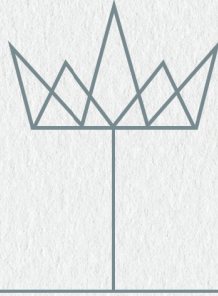
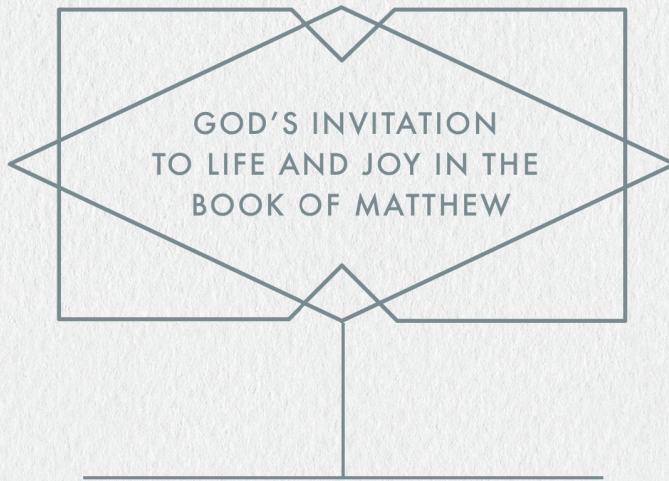


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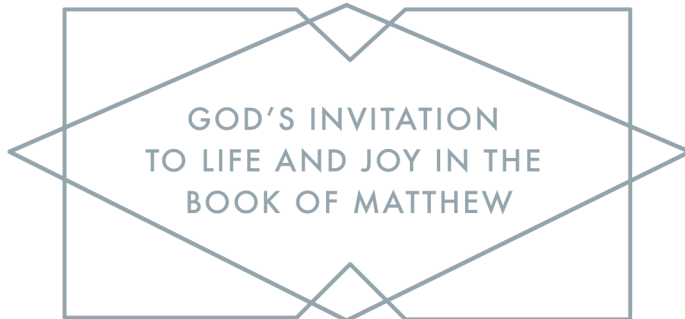
SEEK FIRST
THE
KINGDOM



CHRISTINE HOOVER



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THE
KINGDOM



CHRISTINE HOOVER

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christine Hoover is a pastor's wife, mom of three boys, host of the *By Faith* podcast, and author of several books, including *With All Your Heart: Living Joyfully Through Allegiance to King Jesus*, *Searching for Spring*, *Messy Beautiful Friendship*, and *From Good to Grace*. Her work has appeared on *Christianity Today*, *The Gospel Coalition*, and *For the Church*. Originally from Texas, Christine and her family live in Charlottesville, Virginia, where they planted a church in 2008. Find her at her home online at ChristineHoover.net.

FOREWORD

THE WHYS AND HOWS OF STUDYING MATTHEW



Welcome to a wonderfully rich book of the Bible—the Book of Matthew. In our study together over the coming weeks, we’ll discover who Jesus is, why He is called King, and what it means to be a citizen under His rule and reign in the kingdom of God.

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

If, as Scripture says, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17), God fuels and feeds our faith specifically through His Word. This is why we study the Bible. We’re renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit as we present and submit ourselves to His Word. This growth process, however, doesn’t happen overnight. Jesus said it happens more similarly to how a seed grows (Mark 4:26-27). The seed is first nestled in the ground, unseen. Then its tender, fragile sprout breaks through the soil. Over time, the plant grows sturdier and taller, roots ever-deepening. After several years, the plant proves its identity as a tree by bearing fruit.

In this analogy, we’re neither the seed nor the tree; we’re the soil in which the seed is planted. Jesus said that when we receive, study, and embrace the good seed of the Word, He grows a strong, fruit-bearing faith in us. To “hear and understand” (Matt. 15:10) the Word gives a sense of bending toward a speaker, intent on catching every word in order to obey every word. This is why we study the Bible: we’re presenting ourselves to God for our daily deposit and “watering” of His truth. The promise Jesus gave us is that by doing so, the Spirit will change us, and He will give us deep refreshment in our inner being.

My prayer for you as you begin this study is that you will be good soil, a ready receptacle for God’s Word.

WHY STUDY THE BOOK OF MATTHEW?

Matthew provides the most comprehensive collection of Jesus’ teachings in one book, which is reason enough to study it. But one of the book’s most significant characteristics is the interchange we can observe between Jesus’ words and His actions. He proclaims truth and then models how to live and relate to others according to those truths.

Studying Matthew also helps us understand the kingdom of God, a topic Jesus focused on often. Most of us have heard the phrase “the kingdom of God,” but we have little working knowledge of what the kingdom of God is and how it impacts our daily lives. Thankfully, the Book of Matthew tackles the kingdom from multiple angles, helping to locate us in God’s story and inviting us to find life with and through Jesus in this kingdom.

The Book of Matthew is ultimately a proclamation to us of who our King is. This King—Jesus—constantly draws our eyes to “look at” what we can’t see with physical eyes—a different kingdom from where we currently live. This unseen kingdom, He will repeatedly say to us, is our true home. My prayer for you as you begin this study is that you will have spiritual eyes to see this kingdom God is building through His chosen King: Jesus.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Perhaps you are new to Bible study or you lack confidence in your Bible study skills. I’m glad you’ve chosen this study! The layout of this Bible study book is intended not only to guide your study but also to teach you *how* to study. The structure is based upon questions you can take with you as you study other books of the Bible:

What does the passage say? In other words, what are the facts or truths the author is expressing? Look specifically for the following:

- What does this say about God’s character or nature?
- What does this say about God’s actions, whether past, present, or future?
- What does this say about people, both in general and in relation to God?
- What does this say about a person’s response to God’s actions? In other words, what command is to be obeyed?

What does the passage mean? Think about the passage in the larger context of the book and the even larger context of Scripture. Context often helps bring clarity to the author’s intended meaning. If there are confusing words or phrases, stop and consider them until you have more clarity. Use tools such as cross references, various versions of the Bible, and a dictionary. These should be used often when studying the Bible.

How must I respond? Allow the Holy Spirit to personalize the text. Is there something to confess and repent of? Something to think about? Something on which to take action? Something in which to rejoice?

My prayer for you as you begin this study is that you would better know the character and nature of King Jesus and would respond with undivided allegiance to Him.

HOW TO USE THIS BIBLE STUDY BOOK

For each week of study, start here with this study guide. Complete your five days of personal study in preparation for gathering with your Bible study group. When you gather, discuss your personal study using the given discussion questions at the end of the Bible study book (pp. 216–220).

On a side note, the Book of Matthew is quite long, and our study will not cover every verse, nor will it be studied in the order it's written. In order to “hear and understand” Matthew, I encourage you to read or listen to the entire book several times throughout your study. Listening may be easier, because you can access audio as you drive, exercise, or do mundane work. If you choose to read it, I've provided a reading plan online at lifeway.com/seekfirst. Look and listen for themes and recurring phrases. Look and listen for descriptions of Jesus. Finally, look and listen for specific descriptions of the kingdom of God and your place in it.

May God show you the blessing of living under the rule and reign of Jesus.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MATTHEW



We live in a world of identity confusion. Who are we? What determines our value? Where do we belong? What is our purpose? And perhaps the most important question: who gets to determine the definitive answers to these questions?

Identity is important because how we define ourselves is ultimately the bedrock of our lives, the foundation on which we build and make decisions about how we'll live. We embrace an identity—a story about ourselves and our place in this world—that we believe will lead to our thriving. In other words, we often find our security in the roles and labels by which we identify. Where we place our identity is where we think we'll find life.

Our world, in search of life, exalts self to the ultimate place. This should not be an affront or a surprise. We come into this world factory set on self, and we'll seek anything that feeds a sense of satisfaction, glory, or security.

Christians are not immune to this same confusion. Although we're in Christ and filled by His Spirit, we continue carrying our flesh with us everywhere we go, and our flesh constantly pulls us toward self-reliance, self-exaltation, and self-justification. We're easily disoriented, quickly losing sight of God and our place in His story.

This is why the Book of Matthew is significant, for both the follower of self and the follower of Jesus. Matthew tells us how God locates, finds, and invites us to find all the life and secure identity we could ever hope for. We'll discover in Matthew that God does this work through Jesus, and we'll find that Jesus came telling a story about a kingdom He called the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God as we'll define it in this study is a *people* who enjoy God's *provision* and rest under His *protective power* in a specific *place*.

You and I are meant for this kingdom, we're identified by this kingdom, and this is good news for us in a world of confusion.

In the Book of Matthew, we'll watch and listen as Jesus proclaims the kingdom. In Matthew 4:23, for example, it says, "And [Jesus] went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people."

To proclaim means to announce. When a couple in the British royal family has a baby, their tradition is to set out on an easel in front of Buckingham Palace a written announcement outlining the details of the birth. Similarly, Jesus' mission and ministry was to be an embodied announcement from God. This announcement was a proclamation of life.

The invitation of the kingdom is to find this true life—life as it was intended by God to be. Our search for identity, significance, peace, satisfaction, and purpose is ultimately a search for kingdom life. Jesus, as we'll see in Matthew, says this life is available for those who seek it, and it's a life that will extend beyond physical death. In fact, we continue today waiting for the final fulfillment of this promise of eternal life.

Earlier I listed the questions we all ask in this life: Who am I? What determines my value? Where do I belong? What is my purpose? The most important question, however, was this: who gets to determine the definitive answers to these questions?

The Bible tells us that because Jesus is King, He alone is the One who has the authority to answer our questions. When we become His, Matthew tells us, this is what He says:

Who are we? We're children of God, sustained and provided for.

What determines our value? We rest under the good rule and reign of Jesus.

Where do we belong? We belong to the kingdom of God, a kingdom that will last forever.

What is our purpose? We're to enjoy our King and imitate Him in the world, participating in the cultivation of the kingdom.

It's difficult to be a dependent, peaceful, rejoicing child in a world being torn to shreds, but one of the greatest truths about the kingdom of God is that it gives to us that which it demands. We're not asked to give our allegiance to a disengaged, tyrannical king. We give our allegiance to the King who gives His in return and will never take it away.

The invitation stands. Do you want life? Then you want the King and His kingdom.

I can't wait to lead you on your exploration of the Book of Matthew.

A handwritten signature in a cursive, teal-colored font that reads "Christine".

THE *king*
HAS COME



WEEK ONE

In 2008, my family and I moved from a small, conservative college town in Texas to a small, liberal college town in Virginia to plant a church. Our new city, we quickly learned, prides itself on intellectualism, progressive politics, and tolerance—a vastly different demographic than from where we’d come. Although he had years of preaching and teaching experience in our previous church, my husband Kyle had to learn new ways of communicating the same ancient truths in hopes of reaching everyone from the intellectual skeptic to the listener with no Bible knowledge. The task was both challenging and exhilarating as we witnessed God matching His truth to our community’s context and needs.

Context matters. As we begin our study of Matthew, we must similarly understand the context in which the author (traditionally thought to be Matthew, the tax-collector-turned-disciple) wrote and the audience to whom he wrote. His context and audience often informed his choice of words, and knowing this helps us comprehend his message about who Jesus is and what He came to do.

Matthew wrote his Gospel with a particular audience in mind: Jews just like himself. He repeatedly built a bridge between the Old and New Testament eras, naming prophecies and lineages as proof to a Jewish audience that Jesus is the Messiah. Notably, Matthew most often used “Son of David” as a name for Jesus, a term his Jewish audience would instinctively connote with royalty. The Jews had known for centuries that God would inaugurate an eternal kingdom, and Matthew connected Jesus to the kingly line of David. Matthew made it clear: the kingdom of God was inaugurated in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Because Matthew bridged the two testaments, in our study this week we’ll connect Old Testament promises, patriarchs, and prophecies to the Man Matthew said is the long-awaited Messiah—Jesus Christ. We’ll answer questions about where this Man came from, who He is, and what He did two thousand years ago that continues to influence our lives today.

The beginning of Matthew reads much like a newborn’s baby book. We discover the details of Jesus’ birth, the backstory of His family, and why these details are notable. This is, of course, where we’ll begin. But we’ll also skip ahead to the very end in order to read about Jesus’ death. The baby book and the obituary are the bookends of every person’s life. However, what happens after the writing of Jesus’ obituary is what proves He is not just any other person. The ending adds weight and significance to everything Jesus said and did, and who He claimed to be—if we accept it—completely rewrites your life and mine, from baby book to the grave.



Day One

THE KING'S HERITAGE

People are often fascinated by uncovering their family trees and learning who their ancestors were and where they came from. For someone of royal birth, however, the significance of their lineage goes far beyond fascination or interesting facts: their place in the family tree equates to title and authority. Because of this, a royal lineage is carefully chronicled and kept throughout generations and centuries.

READ MATTHEW 1:1-17.

Matthew began his book with a genealogy. While we're often tempted in our Bible reading to skip genealogies, Matthew begins with one for a significant reason: the author is establishing Jesus' family heritage. Jewish families kept detailed records of their lineage in order to legally establish familial rights and inheritance. Matthew tells us to look at these key people—and the promises given to them—to help frame how we read the entire book and how we understand who Jesus is.¹ His heritage tells a significant story.

1) Matthew establishes Jesus' familial connection to two significant people from Jewish history. Who are they (v. 1)?

- Jesus, the Son of _____
- Jesus, the Son of _____

2) The Book of Luke (3:23-38) lists a different genealogy for Jesus. Luke emphasized the biological descent of Jesus from Adam. By connecting Jesus primarily with Abraham and David, what was Matthew emphasizing in his genealogy?

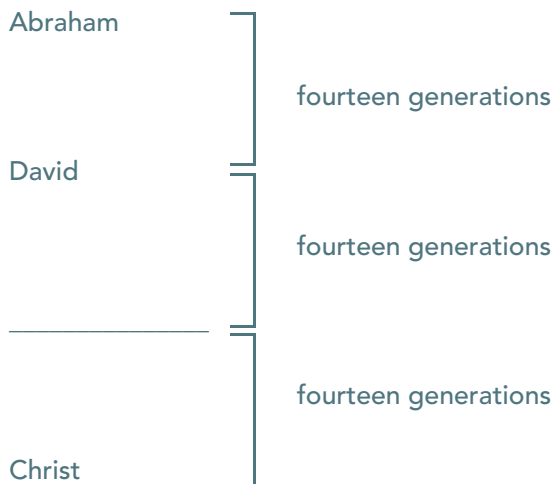
3) David and Abraham are significant in Jewish history because God made promises to both of them. Much of the Old Testament can be understood according to the “eras” of these men. What promises did God make to them?

- Abraham (at the time called Abram) in Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5-7:
- David in 2 Samuel 7:11b-17:

These promises were essentially one-sided binding covenants. God initiated both of them and promised to act according to His own character and not based upon Abraham or David’s ability to keep the covenants. God said He would create a *people*, enjoying His *provision*, resting under His *protective power*, in a specific *place*. In other words, God promised a kingdom.

Jesus inherited these promises through His family line. In other words, these promises will, according to God, be fulfilled and completed by someone in Jesus’ family.

4) Matthew mentioned another era in Jewish history. Fill in the blank below according to verse 17.



In the chart on the previous page, Matthew clearly omitted some names, as his third grouping holds only thirteen names, and 1 Chronicles 3:11-12 lists additional generations. It seems he wanted his readers to focus more on the *arrangement* of the genealogy, specifically the number fourteen. One commentator suggests that the number fourteen is significant because the letters (translated into numbers) of the Hebrew word for “David” add up to fourteen, emphasizing royal kingship. In addition, the number fourteen in the Bible symbolizes completion.²

5) By focusing on the number fourteen in relation to Jesus’ genealogy, what was Matthew emphasizing to his readers?

6) Matthew’s genealogy also includes several women, which is surprising in a patriarchal society. In addition, we might expect to find matriarchs of the faith in Jesus’ lineage, such as Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, or Leah. Which women did Matthew include instead, and what does the Bible tell us about them?

PASSAGES	WHAT IS THE WOMAN’S NAME?	WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TELL US ABOUT HER?
Verse 3; Genesis 38		
Verse 5; Joshua 2; Hebrews 11:31		
Verse 5; Ruth 1		
Verse 6; 2 Samuel 11; 2 Samuel 12:11-24		
Verse 16; Matthew 2:11		

7) When the Jews were exiled to Babylon as a consequence for their rejection of God, God promised He would still fulfill the covenants He made with Abraham and David. What do the following prophecies reveal about how this would happen?

- Isaiah 42:1-4:
- Isaiah 53:1-6:

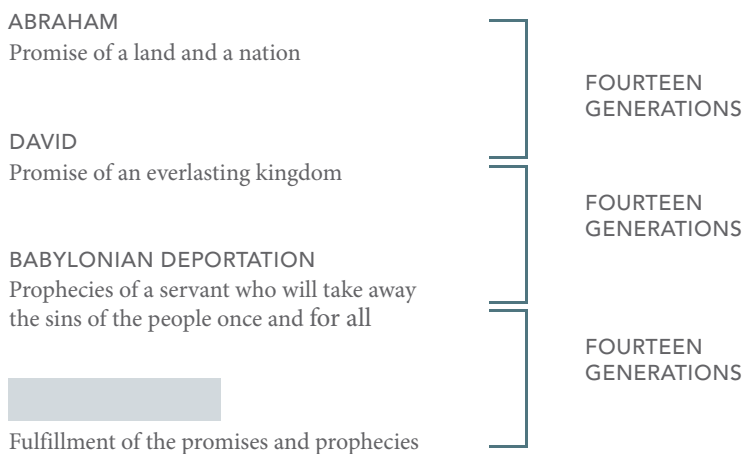
8) Aside from "Son of David" and "Son of Abraham," what are the two additional names attributed to Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17?

- Verse 16:
- Verse 17:

9) The name *Christ* means *Anointed One*. What is the dictionary's definition of *anointed* that best fits the context of this passage?

10) By calling Jesus "the Christ," what conclusion did Matthew reach?

11) Fill in the blue box in the chart according to Matthew's conclusion:



Matthew, writing to a primarily Jewish audience, started his book by establishing Jesus' familial heritage and, because of His heritage, His inheritance of the promises and prophecies God had made about someone who would be born in His line. Matthew formatted his genealogy in a way that emphasizes how Jesus is in fact the fulfillment of these promises and prophecies. He is the King the Jews had waited for. And He is our King as well.

Apply

Jesus as King means He not only has a title, but He also holds authority. What do you think of when you think of authority? How do you tend to relate to those in authority over you?

Matthew's genealogy takes us through Israel's history of covenants, slavery, sojourn, judges, kings, and exiles. God's people experienced His faithful presence and the fulfillment of His promises, despite their sin, setbacks, and suffering. Looking back at your own personal history, how have you experienced God's faithfulness and promise-keeping despite your sin, setbacks, and suffering?

How has Jesus' service specifically benefited you? Spend time in prayer thanking Him.



Day Two

THE KING'S BIRTH

I enjoy regaling my three teenage boys with the details of their births: my first glimpse of their faces, their first screeches filling the operating rooms, and the first time I held each of them in my arms. I tell them about grandparents, aunts, and uncles gathered around the hospital viewing window and our initial days home with our bundles of joy. In my words, I hope they hear how much they were longed for, prepared for, and how much they've been loved from the moment I knew they were in my womb.

Births are celebrated occasions, noted in family Bibles and remembered each year. Yesterday, we learned about the King's heritage—the grandparents and great-grandparents figuratively standing at the viewing window—and why His heritage is significant. Once Matthew set the stage for Jesus' life being a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and promises, he zoomed in on Jesus' nuclear family and the details surrounding His birth—the most significant birth story in history.

READ MATTHEW 1:18–2:23.

1) What are the pertinent facts about Jesus' birth and family?

- Jesus' mother (1:18):
- Jesus' earthly father (1:18):
- Jesus' birthplace (2:1):
- Ruler in power (2:1):
- Jesus' tribe (2:6):
- Jesus' hometown (2:23):

We're told that Mary and Joseph were betrothed. We use this word now to mean "engaged," but in ancient times betrothal was a binding legal agreement, requiring divorce if the agreement was broken. Betrothed couples, however, didn't consummate their marriage or reside together until after their wedding.³ This explains why Joseph is called Mary's husband and why he could consider divorce rather than merely break an engagement (1:19).

2) What are we told about Joseph's character (1:19,20,24-25; 2:13-14)?

3) What phrase or idea is repeated throughout this section of Scripture (1:22; 2:5,15,17,23)? Based upon yesterday's study, what does this confirm about who Jesus is?

4) Matthew notes explicit details about Jesus' birth that match prophecies made hundreds of years prior about the "Anointed One" God would send. Fill in the chart below.

REFERENCE	PROPHECY	TRUE ABOUT JESUS?
Isaiah 7:14		
Micah 5:2		
Hosea 11:1		

5) What five names are attributed to the newborn in Matthew 1:18–2:23? Note any significant details Scripture attaches to each name.

- 1:21:
- 1:23:
- 2:2:
- 2:4:
- 2:23:

6) The name *Jesus* means “Yahweh saves,” and *Immanuel* means “God with us.” Who chose Jesus’ name? What do these names tell us about Him? What does this tell us about God the Father?

7) What actions are we told Jesus will accomplish in His life?

- 1:21:
- 2:6:

Matthew described where Jesus grew up—Nazareth in the region of Galilee—as a fulfillment of prophecy, but no Old Testament prophecy specifically mentions this detail. Nazareth was a small village, often despised and looked down upon (John 1:46; 7:41).

8) Why do you think Matthew connected Nazareth as fulfilling a prophecy about Jesus? (See Isa. 53:2-3 for help.)

Matthew recorded details from Jesus' childhood that mirror another revered Jewish patriarch's life: Moses. Jesus' family fled to Egypt, just like Moses (Gen. 46:3). Before He turned two, His life was threatened by the nation's ruler, just like Moses (Ex. 1:8-22). Jesus' family fled Egypt according to the Lord's leadership, just as Moses led his (very large) extended family out of Egypt (Ex. 14).

Matthew seemed to foreshadow to his Jewish readers that Jesus would act as a new and better Moses.

9) Look up the following passages and record details from Moses' life.

PASSAGE	MOSES' ROLE OR ACTION
Exodus 3:7-10	
Exodus 3:14-15	Moses was God's spokesperson.
Exodus 4:1-9	Moses was given signs to use to prove he comes on God's authority.
Exodus 12:7-13	
Exodus 12:50-51	
Exodus 14:15-17,26-31	
Exodus 16:4; 17:1-7	Moses gave the message that God has given water and bread from heaven for the people.
Exodus 19:1-6	

10) Why, then, do you think Matthew wanted us to recall Moses when we read about Jesus' birth and childhood?

By attaching specific names and language to the birth of Jesus, Matthew made clear to his readers that this Baby is beyond significant. He is, in fact, the One who will deliver people from sin and death, like Moses saved Israel from Pharaoh's slavery.

Apply

Joseph was told that Jesus "will save his people from their sins" (1:21). Have you been saved from your sins through faith in Him? If not, will you call on Him today? (See p. 222 to understand more of what it means to be saved by Jesus.)

Jesus is our Shepherd, guiding us in the right way to go and providing for our needs. Every single time God directed Joseph through a dream, he immediately obeyed, even when it meant his social embarrassment or uncertainty. Do you put stipulations or conditions on your obedience to God? If so, what are they?



Day Three

THE KING'S INAUGURATION

Most of us live lives of obscurity—learning, serving, and loving in unseen, uncelebrated ways. Jesus wasn't immune to this common human experience. He grew up in obscurity in a tiny village in Galilee, far removed from the center of Jewish religious life in Jerusalem and the religious leaders of the day—the Pharisees and Sadducees.

We can only imagine Jesus' childhood. Perhaps He learned woodworking from His carpenter father and played games with His neighborhood friends. We can imagine how He grew in stature, bypassing His mother in height, and how He took pleasure in His hobbies.

The plan wasn't for Him to remain in obscurity, however. At the appointed time, following the direction of His heavenly Father, Jesus purposefully inched into the spotlight, taking on a public ministry.

Between Matthew 2 and Matthew 3, which we'll study today, about twenty-five years have gone by. Matthew 3 describes the beginning of Jesus' formal ministry. Because He leaves His obscurity behind, willingly seeking the lost for His Father, the world is changed forever.

READ MATTHEW 3.

1) Who was John the Baptist? How does Matthew describe him and what he was doing (vv. 1,4,6)?

2) What else do we know about him from other Gospel writers? Read Luke 1:5-17,39-45 and record what additional details you learn about John the Baptist.

3) Matthew again bridged the Old Testament and the New Testament with his narrative, saying, "For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah" (v. 3). The Gospel of Luke also connects prophecies to John the Baptist. Read Luke 1:67-80. Who is speaking? Were these words merely a father's hope for what his son would be? How do you know?

4) According to Matthew 3:3, what was John the Baptist's specific calling from God? What do you think it means to make a path straight? (See Isa. 40:1-5 for help.)

5) What was John the Baptist's message (3:1)?

_____, for the kingdom of heaven is _____.

The "kingdom of heaven" is an interchangeable phrase for "kingdom of God," which you may recall from Day One is a *people* who enjoy God's *provision* and rest under His *protective power* in a specific *place*.⁴ As we follow Jesus' life, we will continue to uncover different aspects of this definition.

6) What is the dictionary's definition of *repent*?

7) What do you think John the Baptist meant when he said that the kingdom of heaven is "at hand" (v. 2)?

8) John the Baptist was laying the groundwork for the Anointed One yet to come, preaching that all should prepare themselves to enter into the kingdom of heaven. How did people receive John the Baptist's message? Did he himself receive everyone equally for baptism? Why or why not?

In verses 7-10, John the Baptist specifically addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees. We will see these two groups show up countless times in our study, so it's important that we get to know them.

The Pharisees (meaning "separated ones") studied and strictly observed Jewish law, even down to the minutest of rules they'd developed to help them avoid breaking any commandment of God. They were the strictest sect of Judaism and, therefore, often considered themselves holier than others. They gave such attention to outward minutiae that they sometimes lost sight of weightier matters.⁵

The Sadducees considered themselves true descendants of David's high priest, Zadok. They had wealth, influence, and political power through cooperation with Rome.⁶

9) After reading about these two groups, what do you think John the Baptist meant when he warned them to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt. 3:8)? What were these groups *not* doing or getting right in relation to God and others? (For help, compare Matt. 3:9 with Gal. 3:7.)

10) If John was practicing a baptism of repentance, why did Jesus insist on being baptized by him? What does it mean that these are Jesus' first recorded words and His first recorded action in the Book of Matthew (3:15)?

11) What names are attributed to Jesus in Matthew 3?

- 3:3:
- 3:17:

In our reading today, we've observed the King's inauguration—the formal beginning of Jesus' ministry. John the Baptist served as the King's herald. He called on people to prepare themselves for God's Anointed One through repentance, a heart posture worthy of this King. Jesus could not do the work He came to do—to save people from their sins—without people recognizing their need for such a work.

Apply

Give an example of a time when you've repented of sin. What fruit did you see God grow in your life through repentance?

The Pharisees and Sadducees were focused on external rule-keeping but not willing to acknowledge their sin and, therefore, their need for Jesus. Are there areas of your life where you're more focused on rule-keeping than on dependence upon Jesus? How can you better cultivate a reliance on God in those areas of your life?



Day Four

WHO IS THIS KING?

Matthew 1–3 build the argument that Jesus is the Messiah whom God promised to Abraham, David, and the entire Israelite nation. The details of His birth align perfectly with many Old Testament prophecies regarding this Messiah, who would serve God by creating a *people* who enjoy His *provision* and rest under His *protective power* in a specific *place*.

We've already learned some of the ways Matthew described Jesus and connected Him to the Old Testament, but what in His life *confirmed* He was the Messiah sent from God? We're going to skip around in the Book of Matthew today in order to answer this question.

1) Read Matthew 8:1-17 and record your answers to the questions in the chart below.

PASSAGE	WHAT DID JESUS DO?	WHY DID HE DO IT?
8:1-4		
8:5-13		
8:14-17		

What did Jesus exhibit authority over? In what groups of people did He exhibit this authority?

2) Read Matthew 9:1-8 and record your answers to the questions in the chart below.

PASSAGE	WHAT DID JESUS DO?	WHY DID HE DO IT?
9:1-8		

What did Jesus exhibit authority over? In what "group" of people did He exhibit this authority?

3) Read Matthew 8:23-27; 14:22-33; and 15:32-39. Record your answers to the questions in the chart below.

PASSAGE	WHAT DID JESUS DO?	WHY DID HE DO IT?
8:23-27		
14:22-33		
15:32-39		

What did Jesus exhibit authority over? In what group of people did He exhibit this authority?

4) Why do you think Jesus performed miracles of healing, declared sins forgiven, and displayed authority over the created world?

5) Why is it significant that Jesus performed these miracles among and for people of various groups and backgrounds?

6) In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-3 in the synagogue and attributed it to Himself. Read Isaiah's prophecy about the Anointed One below and underline what we've seen Jesus do and/or groups of people to which He's ministered.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

ISAIAH 61:1-3

Who is this King? Jesus is one with authority over disease and spiritual malaise. And He is a King who exercises that authority for the benefit of those who come under His *protective power*.

Apply

Skim through Isaiah 61:1-3 again. According to your need today, who do you most resonate with: the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive, the bound, or the mourner? How does Jesus specifically respond to the one you most resonate with? Ask Him to meet your need in this way.

The fulfillment of these prophecies shows us that God is a promise-keeping God. What promises are you struggling to believe? Ask God to give you faith where it's lacking.



Day Five

THE KING'S CROWNING

We expect royal families to act, dress, speak, and live in ways that match their standing. If we ran into the Queen of England eating solo at a local dive restaurant, we'd be sorely disappointed. We'd want to experience her, if we could, in all her pomp and glory. To that end, perhaps to meet the public's expectation and represent their country well, the British royal family must follow specific rules as they interface with their public.

When the Queen stands, no one sits. Royal husbands and wives must not show any public displays of affection. Royals must remain completely neutral on political matters: no voting or making political statements. They can't take selfies or sign autographs, be seen or photographed in casual clothing, and royal women are to wear pantyhose in public. The public is expected to never touch a royal, aside from shaking an extended, gloved hand.⁷

Jesus endured expectations about His kingship as well, and almost no one expected how He'd eventually be crowned King.

So far, we've observed how Matthew named Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises and prophecies: He was the Anointed One, sent specifically by God to serve, save, and shepherd. By performing miracles and casting out demons, Jesus proved His divine authority over every realm, whether seen or unseen.

However, He also gained followers who believed "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2) meant that the Jewish people would soon cast off oppressive rule and reign in their nation under His authority. Jesus would certainly soon reign, but it would not be in the way they—or anyone else—assumed.

Today, we will move to the bookend that marks the last days of Jesus' life and seek to understand the significance of all He did.

1) Why did the Jews believe that if Jesus was truly the Messiah, He would gather them as a nation, overthrow Roman rule, and reign as an earthly king? (See Day One, Question 3 for help.)

2) Who, then, did the Jews believe would be included in the kingdom of God? Who would it exclude?

READ MATTHEW 21:1-11 IN LIGHT OF THE JEWS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE MESSIAH.

3) What did the crowd call Jesus? What significance does this have?

4) What Old Testament prophecy does Matthew reference in this passage that would have reaffirmed the crowd's belief? What does this prophecy call the coming one?

5) All along the way to His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus told His followers they should expect something different than an earthly kingdom. What did He foretell about Himself and what He was really on earth to do?

PASSAGE	WHAT JESUS FORETOLD HE WOULD DO
Matthew 17:9-13	
Matthew 17:22-23	
Matthew 20:17-19	

Jesus' closest friends—Jews themselves—remained confused and bewildered by this talk of suffering, death, and resurrection.

READ MATTHEW 16:21-23 AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

6) Why do you think Peter responded the way he did?

7) Why do you think Jesus called him Satan?

8) Jesus distinguished between "things of God" and "things of man." In the context of this passage, what are the "things of God" and what are the "things of man"? (See also John 18:36.)

What Jesus foretold about Himself came true. He was tortured, crucified on a cross, and in a grave for three days before He resurrected, overcoming death. (You can read the entire account in Matt. 27:15–28:10.)

9) Read Philippians 2:5-11. What was God the Father's response to Jesus' service?

10) Over whom and what does He now reign?

The servant, through His service, has become King!

The King's crowning ceremony happened in a way the Jews didn't expect. He showed himself to be King, not by taking political power or amassing wealth and influence, but through laying down His life for our sake. This is the King we follow, and we'll see repeatedly in our study of Matthew how Jesus calls us to a similar servanthood.

Apply

Jesus came to serve rather than be served. In what areas of your life are you seeking to be served rather than to serve? What about His example will you emulate today?

Like the Jews and like Peter, we can easily become confused about what Jesus came to do and what He continues to do for His people. What are the "things of man" that often draw your attention away from the "things of God"?

Now that you've studied what Jesus came to do and how He earned His rightful crown from God the Father, consider what you want or expect Jesus to be as King in your life. Does your idea of who He is line up with what He says He came to do?

WRAP-UP: *Week One*

The details of Jesus' ancestry and birth point like neon signs to the truth that He is the Messiah God promised Israel. He will go on to save His people from their sins. Through His sinless life, unjust death, and glorious resurrection, He earned the title of King of kings from His Father and currently reigns over the kingdom of God.

The bookends of Jesus' life—His birth and death—are significant and supernatural. The details surrounding them not only prove His divinity, but they also alert us to study carefully what He taught and how He lived while He walked the earth.

What's one main takeaway you learned about the King and the kingdom this week?

How does knowing this truth change the way you relate to God and others?

Please use the space below to take notes during your group meetings. You can find group discussion questions in the leader guide on page 216.