



The Sword & The Plow

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Commentary on Matthew Chapter One

[Editor's note: We are writing a commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew and will publish chapters here from time to time, especially as they pertain to eschatology and Preterism. Although Matthew one short on eschatology, it is long on the Christ's claim to David's throne, which Jesus received at his ascension. The kingdom is a present reality, and this is of great eschatological moment.]

CHAPTER I

1 - The book of the generation of Jesus Christ,

The identical phrase *the book of the generation* occurs in Genesis 5:1, where it introduces a list of Adam's descendants beginning with Seth through nine generations, to Shem, Ham, and Jepheth, the sons of Noah (Gen. 5:32). The table is not a comprehensive list of Adam's descendants, but represents the sacred seed-line through which God would bring the Redeemer into the world. Following the fall of our first ancestors, God promised to save his people and defeat the power of sin and death:

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Gen. 3:14-16

This promise, called the *protevangelium*, is the earliest announcement of the gospel of Christ. The *woman* stands for the people of God, the

faithful seed embodied in by the covenant community. The *serpent* is the enemy of God's people, first and foremost, the power of sin and death, but by extension, the sons of disobedience, which persecuted the people of God, particularly as these came to be identified in the opposing world civil power (Rome and the rulers of the Jews). The promised *seed* is Christ. *Bruising the heel* of Christ describes the sting of the serpent's bite in Jesus' crucifixion; *bruising (crushing) the head* of the serpent describes Christ's complete victory over the power of sin and death in his cross and glorious resurrection. It also foretells of Jesus putting his enemies (the Jews and Romans) beneath his feet in the events that which witnessed the Roman civil wars and the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome (A.D. 68-70).

By using language recalling the book of Adam's sacred heirs, Matthew signifies that the seed-line of man's salvation culminates in the birth of Jesus Christ.

the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The genealogical descent of the sacred seed-line from Adam to the sons of Noah resumes in Gen.

10:10-32, which gives an account of the descendants of Shem to Abraham (nine generations). The heirs to the promise are usually, though not invariably, firstborn sons. The election, by which the promise descended, was according to God's sovereign choice, and "*not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*" (Rom. 9:16). Sometimes the descent occurred under circumstances specifically designed to show that the work of man's salvation belonged to God. Isaac was born to Abraham when he was past the age of generation and his own body was "now dead" (Rom. 4:19). Other times, the descent appears to have been according to the foreknowledge of God, who foresaw the profane nature of the firstborn son (Cain/Esau), and thus gave the blessing to a younger sibling who was morally disposed to the obedience of faith (Abel/Seth/Abraham/Jacob). The promise of a kinsman redeemer given to Adam and Eve in the garden funneled down to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then to the tribe of Judah and finally the house of David, the king. David was the youngest of seven brothers and was chosen because he was a man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14; 16:7; Ps. 89:20; Acts 13:22).

Matthew places the names of David and Abraham at the head of his genealogical account because these two names sum up in an instant the distinct claims of Christ: As son of David he was heir to the Davidic throne; as the son of Abraham he was the promised seed who was heir of the world (Rom. 4:13).

2 - Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren.

Luke (*e.g.*, Lucas abbreviated from Lucanus) was a Gentile and addressed his gospel to a Gentile named Theophilus (Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1). It is therefore natural in giving the genealogy of Christ that Luke traced Jesus' descent to Adam, showing his common humanity with the whole race of men and that he is the Savior of all mankind. Matthew, however, was a Jew and composed his gospel as we might expect a Jew, concerned to demonstrate how Jesus fulfilled the promises of which the Jewish nation was steward (*cf.* Rom. 9:4). Matthew therefore confines himself to proof of Jesus' descent from Abraham. The first series of names covers four generations,

from Abraham to Judah and his brethren.¹ The phrase *and his brethren* will occur again in v. 11, but to a different purpose. Here the point serves to underscore the twelve tribes, which took their start from Jacob's sons.

Judah was not the first born son of Jacob; Ruben was, but lost his birthright by defiling his father's bed (Gen. 35:22; 49:4; I Chron. 5:1). The birthright and double portion of the father's estate Jewish custom set aside for the firstborn went instead to Joseph (Gen. 43:22; *cf.* Deut. 21:15-17); the seed-line of the promised Savior, however, was transferred to Judah, perhaps because of the selfless nobility with which he intervened with Joseph and offered himself in place of his brother Benjamin (Gen. 44:18-34). We learn of the transference of the blessing to Judah from Jacob's blessing of his son's shortly before his death:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Gen. 49:10

The term *Shiloh* is an epithet for the Messiah and means *he that shall be sent*.² Jacob thus prophesied that the royal scepter would come to the tribe of Judah, and there remain until Christ.

3 - And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esron; and Esrom begat Aram.

Judah had five sons by two women, of whom Pharez and Zarah were numbers four and five. Rebekah had twins, yet she is not named nor is Esau; only Jacob is mentioned by Matthew. The specific mention of Tamar and the twins she bore is not necessary to Matthew's genealogy, and can only serve to direct attention to the moral stain associated with the children's conception (Gen. 38). Out of forty-two generations given by Matthew, only four provide the mother's name, and each of these was marked with the opprobrium of sin. Some were of foreign extraction and presumably had been worshippers of idols; others were implicated in adultery, harlotry, and incest. Notwithstanding their offences, we may number these women among

¹ The Greek spelling of names found in the manuscripts is preserved by the translators; hence Judas = Judah.

² See Isa. 8:6 where *Siloah* or *Siloh* is rendered in the Septuagint *apestalmenoj*, *sent fourth*. Clarke *in loc*.

the righteous, and if the specific mention of their names calls attention to their failings, it is not to *condemn them*, but to *recommend us* to the grace of God, by showing that even the most sordid sinners can find a place in the family of God where they come to him in true faith and repentance.

Israel entered into Egypt while Hezron was a child (Gen. 46:12). Hence, the genealogy here reaches to the first generation of children born in Egypt.

4 - And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naason; and Naason begat Salmon.

Abraham was seventy five when he entered Canaan (Gen. 12:4). He was one hundred years old when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5); a difference of twenty-five years. Isaac was sixty years old when Jacob was born (Gen. 25:26). Jacob was one hundred thirty years old when he entered Egypt (Gen. 47:9). Hence, there were two hundred fifteen years from Abraham's entering Canaan until Jacob entered Egypt (25 + 60 + 130 = 215). There were four hundred thirty years from Abraham entering Canaan to the Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12:40, 51; Gal. 3:16, 17). These four hundred thirty years are therefore evenly divided between two hundred fifteen years from when Abraham entered Canaan until Jacob entered Egypt, and two hundred fifteen years from entering Egypt until the Exodus. So Josephus:

They left Egypt in the month Xanthicus, on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt. Ant. II, xv, 2

God told Abraham that his seed would be servants in a strange land and come out in the fourth generation (Gen. 15:13-16). Nahshon is listed as one of the heads of the tribes of Judah at the Exodus (Num. 1:7). If numbered from Hezron, who was a child when the tribes entered, this group of names would represent the four generations of Israel's sojourn in Egypt.

5, 6 - And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse. And Jesse begat David the king; and

David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.

The chief difficulty of these verses is the distance of time spanned by six generations. Solomon began building the temple in the four-hundred-eightieth year after the children of Israel came out of Egypt (I Kng. 6:1). Assuming he was about 30 years old when he began construction, this would mean Solomon was born about four and a half centuries after the Exodus. Given the size of this expanse, it has been usual to suppose that the list has suffered abridgement and that several names have dropped out. However, if it has suffered abridgment, it did so at a very early stage and not by the hand of Matthew, since the identical genealogy is given by the book of Ruth (Ruth 4:18-21). However, it argues for the completeness of the record that Caleb at age eighty-five was as strong as he was at forty and able to go to war (Josh. 14:10, 11), and that Abraham begat Ishmael when he was eighty-six and married again and begat six sons more after the death of Sarah when he was over one hundred (Gen. 16:16; 25:1-3). The body's natural strength and vitality was therefore much greater at this time, so that men and women bearing children into their eighties or older is not at all improbable.

It is remarkable that, in mentioning David and Solomon, the two principal types of the Messiah, there should also occur the names of women whose mention calls to mind our fallenness and sin. By woman sin entered into the world; and by woman came the Redeemer of mankind.

7 - And Solomon

Matthew introduces his genealogy saying, "*the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David.*" The first son of David in the kingly line was Solomon; Jesus Christ was the last. After David, Solomon is the leading type and foreshadow of Christ. God promised David:

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. II Sam. 7:12-14

Here we find God's promise that Christ would come from the *seed of David*, that God would be his *father*, and that his throne and kingdom (dominion) would *last forever*. In their immediate historical context, these promises found a certain fulfillment in Solomon, whose greatness, wealth, and wisdom prefigured Christ, who was their ultimate object. Israel under Solomon was the world power of the day. Egypt was in decline, and Assyria had not yet risen to world prominence; Solomon was king of kings and lord of lords:

All the kings of Arabia and the governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon...and all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God put in his heart"...And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistine, and to the border of Egypt. (II Chron. 9:14, 23, 26; cf. Ps. 72).

The typological nature of Solomon's reign, and the prediction that the Messiah would reign "unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8; cf. Dan. 7:27), caused Jewish expectation to see Christ as a national liberator, who would sit on David's throne in earthly Jerusalem, vanquish Israel's enemies, and raise her to world power. On one occasion, this misapprehension led the Jews to attempt take Jesus by force and make him king (Jn. 6:15). But this very much mistook the case: Christ's kingdom (dominion) is not of this world (Jn. 18:36); his rule is from the right hand of God in heaven, which he received at his ascension. He rules the nations with a rod of iron (Act 2:33; I Pet. 3:22; Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:26, 27; 12:5).

begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa.

David reigned forty years over Israel and Judah, as did Solomon after him (I King 2:11; 11:42). Rehoboam reigned seventeen years over Judah, for in his days the kingdom was divided (II Chron. 10:19; 13:1). Abaijah reigned three years over Judah (II Chron. 13:2). Asa died in the forty-first of his reign over Judah (II Chron. 16:13). The reigns of David through Asa thus fulfilled *one hundred forty-one years*.

8 - And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias.

This verse presents a gap in the succession of kings and Matthew's genealogy. Jehoshaphat reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem (II Chron. 20:31); his son, Jehoram, reigned eight years (II Chron. 21:5). The genealogy then skips to Uzziah, omitting three kings: *Ahaziah*, the youngest son of Jehoram, who reigned only one year (II Chron. 22:1, 2); *Joash*, who reigned forty years (II Chron. 24:1); and *Amaziah*, who reigned twenty-nine years (II Chron. 25:1). In between Ahaziah and Joash, Athaliah, the queen mother, reigned six years (II Chron. 22:12). This verse thus covers a period of *one hundred nine years*.

The omission of these kings involves neither deception nor error, but probably reflects a Jewish convention that was loath to give their names in the succession of the kings of Judah, because of their connection with the house of Ahab. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, made affinity with Ahab, king of Israel, by marrying his son, Jehoram, to Athaliah, Ahab's daughter (II Chron. 18:1; 21:6).³ Ahab and his wife Jezebel were unparalleled in wickedness among the rulers of Israel, even persecuting the prophets and Elijah (I Kng. 18:13). God thus said he would cut off the house and posterity of Ahab (I Kng. 21:21; II Kng. 9:8). When, therefore, Jehu executed judgment upon the house of Ahab, Ahaziah was slain also (II Kng. 9:27, 28; II Chron. 22:7-9). And because the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those that hate the Lord (Ex. 20:5), the names of Joash and Amaziah apparently are blotted from memory also.

9 - And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias.

Ozias is the Greek spelling of Uzziah; Uzziah reigned fifty-two years (II Chron. 26:3). Jotham reigned sixteen years (II Chron. 27:1). Ahaz reigned sixteen years (II Chron. 28:1), and Hezekiah reigned twenty-nine years (II Chron. 29:1). This verse thus spans the period of *one hundred thirteen years*. It was during the reigns of these kings that Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 1:1), and we first read of the Assyrio-Babylonian invasions. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, the ten

³ Athaliah is called the *daughter of Omri* in II Chron. 22:2, but this is understood in the sense of a descendant (e.g., grand-daughter), in the same way that Jehoshaphat could be called the *son of David* (II Chron. 17:3). Ahab was the son of Omri (I Kng. 16:28).

northern tribes were carried in captivity by the Assyrians (II Kng. 17:1, 6; II Kng. 18:9, 10). The Assyrians also invaded Judah and took many of the fenced cities, but when they attempted to besiege Jerusalem, they were smitten by the Lord and one hundred eighty-five thousand Assyrians died of the plague (Isa. 37:36). It was during the reign of Ahaz that the prophecy of the virgin birth of the Savior was made (Isa. 7:14; *cf.* Matt. 1:23). It is sometimes supposed that this prophecy had Hezekiah as its immediate, historical object, but this cannot be. Hezekiah was twenty-five when he began to reign, following his father's reign of sixteen years. Hence, Hezekiah was fully nine years old when Ahaz obtained the kingdom. Isaiah's prophecy of a child yet to be born therefore cannot refer to Hezekiah. However, as the prophecy does appear to have had an immediate, historical application relevant to the invasion of Judah and Jerusalem by Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, as a sign that the Lord would deliver Judah (Isa. 7:1-9; *cf.* II Kng. 16:5), the better view is that Isaiah's child was in immediate view (*cf.* Isa. 8:3, 18; *see also comments at v.* 23).

10 - And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias.

Manasseh reigned fifty-five years (II Chron. 33:1). Amon reigned two years (II Chron. 33:21). Josiah reigned thirty-one years (II Chron. 34:1). From Manasseh through Josiah thus covers a period of *eighty-eight years*.

11 - And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

Josiah had four sons: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Shallum. Jehoahaz was carried into captivity and died in Egypt without issue (II Kng. 23:33, 34; II Chron. 36:3, 4); the sons of Zedekiah were slain leaving no male issue (II Kng. 25:1-7; II Chron. 36:11-21; Jer. 52:1-11); and Shallum apparently had no male issue at all (*see* I Chron. 3:15). Jehoiakim had one son, Jehoiachin (Coniah). Even though all of Josiah's sons, with the exception of Shallum, reigned as king, descent of the seed-royal fell to Jehoiakim, because he alone had issue that survived. The succession following Josiah until the carrying away into Babylon is as follows:

Name	Length of Reign	History
Josiah	31 years	Slain in battle by Pharaoh Necho
Jehoahaz	3 months	Carried by Pharaoh Necho into captivity in Egypt where he died without male issue.
Jehoiakim	11 years	Rebelled against Babylonians; was executed by Nebuchadnezzar, who made Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin (Coniah), king instead.
Jehoiachin (Coniah, Jeconiah)	3 months, 10 days	Carried into captivity in Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, his father Jehoiakim's brother, king instead.
Zedekiah	11 years	Rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, was captured, his sons slain without issue, and was carried captive into Egypt.

Since three out of four of Josiah's sons reigned as king, when Matthew says *Josiah begat Jeconiah and his brethren about the time they were carried away into Babylon*, it seems clear it is Jehoiakim and his brethren that are actually referred to. This is especially evident when it is borne in mind that Jeconiah was the only son of his father and had no brethren. The question thus becomes, why is Jeconiah named in place of his father Jehoiakim? We believe it is because Jehoiakim is numbered among the *execrated* kings of Judah whose names convention forbade mention.

Jehoiakim “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done” (II Kng. 23:37). In the beginning of his reign, Jeremiah prophesied that all nations would be brought under the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar;

those nations that did not submit willingly would be carried into captivity, but those that did would be allowed to remain in their land (Jer. 27:1-11). Jehoiakim responded to Jeremiah's prophecies by burning them and ordering the prophet to be arrested (Jer. 36:1-26). Because of Jehoiakim's wickedness and rebellion, God swore that he would be slain and have the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem, his body left to the elements, and that none of his seed would reign upon the throne of David in Jerusalem (Jer. 22:18-30; cf. 36:30). Jehoiakim's fate was similar to Jezebel's, whose body was eaten by dogs and was like "dung upon the face of the field" (II Kng. 9:30-37). Jewish convention thus appears to have forbade mention of Jehoiakim in the succession of Judah's kings; hence, his son, Jeconiah is named in his place.

12 - And after they were brought to Babylon,

Beginning with the Babylonian captivity, Judea was under the dominion of Gentile nations, set under tribute, and garrisoned by foreign armies; the nation was trod underfoot by successive Gentile powers, Babylon, Mede-Persia, Greece, and finally, Rome. Isaiah thus cried, "*O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us*" (Isa. 26:13). And the Psalmist lamented that God had profaned David's crown "*casting it to the ground. Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin...Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground*" (Ps. 89:39, 44). This condition prevailed for almost six hundred years. Not until Christ would the Davidic throne again have an occupant, and then, not on earth, but from the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 2:33; Heb. 1:3; 10:12, 13; I Pet. 3:22). This was according to the word of the prophet Ezekiel, who stated that the Davidic crown would perish from Judah until Christ arrived to claim it:

And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same. Exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him. Ezek. 21:25-27

From the Babylonian captivity until the birth of Christ, the house of David was like a tree cut

down, leaving only a stump. But the root of Jesse would put forth a rod and bud:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. Isa. 1:1-5

Jechonias begat Salathiel;

Matthew has arranged his genealogical account in three sets of fourteen generations (v. 17). Jeconiah appeared in place of his father above, and a Jeconiah appears again here. However, these are not the same man; otherwise, Matthew would be guilty of counting the same man twice, negating his scheme of three sets of fourteen generations. The Jeconiah of this verse is actually Zedekiah, the son of Jeconiah. This is clear from the genealogy of I Chronicles:

And the sons of Josiah were, the firstborn Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. And the sons of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son. And the sons of Jeconiah, Assir, Salathiel his son, Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. I Chron. 3:15-18

Here we see that the succession of the seed-royal followed Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, Zedekiah, and Salathiel. But where we would expect Zedekiah to be named in the generation following Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, the name Jeconiah appears a second time instead. But this must be understood as Zedekiah by another name and not the same man twice, for it was common among the kings and royal family to have more than one name. Thus, Jehoahaz is called Johanan and Shallum (I Chron. 3:15; Jer. 22:11); Jehoiakim is called Zedekiah (Jer. 27:1, 3); and Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, is called

Mattaniah (II Kng. 24:14). A further difficulty arises in the fact that, where Matthew has Salathiel as the son of Jeconiah (Zedekiah), Luke has Salathiel as the son of Neri or Neriah (Lk. 3:27). But this may be explained by a levirate marriage⁴, in which Neri died childless and it fell to Zedekiah to father a son by marrying his near kinsman's widow.

and Salathiel begat Zorobabel.

There is an apparent discrepancy between Matthew and Chronicles. Matthew says Zerubbabel was the son of Salathiel, but Chronicles say he was the son of Pedaiah.

And the sons of Jeconiah, Assir, Salathiel his son, Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. And the sons of Pedaiah were, Zerubbabel, and Shimei: and the sons of Zerubbabel, Meshullam, and Hannaniah, and Shelomith their sister: And Hashubah, and Ohel, and Berechiah, and Hasadiah, Jushabhesed, five. I Chron. 3:17-20

The solution here again doubtless is a levirate marriage, in which Pedaiah died without issue and Salathiel married his brother's widow, similar to Boaz who married Ruth, so that Chronicles attributes Zerubbabel to Pedaiah, but Matthew gives the name Salathiel instead. Matthew is corroborated by Ezra, the prophet Haggai, and Luke, who also call Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel (Ezra 3:2; 5:2; Haggai 1:1,14; 2:2; Lk. 3:27).

13 - And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor.

Zerubbabel was the governor who, together with Joshua the high priest, brought again the captivity out of Babylon to Judea and undertook rebuilding the temple (Ezra 2:1, 2; 3:2, 8). Zechariah prophesied about Zerubbabel and Joshua under the character of two olive trees ("anointed ones"), which provided oil to a golden lampstand with seven lamps. In its historical context, the vision refers to the work of rebuilding the temple and spiritual light of the nation, but it is probable that the vision looks beyond its immediate circumstances unto the

⁴ The term *levirate* is not from the tribe of Levi as is sometimes supposed, but from the Latin *levir* for "one's husband's brother."

Messiah. If so, the lampstand would seem to represent Christ (*cf.* Zech. 3:8, 9 and 4:10), and the two olive trees to signify that the two families of Joshua and Zerubbabel would combine and bring forth the Messiah (Zech. 4; *cf.* Jer. 33:17-18 *where union of David and Levi in the person Christ is suggested*). That Jesus carried in his veins the blood of both David and Aaron is suggested by the fact that Mary, Jesus' mother, was the cousin of Elizabeth, who is called a daughter of Aaron (Lk. 1:5; 36).⁵

The names following Zerubbabel in Chronicles disagree with those in Matthew. Chronicles attributes eight children to Zerubbabel, seven sons and one daughter: *Meshullam, Hananiah, Shelomith (their sister), Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushabhesed (I Chron. 3:19, 20)*. But where Matthew follows Abiud, Chronicles carries forward Zerubbabel's descendants through Hananiah. Since Chronicles does not mention Abiud, we may assume that he appears in Chronicles by another name (Jushabhesed?), and that Chronicles follows Hananiah because it was the leading family at the time, which later dying out, the succession fell to the line of Abiud. Indeed, virtually all the seeming discrepancies between Matthew, Luke, and the other genealogies of scripture may be attributed to either levirate marriage or the failure of one male line and its transference to another.

14 - And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud.

We here enter the intertestamental period between the close of the Old Testament canon and the opening of the New Testament. This was a period of prophetic silence, during which there were no prophets or prophetic utterances and heaven seemed shut up against man, as if to make the miracles of Christ and the apostles the more glorious and pronounced when once the heavens opened again, attesting that Jesus is the Son of God.

15, 16 - And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of

⁵ Succession followed the father. Mary's mother may have been of the house of Aaron and have married into the family of David, making Mary of the house of David, but the children of Mary's uncle, the brother of Mary's mother, Elizabeth's father, would be called after Aaron.

Matthews says that Jacob *begat* Joseph, but Luke calls Joseph the *son of* Heli (Eli) (Lk. 3:23). Matthew's genealogy traces the *jus successionis*, or right of succession, to the Davidic throne; hence, Matthew traces Jesus' royal descent through the kings of Judah and putative heirs to David's throne. On the other hand, Luke traces Jesus' descent through the family of Nathan, a lesser known son of David briefly mentioned in the Old Testament (II Sam. 5:14; I Chron. 3:5; 14:4). That the house of Nathan would be connected with the birth of the Messiah is alluded to by the prophet Zechariah in describing the death of Christ, saying, "*the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart*" (Zech. 12:12). These two lines touch briefly at Salathiel and Zerubbabel, and then part to meet again in Joseph. The way Jacob could *beget* Joseph and Joseph be also the *son of* Heli, is by Jacob marrying his kinsman's widow, preserving the seed of Heli. Luke's *son of* therefore does not contradict Matthew's *begat*.⁶

Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

St. Paul said Jesus "*was made of the seed of David according to the flesh*" (Rom. 1:3; cf. Rev. 5:5; 22:16). Since Jesus had no earthly father, we must infer that Mary was of the house of David and that Christ was the seed of David by virtue of descent from her. However, in Jewish society, except as to the status of slaves (Ex. 21:1-4; cf. Gal. 4:21-26), illegitimate issue (Deut. 23:2), and children of concubines (Gen. 25:1-6), one's legal status was determined by the *father*. Thus, the promise that the Savior would be of the seed of David would normally require descent through the male, not female, line. But we are not here dealing with what is normal; the birth of Christ was to be a supernatural event. The *protevangelium* affirmed that the *woman's* seed would bruise the head of sin and death (Gen. 3:15), attributing seed to the woman and implying the virgin birth. But as the Jews did not understand any of this and looked for the Messiah to be a son of David by the male line, God made provision that Jesus have a father of the house of David. Both Matthew and Luke

therefore provide *Joseph's* genealogy, and his paternity is attributed to Christ, if only to prevent the Jews from stumbling or taking offense.

17 - So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

Matthew enumerates three sets of fourteen generations ("*tesseradecads*") from Abraham until Christ. As we have seen, these are not strictly literal, but contain several omissions. They represent sets of *mentionable* (non-execrated) names, symmetrically arranged in equal parts to aid memorization - "*three sets of fourteen, plus four*" (*the four kings omitted being Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, and Jehoiakim*) - the omission of certain names being understood and accepted by all in accordance with Jewish convention. The absolute reliability of Matthew's account of Jesus' descent and claim to the Davidic throne is admitted even by the Jews. Rabbi Ulla (*circa* A.D. 210) says "*Jesus was exceptionally treated because of royal descent.*"⁷ This royal descent was publicly known and acknowledged by the Romans in the time of Domitian, who gave orders for the execution of the royal family of David, but, having examined the grandsons of Jude, the brother of the Lord, dismissed them as harmless, simple folk.⁸

If we tally the years until the birth of Christ, the sum of the above will be as follows:

From the birth of Abraham to Israel's entering Egypt was.....	290 years
From entering Egypt until the Exodus was.....	215 years
From the Exodus until the beginning of David's reign.....	437 years
From David until the Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.).....	452 years
From the captivity until the birth of Christ (2 B.C.).....	584 years
Total.....	1978 years

⁶ See Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History where a letter by Julius Africanus proposed this very thing with slight variation, representing it to have been preserved by the *desposyni*, or descendants of the holy family (*Eccl. Hist.* I, vii).

⁷ T.B. *Sanhedren* 43a, Amsterdam edition; cited by F.W. Farrar, *the Gospel According to St. Luke* (Cambridge, 18 82), p. 373.

⁸ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* III, xix, xx.

If we then add to this the period from Adam to Noah.....1056 years⁹
 And from Noah to Abraham.....952 years¹⁰

Total...3986 years

18 - Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise:

Having provided an account of Jesus' genealogical descent and claim to the Davidic throne, Matthew proceeds to the circumstances of his birth, which, no less than his ancestral descent, give full evidence that Jesus is the Christ of prophetic promise.

When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together,

According to Jewish law and tradition, betrothal or espousal was equal to marriage in all points except consummation and sexual intimacy. The couple's espousal was solemnized by covenant and oath just as in a marriage ceremony, but instead of the nuptials following immediately, there was instead a betrothal period of approximately one year - enough time for the bride's purity to be demonstrated; for if she were pregnant with another man's child, it would become evident during this period. The couple did not cohabit as is sometimes asserted, for if the bride was found to be pregnant, this would expose the husband to a charge that the child was in fact his own. And since impurity in the bride

⁹ Adam begat Seth when he was 130 (Gen. 5:3); Seth begat Enos when he was 105 (Gen. 5:6); Enos begat Cainan when he was 90 (Gen. 5:9); Cainan begat Mahalaleel when he was 70 (Gen. 5:12); Mahalaleel begat Jered when he was 65 (Gen. 5:15); Jered begat Enoch when he was 162 (Gen. 5:18); Enoch begat Methuselah when he was 65 (Gen. 5:21); Methuselah begat Lamech when he was 187 (Gen. 5:25); Lamech begat Noah when he was 182 (Gen. 5:28); the sum of which equals 1056 years.

¹⁰ Noah was 502 when Shem was born, inasmuch as Shem was 100 years old two years after the flood (Gen. 11:10). The flood came in the 600th year of Noah's life when he was 599 years old, and prevailed for a full year and ten days (Gen. 7:11; 8:14). Noah lived 350 years after the flood, dying at age 950 (Gen.9:28, 29). Thus, Shem turned 100 years old when Noah was 602. Shem was 100 when he begat Arphaxad (Gen. 11:10); Arphaxad was 35 when he begat Salah (Gen. 11:12); Salah was 30 years when he begat Eber (Gen. 11:14); Eber was 34 when he begat Peleg (Gen. 11:16); Peleg was 30 when he begat Reu (Gen. 11:18); Reu was 32 when he begat Serug (Gen. 11:20); Serug was 30 when he begat Nahor (Gen. 11:22); Nahor was 29 when he begat Terah the father of Abraham (Gen. 11:24). Abraham was 75 when his father Terah died (Gen. 11:32; 12:4), making Terah 130 at Abraham's birth; the sum of which is 952 years.

was equal to adultery and might be punished capitally, every precaution was made to preserve the bride's chastity from all suspicion and accusation. The shame and peril associated with the charge of being unchaste, which Mary freely undertook to bring Christ into the world, anticipated Jesus' shame in the cross, who *"was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (II Cor. 5:21).

she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

The details of Mary's conception are not provided. For these we must turn to Luke, who tells of the visitation of Gabriel and the Annunciation (Lk. 1:26-38). The appearance of Gabriel at the Annunciation is significant, for it was Gabriel who carried word to Daniel, placing the appearance of the Messiah within four hundred and ninety prophetic years from the rebuilding of Jerusalem following the captivity (Dan. 9:20-27). Hence, with the Annunciation, the kingdom of the Messiah and fulfillment of all prophetic utterance was at hand.

19 - Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

Legal standing to bring a charge of adultery seems to have belonged solely to the husband; the state appears to have had no jurisdiction or authority to prosecute a complaint in its own right where the husband decided not to act. The husband at his election might bring a public charge; punishment would then entail stoning at the door of her father's home, since while she was in his house she was under his coverture (authority and protection, as implied by the veil, I Cor. 11:1-16), and he must therefore share the blame for not having adequately safeguarded her purity and conduct (Deut. 22:13-21). The guilty man was also to be put to death (Deut. 22:22). Or, the husband might put her away privately (Deut. 24:1-4). Guided by a sense of justice and proportion rather than the passions of anger and vengeance, the offense being against him alone and not of a public nature or scandal, Joseph determined that there was no sufficient reason to make of Mary a public example, and hence determined to divorce her privately. Joseph's compassion here anticipates the Lord's when confronted by his adversaries with the woman taken in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11).

20 - But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

The Davidic throne had been unoccupied for almost six hundred years; the house of David had fallen into the utmost meanness and poverty; his descendants reduced to country peasants and simple artisans; descent from David must have seemed a mere curiosity, an irrelevancy, just as it would be to claim today descent from a medieval monarch. Yet, the angelic announcement revives the hope of Israel for its promised Savior. Heaven has safeguarded the house and seed of David these long centuries for this very moment: the child Mary carries is from God and will fulfill his promise to David: "*Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne*" (Ps. 132:11; cf. II Sam. 7:12).

21 - And she shall bring forth a son,

The prophecy of Isaiah seems particularly appropriate here:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Isa. 9:6, 7

and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The name *Jesus* means "savior." It is the Greek form of the Aramaic *Yeshua* or the more familiar Anglicized version *Joshua*. The Holy Ghost chose to reveal the Savior to the Gentile world by the Greek name *Jesus*, even though his family would have known him by the Aramaic *Yeshua*. But as the Aramaic form would be a word without meaning to the Greek speaking world of the day, the Greek form was chosen to make clear that Christ's mission was *to save man from sin*.

22, 23 - Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,

The virgin birth of Christ is firmly attested and an essential element of the Christian faith. When God created Adam, he made him in his own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26), which is best understood in terms of man's moral faculties and ability to demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). Man's ability to live above the flesh depended upon the indwelling of God's Spirit, breathed into man at his creation (Gen. 2:7). This indwelling and inspiration meant that man *supernaturally* inclined to the things of the Spirit. But with the fall of our first ancestors, the indwelling of the Spirit was lost, and man became subject to his carnal nature; he inclined naturally to the things of the flesh. Adam's children were made in his image and likeness after his fall (Gen. 5:3), and therefore did not inherit the original state and condition of goodness and innocence Adam was created with. Rather, they inherited his fallen, carnal nature. This does not mean, nor do we believe scripture teaches, that God *imputed* Adam's transgression to his heirs, or that babies and little children are in need of salvation. "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son*" (Ezek. 18:20). As children attain the moral faculties to know right from wrong, then and then alone do they come under condemnation for sin (Jm. 4:17; cf. Deut. 1:39). But the lesson of scripture and human experience is that all the descendants of Adam are by nature carnal, sold under sin, and will invariably and without exception follow the flesh and transgress God's positive law written man's own conscience. Hence, the apostle Paul thus declaims against himself

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I...I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. 7:14-25

Here we have Paul's description of man's hopeless inability to satisfy the law, even though he consents that it is good and aspires to satisfy its demands. This is the unhappy lot of all Adam's natural descendants. Since man's Savior had to be the blameless and spotless Lamb of God, it is impossible that he should have been born into the world by normal procreative process; for if he had, he would have inherited our fallen nature, and suffered the same debilitating effects described by Paul. Hence, the virgin birth was essential to man's salvation and is therefore a foundational tenet of the Christian faith.

Thus far the doctrinal basis underlying the virgin birth, what does the text and language of scripture state? There are two terms rendered *virgin* in the Old Testament; one *implies* virginity, the other *expressly* declares it. The term used by Isaiah is the Hebrew *almah*, which Strong's defines as "*a lass, damsel, maid, or virgin.*" The common factor in all these is the subject's *age*, from which virginity is *naturally implied*. The other term is the Hebrew *bethuwliym*, which Strong's defines as "*a virgin; sometimes (by continuation) a bride; also (fig.) a city or state: - maid, virgin.*" As between these two, the latter is the more specific. But Isaiah used *almah*, not *bethuwliym*, and this has given occasion for some to impugn the virgin birth, claiming that the prophecy affirms only that a *young woman* would conceive.

The reason Isaiah used *almah* and not *bethuwliym* is that his prophecy had both an immediate historical application, and another that was messianic; the one was fulfilled in Isaiah's day, the other in Christ. Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin birth was given in the days of king Ahaz, when Judah and Jerusalem were threatened with invasion by Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel. However, God promised that their threatenings would come to nothing, and that within sixty-five years Israel would be broken and no longer a people (nation). The Lord then urged Ahaz to ask for a sign in assurance of this promise. Ahaz feigned an objection to asking a sign on the grounds that it was tempting the Lord (Isa. 7:1-13). God responded by saying he himself would give a sign:

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and

honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. Isa. 7:14-16

Here we see that there is an unmistakable historical context the prophecy spoke to. Within the space of sixty-five years, the northern tribes would be carried into captivity and cease to be a nation; but before that, while as yet a child was still tender, Rezin and Pekah would be taken out of the way. This sign was fulfilled in Isaiah's son, *Ma-her-shal-al-hash-baz*.

And I went to the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the Lord to me, Call his name Ma-her-shal-al-hash-baz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria. Isa. 8:3, 4

The name *Ma-her-shal-al-hash-baz* means "*in making speed to the spoil he hasteneth the prey*" (marginal reading). Isaiah then states, "*Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion*" (Isa. 8:18). Taken together, this argues strongly that the prophecy had an immediate context that was fulfilled when a virgin, a bride, married and bore a son, whose name pointed to the coming judgment upon Israel and Damascus. However, it is equally clear that there was a messianic dimension to the prophecy that looked ahead to Christ. Use of the Hebrew word *almah* allowed the prophecy to have this flexibility and dual application, which *bethuwliym* presumably could not.

When we come to the New Testament, we find that Matthew translated the Hebrew *almah* by the Greek *parqenoj*. This is the Greek word for a *virgin*, and is the root of the word *Parthenon*, the Greek temple devoted to the virgin goddess, Dianna. Matthew follows the Septuagint, which also used the term *parqenoj* to translate Isa. 7:14. Thus, Jews several hundred years before Christ took *almah*, not in the sense of merely a young woman, but a *virgin*. Therefore, the virgin birth is firmly fixed in both doctrine and text.

and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Here we find another aspect spread before us that gazes beyond Isaiah's son to the birth of Christ. The name given the child in Isa. 7:14 does not correspond with the child named *Ma-her-shal-al-hash-baz*, and is further evidence that the prophecy had a double signification. *Ma-her-shal-al-hash-baz* spoke distinctly to the historic situation confronting Judah and Ahaz; *Immanuel* looked ahead to the incarnate God. St. Paul says that Christ, though "*being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*" (Phil. 2:6, 7). The phrase "*thought it not robbery to be equal with God*" has perplexed many, and caused the translators of the Revised Standard Edition (RSV) to wrest the Greek to obtain what they supposed to be Paul's meaning (even if not his language). Hence the RSV renders the passage, saying, Christ "*did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*"; but this misses the point entirely. What Paul is saying instead is that Christ did not consider his equal part in the Godhead a thing *gotten by robbery*, properly requiring that it be laid aside. To the contrary, Christ's divinity was fully and properly his own, and his only compulsion to assume our humanity was that he might redeem us to God. "*For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself*" (II Cor. 5:19).

24 - Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.

Setting aside all doubts and concerns about Mary's purity, Joseph obeys the Lord's command to take Mary as his wife. The divine message was not merely to give assurance to Joseph, or for Mary's sake and reputation. Joseph had a critical role to play in the divine plan, by lending his royal lineage and claim to the Davidic throne to Christ. Taking Mary as his wife also served to legitimize Jesus' birth in the public eye. Mary would have given birth whether Joseph married her or not, but Jesus' future ministry would have been greatly hindered if it was rumored that he was illegitimately conceived and born. It was necessary that the stainless and pure Lamb of God not seem to bear any blemish or mark of sin, which could not be the case without Joseph standing in as his earthly father.

25 - And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

The natural inference of this verse is that Joseph and Mary engaged in normal conjugal relations following the birth of the Christ child. Although the word "till" does not require this conclusion, it seems unavoidable nevertheless as its inclusion would otherwise be meaningless. What purpose could be served in saying the couple did not have conjugal relations until the birth of Christ, if in fact they never had them at all? Numerous passages speak of Jesus' brothers and sisters in connection with Joseph his father and Mary his mother:

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? Matt. 13:55-56; cf. Mk. 6:3; Acts 1:12-14; Gal. 1:10

Surely, the normal sense of passages such as these is that Mary went on to bear Joseph children, who were recognized by the community as Jesus' brothers and sisters by their common parents. The notion that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were Joseph's children by a prior marriage has its roots in the second century, the pseudo-epigraphical book, *The Protoevangelium of James*, which is also the source of the notion that Mary was only twelve and Joseph an old man and widower when they were betrothed and Mary bore Jesus.¹¹ By the fourth century the doctrine of the *perpetual virginity* of Mary had gained currency among Christian writers, and was eventually followed by the doctrines of the *Immaculate Conception of Mary*, and her *Assumption* into heaven; but none of these has ever had the least scriptural support.

¹¹ *Protoevangelium of James*, 7-9. The notion that Joseph was an old man is apparently intended to buttress the virgin birth; e.g., Joseph is impotent and unable to consummate the marriage.

THE
REVELATION of JOHN
 Bishop John Lightfoot

As it will be easily admitted, to place this book last of all the New Testament, because it stand so in all Bibles, so on the other hand it will be caviled at, that I have brought in the writing of hit so soon [viz, AD 66], as before the fall of Jerusalem; since it hath been of old and commonly held, that it was penned in the reign of Domitian, far after these times that we are upon. But the reasons, by which I have been induced thereunto, will appear out of some passage in the book itself, as we go through it.

As God revealed to “Daniel, the man greatly beloved,” the state of his people, and the monarchies that afflicted them, from his own time, till the coming of Christ; so doth Christ to “John, the beloved disciple,” the state of the church, and story in brief, of her chief afflictors, from thence to the end of the world. So that where Daniel ends, the Revelation begins; and John hath nothing to do with any of the four monarchies that he speaketh of, but deals with a fifth, the Roman, that rose, as it were, out of the ashes of those four, and swallowed them all up. [Editor’s note: Lightfoot erroneously believed that Daniel’s four kingdoms reached only to Antiochus Epiphanes and the Greco-Syrian dynasty of the Seleucids, and not to the earthly ministry of Christ or the Romans. This error comes from confounding the little horn in Daniel seven under the fourth empire with the little horn (Antiochus Epiphanes) of Daniel eight, which appeared in the time of the third empire. It also comes from mistakenly identifying the “abomination of desolation” in Daniel 12:13 with that of Daniel 11:35. But as Christ applied the former of these to the fall of Jerusalem, it plainly cannot have reference to Antiochus Epiphanes.]

The composure of the book is much like Daniel’s in this, that it repeats one story over and over again, in varied and enlarged expressions; and exceeding like Ezekiel’s, in method and things spoken. The style is very prophetic, as to the things spoken; and very Hebraizing, as to the speaking of them. Exceeding much of the old prophet’s language, and matter adduced to intimate new stories: and exceeding much of the Jew’s language, and allusion to their customs and opinions, thereby to speak the things more familiarly to be understood. And as Ezekiel wrote concerning the ruin of Jerusalem, when the ruining of it was now begun, so, I suppose, doth John of the

final destruction of it; when the wars and miseries were now begun, which bred its destructions.

REVELATION I, II, III

The three first chapters refer to that present time, when John wrote: and they contain the story of his obtaining this Revelation, and of the condition of the seven churches of Asia at that time, declared in the Epistles directed to them.

John, travelling in the ministry of the gospel up and down from Asia, westward, cometh into the isle Patmos, in the Icarian sea, an Island about thirty miles’ compass: and there, on the Lord’s day, he hath these visions; and an angel interprets to him all he saw.

He seeth Christ, clothed like a priest, podere (see the LXXX in Exod. 28:4), and girded over the paps, as the priests used to be, with the curious girdle. His appearance, full of majesty hand gloriousness, described in the terms of Daniel. Amongst other his divine titles, he is called, “Alpha and Omega,” terms ordinarily used by the Jews (only uttered in their Hebrew tongue) to signify “the beginning and the end, or the first and the last.” “Abraham and Sarah performed all the law from Aleph to Tau.”¹² “He walks in integrity is as if he performed all the law, from Aleph to Tau.”¹³

He directs epistles to be sent to “the seven churches of Asia;” who are “golden candlesticks,” though very full of corruptions (it is not a small thing that unchurches a church); and inscribed to “the angels of the churches.” This phrase translates **שליח צבור** “Sheliach Tsibbor,” the title of the minister in every synagogue, who took care for the public reading and expounding of the law and prophets: and these epistles are sent, accordingly, to the ministers of the several churches, that they might be read openly in their congregations.

There are seven several epistles, to the several churches, dictated immediately and sent by Christ;

¹² Midr. Tillim, fol. 47. 2.

¹³ Marg. Tripl. Targ. In Deut. 28:13.

and another general one from John, to them all, in which he shows that warrant and way of writing those seven.

He terms the Holy Ghost, “the seven spirits,” according to the Jews’ common speech, who, from Isa. 11:2, speak much of “the seven spirits of Messias.” And, speaking of Christ’s “coming with clouds,”¹⁴ from Dan. 7:13, and from the words of Christ himself,¹⁵ he at once teacheth that he takes at Daniel, and speaks of Christ’s coming and reigning, when the four monarchies were destroyed; and especially referreth to the first most visible evidence of his power and dominion, in coming to destroy his enemies, the Jewish nation, and their city. And here is one reason that induceth me to suppose this book written, before that city was destroyed.

Coming to read the present condition of these Asian churches, in the epistles written to them, we may pertinently think of that saying of Paul, “This thou knowest, that all they that are in Asia, are turned from me;” a great apostasy, of which there is too much evidence in these churches, as also mention of some sad fruits of it, and means and instruments inducing to it. As, 1. Unbelieving Jews, which the Holy Ghost, all along, calls, “a synagogue of Satan;” with these, the church of Smyrna was pestered, and, more especially, Pergamus, where their mischievousness is styled, the very throne, or “seat of Satan;” and where they had murdered Antipas, a faithful martyr already. 2. False apostles and seducers; some that pretended apostolic power and commission, and, it may be, coloured their pretences with magical wonders, that they might act more apostle-like. These the church of Ephesus was trouble with, but had discovered their delusions and found them liars. 3. Other seducers, that, it may be, came not in the demonstration of such devilish power; but answered that, by their horrid devilish doctrines, “the doctrines of the Nicolaitans,” which taught to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. In Thyatira, a woman-seducer cried up this doctrine, a whore and witch, a Jezebel; wherefore, she and her children, that is, her disciples, are threatened to be destroyed by the plague; the vengeance upon the fornicators with Baal-Peor.

REVELATION IV, V

Now cometh a second vision. That before, was of “things then being,” but this, and forward, of “things to come.”¹⁶ “A door open in heaven, and the voice of a trumpet talking with John,” out of it. The scene of John’s visions, said to be “in heaven,” is according to

the scheme of the temple and the divine glory there. And hence you have mention of the altar, candlesticks, sea of glass (the brazen laver made of the women’s looking-glasses), the ark of the covenant, and the like. And as, at the opening of the temple-doors, a trumpet sounded, so is the allusion here. The door in heaven opened, and a trumpet calls John to come in and see what was there. “And immediately he was in the spirit.”¹⁷ Why, was he not in the spirit before?¹⁸ And was he not in the spirit, in seeing the door in heaven opened? &c. But we may observe a double degree in rapture; as inspired men may be considered under a double notion; viz. those that were inspired with prophecy, or to be prophets and to preach, and those that were inspired to be penmen of divine writ, which was higher. John hath both inspirations for revelations to both ends, both in the vision before, and this: then he was in the spirit, and saw the vision; and was in the spirit, and inspired to pen what he saw, and what to be sent to the churches. And, in the first verse of this chapter, he is in the spirit, or hath a revelation; and, in ver. 2, he is in the spirit; and is inspired so as to take impression and remembrance of these things, to write them also. He seeth Christ enthroned in the middle of his church, in the same prophetic and visionary emblem that Ezekiel had seen;¹⁹ and this is a commentary and fulfilling of that scene that Daniel speaketh of.²⁰ In Ezekiel, the Lord, when Jerusalem was now to be destroyed, and the glory of the Lord that used to be three, and the people were to flit into another land, appeareth so enthroned, as sitting in judgment, and flitting away, by degrees, to another place: as, compare Ezek. I and x, well together. So Christ here; when the destruction of Jerusalem was now near at hand, and his glory and presence to remove from that nation, now given up to unbelief and obduration, to reside among the Gentiles, he is seated upon his throne, as judge and king, with glorious attendance, to judge that nation, for their sins and unbelief, and stating the affair of his church, whither his glory was now removing.

The scheme is platformed, according to the model of Israel’s camp: 1. The tabernacle was in the middle there; so is the throne here. 2. There, the four squadrons of the camp of Levi next the tabernacle; so here the four living creatures. 3. The n the whole camp of Israel; so here, twenty-four elders, representatives of the whole church, built from twelve tribes, and twelve apostles.

In the hand of him, that sat on the throne, was a book, sealed, which no creature could open. This justly calls us back to Dan. Xii ver. 4, where “words are

¹⁷ Chap. iv. 2

¹⁸ Chap. i. 10

¹⁹ Ezek. 1, and x

²⁰ Dan. vii, 9, 10, 22

¹⁴ Rev. 1:7

¹⁵ Matt. 24:30

¹⁶ Chap. iv. 1

shut up, and a book sealed unto the time of the end,” and now, that that is near drawing on, the book is here opened.

REVELATION VI

The opening of the six seals in this chapter, speaks the ruin and rejection of the Jewish nation, and the desolation of their city; which is now very near at hand.

The first seal, opened,²¹ shows Christ setting forth in battle array and avengement against them, as Psalm xlv. 4, 5. And this the New Testament speaketh very much and very highly of; one while calling it, “his coming in clouds;” another while, his “coming in his kingdom;” and sometime, his “coming in power and great glory,” and the like. Because his plaguing and destroying of the nation that crucified him, that so much opposed and wrought mischief against the gospel, was the first evidence, that he gave in sight of all the world, of his being Christ; for till then, he, and his gospel, has been in humility, as I may say, as to the eyes of me, he persecuted whilst he was on earth, and they persecuted after him; and no course taken with them, that so sued both; but now he awakes, shows himself, and makes himself known by the judgment that he executeth.

The three next seals, opening, show the means by which he did destroy, namely, those three sad plagues, that had been threatened so oft, and so sore, by the prophets, “sword, famine, and pestilence.” For,

The second seal, opened, sends out one upon a red horse, to take peace from the earth, and that men should destroy one another; he carried a “great sword.”²²

The third seal, opening, speaks of famine, when corn for scarcity should be weighed, like spicery, in a pair of balances.²³

The fourth seal sends out one, on a pale horse, whose name was Death (the Chaldee very often expresseth the ‘plague,’ or ‘pestilence,’ by that word מוֹתָא and so it is to be taken, (Rev. ii, 23); and hell, or hades, comes after him.²⁴

The opening of the fifth seal, reveals a main cause of the vengeance, namely, the blood of the saints which had been shed, crying, and which was to be required

of that generation.²⁵ These souls are said to cry from under the altar, either in allusion to the blood of creatures sacrificed, poured at the foot of the altars, or according to the Jews’ tenet, That “all just souls, departed, are under the throne of glory.” Answer to their cry is given, that the number of their brethren, that were to be slain, was not yet fulfilled; and they must rest till that should be; and then avengement in their behalf should come. This speaks suitable to that which we observed lately, that now times were begun of bitter persecution, “an hour of temptation,”²⁶ the Jews and devil raging, till the Lord should something cool that fury by the ruin of that people. The opening of the sixth seal (ver. 12, 13), shows the destruction itself, in those borrowed terms, that the Scripture useth to express it by; namely, as if it were the destruction fo the whole world.²⁷ the sun darkened, the stars falling, the heaven departing, and the earth dissolved; and that conclusion (ver. 16), “They shall say to the rocks, Fall on us,” &c. doth not only warrant, but even enforce, us to understand and construe these things in the sense that we do; for Christ applies these very words to the very same thing, Luke xxiii, 30. And here is another, and, to me, a satisfactory reason, why to place the showing of these visions to John, and his writing of this book, before the destruction of Jerusalem.



THE TOWER OF HIPPICUS, A FORTIFICATION OF JERUSALEM.

²¹ Rev. vi. 2

²² Ver. 4

²³ Ver. 5, 6

²⁴ Ver. 8

²⁵ Matt. xxiii, 35, 36

²⁶ Rev. ii, 10, and iii, 10

²⁷ Matt. xxiv, 29, 30

Roman Procurators over Judea

Coponius (A.D. 6-9) Marchus Ambivius (A.D. 9-12) Annius Rufus (A.D. 12-15) Valarius Gratus (A.D. 15-26) Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26- 35) Marcellus Marullus Cuspius Fadus (A.D. 44-46) Tiberius Alexander (A.D. 46-48) Cumanus (A.D. 48-52) Felix (A.D. 52-60) Pocius Festus (A.D. 60-62) Albinus (A.D. 62-64) Gessius Florus (A.D. 64-66)	Augustus emperor (31 B.C. – A.D. 14) Tiberius emperor (A.D. 14-36) Caius Caligula emperor (A.D. 36-42) Agrippa I, king (A.D. 36-44) Claudius emperor A.D. 42-54) Nero emperor (A.D. 54-68)
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How Men Were Saved in the New Testament

“Baptism Doth Also Now Save Us” I Pet. 3:21

	Hear	Believe	Repent	Confess	Baptized
Pentecostians- Acts 2:38	X	X	X		X
Samaritans – Acts 8:12	X	X			X
Simon Magi - Acts 8:13	X	X			X
Eunuch – Acts 8:36, 37	X	X		X	X
Cornelius – Acts 10:47, 48	X	X			X
Lydia – Acts 16:15	X				X
Philipian Jailer – Acts 16:30-33	X				X
Corinthians – Acts 18:8	X	X			X
Ephesians – Acts 19:5	X				X
Saul (Paul) – Acts 22:16	X		X		X

Any attempt to conform the church and gospel to the pattern of teaching we find in the New Testament must place a high premium on baptism as an integral part of the gospel message and means by which men attain salvation in Christ. John was not called the “faith-only-izer” but the “Baptist” or “baptizer.” John came preaching baptism and repentance for remission of sins (Mk. 1:4). During his earthly ministry, Jesus’ disciples overtook John in the numbers they baptized (Jn. 4:1). The Lord’s final

instructions to his disciples before he ascended to heaven were that they continue the work of teaching repentance and baptism for remission of sins in his name (Mk. 16:15, 16). As Preterists, we are attempting to restore to the 21st century church the *primitive* faith and teaching of the Lord about eschatology. But what is restored eschatology if we fail to understand the very plan of salvation itself, and how men come to salvation in Christ?

From our Readers

Question: I have a couple questions that perhaps you can help me with, one is pertaining to resurrection, and the other is related to OT prophecy.

1) What part do you believe the physical body played/plays in resurrection? Based on 1 Cor. 15:44, I understand the result of resurrection is a spiritual body, but is it the physical body that transforms into the spiritual body? If so, wouldn't that mean that physical bodies should be missing from the ground? If not, why do you think Paul speaks of resurrection while speaking of the physical body in 1 Cor. 6:14?

2) Dan. 7:11 speaks of the destruction of the beast. Currently I understand the beast to be Rome, so was wondering how you think that fits in with Matt. 5:17 and all OT prophecy being fulfilled in the first century, seeing how the fall of Rome (Western Empire at least) did not occur until 476 AD?

Answer: Thanks for writing. These are good questions and I am glad to answer them.

1) The physical body is no part of the resurrection. Paul is very clear about this in 1 Cor. 15:37 when he says the "body that thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be." "Sowing" is the creation of Adam and the birth of all men thereafter: God plants a physical body, but a spiritual, intangible, immaterial body is raised/provided for the soul or spirit. Think of a seed. We plant a hard kernel but a soft, green plant immerses totally unlike the seed that housed it. So in the resurrection the spirit of man within him will immerge to be clothed with a house from heaven. Paul said, Christ became a "quickening/life giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). God is spirit (Jn. 4:24). In the resurrection we will be spirits, like the angels in heaven (Matt. 22:30).

2) The Little Horn (Nero) in Daniel was destroyed at Christ's coming after the persecution of 3 1/2 years. In Revelation the beast and dragon were cast into the lake of fire at the coming of Christ (Rev. 19 & 20). Thus, when Daniel speaks about the body of the beast being given to burning, he probably does not mean the

total end of Rome as a political entity, but the defeat that marked the transfer of dominion to Christ at the eschaton. Jesus began to rule from the time of his ascension, but his dominion and kingdom "came in power" by the destruction of his enemies in the Roman civil wars that broke out upon the death of Nero (AD 68-70) and the Jews' war with Rome (AD 67-70). The "Rome" that went into the eschaton was not the "Rome" that came out. The city was destroyed and its temple Jupiter Capitolanus burned; the line of the Caesars ended and a great part of its nobility was slain by Nero. Italy was a ruin. So, just because a form of government still existed and there was a certain continuity there, the reality is that Christ came out with his enemies firmly beneath his feet, and began ruling the nations (including Rome) with an iron rod. Thus, although the imagery in Daniel 7 looks like it might be pointing to the fall of Rome in 476 AD, I think that Revelation requires we see Daniel as merely pointing to the defeat that marked the dominion turning to Christ. It is not the end of the political entity that is in view, but its dominion. Hope that helps. Write any time!

Question: Thanks again Kurt. Based on 1 Cor. 15, I think it makes total sense that the nature of the resurrection is a spiritual (and therefore physically invisible) body. But 1 Cor. 6:14 is somewhat bothersome to me that Paul would say "raise us up" in the middle of speaking about things pertaining to the physical body.

I've been doing some reading and I've come across an argument from critics of full preterism that the first century Jewish understanding of resurrection had to do with the physical body, and since no attempt was made by Jesus or the apostles to clarify what was meant when they mentioned "resurrection" then that means they had the same understanding. One verse quoted was Acts 24:15 where Paul speaks of the common belief between himself and the Pharisees of the coming resurrection. How would you respond to this argument, that the Pharisees understood the resurrection to involve the physical body and since Paul said he agreed with them, then the resurrection must involve the physical body?

Answer: Paul did agree with the Pharisees that the resurrection was central to their hope of salvation, but he did not share their view of what the resurrection entailed, at least not after he converted to Christ. The Jews' conception of the resurrection was that physical bodies would live upon a material, new earth, where they would marry, bear children, etc. Jesus expressly rejected this concept, saying instead that in the resurrection we would be "as angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30). In other words, we will be immortal, intangible, immaterial, invisible, etc. Thus, the charge that Jesus did not refute the Jews' misconception is incorrect. He most certainly did refute it, and established that the resurrection is on the other side of eternity, into realms above, not upon the earth here below. Hope that helps!

Question: Hi Kurt, hope this finds you well. When you find the time, could you explain Ro.5:14 to me?

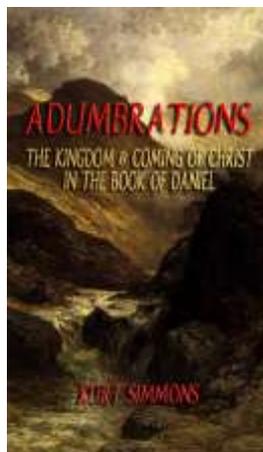
Answer: Thanks for writing. As I see it at present, "death reigned from Adam to Moses" means that the penalty of sin was without remedy from the time of the fall and onward. The law of Moses could provide no remedy. The remedy - the only remedy - was Christ. "Death" was the "prince of this world" that was coming for Jesus, but had no power over him (because he had no sin) (Jn. 14:30). When Jesus said "now shall the prince of this world be cast out" and "now is the prince of this world judged" (Jn. 12:31; 16:11), he meant that the power of sin/death would be annulled in his cross for those that believe and obey. See Col. 2:15 where Paul says Christ triumphed over

the principalities and powers (of sin and death) in his cross by fulfilling the sentence of death in himself, relinquishing its hold upon us.

"Even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Adam's transgression was qualitatively unique in that Adam was created with a moral disposition to good through the indwelling of the Spirit/inspiration breathed into him at creation. We, too, have free will, but our moral disposition is toward our carnal nature and sinful appetites. The idea that men today do not have free will is contradicted by many scriptures Rom. 7:18 says "for me to will is present". Thus, we can will to do right, but *the performance* of it is beyond our reach due to our fallen nature. We can never live completely above the flesh. Thus, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

"who is the figure of him that was to come" - Adam was a type or figure of the second Adam (Christ). As "in Adam all die" so in Christ all are made alive (e.g., all those that obey the gospel). Adam was the first man of the earth; Christ is the second man, the Lord from heaven. Adam stands at the head of creation as the source of physical birth; Christ stands at the head of the re-creation as the source of our second birth (forgiveness of sins/adoption as sons). We contract the contagion of sin from physical descent from Adam, we receive the gift of eternal life and atonement from Christ.

Hope that helps.



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