

The question that you raised about Mr Rumball's comments on Matthew 1:1 is indeed an interesting one. What would a modern reader naturally think was meant by the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ"? The ordinary reader, seeing this word, would think of our common use of the noun "generation" as meaning the people who are contemporaries during any certain period of time, or the length of time in which an average group of people would pass through the active portion of their careers.

Since Matthew is neither an account of all the many people who lived at the time of Jesus Christ nor of all the varied outstanding events in the course of a single generation of history, neither of these meanings would particularly fit. Thus the word "generation" would seem to be rather archaic in this context.

If a man has done much Bible reading he doubtless would have a strong impression in his mind of the many uses of the word "generations" in the Book of Genesis, where it is generally used to introduce genealogies. As a result I have little doubt that at least ninety percent of such readers simply assume, when they read Matthew 1:1, that "generation" here means "genealogy," and is therefore a natural introduction to the following verses, which present the human genealogy of Christ.

All this, of course, while interesting, is not particularly important. The important question is, what is the real meaning of the Greek word actually used here? That word is *genesis*, which is the word used to describe the first book of the Bible, and ordinarily means "beginning." It occurs only five times in the New Testament. The other four are Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:14, where it is translated "birth," James 1:23, where it is translated "natural," and James 3:6 where it is translated "nature." (In Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:14 the older manuscripts do not contain the word *genesis* but a different word that is quite similar.) In various passages in Genesis where a genealogy is introduced by the word "generations" (plural), the ancient Greek translation renders it by the plural of *genesis*. Thus "genealogy" is a very natural interpretation of this word. The great majority of Biblical commentators interpret it in this sense in Matthew 1:1 and understand it to be an introduction to the genealogy that occupies the greater part of the chapter.

There are, however, a few interpreters who think that the first verse of Matthew ought to introduce the book as a whole.