

# Gospels: MATTHEW

## INTRODUCTION

The book of Matthew is the first of the four Gospel accounts that detail the life of Jesus Christ. The book was likely written around A.D. 60-65 (which means chronologically, it may be second), by the apostle Matthew who was once a tax collector. Matthew was an eyewitness to the life of Jesus and His teachings. It seems original purpose of Matthew's writing was to bring light to the converted Jews of that time that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. Throughout Matthew, we see the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies. Matthew's goal was to help the Jews see that Jesus is the Messiah the Jewish people had been waiting for (The Genesis 3:15 seed). Matthew highlights the ministry of Jesus Christ including his teachings to the Jews, the miracles he performed, and the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The whole book of Matthew is centered around the theme of Jesus being King of the Jews and the Father's sacrifice of his Son for our salvation.

The book of Matthew begins with the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary and details his early life. It then jumps ahead to his adult ministry in Galilee with him being baptized by John the Baptist prior to being tempted in the wilderness. Jesus' ministry was marked by teaching sermons through parables, preaching repentance and the coming kingdom of God, as well as healing and performing miracles. He even foretold his own death to the disciples many times. Jesus, the Son of God, entered Jerusalem and was soon betrayed, arrested, mocked, tortured, and killed on the cross. However, he did not stay dead. Three days later, he resurrected from the dead and appeared to his disciples. Before his ascension to heaven, he tasked his disciples, and all believers today, with the Great Commission.

## IMAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING

Has there ever been a gift, experience, or season of life that you were wanting, but had to wait an extended period of time to receive? Some aspects might have been different than you had originally pictured, but the outcome was far better than you had hoped, and it was so much sweeter to receive because you waited for so long.

In the same way, in Matthew, we see that the Jews had been waiting for their promised Messiah to come with anticipation for ages. They had heard about what he would be like, and when he finally came, they had a hard time believing their eyes. Jesus was different from what they expected, but he was far better than what they could have imagined!

## BOOK ORGANIZATION

Matthew: JESUS AS KING

Chapters 1-4: Presentation

Chapters 5-7: Preaching

Chapters 8-13: Power & Opposition

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Chapters 14-20: Preparation of the Twelve  
Chapters 21-28: Predictions & Passions

## JESUS IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

In Matthew, Jesus is revealed as the long-awaited King and the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. From the very first verse, Matthew ties him to Israel's story: "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*" (Matthew 1:1 ESV). As the son of David, he is the rightful King; as the son of Abraham, he is the promised blessing to all nations.

We see him as Immanuel — "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). He is not just a miracle worker, but God himself come near. And Matthew especially highlights Jesus as the great teacher. The gospel is structured around five major sermons: the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), the Missionary Discourse (chapter 10), the Parables of the Kingdom (chapter 13), the Community Discourse (chapter 18), and the Olivet Discourse about the end times (chapters 24–25). Each ends with the phrase, "*When Jesus had finished these sayings...*" (cf. Matthew 7:28 ESV). Just as Moses gave five books of the Law, Matthew presents Jesus as the new and greater teacher, delivering the fullness of God's word.

Most of all, Matthew shows us Jesus as the suffering servant-King who came to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). His death fulfills prophecy (Matthew 26–27), and his resurrection launches the mission to the nations (Matthew 28). The book closes with his promise: "*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20 ESV). So, in Matthew, we see Jesus as King, God-with-us, the supreme Teacher, the crucified Savior, and the risen Lord.

## BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: HOW TO APPROACH THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

### OBSERVATION

- Who is speaking? Notice how Matthew organizes his Gospel. It alternates between narrative (stories) and discourse (sermons).
  - Watch how people refer to Jesus: Son of David (Matthew 9:27), Son of Man (24:30), Immanuel (1:23), Teacher (8:19), Lord (8:25).
- What's repeated? Pay attention to the repeated phrase, "*When Jesus had finished these sayings...*" (Matthew 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1 ESV). It signals the end of each major sermon section.
- When is this taking place? Observe transitions like "*From that time Jesus began to...*" (Matthew 4:17; 16:21), which mark turning points in his ministry.

### INTERPRETATION

- Cultural Context: Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to show that Jesus is the Messiah. Ask, "*How would a first-century Jew have heard this?*" For example, when Matthew calls Jesus "*Son of David*" (Matt. 1:1), it's not just genealogy—it's a royal title that means Jesus is the promised King.

- Narrative Context: Matthew often says, *"This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet"* (Matt. 1:22). Ask, *"Why does Matthew connect this passage to that prophecy?"* He's showing that Jesus completes Israel's story. For example, Hosea 11:1 (*"Out of Egypt I called my son"*) originally referred to Israel, but Matthew 2:15 applies it to Jesus—interpreting Jesus as the true and better Israel.

## APPLICATION

- Don't rush straight to "what does this mean for me?" Ask first: *"What did it mean for Matthew's audience, and what truth about Jesus or the kingdom is being revealed?"* (Before you move on to application, make sure you've completed the previous step: Interpretation).
- Matthew highlights Jesus's teaching about the kingdom of heaven. Application isn't just private morality ("what should I do differently this week?") but also about living under the King's rule. Ask: *"How does this passage re-shape the way I think about God's kingdom, my priorities, or my allegiance?"*
- Not everything Matthew records is a direct command. Some passages are descriptive (Jesus healing), some are prescriptive (Jesus saying "Go and make disciples," Matt. 28:19). Discern, *is this something I am meant to imitate, believe, or obey?*
- Matthew is full of "follow me" moments. Think: *What does this passage call me to as a disciple of Jesus?*
- Many commands in Matthew are spoken to groups of disciples. Application isn't only individual but also corporate.
  - Example: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"* (Matt. 28:19 ESV) isn't just for one missionary; it's for the whole church.
- Matthew calls us to a high standard (the Sermon on the Mount feels impossible!). The point isn't to despair, but to remember we live this out only because Jesus fulfilled the law, died for our sins, and gave us his Spirit.
  - Application step: *How does this passage drive me to depend on Jesus, not just try harder on my own?*

## PRAYER

When we pray through Matthew, we're reminded that prayer is not about twisting God's arm but about aligning our hearts with his kingdom. Jesus himself taught us to pray, *"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10 ESV). That means prayer is less about asking God to bless our agendas and more about surrendering to his. It's asking him to shape us into disciples who actually live out the Sermon on the Mount, who stay watchful and faithful as we wait for Christ's return, and who carry out the Great Commission with confidence that *"I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20 ESV). Prayer in Matthew is a daily act of re-centering on Jesus as King—seeking his presence, trusting his power, and yielding to his will.

### **CHURCH HISTORY: WHAT CHURCH HISTORY HAS SAID ABOUT THE BOOK OF MATTHEW**

"Take heed, therefore," says He, "that you do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: i.e., take heed that you do not live righteously with this intent, and that you do not place your happiness in this, that men may see you." – Augustine of Hippo, AD 393

"The whole Gospel is contained in Christ." – John Calvin

"This Gospel encourages and demands faith, or it pre-figures Christ coming with grace, and none may receive or accept save he who believes him to be the man, and has the mind, as this Gospel portrays in Christ." – Martin Luther

"By the light of nature we see God as a God above us, by the light of the law we see Him as a God against us, but by the light of the gospel we see Him as Emmanuel, God with us." - Matthew Henry

