

# Matthew

**WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT?** A biography of Jesus, written especially to convince Jewish readers that he was the Messiah.

**WHO WROTE IT?** Matthew (Levi), a former tax collector, one of Jesus' original twelve disciples.

**WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?** Matthew apparently wrote this in the 50s or 60s A.D.

**WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT?** The birth of Jesus marked the beginning of a new era in human history—the era of God's new covenant with humanity.

**THE BREAKDOWN**

- Chapters 1–2: Jesus' birth and early years
- Chapters 3–4: Jesus' baptism and early ministry
- Chapters 5–7: The Sermon on the Mount
- Chapters 8–9: Jesus preaches in Galilee
- Chapter 10: Jesus deploys the twelve disciples
- Chapters 11–12: Continued ministry in Galilee
- Chapter 13: Parables of the Kingdom
- Chapters 14–17: Jesus reveals Messiahship
- Chapter 18: Life in the community of believers
- Chapters 19–20: Jesus preaches: Judea, Perea
- Chapters 21–27: Jesus' last week
- Chapter 28: Jesus' resurrection

**KEY CONCEPTS**

• "Kingdom of Heaven" (Using the word "heaven" to signify God connected with a Jewish audience)

**SCORECARD**

- **Jesus:** The number one personality in the book
- **John the Baptist:** Desert preacher who prepared the people for Jesus' coming
- **Herod Antipas:** Jewish ruler of Galilee
- **Pilate:** Roman governor of Judea
- **Pharisees and Sadducees:** Religious leaders who questioned Jesus' authority
- **Judas Iscariot:** Disciple who betrayed Jesus

**READING TIME**



**WORTH MEMORIZING**

Of the hundreds of excellent passages in Matthew, here are a few key references:

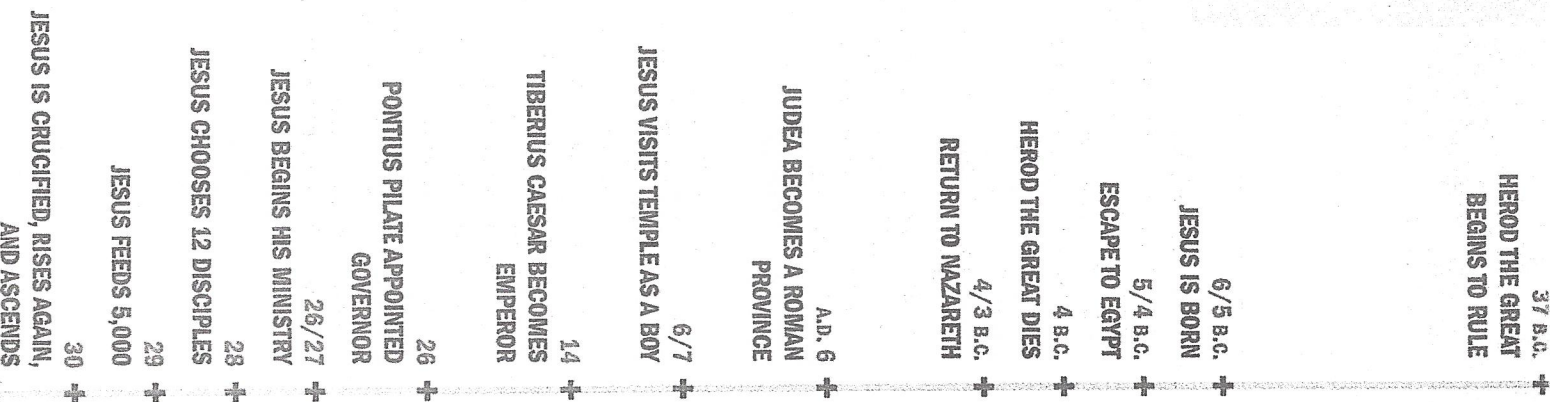
- 5:3-10 The Beatitudes
- 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. . . ."
- 6:9-13 The Lord's Prayer
- 6:19-21 "Don't store up treasures here on earth. . . ."
- 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. . . ."
- 11:28-30 "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. . . ."
- 28:19-20 "Go and make disciples of all the nations. . . ."

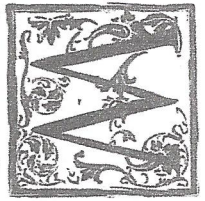
**THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE**

• **ORDINARY MEN.** Jesus' twelve disciples were a very diverse group of men that Jesus formed into a united team. He showed them what to do. He taught them. When he warned about anger, adultery, divorce, and revenge, he spoke from the male perspective. He gave them practical experience. He helped resolve their conflicts, especially their power struggles. He dealt with betrayal and abandonment. But he never gave up on them. At the end, he gave them a mission that would energize them for the rest of their lives.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF  
**Matthew?**  
++ ++  
God kept his  
many promises  
to send us  
a Savior.

**Timeline**





Whenever Jesus passes by, lives are changed. Take, for example, the tax collector Matthew. One day he was sitting in his tax booth when Jesus walked by, looked him in the eye, and said, "Follow Me" (Matthew 9:9). Just that quickly, Matthew "left all, rose up, and followed Him" (Luke 5:29).

Matthew later wrote the first Gospel, an account of the words and works of Jesus penned for his fellow Jews, probably between A.D. 50 and 60. The Gospel of Matthew had one overriding purpose: to demonstrate that the carpenter from Nazareth was the long-awaited Messiah—Christ, the Anointed One. Matthew packed his Gospel with Old Testament links, quoting and alluding to the Old Testament more than any other New Testament writer. His Gospel is wholly cut from Jewish cloth. Yet it's a garment for Jews and Gentiles alike. Matthew began his book with the visit of the Gentile Magi at the birth of Christ, and concluded his Gospel with the commission to make disciples of all nations.

Matthew, which is structured around five major discourses of Jesus, emphasizes the kingdom of heaven, our Lord's role as Messiah, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, and the worldwide nature of the Gospel. As the Promised One, Jesus is worthy of our hope. As Messiah, He is worthy of our trust. As King, He is worthy of our devotion. As Savior, His name should be proclaimed to all the earth, and, lo, He is with us, even to the end of the age.



**KEY THOUGHT:**

Jesus Christ, Son of David,  
Son of Abraham, is the Messiah,  
the King of Israel, the Savior  
of the world.



**KEY VERSES:**

"He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' . . . Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'"  
Matthew 16:13, 16



**KEY ACTION:**

Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:19-20).



**KEY PRAYER:**

May my life reflect the glory  
of Your name.

## BASIC SURVEY

### MATTHEW

**AUTHOR:** Not stated, but traditionally Matthew, a tax collector (9:9). Matthew is also known as “Levi” (Mark 2:14 KJV).

**DATE:** Approximately AD 55, before all the apostles left Jerusalem to evangelize the world.

#### IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

Jesus fulfills the Old Testament prophecies of a coming Messiah.

#### DETAILS, PLEASE

The first of the four *Gospels* (meaning “good news”), Matthew is written primarily to a Jewish audience, so it quotes numerous Old Testament references to prove that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Beginning with a genealogy that shows Jesus’ ancestry, Matthew then details the angelic announcement of His conception. He introduces John the Baptist and describes the calling of key disciples Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Jesus’ teachings are emphasized, with long passages covering His “Sermon on the Mount” (chapters 5–7), including the Beatitudes and the Lords Prayer. Matthew also details the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

#### QUOTABLE

- > “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (1:21 NKJV).
- > “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” (28:19 NIV).

#### UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

Matthew is the only biographer of Jesus to mention unusual miracles—the tearing of the temple curtain, the breaking open of tombs, and the raising to life of dead saints—that occurred during that time (27:50–54).

#### SO WHAT?

As Messiah, Jesus is also king—and worthy of our worship.

#### READ MATTHEW 3–4.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 183. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 177. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 177. →

## HEART OF THE BOOK

### FULFILLING MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS

Matthew repeatedly quotes Old Testament scriptures to prove that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah—and Jesus fulfilled *many* prophecies. However, He also surprised the Jews by fulfilling promises that they hadn’t realized were about the Messiah. They hadn’t expected, for example, that He would be a healer and a teacher (Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18–19), and they certainly weren’t expecting that He’d be rejected by the religious leaders, be crucified, die, then resurrect from the dead.

The Jews envisioned a charismatic king like David who would rally Israel, vanquish the foreign oppressors, and reestablish the greatness and glory of the kingdom of Israel. That’s why the disciples repeatedly asked Jesus, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6 NIV). God had promised David: “I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons . . . I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever” (1 Chronicles 17:11, 14 NIV). That’s why, when Jesus spoke of His death, the Jews said, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever” (John 12:34 NKJV).

Jesus wasn’t quite doing what people expected the Messiah would do. Nevertheless, the common people reasoned, “When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?” (John 7:31 NIV). They hoped that this gentle carpenter would eventually rise to the occasion and fulfill *all* their Messianic expectations. So the crowds shouted, “Son of David!” when He rode into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9 NIV). The expression “Son of David” literally meant “Messiah.”

#### READ MATTHEW 16 AND 21.

- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 180. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 178. →

## CLOSER LOOK

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT



*Sermon on the Mount* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890) portrays Jesus delivering His most famous teaching.

clearly given in another setting at another time. Jesus repeated these basic teachings because it was vital that *everyone* hear them.

The following are just a few examples of what Jesus taught: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44 KJV). “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1 NKJV). “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7 KJV).

Jesus often taught the opposite of what people expected to hear. They were used to hearing “an eye for an eye,” but Jesus told them not to retaliate, but that if someone struck them on one cheek, to let them slap the other as well. Instead of hating enemies, He commanded us to love them. Instead of covetously and stingily saving, He commanded us to be generous and freely give to those who asked of us (Matthew 5:38-42). These counterintuitive teachings nevertheless make great sense in God’s larger scheme of things.

## READ MATTHEW 6-7.

- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 179.



## CLOSER LOOK

## JESUS’ HEALING MIRACLES

Matthew’s Gospel describes Jesus performing miracle after miracle, healing people’s physical infirmities and sicknesses, and for three and a half years, sick people crowded around Him.

Jesus was an outstanding healer and had power and authority over the devil. “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38 NLT). He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to . . . proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18 NASB).

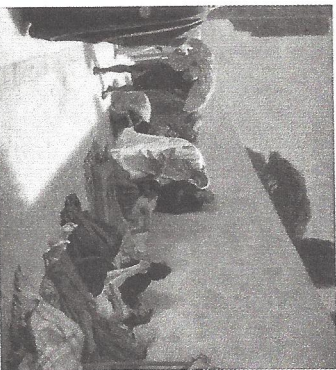
The Jews hadn’t visualized their Messiah coming as a healer, but there were certainly prophecies that He would do exactly that. Matthew tells us that Jesus “healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases’” (Matthew 8:16-17 NIV).

Besides demonstrating God’s love and concern for His people, Jesus’ miracles—healing people, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead—were powerful proof that Jesus was who He claimed to be. And people who were honest recognized this.

Nicodemus admitted, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2 NIV). After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, “many of the Jews who had . . . seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him” (John 11:45 NKJV).

## READ MATTHEW 8-9.

- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 180.



Gebhard Fugel (1863-1939) painted *Miracles of Jesus*, which illustrates Jesus healing the sick.

## HEART OF THE BOOK

## JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

God sent His Son to earth to become a man, to experience all the pain and sorrow that humans experience, and to be our Savior. But to the utter surprise of many Jews, to save us He had to die on the cross for our sins. And to be crucified, He had to be rejected by His own people. Now, the “common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37 KJV), but the corrupt religious leaders, motivated by jealousy, plotted against Him, had Him arrested, and after conducting a fake trial, handed Him over to the Romans to be crucified. Jesus first suffered severe pain and blood loss from a flogging, then endured excruciating pain on the cross. As a result, after only six hours, He died.

Two wealthy disciples buried Jesus in a tomb in a garden near the place of execution, and that seemed to be the end of any hope that Jesus would deliver His people. But on the third day, early in the morning, the Spirit of God raised His corpse to life and Jesus Christ “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4 NASB). Small wonder that Thomas bowed down before Him and declared, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28 NIV).

Jesus’ resurrection gives hope of eternal life to all humankind: “God . . . has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3 NIV).

READ MATTHEW 27:31-28:20.

- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 183. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 183. →

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Over seven hundred years before Jesus’ birth, Isaiah prophesied, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son” (Isaiah 7:14 NKJV). Now, after Joseph became engaged to a young woman named Mary, the angel Gabriel told Mary, “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be . . . the Son of the Most High” (Luke 1:31-32 NIV). Mary was a virgin, but the Spirit of God miraculously caused her to conceive. Joseph was troubled by Mary’s pregnancy but the angel told him, “That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and . . . He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21 NKJV). This is exactly what happened.

READ MATTHEW 1 AND ISAIAH 7.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## THE WISE MEN

Balaam prophesied, “A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel” (Numbers 24:17 NLT). Some fourteen hundred years later, wise men known as Magi saw a bright star in the skies over Israel. They knew that a great king had been born in Israel. When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem, they asked King Herod, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose” (Matthew 2:2 NLT). Herod summoned the priests and scribes and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” They answered, “In Bethlehem in Judea” (Matthew 2:4-5 NLT). The Magi then went to Bethlehem, found Jesus, worshipped Him, and gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, fulfilling Isaiah 60:6.

READ MATTHEW 2:1-12 AND ISAIAH 60.



The Magi went to worship the King whose birth had been prophesied. This painting titled *Adoration of Magi* was created by Giacomo Cavedoni (1577-1660).

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Jesus frequently taught the crowds using parables. This is His most famous parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold" (Luke 8:5-8 NKJV). Jesus explained this parable to His disciples, but not to the crowds. He wanted them to think and pray about it until they finally understood it. Being practical farmers, many of them eventually got it (See Matthew 11:25 NLT).

READ MATTHEW 12-13.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## THE END TIME

Jesus' disciples asked, "What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3 NLT). Jesus answered that there would be many false Messiahs, wars, famines, and earthquakes, but the end would not be yet. He warned, "You will be hated all over the world." After Christians preach the Gospel in all nations, "then the end will come" (Matthew 24:9, 14 NLT). When the Abomination of Desolation is set up in God's temple, believers must flee, for then the Great Tribulation begins (Matthew 24:15-21). Then immediately after those days "they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30 NASB) and Jesus will gather all believers to Himself.

READ MATTHEW 24 AND LUKE 21.

Jesus had a unique way of tantalizing audiences with parables. These stories frequently surprised his listeners and made them think. Here are more than 30:

REFERENCE	PARABLE	MAIN POINT
Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49	Two houses, two foundations	Don't just listen to Jesus; follow through.
Matthew 9:14-17;	Patching garments, filling wineskins	New truth requires new structures.
Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:36-39		
Matthew 13:1-23;	Four kinds of soil	The gospel gets varying results.
Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15		
Matthew 13:24-29, 37-43	The wheat & the weeds	Good and evil will get sorted out—eventually.
Matthew 13:31-32;	The mustard seed	God's Kingdom may start out small —but just wait.
Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19		
Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21	Yeast in the bread dough	God's Kingdom can permeate everywhere.
Matthew 13:44	Hidden treasure in a field	Get the spiritual treasure, whatever it costs.
Matthew 13:45-46	The pearl merchant	Get the spiritual treasure, whatever it costs.
Matthew 13:47-51	The fishing net	Good and evil will get sorted out—eventually.
Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7	One lost sheep	Every individual counts to God.
Matthew 18:21-35	The two debtors	"Hard guys" eventually get broken.
Matthew 20:1-16	The day laborers	God doesn't need anyone's permission to be generous.
Matthew 21:28-32	A job for two sons	Talk is cheap; action is what counts.
Matthew 21:33-46;	The obnoxious tenants	Rejecting Jesus is not a smart idea.
Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19		
Matthew 22:1-14;	The wedding feast	Not everyone sees the value of being close to God.
Luke 14:15-24		
Matthew 24:45-51;	Managers with an absent boss	We're all accountable to a Master.
Mark 13:34-37; Luke 12:42-48		
Matthew 25:1-13	The 10 bridesmaids	Be ready for the Second Coming.
Matthew 25:14-30	The three servants	Get to work with whatever you've been given.
Mark 4:21-25	The oil lamp	God's light is for sharing.
Mark 4:26-29	The growing seeds	God's Kingdom grows gradually.
Luke 10:30-37	The good Samaritan	Don't be too busy to help the distressed.
Luke 11:5-10	A neighbor at midnight	Don't hesitate to ask God for what you truly need.
Luke 12:13-21	The rich fool	Material goods won't last.
Luke 13:6-9	The barren fig tree	Be productive—or else.
Luke 15:8-10	The lost coin	Every individual counts to God.
Luke 15:11-32	The lost son	God can handle our major mistakes in life.
Luke 16:1-12	The shrewd manager	Financial faithfulness is important.
Luke 18:1-8	The widow who wouldn't give up	God will surely grant justice.
Luke 18:9-14	The Pharisee & the tax collector	"Hot air" won't impress God.
Luke 19:11-27	The 10 servants	Get to work with whatever you've been given.
John 10:1-30	The Good Shepherd	Jesus truly cares for us.
John 15:1-17	The True Vine	Apart from Jesus, we die.

# Matthew

The most amazing thing about the book of Matthew is the author. We know that he began his career collecting taxes but ended it as a devoted follower of Christ. Why would Jesus pick a man so despised to be one of His disciples—to be with Him constantly for three years? Perhaps He did it to show that true change is possible. If a man like Matthew—hated by his own people for squeezing taxes from them—could learn to trust Jesus as Savior, then anyone could.

Also known as Levi, Matthew's job was to make the Israelites cough up hard-earned cash to the Romans—the ones who conquered his people and controlled their country. Beyond that, it was standard operating procedure for a tax collector to charge even more than the Romans wanted and pocket the difference. You can imagine how Matthew's neighbors felt about someone profiting by helping the enemy. But a miracle happened when Jesus met Levi. Luke records it: "Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' So, leaving everything behind, he got up and began to follow Him" (Lk 5:27-28). Get that? He left everything behind to follow Jesus. The tax collector's heart and life changed with those two little words from Jesus: "Follow Me!"

As a Jew, Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience, embedding in his story prophecies and Old Testament teachings to help his readers realize that Jesus was the Messiah for whom they had been waiting for centuries.

Beginning with His family tree, Matthew wrote of Jesus' earthly heritage and how God worked through ordinary people to bring about His birth. He described how the leaders of Israel knew from the prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (2:1-6). Matthew also showed to his Jewish readers that Jesus was the chosen one, the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, a verse Matthew quoted: "See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel, which is translated 'God is with us'" (Mt 1:23).

Jesus fulfilled still more prophecies, as Matthew recorded in 4:15-17: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, along the sea road, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles! The people who live in darkness have seen a great light, and for those living in the shadowland of death, light has dawned" (from Is 9:1-2). And as Jesus entered Jerusalem the week of His crucifixion, Matthew 21:5 pointed out that this fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy (Zch 9:9).

The gospel of Matthew contains many prophecies fulfilled through Jesus' life. As the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus explained, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for

many" (20:28). And He rose again to live forever. Matthew's Gospel, written by a former tax collector, makes it very clear that Jesus can change people's lives.

Looking for a change? Jesus is just the change you need.

**Author:** Matthew, a Jewish tax collector and disciple of Jesus

**Date:** Written in A.D. 60–65, the Gospel of Matthew covers events leading up to the birth of Jesus through His crucifixion and resurrection

**What in the world is going on?**

ca 300 B.C.–A.D. 100 The Chincalan, an early Mayan civilization in the Late Formative period, flourishes in the lowlands of Guatemala

ca 247 B.C.–A.D. 224 The era of the Parthian Empire (established by Arsaces in what is now Khorāsān, Iran)

206 B.C.–A.D. 220 Han Dynasty in China (an era interrupted by the Xin dynasty in A.D. 9–25); the Silk Road, a trading route that connected China to western countries, was in use especially during the era of the Roman Empire

200 B.C.–A.D. 500 A Native American culture known for its burial mounds thrives at Hopewell, in southern Ohio

ca 200 B.C.–A.D. 68 The Dead Sea Scrolls, found in A.D. 1947–1956, date from this era

44 B.C. Julius Caesar is assassinated on the Ides of March (March 15)

37–4 B.C. Herod the Great is king of Judea

27 B.C.–A.D. 476 The era of the Roman Empire

27 B.C.–A.D. 14 The reign of Augustus Caesar (Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar) is also *Pax Romana*—the era of peace in the Mediterranean world

20 B.C. King Herod begins massive reconstruction on the temple in Jerusalem

6 B.C. Jesus is born

4 B.C. After the visit of the Magi, Jesus and His family escape to Egypt

A.D. 6 Twelve-year-old Jesus visits the temple in Jerusalem

A.D. 8 The Julian calendar, established by Julius Caesar, is finally in use

A.D. 18–36 Caliphates is the high priest in Jerusalem

A.D. 25–220 The Eastern Han dynasty is in force in China

A.D. 26–30 Years of Jesus' ministry

A.D. 26–36 Pontius Pilate is the governor of Judea

A.D. 30 Jesus is crucified, resurrected, and ascends to heaven

ca A.D. 60–65 Matthew writes his Gospel



# Matthew

BOOK INTRODUCTION

**W**ho could imagine that Matthew—a corrupt small-time tax collector for Rome—would one day write a document that would be read, studied, memorized, and treasured for centuries in every part of the world? His account of the words and works of Jesus, written for his fellow Jews probably between AD 50 and 60, had one overriding purpose: to demonstrate that the carpenter from Nazareth was none other than the long-awaited Jewish Messiah—Christ, the Anointed One.

Educated and literate, Matthew had all the prerequisites to maintain accurate records of tax receipts and payments to Rome under Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. So it is really no surprise that God's Spirit would use this talent and training to produce a beautifully organized record of Jesus' ministry, presented in a thoroughly Jewish way.

Some time during his life, Matthew had left his Jewish religion behind. The lure of wealth as an agent of Rome—his willingness to grow rich on the backs of his fellow countrymen—overpowered whatever commitment he might have had to the tenets of Judaism, until Jesus issued a startling invitation.

Matthew was sitting in his tax booth, possibly calculating the day's take, when the itinerant preacher from Nazareth—the one everyone had been talking about—strode purposefully over to his makeshift office along the roadside, looked Matthew right in the eyes, and said, "Follow Me." And just that quickly, Matthew did! He stood up, stepped out from behind the counter, and simply walked away . . . *from everything*. As Scripture says, Matthew "left all, rose up, and followed Him" (Luke 5:27, 28).

Left *all*? Scripture gives us no hint of hesitation. When Jesus looked at him and called his name, Matthew instantly turned his back on his old life and became a lifelong disciple of the young rabbi from Nazareth.

Shortly thereafter, Matthew gave a party in his own home, inviting all his equally despised former colleagues to meet his new Master! It was a tax collectors' open house—with Jesus as the guest of honor! None of this was lost on the scribes and Pharisees, who were sputtering with indignation. Confronting Jesus' disciples, these Jewish leaders said, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Referring to Matthew and his fellow revenue agents, Jesus gave His now-famous reply: "Those who are well have no

need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:30–32).

## WHAT IT SAYS | *Announcing the Eternal Kingdom*

Even if the transformed Matthew could not return to his countrymen all the money he had stolen as a tax collector, he could give them something else, something infinitely better: the good news that God's Messiah had appeared at last, announcing the kingdom of heaven. Even if the Jews could not throw off the yoke of Rome, they could throw off the crushing spiritual yoke of the law by entering that kingdom and taking upon themselves the yoke Jesus offered, one that would provide rest for their souls (11:29, 30).

Wanting all the children of Abraham to experience what he had, Matthew wrote an account of Jesus' life cut wholly from Jewish cloth—yet this Gospel garment could be worn by Jews and Gentiles alike. Matthew recorded Jesus' healing of a Gentile woman's daughter from Canaan (15:21–28) and concluded his book with Jesus' commission to go and "make disciples of all the [Gentile] nations" (28:19, 20). His is also the only Gospel that records the visit of the Gentile magi at the birth of Jesus (2:1–12) and Jesus' statement that "The field is the world" (13:38). All these inclusions link back to Isaiah, who saw Israel and her coming Servant Messiah as a "light to the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 60:3).

Still, Matthew never lost sight of his principal goal: bringing the Good News to his oppressed Jewish kinsmen. As a result, he fills his Gospel with OT links that only the Jews would have understood. He quotes and alludes to the OT more than all the other NT writers, showing how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the coming Messiah. Instead of using the phrase "kingdom of God," Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven," in deference to those Jews who believed it a sacrilege to write or speak God's name. Matthew's Gospel also refers to Jesus as the "Son of David" more than the other three Gospels combined, showing Jesus to be the rightful heir to the throne of Israel. In the opening two verses of his Gospel, Matthew begins tracing the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham, the father of the Jews, rather than from Adam as Luke does. And Matthew does not explain Jewish customs to his readers as Mark does, who wrote for a Gentile audience (compare Matt. 15:1, 2 with Mark 7:1–5).

Each biblical author wrote with a distinct audience and purpose in mind—and Matthew's was clear. He had met and followed his people's Messiah and the world's Savior for three years. He lovingly wrote his record so all the world might believe.

## WHAT IT MEANS | *Life in a New Kingdom*

Readers of the Gospel of Matthew encounter his distinctively Jewish focus in its five major themes:

- **Life in the Upside-down Kingdom:** In the Sermon on the Mount (5–7), Jesus provides the first glimpse of the new kingdom He is ushering in—a kingdom that not only turns the OT law inside out but that operates opposite of earthly kingdoms. This "kingdom of heaven" is mentioned 32 times in Matthew and reflects the coming messianic kingdom foreseen by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 2:44).
- **Messiah:** Matthew's goal is to present Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, the King of Israel, by referring to Him as "Son of David" (1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30).
- **Fulfillment of OT Prophecy:** Writing a thoroughly Jewish account of Jesus' life and ministry, Matthew cites many OT prophecies to show that Jesus fulfills them, rightfully claiming the mantle of Messiah (1:22; 2:15; 2:17; 4:14; 8:17).
- **Jesus' Teachings and Works:** Matthew presents Jesus' teachings in five major discourses (5–7; 10; 13; 18–20; 24; 25), each followed by narratives of Jesus' works. Some have thought that Matthew intended the five discourses to parallel the five books of the Pentateuch (Gen.—Deut.), drawing contrasts and comparisons between the ministry of Moses and that of Jesus.



• **The Danger of Unbelief.** Matthew devotes chapter 13 to a central theme in Israel's history: the judgment of God upon their unbelief. Jesus' parables were intended to illustrate a theme first declared by the prophet Isaiah—the closed spiritual ears of Israel (13:13–15; Isa. 6:9, 10). Jesus spared no words regarding the consequences of failing to act on the gospel message.

#### WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU | *A Sure and Blessed Future*

In reading this Gospel, we come to understand not just the treasures of God's abiding kingdom—riches that all who believe in Him will inherit—but the treasured truth of who Jesus is: the Promised One, the Messiah, the eternal King of kings.

As the Promised One, He is worthy of our hope. As the Messiah, He is worthy of our trust. As the eternal King, He is worthy of our devotion, our submission, our all. There has never been another One like Him.

#### HAPPINESS ACCORDING TO JESUS • 5:1–12

Jesus revealed eight characteristics that run contrary to our current ideas about happiness but describe the inner joy that can be experienced by those who would follow Him. Those who live in this way are blessed.	
<b>5:3 The poor in spirit</b>	<i>The humble.</i> Those with destitute hearts sense their spiritual need and seek after God (Ps. 34:18; 51:17). They have the advantage—and the great joy—of being able to cry out to God for help.
<b>5:4 Those who mourn</b>	<i>The hurting.</i> The one who weeps over the pains of life can be confident of God's healing and comfort. The Greek word translated <i>comforted</i> is also used to describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In our sadness, the Holy Spirit will move us to joy.
<b>5:5 The meek</b>	<i>The harassed.</i> Meekness is not weakness but power under control. It implies a humble acceptance of one's lowly position before God. By trusting in Him, the meek will inherit the blessings of God's fulfilled promises.
<b>5:6 Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness</b>	<i>The hungry.</i> These people seek to justice and holiness, and most importantly, God in whose presence "is fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11).
<b>5:7 The merciful</b>	<i>The helpers.</i> For Christians, mercy is a Spirit-led ability to manifest practical, compassionate, and cheerful love toward those suffering. The merciful will obtain mercy and find true happiness in being merciful to others.
<b>5:8 The pure in heart</b>	<i>The holy.</i> These people have guileless motives, holy thoughts, and a clean conscience. In scripture, those who are most holy are also most joyfull.
<b>5:9 The peacemakers</b>	<i>The healers.</i> The word translated <i>peacemakers</i> comes from a verb meaning "to join together." It pictures two opposing forces that are now being reconciled (5:44, 45). Peacemakers experience joy and excitement as they help others reconcile with God and with one another.
<b>5:10 Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake</b>	<i>The harassed.</i> Persecution is suffering wrongfully—being punished for being righteous. Although suffering is never fun, those who remain faithful through it are blessed to be identified with Christ.

#### FOR REFLECTION

Overcoming Worry • 6:25–34

Three times in this text, Jesus says, "Do not worry" (6:25, 31, 34). Jesus gives five reasons why we should not worry:

1. *Worry is inconsistent* (6:25). If we can trust Jesus to provide us with our life, can we not also trust Him with our daily needs?
2. *Worry is irrational* (6:26). If our Lord cares for the birds, will He not also care for us, since we are more valuable than birds?
3. *Worry is ineffective* (6:27). Who among us can add one cubit (the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger) to our stature by worrying?
4. *Worry is illogical* (6:28–30). If God can clothe the lilies of the field, can He not also clothe us?
5. *Worry is irrelevant* (6:31, 32). When we worry, we act just like those who do not know God, in this case, "the Gentiles."

To avoid worrying, we need a system of priorities: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (6:33). We also need a strategic program: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things" (6:34).

MATTHEW 20:29

#### FOR REFLECTION

The Upside-Down Kingdom • 20:26

The world's approach to leadership and the church's approach to leadership are two different things. In the world, a person starts a job on the lower level and keeps working up. Then, after arriving at the top, the person looks down at everyone who is serving and says, "I'm the boss, and all these people do my bidding." But Jesus declares that anyone who desires to be a leader in the kingdom of God must take this model and turn it upside down. The question in the kingdom of God is not how many people are serving the leaders, but how many people are the leaders serving? In the kingdom of God, the way up is the way down. The more useful people want to be to Him, the greater responsibility they have to serve others.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Many Jews in Jesus' day cherished some form of Messianic hope. The Romans were oppressive rulers, and the Jews suffered miserably under their control. God's people clung to the belief that a Savior would emerge to deliver them. Based on the Old Testament promises of a delivering king, the people eagerly awaited the Messiah's coming.

God wanted people to accept Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. Through Jesus' ancestry, virgin birth, fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, teachings and miracles, God demonstrated who Jesus was. But during Jesus' earthly ministry most of his own people were unwilling to face the reality of his identity. Instead of viewing him as their long-awaited Messiah, the Jews crucified him. Instead of finding deliverance, they remained bound in sin.

To deal with our problems, we sometimes focus our hope on various means of deliverance. Some of us may still look to sin to meet our needs. Some of us long for freedom through people or plans rather than Jesus and his way. The Gospel of Matthew makes it clear that our only hope for spiritual renewal lies in Jesus the Messiah.

In order to experience freedom from the power of sin we must place our trust in Jesus. When we rely on the forgiveness gained through his death and the hope for a new life found in his resurrection, we gain true hope for a genuine spiritual renewal. Letting go of our self-sufficiency and pride, we must place our hope in God and make Jesus the King of our lives. He alone is worthy of that honor and responsibility.

## THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

We sometimes believe we can find the power for our spiritual renewal within ourselves. We don't want to depend on something outside of us. But the power within us can be only as strong as we are, and we all have inherent weaknesses. God demonstrated his power in many ways in the Gospels. God's power was ultimately exemplified in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In his victory over sin and death, Jesus established his credentials as king and his power and authority over all evil. That's the kind of power we need, and it is available when we surrender our lives to God.

### A. JESUS' INTRODUCTION AS THE PROMISED KING (1:1 — 4:11)

1. His Family History (1:1 — 17)
2. His Birth and Development (1:18 — 2:23)
3. His Baptism and Temptation (3:1 — 4:11)

### B. JESUS' KINGLY MINISTRY AND MESSAGE (4:12 — 20:34)

1. Jesus' Early Ministry (4:12 — 25)
2. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (5:1 — 7:29)
3. Jesus' Many Miracles (8:1 — 10:42)
4. Jesus' Teachings About His Kingdom (11:1 — 20:34)

### C. JESUS, THE REJECTED REDEEMER (21:1 — 27:66)

1. Jesus the King Enters Jerusalem (21:1 — 17)
2. Jesus Teaches His Disciples (21:18 — 25:46)
3. Jesus Is Rejected and Crucified (26:1 — 27:66)

### D. JESUS, THE RESURRECTED SAVIOR (28:1 — 29)

### Essential Facts

#### PURPOSE:

To prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah and to show that God offers salvation to all through him.

#### AUTHOR:

Matthew, a disciple and former tax collector.

#### AUDIENCE:

Matthew wrote primarily for Jewish Christian readers.

#### DATE WRITTEN:

Probably between AD 60 and 65.

#### SETTING:

Matthew emphasized the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the person of Jesus Christ, making this Gospel the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments.

#### KEY VERSE:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (5:17).

#### KEY PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS:

Jesus in relationship with his ancestors, Mary and Joseph, John the Baptist, his disciples and the Jewish and Roman leaders.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF HOPE

Without hope we are miserable. Hope is the driving force behind our spiritual renewal. If we had no hope, there would be no reason to seek spiritual growth. Understanding who Jesus is gives each of us hope that transcends even the deepest despair. In the Gospel of Matthew, we see and hear the message of a hope available to everyone, not just to a select group of people. Jesus' resurrection forms the basis of our hope because through it God demonstrated his control over the power of death.

### THE DANGERS OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Often people claim that if they could just witness a miracle, they would believe in God. But as we see throughout Matthew's Gospel, many people denied the truth about Jesus despite the miracles he performed in their presence. Spiritually blinded people cannot glimpse the truth even when it is right before their eyes. God can handle our doubts and our fears, but our cynicism and unbelief blind us and effectively shut us off from his transforming power. Let us be like the disciples who stood in awe and wondered what kind of man Jesus was (see Matthew 8:27). Such an open, receptive heart will cause us to seek God more and more.

INTRODUCTION TO  
**MATTHEW**

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO  
**MATTHEW**

**BACKGROUND**

**M**atthew's Gospel bridges the Old Testament and the New Testament, linking the prophecies of the coming Messiah and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. It is the first of the three Synoptic Gospels (with Mark and Luke), so called because of their similarities.

Matthew, whose name means "gift of the Lord," was surnamed Levi (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27). He was the son of Alphaeus (Mk 2:14) and worked as a tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government—an unpopular profession among the people of Israel. Yet Jesus called Matthew to follow him. Matthew left his profession behind, becoming one of Jesus' chosen twelve. After the Gospels, Matthew is mentioned only once, in Acts 1:13.

**MESSAGE**

Matthew repeatedly quotes the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the one who was spoken of by the ancient writers. Even his opening lines, a genealogy beginning with Abraham, show that Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience to pre-

sent overwhelming evidence of Jesus' kingship: "the kingdom of God is come unto you" (12:28). Jesus' genealogy, baptism, messages, miracles, death, and resurrection point to the conclusion that he is the promised Messiah. Matthew includes an extensive version of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)—much of it explaining the kingdom of God—and his teaching on end times (24:1-25:46). The Gospel ends with a command and challenge to go into the world and make disciples; the gospel is not for Jews alone but for all people. But that mandate is not the last word. The final statement is the assuring, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (28:20).

**TIME**

Matthew wrote his Gospel between A.D. 58 and 68. The expressions "unto this day" (27:8) and "until this day" (28:15) indicate a substantial period of time between the events in the book and the time they were written down. The Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46) anticipated the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**OUTLINE**

- I. Arrival of the King
  - A. Birth and early years
  - B. Baptism and temptation
- II. Proclamation of the King
  - A. Calling the disciples
  - B. Sermon on the Mount
  - C. Healings, teachings, miracles
- III. Rejection of the King
  - A. Preparing the disciples
  - B. The transfiguration
  - C. Healings, teachings, miracles
- IV. Crucifixion of the King
  - A. The final week
  - B. The Last Supper
  - C. Jesus on trial
  - D. The crucifixion and burial
- V. Resurrection of the King

1:1-3:12	4:12-25
3:13-4:11	5:1-7:29
	8:1-16:12
	16:13-28
	17:1-13
	17:14-20:34
	20:1-26:16
	26:17-56
	26:57-27:25
	27:26-66
	28:1-20

**MATTHEW IS THE GOSPEL WRITTEN** by a Jew to Jews about a Jew. Matthew is the writer, his countrymen are the readers, and Jesus Christ is the subject. Matthew's design is to present Jesus as the King of the Jews, the long-awaited Messiah. Through a carefully selected series of Old Testament quotations, Matthew documents Jesus Christ's claim to be the Messiah. His genealogy, baptism, messages, and miracles all point to the same inescapable conclusion: Christ is King. Even in His death, seeming defeat is turned to victory by the Resurrection, and the message again echoes forth: the King of the Jews lives. At an early date this gospel was given the title *Kata Matthalon*, "According to Matthew." As this title suggests, other gospel accounts were known at that time (the word "gospel" was added later). Matthew ("Gift of the Lord") was also surnamed Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27).

**WATCH WORDS**

- pure (without blemish, clean, and undefiled)—5:8 (also 23:26; 27:59)
- disciple (a learner and follower of both a teacher and his teachings)—10:1 (also 10:24)
- good (fit, useful, moral goodness, beautiful, free from defect)—19:17 (also 7:17)
- Christ (anointed one, Messiah)—22:42 (also 1:16)
- kingdom (the place where the God the King rules)—25:1 (also 3:2; 4:17; 5:3; 10:10:7)

**On an Ordinary Day**

Matthew 8:14-15

**SOME BIBLICAL MIRACLES** work great in movies. *The Ten Commandments* portrays the plagues against Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea. *Jesus of Nazareth* features dramatic moments in Jesus' life, like the time he fed the 5,000 and his death and resurrection.

But here in a passage so tiny and quiet that we almost overlook it, the miraculous and the mundane collide. Soon after delivering the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was hanging out at Peter's place. This brief passage doesn't give us many details, but it doesn't seem unreasonable to assume that Peter's small house in the town of Capernaum was more or less like any normal house today: messy, active, and noisy—especially with Jesus there, drawing crowds.

We are told that Peter's mother-in-law was laid up with a fever. Jesus touched her hand and healed her. Physical healing is always an event to take note of, and if this were in a movie, we would expect angels to hover overhead flapping their wings while the soundtrack's violins rise in a crescendo. Instead, the woman simply got up and began cooking.

Jesus didn't need a headline event to show his power and compassion. Perhaps he wanted to show us that God loves us not only in our "religious" moments but also when we're just hanging out in the family room.

# Fathers (and Mothers)

Matthew 1

EVERYONE EVER BORN had a human mother and father—with three notable exceptions. Adam and Eve were created by God, and Jesus was conceived by a woman named Mary through the work of the Holy Spirit. The rest of us have ordinary biological parents.

In the opening chapter of the New Testament, dads get a lot more credit than moms. Matthew's goal is to show us that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, a direct descendant of generation after generation of godly men—from Abraham the patriarch to David, the king of Israel.

Along the way, Matthew mentions 42 fathers but only five mothers. Why?

Some critics of Christianity say this passage proves that the Bible is inherently sexist, favoring men over women, who are regarded as weak and sinful. The truth, however, is very different. The Bible was written in sexist times, but biblical writers rose above these cultural biases, giving women more attention than they got elsewhere.

The women mentioned here are a colorful group. Tamar (Genesis 38) got into a messy situation bearing her father-in-law's twins. Rahab (Joshua 2 and 6), a prostitute from an idolatrous tribe, chose to serve God. Ruth, a foreigner from Moab, was a faithful woman who has her own book of the Bible. And Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 1-2) so entranced King David that he invited her to spend the night and then murdered her husband.

The women aren't the only colorful characters in the genealogy. Glance through the names of the fathers, and you'll find characters from Bible stories you know—most of them unflattering in some way. The point in this chapter isn't to judge the shortcomings of Jesus' ancestors. Rather, Matthew is showing us that God chose and prepared a specific lineage for his Son. God used ordinary men—and women—to play important roles in the divine drama.

# Dance of Death

Matthew 14:1-12

HOW MANY CLASSIC LOVE SONGS have described the mesmerizing sight of a woman lost in a sensual dance? Whether it's the Twist or the tango, the sight of a dancing beauty has long captivated men's hearts.

In this dark and depressing passage, a ruler becomes so entranced by his stepdaughter's moves that he makes a fateful promise he later regrets.

Herod Antipas was a morally conflicted man. His wife Herodias used to be married to his brother. But Herod's plans to marry her had been condemned by John the Baptist, and in response, Herod had thrown the holy man in jail. Herod might have killed John, but he was fearful that the people would riot, because they believed that God had blessed him.

That all changed the night of Herod's birthday bash. There was plenty of eating, drinking, and dancing. One particular dancer captured Herod's heart: the young, lissome Salome.

Swept up with delight, Herod promised to give the girl whatever she wanted. Herodias saw this as her chance, so she whispered into the ear of her daughter, who relayed the request to Herod: "I want the head of John the Baptist on a tray!" (Matthew 14:8). Suddenly Herod found himself in a terrible bind. If he refused his stepdaughter's request, he would be seen as going back on his word. But if he gave her what she asked, he would be responsible for the death of an innocent man. As we know from reading Matthew, Herod decided that murder was the easier road.

Two lessons emerge from this sad tale. First, be careful what you promise, particularly when your brain has been commandeered by your desires. And second, if you're vulnerable to the wiles of gyrating women, you may want to steer clear of the dance floor.

# A Loophole for Flawed Lovers

Matthew 19:1-12

EVERY YEAR AT TAX TIME, some people grow anxious. The most desperate (and least ethical) come up with "creative" accounting techniques to save a few bucks, exploiting loopholes in the tax law.

Overnight, the laundry room becomes a home office. The old jalopy that hasn't run too well in years becomes a company car.

If you've ever had your income tax papers audited or been called into a government office to explain your deductions, you can understand the feelings of those who asked Jesus about divorce. Originally hoping for an easy way out, they were shocked when he reinforced the strictest demands of Jewish law.

"Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts," said Jesus, "but it was not what God had originally intended" (Matthew 19:8).

Jesus described God's plan from the beginning of time in language that is both simple and profound. God created male and female. And when the two are united in marriage, they are no longer two, but one. In some mysterious way, marriage and sexual union turns husband and wife into a new entity that is more than the sum of its parts.

No judge can separate what God has joined together, no matter how high-priced the attorneys, how liberal the divorce laws, or how culturally acceptable it is to get a divorce, or two, or more.

Jesus' teaching on divorce zeroes in on our sinful hearts. We can look all we want for an easier interpretation, but his words stand firm.

Can men and women be forgiven for forsaking their marriage vows? Yes. But before dismantling a marriage, men and women should consider the emotional and spiritual repercussions of going against God's plan.

The Bible identifies darkness in four different ways:

- *Darkness is a person.* Satan is the prince of the power of darkness (Eph. 2:2; 6:12), so when the Bible speaks of darkness, it refers to Satan, his minions, and his kingdom.
- *Darkness is a power.* Spiritual darkness has a power over non-Christians. It controls their thoughts, words, and actions, and they cannot break that control without Christ (Acts 26:18).
- *Darkness is a preference.* Ungodly people prefer darkness so they can do whatever they want without being exposed (John 3:19-21).
- *Darkness is a place.* Those who live in darkness—who practice the unfruitful works of darkness—are headed toward a place of “outer darkness” where “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (8:12). Fortunately, darkness is a thing of the past for followers of Christ. Our present is in the light, and our future will be as well (5:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). Once believers have been set in this new direction, they should reflect it in their relationships with others, with God, and with themselves—pursuing the good of others (1 Thess. 5:5); seeking a relationship with God that is characterized by honesty, openness, and good deeds (1 Tim. 6:11), and desiring to show integrity in their words and deeds.

## Adultery of the Heart

Matthew 5:27-28

**ONE OF THE QUESTIONS** religious leaders repeatedly threw at Jesus was “What about the Jewish law?” Jesus was proclaiming the Kingdom of God. What did this new Kingdom have to do with the old regime that had ruled Israel for centuries? Was Jesus claiming that his teachings should supersede the divinely ordained laws designed to hold Jewish society together?

This question persists even today. One theory says that the Old Testament is all about law and the New Testament is all about grace. That makes it easy to think Jesus brought a happy and painless religion of love, kindness, and “being as good as you can.”

But this is a gross oversimplification, as we see from Jesus’ comments about adultery. According to the “law vs. grace” theory, the Old Testament would condemn the sin of adultery and the New Testament would teach forgiveness. But Jesus clearly shows a different angle. Instead of focusing on the outward sin of sleeping around, Jesus turns inward and shines a bright light on the human heart, where sin is conceived and developed. He knew that men don’t do what they haven’t first *imagined* or *fantasized*. “Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart,” declares Jesus. Tell that to the guys ogling the latest *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue, or the far more explicit material on DVD and the Internet.

Jesus wanted his new message of grace to help clean out our sinful hearts, not give us some kind of twisted rationale to keep on sinning.

## A Mother’s Misdirected Pride

Matthew 20:20-28

**A MOTHER’S LOVE** can be a wonderful thing. Children who grow up confident of Mom’s affection and support have a secure foundation to sustain them when life grows nasty.

Some mothers go even further, teaching their children to not only believe in themselves, but to stand up for themselves and to fight for their supposed rights.

Apparently the mother of James and John was such a woman. We don’t know her name, but we know her type: always fighting for her boys, making sure they get the best life has to offer.

Although she knelt respectfully before Jesus, this hard-charging mom knew exactly what she wanted when Jesus’ heavenly Kingdom arrived: one son sitting on Jesus’ right and the other on his left.

Jesus rebuked the mother of James and John for her inappropriate request. “You don’t know what you are asking!” he exclaimed (Matthew 20:22).

Then Jesus offered a challenge to the boys: Could they endure the sufferings that were about to come? They quickly assured him that they could.

When the other disciples heard what had happened, they were indignant, perhaps because they hadn’t thought of the idea first. Seizing the opportunity to teach an important lesson, Jesus turned everybody’s ideas of entitlement upside down. The first shall be last, he told them, and the last shall be first.

They didn’t like the lesson any more than we do. But it’s the truth, whether we’re trying to get the best seats in heaven or merely scrambling up the corporate ladder.

### **TVI** Conflict Resolution God’s Way • 18:15-17

Jesus offered a handbook for conflict resolution in Matthew 18. Believers should follow these steps and take a subsequent step only if the previous attempt at resolution fails.

1. In a private conference, humbly confront the person who has offended (18:15; Lev. 19:17). If this works, it prevents the conflict from spreading and avoids embarrassment for the offending party.
2. If the first step fails, the offended party should take along one or two witnesses and confront the person again, not to overwhelm the person but to encourage resolution (18:16). This follows the advice offered in the OT (Num. 35:30; Deut. 19:15) and helps both parties gain objectivity about the matter.
3. If that step fails, the offended party should bring the conflict before the whole church (18:17). The leadership of the church can sometimes successfully mediate or resolve the conflict and bring the offending party to repentance.
4. If the offender is still unrepentant, the church should reject that person’s company and exclude him or her from church fellowship (18:17). This may help the individual see the seriousness of the offense; it also keeps the conflict from spreading through the church and protects people from further hurt.

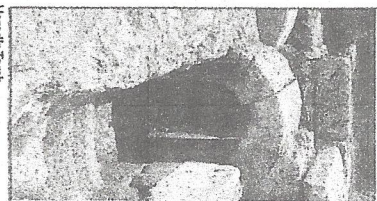
The Pharisees did not accept the teaching of John the Baptist, and John the Baptist denounced the Pharisees as a “brood of vipers” (3:7). But here the Pharisees and John’s disciples are in agreement about fasting.

According to the law, Jews were required to fast only one day each year: the Day of Atonement. The Pharisees, however, had extended that law to require twice-weekly fasts. Jesus and His disciples did not follow their fasting laws, and John’s disciples wanted to know why. Jesus answered with a wedding analogy. Fasting during a wedding feast is inappropriate. John the Baptist had already announced that Jesus was the Bridegroom, and when the Bridegroom is present, people celebrate. Soon the Bridegroom would be taken away, and then it would be proper to mourn and fast.

With Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, Christians have ceased to be the guests of the Bridegroom and have become the actual bride of Christ (22:2; Rev. 21:2). If we are expected to have joy as His guests, the intensity of our joy should be even greater as His bride (Ps. 30:11; John 15:11; Acts 2:46; Heb. 1:9).

## Herod the Great

Bible readers know Herod the Great as the ruler who attempted to kill the newborn Jesus (Mt 2:1-18), and who remodeled the Jerusalem temple and its platform (Jn 2:20). He also ordered the construction of hilltop palaces such as Masada, the Herodium, and Macherus. Confidence in the reliability of the Bible’s



Herod's Tomb

portrayal of King Herod (37-4 B.C.) has been bolstered by several archaeological discoveries. For instance, Ehud Netzer of Hebrew University led excavations in 2007 at the Herodium, where he unearthed what is believed to be Herod’s tomb. The finding fit the biblical timeline, plus it is consistent with the account of Josephus, the Jewish historian who said Herod was buried with great pomp at this site (*Mt 1:21-10; Antiquities XIV:13.9*). Netzer is also well known for his search for Herodian remains at Masada, Herod’s fortress palace nestled on an arid plateau overlooking the western shores of the Dead Sea. Here, while excavating pottery from a cave, he discovered a shard with three lines of Latin inscription identifying “Herod, King of Judea” as well as the date and type of wine Herod imported from Europe. These and other archaeological discoveries prove beyond doubt Herod’s true existence and support the NT data.

## Bones & Dirt

### Tough Questions

#### Can a believer commit the unpardonable sin? • 12:31

Jesus’ miracle-working, supernatural power manifested the Holy Spirit within Him, yet the Pharisees purposely, verbally, and continuously attributed His miracles to Satan. Such blasphemy against the Spirit is recorded here as the one sin that “will not be forgiven” (Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10).

It is stated this way, not because God’s grace changes toward such sinners, but because these sinners harden their hearts so that the operation of grace upon their lives cannot be received. Grace, like bodily food, may be rejected until the power to receive it is lost. Christ warned the scribes in Mark 3:28, 29 that they were perilously near to this condition.

For those haunted by the thought that they may have committed this sin, their concern is in itself proof that they have done no such thing. Anyone who would be so calloused by sin as to accuse Jesus of doing the work of Satan would surely not be concerned about forgiveness (Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10).

MATTHEW 15:20

### fvi

#### The Four Gospels: Balancing Purpose and Chronology • 15:21

The Gospels were written to emphasize certain themes, not necessarily to give an exact chronology. Though each Gospel has a logical flow, the writers’ primary goal was not to describe events in the order they occurred. Instead:

- The Gospel of John was written to prove that Jesus is God.
- Mark wrote his Gospel to demonstrate that Jesus Christ was a servant.
- In his Gospel, Luke dealt with the humanity of Christ; he wrote to reveal Jesus Christ as the Son of Man.
- Matthew wrote his Gospel to prove, beyond any doubt, that Jesus was the Messiah, the King of Israel.

When we read the Gospels with these purposes in mind, it helps us understand some of the chronological variance we find among the four accounts.

MATTHEW 16:22

### TEACHINGPOINTS

#### True Discipleship 16:24-28

In this passage, Jesus shares with His disciples the three laws of discipleship:

1. Law of self-denial: “let him deny himself”
2. Law of sacrifice: “take up his cross”
3. Law of submission: “follow Me”

But the Lord does not just leave them with these responsibilities. He qualifies them by pointing out the rewards that belong to those who are disciples:

- *Permanence of discipleship:* “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it,” meaning that joy and fulfillment are found when we exchange our lives for the life of Christ.
- *Price of discipleship:* “What profit is it . . . if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” We all get only one chance to live by faith as believers. It is priceless.
- *Prize of discipleship:* “He will reward each according to his works.”

### fvi

#### The Olivet Discourse • 24:3-25:46

Matthew 24 and 25 have nothing to do with the Rapture specifically but everything to do with what will occur immediately before Christ comes to set up His kingdom. Here are the events of that Tribulation period:

*The General Signs.* Jesus first explains the general signs that will precede the Second Coming. Reporting the events in panoramic form, He talks of people pretending to be Christ, of wars and rumors of wars, of famines and pestilence and earthquakes (24:4-14).

*The Specific Signs.* Jesus then gives the specific sign of the beginning of the Great Tribulation (24:15). The Tribulation will be bad, but the Great Tribulation—which starts halfway through the Tribulation period—will be even worse. It will be so awful that they should run for their lives without looking back. The events that will transpire in that final three-and-a-half years will be the worst the world has ever seen.

The details of the Tribulation are expanded upon in Revelation 4-18. Jesus would give the disciples information about the Rapture later.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

**M**atthew tells the story of Jesus, the Savior predicted by Old Testament prophets. Jesus didn't act the way the Jewish people expected. Instead of being a conqueror, Jesus was a teacher. Instead of punishing sinners, he died to pay for people's sins and to bring salvation to anyone who believed in him. Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, wrote this book about Jesus, so even today we can know that Jesus offers salvation to anyone who will believe in him.

## Headlines

**THE DEVIL STRIKES OUT**  
Matthew 4:1-11, page 1321

**DEMONS FIND NEW HOME . . .**  
**IN A HERD OF PIGS!**  
Matthew 8:28-34, page 1329

**JESUS IN LEAGUE WITH  
THE DEVIL?**  
Matthew 12:22-37, page 1334

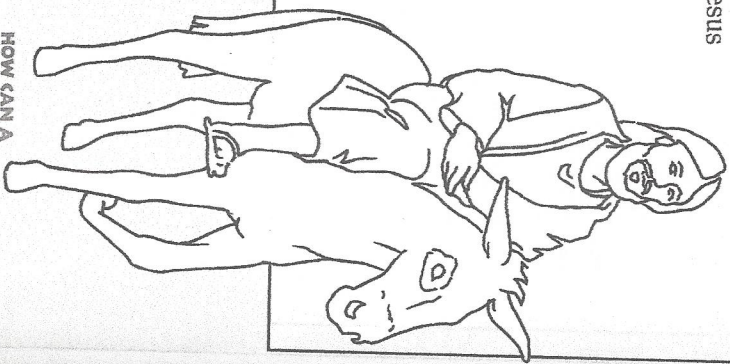
**PHARISEES MAKE BAD BREAD**  
Matthew 16:5-12, page 1341

**MOSES, ELIJAH MAKE SURPRISE  
APPEARANCE**  
Matthew 17:1-9, page 1344

**KING TAKES DONKEY RIDE**  
Matthew 21:1-11, page 1350

**JESUS TAKES CRIMINAL'S PLACE**  
Matthew 27:15-26, page 1363

**SUN AND SON RISE!**  
Matthew 28, page 1365



HOW CAN A  
DONKEY RIDE FULL-FILL  
PROHECY? SEE MATTHEW 21:1-5  
AND ZECHARIAH 9:9.

## The Messiah

Messiah means "anointed one." The Old Testament prophets wrote about a man anointed by God who would come to Earth to save the Jewish people. When Jesus came to Earth, he fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. But many Jews did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. They expected a military leader to save them from the Romans. Jesus came instead to save people from something far worse—sin.

Prophecy about Messiah	Old Testament	New Testament
Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18-23
Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
Preceded by a messenger	Malaichi 3:1	Matthew 3:1-3
Tortured and crucified	Psalms 22:1-18	Matthew 27:27-50
Raised from the dead	Psalms 16:9-10	Matthew 28:5-6

## Family Fun: the Good and Bad Guide Game

The Guide Game is played on the lawn or anywhere there is open space. Place four empty plastic bottles on the lawn. Blindfold one "player" and one "guide." Let the blindfolded guide try to feel the player how to find and knock over the bottles. Then let someone who is not blindfolded be a guide. This person who can see should try to direct the player to knock over the bottles. Then read and talk about John 10:1-10 and Matthew 23:1-22.

## In It For Me?

JESUS IS . . .

THE PROMISED  
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

GOD'S

MY

MY

THE

THE

## Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous

It seems like rich and famous people have it made. Everybody likes rich people. They don't have to worry about paying the bills. They can buy all sorts of neat things. Being rich and famous must be the best way to find happiness, right?

Well, at least one person didn't think so: Jesus. In part of his Sermon on a Mountain (see Matthew 5:1-12), Jesus taught that people who are really blessed are sad, helpless, and persecuted!

What was Jesus thinking? It's pretty simple, really. People who are rich and satisfied often don't look to God for help and comfort. They think they have it made. So they miss out on the real joy that comes from knowing God.

People with problems know they need God. And that's good! Anyone who knows Jesus has the true source of happiness!

## What's In A Name?

**MATTHEW** = "gift of God"

**JESUS** (Greek form of Joshua) = "the Lord saves"

**MESSIAH** (Hebrew) = "Anointed One"

**CHRIST** (Greek) = "Anointed One"

# MATTHEW

## DID YOU KNOW

► When Jesus called Matthew to leave his position and become a disciple, he was a tax collector, considered one of the most sinful and corrupt vocations of the time.

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

As the first book of the New Testament, Matthew establishes Jesus as the Messiah from the point of view of the Jews. Jesus was a descendant of David—the earthly lineage prophesied in the Old Testament. The book of Matthew often references the Old Testament, which foretells the Messiah's arrival. The phrase Son of David appears 10 times; Son of Man appears 30 times; kingdom of heaven appears 32 times; and the word prophet (or prophecy) appears 41 times.

## BY THE NUMBERS

28 CHAPTERS  
1,071 VERSES  
22,596 WORDS

## In the Word

- This Gospel was written by a Jew to all the Jews, announcing the arrival of the Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament.
- This Gospel contains over 60 prophetic quotes from the Old Testament.

LIFE LESSONS: Make your faith evident to everyone around you (5:14+16). God rewards persistent prayer (7:7-8).

## HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW MATTHEW?

# MATTHEW IN REVIEW

### Ⓚ TIME TRAVELER

1. Your grandson was husband of Mary, the mother of the Messiah. Who are you?

### ★ MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

2. How many generations were there from Abraham to Jesus?  
A. 96 generations  
B. 70 generations  
C. 77 generations  
D. 42 generations

### 🔥 HOT SEAT

3. Hey, I am a peacemaker! What does Jesus say about peacemakers?  
A. They will inherit the earth.  
B. They will see God.  
C. They will be called children of God.  
D. There is the kingdom of heaven.

### Ⓚ TIME TRAVELER

4. Jesus warned about you, a false prophet! He describes you as one who comes in sheep's clothing, but inside you are what?  
A. A ferocious wolf  
B. A hungry lion  
C. A cunning serpent  
D. A destructive demon

### Ⓚ TIME TRAVELER

5. You are just a simple human, but Jesus says you are worth more than many what?

### 🔥 HOT SEAT

6. I am trying to grow a crop, but someone has planted weeds in my fields. I can't believe it! Do you know what crop I was trying to grow before the enemy stepped in?

### 🔥 HOT SEAT

7. I am Herod's brother, and my wife is named Herodias. Who am I?

### ❓ WHO SAID IT?

8. "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me?"

### 🔥 HOT SEAT

9. Jesus healed a blind and mute demon-possessed man, and the Pharisees said Jesus healed him by my power, not God's power! I am the prince of demons. What is my name?

### 🔁 THEN VS. NOW

10. While Jesus was on the cross, he cried out "Eli, Eli." What does Eli (sometimes translated as Eloi) translate to in modern-day English?

### Ⓚ TIME TRAVELER

11. Your sons were fishermen whom Jesus called to follow him. One of them was given a name meaning "rock." What is your name?

### 🔥 HOT SEAT

12. During the transfiguration, I offered to set up shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Who am I?

- A. Peter
- B. James
- C. John
- D. Andrew

### ANSWERS:

1. Matthew (13:17)
2. D
3. C
4. 5
5. Sparrows (10:3)
6. A
7. Pharaoh (3:24-30)
8. Peter (18:21)
9. Beelzebul (12:22-24)
10. My God (27:46)
11. A
12. A