

MATTHEW

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

2 John

3 John

Jude

Revelation

OUTLINE

Key theme: The King and His kingdom

Key verses: Matthew 2:2; 4:17

I. THE REVELATION OF THE KING (1—10)

A. His person—1—4

B. His principles—5—7

C. His power—8—10

(Note: The message during this period of His ministry was, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” [3:2; 4:17; 10:7].)

II. THE REBELLION AGAINST THE KING (11—13)

A. His messenger rejected—11:1–19

B. His works denied—11:20–30

C. His principles refused—12:1–21

D. His person attacked—12:22–50

E. Result: the “mysteries of the kingdom”—13

III. THE RETIREMENT OF THE KING (14—20)

(The Lord seeks to leave the multitudes to be alone with His disciples.)

A. Before Peter’s confession—14:1—16:12

B. Peter’s confession—16:13–28 (First mention of the cross—16:21)

C. After Peter’s confession—17:1—20:34 (Second mention of the cross—17:22)

(Third mention of the cross—20:17–19)

IV. THE REJECTION OF THE KING (21—27)

(“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you,” 21:43.)

A. His public presentation as King—21:1–16

B. His conflict with the rulers—21:17—23:39

C. His prophetic message—24—25

D. His suffering and death—26—27

V. THE RESURRECTION OF THE KING (28)

CONTENTS

Here’s Good News!

Matthew 1—2 12

The King’s Birth

Matthew 3—4 15

The King’s Credentials

Matthew 5 18

The King’s Principles: True Righteousness

Matthew 6 21

The King’s Principles: True Worship

Matthew 7 24

The King’s Principles: True Judgment

Matthew 8—9 27

The King’s Power

Matthew 10 30

The King’s Ambassadors

Matthew 11—12 33

The King’s Conflicts

Matthew 13 37

The King’s Secrets

Matthew 14 40

The King’s Withdrawal

Matthew 15 43

The King’s Concern

Matthew 16 46

The King’s Surprise

Matthew 17 49

The King’s Glory

Matthew 18 52

The King’s Rebuke

Matthew 19:1–15 56

The King’s Instructions

Matthew 19:16—20:34	59
The King's Demands	
Matthew 21:1—22:14	62
The King's Judgments	
Matthew 22:15—46	65
The King's Defense	
Matthew 23	67
The King's Denunciation	
Matthew 24:1—44	70
The King's Return—Part 1	

Matthew 24:45—25:46	73
The King's Return—Part 2	
Matthew 26:1—56	76
The King's Preparation	
Matthew 26:57—27:26	79
The King's Trial	
Matthew 27:27—66	82
The King's Suffering and Death	
Matthew 28	84
The King's Victory	

CHAPTER ONE HERE'S GOOD NEWS!

Twenty or thirty years after Jesus had gone back to heaven, a Jewish disciple named Matthew was inspired by the Spirit of God to write a book. The finished product is what we know today as “The Gospel According to Matthew.”

Nowhere in the four gospels do we find a single recorded word that Matthew spoke. Yet in his gospel, he gives us the words and works of Jesus Christ, “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Matthew did not write to tell us about himself. But let’s get acquainted with him and the book he wrote. Then we can learn all that he wanted us to know about Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit used Matthew to accomplish three important tasks in the writing of his gospel.

The Bridge-Builder: He Introduced a New Book

That book was the New Testament. If a Bible reader were to jump from Malachi into Mark, or Acts, or Romans, he would be bewildered. Matthew’s gospel is the bridge that leads us out of the Old Testament and into the New Testament.

The theme of the Old Testament is given in Genesis 5:1: “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” The Old Testament gives the history of “the Adam family,” and it is a sad history indeed. God created man in His own image, but man sinned—thus defiling and deforming that image. Then man brought forth children “in his own likeness, after his image” (Gen. 5:3). These children proved themselves to be sinners like their parents. No matter where you read in the Old Testament, you meet sin and sinners.

But the New Testament is “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ” (Matt. 1:1). Jesus is the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), and He came to earth to save the “generations of Adam.” (This includes you and me, by the way.) Through no choice of our own, we were born into the generations of Adam, and this made us sin-

ners. But by a choice of faith, we can be born into the generation of Jesus Christ and become the children of God!

When you read the genealogy in Genesis 5, the repeated phrase *and he dies* sounds like the tolling of a funeral bell. The Old Testament illustrates the truth that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). But when you turn to the New Testament, that first genealogy emphasizes *birth* and not death! The message of the New Testament is that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

The Old Testament is a book of promise, while the New Testament is a book of fulfillment. (To be sure, there are many precious promises in the New Testament, but I am referring to the emphasis of each half of the Bible.) Beginning with Genesis 3:15, God promised a Redeemer; and Jesus Christ fulfilled that promise. *Fulfillment* is one of the key words in the gospel of Matthew, used about fifteen times.

One purpose of this gospel is to show that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament promises concerning the Messiah. His birth at Bethlehem fulfilled Isaiah 7:14 (Matt. 1:22–23). Jesus was taken to Egypt for safety, and this fulfilled Hosea 11:1 (Matt. 2:14–15). When Joseph and the family returned and decided to settle in Nazareth, this fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies (Matt. 2:22–23). Matthew used at least 129 quotations or allusions to the Old Testament in this gospel. He wrote primarily for Jewish readers to show them that Jesus Christ was indeed their promised Messiah.

The Biographer: He Introduced a New King

None of the four gospels is a biography in the modern sense of the word. In fact, the apostle John doubted that a complete biography of Jesus could ever be written (John 21:25). There are many details about the earthly life of Jesus that are not given in any of the Gospels.

Each of the four gospels has its own emphasis. Matthew’s book is called, “the gospel of the King.” It was written primarily for Jewish readers. Mark’s book,

the gospel of the Servant, was written to instruct Roman readers. Luke wrote mainly to the Greeks and presented Christ as the perfect “Son of Man.” John’s appeal is universal, and his message was “This is the Son of God.” No one gospel is able to tell the whole story as God wants us to see it. But when we put these four gospel accounts together, we have a composite picture of the person and work of our Lord.

Being accustomed to keeping systematic records, Matthew gave us a beautifully organized account of our Lord’s life and ministry. The book can be divided into ten sections in which “doing” and “teaching” alternate. Each teaching section ends with “When Jesus had ended these sayings” or a similar transitional statement. The chapters can be divided like this:

Narrative	Teaching	
Transition		
1—4	5—7	7:28
8:1—9:34	9:35—10:42	11:1
11:2—12:50	13:1—52	13:53
13:53—17:27	18:1—35	19:1
19:1—23:39	24:1—25:46	26:1
26:1—28:20 (the Passion narrative)		

Matthew described Jesus as the Doer and the Teacher. He recorded at least twenty specific miracles and six major messages: the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5—7), the charge to the apostles (chap. 10), the parables of the kingdom (chap. 13), the lesson on forgiveness (chap. 18), the denunciation of the Pharisees (chap. 23), and the prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives (chaps. 24—25). At least 60 percent of this book focuses on the teachings of Jesus.

Remember, Matthew focuses on the kingdom. In the Old Testament, the Jewish nation was God’s kingdom on earth: “And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). Many people in Jesus’ day were looking for the God-sent Deliverer who would release them from Roman bondage and reestablish the glorious kingdom of Israel.

The message of the kingdom of heaven was first preached by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1—2). The Lord Jesus also preached this message from the very beginning of His ministry (Matt. 4:23). He sent out the twelve apostles with the same proclamation (Matt. 10:1—7).

However, the good news of the kingdom required a moral and spiritual response from the people, and not simply the acceptance of a ruler. John the Baptist called for repentance. Likewise, Jesus made it clear that He had not come to overcome Rome, but to transform the hearts and lives of those who trusted Him. Before He could enter into the glory of the kingdom, Jesus endured the suffering of the cross.

One further word about this gospel. Matthew arranged his material in a topical order, rather than chronological. He grouped ten miracles together in chapters 8—9 instead of putting them into their his-

torical sequence in the gospel’s narrative. Certain other events are totally omitted. By consulting a good harmony of the Gospels, you will see that, while Matthew does not contradict the other three gospel writers, he does follow his own pattern.

Matthew was not only a bridge-builder who introduced a new book, the New Testament; and a biographer who introduced a new King, Jesus Christ; but he also accomplished a third task when he wrote his book.

The Believer: He Introduced a New People

This new people, of course, was the church. Matthew is the only gospel writer to use the word *church* (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). The Greek word translated *church* means “a called-out assembly.” In the New Testament, for the most part, this word refers to a local assembly of believers. In the Old Testament, Israel was God’s called-out people, beginning with the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff.; Deut. 7:6—8). In fact, Stephen called the nation of Israel “the church [assembly] in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), for they were God’s called-out people.

But the New Testament church is a different people, for it is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. In this church there were no racial distinctions (Gal. 3:28). Even though Matthew wrote primarily for the Jews, he has a “universal” element in his book that includes the Gentiles. For example, Gentile leaders came to worship the Infant Jesus (Matt. 2:1—12). Jesus performed miracles for Gentiles and even commended them for their faith (Matt. 8:5—13; 15:21—28). The Gentile Queen of Sheba was praised for her willingness to make a long journey to hear God’s wisdom (Matt. 12:42). At a crisis hour in Jesus’ ministry He turned to a prophecy about the Gentiles (Matt. 12:14—21). Even in the parables, Jesus indicated that the blessings which Israel refused would be shared with the Gentiles (Matt. 22:8—10; 21:40—46). The Olivet Discourse stated that the message would go “unto all nations” (Matt. 24:14); and the Lord’s commission involves all nations (Matt. 28:19—20).

There were only believing Jews and believing Jewish proselytes in the church at the beginning (Acts 2—7). When the gospel went to Samaria (Acts 8), people who were part Jewish and part Gentile came into the church. When Peter went to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10), the Gentiles became fully accepted in the church. The Conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15) settled the decision that a Gentile did not have to become a Jew before he could become a Christian.

But Matthew anticipated all of this. And when his book was read by members of the early church, both Jews and Gentiles, it helped to settle differences and create unity. Matthew made it clear that this new people, the church, must not maintain a racial or social exclusiveness. Faith in Jesus Christ makes believers “all one” in the body of Christ, the church.

Matthew’s own experience with the Lord is recorded

in Matthew 9:9–17, and it is a beautiful example of the grace of God. His old name was Levi, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). “Matthew” means “the gift of God.” Apparently, the name was given to commemorate his conversion and his call to be a disciple.

Remember that tax collectors were among the most hated people in Jewish society. To begin with, they were traitors to their own nation because they “sold themselves” to the Romans to work for the government. Each tax collector purchased from Rome the right to gather taxes, and the more he gathered, the more he could keep. They were considered thieves as well as traitors, and their constant contacts with Gentiles made them religiously suspect, if not unclean. Jesus reflected the popular view of the publicans when He classified them with harlots and other sinners (Matt. 5:46–47; 18:17); but it was obvious that He was the “friend of publicans and sinners” (Matt. 11:19; 21:31–32).

Matthew opened his heart to Jesus Christ and became a new person. This was not an easy decision for him to make. He was a native of Capernaum, and Capernaum had rejected the Lord (Matt. 11:23). Matthew was a well-known businessman in the city, and his old friends probably persecuted him. Certainly Matthew lost a good deal of income when he left all to follow Christ.

Matthew not only opened his heart, but he also opened his home. He knew that most, if not all, of his old friends would drop him when he began to follow Jesus Christ, so Matthew took advantage of the situation and invited them to meet Jesus. He gave a great feast and invited all the other tax collectors (some of whom could have been Gentiles), and the Jewish people who were not keeping the law (“sinners”).

Of course, the Pharisees criticized Jesus for daring to eat with such a defiled group of people. They even tried to get the disciples of John the Baptist to create a disagreement (Luke 5:33). The Lord explained why He was fellowshiping with “publicans and sinners”: They were spiritually sick and needed a physician. He had not come to call the righteous because there were no righteous people. He came to call sinners, and that included the Pharisees. Of course, His critics did not consider themselves “spiritually sick,” but they were just the same.

Matthew not only opened his heart and home, but he also opened his hands and worked for Christ. Alexander Whyte of Edinburgh once said that when Matthew left his job to follow Christ, he brought his pen with him! Little did this ex-publican realize that the Holy Spirit would one day use him to write the first of the four gospels in the New Testament

According to tradition, Matthew ministered in Palestine for several years after the Lord’s return to heaven, and then made missionary journeys to the Jews who were dispersed among the Gentiles. His work is associated with Persia, Ethiopia, and Syria, and some traditions associate him with Greece. The New

Testament is silent on his life, but this we do know: Wherever the Scriptures travel in this world, the gospel written by Matthew continues to minister to hearts.

CHAPTER TWO

Matthew 1—2

THE KING’S BIRTH

If a man suddenly appears and claims to be a king, the public immediately asks for proof. What is his background? Who pays homage to him? What credentials can he present? Anticipating these important questions, Matthew opened his book with a careful account of the birth of Jesus Christ and the events that accompanied it. He presented four facts about the King.

The Heredity of the King (1:1–25)

Since royalty depends on heredity, it was important for Jesus to establish His rights to David’s throne. Matthew gave His human heredity (Matt. 1:1–17) as well as His divine heredity (Matt. 1:18–25).

His human heredity (vv. 1–17) and genealogies were very important to the Jews, for without them they could not prove their tribal memberships or their rights to inheritances. Anyone claiming to be “the Son of David” had to be able to prove it. It is generally concluded that Matthew gave our Lord’s family tree through His foster father, Joseph, while Luke gave Mary’s lineage (Luke 3:23ff.).

Many Bible readers skip over this list of ancient (and, in some cases, unpronounceable) names. But this “list of names” is a vital part of the gospel record. It shows that Jesus Christ is a part of history, that all of Jewish history prepared the way for His birth. God in His providence ruled and overruled to accomplish His great purpose in bringing His Son into the world.

This genealogy also illustrates God’s wonderful grace. It is most unusual to find the names of women in Jewish genealogies, since names and inheritances came through the fathers. But in this list we find references to four women from Old Testament history: Tamar (Matt. 1:3), Rahab and Ruth (Matt. 1:5), and Bathsheba “the wife of Uriah” (Matt. 1:6).

Matthew clearly omitted some names from this genealogy. Probably, he did this to give a systematic summary of three periods in Israel’s history, each with fourteen generations. The numerical value of the Hebrew letters for “David” equals fourteen. Matthew probably used this approach as a memory aid to help his readers remember this difficult list

But there were many Jewish men who could trace their family back to King David. It would take more than human pedigree to make Jesus Christ “the Son of David” and heir to David’s throne. This is why the divine heredity was so important.

His divine heredity (vv. 18–25) Matthew 1:16 and 18 make it clear that Jesus Christ’s birth was

different from that of any other Jewish boy named in the genealogy. Matthew pointed out that Joseph did not “beget” Jesus Christ. Rather, Joseph was the “husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.” Jesus was born of an earthly mother without the need of an earthly father. This is known as the doctrine of the virgin birth.

Every child born into the world is a totally new creature. But Jesus Christ, being eternal God (John 1:1, 14), existed before Mary and Joseph or any of His earthly ancestors. If Jesus Christ were conceived and born just as any other baby, then He could not be God. It was necessary for Him to enter this world through an earthly mother, but not to be begotten by an earthly father. By a miracle of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary, a virgin (Luke 1:26–38).

Some have raised the question that perhaps Mary was not a virgin. They say that Matthew 1:23 should be translated “young woman.” But the word translated *virgin* in this verse always means virgin and cannot be translated “young woman.”

Both Mary and Joseph belonged to the house of David. The Old Testament prophecies indicated that the Messiah would be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), of the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18), through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), and of the family of David (2 Sam. 7:12–13). Matthew’s genealogy traced the line through Solomon, while Luke’s traced it through Nathan, another one of David’s sons. It is worth noting that Jesus Christ is the only Jew alive who can actually prove His claims to the throne of David! All of the other records were destroyed when the Romans took Jerusalem in AD 70.

To the Jewish people in that day, betrothal (engagement) was equivalent to marriage—except that the man and woman did not live together. They were called “husband and wife,” and, at the end of the engagement period, the marriage was consummated. If a betrothed woman became pregnant, it was considered adultery (see Deut. 22:13–21). But Joseph did not punish or divorce Mary when he discovered she was with child, for the Lord had revealed the truth to him. All of this fulfilled Isaiah 7:14.

Before we leave this important section, we must consider the three names assigned to God’s Son. The name *Jesus* means “Savior” and comes from the Hebrew name Joshua (“Jehovah is salvation”). There were many Jewish boys with the name Joshua (or, in the Greek, Jesus), but Mary’s Boy was called “Jesus the Christ.” The word *Christ* means “anointed”; it is the Greek equivalent of *Messiah*. He is “Jesus the Messiah.” Jesus is His human name; Christ is His official title; and Emmanuel describes who He is—“God with us.” Jesus Christ is God! We find this name “Emmanuel” in Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8.

The King, then, was a Jewish male who is also the divine Son of God. But, did anybody acknowledge His

kinship? Yes, the magi from the East came and worshipped Him.

The Homage to the King (2:1–12)

We must confess that we know little about these men. The word translated “wise men” (magi) refers to a group of scholars who studied the stars. Their title connects them with magic, but they were probably more like astrologers. However, their presence in the biblical record is not a divine endorsement of astrology.

God gave them a special sign, a miraculous star that announced the birth of the King. The star led them to Jerusalem, where God’s prophets told them that the King would be born in Bethlehem. They went to Bethlehem, and there they worshipped the Christ Child.

We do not know how many magi there were. From the three gifts listed in Matthew 2:11, some people have assumed there were three kings from the Orient, though this is not certain. But when their caravan arrived in Jerusalem, there were enough of them to trouble the whole city.

Keep in mind that these men were Gentiles. From the very beginning, Jesus came to be “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). These men were also wealthy, and they were scholars—scientists in their own right. No scholarly person who follows the light God gives him can miss worshipping at the feet of Jesus. In Jesus Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). In Him dwells “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

The magi were seeking the King, but Herod was afraid of the King and wanted to destroy Him. This was Herod the Great, called *king* by the Roman senate because of the influence of Mark Antony. Herod was a cruel and crafty man who permitted no one, not even his own family, to interfere with his rule or prevent the satisfying of his evil desires. A ruthless murderer, he had his own wife and her two brothers slain because he suspected them of treason. He was married at least nine times in order to fulfill his lusts and strengthen his political ties.

It is no surprise that Herod tried to kill Jesus, for Herod alone wanted to bear the title “King of the Jews.” But there was another reason. Herod was not a full-blooded Jew; he was actually an Idumaeon, a descendant of Esau. This is a picture of the old struggle between Esau and Jacob that began even before the boys were born (Gen. 25:19–34). It is the spiritual versus the carnal, the godly versus the worldly.

The magi were seeking the King; Herod was opposing the King; and the Jewish priests were ignoring the King. These priests knew the Scriptures and pointed others to the Savior, but they would not go to worship Him themselves. They quoted Micah 5:2 but did not obey it. They were five miles from the very Son of God, yet they did not go to see Him! The Gentiles sought and found Him, but the Jews did not.

Matthew 2:9 indicates that the miraculous star was

not always visible to the magi. As they started toward Bethlehem, they saw the star again; and it led them to the house where Jesus was. By now, Joseph had moved Mary and the baby from the temporary dwelling where the Lord Jesus had been born (Luke 2:7). The traditional manger scenes that assemble together the shepherds and wise men are not true to Scripture, since the magi arrived much later.

Matthew cites a second fulfilled prophecy to prove that Jesus Christ is the King (Matt. 2:5). How He was born was a fulfillment of prophecy, and where He was born was a fulfillment of prophecy. Bethlehem means “house of bread,” and this was where the “Bread of Life” came to earth (John 6:48ff.). Bethlehem in the Old Testament was associated with David, who was a type of Jesus Christ in His suffering and glory.

Hostility against the King (2:13–18)

A person is identified not only by his friends, but also by his enemies. Herod pretended that he wanted to worship the newborn King (Matt. 2:8), when in reality he wanted to destroy Him. God warned Joseph to take the child and Mary and flee to Egypt. Egypt was close. There were many Jews there, and the treasures received from the magi would more than pay the expenses for traveling and living there. But there was also another prophecy to fulfill, Hosea 11:1: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”

Herod’s anger was evidence of his pride; he could not permit anyone to get the best of him, particularly some Gentile scholars! This led him to kill the boy babies two years of age and under who were still in Bethlehem. We must not envision hundreds of little boys being killed, for there were not that many male children of that age in a small village like Bethlehem. Even today only about twenty thousand people live there. It is likely that not more than twenty children were slain. But, of course, one is too many!

Matthew introduced here the theme of hostility, which he focused on throughout his book. Satan is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44), as was King Herod. He lied to the magi and he murdered the babies. But even this horrendous crime of murder was the fulfillment of prophecy found in Jeremiah 31:15. In order to understand this fulfillment, we must review Jewish history.

The first mention of Bethlehem in Scripture is in connection with the death of Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel (Gen. 35:16–20). Rachel died giving birth to a son whom she named Benoni, “son of my sorrow.” Jacob renamed his son Benjamin, “son of my right hand.” Both of these names relate to Jesus Christ, for He was a “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3), and He is now the Son of God’s right hand (Acts 5:31; Heb. 1:3). Jacob put up a pillar to mark Rachel’s grave, which is near Bethlehem.

Jeremiah’s prophecy was given about six hundred years before Christ was born. It grew out of the captivity of Jerusalem. Some of the captives were taken to Ramah in Benjamin, near Jerusalem, and this

reminded Jeremiah of Jacob’s sorrow when Rachel died. However, now it was Rachel who was weeping. She represented the mothers of Israel weeping as they saw their sons going into captivity. It was as though Rachel said, “I gave my life to bear a son, and now his descendants are no more.”

Jacob saw Bethlehem as a place of death, but the birth of Jesus made it a place of life! Because of His coming, there would be spiritual deliverance for Israel and, in the future, the establishment of David’s throne and kingdom. Israel, “the son of my sorrow,” would one day become “the son of my right hand.” Jeremiah gave a promise to the nation that they would be restored to their land again (Jer. 31:16–17), and this promise was fulfilled. But he gave an even greater promise that the nation would be regathered in the future, and the kingdom established (Jer. 31:27ff.). This promise shall also be fulfilled.

Very few people today think of Bethlehem as a burial place; they think of it as the birthplace of Jesus Christ. And because He died for us and rose again, we have a bright future before us. We shall live forever with Him in that glorious city where death is no more and where tears never fall.

The Humility of the King (2:19–23)

Herod died in 4 BC, which means that Jesus was born sometime between 6 and 5 BC. It is impossible not to notice the parallel between Matthew 2:20 and Exodus 4:19, the call of Moses. As God’s Son, Jesus was in Egypt and was called out to go to Israel. Moses was outside Egypt, hiding for his life, and he was called to return to Egypt. But in both cases, God’s program of redemption was involved. It took courage for Joseph and his family to leave Egypt, and it took courage for Moses to return to Egypt.

Archelaus was one of Herod’s sons, and to him Herod had willed the title of king. However, the Jews discovered that, in spite of his promises of kindness, Archelaus was as wicked as his father. So they sent a delegation to Rome to protest his crowning. Augustus Caesar agreed with the Jews and made Archelaus an ethnarch over half of his father’s kingdom. (Jesus may have had this bit of Jewish history in mind when He told the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:11–27.)

The whole episode is a good example of how God leads His children. Joseph knew that he and his family were no safer under the rule of Archelaus than they had been under Herod the Great. It is likely they were heading back to Bethlehem when they discovered that Archelaus was on the throne. Certainly, Joseph and Mary prayed, waited, and sought God’s will. Common sense told them to be careful; faith told them to wait. In due time, God spoke to Joseph in a dream, and he took his wife and her Son to Nazareth, which had been their home earlier (Matt. 2:19–20).

But even this fulfilled prophecy! Once again, Matthew points out that every detail in the life of Jesus was foretold in the Scriptures. It is important to note

that Matthew did not refer to only one prophet in Matthew 2:23, but instead says “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets” (plural).

We will not find any specific prophecy that called Jesus a “Nazarene.” The term Nazarene was one of reproach: “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). In many Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah’s lowly life of rejection is mentioned, and this may be what Matthew had in mind (see Ps. 22; Isa. 53:2–3, 8). The term Nazarene was applied both to Jesus and His followers (Acts 24:5), and He was often called “Jesus of Nazareth” (Matt. 21:11; Mark 14:67; John 18:5, 7).

But perhaps Matthew, led by the Spirit, saw a spiritual connection between the name “Nazarene” and the Hebrew word *netzer*, which means “a branch or shoot.” Several prophets apply this title to Jesus (see Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12–13).

Our Lord grew up in Nazareth and was identified with that city. In fact, His enemies thought He had been born there, for they said that He came from Galilee (John 7:50–52). Had they investigated the temple records, they would have discovered that He had been born in Bethlehem.

Who ever heard of a king being born in a humble village and growing up in a despised city? The humility of the King is certainly something to admire and imitate (Phil. 2:1–13).

CHAPTER THREE

Matthew 3—4

THE KING’S CREDENTIALS

Some thirty years passed between chapters 2 and 3 of Matthew, during which Jesus lived in Nazareth and worked as a carpenter (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). But the time came for Him to begin His public ministry, which would culminate at the cross. Was He still qualified to be King? Had anything taken place that would disqualify Him? In chapters 2 and 3, Matthew assembled the testimonies of five witnesses to the person of Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God and the King.

John the Baptist (3:1–15)

For over four hundred years, the nation had not heard the voice of a prophet. Then John appeared and a great revival took place. Consider four facts about John.

His message (vv. 1–2, 7–10) is preaching centered on repentance and the kingdom of heaven. The word *repent* means “to change one’s mind and act on that change.” John was not satisfied with regret or remorse; he wanted “fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8). There had to be evidence of a changed mind and a changed life.

All kinds of people came to hear John preach and to watch the great baptismal services he conducted. Many

publicans and sinners came in sincere humility (Matt. 21:31–32), but the religious leaders refused to submit. They thought that they were good enough to please God, yet John called them a “generation of vipers.” Jesus used the same language when He dealt with this self-righteous crowd (Matt. 12:34; 23:33; John 8:44).

The Pharisees were the traditionalists of their day, while the Sadducees were more liberal (see Acts 23:6–9). The wealthy Sadducees controlled the “temple business” that Jesus cleaned out. These two groups usually fought each other for control of the nation, but when it came to opposing Jesus Christ, the Pharisees and Sadducees united forces.

John’s message was one of judgment. Israel had sinned and needed to repent, and the religious leaders ought to lead the way. The ax was lying at the root of the tree, and if the tree (Israel) did not bear good fruit, it would be cut down (see Luke 13:6–10). If the nation repented, the way would be prepared for the coming of the Messiah.

His authority (vv. 3–4) John fulfilled the prophecy given in Isaiah 40:3. In a spiritual sense, John was “Elijah who was to come” for he came in the “spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:16–17). He even dressed as Elijah did and preached the same message of judgment (2 Kings 1:8). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets (Luke 16:16) and the greatest of them (Matt. 11:7–15; see 17:9–13).

His baptism (vv. 5–6, 11) The Jews baptized Gentile converts, but John was baptizing Jews! His baptism was authorized from heaven (Matt. 21:23–27); it was not something John devised or borrowed. It was a baptism of repentance, looking forward to the Messiah’s coming (Acts 19:1–7). His baptism fulfilled two purposes: it prepared the nation for Christ, and it presented Christ to the nation (John 1:31).

But John mentioned two other baptisms: a baptism of the Spirit and a baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11). The baptism of the Spirit came at Pentecost (Acts 1:5, and note that Jesus said nothing about fire). Today, whenever a sinner trusts Christ, he is born again and immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the church (1 Cor. 12:12–13). In contrast, the baptism of fire refers to the future judgment, as Matthew explains (Matt. 3:12).

His obedience (vv. 13–15) Jesus was not baptized because He was a repentant sinner. Even John tried to stop Jesus, but the Lord knew it was His Father’s will. Why was Jesus baptized? First, His baptism gave approval to John’s ministry. Second, He identified Himself with publicans and sinners, the very people He came to save. But mainly, His baptism pictured His future baptism on the cross (Matt. 20:22; Luke 12:50) when all the “waves and billows” of God’s judgment would go over Him (Ps. 42:7; Jonah 2:3).

Thus, John the Baptist bore witness to Jesus Christ as the Son of God and also as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Because of John’s witness, many sinners trusted Jesus Christ (John 10:39–42).

The Holy Spirit (3:16)

The coming of the Holy Spirit like a dove identified Jesus to John (John 1:31–34), and also assured Jesus as He began His ministry that the Spirit's ministry would always be His (John 3:34). The dove is a beautiful symbol of the Spirit of God in its purity and in its ministry of peace. The first time we see a dove in Scripture is in Genesis 8:6–11. Noah sent out two birds, a raven and a dove, but only the dove came back. The raven represented the flesh; there was plenty for the raven to eat outside the ark! But the dove would not defile itself on the carcasses, so it came back to the ark. The second time the dove was released, it returned with an olive leaf, a symbol of peace. The third time, the dove did not return.

There may be another picture here. The name Jonah means "dove," and he too experienced a baptism! Jesus used Jonah as a type of Himself in death, burial, and resurrection (Matt. 12:38–40). Jonah was sent to the Gentiles, and Jesus would minister to the Gentiles.

The Father (3:17)

On three special occasions, the Father spoke from heaven: at Christ's baptism, at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3), and as Christ approached the cross (John 12:27–30). In the past, God spoke to His Son; today He is speaking through His Son (Heb. 1:1–2).

The Father's statement from heaven seems to be an echo of Psalm 2:7—"The Lord hath said unto me, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.'" Acts 13:33 informs us that this "begetting" refers to His resurrection from the dead and not to His birth at Bethlehem. This statement ties in perfectly with the Lord's baptismal experience of death, burial, and resurrection.

But the Father's statement also relates Jesus Christ to the "Suffering Servant" prophesied in Isaiah 40–53. In Matthew 12:18, Matthew quoted from Isaiah 42:1–3, where the Messiah-Servant is called "My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased." The Servant described in Isaiah is humble, rejected, made to suffer and die, but is also seen to come forth in victory. While the nation of Israel is seen dimly in some of these "Servant Songs," it is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is revealed most clearly in them. Again, we see the connection with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection.

Finally, the Father's statement approved all that Jesus had done up to that point. His "hidden years in Nazareth" were years of pleasing the Father. Certainly, the Father's commendation was a great encouragement to the Son as He started His ministry.

Satan (4:1–11)

From the high and holy experience of blessing at the Jordan, Jesus was led into the wilderness for testing. Jesus was not tempted so that the Father could learn anything about His Son, for the Father had already given Jesus His divine approval. Jesus was tempted so

that every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might know that Jesus Christ is the Conqueror. He exposed Satan and his tactics, and He defeated Satan. Because of His victory, we can have victory over the tempter.

Just as the first Adam met Satan, so the Last Adam met the enemy (1 Cor. 15:45). Adam met Satan in a beautiful garden, but Jesus met him in a terrible wilderness. Adam had everything he needed, but Jesus was hungry after forty days of fasting. Adam lost the battle and plunged humanity into sin and death. But Jesus won the battle and went on to defeat Satan in more battles, culminating in His final victory on the cross (John 12:31; Col. 2:15).

Our Lord's experience of temptation prepared Him to be our sympathetic High Priest (Heb. 2:16–18; 4:15–16). It is important to note that Jesus faced the enemy as man, not as the Son of God. His first word was, "Man shall not live by bread alone." We must not think that Jesus used His divine powers to overcome the enemy, because that is just what the enemy wanted Him to do! Jesus used the spiritual resources that are available to us today: the power of the Holy Spirit of God (Matt. 4:1) and the power of the Word of God ("It is written"). Jesus had nothing in His nature that would give Satan a foothold (John 14:30), but His temptations were real just the same. Temptation involves the will and Jesus came to do the Father's will (Heb. 10:1–9).

The first temptation (vv. 1–4) involved the love of God and the will of God. "Since You are God's beloved Son, why doesn't Your Father feed You? Why does He put You into this terrible wilderness?" This temptation sounded like Satan's words to Eve in Genesis 3! It is a subtle suggestion that our Father does not love us.

But there was another suggestion: "Use Your divine powers to meet Your own needs." When we put our physical needs ahead of our spiritual needs, we sin. When we allow circumstances to dictate our actions, instead of following God's will, we sin. Jesus could have turned the stones into bread, but He would have been exercising His powers independently of the Father and He came to obey the Father (John 5:30; 6:38).

The Lord quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to defeat Satan. Feeding on and obeying God's Word is more important than consuming physical food. In fact, it is our food (John 4:32–34).

The second temptation (vv. 5–7) the second temptation was even more subtle. This time Satan also used the Word of God. "So You intend to live by the Scriptures," he implied. "Then let me quote You a verse of Scripture and see if You will obey it!" Satan took the Lord Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, probably five hundred feet above the Kidron Valley. Satan then quoted from Psalm 91:11–12, where God promised to care for His own. "If You really believe the

Scriptures, then jump! Let's see if the Father cares for You!"

Note carefully our Lord's reply: "It is written again" (Matt. 4:7, emphasis mine). We must never divorce one part of Scripture from another, but we must always "compare spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:13). We can prove almost anything by the Bible if we isolate texts from the contexts and turn them into pretexts. Satan had cleverly omitted the phrase "in all thy ways" when he quoted from Psalm 91. When the child of God is in the will of God, the Father will protect him. He watches over those who are "in His ways."

Jesus replied with Deuteronomy 6:16: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." We tempt God when we put ourselves into circumstances that force Him to work miracles on our behalf. The diabetic who refuses to take insulin and argues, "Jesus will take care of me," may be tempting the Lord. We tempt God when we try to force Him to contradict His own Word. It is important for us as believers to read all Scripture, and study all God has to say, for all of it is profitable for daily life (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The third temptation (vv. 8-10) The devil offered Jesus a shortcut to His kingdom. Jesus knew that He would suffer and die before He entered into His glory (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11; 5:1). If He bowed down and worshipped Satan just once (this is the force of the Greek verb), He could enjoy all the glory without enduring the suffering. Satan has always wanted worship, because Satan has always wanted to be God (Isa. 14:12-14). Worshipping the creature instead of the Creator is the lie that rules our world today (Rom. 1:24-25).

There are no shortcuts to the will of God. If we want to share in the glory, we must also share in the suffering (1 Peter 5:10). As the prince of this world, Satan could offer these kingdoms to Christ (John 12:31; 14:30). But Jesus did not need Satan's offer. The Father had already promised Jesus the kingdom! "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen [nations] for thine inheritance" (Ps. 2:8). You find the same promise in Psalm 22:22-31, and this is the psalm of the cross.

Our Lord replied with Deuteronomy 6:13: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Satan had said nothing about service, but Jesus knew that whatever we worship, we will serve. Worship and service must go together.

Satan slunk away, a defeated foe, but he did not cease to tempt Jesus. We could translate Luke 4:13, "And when the devil had ended every possible kind of temptation, he stood off from Him until a suitable season." Through Peter, Satan again tempted Jesus to abandon the cross (Matt. 16:21-23), and through the crowd that had been fed, Satan tempted Jesus to an "easy kingdom" (John 6:15). One victory never guarantees freedom from further temptation. If anything,

each victory we experience only makes Satan try harder.

Notice that Luke's account reverses the order of the second and third temptations as recorded in Matthew. The word then in Matthew 4:5 seems to indicate sequence. Luke only uses the simple conjunction "and" and does not say he is following a sequence. Our Lord's command at the end of the third temptation ("Get thee hence, Satan") is proof that Matthew followed the historical order. There is no contradiction since Luke did not claim to follow the actual sequence.

After Jesus Christ had defeated Satan, He was ready to begin His ministry. No man has a right to call others to obey who has not obeyed himself. Our Lord proved Himself to be the perfect King whose sovereignty is worthy of our respect and obedience. But, true to his purpose, Matthew had one more witness to call to prove the kingship of Jesus Christ.

Christ's Ministry of Power (4:12-15)

Matthew has already shown us that every detail of our Lord's life was controlled by the Word of God. Remember that between the end of His temptation and the statement in Matthew 4:12 comes the ministry described in John 1:19 through John 3:36. We must not think that John the Baptist was thrown into prison immediately after our Lord's temptation. Matthew wrote his book topically rather than chronologically. Consult a good harmony of the Gospels to study the sequence of events.

In Matthew 4:16, Matthew quoted Isaiah (see Isa. 9:1-2). The prophet wrote about people who "walked" in darkness, but by the time Matthew quoted the passage, the situation was so discouraging that the people were sitting in darkness! Jesus Christ brought the Light to them. He made His headquarters in Capernaum in "Galilee of the Gentiles," another reference to the universal outreach of the gospel's message. In Galilee there was a mixed population that was somewhat despised by the racially "pure" citizens of Judea.

How did Jesus bring this Light to Galilee? We are told in Matthew 4:23: through His teaching, preaching, and healing. This emphasis is found often in the gospel of Matthew; see 9:35; 11:4-5; 12:15; 14:34-36; 15:30; 19:2. Matthew was quite clear that He healed "all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 4:23). There was no case too difficult for Him!

The result of these great miracles was a tremendous fame for Jesus, and a great following of people from many areas. "Syria" refers to an area in northern Galilee. "Decapolis" means "ten cities" and was a district made up of ten cities originally built by followers of Alexander the Great. The Decapolis was in the northeastern part of Galilee. "Beyond Jordan" means Perea, the area east of the Jordan. News traveled fast, and those who had afflicted friends or family members brought them to Jesus for healing.

Matthew listed some of the "cases" in Matthew

4:24. “Diseases and torments” could cover almost any disease. Of course, our Lord often delivered people from demons. The term “lunatic” did not refer to people who were insane. Rather, it was used to describe those afflicted with epilepsy (see Matt. 17:15). Palsy meant “paralytic.”

Miracles of healing were but a part of Christ’s ministry throughout Galilee, for He also taught and preached the Word. The “light” that Isaiah promised was the Light of the Word of God, as well as the Light of His perfect life and compassionate ministry. The word *preachin* Matthew 4:17 and 23 means “to announce as a herald.” Jesus proclaimed with authority the good news that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

The phrase *kingdom of heaven* is found thirty-two times in Matthew’s gospel. The phrase *kingdom of God* is found only five times (Matt. 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). Out of reverence for the holy name of the Lord, the Jews would not mention “God” but would substitute the word *heaven*. The Prodigal Son confessed that he had sinned “against heaven,” meaning, of course, against God. In many places where Matthew uses *kingdom of heaven*, the parallel passages in Mark and Luke use *kingdom of God*.

In the New Testament, the word *kingdom* means “rule, reign, authority” rather than a place or a specific realm. The phrase “kingdom of heaven” refers to the rule of God. The Jewish leaders wanted a political leader who would deliver them from Rome, but Jesus came to bring *spiritual rule* to the hearts of people. This does not deny the reality of a future kingdom as we have already noted.

But Jesus not only proclaimed the good news and taught the people God’s truth, He also called to Himself a few disciples whom He could train for the work of the kingdom. In Matthew 4:17–22 we read of the call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, men who had already met Jesus and trusted Him (John 1:29–42). They had gone back to their fishing business, but He came and called them to give up their business and follow Him. The details of this call may be found in Mark 1:16–20 and Luke 5:1–11.

The term “fishers of men” was not new. For centuries, Greek and Roman philosophers had used it to describe the work of the man who seeks to “catch” others by teaching and persuasion. “Fishing for men” is but one of many pictures of evangelism in the Bible, and we must not limit ourselves to it. Jesus also talked about the shepherd seeking the lost sheep (Luke 15:1–7), and the workers in the harvest-field (John 4:34–38). Since these four men were involved in the fishing business, it was logical for Jesus to use this approach.

Jesus had four and possibly seven men in the band of disciples who were professional fishermen (see John 21:1–3). Why would Jesus call so many fishermen to His side? For one thing, fishermen were busy people; usually professional fishermen did not sit around doing nothing. They either sorted their catch, prepared for a

catch, or mended their equipment. The Lord needs busy people who are not afraid to work.

Fishermen have to be courageous and patient people. It certainly takes patience and courage to win others to Christ. Fishermen must have skill; they must learn from others where to find the fish and how to catch them. Soul-winning demands skill too. These men had to work together, and the work of the Lord demands cooperation. But most of all, fishing demands faith: fishermen cannot see the fish and are not sure their nets will enclose them. Soul-winning requires faith and alertness too, or we will fail.

Matthew has presented to us the person of the King. Every witness affirms, “This is the Son of God, this is the King!”

CHAPTER FOUR

Matthew 5

THE KING’S PRINCIPLES: TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most misunderstood messages that Jesus ever gave. One group says it is God’s plan of salvation, that if we ever hope to go to heaven we must obey these rules. Another group calls it a “charter for world peace” and begs the nations of the earth to accept it. Still a third group tells us that the Sermon on the Mount does not apply to today, but that it will apply at some future time, perhaps during the tribulation or the millennial kingdom.

I have always felt that Matthew 5:20 was the key to this important sermon: “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” The main theme is true righteousness. The religious leaders had an artificial, external righteousness based on law. But the righteousness Jesus described is a true and vital righteousness that begins internally, in the heart. The Pharisees were concerned about the minute details of conduct, but they neglected the major matter of character. Conduct flows out of character.

Whatever applications the Sermon on the Mount may have to world problems, or to future events, it is certain that this sermon has definite applications for us today. Jesus gave this message to individual believers, not to the unsaved world at large. What was taught in the Sermon on the Mount is repeated in the New Testament Epistles for the church today. Jesus originally gave these words to His disciples (Matt. 5:1), and they have shared them with us.

In this chapter, Jesus gave three explanations about true, spiritual righteousness.

What True Righteousness Is (5:1–16)

Being a master Teacher, our Lord did not begin this important sermon with a negative criticism of the scribes and Pharisees. He began with a positive emphasis on righteous character and the blessings that it brings to the life of the believer. The Pharisees taught that righteousness was an external thing, a matter of obeying rules and regulations. Righteousness could be measured by praying, giving, fasting, etc. In the Beatitudes and the pictures of the believer, Jesus described Christian character that flowed from within.

Imagine how the crowd's attention was riveted on Jesus when He uttered His first word: "Blessed." (The Latin word for blessed is *beatus* and from this comes the word *beatitudō*. This was a powerful word to those who heard Jesus that day. To them it meant "divine joy and perfect happiness." The word was not used for humans; it described the kind of joy experienced only by the gods or the dead. "Blessed" implied an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that did not depend on outward circumstances for happiness. This is what the Lord offers those who trust Him!

The Beatitudes describe the attitudes that ought to be in our lives today. Four attitudes are described here.

Our attitude toward ourselves (vv. 1–3). To be poor in spirit means to be humble, to have a correct estimate of oneself (Rom. 12:3). It does not mean to be "poor spirited" and have no backbone at all! "Poor in spirit" is the opposite of the world's attitudes of self-praise and self-assertion. It is not a false humility that says, "I am not worth anything; I can't do anything!" It is honesty with ourselves: we know ourselves, accept ourselves, and try to be ourselves to the glory of God.

Our attitude toward our sins (vv. 4–6). We mourn over sin and despise it. We see sin the way God sees it and seek to treat it the way God does. Those who cover sin or defend sin certainly have the wrong attitude. We should not only mourn over our sins, but we should also meekly submit to God (see Luke 18:9–14; Phil. 3:1–14).

Meekness is not weakness, for both Moses and Jesus were meek men (Num. 12:3; Matt. 11:29). This word translated "meek" was used by the Greeks to describe a horse that had been broken. It refers to power under control.

Our attitude toward the Lord (vv. 7–9). We experience God's mercy when we trust Christ (Eph. 2:4–7), and He gives us a clean heart (Acts 15:9) and peace within (Rom. 5:1). But having received His mercy, we then share His mercy with others. We seek to keep our hearts pure that we might see God in our lives today. We become peacemakers in a troubled world and channels for God's mercy, purity, and peace.

Our attitude toward the world (vv. 10–16). It is not easy to be a dedicated Christian. Our society is not a friend to God nor to God's people. Whether we like it or not, there is conflict between us

and the world. Why? Because we are different from the world and we have different attitudes.

As we read the Beatitudes, we find that they represent an outlook radically different from that of the world. The world praises pride, not humility. The world endorses sin, especially if you "get away with it." The world is at war with God, while God is seeking to reconcile His enemies and make them His children. We must expect to be persecuted if we are living as God wants us to live. But we must be sure that our suffering is not due to our own foolishness or disobedience.

How True Righteousness Comes (5:17–20)

Certainly after the crowd heard our Lord's description of the kind of person God blesses, they said to themselves, "But we could never attain that kind of character. How can we have this righteousness? Where does it come from?" They wondered how His teaching related to what they had been taught all their lives. What about Moses and the law?

In the law of Moses, God certainly revealed His standards for holy living. The Pharisees defended the law and sought to obey it. But Jesus said that the true righteousness that pleases God must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees—and to the common people, the scribes and Pharisees were the holiest men in the community! If they had not attained, what hope was there for anybody else?

Jesus explained His own attitude toward the law by describing three possible relationships.

We can seek to destroy the law (v. 17a). The Pharisees thought Jesus was doing this. To begin with, His authority did not come from any of the recognized leaders or schools. Instead of teaching "from authorities" as did the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus taught with authority.

Not only in His authority, but also in His activity Jesus seemed to defy the law. He deliberately healed people on the Sabbath day and paid no attention to the traditions of the Pharisees. Our Lord's associations also seemed contrary to the law, for He was the friend of publicans and sinners.

Yet, it was the Pharisees who were destroying the law! By their traditions, they robbed the people of the Word of God; and by their hypocritical lives, they disobeyed the very law that they claimed to protect. The Pharisees thought they were conserving God's Word, when in reality they were preserving God's Word: embalming it so that it no longer had life! Their rejection of Christ when He came to earth proved that the inner truth of the law had not penetrated their hearts.

Jesus made it clear that He had come to honor the law and help God's people love it, learn it, and live it. He would not accept the artificial righteousness of the religious leaders. Their righteousness was only an external masquerade. Their religion was a dead ritual, not a living relationship. It was artificial; it did not reproduce