

THE GOSPEL OF —
MATTHEW



INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew records one of the earliest official accounts of Jesus of Nazareth. It stands first among the four gospels, creating a link between the Old and the New Testament. The author is believed to be Matthew, the tax collector - one of the twelve apostles that Jesus appointed. He features in the book on two occasions (Matt. 9:9, 10:3).

However, most scholars today agree that the Gospel of Mark is the earliest of the four gospels. They also believe that the writers of Matthew and Luke had access to Mark's Gospel while writing their accounts. Matthew, however, has gathered and arranged all the teachings of Jesus into an amazing tapestry of five blocks that highlight certain themes about Jesus.

Matthew wanted to show how Jesus is the continuation and fulfillment of the whole biblical story of God and Israel, so he emphasizes that:

- Jesus is the Messiah from the line of David
- Jesus is a new, authoritative teacher like Moses, and
- Jesus is God with us (Immanuel)

THE BIG IDEAS IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

■ Matthew's central theme is **promise and fulfilment**:

God's promise in the Old Testament - to bring salvation to His people Israel and the whole world - is fulfilled with the coming of Jesus the Messiah. The Church should be moved into action by this good news and make disciples (followers) of Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 28:18-20).

■ Matthew points out that Jesus is the promised Messiah- from the promised lineage of Abraham and David. Every page of Matthew's Gospel is steeped in this theme of promise and fulfilment. The Gospel begins with the announcement that, *"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David,*

Why Four Gospels?

One of the most surprising things first-time readers of the New Testament discover is that the story of Jesus is told not once, but four times: The "Gospels" according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So why are there four Gospels in the New Testament? Why not just tell the whole story once?

Throughout the centuries there have been numerous attempts to "harmonize" the Gospels into a single story. If we cut and paste them into the single gospel, we take four Spirit-inspired masterpieces and turn them into one un-inspired work of man.

This is because each Gospel represents a unique portrait of Jesus. Each Gospel writer has a particular story to tell and certain theological themes to emphasize. Merging them together into a single-story risks missing each Gospel's unique perspective. Worse, we risk missing the Holy Spirit's message to us through the text.

the son of Abraham,” followed by a detailed genealogy of 41 generations! The genealogy introduces Jesus as the “*Son of Abraham*” and the “*Son of David,*” meaning Jesus is in the lineage of two of the most significant figures in biblical history.

Matthew uses many titles for Jesus in his Gospel, including Messiah, King, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, Immanuel, etc. All of these have their roots in the Old Testament and point in one way or another to the theme of fulfilment and the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

TITLES FOR JESUS

MESSIAH
KING
LORD
SON OF GOD
SON OF MAN
SON OF DAVID
IMMANUEL

■ **Matthew develops the typology of Jesus being the New Israel.**

Just as God brought his ‘son’ Israel out of Egypt, so Jesus, the true Son of God, comes out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1, Matt.2:15). Just as Israel was tested for 40 years in the wilderness, so Jesus is tested by Satan for 40 days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). While Israel repeatedly failed to obey God, Jesus remains faithful and obedient.

■ **Matthew portrays Jesus as a New Moses** too. As Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, written on tablets of stone, so did Jesus deliver His Sermon on the “*Mount*” to inaugurate the new covenant, written on human hearts. Moses’ face was glowing when he came down from his

encounter with God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:29-33), so Jesus' face shone like the sun at His transfiguration (Matt. 17:2). Also, just as Moses wrote five books of the Torah (Genesis–Deuteronomy), Matthew presents five major teaching discourses that show Jesus in the light of the new Moses who brings the new covenant. discourses that show Jesus in the light of the new Moses who brings the new covenant.

The material of Matthew, the accountant, is very systematic in composition. Special attention is given to money, with two parables dealing with financial transactions found only in this Gospel (Matt. 18 and 20). He also notes financial details in Judas' betrayal and the bribing of the guards at the sepulcher.

Finally, Matthew presents:

1. Jesus' radical claims to discipleship,
in obedience to God's will;

2. Jesus' own life as a model
for the high ethical demands; and

3. Jesus' emphasis on the church
as the community of faith.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The book of Matthew has its unique characteristics. The story of Jesus' life is designed with an introduction and a conclusion that wraps around **five clear sections** in the center. Each of these sections concludes with a long block of Jesus' teaching.

Introduction

Matthew 1-3

Jesus as the Messiah and Immanuel (God with us)

1

Matthew 4-7

Arrival of God's Kingdom and the Sermon on the Mount

Teaching Block 1
(5-7)

2

Matthew 8-10

The Kingdom's Power and Invitation to Discipleship

Teaching Block 2
(9-10)

3

Matthew 11-13

The Different Reactions to Jesus

Teaching Block 3
(13)

4

Matthew 14-20

What it Means for Jesus to Be the Messiah

Teaching Block 4
(18)

5

Matthew 21-25

Jesus Confronts Israel's Leaders

Teaching Block 5
(24-25)

Conclusion

Matthew 26-28

Jesus' Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

Within the five sections lie five blocks about Jesus' teachings on:

1. **Righteousness**, in 5:1–7:29,
2. **Missions**, in 9:35–10:42,
3. **Kingdom**, in 13:1–58,
4. **Church**, in 18:1–35, and
5. **Eschatology** (End Times), in 24:1–25:46.

These five teaching blocks have been called the “*five books*” of Matthew and are the major presentations of the teachings of Jesus in the Gospel.



Incarnation

The Holy Spirit, the same divine creative Agent who brooded over chaos and brought order at the dawn of creation morning, who acted in the creation of the first man and the first woman, was the divine Agent who ushered the life of the eternal Christ into the body of Mary for a miracle of the ages known as the Incarnation.

Thus, the God who created man in the beginning from nothing, who created woman from man without the agency of man or woman, now created Jesus of Nazareth through Mary without the agency of a man.

The Incarnation is God's greatest affirmation of humanness. In the incarnation, God demonstrated that He could become human without becoming sinful. Humanness and sinfulness are not synonymous.

Sinfulness is the perversion of the truly human, the perversion of the Imago Dei (the image of God) in which we were created. **Salvation is, among other things, primarily the restoration of true humanity in our lives, the correction of perversion so that we may once again be persons who express the image of God.**

MATTHEW 1-3

Jesus as the Messiah and Immanuel (God with us)

Chapters 1-3 set the stage by blending Jesus' story right onto the Old Testament Scriptures. Matthew tells us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the City of David, emphasizing the royal lineage. His focus is on the kingly lineage of Christ even in the lowly circumstances of His birth

Matthew opens with the genealogy of Jesus that highlights him as the messianic son of David and Abraham who will bring God's blessing to all nations. Thereafter, we arrive at the famous story about Jesus' birth and how it fulfilled the Old Testament's prophetic promises with nations coming

to honour the Messiah who was born in Bethlehem. More than that, Jesus' conception was by the Holy Spirit, and He was named **Immanuel**, which proves that Jesus is no mere human. He is God with us, the God of Israel embodied as a human.



(Remember that the genealogies in the Old Testament are always working to communicate multiple layers of information to readers. Genealogies obviously trace family trees, but they also help us follow priestly and royal lines through Israel's story. You can see each of these types of genealogies in the first nine chapters of Chronicles. Matthew shows the readers that Christianity is not rooted in mythology but rather in history, beginning with the lineage of the King. This genealogy is a summary of God's work in history through His chosen people - the Israelites - as a channel to unfold the Messiah as the Saviour of the world.)

The Gospel of Matthew was written with a focus on the King and His kingdom, interpreting the new understanding of the messianic role. Matthew begins his Gospel by introducing the King Himself, Jesus Christ (Kristos, Messiah). Significantly, the concept of the kingdom appears fifty five times in the Gospel of Matthew.



heaven," a phrase found only in Matthew, but understood in the Jewish community as the rule of God. Matthew is the bridge between the old covenant and the new. He introduces the Christ and His kingdom as the fulfilment of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

MATTHEW 4-7

Arrival of God's Kingdom and the Sermon on the Mount

Chapters 4-7 Jesus steps onto the scene announcing the arrival of God's Kingdom. This is important because the Kingdom is the main theme of Jesus' teaching. In essence, it is about God's rescue operation for His world, all taking place through King Jesus. He comes to confront evil, especially spiritual evil and its legacy of demonization, disease, and death. He steps in to restore God's reign over the world by creating a new family of people who will live under His rule.

After Jesus begins healing people and invariably creating a movement, He takes His followers to a mountain and

A Culture Clash!

The way of the Kingdom of God opposes our contemporary culture.

Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," but we say blessed are the **achievers**.

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn," but we say blessed are the **self-fulfilled**.

Blessed are the ones who hunger and thirst after righteousness but we say blessed are the **mavericks**!

Blessed are the pure in heart but we say blessed are the **unethical**!

Blessed are the peacemakers but we say blessed are the **neutrals**!

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake but we say blessed are the **escapists**!

Jesus says we are blessed when persecuted for His sake but we say blessed are the **defenders**!

Jesus challenges the very selfishness that determines so much of our social

delivers His first block of teaching, traditionally called the Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7). Here, Jesus maps the journey for His followers and reveals life in God's Kingdom. It's an Upside-Down Kingdom where there are no privileged members - the poor, the

behaviour. The Kingdom of God is breaking into time, calling persons to be disciples of Christ, living by His mercy and love. The King Himself came as the "suffering servant," as one who identified with humanity in its problems without altering His own relation with the Father, thereby calling us into the kingdom of the Father.

nobodies, the wealthy, the religious, and others are all invited to turn and follow Jesus and join His new family. **Jesus clarifies that He does not intend to set aside the commands of the Torah but rather to fulfil them through His teachings, which transform the hearts of His people to truly love God and their neighbours, including their enemies.** The Sermon on the Mount is known as the "*The Manifesto of the King*", commonly known as "*the Christian's working philosophy of life*." It is an outline of the behaviour prescribed for the citizens of the kingdom. As one of many messages preached by Jesus, it presents important moral and ethical teachings. It is not a message on salvation as is John 3, neither is it on the work of the Holy Spirit as in John 16. Rather, it is a message on a lifestyle for the "*new creation*" - those who are born of the Spirit. It outlines the kind of life that is expected of the "*new community*." However, it is not a legalistic formula, rather this message calls the members of the kingdom to faith in every area of life.

- *Blessed are the poor in spirit* — the humble — for theirs is the kingdom.
- *Blessed are those who mourn* — those who care deeply — for they shall be comforted.
- *Blessed are the gentle* — the meek — for they shall inherit the earth. And it is the meek person who does enjoy or receive the deepest satisfaction from God's created order.
- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness* — those who seek God—for they shall be filled. "*Righteousness*" means right-relatedness with God.
- *Blessed are the merciful*, for they shall obtain mercy.
- *Blessed are the peacemakers*, for they shall be called sons of God.
- *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake*, for theirs is the kingdom.
- *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you ... for My sake*. This beatitude is often merged with the preceding one. However, it has the direct focus of persecution for the person of Christ.

The whole teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are revolutionary: love for enemies instead of their destruction, unconditional forgiveness rather than retaliation, readiness to suffer rather than use force, and blessing for peacemakers instead of hymns of hate and revenge. "*Jesus did not set in motion a social/political revolution; what He brought about was a non-violent revolution, emerging from man's heart, from a radical change in man's thinking, from a conversion into a new creation.*"

MATTHEW 8-10

The Kingdom's Power and Invitation to Discipleship

After concluding His great teaching on the Kingdom, the next section shows Jesus bringing the Kingdom into reality in the day-to-day lives of people (chapters 8 - 10). Matthew has arranged nine stories in which Jesus brings the liberating power of God's Kingdom to bear on the lives of normal people. There are three groups of three stories here, all about people who are sick, broken, or in danger. Jesus heals or saves all of them by acts of power. Then, in between the triads, we find two parallel stories about Jesus' radical call to follow him. A person can only enter God's Kingdom by following Him and becoming His disciple.

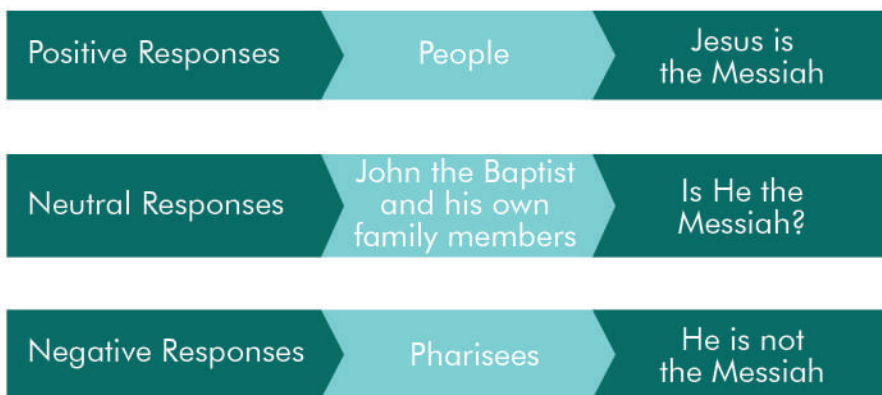
Leper (8:2)	Centurion's Servant (8:5)	Sick Mother (8:14)
	Jesus says, Follow Me (8:22)	
Stormy Seas (8:24)	Demonized Men (8:28)	Paralyzed Man (9:2)
	Jesus says, Follow Me (9:9)	
Dead Girl / Sick Woman (9:20,24)	Two Blind Men (9:27)	Mute Man (9:32)

In Chapter 10, we continue into the **second large block of teaching** in the book of Matthew, as Jesus extends His reach by sending out 12 disciples. He teaches these disciples how to announce the Kingdom of God as well as what to expect once they do. While many in Israel accepted the Kingdom of Jesus, Israel's leaders stood to lose a lot if they did so. The disciples were warned that the leaders would, in all probability, reject and persecute Jesus and His followers.

MATTHEW 11-13

The Different Reactions to Jesus

Here Matthew has collected a group of stories about people responding to Jesus and His message. It's a mixed bag. Some react positively; they love Jesus and recognize Him as the Messiah. Others are neutral; they're not sure what to make of Jesus. John the Baptist ends up in this group when he makes it clear that Jesus is not what he expected. The reactions of Israel's leaders are negative, as the Pharisees and Bible teachers reject and challenge Jesus altogether. They think that He's a false teacher leading the people astray, and accuse Him of blasphemy for His exalted claims of divine authority.



Jesus wasn't surprised or taken aback by these diverse responses. In fact, He focuses on them in **the third large block of teaching, starting in chapter 13.**

Here, Matthew has collected many of Jesus' parables about the Kingdom: the farmer throwing seed on four types of soil, the mustard seed, the pearl, and the buried treasure. These parables are like a commentary on the stories that you have just read. Some accept Jesus with enthusiasm, while others reject Him, but God's Kingdom will continue to grow despite these obstacles.

7 Parables are given in Matthew 13 to explain the nature of the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 13

... kingdom of God is like unto...

"Jesus portrays in a simple way, God's vision for the Church and reveals the character of the world and the devil through these 7 parables"

v.3-23

Parable of the Sower,
seeds and soils

v.24-30

Parable of the wheat and tares

v.31-32

Parable of the mustard seed

v.33

Parable of the Yeast

v.44

Parable of the
Hidden Treasure

v.45

Parable of the Pearl

v.47

Parable of the Net

As we finish chapter 13, halfway through the book of Matthew, we come across a key question about Jesus. How will this tension between Jesus and Israel's leaders play itself out?



Discipleship Model

Why don't Christians look more like Christ?

A disciple is someone who believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, intentionally learns from Him, and strives to live more like Him. A disciple is called to be a servant, to bear the identity of the Cross in living for Christ and His kingdom. Trusting Him for everything, not just what happens when one dies. Trusting Jesus and becoming His disciple is the same thing.

Matthew 16:24, *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'"*

Discipleship, as in verse 24, can be expressed in three points: (1) making up one's mind; (2) giving up one's autonomy; and (3) taking up one's identity in Christ.

To put this in simple terms, to be a disciple means to –

- Be with Jesus
- Become like Jesus
- Do what Jesus did

MATTHEW 14-20

What It Means for Jesus to Be the Messiah

In Chapter 14-20, Matthew explores the different perspectives people had about Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus continues to heal sick people, and miraculously provide food for huge crowds in the desert on two occasions, one of which fed a crowd that consisted of a large number of Jewish people (chapter 14), the other non-Jewish (chapter 15). This sign is very similar to what Moses did for Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 16), so lots of people got excited about Jesus and considered Him to be the great prophet and Messiah.

The religious leaders, however, were not convinced. Their perception of the Messiah was built on passages

such as Psalm 2 or Daniel 2 that talk about a victorious Messiah who will deliver Israel and defeat the pagan oppressors. From their point of view, Jesus was a false teacher who made blasphemous claims about Himself. Therefore, they increased their opposition and started hatching a plot to kill Him.

In chapters 16 and 17, Jesus withdraws and teaches His closest disciples about what it really means for Him to be Israel's Messiah, because it was far from what they expected. Jesus asks the disciples, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Peter comes up with the right answer: *"You're the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* It soon becomes clear, however, that Peter is thinking of a king who will reign victoriously through military power.

Jesus challenges Peter, by saying He will become a King, but unconventionally. Jesus starts teaching on themes from the prophet Isaiah, who said that the Messianic King would suffer and die for the sins of His people. Jesus was positioning Himself as a Messianic King who would reign by becoming a servant and laying down His life for Israel and other nations.

Peter and the disciples don't understand the prophesy fully, so Jesus continues into the **fourth large block of teaching in chapter 18**, followed by another series of teachings in chapters 19 and 20. These messages are focussed on the upside down nature of Jesus' messianic Kingdom and how it flips our normal value system on its head. In the community of the servant King, you gain honour by serving others. Instead of revenge, you

forgive and do good to your enemies. You gain true wealth by giving it away. To follow the servant Messiah, you must become a servant yourself.

(A significant emphasis in Matthew is the “church.” In all of the synoptic Gospels, the concept of church as ekklesia is found only in Matthew. Jesus introduced the church, in response to Peter’s confession, as the ultimate redemptive purpose of Christ. It was when Peter introduced it that Jesus also told His disciples of His coming death and resurrection. The church was to be an expression of the New Covenant of the people of God in contradistinction with the Judaic tradition of the continuing expression of the people of God. Jesus’ selection of the twelve was a deliberate symbol of a new Israel, and these people of faith were the true heirs of salvation.)



MATTHEW 21-25

Jesus Confronts Israel's Leaders

In the next section (chapters 21-25), we watch **the two kingdoms clash - Jesus' Kingdom and that of Israel's leaders**. Jesus comes to Jerusalem for the Passover, riding on a donkey as the crowds hail Him as the Messiah. Jesus immediately marches into the courtyard of the temple, creating a disruption that brings daily sacrifices to a halt. His actions speak louder than words. As Israel's king, Jesus was asserting His royal authority over the temple - the place where God and Israel met. In Jesus' view, the temple was compromised by the hypocrisy of Israel's leaders, so He challenged their authority. The leaders were deeply offended,

Woe to you!

In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounces seven "woes" to all religious leaders. 'Woe' means anguish and grief over something that is broken or corrupt. The Lord Jesus was deeply distressed as He spoke to the Pharisees. What greatly troubled Jesus in this context was simply the tendency of the Pharisees to focus on outward appearances rather than on internal reality – a deeper relationship with God. Jesus says, *"First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean."*

Perhaps modern Christianity is not as immune as we might think from strains of the Pharisee virus. How do you recognize a modern-day Pharisee?

- Pharisees know what to say, but do not do what they say.
- Pharisees practice their faith to be seen by others.
- Pharisees keep people from Jesus and His grace.
- Pharisees add their convictions and traditions to the word of God.
- Pharisees lack a love for people in need.
- Pharisees are lawful on the outside but lawlessness on the inside.
- Pharisees cover their sin instead of confessing and repenting.

and in chapter 22, they tried to trap Jesus and shame Him in public debate. They failed, and as a result, they hastened their plan to have Him killed.

In response, Jesus delivers **His final block of teaching** (chapters 23-25). First, He offers a passionate critique of the Pharisees and their hypocrisy before weeping over Jerusalem and its rejection of God's Kingdom. Jesus withdraws with the disciples and starts telling them about the immediate future, wherein the leaders of Israel were going to execute Him, but in doing so, they would create their own demise. Instead of accepting Jesus' way of the peaceful Kingdom, they were going to take the road of revolt against Rome, and consequentially the city and the temple would be destroyed

But, Jesus says, that's not the end of the story. **He will vindicate His death with His resurrection and one day return to set up His Kingdom over all nations.** In the meantime, the disciples were encouraged to stay alert and committed to announcing Jesus' Kingdom and spreading the good news about Him.



The Great Commission

The Great Commission, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (16:15). This is a principle of growth for the kingdom of God that shocks the sensibilities of our efficiency minded age. The temptation is to give our energies to people from whom we will get the greatest response. If so, we will have to rewrite the Parable of the Sower to limit the sowing of the seed to soil that is fertile.

Our only responsibility is to preach and teach the gospel to all nations; the responsibility for results belongs to the Holy Spirit.

The singular command of the Great Commission is to *"make disciples."* More than just a *"convert to Christianity"* or to some *"particular 'faith and practice'"*, a disciple is a learner, a pupil, or an apprentice – a person who has decided to follow their master and become like Him. Christians are to apprentice themselves to Christ and allow Christ to shape their lives after His life. Discipleship does not end with conversion, rather it is a life-long relationship of walking with and growing in Christ.

MATTHEW 26-28

Jesus' Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

With all this ringing in the disciples' ears, the story comes to its climax in chapters 26-28. That night, Jesus takes the disciples aside to celebrate a Passover meal, which retells the story of Israel's rescue from slavery and the death of the Passover lamb. **Jesus uses the bread and wine from the meal as new symbols, showing that His coming death would be a sacrifice that would redeem people from slavery, evil, and sin.**

After the meal, Jesus is arrested and put on trial before the Sanhedrin, a council of Jewish leaders. His claim to be the Messiah is rejected, He's charged with blasphemy against God, and He's brought before the

Roman governor Pilate. Pilate thinks that Jesus is innocent, but he gives in and sentences Jesus to death by crucifixion. Jesus is led away by the Roman soldiers and is crucified.

You'll notice here that, just as in the opening chapters, there are lots of references to the Old Testament. **Matthew is showing that Jesus' death was not a failure but rather the surprising fulfilment of prophetic promises.** Jesus came as the servant Messiah who was rejected by His own people. But instead of judging them, He is judged on their behalf and bears the consequences of their sin.

The crucifixion scene comes to a close and Jesus' body is placed in a tomb, but the book of Matthew ends with a surprising twist. On Sunday morning, the disciples discover that the tomb is empty. Suddenly, all kinds of people begin to see the risen Jesus!

The book concludes with the resurrected Jesus giving a final teaching called the Great Commission. He is now the true King of the world, so He sends the disciples to all nations with **the good news that Jesus is Lord.** Anyone can join His Kingdom by being baptized and following His teachings.

CONCLUSION

Echoing all the way back to the first chapter where Jesus is called Immanuel, or *"God with us,"* Jesus' last words to His disciples were, *"I will be with you."* It is a promise that Jesus' personal presence will be with His followers until He finally returns to rejoin heaven and earth in God's Kingdom.





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