

Chapter 3 Backstory

2 Matthew's Good News Chapter 1, verse 2

Who has been revealing himself through these stories?

A thousand years before David was the anointed king of Israel, Abraham lived in the most powerful civilization on earth. Genesis 11 calls it "Babel." In that great city people worked to build a monument to themselves. They worked to prove that they could regain paradise. It all ended with their inability to get along. They could not understand each other. God had not designed people to thrive apart from Him.

Abraham left the great civilization, the life of trying to build stairways to heaven, and walked faithfully with God on God's earth. "**Son of Abraham**" is a term for those who live by faith in God. They believe that God is good and purposeful. They believe that God knows what he is doing in creation, in the world, in the story of mankind, in people who trust him.

Matthew chapter 1 is showing that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of all those stories going back to the Genesis. He is the ultimate King who was promised to David. He is the ultimate Son of Abraham who walks faithfully as no other human has.

The story of Jesus is the focal point of the whole Bible. It is the story of God's kind of king. Like David, he is raised out of humility. Like David, Jesus reflects God's heart. Far beyond David, He is worthy to reign over everything forever. Like Abraham, Jesus was called to follow a path very different from the world of arrogance, oppression, and self-seeking. Like the stories of Genesis, this is a story about God above all--not God as the religion of the main characters, but God as the Main Character, revealing himself to creatures who don't pay attention.

That's what Matthew is telling us with this list of names, reminders of a long story of God's perseverance with his stumbling, bumbling people. So Matthew reminds us of Genesis, of Abraham, who followed God away from the great civilization that built monuments to itself. Abraham waited for God to provide the son whose family would bless all the nations on the earth. Abraham's story was hoping for Jesus.

Abraham fathered Isaac--who appears in the story briefly (in Genesis) as a bridegroom in need of a bride. Isaac foreshadows the eternal king who is patiently preparing his people for the eternal wedding feast (mentioned in Revelation) when the King (Jesus) will be united with his bride (His eternal community). Isaac's story was ultimately about Jesus.

Isaac fathered Jacob--who began as a liar and a thief. He was running for his life when he first became aware of God's presence. He had to wrestle with God before he learned who he really was. Jacob stands for all the people who are slow to understand God's grace in their stories. We meet those people in the story of Jesus.

Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers--who went into Egypt as a starving family, became a nation of slaves, and came out of Egypt by God's amazing work of salvation. We meet the same saving God in the Person of Jesus.

Matthew wrote his Gospel for people who knew the stories already told in the Old Testament (and for people willing to hear them). Matthew is telling us that God has been revealing himself to people for a very long time. If we know the 2000 years of stories of how God saves his people, we should recognize him when he comes to us in the flesh.

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