



MATTHEW

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Drew Hunter



J. I. Packer

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

Dane C. Ortlund

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Genesis	Mark
Ruth, Esther	John
Psalms	Acts
Proverbs	Romans
Isaiah	Philippians
Matthew	James

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Drew Hunter

Knowing the Bible: Matthew, A 12-Week Study

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Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Simplicated Studio

First printing 2014

Printed in the United States of America

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Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-4018-9

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-4019-6

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-4020-2

EPub ISBN: 978-1-4335-4021-9

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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S E R I E S P R E F A C E

KNOWING THE BIBLE, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of that book of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, to help understand the Bible in this deeper way, we would urge the reader to use the ESV Bible and the ESV Study Bible, which are available online at www.esvbible.org. The *Knowing the Bible* series is also available online. Additional 12-week studies covering each book of the Bible will be added as they become available.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer and
Lane T. Dennis

WEEK 2: THE ARRIVAL OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

Matthew 1–2



The Place of the Passage

The opening two chapters of Matthew announce the arrival in world history of Jesus Christ. This was a long-anticipated moment in an ongoing story. Through various Old Testament references, allusions, and quotations Matthew shows us that Jesus came as the climax of the Old Testament storyline. He is the long-awaited Messiah,¹ the King who will bring to fulfillment God's promises to rescue his people and restore this broken world.

The Big Picture

In Matthew 1–2 Jesus arrives as the long-awaited King who came to save his people from their sins.

Reflection and Discussion

Read through the complete passage for this study, Matthew 1–2. Then think through and write your own notes on the following questions. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 1820–1823, available online at www.esvbible.org.)

1. The Long-Awaited King Arrives (1:1–1:25)

From his titles (Matt. 1:1) to his genealogy (1:2–17), Matthew clearly situates Jesus within history in general and the Old Testament story in particular. How so?

By calling Jesus the “son of Abraham” and “son of David” (Matt. 1:1), Matthew gives us a concise yet thick description of Jesus’ identity. Reflect on the central promises God gave to Abraham (see Gen. 12:1–3; 22:18) and David (see 2 Sam. 7:11–16; Ps. 89:3–4). What light do these shed on what Jesus came to do?

Since ancient genealogies customarily traced lineage through men, the inclusion of five women—Tamar (Matt. 1:3), Rahab (v. 5), Ruth (v. 5), Bathsheba (“the wife of Uriah”; v. 6), and Mary (v. 16)—is unusual. Further, Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth were Gentiles (non-Jews), and Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba were women of questionable character. Why would Matthew draw attention to these aspects of Jesus’ lineage? How does this already anticipate what we learn of Jesus in 1:21?

What evidence is there that Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ genealogy is very carefully structured? Identify the key moments or turning points in the ongoing story that is referenced through the genealogy.

When he heard that Mary was pregnant, Joseph naturally assumed that she had been unfaithful to him. Yet how did he respond (Matt. 1:18–19)? How did he change his actions after the angel visited him (vv. 20–24)? In what ways is Joseph portrayed as a model disciple (consider 9:13; 12:7)?

2. Initial Responses to the King (2:1–12)

The foreign wise men (or *magi*, i.e., magicians or astrologers) were likely familiar with Old Testament prophecies. How does Numbers 24:17 help us understand why they would follow a star to find a king? Additionally, read Psalm 72:8–11, 15, in the context of the whole psalm. How does this shed light on the wise men’s actions in Matthew 2:11?

Isaiah 60:1–5 tells us that when a “light” comes to Israel it will be the time of salvation for his people and renewal for the world. This should cause the people’s hearts to thrill and rejoice (Isa. 60:5). When this “light” finally comes, who ends up responding properly and who does not (note Matt. 2:3, 10)?

WEEK 2: THE ARRIVAL OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

How do Herod's disposition, plotting, and actions in Matthew 2:3–8 and verse 16 already set our expectations for what is to come (see Matt. 26:3–4; 27:1–2)?

3. Flight and Return (2:13–23)

Review Exodus 1:15–22 and 2:11–15, then consider in what ways Herod's actions in Matthew 2:13–16 parallel those of the ancient king of Egypt.

Three times in Matthew 2:13–23 we hear that something happened to Jesus in order that the Old Testament might be “fulfilled” (2:15, 17–18, 23). What is Matthew trying to show us about the relationship between Old Testament expectations and the arrival of Jesus?

Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to consider the *Personal Implications* these sections may have for you.

Gospel Glimpses

COUNTERCULTURAL GRACE. Matthew’s genealogy presses firmly against his day’s cultural impulses. First, while genealogies would typically include only men, Matthew mentions four women. Second, he doesn’t go out of his way to include the noblest women in Jesus’ line, such as Sarah, the great matriarch and wife of Abraham. Just the opposite. Tamar posed as a prostitute (Genesis 38), Rahab was a prostitute, and David made Bathsheba an adulterer. Third, Rahab and Ruth were Gentiles, and Bathsheba was married to a Gentile. Jesus’ lineage runs against the first century’s cultural instincts (by including women), moral instincts (by including *these* women), and religious instincts (by including non-Jews). Jesus didn’t come for a particular gender, race, or type of sinner (see Gal. 3:29). Woven into the very lineage of our Savior are the diverse kinds of people he came to save.

SAVED FROM SINS. “Jesus” is the Greek name for the Hebrew “Joshua,” which means, “Yahweh² saves.” This name communicates what he came to do: “you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). “Salvation” is often a comprehensive term for all the ways that God saves his people through the work of Jesus. Here in Matthew the focus is on being saved from our sins, for this is our deepest problem and most basic need. Jesus’ name declares his commitment to rescue us from this root issue. And what is declared in his name was displayed in his death, for there he saves us by taking upon himself all our sins.

Whole-Bible Connections

A CONTINUING STORY. Like a book with chapters, the Old Testament is a singular epic story that progresses from one shorter story to the next. This story begins with the creation of the world (Genesis 1–2), plunges into the fall³ (Genesis 3), and rises with God’s promise to make all things right again (Gen. 3:15; 12:1–3). According to the contours of Matthew’s genealogy, the out-working of this promise begins with Abraham, progresses through kingship with David and exile into Babylon, and ends with an increased longing for the arrival of the Christ, or Messiah (Matt. 1:17). This opening to Matthew’s Gospel is more than a list of names; it is a genealogical story wherein the history of Israel is reviewed and brought to its proper climax with Jesus Christ.

THE PROMISED KING. God promised David that one from his own line would rule forever over an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12–13). While Israel’s kingdom crumbled, the prophets kept the promise alive (Isa. 9:6–7; Jer. 33:17; Ezek. 34:23–24). After centuries of waiting, Matthew announces that this “son of David” has arrived (Matt. 1:1). He traces Jesus’ lineage right through David,

WEEK 2: THE ARRIVAL OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

“the king” (1:6), and up to Joseph, another “son of David” (1:16, 20), who adopts Jesus into this royal line. As a consequence of his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus is already reigning as King, though we do not yet see the full manifestation of his rule that will occur when he returns.

NEW EXODUS. Matthew tells us Jesus’ flight to Egypt and subsequent return occurred in order to fulfill what the Lord had spoken in Hosea 11:1: “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Matt. 2:15). This quotation from Hosea is not in itself, however, a future-looking prediction about Jesus, but a backward remembering of Israel when they, as God’s “son” (see Ex. 4:22–23), were brought out from Egypt at the exodus.⁴ If it’s not a promise, how can it be fulfilled? When we read the quotation in its context, we find that Hosea isn’t just thinking of the past exodus-event. He is looking forward to *another* exodus-like redemption for God’s people (Hos. 2:14–15; 11:8–12, especially v. 11). Jesus arrives as the true “Son” of God, the true Israel. The exodus story is reenacted in Jesus’ own life to show that he has come to fulfill Hosea’s promise of a new and greater deliverance for those he saves. Jesus came to bring us out of our slavery to sin and Satan in order to restore us to God.

Theological Soundings

INCARNATION. Mary “was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18). This is a great mystery. We call it the incarnation, which literally means “en-fleshing.” In a singular moment of time, just over 2,000 years ago, the God who created all things entered into this creation and became a part of it. In Jesus Christ, God became a man. Jesus is not half-man and half-God, but he is truly man and truly God, and both, so to speak, in full. He is this human “child” inside of Mary, and yet he is also to be called “Immanuel,” which means, “God with us” (1:23).

ANGELS. Angels, messengers of God, serve an important role in the events surrounding the earliest days of Jesus’ life. As an angel (Gabriel) had announced Jesus’ forthcoming birth to Mary, so angels appeared to Joseph when he was planning to break off his engagement with her (Matt. 1:20) and also before and after Herod plotted against Jesus’ life (2:13, 19). The supernatural world of angels and demons is assumed and taught throughout the Bible. We see their active presence perhaps most often in the Gospel narratives.

Personal Implications

Take time to think about and make notes on the personal implications for your own life today in the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological*

Soundings, and (4) this passage as a whole. Also consider what you have learned that might lead you to praise God, repent of sin, trust his gracious promises, and live in obedience to him.

1. Gospel Glimpses

2. Whole-Bible Connections

3. Theological Soundings

4. Matthew 1-2

As You Finish This Unit . . .

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord's blessing and help as you continue in this study of Matthew. And take a moment also to look back through this unit of study, to reflect on a few key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and perhaps to highlight and underline these things to review again in the future.

Definitions

¹ **Messiah** – Transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “anointed one,” the equivalent of the Greek word *Christ*. Originally applied to anyone specially designated for a particular role, such as king or priest. In Jesus' day, the term denoted Israel's promised deliverer-king Jesus himself affirmed that he was the Messiah sent from God (Matt. 16:16–17).

² **Yahweh** – The likely English form of the name represented by the Hebrew letters *YHWH*. The Lord revealed this unique name for himself to Moses at the burning bush and told him to instruct the Israelites to call on him by it (Exodus 3). English translations of the Bible usually render this term as “LORD,” with small capital letters.

³ **Fall, the** – Adam and Eve's disobedience to God by eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, resulting in their loss of innocence and favor with God and the introduction of sin and its effects into the world (Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22).

⁴ **Exodus** – The departure of the people of Israel from Egypt and their journey to Mount Sinai under Moses' leadership, en route for the Promised Land (Exodus 1–19).



THE BOOK OF MATTHEW paints a powerful portrait of Jesus as Israel's long-awaited Messiah, the one who would bring God's kingdom to earth and fulfill his promises to his people.

Leading readers through this hope-filled book, this guide explains the biblical text with clarity and passion—inviting us to encounter God's one and only Son: Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

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- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God's Word

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BIBLE STUDY

