THE TITLE OF THE GOSPEL

Matthew 1:1

The record of the genesis of Jesus Messiah, the Son of David, son of Abraham.
Matthew 1:1

Matthew begins his gospel with the Greek words:

Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ.

Of these the first two are of great significance and can be translated in English as:

The book of the genesis;
The book of the genealogy;
This is the record of the genealogy;
A record of the origin.

Is this title *"record of beginnings"* simply about the genealogy that follows? Is it about the advent of the Messiah in the first few chapters? Or is it a *long title* for the entirety of Matthew's Gospel?

If it refers to the whole of Matthew's Gospel - the significance being that Jesus has come to inaugurate the Kingdom of Heaven on earth thus ushering in the *latter-days* and the *beginning of the restoration of all things* – then we could render the first verse as Davies and Allison do:

Book of the New Genesis wrought by Jesus Christ . . .

If it refers to the matter of the immediate genealogy, then it's importance in actually listed in the arrangement Matthew places on the names in the first verse preceding the genealogical record and the last verse of that same record which can be compared in the underscored like this:

The record of the genesis of Jesus <u>Messiah</u>, the Son of <u>David</u>, son of <u>Abraham</u>.
Matthew 1:1

So all the generations from <u>Abraham</u> to <u>David</u> are fourteen generations . . . to the <u>Christ</u> are fourteen generations.
Matthew 1:17

Christ . . . David . . . Abraham

Abraham . . . David . . . Christ

There is therefore, and inclusion within the structure of Matthew's genealogical record that sets Jesus at the center. The ramifications of the person of Christ reaching backward to Abraham and the promise to him that all the world would be blessed by a coming offspring, and forward where the advent of the coming offspring restores all things and fulfills all promises.

If we read the opening verse as including the entirety of Matthew's Gospel, then we may wonder if the verse suggests a kind of *"Genesis II: the Sequel."* Matthews's very first words may even project an arch that extends to the Gospel's very final words – *And behold, I am with you always, to the consummation of the age."*

The record of the genesis reveals to us that Matthew has in mind that the deepest beginning in history was not the birth of the world but the birth of the world's Savior. (Dale Bruner).

We have already discussed Matthew's genealogical use of the 3 groupings of 14. There are others.

If we take the three fourteens as multiples of seven, then with the coming of Christ we are entering the *seventh seven*, the period of perfection and fulfillment.

Another possibility is that the number 14 alludes to Daniel's reference of the 70 weeks of years.

> *Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.*
> *Daniel 9:24*

If we reckon a generation as thirty-five years, then 14 generations of 35 years adds up to the number 490, which is the same number of years as the 70 years of sevens. Thus, after three periods of seventy weeks of years, God sends his Messiah into the world.

In any case and in any interpretations of the 3 sets of 14's, Jesus is the focus of Matthew, and we need to keep that as our focus as well.

The record of the genesis of Jesus Messiah

Matthew's desire is to call our attention to this monumental, even sacred character of the genealogy and therefore, to the final person where the genealogy leads. In that light, despite all the names and events and their importance, their true significance lies in the fact that they are a moving lineage through history, bringing *about* and *part of* the origin of Jesus Christ.

And that is the point Matthew is truly making here.

> *It is very important to notice that genealogies in the Old Testament and Jewish tradition always take their name from the progenitor, the first name of the list. Here, however, <u>the genealogy is designated according to the last member of the list</u>. The theological orientation is unmistakable.*
> *Donald Hagner – World Biblical Commentary (WBC), Matthew 1-13, page 9*

The record of the genesis of Jesus Messiah

Messiah is usually a royal title.

Matthew understands that anticipation in the advent of the Messiah was prophesied and he wants to clarify to his readers that the Messiah has indeed, arrived in Jesus *Christ.*

the Son of David, son of Abraham.

Abraham and David represent two great receptors of promise. They are far more than names in a genealogy leading to Christ.

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
Genesis 12:1-3

The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.
Genesis 18:10

Then Abraham said to his young men, "stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father." And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.
Genesis 22:5-8

Now when King David lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." When you days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son, I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.
1 Chronicles 17:1, 11-14

The promise was to David of a son who would be king - *forever*,
and the promise to Abraham was of a seed who would be a blessing - *for everyone.*

The promise to David – *Israel, here is your Messiah!*

The promise to Abraham – *Nations, here is your hope!*

The record of the genesis of Jesus Messiah, the Son of David, son of Abraham.
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Jerome acknowledges that Matthew omits all other ancestors in his Gospel title and mentions only Abraham and David *"because to them alone was the promise of Messiah made."*

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
Genesis 12:1-3

In Jesus, we see this promise beginnings its fulfillment, coming to its fullest expression at the end of Matthew's Gospel.

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." "I tell you, many will come from the east and the west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 8:5, 11

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.
Matthew 21:43

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .
Matthew 28:19

And in this progression, we see the Kingdom of heaven through Jesus fulfilling the Abrahamic and Davidic promises.

When you days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son, I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.
1 Chronicles 17:11-14

I will raise up – in reading this account, Matthew may have been inspired to see the word ἀναστήσω – *raise* from the Septuagint and saw in its meaning, something beyond birth:

God will <u>resurrect</u> the Son of David from the dead to ascend to the throne.

Matthew thus frames his gospel revealing that Jesus Messiah is the offspring and promise of Abraham and David *according to the flesh,* but that he is before them as the Divine and Preeminent Son of God, the Eternal One whose coming forth was the dateless past.

The book of the generations - Βίβλος γενέσεως - of Jesus Messiah, the Son of David, son of Abraham. Matthew 1:1

This is the book of the generations - Βίβλος γενέσεως - of heaven and earth, when they were made, in the day in which the Lord God made the heaven and the earth. Genesis 2:4

And this is the genealogy - Βίβλος γενέσεως - of men in the day in which God made Adam, in the image of God he made him: male and female he made them and called his name Adam in the day he made them. Genesis 5:1

Matthew proclaims:

Jesus as the genesis of the heaven and the earth,

Jesus as the complete genesis of humanity – from the first *Adam* to the fulfilled and transformed *Adam*.

Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, types, and foreshadows.

Jesus as the culmination of what the Old Testament moved toward and pointed to.

Jesus as the inauguration of the Kingdom of Heaven, bringing that Kingdom with his incarnation to manifestation upon the earth in the form of a human being.

Jesus as the full image of the Godhead and as such, the fulfillment of what humanity was always created to be.

Jesus as the ultimate *genesis*, not only the *Creator* of all things visible and invisible, but the One who will *restore all things* through the New Genesis.

Therefore, Jesus is the *Alpha* and the *Omega, the first and the last, the One who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*

Matthew's first verse, his title if you will, says all of this with a bold proclamation.

Book of Genesis of Jesus Messiah, Son of David, Son of Abraham. Matthew 1:1