

Unlike most people I have met, I have always had a fascination with the genealogies in the Bible. In the *New Testament in Its World – Audio Lectures*, in the lecture on “The Gospel According to Matthew,” Wright states, “for those with eyes to see, the genealogy itself tells the whole story:” Abraham, the founder of the family; David, the king of the family who was promised an heir who would rule the world; the Babylonian exile where all hope for the family seems to be lost; and finally Messiah, the long awaited fulfillment of Israel’s promise, and more importantly, Emmanuel, God with us.

I guess I like a slightly fuller story. I feel the best way to see the full story is to combine Matthew’s genealogy with Luke’s. Both genealogies end up showing that Jesus is for everyone, not just the Jews, but they go about it in different ways. Luke’s genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, thereby including all to be covered by the blood of Jesus; I prefer this version of going all the way back to the beginning. Matthew’s genealogy is rooted in Abraham, the father of God’s chosen people, but includes the grafting in of other nations through the mention of Tamar (Canaanite), Rahab (Canaanite), Ruth (Moabite), and Bathsheba (possibly Hittite).

There are other things I prefer about each of these approaches, which results in my belief that the whole story is told when combining the two genealogies. Luke and Matthew’s genealogies differ greatly in the names used from David to Jesus. Whether that is from tracing the legal descent of the house of David using only heirs to the throne, or the direct bloodline of Joseph, or simply a translation difference of names, I prefer the names in Matthew’s genealogy because they are the versions connected to the Old Testament stories.

I also prefer Matthew’s inclusion of women in the genealogy. As a child, I didn’t understand how significant it was for women to be included in the genealogy for a patriarchal society. This inclusion made them people, at a time when women were viewed as the property of their husband, and not even the most valuable piece of his property. Matthew’s readers surely would

have noticed this inclusion—it would have spoken volumes to them—and this is more significant that we make it out to be today. God's activity is not limited to men.

I think I have always preferred reading Luke to reading the other gospels. Although I reasoned that Luke was just a better storyteller, perhaps that has to do with the intended audience—growing up I was definitely more of a Roman aristocrat and God-fearing Gentile than a converted Jew. Other questions I am still wrestling with revolve around a deeper realization of the words of Jesus as coming from a collection of sayings, not a single speech/sermon. It isn't that I previously thought the sermon on the mount or the sermon on the plain were direct transcriptions of Jesus' words; I just didn't think about it much at all. Recently, though, I was reading from a few different collections of quotes from Queen Elizabeth. The picture I got of the queen varied depending on the collection of quotes, and now I'm wondering how much that effect is true of the collections and arrangements of the words of Jesus. I do believe God's inspiration flowed through the authors of the Bible, but I have heard much talk through my life about which Gospel is more accurate and such, without a definite answer to the question. Maybe none of it is about accuracy, though. Maybe it is about the picture of Jesus that the author wanted his readers to see. I think you kind of referred to this with the terms *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox*; the precise words versus the precise voice. I think there has always been a tension for me of trying to bring the Gospels into alignment with one another; to make them work together to paint one picture of Jesus. What if I look at them as completely different views of Jesus? Is the Jesus I have in my head more one dimensional because I try to align different views before considering each view on its own? These are the things I am now thinking as I want to approach the Gospels with a fresh reading. I want to read through them without trying to see how they match, or mesh, or work together, but as a stand alone. What light does each author want their reader to see Jesus in? What can I learn about Jesus by looking at each Gospel as a different artistic style, so to speak?