

22. Capstone - Biblical Echoes in Matthew 1–4

Matthew’s opening chapters are packed with allusions to **Genesis**, **Exodus**, and the Hebrew Scriptures in general. He’s not just telling us what happened—he’s framing Jesus as the **fulfillment and recapitulation** of the entire story of Israel

◆ GENESIS THEMES & REFERENCES

Matthew Passage	Genesis Echo	Connection
1:1–17 – Genealogy	Abraham → David → Jesus	Matthew traces Jesus’ ancestry through Abraham , the father of Israel, showing him as the fulfillment of the promise that through Abraham’s line “all nations will be blessed” (Gen 12:3).
1:18–25 – Virgin birth	Creation by the Spirit	Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters in Gen 1:2, here the Holy Spirit brings forth new life. Jesus is a new creation .
2:1–12 – Visit of the Magi	Blessing to the nations	The nations (Gentile Magi) come to worship the descendant of Abraham—echoes of the promise to Abraham that all nations would come through his line.
3:1–12 – John the Baptist	New Adam / Voice in the garden	John is the “voice crying in the wilderness,” recalling how God called to Adam, “Where are you?” John calls people back to God in a new Eden.
4:1–11 – Temptation in the desert	Adam and Eve in the garden	Adam failed when tempted by the serpent; Jesus succeeds . Both involve food (fruit / bread), identity, and trust in God’s Word. Jesus is the New Adam .
4:16 – Darkness → light	Genesis 1	“Let there be light...” Jesus brings the first light of a new creation , just as God did at the beginning.

◆ EXODUS THEMES & REFERENCES

Matthew Passage	Exodus Echo	Connection
1:18–2:23 – Herod’s massacre	Pharaoh’s massacre of Hebrew boys (Ex 1)	Just like Moses, Jesus is saved from a tyrant who slaughters infants.
2:13–15 – Flight to Egypt	Israel in Egypt / Exodus out	Jesus goes into Egypt and later comes out , fulfilling “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Hosea 11:1, referencing Israel’s Exodus).
3:13–17 – Baptism in the Jordan	Red Sea crossing	Baptism is Jesus’ passage through the waters , like Israel’s Red Sea—he is the new Moses, leading a new people.

Matthew Passage	Exodus Echo	Connection
4:1–11 – 40 days in the wilderness	Israel’s 40 years in the desert	Jesus relives Israel’s wilderness—but where they failed, he remains faithful . He quotes Deuteronomy , Israel’s desert instruction manual.
4:23–25 – Healing and liberation	Signs and wonders in Egypt	Jesus performs miraculous signs , not to curse like Moses, but to heal and restore —a new kind of Exodus.

◆ OTHER MAJOR SCRIPTURAL ECHOES

Matthew Passage	Scriptural Reference	Connection
1:23 – “God with us”	Isaiah 7:14	Emmanuel = God is not distant. He’s entering history.
2:23 – “He shall be called a Nazarene”	Prophetic fulfillment	Possibly wordplay on “netzer” (branch), linking Jesus to messianic prophecies (Isaiah 11:1).
3:3 – Voice in the wilderness	Isaiah 40:3	John’s ministry is framed as the preparation for a new Exodus .
4:15–16 – Zebulun/Naphtali light	Isaiah 9:1–2	The first tribes to fall into exile now receive the first light of the Messiah.
4:17 – “Kingdom of heaven is at hand”	Daniel 2, 7	The coming Kingdom is what Daniel foresaw—the reign of God overturning earthly empires.

The Big Picture: Matthew’s Theology

Biblical Arc	Jesus’ Role
Creation → New Creation	Jesus as New Adam, light, Spirit-born
Exodus → New Exodus	Jesus as New Moses , leading us from slavery to freedom
Exile → Return	Jesus as the light to the exiled , restoring the scattered tribes
Promise → Fulfillment	Jesus as Son of Abraham, Son of David, and Son of God

It was important for Matthew to connect the beginning of his Gospel with Genesis, Exodus, and other key parts of the Hebrew Scriptures because he was showing that Jesus is not starting a new story—he is fulfilling and completing the old one. By echoing Genesis, Matthew presents Jesus as the New Adam, ushering in a new creation; by recalling Exodus, he shows Jesus as the New Moses, leading a new people into freedom and covenant; and by referencing the prophets and promises to Abraham and David, he roots Jesus in the deep identity and hope of Israel. For Matthew’s largely Jewish audience, these connections were essential—they revealed that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, not a break from their tradition, but its divine climax.