

CONTENTS

<i>Editor's Preface</i>	xvi
<i>Author's Preface</i>	xviii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xx
<i>Bibliography</i>	xxix
INTRODUCTION	1
I. THE STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW	2
II. GALILEE AND JERUSALEM	5
III. THE MATTHEAN DISCOURSES	8
IV. FULFILLMENT—THE "FORMULA-QUOTATIONS"	10
V. WHO? WHERE? WHEN? HOW? SOME BROAD PROPOSALS ON THE PROVENANCE OF THE "GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"	14
A. Author	15
B. Provenance and Setting	15
C. Date	18
D. Relation to Mark and Luke	20
COMMENTARY	
I. INTRODUCING THE MESSIAH (1:1–4:11)	25
A. The "Book of Origin" of the Messiah (1:1-17)	26

CONTENTS

B. A Demonstration That Jesus of Nazareth Is the Messiah: Five Scriptural Proofs (1:18–2:23)	40
1. Joseph, Son of David, Accepts Jesus as His Son (1:18-25)	46
2. The King of the Jews Born in the City of David (2:1-12)	59
3. God’s Son Brought out of Egypt (2:13-15)	76
4. The King Tries to Thwart God’s Purpose (2:16-18)	82
5. A Galilean Messiah (2:19-23)	88
C. The Messiah’s Herald (3:1-12)	96
D. The Messiah Revealed as the Son of God (3:13-17)	116
E. The Testing of the Son of God: The Messiah as the True Israel (4:1-11)	124
II. GALILEE: THE MESSIAH REVEALED IN WORD AND DEED (4:12–16:20)	136
A. The Light Dawns in Galilee (4:12-17)	138
B. The Founding of the Messianic Community (4:18-22)	144
C. An Overview of the Messiah’s Revelation in Galilee (4:23-25)	148
D. The Messiah’s Authority Revealed in His Teaching: <i>The Discourse on Discipleship</i> (5:1–7:29)	153
1. Teaching in the Hills (5:1-2)	156
2. The Good Life: The Paradoxical Values of the Kingdom of Heaven (5:3-10)	158
a. The “Beatitude” Form	159
b. The Meaning of <i>Makarios</i>	160
c. The Structure of Matthew’s Beatitudes	161
d. Matthew’s Beatitudes Compared with Luke 6:20-26	162
e. The OT Background of Matthew’s Beatitudes	163
f. The Eschatological Character of the Promises	164
3. The Distinctiveness of the Disciples (5:11-16)	170
4. Fulfilling the Law (5:17-48)	177
a. Fulfilling the Law: General Principles (5:17-20)	178
b. Fulfilling the Law: Six Examples (5:21-47)	191

CONTENTS

(1) Murder (5:21-26)	199
(2) Adultery (5:27-30)	204
(3) Divorce (5:31-32)	206
(4) Swearing (5:33-37)	213
(5) Retribution (5:38-42)	217
(6) Love (5:43-47)	223
c. Fulfilling the Law: Summary (5:48)	228
5. Piety, True and False: Three Contrasts (6:1-18)	229
a. The General Principle: Avoiding Ostentation in Religion (6:1)	233
b. Secret Almsgiving (6:2-4)	235
c. Secret Prayer (6:5-6)	238
d. Further Teaching on Prayer (6:6-8)	240
e. The Pattern Prayer (6:9-13)	241
f. Comment on the Lord's Prayer (6:14-15)	252
g. Secret Fasting (6:16-18)	254
6. Treasure in Heaven (6:19-24)	256
7. Trusting Your Heavenly Father (6:25-34)	263
8. Criticism (7:1-6)	273
9. Expect Good Things from God (7:7-11)	278
10. Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets (7:12)	282
11. Responding to Jesus' Words: Four Warnings (7:13-27)	284
a. Scene 1: The Broad and Narrow Roads (7:13-14)	287
b. Scene 2: False Prophets: Good and Bad Fruit (7:15-20)	289
c. Scene 3: Insiders and Outsiders: Things May Not Be as They Seem (7:21-23)	292
d. Scene 4: Two House Builders: Hearing and Doing (7:24-27)	296
12. The Authority of the Teacher Recognized (7:28-29)	297
E. The Messiah's Authority Revealed in His Action: An Anthology of Works of Power (8:1-9:34)	299
1. Three Miracles of Healing and Restoration (8:1-17)	302
a. The Leper (8:1-4)	305
b. The Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)	309

CONTENTS

c. Peter's Mother-in-Law (8:14-15)	320
d. Conclusion of the First Group of Miracles (8:16-17)	321
2. Following Jesus: Two Contrasting Case Studies (8:18-22)	323
3. Three Further Demonstrations of Authority (8:23-9:8)	331
a. The Storm on the Lake (8:23-27)	334
b. The Gadarene Demoniacs (8:28-34)	338
c. The Paralyzed Man (9:1-8)	343
4. Following Jesus: Tax Collectors and Sinners (9:9-17)	349
5. Three Further Stories of Deliverance (9:18-34)	358
a. Two Women Restored (9:18-26)	360
b. Two Blind Men Healed (9:27-31)	365
c. Conflicting Responses to an Exorcism (9:32-34)	368
F. The Messiah's Authority Shared with His Disciples: <i>The Discourse on Mission</i> (9:35-11:1)	370
1. The Context of Mission (9:35-38)	371
2. The Mission of the Twelve (10:1-4)	374
3. Instructions for the Mission (10:5-15)	379
4. The Expectation of Persecution (10:16-23)	388
5. How to Respond to Persecution (10:24-33)	398
6. The Radical Effects of Jesus' Mission (10:34-39)	406
7. Supporters (10:40-42)	411
8. Jesus Resumes His Mission (11:1)	416
G. Varying Responses to the Messiah (11:2-30)	417
1. John the Baptist (11:2-19)	418
a. John's Estimate of Jesus (11:2-6)	421
b. Jesus' Estimate of John (11:7-15)	425
c. The People's Estimate of Both John and Jesus (11:16-19)	432
2. Unresponsive Towns in Galilee (11:20-24)	436
3. Revelation to the Little Ones (11:25-30)	439
H. Jesus' Authority Is Challenged (12:1-45)	451
1. Conflicts over Keeping the Sabbath (12:1-14)	453

CONTENTS

2. Jesus Withdraws from Confrontation (12:15-21)	466
3. The Accusation of Using Demonic Power (12:22-37)	473
4. The Demand for a Sign (12:38-45)	486
I. Jesus' True Family (12:46-50)	494
J. The Kingdom of Heaven—Proclamation and Response: <i>The Parable Discourse</i> (13:1-53)	498
1. Teaching by the Lake (13:1-3a)	501
2. Introductory Parable: The Sower (13:3b-9)	502
3. About Teaching in Parables (13:10-17)	506
4. Explanation of the Parable of the Sower (13:18-23)	516
5. Three Further Parables of Growth (13:24-33)	522
a. The Parable of the Weeds (13:24-30)	524
b. The Parables of the Mustard Seed and of the Leaven (13:31-33)	526
6. About Teaching in Parables (13:34-35)	529
7. Explanation of the Parable of the Weeds (13:36-43)	531
8. Three Further Short Parables (13:44-50)	538
a. The Parables of the Treasure and of the Pearl (13:44-46)	539
b. The Parable of the Net and Its Explanation (13:47-50)	542
9. Concluding Parable: The Householder (13:51-52)	543
10. Moving On (13:53)	547
K. Further Hostile Responses (13:54–14:12)	547
1. Nazareth (13:54-58)	548
2. Herod Antipas (14:1-12)	551
L. Miracles around the Lake (14:13-36)	556
1. Feeding the Crowd (14:13-21)	557
2. Walking on the Water (14:22-33)	565
3. Many Healings (14:34-36)	572
M. A Further Challenge: The Question of Purity (15:1-20)	573
N. The Messiah's Mission Extended beyond Israel (15:21-39)	587
1. The Faith of a Canaanite Woman (15:21-28)	588

CONTENTS

2. Many Healings (15:29-31)	596
3. Feeding the Crowd (15:32-39)	599
O. The End of the Galilean Mission (16:1-12)	603
1. Jesus Dismisses His Critics (16:1-4)	604
2. The Disciples Begin to Understand (16:5-12)	606
P. The Messiah Recognized by His Disciples (16:13-20)	611
III. FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM: THE MESSIAH AND HIS FOLLOWERS PREPARE FOR THE CONFRONTATION (16:21-20:34)	628
A. A Glimpse into the Future: Messianic Suffering and Glory (16:21-17:13)	629
1. Messianic Suffering Asserted and Challenged (16:21-23)	630
2. The Disciples' Loyalty and Its Consequences (16:24-28)	635
3. Glory Revealed on the Mountain (17:1-8)	641
4. Glory and Suffering: Elijah, John, and Jesus (17:9-13)	651
B. Back to the Present: Frustration and Accommodation (17:14-27)	655
1. The Disciples' Failure in Exorcism (17:14-20[21])	656
2. Second Prediction of the Passion (17:22-23)	663
3. Paying the Temple Tax (17:24-27)	665
C. Living Together as Disciples: <i>The Discourse on Relationships</i> (18:1-19:2)	672
1. The Disciples' Question about Status (18:1)	675
2. The Example of the Child (18:2-5)	676
3. Care for the Little Ones: The Danger of Stumbling Blocks (18:6-9)	680
4. Care for the Little Ones: The Parable of the Sheep (18:10-14)	684
5. Dealing with a Brother's Sin (18:15-17)	689
6. The Authority of the Disciple Community (18:18-20)	694
7. Peter's Question about Forgiveness (18:21)	699
8. Unlimited Forgiveness: The Parable of the Debtors (18:22-35)	701

CONTENTS

9. Moving On toward Jerusalem (19:1-2)	709
D. The Revolutionary Values of the Kingdom of Heaven: Re-education for the Disciples (19:3–20:28)	710
1. Marriage, Divorce, and Celibacy (19:3-12)	711
2. Children (19:13-15)	726
3. Wealth (19:16-26)	728
4. Rewards (19:27-30)	739
5. The Parable of Equal Wages for Unequal Work (20:1-16)	746
6. Third Prediction of the Passion (20:17-19)	752
7. Status in the Kingdom of Heaven: James and John (20:20-28)	754
E. Sight Restored (20:29-34)	763
IV. JERUSALEM: THE MESSIAH IN CONFRONTATION WITH THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES (21:1–25:46)	767
A. The Confrontation Begins: Three Symbolic Actions (21:1-27)	770
1. The King Comes to Jerusalem (21:1-11)	771
2. The Messiah Asserts His Authority in the Temple Court (21:12-17)	782
3. A Fruitless Tree Destroyed (21:18-22)	790
4. Jesus' Authority Is Challenged (21:23-27)	796
B. Three Polemical Parables (21:28–22:14)	799
1. The Two Sons (21:28-32)	801
2. The Vineyard (21:33-44)	807
3. Reactions to Jesus' Parables (21:45-46)	819
4. The Wedding Feast (22:1-14)	820
C. Three Challenges and a Counterchallenge (22:15-46)	828
1. The Question about the Poll Tax (22:15-22)	829
2. The Question about Resurrection and Marriage (22:23-33)	835
3. The Question about the Greatest Commandment (22:34-40)	841
4. Jesus' Question about the Messiah (22:41-46)	847

CONTENTS

D. Jesus' Verdict on Jerusalem and Its Leadership (23:1–24:2)	853
1. Warning against the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-12)	857
2. Seven Woes on the Scribes and Pharisees (23:13-36)	865
3. Judgment on Jerusalem (23:37-39)	882
4. Jesus Leaves the Temple and Predicts Its Destruction (24:1-2)	885
E. The End of the Old Order and the Reign of the Son of Man: <i>The Discourse on the Future</i> (24:3–25:46)	889
1. The Disciples' Double Question (24:3)	894
2. Jesus Answers the Question about the Destruction of the Temple (24:4-35)	896
a. The End Is Not Yet (24:4-8)	901
b. Standing Firm in Difficult Times (24:9-14)	904
c. The Beginning of the End for Jerusalem (24:15-28)	910
d. The End of the Temple and the Triumph of the Son of Man (24:29-31)	919
e. Summary of the Answer to the Disciples' First Question (24:32-35)	928
3. Jesus Answers the Question about the <i>Parousia</i> and the End of the Age (24:36–25:46)	931
a. The Unknown Time of the <i>Parousia</i> (24:36-44)	938
b. The Parable of the Slave Left in Charge (24:45-51)	943
c. The Parable of the Girls Waiting for the Bridegroom (25:1-13)	946
d. The Parable of the Slaves Entrusted with a Lot of Money (25:14-30)	950
e. The Final Judgment by the Son of Man (25:31-46)	957
V. JERUSALEM: THE MESSIAH REJECTED, KILLED, AND VINDICATED (26:1–28:15)	967
A. Setting the Scene (26:1-16)	969
1. The Passover (26:1-2)	969
2. The Priests Plot to Kill Jesus (26:3-5)	971
3. A Woman Anoints Jesus (26:6-13)	972
4. Judas Offers to Help the Priests (26:14-16)	976

CONTENTS

B. Jesus' Last Hours with the Disciples (26:17-46)	979
1. Preparing the Passover Meal (26:17-19)	980
2. Jesus' Last Meal with His Disciples (26:20-30)	986
3. Jesus Predicts the Disciples' Failure (26:31-35)	996
4. Jesus Prays in Gethsemane While the Disciples Sleep (26:36-46)	1000
C. The Arrest and Trials of Jesus (26:47-27:26)	1008
1. The Arrest of Jesus (26:47-56)	1009
2. The Hearing before the Sanhedrin (26:57-68)	1015
3. Peter's Failure (26:69-75)	1031
4. Jesus Brought to the Roman Prefect for Trial (27:1-2)	1034
5. The Remorse and Suicide of Judas (27:3-10)	1036
6. The Roman Trial (27:11-26)	1045
D. The Death and Burial of Jesus (27:27-66)	1059
1. Jesus Mocked by the Roman Soldiers (27:27-31)	1060
2. The Crucifixion (27:32-38)	1063
3. Jesus Mocked by Fellow Jews (27:39-44)	1068
4. The Death of Jesus (27:45-54)	1072
5. Women Who Witnessed Jesus' Death and Burial (27:55-56)	1085
6. The Burial of Jesus (27:57-61)	1087
7. The Guard at the Tomb (27:62-66)	1091
E. The Empty Tomb and the Risen Jesus (28:1-10)	1095
F. Last Glimpse of Jerusalem: The Priests Cover Up (28:11-15)	1103
VI. GALILEE: THE MESSIANIC MISSION IS LAUNCHED (28:16-20)	1106

INDEXES

<i>Modern Authors</i>	1120
<i>Subjects</i>	1129
<i>Biblical and Other Ancient References</i>	1135

Text, Exposition, and Notes

I. INTRODUCING THE MESSIAH (1:1–4:11)

The prominent repetition of the title "Messiah" (or, in many English versions, "Christ") in 1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2:4, together with the other related titles which recur in these opening paragraphs of the gospel ("Son of David," 1:1, 20; "King of the Jews," 2:2), make it clear that Matthew is aiming to present an account not just of a historical figure (Jesus of Nazareth) but of the long-awaited deliverer of God's people Israel. He will begin to tell the story of the Messiah's revelation to Israel, and of the way people responded to his coming, in 4:17, where Jesus' public proclamation in Galilee begins. That public appearance, together with Matthew's introductory comment on why it must be in Galilee that the light dawns (4:12-16), will thus introduce the first main phase of the story, which will run right through to the end of the Galilean ministry in ch. 16.

But before we reach that point, Matthew will devote a lengthy preamble to introducing this Messiah. Using a number of different but related approaches, he will weave in 1:1–4:11 a rich tapestry of scenes and reflections which together help the reader to appreciate how in the coming of Jesus of Nazareth all God's purposes for his people, declared and illustrated throughout the writings of the OT and the history of Israel, are coming to their destined fulfillment. While these chapters will contain a variety of narrative elements about the events preceding and following Jesus' birth and about his personal preparation for his mission, they are presented not simply as biographical information, but as pointers, in the light of Scripture, to the theological significance of the story which Matthew is about to relate.

Sometimes the appeal to Scripture is overt, as in the five quotations which form the structural basis of 1:18–2:23 and in the biblically derived list of names which precedes those opening scenes. More often, however, the tes-

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

timony of Scripture is woven into the way the stories are told, so that their significance depends on the ability of the reader to recognize allusions to biblical events and persons and to draw the appropriate conclusions. In the commentary that follows I shall try to explain this allusive material and to draw attention to the biblical passages which underlie the telling of the story. Clearly the author of this gospel knew the OT scriptures very well indeed, in their more obscure details as well as in their more prominent features, and felt that he could assume at least a reasonable scriptural background in his readers, though we may wonder whether the majority of them would have been able to pick up every detailed nuance without assistance. Most of those who heard Matthew's stories would have been illiterate, and even those who could read would not have had ready access to scrolls of the individual OT books. Even in our day, when printed texts of the whole OT are readily available, it may be doubted whether most readers of Matthew know the texts well enough to follow all the subtleties of his arguments from Scripture. But "to those who have, more will be given," and perhaps in Matthew's day his text was not simply left to do its work alone, but would have been the basis for theological instruction within the church, as teachers and taught delighted to trace the scriptural background to what may appear on the surface to be deceptively simple accounts of the family background and early experiences of Jesus of Nazareth. It will be the aim of this commentary to facilitate something of the same biblical exploration as we work through Matthew's introductory chapters.

The headings of the sections into which I have divided these chapters (see Contents, pp. vii-viii) indicate my understanding of how the various parts of this introduction relate to one another and together build up to a rounded portrayal of the Messiah as not only Son of David but also Son of God (an issue which will be raised again explicitly in 22:41-46). Further comment on the special contribution which each section makes to our understanding of Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's Messiah will be given in the introduction to each division of the text.

A. THE "BOOK OF ORIGIN" OF THE MESSIAH (1:1-17)

1 The book of origin¹ of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

1. Βίβλος γενέσεως occurs in LXX Gen 2:4 for the "account of the origin" of the heavens and the earth and in LXX Gen 5:1 for the "list of the descendants" of Adam. The phrase occurs nowhere else in the LXX. Its use here deliberately echoes the opening chapters of Genesis.

1:1-17 THE "BOOK OF ORIGIN" OF THE MESSIAH

2 Abraham² was the father of³ Isaac, and Isaac was the father of Jacob, and Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron was the father of Ram, 4 and Ram was the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab was the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon was the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed was the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, 7 and Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam was the father of Abijah, and Abijah was the father of Asaph, 8 and Asaph⁴ was the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram, and Joram was the father of Uzziah, 9 and Uzziah was the father of Jotham, and Jotham was the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah, 10 and Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh was the father of Amos, and Amos⁵ was the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah was the father of Jeconiah⁶ and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

2. Matthew's list normally uses the LXX form of the OT names (though these vary among LXX manuscripts); the more familiar English forms, reflecting the Hebrew, are used in this translation for those names (down to Zerubbabel) which are known to us from the OT, except for Asa and Amon (see following notes).

3. Matthew's verb, γεννάω (which echoes the terminology of several OT genealogies, such as Ruth 4:18-22), is properly used of the male role in procreation, though in a formal genealogy its repetition apparently allows a less immediate relationship, including a gap of three generations in v. 8. See further the discussion below of how far this is meant to be a record of biological descent, and how far of official (royal) status.

4. The textual evidence strongly indicates that Matthew used the form Ἀσάφ in both vv. 7 and 8. While there is no historical reason to associate Asaph the psalmist with King Asa, Matthew (or his source) may have found the similarity of name suggestive.

5. As with Ἀσάφ in vv. 7-8, the textual evidence indicates that Matthew used the form Ἀμώζ here, thus recalling the name of the prophet rather than Manasseh's undistinguished son Amon, even though of course there is no historical link. Several LXX MSS use the form Ἀμώζ for the king, but this is likely to be due to the influence of Matthew.

6. Matthew follows the LXX in giving the name Ἰεχονιάς, which sometimes occurs in the OT (Jer 24:1 etc.; also in the abbreviated form Coniah, Jer 22:24 etc.) as an alternative name for Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim; it was probably his given name, Jehoiachin being a throne name. The form Jeconiah occurs in both the Hebrew and LXX of the genealogy in 1 Chr 3:16-17, which was probably Matthew's source. The LXX fails to distinguish between Jehoiakim (whom Matthew omits from his list) and Jehoiachin, using Ἰωακίμ for both; Ἰεχονιάς is thus the only distinguishable LXX name for this king. Some later MSS and versions (Θ Σ Γ¹ etc.) have added Jehoiakim's name between Josiah and Jeconiah.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

12 After the exile to Babylon Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel, 13 and Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud, and Abiud was the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim was the father of Azor, 14 and Azor was the father of Zadok, and Zadok was the father of Achim, and Achim was the father of Eliud, 15 and Eliud was the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar was the father of Matthan, and Matthan was the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary who was the mother of⁷ Jesus who is called the Messiah.

17 So there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham until David, and fourteen generations from David until the exile to Babylon, and fourteen generations from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah.

The first two words of Matthew's gospel are literally "book of genesis" (see n. 1 above).⁸ The effect on a Jewish reader is comparable to that of John's opening phrase, "In the beginning. . . ." The theme of the fulfillment of Scripture is signaled from the very start, and these opening words suggest that a new creation is now taking place. That particular concept of fulfillment is not clearly developed elsewhere in the gospel, which is concerned rather with how Jesus brings the history of God's people to its climax, but this passing echo of the beginning of the world's history adds a further allusive dimension for those who wish to think it through, perhaps particularly in the light of the creative act of God which will result in Jesus' birth.⁹

7. This translation aims to preserve Matthew's careful distinction between the male relationship expressed in each of the preceding generations and Jesus' birth from Mary, *not* from Joseph. The feminine pronoun, ἐξ ἧς, makes the point more directly than the ungendered English relative would convey, and the passive form of γεννάω, conspicuously breaking the pattern of the list so far, indicates a different type of "generation"; the ἐκ picks up the formula used for the four mothers mentioned in vv. 3-6. All MSS and versions agree in making it explicit that Joseph was not Jesus' father, with the one exception of sy⁶, which reads "Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary the virgin, begot Jesus." The fact that this version mentions Mary as "betrothed" to Joseph and as "virgin" shows that the translator/scribe was aware of the story that follows, and his use of the verb "beget" for Joseph is therefore more likely due to unthinking repetition of the set formula than to a deliberate desire to assert Joseph's physical fatherhood; see B. M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 2-7. The Greek text is not in doubt, the most significant variation being the reading of some OL and a few Greek MSS, ἡ μνηστευθεῖσα παρθένος Μαρίας ἐγέννησεν Ἰησοῦν . . . , a patent attempt to underline further the supernatural conception of Jesus. This variant is close to the wording of sy⁶, and may have been its source. See further J. Nolland, *CBQ* 58 (1996) 665-73.

8. See Davies & Allison, 1:151, for evidence that by the first century A.D. the Greek title Γένεσις was already in use for the first book of Moses.

9. W. D. Davies, *Setting*, 67-73, finds the theme of a new creation hinted at not

1:1-17 THE "BOOK OF ORIGIN" OF THE MESSIAH

Matthew's "book of origin" is in effect a survey of the history of the people of God from its very beginning with Abraham, the ancestor of Israel, to the coming of the Messiah, the "son of David." He emphasizes the completeness of this history by setting it out in three balancing periods of fourteen generations each,¹⁰ and the fact that it is only with difficulty that the actual history can be made to fit into this pattern indicates that for the author this is not so much a statistical observation as a theological reflection on the working out of God's purpose for his people. It shows that the period of preparation is now complete, and that the stage is set for the dawning of the time of fulfillment in the coming of the promised Messiah.

That Matthew's three fourteens are not simply a matter of historical observation is indicated by the imbalance between the three periods in terms of the actual historical time-scale involved. While there is debate about the possible date of Abraham, he is likely to have been at least seven or eight hundred years before David, which, even given the reported longevity of the patriarchs, is a lot to cover in fourteen generations. From David to the exile is about four hundred years, and, as we shall see, even that relatively modest period has been fitted into fourteen generations only by the omission of four members of the dynastic succession. From the exile to the birth of Jesus is a further six hundred years, so that Matthew's thirteen names for that whole period (compared with Luke's twenty-two for the same period) again give improbably long "generations." It seems then that Matthew's list, like some other biblical genealogies, is selective, and that the scheme of three fourteens is doing something other than recording statistical data.

The effect of the division into three sets of fourteen generations is to highlight the two turning points in the time of David and the exile. The specific mention that David was "King" (v. 6) indicates the significance of these divisions, as the central section of the list runs from the foundation of the united monarchy of Israel under David to the final dissolution of the monarchy of Judah at the time of the Babylonian exile. David and Jehoiachin thus represent the first and last kings of the dynasty of Judah (Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, 2 Kgs 24:17, being treated as an irrelevant appendix while the true king was in exile in Babylon), whose historical throne succession makes up the central section of the genealogical list. Matthew thus signals that this is a royal list, with the probable implication

only in the opening phrase but throughout ch. 1. J. Nolland, *NTS* 42 (1996) 463-71, is more sceptical, and finds the relevance of Matthew's use of *γένεσις* in 1:1, 18 in the genealogy which the two uses frame (as in the immediate sense of the term in Gen 5:1) rather than in any allusion to the book of Genesis or to a new creation.

10. Cf. the observation in *m. 'Abot* 5:2 that there were ten generations from Adam to Noah and ten generations from Noah to Abraham. For Matthew's fondness for balancing structures, and particularly for groups of three, see my *Matthew: Evangelist*, 130-32.