophecy thus continued to present the ultimate manifestation of "God is with us" in Is

9:1-7. The name Jesus ("Yahweh saves") describes what Jesus does; Immanuel ("God is with us") describes who Jesus is. Matthew included the prophecy to assert the divinity of Jesus.

2:1-2 Some interpreters deny the historicity of the wise men's visit. One reason for doing so is a general anti-supernaturalism. Another is the alleged parallelism in form and/or content with legends or myths of great people or gods in the ancient Mediterranean world. Some take the star as purely supernatural, since it pointed the way to where Jesus lay (v. 9). Several scientific explanations have been offered to identify the star of Bethlehem, such as it being a conjunction of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn in 7-6 BC or perhaps the appearance of a comet in 5 BC. Wise men (sometimes translated as "magi") were originally a religious class in Media and the Persian Empire, but the word *magi* came to describe any student of astrology and lore. These men had

probably been studying Jewish texts such as Nm 24:17 in order to correlate their astronomical observations with the birth of a Jewish king.

2:6 Matthew did not quote Mc 5:2 directly but paraphrased it to bring out the sense of the passage. Thus, while the Prophet Micah noted the smallness of Bethlehem in relation to its being the home of the Ruler, Matthew emphasized Bethlehem's significance by calling it "by no means least" of Judah's towns. (The reading of "rulers" for thousands predates Matthew. These terms are spelled the same in Hb.) He concluded with a quote from 2Sm 5:2 (Ezk 34:23), since the identification of Bethlehem as the ruler's hometown set the prophecy in the stream of Davidic messianism (and was so understood in first-century Judaism). The principle of biblical inerrancy requires only that a NT paraphrase of an OT text preserves the intent of that text or expresses its implications.

treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

¹³After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. ¹⁵He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: **Out of Egypt I called my Son.**^A

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

¹⁶Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸ **A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping,^B and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;**

**and she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more.**^C

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

¹⁹After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰saying, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead." ²¹So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. ²³Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

THE HERALD OF THE CHRIST

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ²and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!" ³For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said:

**A voice of one crying out
in the wilderness:
Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight!**^D

^A2:15 Hs 11:1 ^B2:18 Other mss read *Ramah, lamentation, and weeping*, ^C2:18 Jr 31:15 ^D3:3 Is 40:3

2:16 No sources outside the Bible corroborate this episode, but it fits the character of Herod as reported in the writings of the historian Josephus. In addition to atrocities he had earlier perpetrated, Herod grew increasingly paranoid in his last years and committed or planned several political executions, including those of his own family. The slaughter of perhaps twenty or so babies in an insignificant village to protect his throne is thus entirely plausible and would hardly merit mention in historical sources. That Herod based his decision to kill all male children two years or younger on the timing ascertained from the wise men indicates that they had initially seen the star rise two years earlier. It is unknown whether the initial appearance corresponded to the birth (making Jesus two years old at this point) or merely foretold it (so that Jesus at this point was still a baby).

This Herod, known as Herod the Great, was different from the other three members of the Herodian

dynasty mentioned in the Gospels. They are: (1) Herod Archelaus, son and successor of Herod the Great who ruled over Judea (v. 22); (2) Herod Antipas, who executed John the Baptist (Mk 6:17-29) and who returned Jesus for sentencing by Pilate (Lk 23:6-12); and (3) Herod Philip, ruler in extreme northern Galilee when Jesus began his public ministry (Lk 3:1,19-20).

2:17-18. Matthew loosely translated the Hebrew of Jr 31:15. Ramah was the staging point for the Babylonian exile (Jr 40:1-2), an event Matthew had already identified as important to Jesus's identity (Mt 1:17). But Jr 31:16-35 also promised an end to the exile and the institution of the new covenant with Israel, events associated elsewhere with the messianic reign (Jr 30:1-9; 33:14-26; see Mt 26:28). With the birth of Jesus, the Davidic Son had arrived and the exile was ended. Thus the weeping in Bethlehem fulfilled, or culminated, Rachel's weeping. This is the final mourning of exiled Israel.

2:23 According to Lk 1:26 and 2:4, Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth prior to the birth of Jesus, prompting some to claim that Matthew was unaware of this and thus presented Bethlehem as their hometown. But Matthew's focus was only the well-known fact that Nazareth was Jesus's hometown at the start of his ministry. He was not concerned to tell the reader the hometown of Jesus's parents. Though he first mentioned them in connection with the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, he nowhere stated that Bethlehem was their hometown. The quote corresponds to no known passage in the OT. The best possibility is that Matthew alluded to Is 11:1 ("shoot" = Hb *nezer*), but others suggest that "a Nazarene" is a title of dishonor and thus alludes to those texts in which the Messiah is despised (Ps 22:6-8; Is 53:2-3). The two may go together, since Is 11:1 describes the Messiah as arising from the ignominious conditions into which David's house had fallen and has links to the Servant of Is 49-53 (Is 11:1,10,12; 49:22; 53:2).

DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT MISQUOTE THE OLD TESTAMENT?

by Paul Copan

Perhaps you've wondered why New Testament (NT) writers appear to take Old Testament (OT) verses out of context to make them fit their theology about Jesus's teaching or ministry. Critics cry foul and charge that such "fabricated predictions" referred to something other than a coming Messiah. For example, the context of Hosea 11:1 ("Out of Egypt I called my son") referred to Israel's exodus from Egypt, but Matthew 2:15 says that the "son" was Jesus coming from Egypt. Isaiah 7:14 ("the virgin will conceive, have a son") directly concerned King Ahaz's time, when a "sign child" would be born within Isaiah's lifetime (7:15-16; 8:4), but Matthew 1:22-23 says Mary was the virgin fulfilling the Isaiah passage. Rachel's weeping in Jeremiah 31:15 probably referred to mourning over Judah being taken into exile (Babylon) in 586 BC, but Matthew 2:18 speaks of weeping mothers after Herod's capricious decree to kill all boys under two in Bethlehem (where Rachel was buried).

Frequently critics—and Christians too—think *prophecy* means "prediction" and *fulfillment* means "realization of a prediction"; from this, critics conclude "fabricated predictions." However, this charge rests on a great mistake, and sometimes Christians become confused by it.

First, if the NT writers "plundered" the OT for proof texts, why, for instance, didn't Luke—who mentioned the virgin birth—quote Isaiah 7:14 (as Matthew did)? The same could be asked about other such passages.

Second, Jewish interpretation of the OT during Jesus's day viewed "fulfillment" more broadly, as more varied and nuanced. The literal approach was only one method.

Third—and most importantly—the word "fulfill" (*plēroō*) in the NT is used to portray Jesus as bringing to full fruition OT events or experiences (the exodus, covenant), personages (Jonah, Solomon, David), and institutions (temple, priesthood, sacrifices, holy days). "Fulfill" doesn't necessarily (or even primarily) refer to the mere fulfillment of a prediction. Rather, a theological point is being made: many OT events and institutions—usually related to Israel—foreshadow something greater in Christ and the new community he called together (e.g., Christ's calling twelve disciples, reminiscent of Israel's twelve tribes). Jesus is the true, beloved son that Israel failed to be (Hs 11:1; see Mt 2:15; Lk 3:22), the shepherd Israel's leaders weren't (Ezk 34; see Jn 10:1-18), and the genuine ("true") fruit-bearing vine Israel wasn't (Ps 80:8,14; Is 5:1-7; see Jn 15:1-11). In his ministry, Jesus reenacted the history and experiences of Israel—but on a higher plane (e.g., forty days of testing in the wilderness, giving a new "law" from a mountain in Matthew 5-7, being in the "belly" of the earth for "three days and three nights"). He took over Israel's destiny and role, bringing it to fulfillment. The law of Moses has a handful of messianic predictions, but Jesus's fulfilling the law (Mt 5:17; Lk 24:44) refers to his bringing it to completion.

Of course, there *are* predictions regarding the Messiah's birthplace (Mc 5; see Mt 2:5), the Messiah's death and atonement (Is 53), and a coming prophet and messenger (Dt 18; Mal 3). But fulfillment of the OT generally refers to the broader idea of perfectly embodying, typifying, epitomizing, or reaching a climax. For example, Jesus (citing Is 29:13) said to unbelieving Jews of his day, "Hypocrites! Isaiah *prophesied correctly about you* when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me'" (Mt 15:7-8, emphasis added). Of course, Isaiah didn't literally predict that Jesus would deal with hostile religious leaders; rather, Jesus was using the situation