

JEREMIAH
BIBLE STUDY SERIES



MATTHEW

THE ARRIVAL OF THE KING

DR. DAVID JEREMIAH

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Prepared by Hudson Bible



THOMAS NELSON
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Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Inc.

Produced with the assistance of Hudson Bible (www.HudsonBible.com). Project staff include Christopher D. Hudson and Randy Southern.

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The quote by Papias in the Introduction is from Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 3:39. The quote by Irenaeus is from *Against Heresies*, 3:1. The quote by Origen is from Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 6:25.

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ISBN 978-0-310-09149-3

First Printing April 2019 / Printed in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION TO

The Gospel of Matthew

“As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him” (Matthew 9:9). At first glance, it seems surprising that Jesus would call a man like Matthew (also known as Levi) to become one of His disciples. As a small-time tax collector, Matthew would have been despised by the Jewish people, who viewed those in the profession as traitors to Rome. But the fact that Matthew was educated, literate, and also familiar with Jewish law and customs made him the ideal candidate to not only accompany Jesus during His earthly ministry but also record all that he witnessed. The result is the Gospel we have today—a document that since its creation has been read, studied, memorized, and treasured throughout church history in every part of the world.

AUTHOR AND DATE

The Gospel of Matthew, as with the other three Gospels, does not list the name of its author. However, the earliest church fathers to mention the Gospel all concurred it was written by the disciple named Matthew. Papias, who lived c. AD 60–163, wrote, “Matthew composed the *Logia* [Gospel] in the Hebrew dialect, and everyone interpreted them as he was able.” Irenaeus (c. AD 130–202) wrote, “Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect.” Origen (c. AD 185–254) agreed, stating, “Among the four Gospels . . . I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an

apostle of Jesus Christ.” Internal evidence indicates the Gospel was likely written sometime between AD 50 to 60, possibly from Antioch.

BACKGROUND AND SETTING

While Matthew does not overtly state his purpose in writing his Gospel, it is clear his intended audience was predominantly Jewish and that his overriding goal was to demonstrate that Jesus—the carpenter from Nazareth—was their long-awaited Messiah. This is seen in the fact that Matthew references Jewish customs without explaining them, frequently cites prophecies from the Old Testament to show how Jesus fulfilled them, refers to Jesus as “the Son of David,” and uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” rather than “kingdom of God” so as not to offend those Jews who believed it was sacrilegious to speak or write God’s name. Matthew’s genealogy goes back only as far as Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, and his account of Jesus’ ministry focuses more on Christ’s work within Galilee than among the Gentiles.

KEY THEMES

Several key themes are prominent in Matthew’s Gospel. The first, as previously noted, is that Jesus was *the promised Messiah* whose birth, ministry, death, and resurrection were prophesied in the Old Testament. Matthew makes his case by quoting more than sixty prophecies from the Old Testament, revealing how Jesus fulfilled each one. Matthew’s use of the “Son of David” for Jesus, in addition to his narrative on the Magi who presented gifts to him, reveal that he intended to present Jesus as the true King of the Jewish people.

A second theme is that *Jesus ushered in a new kingdom*. Jesus provided the first glimpse of this new kingdom in His Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–7) . . . and it was not at all what the Jewish people were expecting. This “kingdom of heaven” that Jesus proclaimed was both a present reality (as Jesus revealed through the healings He performed) and

a future hope (which He depicted in many of His teachings and parables). Throughout Matthew's Gospel, we find Jesus instructing His followers on what living in this type of kingdom required from them.

A third theme is that *Jesus was a teacher and worker of miracles*. Matthew records five major discourses from Jesus (5–7; 10; 13; 18–20; 24; 25), each followed by narratives of Jesus' works. These works often took the form of miracles that Jesus performed—signs that revealed how Jesus was the promised Messiah and was ushering in the arrival of God's kingdom on earth. Jesus' acts over nature (such as the calming of the sea and the multiplication of loaves and fish to feed crowds of people) in particular point to His authority as the Messiah.

A fourth theme is that *Jesus warned about the danger of unbelief*. Matthew often shows Jesus engaging with the Pharisees and Sadducees—the Jewish religious leaders of the day—to show how their use of rituals and traditions were keeping the people from finding God. This culminates with Jesus issuing seven “woes” against such teachers (see Matthew 23:13–30). Many of Jesus' parables also illustrate how the Jewish people were closed to receiving His words. Jesus repeatedly warned of the failure to act on the message He was proclaiming.

KEY APPLICATIONS

Matthew shows how Jesus, as the promised Messiah, is worthy of our *hope*. He shows how Jesus, as the Messiah, is worthy of our *trust*. And he explains how Jesus, as the eternal King, is worthy of our complete *devotion* . . . and our complete *submission* to Him.

SETTING THE STAGE

For 400 years God had been silent. The books of what we know as the Old Testament were completed, and nothing new had been added to their ranks. The silence was ultimately broken by a tax collector, of all people. Guided by the Holy Spirit, a man named Matthew began his account of Jesus' life with a genealogy.

The disciple of Christ had a specific intent in writing his Gospel: he wanted to prove to his Jewish readers that Jesus was *their* Messiah. The first step in that process was to trace Jesus' earthly lineage and demonstrate His claim to the throne of Israel. So Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. He follows Jesus' ancestry through King David. To emphasize the connection with the beloved monarch, Matthew refers to Jesus as the "Son of David" several times in his Gospel. From David, Matthew traces Jesus' royal ancestry through Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, all the way to Jesus' earthly father, Joseph.

The narrative that follows begins with a young couple in crisis. Joseph and Mary were pledged to be married, but the most extraordinary event in human history interrupted their plans. Mary learned that she had been chosen to give birth to the Messiah. Although she was still a virgin, the Holy Spirit had planted a seed within her. She was pregnant.

Joseph knew that Mary's child was not his, so he was faced with a dilemma. His first instinct was to resolve the matter quietly by giving Mary a divorce. But a visit from an angel convinced him to change his mind and embrace his role as Jesus' earthly father.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 1:1–17)

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

² Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. ⁴ Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. ⁵ Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. ⁸ Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

¹² And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. ¹⁴ Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. ¹⁶ And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

1. Matthew lists five women in Jesus' ancestry, which was unusual for genealogies of the time. Why do you think Matthew included Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary in his list of Jesus' ancestors (see verses 3, 5–6, 16)?

2. Rahab and Ruth were not even members of the Jewish race. Why do you think Matthew chose to include these non-Jews (or “Gentiles”) in his genealogy of Jesus?

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son (Matthew 1:18–25)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

3. This passage comprises much of Joseph’s biographical information that we have available to us in the New Testament. Based on these eight verses, what conclusions can you draw about Jesus’ earthly father?

4. Read Leviticus 20:10. Why was Mary’s pregnancy especially difficult for someone who followed the Law of Moses, as Joseph did?

Wise Men from the East (Matthew 2:1–12)

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵ So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

⁶ 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.' "

⁷ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

⁹ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. ¹¹ And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹² Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

5. The "wise men from the East" were likely a class of astrologers from the Parthian Empire whose duties included electing the king. How did these men, sometimes referred to as "Magi," respond to meeting the child Jesus (see verses 11–12)?

6. Traditional Christmas manger scenes place the wise men at the site of Jesus' birth, along with the shepherds, various animals, and an angel. What clues do you see in verses 9–11 that suggest the wise men may have come later?

The Escape to Egypt (Matthew 2:13–23)

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, ¹⁵ and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more."

¹⁹ Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." ²¹ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.

²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

7. The Bible says Satan is "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31) and holds significant influence over the earth. Jesus' arrival on the earth posed a real threat to Satan's power. Where do you see evidence in this passage of Satan trying to stop Jesus?

8. Nazareth was something of a laughingstock in first-century Israel. How did Joseph's decision to settle there fulfill the Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah in Isaiah 53:3?

REVIEWING THE STORY

Perhaps the only aspect of the Messiah's coming that conformed to Jewish expectations was His genealogy. Matthew established Jesus' royal lineage in the first chapter of his Gospel. Beyond that, virtually everything about Jesus' coming was unexpected. He was born to an unmarried girl who was betrothed to an unremarkable carpenter from the lowly town of Nazareth. His arrival did not usher in an era of political sovereignty for Israel, as expected; instead, it sparked a humanitarian atrocity. Through it all, though, God made His plan known to those involved, in memorable and often supernatural ways.

9. Isaiah had prophesied the Messiah would come “from the stem of Jesse” (11:1), who was the father of King David. Given this, why was it important for Matthew to provide a detailed genealogy of Jesus' ancestors (see Matthew 1:2–16)?

10. What two names does Matthew give to describe the Messiah (see 1:21–23)? What does each name mean?

11. To what extreme lengths did the power-hungry Herod go to rid himself of the newborn king (see Matthew 2:3–4, 7–8, 16)? Why do you think he reacted in this way?

12. How many times do angels appear in Matthew 1–2? Why do you think God used so many angelic visits and dreams to guide Joseph and Mary during the first few years of Jesus' life?

APPLYING THE MESSAGE

13. God worked through the political maneuverings of emperors and kings, including Caesar Augustus's taxation plan and King Herod's decree to kill all male babies, to fulfill prophecies made centuries earlier. What does that tell you about God's ability to work through the difficult situations in your life?

14. The wise men offered Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. What gifts do you have to offer Jesus? How can you present your gifts to Him or use them for His glory?

REFLECTING ON THE MEANING

Christmas illustrations and decorations depicting the “holy family”—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—inevitably show them in a serene pose, with the parents gazing lovingly at their beatific newborn. What gets lost in the celebration of Advent is the reality that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were all profoundly outside their comfort zones.

Jesus’ comfort zone (if the Son of God can be said to have a “comfort zone”) was heaven, where He enjoyed the worship and adoration of the angels. He willingly gave up His heavenly glory, not to mention the independent use of His divine power and attributes, to take on human flesh. He became a helpless baby. He made Himself susceptible to pain, ridicule, betrayal, and temptation.

Mary was a humble young woman whose only expectations were to marry Joseph and raise a family. She likely never thought of herself as someone who would be visited by an angel, let alone as someone who would be chosen to give birth to the Messiah. Centuries’ worth of prophecies would be fulfilled through *her*.

Joseph found himself in a near-impossible position. He was an honorable man betrothed to a pregnant woman whose child was not his own. The truth of the matter likely didn’t offer him much comfort. He was betrothed to the mother of the Messiah. Joseph, a simple carpenter from Nazareth, would be responsible for raising the Son of God.

