

39. Jesus in Matthew

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The Gospel of Matthew begins the biographical section of Jesus in the NT. It is not a complete account of Jesus' life. Rather, the author of this Book selected the portions of His life according to what the Holy Spirit inspired him to write.

A. AUTHOR

Matthew, also known as Levi, was a Jew who was an IRS agent for the Roman government, thus he was hated and despised by his own people. But after becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, Matthew wanted to give to the Jews instead of take from them. He longed for them to know that Jesus Christ was their Messiah, the anointed King promised in their OT Scriptures.

B. AUDIENCE

The Book was obviously written by a Jew, Matthew and was intended for Jewish readers. According to a Christian tradition, it was originally written in Hebrew and later translated into Greek. But we don't know exactly when it was written, but it was clearly completed before A.D. 70, when the temple was destroyed because Matthew did not say anything about the destruction of Jerusalem or the temple in the Book.

This Gospel according to Matthew was written with a distinctive Jewish flavor. It shows how Jesus fulfilled OT prophecies and was obviously linked to their whole history.

For example, the genealogy in chapter 1, Matthew traced Jesus to Abraham and confirmed His lineage to king David.

Matthew 1:1-2 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: 2 Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers.

Throughout this Gospel, Matthew referred to Christ as the "Son of David." And the author had no intention to explain Jewish customs, because his audience was the Jews, unlike the Gospel of Mark that was written for the Roman church believers who knew very little about the Jewish culture, so Mark often explained what he was talking about.

C. PURPOSE

This Book is the story of the Great King, the royal Son of David who set aside His divine regal robes and donned the cloak of a commoner so that we could become uncommon-royal children of the Most High God.

D. STRUCTURE

Many Bible scholars see the book of Matthew as being constructed around five major discourses:

- 1) **The Sermon on the Mount** – Chaps. 5-7
- 2) **The Sending out of the Twelve** – chap. 10
- 3) **Kingdom Parables** – chap. 13
- 4) **Kingdom Living** – chap. 18
- 5) **The Olivet Discourse** – chaps. 24-25

The spoken words of Jesus account for about 60% of the Book's content. Matthew obviously wanted his readers to observe how Jesus lived, but, more importantly, to know, and live what He taught.

Many commentators believe that Matthew was a skilled teacher in his own right and organized his material for easy memorization, not necessarily in the chronological orders. This would have helped the early church hold Jesus' words in their hearts during a time when the possession of books was not commonplace.

Matthew's Gospel reminds us that God's inspired Word was given not just to provide us with information, but to get into our lives and change us.

E. TWO MAJOR THEMES IN MATTHEW

Though Jesus dealt with numerous issues in this Book, two stand out over everything else:

1) The Kingdom of Heaven

To the Jews at the time of Jesus, they expected the Messiah to put every enemy of Israel under His feet and set up a glorious kingdom on earth and to bring about His people's complete restoration.

When Jesus declared the Kingdom, He was teaching them about the Kingdom living on earth now as well as the Kingdom after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in the future. Jesus' Kingdom living is a process of sanctification through the power of the Holy Spirit. We certainly cannot do it, nor do we want to do it, because everything about the Kingdom living goes against the grain of our carnal nature – pride, greed, sensuality, and anything that the Bible teaches us not to do.

But the Jews chose to think what was convenient for them since they were under the control of Rome.

The word "kingdom" is used 50 times in reference to God's kingdom, and the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" occurs 32 times – 11 in parables, such as, "the kingdom of heaven is like.... The concept of the kingdom obviously needed some explaining, both in Jesus' day and in Matthew's, since the Jews were expecting a different kind of king.

2) Hypocrisy and Self-Righteousness

I've mentioned this before, but I believe that it is worth repeating: Religion is made by humans to approach God. It makes humans be prideful for one's own accomplishment through one's religion. Humans want a religion in one's own terms to appease one's own spirituality. However, it has one drawback. It still leaves an emptiness in one's heart no matter what humans do.

So the Kingdom of heaven had to intervene with the religion since it produces nothing but sins, not real righteousness. The caretakers of the Israel's man-made spirituality were the Pharisees, with whom Jesus clashed many times.

Matthew 23:23-24 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

The Judaism and its law show us our desperate needs for the righteousness from God. But instead, the Pharisees thought that they were good enough by burying God's law under a mountain of their own interpretations and traditions. Jesus had a different message, though, for those who were straining under the load of Pharisaic legalism.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

F. QUICK SURVEY

1) Announcement and Arrival of the King – 1:1-4:77

The author Matthew foreshadowed the Jewish people's future rejection of Jesus with placing Herod's murderous pursuit of Him, while His acceptance by believing Gentiles is prefigured by the magi's quest and worship.

Then, skipping 30 years, the scene opened at the Jordan River where John the Baptist broke 400 years of prophetic silence and prepared the way for the Messiah. Right after that, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by satan for 40 days and 40 nights without food or water. By using the Word of God, not His divine power, our Lord Jesus resisted the devil and established Himself as the perfectly obedient and sinless sacrifice for humanity.

2) Proclamation and Reception of the King – 4:12-15:39

In chapter 4, we see Jesus starting to recruit His disciples and traveling throughout all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease.

Then, we see Jesus' first discourse: the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 through 7. Here He teaches the standard of kingdom life. He expounds genuine righteousness and true interpretation of God's law, real spirituality, hypocrisy, trust, forgiveness, and good works. The crowds are amazed that He teaches with such authority and not as their scribes.

In chapters 8-9, Jesus performs 10 miracles that highlight His compassion as well: cleansing the leper, healing the centurion's servant, healing Peter's mother-in-law, freeing the demon-possessed, healing the sick people, calming the storm, freeing two demon-possessed men, healing a paralyzed man, raising a young girl from the dead, healing the hemorrhaging woman, healing the blind and mute. These miracles reveal Jesus' authority over every realm – disease, demons, death, and nature.

As the Jewish religious rulers' rejections were intensifying, our Lord shifted His attention to His disciples and explained to them His kingdom parables in chapter 13. Though Jesus was able to feed 5000, to walk on water, and to feed another 4000, the Pharisees' antagonism only increased.

3) Opposition and Rejection of the King – Chaps. 16-27

The Pharisees' badgering contrasts sharply with Peter's revelation of Jesus as the Messiah in chapter 16. And Jesus' promise to build His church clearly anticipates the continuation of what He has begun, despite His fast-approaching crucifixion. His transfiguration on Mount Hermon gives further assurance of the ultimate triumph of His kingdom. His fourth discourse, in fact, lays out some distinctives of life in the kingdom community in chapter 18.

More frequent and intense confrontation with the Pharisees in chapter 23 caused Jesus to prepare His followers for His death and looked ahead to His Second Coming. Then, there was His final discourse, known as the Olivet Discourse in chap-

ters 24-25. After spending a final Passover meal with His men, Jesus is arrested, paraded through a series of kangaroo court trials, and crucified.

4) Resurrection and Triumph of the King – Chap. 28

On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, just as He said He would, securing salvation for all who trust in Him. Appearing to His disciples in His resurrected body, Jesus commissioned them to reach the world with His message. An enormous task. But they wouldn't be doing it alone. Nor will we. For the Baby named Emmanuel, meaning "*God with us*", is now the Risen Lord who proclaims, "*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*"

This Risen King is coming back to get us out of this world. After the 7 years from the rapture, we will come back with Him. Maranatha!!!