

The Mission Of The Messiah

Matthew 1:1-17

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Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare somewhere between 1591 and 1595. Along with Shakespeare's Hamlet, it was one of the most popular plays of his lifetime and remains so today.

Romeo and Juliet is about forbidden love. Juliet is the daughter of Lord Capulet and Romeo is the son of Lord Montague. The houses of Capulet and Montague are sworn enemies.

Shakespeare uses dramatic turning points in the play to build tension between the two houses—and the two lovers, Romeo and Juliet.

Some of the dramatic turning points are sometimes mistaken for the climax of the play.

For example, when Romeo avenges the murder of his cousin Mercutio by killing Juliet's cousin Tybalt and is banished from Verona, that's a dramatic turning point but it is not the climax of the play.

However, the tension continues to build until it arrives at the true climax. To reunite with Romeo and avoid an arranged marriage, Juliet feigns her death.

Unfortunately, Romeo is unaware of Juliet's plan. He discovers Juliet's seemingly lifeless body. Grief-stricken, he believes Juliet is dead. Unwilling to live without her, Romeo drinks the real poison and dies.

When Juliet wakes up from her feigned death she discovers Romeo, dead beside her. So, she stabs herself to death with his dagger and dies beside him.

This infamous climax leads to reconciliation between the Capulets and Montagues and they agree to end their long, violent family feud.

In literary terms, the definition of a climax is *“the highest point of tension in a storyline, often depicted by a confrontation between the protagonist and antagonist. A climax resolves the main conflict of the story and is the moment the main character reaches—or fails to reach—his or her goal.”*

Gustav Freytag, a nineteenth-century German writer, defined the five progressions of a story, which have come to be known as Freytag’s Pyramid.

The five progressions are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. Those structural pillars are still the defining elements of a story arc, with the climax at the peak.

The placement of a climax is essential to a good story. It typically occurs around 90% of the way through the narrative to have the greatest impact.

But once the climactic moment happens, the story should be resolved quickly.

If the climax happens too soon, the resolution will be too long, and readers will become disengaged.

If a writer places the climax too late in the story without enough of a wrap-up, it creates an unsatisfying conclusion.

In the story of Romeo and Juliet, the climax occurs right near the end of the play when Romeo discovers Juliet, and thinking that she’s dead, he kills himself.

The Bible's a grand example of God's story of redemption. In his Gospel, Matthew is masterful in the way in which he introduces Jesus as the climax in God's plan of redemption.

The entire Bible can be seen in three acts. First, there is creation, including the creation of mankind (that's found in the first two chapters of Genesis).

Second, there is the fall of mankind (Genesis 3). And third, the rest of the entire Bible is about God's redemption of sinful men and women.

The Old Testament is an exposition and rising action about creation, the fall, and redemption. God promised that He'd save a certain group of people, but they continually rebelled against Him and His promises.

Matthew presents Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as the climax of the Biblical story because it's the dramatic turning point of the story.

Matthew did so masterfully in the lives of two key individuals: David and Abraham. In fact, he hints at that right in the first verse of his Gospel as he writes about the mission of the Messiah.

In Matthew 1:1-17, we learn that Matthew summarized the entire history of God's people because he believed it climaxed in the mission of Jesus.

In Matthew's Gospel, Abraham and David figure prominently Jesus' history. That's why the genealogy of Jesus includes these two ancestral giants.

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Matthew 1:1, *"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham,"* then verse 17a, *"Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David."*

Jesus was a direct descendant of Abraham. But that's not the reason Abraham's mentioned in this genealogy.

The reason Abraham's mentioned is that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise God made to him.

God said to Abraham in Genesis 22:18, "*And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.*" The offspring through whom all the nations of the earth are blessed is Jesus.

Matthew has previously hinted that "*all the nations*" were already blessed by the inclusion of four Gentile women in Jesus' genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah.

Then, after the birth of Jesus, Matthew noted that the first to come and worship Jesus were Gentiles, "*Magi from the east.*"

Later, when Jesus grew up and began His public ministry, He did so in "*Galilee of the Gentiles*" because His ministry was to bring blessing to all the nations.

Among Jesus' very first miracles is the healing of a Roman centurion's servant. Later, Jesus healed a Canaanite woman's daughter who was severely oppressed by a demon.

Even though Matthew recorded that Jesus fed five thousand people who were Jews, Mark's Gospel tells us that Jesus fed four thousand Gentiles.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus revealed that before the end would come the Good News of the Gospel must be proclaimed through the entire world as a testimony to "*all nations.*"

Finally, Matthew concluded his Gospel with Jesus' command to His Apostles that they were to make disciples of "*all nations.*" This points to the consummation of the promise that was made to Abraham.

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Matthew 1:1, "*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham,*" and verse 17b, "*fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon.*"

When David became king, he didn't have a united kingdom, the first 7 years of his reign were over only the area of Judah.

Finally, all the tribes united and David ruled over a combined Judah and Israel for 33 years. During this time, he defeated all his surrounding enemies and set up his palace in Jerusalem.

It's at this time that he wanted to build a temple for God, but God sent a message through Nathan the prophet that David would not build Him a house. Instead, God was going to build a "house," that is, a dynasty, for David.

This is how God expressed it in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, "*When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*"

That offspring was Jesus. Matthew provided Jesus' royal genealogy by tracing Jesus' descent in three stages.

From Abraham to David, from David to Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon, and then from Jechoniah down to Joseph the son of David, who was the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born.

By taking special notice of the deportation to Babylon, which he mentioned twice, Matthew showed that God's promise to David didn't come to an end with the deportation to Babylon.

Matthew picked up on the final words of 2 Kings, which tell us that the line of David, despite the slaughter of Zedekiah's five sons, was preserved during the exile to Babylon through Jechoniah, also called Jehoiachin.

2 Kings ends by anticipating the Messiah's reign, telling us that Jehoiachin was released from prison and given a seat above all the other kings who were in Babylon.

Matthew ends with the fulfillment of that passage, showing that Jesus, the son of David, is given all authority in heaven and on earth in Matthew 28:18.

So, Jesus is the son of Abraham and Jesus is the son of David.

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Next, notice that three times in these opening verses of his Gospel, Matthew referred to Jesus as "Christ."

He did so in verse 1, again in verse 16, and again in verse 17. The Gospel of Matthew is a book about Jesus "*the Christ, the Messiah.*"

The New Testament word for "Christ" is the same as the Old Testament word "Messiah." It means "anointed" or "anointed one."

Specifically, it refers to God's promise throughout the Old Testament to send His "*anointed one*" Who would fulfill His plan of redemption for His people.

Matthew's Gospel is the dramatic turning point in the story of God's plan of redemption. Matthew was saying that Malachi wasn't the end.

Even though God had been silent for 400 years, God was now bringing His story of redemption to a glorious climax—and it was fulfilled in the person of His Son, Jesus the Christ, the Messiah.

That's why Matthew repeatedly refers to the Old Testament in his Gospel. He points out, in so many ways, that Jesus was the climax of God's story of redemption.

For example, Matthew pointed out ten times that what happened in Jesus' life was the fulfillment of what the prophets in the Old Testament had foretold. Let me give you several instances of this.

When Jesus' father was struggling with the fact that his wife-to-be Mary was pregnant, he had a dream.

In this dream, the angel told Joseph that Mary *“Will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*

Then Matthew recorded these words in Matthew 1:22-23, *“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).”*

Another instance of Matthew recording what was spoken by the prophets in the Old Testament was when Jesus and his family fled to Egypt to escape Herod's murderous wrath.

Once again, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. Matthew writes in Matthew 2:13-15a, *“And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.*

“Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Instances like this occur another eight times in Matthew’s Gospel. But that is not all. Matthew records ten miracles in chapters 8-9.

These miracles demonstrate that Jesus had complete power to bring to His people the healing and salvation promised by the prophets.

For example, Matthew recorded the following miracle in Matthew 8:14-16, *“When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.”*

Then Matthew recorded in verse 17, *“This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”*

Earlier, Matthew noted in Matthew 4:23 that *“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.”*

Matthew wanted to emphasize that nothing could thwart Jesus’ power, so he repeated this statement in Matthew 9:35 and Matthew 10:1.

Finally, Matthew used the term “*son of David*” ten times in his Gospel. Matthew often used it in connection with the healing done by Jesus.

Matthew wanted to show that Jesus’ kingdom is one of complete blessing and deliverance for the people of God.

Truly, Jesus is the anointed one, the long-awaited Messiah, the Christ, the fulfillment of all that the prophets had foretold.

Jesus is the dramatic turning point in God’s story of redemption. Jesus is the climax of the way by which God brings sinners back into a right relationship with Himself.

So, Jesus is the son of Abraham. Jesus is the son of David. Jesus is the Christ.

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Conclusion

Since Jesus is the Messiah sent by God, we must faithfully complete the mission He has given us to make disciples of all nations.

Earlier, I mentioned Freytag’s Pyramid and the five progressions of a story, well the story of redemption in the Old Testament has exposition and rising action.

The climax is found in the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and present reign of Jesus.

What remains is the falling action and the denouement (that is, the final act). The falling action began when Jesus ascended into heaven and will continue until Jesus’ return.

When Jesus returns, that will be the denouement, the final act as He establishes His kingdom on the new earth and sits on His throne in the New Jerusalem.

So, what does that mean for us today? It means that we know the outcome of the story of redemption. There will be no twist that'll change the ending. Jesus has won the victory over Satan and sin.

In the last recorded act in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gave a commission to His Apostles. In a very real sense, we have a vital part to play in the conclusion of God's story of redemption.

Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20, "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Therefore, let us faithfully complete the mission that Jesus has given us to make disciples of all nations.