

MATTHEW

Title

Matthew, meaning “gift of the Lord,” was the other name of Levi (9:9), the tax collector who left everything to follow Christ (Luke 5:27–28). Matthew was one of the 12 apostles (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). In his own list of the Twelve, he explicitly calls himself a “tax collector” (Matt. 10:3). Nowhere else in Scripture is the name Matthew associated with “tax collector”; the other evangelists always employ his former name, Levi, when speaking of his sinful past. This is evidence of humility on Matthew’s part. As with the other three Gospels, this work is known by the name of its author.

Author and Date

The canonicity and Matthean authorship of this Gospel were unchallenged in the early church. Eusebius (c. A.D. 265–339) quotes Origen (c. A.D. 185–254):

Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism (*Ecclesiastical History*, 6:25).

It is clear that this Gospel was written at a relatively early date—prior to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Some scholars have proposed a date as early as A.D. 50. For a further discussion of some of the issues related to the authorship and dating of this Gospel, especially “the Synoptic Problem,” see Introduction to Mark: Interpretive Challenges.

Background and Setting

The Jewish flavor of Matthew’s Gospel is remarkable. This is evident even in the opening genealogy, which Matthew traces back only as far as Abraham. In contrast, Luke, aiming to show Christ as the Redeemer of humanity, goes all the way back to Adam. Matthew’s purpose is somewhat narrower: to demonstrate that Christ is the King and Messiah of Israel. This Gospel quotes more than 60 times from OT prophetic passages, emphasizing how Christ is the fulfillment of all those promises.

The probability that Matthew’s audience was predominantly Jewish is further evident from several facts: Matthew usually cites Jewish custom without explaining it, in contrast to the other Gospels (cf. Mark 7:3; John 19:40). He constantly refers to Christ as “the Son of David” (Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45). Matthew even guards Jewish sensibilities regarding the name of God, referring to “the kingdom of heaven” where the other evangelists speak of “the kingdom of God.” All the book’s major themes are rooted in the OT and set in light of Israel’s messianic expectations.

Matthew’s use of Greek may suggest that he was writing as a Palestinian Jew to Hellenistic Jews elsewhere. He wrote as an eyewitness of many of the events he described, giving firsthand testimony about the words and works of Jesus of Nazareth.

His purpose is clear: to demonstrate that Jesus is the Jewish nation’s long-awaited Messiah. His voluminous quoting of the OT is specifically designed to show the tie between the Messiah of promise and the Christ of history. This purpose is never out of focus for Matthew, and he even adduces many incidental details from the OT prophecies as proofs of Jesus’ messianic claims (e.g., 2:17–18; 4:13–15; 13:35; 21:4–5; 27:9–10).

Historical and Theological Themes

Since Matthew is concerned with setting forth Jesus as Messiah, the King of the Jews, an interest in the OT kingdom promises runs throughout this Gospel. Matthew's signature phrase "the kingdom of heaven" occurs 32 times in this book (and nowhere else in all of Scripture).

The opening genealogy is designed to document Christ's credentials as Israel's king, and the rest of the book completes this theme. Matthew shows that Christ is the heir of the kingly line. He demonstrates that he is the fulfillment of dozens of OT prophecies regarding the king who would come. He offers evidence after evidence to establish Christ's kingly prerogative. All other historical and theological themes in the book revolve around this one.

Matthew records five major discourses: the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7); the commissioning of the apostles (ch. 10); the parables about the kingdom (ch. 13); a discourse about the childlikeness of the believer (ch. 18); and the discourse on his second coming (chs. 24–25). Each discourse ends with a variation of this phrase: "when Jesus had finished these sayings" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). That becomes a motif signaling a new narrative portion. A long opening section (chs. 1–4) and a short conclusion (28:16–20), bracket the rest of the Gospel, which naturally divides into five sections, each with a discourse and a narrative section. Some have seen a parallel between these five sections and the five books of Moses in the OT.

The conflict between Christ and Pharisaism is another common theme in Matthew's Gospel. But Matthew is keen to show the error of the Pharisees for the benefit of his Jewish audience—not for personal or self-aggrandizing reasons. Matthew omits, for example, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, even though that parable would have put him in a favorable light.

Matthew also mentions the Sadducees more than any of the other Gospels. Both Pharisees and Sadducees are regularly portrayed negatively, and held up as warning beacons. Their doctrine is a leaven that must be avoided (16:11–12). Although these groups were doctrinally at odds with one another, they were united in their hatred of Christ. To Matthew, they epitomized all in Israel who rejected Christ as King.

The rejection of Israel's Messiah is another constant theme in this Gospel. In no other Gospel are the attacks against Jesus portrayed as strongly as here. From the flight into Egypt to the scene at the cross, Matthew paints a more vivid portrayal of Christ's rejection than any of the other evangelists. In Matthew's account of the crucifixion, for example, no thief repents, and no friends or loved ones are seen at the foot of the cross. In his death, he is forsaken even by God (27:46). The shadow of rejection is never lifted from the story.

Yet Matthew portrays him as a victorious King who will one day return "on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:30).

Interpretive Challenges

As noted above, Matthew groups his narrative material around five great discourses. He makes no attempt to follow a strict chronology, and a comparison of the Gospels reveals that Matthew freely places things out of order. He is dealing with themes and broad concepts, not laying out a timeline.

The prophetic passages present a particular interpretive challenge. Jesus' Olivet Discourse, for example, contains some details that evoke images of the violent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus' words in 24:34 have led some to conclude that all these things were fulfilled—albeit not literally—in the Roman conquest of that era. This is the view known as "preterism." But this is a serious interpretive blunder, forcing the interpreter to read into these passages spiritualized, allegorical meanings unwarranted by normal exegetical methods. The grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach to these passages is the approach to follow, and it yields a consistently futuristic interpretation of crucial prophecies.

For a discussion of the Synoptic Problem, see Introduction to Mark: Interpretive Challenges.

OUTLINE**I. (Prologue) The King's Advent (1:1–4:25)**

- A. His Birth (1:1–2:23)
 - 1. His ancestry (1:1–17)
 - 2. His arrival (1:18–25)
 - 3. His adoration (2:1–12)
 - 4. His adversaries (2:13–23)
- B. His Entry into Public Ministry (3:1–4:25)
 - 1. His forerunner (3:1–12)

2. His baptism (3:13–17)
3. His temptation (4:1–11)
4. His earliest ministry (4:12–25)

II. The King's Authority (5:1–9:38)

- A. Discourse 1: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)
 1. Righteousness and happiness (5:1–12)
 2. Righteousness and discipleship (5:13–16)
 3. Righteousness and the Scriptures (5:17–20)
 4. Righteousness and morality (5:21–48)
 5. Righteousness and practical religion (6:1–18)
 6. Righteousness and mundane things (6:19–34)
 7. Righteousness and human relations (7:1–12)
 8. Righteousness and salvation (7:13–29)
- B. Narrative 1: The Authenticating Miracles (8:1–9:38)
 1. A leper cleansed (8:1–4)
 2. The centurion's servant healed (8:5–13)
 3. Peter's mother-in-law healed (8:14–15)
 4. Multitudes healed (8:16–22)
 5. The winds and sea rebuked (8:23–27)
 6. Two demon-possessed men delivered (8:28–34)
 7. A paralytic pardoned and healed (9:1–8)
 8. A tax collector called (9:9–13)
 9. A question answered (9:14–17)
 10. A girl raised from the dead (9:18–26)
 11. Two blind men given sight (9:27–31)
 12. A mute speaks (9:32–34)
 13. Multitudes viewed with compassion (9:35–38)

III. The King's Agenda (10:1–12:50)

- A. Discourse 2: The Commissioning of the Twelve (10:1–42)
 1. The Master's men (10:1–4)
 2. The sending of the disciples (10:5–23)
 3. Hallmarks of discipleship (10:24–42)
- B. Narrative 2: The Mission of the King (11:1–12:50)
 1. Jesus' identity affirmed for John's disciples (11:1–19)
 2. Woes pronounced on the impenitent (11:20–24)
 3. Rest offered to the weary (11:25–30)
 4. Lordship asserted over the Sabbath (12:1–13)
 5. Opposition fomented by the Jewish leaders (12:14–45)
 6. Eternal relationships defined by spiritual ancestry (12:46–50)

IV. The King's Adversaries (13:1–17:27)

- A. Discourse 3: The Kingdom Parables (13:1–52)
 1. The soils (13:1–23)
 2. The wheat and weeds (13:24–30, 34–43)
 3. The mustard seed (13:31–32)
 4. The leaven (13:33)
 5. The hidden treasure (13:44)
 6. The pearl of great value (13:45–46)
 7. The net (13:47–50)
 8. The master of a house (13:51–52)
- B. Narrative 3: The Kingdom Conflict (13:53–17:27)
 1. Nazareth rejects the King (13:53–58)
 2. Herod murders John the Baptist (14:1–12)
 3. Jesus feeds the 5,000 (14:13–21)
 4. Jesus walks on water (14:22–33)

5. Multitudes seek healing (14:34–36)
6. The scribes and Pharisees challenge Jesus (15:1–20)
7. A Canaanite woman believes (15:21–28)
8. Jesus heals the multitudes (15:29–31)
9. Jesus feeds the 4,000 (15:32–39)
10. The Pharisees and Sadducees seek a sign (16:1–12)
11. Peter confesses Christ (16:13–20)
12. Jesus predicts his death (16:21–28)
13. Jesus reveals his glory (17:1–13)
14. Jesus heals a child (17:14–21)
15. Jesus foretells his betrayal (17:22–23)
16. Jesus pays the temple tax (17:24–27)

V. The King's Administration (18:1–23:39)

- A. Discourse 4: The Childlikeness of the Believer (18:1–35)
 1. A call for childlike faith (18:1–6)
 2. A warning against offenses (18:7–9)
 3. A parable about a lost sheep (18:10–14)
 4. A pattern for church discipline (18:15–20)
 5. A lesson about forgiveness (18:21–35)
- B. Narrative 4: The Jerusalem Ministry (19:1–23:39)
 1. Some kingly lessons (19:1–20:28)
 - a. On divorce (19:1–10)
 - b. On celibacy (19:11–12)
 - c. On children (19:13–15)
 - d. On surrender (19:16–22)
 - e. On who may be saved (19:23–30)
 - f. On equality in the kingdom (20:1–16)
 - g. On his death (20:17–19)
 - h. On true greatness (20:20–28)
 2. Some kingly deeds (20:29–21:27)
 - a. He heals two blind men (20:29–34)
 - b. He receives adoration (21:1–11)
 - c. He cleanses the temple (21:12–17)
 - d. He curses a fig tree (21:18–22)
 - e. He answers a challenge (21:23–27)
 3. Some kingly parables (21:28–22:14)
 - a. The two sons (21:28–32)
 - b. The wicked tenants (21:33–46)
 - c. The wedding feast (22:1–14)
 4. Some kingly answers (22:15–46)
 - a. The Herodians: on paying taxes (22:15–22)
 - b. The Sadducees: on the resurrection (22:23–33)
 - c. The Scribes: on the first and great commandment (22:34–40)
 - d. The Pharisees: on David's greater Son (22:41–46)
 5. Some kingly pronouncements (23:1–39)
 - a. Woe to the scribes and Pharisees (23:1–36)
 - b. Woe to Jerusalem (23:37–39)

VI. The King's Atonement (24:1–28:15)

- A. Discourse 5: The Olivet Discourse (24:1–25:46)
 1. The destruction of the temple (24:1–2)
 2. The signs of the times (24:3–31)
 3. The parable of the fig tree (24:32–35)
 4. The lesson of Noah (24:36–44)
 5. The parable of the two servants (24:45–51)
 6. The parable of the 10 virgins (25:1–13)

7. The parable of the talents (25:14–30)
8. The judgment of the nations (25:31–46)
- B. Narrative 5: The Crucifixion and Resurrection (26:1–28:15)
 1. The plot to kill the King (26:1–5)
 2. Mary's anointing (26:6–13)
 3. Judas's betrayal (26:14–16)
 4. The Passover (26:17–30)
 5. The prophecy of Peter's denial (26:31–35)
 6. Jesus' agony (26:36–46)
 7. Jesus' arrest (26:47–56)
 8. The trial before the Sanhedrin (26:57–68)
 9. Peter's denial (26:69–75)
 10. Judas's suicide (27:1–10)
 11. The trial before Pilate (27:11–26)
 12. The soldiers' mocking (27:27–31)
 13. The crucifixion (27:32–56)
 14. The burial (27:57–66)
 15. The resurrection (28:1–15)

VII. (Epilogue) The King's Assignment (28:16–20)

MATTHEW

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

1^aThe book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, ^bthe son of David, ^cthe son of Abraham. ^{2d}Abraham was the father of Isaac, and ^eIsaac the father of Jacob, and ^fJacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³and ^gJudah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by ^hRahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,⁶ and ⁱJesse the father of David the king.

And ^jDavid was the father of Solomon by ^kthe wife of Uriah,⁷ and ^lSolomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,² ⁸and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram,^m and Joram the father

Chapter 1

1^a[Luke 3:23-38] ^{b2} Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 132:11; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; Luke 1:32, 69; John 7:42; Acts 2:30; 13:23; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16 ^c Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16 ^{2d} Gen. 21:3 ^e Gen. 25:26 ^f Gen. 29:35 ^{3g} [Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chr. 2:1-15] ^{5j} Josh. 6:25 ^{6l} 1 Sam. 16:1; 17:12 / 2 Sam. 12:24 ⁷ 2 Sam. 12:10 ⁷ For ver. 7-10, see 1 Chr. 3:10-14 ^{8m} [2 Kgs. 15:1; 1 Chr. 3:11, 12]

¹¹ⁿ 1 Chr. 3:15, 16 ^o Esth. 2:6; Jer. 24:1; 27:20 ^{12p} 1 Chr. 3:17-19 ^q Luke 3:27 ^r Ezra 3:2 ¹⁶ Luke 3:23

of Uzziah,⁹ and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,¹⁰ and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos,³ and Amos the father of Josiah,¹¹ and ^oJosiah the father of ^qJechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

¹²And after the deportation to Babylon: ^pJechoniah was the father of ^rShealtiel,⁴ and ^rShealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,¹³ and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor,¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud,¹⁵ and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob,¹⁶ and Jacob the father of ^sJoseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from

¹ Greek *Aram*; also verse 4 ² *Asaph* is probably an alternate spelling for *Asa*; some manuscripts read *Asa*; also verse 8 ³ *Amos* is probably an alternate spelling for *Amon*; some manuscripts read *Amon*; twice in this verse ⁴ Greek *Salathiel*; twice in this verse

1:1 book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. This phrase is viewed by some as Matthew's title for the entire Gospel. The Greek phrase translated "book of the genealogy" is exactly the same phrase used in Gen. 5:1 in the LXX. **Jesus.** The Hebrew *Jeshua* means "the Lord is Salvation." **son of David.** A messianic title used as such in only the synoptic Gospels (see notes on Matt. 22:42-45). **son of Abraham.** Takes his royal lineage all the way back to the nation's inception in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3).

1:2 For a comparison of this genealogy and the one given by Luke, see note on Luke 3:23-38.

1:3 Tamar. It is unusual for women to be named in genealogies. Matthew names five: "Tamar" was a Canaanite woman who posed as a prostitute to seduce Judah (Gen. 38:13-30). "Rahab" (Matt. 1:5) was a Gentile and a prostitute (Josh. 2:1). "Ruth" (Matt. 1:5) was a Moabite woman (Ruth 1:3) and a worshiper of idols. "Bathsheba" ("wife of Uriah," Matt. 1:6) committed adultery with David (2 Sam. 11). And "Mary" (Matt. 1:16) bore the stigma of pregnancy outside of wedlock. Each of these women is an object lesson about the workings of divine grace.

1:5-6 Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab . . . Jesse the father of David the king. This is not an exhaustive genealogy. Several additional generations must have elapsed between Rahab (in Joshua's time) and David (v. 6)—nearly four centuries later. Matthew's genealogy (like most of the biblical ones) sometimes skips over several generations between well known characters in order to abbreviate the listing.

1:8 Joram the father of Uzziah. Cf. 1 Chron. 3:10-12. Matthew skips over Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, going directly from Joram to Uzziah (Azariah)—

using a kind of genealogical shorthand. He seems to do this intentionally in order to make a symmetrical threefold division in Matt. 1:17.

1:11 Josiah the father of Jechoniah. Again, Matthew skips a generation between Josiah and Jechoniah (cf. 1 Chron. 3:14-16). Jechoniah is also called Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6; 2 Chron. 36:8) and sometimes Coniah (Jer. 22:24). Jechoniah's presence in this genealogy presents an interesting dilemma. A curse on him forbade any of his descendants from the throne of David forever (Jer. 22:30). Since Jesus was heir through Joseph to the royal line of descent, but not an actual son of Joseph and thus not a physical descendant through this line, the curse bypassed him.

1:12 Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. See 1 Chron. 3:17-19, where Zerubbabel is said to be the offspring of Pedaiah, Shealtiel's brother. Elsewhere in the OT, Zerubbabel is always called the son of Shealtiel (e.g., Hag. 1:1; Ezra 3:2; Neh. 12:1). Possibly Shealtiel adopted his nephew (see note on Hag. 2:23). Zerubbabel is the last character in Matthew's list who appears in any of the OT genealogies.

1:16 Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born. The pronoun "whom" is singular, referring to Mary alone. The unusual way in which this final entry is phrased underscores the fact that Jesus was not Joseph's literal offspring. The genealogy nonetheless establishes his claim to the throne of David as Joseph's legal heir.

1:17 fourteen generations. The significance of the number 14 is not clear, but Matthew's attention to numbers—a distinctly Hebrew characteristic—is evident throughout the Gospel. The systematic ordering may be an aid for memorization. Notice that Matthew counts Jechoniah in both the third and

David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

¹⁸Now the birth of ^uJesus Christ¹ took place in this way. ^vWhen his mother Mary had been betrothed² to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child ^wfrom the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling ^xto put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, ^yan angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and ^zyou shall call his name Jesus, ^afor he will save his people from their sins.” ²²^bAll this took place ^cto fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³^d“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name ^eImmanuel”

¹⁷ch. 2:4; 11:2; 16:16; 22:42; 23:10; Mark 8:29; Luke 3:15; [John 1:41; 4:25]
¹⁸ver. 1; Mark 1:1; John 1:17; 17:3; [ver. 16]¹ Luke 1:27¹ Luke 1:35
¹⁹[Deut. 24:1]
²⁰ch. 2:13, 19; [ch. 2:12, 22]
²¹ver. 25; Luke 1:31; 2:21
^aLuke 2:11; Acts 4:12; 5:31; 13:23, 38; [Acts 3:26]
²²ch. 21:4; 26:56; John 19:36^c ch. 2:15, 23; 4:14; Mark 14:49
²³^dCited from Isa. 7:14^e Isa. 8:8, 10

^fSee ch. 28:20

²⁵ver. 21

Chapter 2

¹Luke 2:4-7¹ Luke 2:15;

John 7:42¹ Luke 1:5⁴ [Gen.

25:6; 1 Kgs. 4:30]

² ch. 27:11, 37; Jer. 23:5; 30:9;

Zech. 9:9¹ [Num. 24:17; Rev.

22:16]¹ See ch. 8:2

⁴ See ch. 1:17

⁶ Cited from Mic. 5:2

(which means, God ^fwith us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And ^ghe called his name Jesus.

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 Now ^hafter Jesus was born in ⁱBethlehem of Judea ^jin the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men³ from ^kthe east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, “Where is he who has been born ^lking of the Jews? For we saw ^mhis star when it rose⁴ and have come to ⁿworship him.” ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where ^othe Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶^p“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;

¹ Some manuscripts of the Christ ² That is, legally pledged to be married ³ Greek magi; also verses 7, 16 ⁴ Or in the east; also verse 9

fourth groups, representing both the last generation before the Babylonian captivity and the first generation after.

1:18 betrothed. Jewish betrothal was as binding as modern marriage. A divorce was necessary to terminate the betrothal (v. 19) and the betrothed couple were regarded legally as husband and wife (v. 19)—although physical union had not yet taken place. See note on Luke 2:5. **with child from the Holy Spirit.** See Matt. 1:20, 23 and Luke 1:26–35.

1:19 Joseph . . . a just man . . . resolved to divorce her quietly. Stoning was the legal prescription for this sort of adultery (Deut. 22:23–24). Joseph’s righteousness meant he was also merciful; thus he did not intend to “disgrace” Mary. The phrase “a just man” is a Hebraism suggesting that he was a true believer in God who had thereby been declared righteous, and who carefully obeyed the law (see Gen. 6:9). To “divorce her” would be to obtain a legal divorce (Matt. 19:8–9; Deut. 24:1), which according to the Jewish custom was necessary in order to dissolve a betrothal (see note on Matt. 1:18).

1:20 an angel of the Lord. This is one of only a few such angelic visitations in the NT, most of which are associated with Christ’s birth. For others, see 28:2; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3; 12:7–10; 27:23; Rev. 1:1. **in a dream.** As if to underscore the supernatural character of Christ’s advent, Matthew’s narrative of the event describes five such revelatory dreams: Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22. Here the angel told Joseph he was to take Mary into his own home.

1:21 Jesus. See v. 25; Luke 1:31. The name actually means “Savior” (see note on Matt. 1:1).

1:22 to fulfill. Matthew points out fulfillments of OT prophecies no less than a dozen times (cf. 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 26:54–56; 27:9, 35). He quotes from the OT more than 60 times, more frequently than any other NT writer except Paul in Romans.

1:23 virgin. Scholars sometimes dispute whether the Hebrew term in Isa. 7:14 means “virgin” or “maiden.” Matthew is quoting here from the LXX, which uses the unambiguous Greek term for “virgin” (see note on Isa. 7:14). Thus Matthew, writing under the Spirit’s inspiration, ends all doubt about the meaning of the word in Isa. 7:14. **Immanuel.** Cf. Isa. 8:8, 10.

1:24 took his wife. See note on Luke 2:5.

2:1–2 Bethlehem. A small village on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem. Hebrew scholars in Jesus’ day clearly expected Bethlehem to be the birthplace of the Messiah (cf. Mic. 5:2; John 7:42). **in the days of Herod the king.** This refers to Herod the Great, the first of several important rulers from the Herodian dynasty who are named in Scripture. This Herod, founder of the famous line, ruled from 37–4 b.c. He is thought to have been Idumean, a descendant of the Edomites, offspring of Esau. Herod was ruthless and cunning. He loved opulence and grand building projects, and many of the most magnificent ruins that can be seen in modern Israel date back to the days of Herod the Great. His most famous project was the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem (see note on Matt. 24:1). That project alone took several decades and was not completed until long after Herod’s death (cf. John 2:20). See note on Matt. 2:22. **wise men from the east.** The number of wise men is not given. The traditional notion that there were three stems from the number of gifts they brought. These were not kings, but Magi, magicians, or astrologers—possibly Zoroastrian wise men from Persia whose knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures could be traced back to the time of Daniel (cf. Dan. 5:11). **saying.** This present participle conveys the idea of continuous action. It suggests they went around the city questioning everyone they met.

2:2 star. This could not have been a supernova or a conjunction of planets, as some modern theories suggest, because of the way the star moved and settled over one place (cf. v. 9). It is more likely a supernatural reality similar to the Shekinah that guided the Israelites in the days of Moses (Ex. 13:21).

2:4 chief priests. These were the temple hierarchy. They were mostly Sadducees (see note on 3:7). **scribes.** Primarily Pharisees, i.e., authorities on Jewish law. Sometimes they are referred to as “lawyers” (see note on Luke 10:25). They were professional scholars whose specialty was explaining the application of the law. They knew exactly where the Messiah was to be born (Matt. 2:5), but lacked the faith to accompany the Magi to the place where he was.

2:6 This ancient prophecy from Mic. 5:2 was written in the eighth century B.C.

for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

7Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” 9After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

6^oEzek. 34:23; John 21:15-17; [2 Sam. 5:2; Rev. 7:17]
 11¹[1 Sam. 9:7; Ps. 72:10]
³Isa. 60:6⁴Rev. 18:13⁵Ex. 30:23; Ps. 45:8; John 19:39
 12²ver. 22; [ver. 13, 19]¹⁰[ch. 27:19; Gen. 20:6; 31:11; Num. 12:6; Job 33:15]

13⁴ver. 19; ch. 1:20; [ver. 12, 22]
 15⁵See ch. 1:22²Cited from Hos. 11:1
 17²ch. 27:9; [ch. 1:22]

The Flight to Egypt

13Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” 14And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15and remained there until the death of Herod. 17This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Herod Kills the Children

16Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. 17Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

The original prophecy, not quoted in full by Matthew, declared the deity of Israel’s Messiah: “from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” **a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.** This portion of Matthew’s quote actually seems to be a reference to God’s words to David when Israel’s kingdom was originally established (2 Sam. 5:2; 1 Chron. 11:2). The Greek word for “ruler” evokes the image of strong, even stern, leadership. “Shepherd” emphasizes tender care. Christ’s rule involves both (cf. Rev. 12:5).

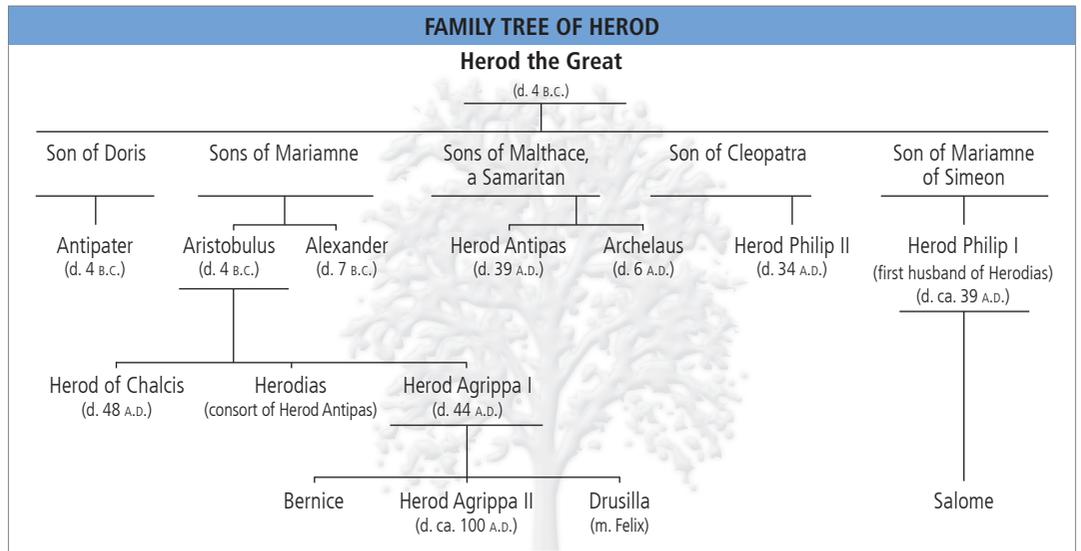
2:8 that I too may come and worship him. Herod actually wanted to kill the child (vv. 13–18), whom he saw as a potential threat to his throne.

2:11 into the house. By the time the wise men arrived, Mary and Joseph were situated in a house, not a stable (cf. Luke 2:7). **the child with Mary**

his mother. Whenever Matthew mentions Mary in connection with her child, Christ is always given first place (cf. Matt. 2:13–14, 20–21). **gold and frankincense and myrrh.** Gifts suitable for a king (cf. Isa. 60:6). The fact that Gentiles would offer such worship had prophetic significance as well (Ps. 72:10).

2:12–13 in a dream. See note on 1:20.

2:15 the death of Herod. Recent scholarship sets this date at 4 B.C. It is probable that the stay in Egypt was very brief—perhaps no more than a few weeks. **Out of Egypt.** This quotation is from Hos. 11:1 (see note there), which speaks of God’s leading Israel out of Egypt in the exodus. Matthew suggests that Israel’s sojourn in Egypt was a pictorial prophecy rather than a specific verbal one such as Matt. 2:6; cf. 1:23. These are called “types,” and all are always



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18^b “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they ^care no more.”

The Return to Nazareth

19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for ^dthose who sought the child’s life are dead.” 21 And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and ^ebeing warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. 23 And he went and lived in a city called ^fNazareth, ^gthat what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

¹ Or crying; Prepare in the wilderness

18^b Cited from Jer. 31:15
^c Gen. 42:13, 36; Lam. 5:7
 20^d [Ex. 4:19]
 22^e See ver. 12
 23^f ch. 4:13; Mark 1:9; Luke 1:26; 2:39; 4:16; John 1:45
^g See ch. 1:22

Chapter 3
 1^f For ver. 1–12, see Mark 1:2–8; Luke 3:2–17
^g John 1:6, 7
^h Josh. 15:61; [Judg. 1:16]
 2ⁱ ch. 4:17; Mark 1:15
^j ch. 10:7; Dan. 2:44; [ch. 6:10]
 3^k [John 1:23; Cited from Isa. 40:3
^l Luke 1:76
 4^m 2 Kgs. 1:8; Zech. 13:4; [Heb. 11:37]
ⁿ Lev. 11:22
^o 1 Sam. 14:26
 6^p Acts 19:18
 7^q ch. 23:13, 15
^r ch. 22:23

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3^h In those days ⁱJohn the Baptist came preaching in ^jthe wilderness of Judea, 2^k “Repent, for ^lthe kingdom of heaven is at hand.” 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

^m “The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

ⁿ “Prepare ^othe way of the Lord; make his paths straight.”

4 Now John wore ^oa garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was ^plocusts and ^qwild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, ^rconfessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of ^sthe Pharisees and ^tSadducees coming to his baptism, he said

fulfilled in Christ and identified clearly by the NT writers. Another example of a type is found in John 3:14. See note on Matt. 21:17.

2:16 killed all the male children. Herod’s act is all the more heinous in light of his full knowledge that the Lord’s Anointed One was the target of his murderous plot.

2:17 fulfilled. See note on v. 15. Again, this prophecy is in the form of a type. Verse 18 quotes Jer. 31:15 (see note there), which speaks of all Israel’s mourning at the time of the Babylonian captivity (c. 586 B.C.). That wailing prefigured the wailing over Herod’s massacre.

2:19 in a dream. See note on 1:20.

2:22 Archelaus. Herod’s kingdom was divided three ways and given to his sons: Archelaus ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Philip II ruled the regions north of Galilee (Luke 3:1); and Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea (Luke 3:1). History records that Archelaus was so brutal and ineffective that he was deposed by Rome after a short reign and replaced with a governor appointed by Rome. Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor of Judea. Herod Antipas is the main Herod in the Gospel accounts. He was the one who had John the Baptist put to death (Matt. 14:1–12) and examined Christ on the eve of the crucifixion (Luke 23:7–12).

2:23 He shall be called a Nazarene. Nazareth, an obscure town 70 miles north of Jerusalem, was a place of lowly reputation, and nowhere mentioned in the OT. Some have suggested that “Nazarene” is a reference to the Hebrew word for branch in Isa. 11:1. Others point out that Matthew’s statement that “prophets” had made this prediction may be a reference to verbal prophecies nowhere recorded in the OT. A still more likely explanation is that Matthew is using “Nazarene” as a synonym for someone who is despised or detestable—for that was how people from the region were often characterized (cf. John 1:46). If that is the case, the prophecies Matthew has in mind would include Ps. 22:6–8; Isa. 49:7; 53:3.

3:1 John the Baptist. Cf. Mark 1:2–14; Luke 1:5–25, 57–80; 3:3–20; John 1:6–8, 19–39. **the wilderness of Judea.** The region to the immediate west of the Dead Sea—an utterly barren desert. The Jewish sect of the Essenes had significant communities in this region. But there is no biblical evidence to suggest that John was in any way connected with that sect. John seems to have preached near the northern end of this region, close by where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea (Matt. 3:6). This was a full day’s journey from Jerusalem and seems an odd location to announce the arrival of a King. But it is perfectly in keeping with God’s ways (1 Cor. 1:26–29).

3:2 Repent. This is no mere academic change of mind, nor mere regret or remorse. John the Baptist spoke of repentance as a radical turning from sin that inevitably became manifest in the fruit of righteousness (v. 8). Jesus’ first sermon began with the same imperative (4:17). For a discussion of the nature of repentance, see notes on 2 Cor. 7:8–11. **the kingdom of heaven.** This is an expression unique to Matthew’s Gospel. Matthew uses the word “heaven” as a euphemism for God’s name—to accommodate his Jewish readers’ sensitivities (cf. Matt. 23:22). Throughout the rest of Scripture, the kingdom is called “the kingdom of God.” Both expressions refer to the sphere of God’s dominion over those who belong to him. The kingdom is now manifest in heaven’s spiritual rule over the hearts of believers (Luke 17:21); and one day it will be established in a literal earthly kingdom (Rev. 20:4–6). **is at hand.** In one sense the kingdom is a present reality, but in its fullest sense it awaits a yet-future fulfillment.

3:3 spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. John’s mission had long ago been described in Isa. 40:3–5 (see notes there). All four of the Gospels cite this passage as a prophecy pointing to John the Baptist (see note on Luke 3:6).

3:4 a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt. Practical and long-wearing clothes, but far from comfortable or fashionable. John evokes the image of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8)—and the Israelites were expecting Elijah before the day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5). **locusts.** These were an allowed food (Lev. 11:22).

3:6 baptized. The symbolism of John’s baptism likely had its roots in OT purification rituals (cf. Lev. 15:13). Baptism had also long been administered to Gentile proselytes coming into Judaism. The baptism of John thus powerfully and dramatically symbolized repentance. Jews accepting John’s baptism were admitting they had been as Gentiles and needed to become the people of God genuinely, inwardly (an amazing admission, given their hatred of Gentiles). The people were repenting in anticipation of the Messiah’s arrival. The meaning of John’s baptism differs somewhat from Christian baptism (cf. Acts 18:25). Actually, Christian baptism altered the significance of the ritual, symbolizing the believer’s identification with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–5; Col. 2:12).

3:7 Pharisees and Sadducees. See note on John 3:1. The Pharisees were a small (about 6,000), legalistic sect of the Jews who were known for their rigid adherence to the ceremonial fine points of the law. Their name means “separated ones.” Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees was usually adversarial. He rebuked them for using human tradition to nullify Scripture (Matt. 15:3–9),

to them, ^u“You brood of ^vvipers! Who warned you to flee from ^wthe wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit ^xin keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, ^y‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from ^zthese stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. ^aEvery tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ ^b“I baptize you with water ^cfor repentance, but ^dhe who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you ^ewith the Holy Spirit and ^ffire. ¹²His ^gwinnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and ^hgather his wheat into the barn, ⁱbut the chaff he will burn with ^junquenchable fire.”

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³ ^kThen Jesus came ^lfrom Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ ^mJohn would have prevented him, saying,

¹ Some manuscripts omit to him ² Or my Son, my (or the) Beloved

⁷ ^uch. 12:34; 23:33 ^vPs. 140:3
^wRom. 5:9; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6;
^x1 Thess. 1:10
⁸ Acts 26:20
⁹ John 8:39 ^c[ch. 4:3]
¹⁰ ^zch. 7:19; Luke 13:7, 9;
 John 15:2, 6
¹¹ ^yJohn 1:26; Acts 1:5 ^cActs
 13:24; 19:4 ^dJohn 1:15, 27;
 3:30, 31; Acts 13:25 ^eJohn
 1:33; Acts 11:16 ^f[Isa. 4:4;
 Mal. 3:2, 3; Acts 2:3]
¹² ^gIsa. 30:24 ^hch. 13:30
ⁱMal. 4:1 ^jMark 9:43, 48
¹³ ^kFor ver. 13-17, see Mark
 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22; [John
 1:32-34] ^lch. 2:22
¹⁴ ^m[John 13:6]

¹⁶ ^oActs 7:56 ^pJohn 1:32, 33;
 [Luke 4:18, 21; Acts 10:38]
¹⁷ ^qJohn 12:28 ^rch. 17:5;
 2 Pet. 1:17; [Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1;
 Eph. 1:6; Col. 1:13; 1 John 5:9]
Chapter 4
¹ For ver. 1-11, see Mark
 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13 ^t[Heb.
 2:18; 4:15]
² ^u[Deut. 9:9, 18; 1 Kgs. 19:8]
^v[John 4:6, 7]
³ ^w1 Thess. 3:5 ^xSee ch. 14:33
^y[ch. 3:9]
⁴ ^zver. 7, 10; Eph. 6:17 ^aCited
 from Deut. 8:3; [John 4:34]

“I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, ^othe heavens were opened to him, ¹and he ^psaw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, ^qa voice from heaven said, ^r“This is my beloved Son,² with whom I am well pleased.”

The Temptation of Jesus

⁴ ^sThen Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness ^tto be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting ^uforty days and forty nights, he ^vwas hungry. ³And ^wthe tempter came and said to him, “If you are ^xthe Son of God, command ^ythese stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴But he answered, ^z“It is written, ^a“‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

and especially for rank hypocrisy (15:7–8; 22:18; 23:13, 23, 25, 29; Luke 12:1). The Sadducees were known for their denial of things supernatural. They denied the resurrection of the dead (Matt. 22:23) and the existence of angels (Acts 23:8). Unlike the Pharisees, they rejected human tradition and scorned legalism. They accepted only the Pentateuch as authoritative. They tended to be wealthy, aristocratic members of the priestly tribe, and in the days of Herod their sect controlled the temple (see note on Matt. 2:4), though they were fewer in number than the Pharisees. Pharisees and Sadducees had little in common. Pharisees were ritualists; Sadducees were rationalists. Pharisees were legalists; Sadducees were liberals. Pharisees were separatists; Sadducees were compromisers and political opportunists. Yet they united together in their opposition to Christ (22:15–16, 23, 34–35). John publicly addressed them as deadly snakes. **the wrath to come.** See note on Luke 3:7. John’s preaching echoed the familiar OT theme of promised wrath in the day of the Lord (e.g., Ezek. 7:19; Zeph. 1:18; see Introduction to Joel: Historical and Theological Themes). This must have been a particularly stinging rebuke to the Jewish leaders, who imagined that divine wrath was reserved only for non-Jews.

3:8 fruit in keeping with repentance. See note on v. 2. Repentance itself is not a work, but works are its inevitable fruit. Repentance and faith are inextricably linked in Scripture. Repentance means turning from one’s sin, and faith is turning to God (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9). They are like opposite sides of the same coin. That is why both are linked to conversion (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 20:21). Notice that the works John demanded to see were “fruit” of repentance. But repentance itself is no more a “work” than faith is (see note on 2 Tim. 2:25).

3:9 Abraham as our father. See John 8:39–44. They believed that merely being descendants of Abraham, members of God’s chosen race, made them spiritually secure. But Abraham’s real descendants are those who share his faith (cf. Rom. 4:16). And “those of faith . . . are the sons of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7, 29). See note on Luke 3:8.

3:10 the axe is laid to the root. Irreversible judgment was imminent (see note on 11:3).

3:11 Three types of baptism are referred to here: 1) **with water for repentance.** John’s baptism symbolized cleansing (see note on 3:6); 2) **with the Holy Spirit.** All believers in Christ are Spirit-baptized (1 Cor. 12:13); and

3) **with . . . fire.** Because fire is used throughout this context as a means of judgment (Matt. 3:10, 12), this must speak of a baptism of judgment upon the unrepentant.

3:12 winnowing fork. A tool for tossing grain into the wind so that the chaff is blown away.

3:14 John would have prevented him. John’s baptism symbolized repentance, and John saw this as inappropriate for the One he knew was the spotless Lamb of God (cf. John 1:29).

3:15 it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Christ was here identifying himself with sinners. He will ultimately bear their sins; his perfect righteousness will be imputed to them (2 Cor. 5:21). This act of baptism was a necessary part of the righteousness he secured for sinners. This first public event of his ministry is also rich in meaning: 1) it pictured his death and resurrection (cf. Luke 12:50); 2) it therefore prefigured the significance of Christian baptism (see note on Matt. 3:6); 3) it marked his first public identification with those whose sins he would bear (Isa. 53:11; 1 Pet. 3:18); and 4) it was a public affirmation of his messiahship by testimony directly from heaven (see note on Matt. 3:17).

3:16–17 Jesus . . . the Spirit of God . . . a voice from heaven. Here all three Persons of the Trinity are clearly delineated. See note on Luke 3:22. The Father’s command to hear his Son and the Spirit’s vindication and empowerment (see note on Matt. 12:31) officially inaugurated Christ’s ministry.

3:17 my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. This heavenly pronouncement combines language from Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1—prophecies that would have been well known to those with messianic expectations. Cf. Matt. 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35.

4:1 led up by the Spirit . . . to be tempted by the devil. God himself is never the agent of temptation (James 1:13), but here—as in the book of Job—God uses even satanic tempting to serve his sovereign purposes. Christ was tempted in all points (Heb. 4:15; 1 John 2:16); Satan tempted him with “the lust of the flesh” (Matt. 4:2–3); “the lust of the eyes” (vv. 8–9); and “the pride of life” (vv. 5–6).

4:2 forty days and forty nights. Similarly, Moses was without food or drink

^{5b}Then the devil took him to ^cthe holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

^d“He will command his angels concerning you,”

and

“On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

⁷Jesus said to him, “Again ^eit is written, ^f“You shall not ^gput the Lord your God to the test.”

^{8h}Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, ⁱSatan! For ^jit is written,

^k“You shall worship the Lord your God and ^lhim only shall you serve.”

¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, ^mangels came and were ministering to him.

^{5b}Luke 4:9 ^cch. 27:53; Neh. 11:18; Isa. 48:2; 52:1; Rev. 21:2; 22:19]
⁶Cited from Ps. 91:11, 12
⁷ver. 4, ¹⁰Cited from Deut. 6:16 ^{8h}Isa. 7:12]
⁸Luke 4:5
¹⁰See 1 Chr. 21:1 ⁱver. 4, 7
⁶Cited from Deut. 6:13
^j1 Sam. 7:3
¹¹^mch. 26:53; Luke 22:43

Jesus Begins His Ministry

¹²Now when he heard that ⁿJohn had been arrested, ^ohe withdrew into Galilee.

¹³And leaving ^pNazareth he went and lived in ^qCapernaum by ^rthe sea, in the territory of ^sZebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴^tso that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵^u“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
¹⁶^vthe people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and ^wshadow of death,
on them a light has dawned.”

¹⁷^xFrom that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ^z“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁸^aWhile walking by ^bthe Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called

¹²ch. 14:3; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:19, 20; [John 3:24] ^oLuke 4:14
¹³See ch. 2:23 ^q[ch. 9:1] ^rJohn 6:1 ^sJosh. 19:32-34
¹⁴See ch. 1:22
¹⁵Cited from Isa. 9:1, 2
¹⁶^vIsa. 42:7; Luke 1:79 ^wJob 3:5; Ps. 23:4; Amos 5:8
¹⁷Mark 1:14 ^xch. 3:2
¹⁸For ver. 18-22, see Mark 1:16-20; [Luke 5:2-11; John 1:40-42] ^aver. 13

on Sinai for “forty days and forty nights” (Deut. 9:9), and Elijah also fasted that long (1 Kings 19:8). See note on Matt. 12:40.

4:3 If you are the Son of God. The conditional “if” carries the meaning of “since” in this context. There was no doubt in Satan’s mind who Jesus was; but Satan’s design was to get him to violate the plan of God and employ the divine power that he had set aside in his humiliation (cf. Phil. 2:7).

4:4 It is written. All three of Jesus’ replies to the devil were taken from Deuteronomy. This one, from Deut. 8:3, states that God allowed Israel to hunger, so that he might feed them with manna and teach them to trust him to provide for them. So the verse is directly applicable to Jesus’ circumstances and a fitting reply to Satan’s temptation. **every word that comes from the mouth of God.** A more important source of sustenance than food, it nurtures our spiritual needs in a way that benefits us eternally, rather than merely providing temporal relief from physical hunger.

4:5 pinnacle of the temple. This was probably a roof with a portico at the southeast corner of the temple complex, where a massive retaining wall reached from a level well above the temple mount, deep into the Kidron Valley. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, this was a drop of nearly 450 feet.

4:6 for it is written . . . lest you strike your foot against a stone. Notice that Satan also quoted Scripture (Ps. 91:11–12)—but utterly twisted its meaning, employing a passage about trusting God to justify testing him.

4:7 it is written. Christ replied with another verse from Israel’s wilderness experience (Deut. 6:16)—recalling the experience at Massah, where the grumbling Israelites put the Lord to the test, angrily demanding that Moses produce water where there was none (Ex. 17:2–7).

4:9 I will give you. Satan is the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). The whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19). This is illustrated in Dan. 10:13 (see note there), where demonic power controlled the kingdom of Persia, so that a demon is called the “prince of the kingdom of Persia.”

4:10 For it is written. Here Christ was citing and paraphrasing Deut. 6:13–14. Again, these relate to the Israelites’ wilderness experiences. Christ, like

them, was led into the wilderness to be tested (cf. Deut. 8:2). Unlike them, he withstood every aspect of the test.

4:11 angels came and were ministering to him. Psalm 91:11–12—the verse Satan tried to twist—was thus fulfilled in God’s way, and in God’s perfect timing.

4:12 John had been arrested. John was imprisoned for his bold rebuke of Herod Antipas. See 14:3–4.

4:13 leaving Nazareth. Some time elapsed between vv. 12 and 13. Jesus’ stay in Nazareth ended abruptly when he was violently rejected by the people of Nazareth, who tried to murder him (see Luke 4:16–30). **Capernaum.** He settled in this important town on the trade route at the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was the home of Peter and Andrew (Matt. 4:18), James and John (v. 21), and Matthew (9:9). A comparison of the Gospels reveals that Christ had already ministered extensively in Capernaum (see note on Luke 4:23).

4:15 Galilee of the Gentiles. This name was used even in Isaiah’s time because Galilee lay on the route through which all Gentiles passed in and out of Israel. In Jesus’ time, the region of Galilee had become an important center of Roman occupation. The prophecy cited by Matthew is from Isa. 9:1–2. See Isa. 42:6–7.

4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach. This marks the beginning of his public ministry. Notice that his message was an exact echo of what John the Baptist preached. **Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** See note on 3:2. The opening word of this first sermon sets the tone for Jesus’ entire earthly ministry (cf. Luke 5:32). Repentance was a constant motif in all his public preaching. And in his closing charge to the apostles, he commanded them to preach repentance as well (Luke 24:47).

4:18 two brothers. Jesus had encountered Peter and Andrew before, near Bethabara, in the Jordan region, where Andrew (and perhaps Peter as well) had become a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35–42). They left John to follow Jesus for a time before returning to fishing in Capernaum. Perhaps they had returned to Capernaum during Jesus’ earlier ministry here (see note on Luke 4:23). Here he called them to follow him in long-term discipleship.

Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you ¹⁹fishers of men.” ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Great Crowds

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, ^eteaching in their synagogues and ^fproclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and ^ghealing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all ^hSyria, and ^gthey brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and ⁱpains, ^jthose oppressed by demons, ^kepileptics, and ^lparalytics, and he healed them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the ⁿDecapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

¹ Greek *huioi*; see preface

¹⁹f ch. 13:47
²³d Mark 1:39 ^ech. 9:35;
 13:54; Mark 1:21; Luke 4:15;
 John 18:20 ^{ch. 24:14}; Luke
 4:43; [ch. 13:19] ^gch. 8:16;
 14:35, 36; Mark 1:34; 6:55, 56
²⁴h Luke 2:2 ^g[See ver. 23
 above] ⁱch. 8:6 ^j[John 10:21]
^kch. 17:15 ^{ch. 9:2, 6}
²⁵m Mark 3:7, 8; Luke 6:17
ⁿMark 5:20

Chapter 5

¹o ch. 15:29 ^pLuke 4:20
²q Ps. 78:2
³r For ver. 3–12, [Luke 6:20–
 23] ^s[Isa. 61:1; 66:2] ^t[Luke
 12:32]
⁴u Isa. 61:2, 3; John 16:20;
 2 Cor. 1:7; 7:10; Rev. 21:4;
 [James 4:9, 10]
⁵v Ps. 37:11
⁶w Ps. 42:2; Isa. 55:1, 2; John
 7:37 ^x2 Tim. 2:22; [ch. 6:33]
⁷y ch. 18:33; 25:34–36; Prov.
 19:17; Luke 6:36; 2 Tim.
 1:16; Heb. 6:10
⁸z Ps. 24:4; 2 Tim. 2:22;
 [1 Pet. 1:22] ^aHeb. 12:14;
 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4;
 [1 Cor. 13:12]
⁹aa James 3:18 ^{ab}1 John 3:1
^{ac}Rom. 8:14
¹⁰ad 2 Tim. 2:12; James 5:11;
 1 Pet. 3:14 ^{ae}[See ver. 3 above]
¹¹af Heb. 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:14

The Sermon on the Mount

5 Seeing the crowds, ^ohe went up on the mountain, and when he ^psat down, his disciples came to him.

The Beatitudes

² And ^qhe opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³ “Blessed are ^ethe poor in spirit, for ^utheirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ “Blessed are ^vthose who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ “Blessed are the ^wmeek, for they ^wshall inherit the earth.

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and ^xthirst ^yfor righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ “Blessed are ^zthe merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ “Blessed are ^athe pure in heart, for ^bthey shall see God.

⁹ “Blessed are ^cthe peacemakers, for ^dthey shall be called ^esons ^fof God.

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for ^utheirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ ^g “Blessed are you when others revile

4:21 James the son of Zebedee. This James is easy to distinguish from the other men named James in the NT, because he is never mentioned in Scripture apart from his brother John. His martyrdom by Herod Agrippa I marked the beginning of a time of severe persecution in the early church (Acts 12:2). For information on others named James, see note on Matt. 10:2; Introduction to James: Author and Date.

4:23 teaching . . . proclaiming the gospel . . . healing. The three main aspects of Christ’s public ministry.

4:24 Syria. The area immediately northeast of Galilee.

4:25 Decapolis. A confederation of 10 Hellenized cities south of Galilee and mostly east of the Jordan. The league of cities was formed shortly after Pompey’s invasion of Palestine (c. 64 B.C.) to preserve Greek culture in the Semitic region. These cities were naturally Gentile strongholds.

5:1–7:29 The Sermon on the Mount introduces a series of five important discourses recorded in Matthew (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). This sermon is a masterful exposition of the law and a potent assault on Pharisaic legalism, closing with a call to true faith and salvation (7:13–29). Christ expounded the full meaning of the law, showing that its demands were humanly impossible (cf. 5:48). This is the proper use of the law with respect to salvation: it closes off every possible avenue of human merit and leaves sinners dependent on nothing but divine grace for salvation (cf. Rom. 3:19–20; Gal. 3:23–24). Christ plumbed the depth of the law, showing that its true demands went far beyond the surface meaning of the words (Matt. 5:28, 39, 44) and set a standard that is higher than the most diligent students of the law had heretofore realized (5:20). See note on Luke 6:17–49.

5:1 he sat down. This was the normal posture for rabbis while teaching (cf. 13:1–2; 26:55; Mark 4:1; 9:35; Luke 5:3; John 6:3; 8:2). See note on Luke 4:20.

5:3 Blessed. The word lit., means “happy, fortunate, blissful.” Here it speaks of more than a surface emotion. Jesus was describing the divinely bestowed well-being that belongs only to the faithful. The Beatitudes demonstrate that

the way to heavenly blessedness is antithetical to the worldly path normally followed in pursuit of happiness. The worldly idea is that happiness is found in riches, merriment, abundance, leisure, and such things. The real truth is the very opposite. The Beatitudes give Jesus’ description of the character of true faith. **poor in spirit.** The opposite of self-sufficiency. This speaks of the deep humility of recognizing one’s utter spiritual bankruptcy apart from God. It describes those who are acutely conscious of their own lostness and hopelessness apart from divine grace (cf. 9:12; Luke 18:13). See note on Matt. 19:17. **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** See note on 3:2. Notice that the truth of salvation by grace is clearly presupposed in this opening verse of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was teaching that the kingdom is a gracious gift to those who sense their own poverty of spirit.

5:4 those who mourn. This speaks of mourning over sin, the godly sorrow that produces repentance leading to salvation without regret (2 Cor. 7:10). The “comfort” is the comfort of forgiveness and salvation (cf. Isa. 40:1–2).

5:5 the meek. Gentleness or meekness is the opposite of being out of control. It is not weakness, but supreme self-control empowered by the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:23). The statement that the meek “shall inherit the earth” is quoted from Ps. 37:11.

5:6 hunger and thirst for righteousness. This is the opposite of the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. It speaks of those who seek God’s righteousness rather than attempting to establish a righteousness of their own (Rom. 10:3; Phil. 3:9). What they seek will fill them, i.e., it will satisfy their hunger and thirst for a right relationship with God.

5:7 they shall receive mercy. The converse is also true. Cf. James 2:13.

5:8 see God. Not only with the perception of faith, but in the glory of heaven. Cf. Heb. 12:14 and Rev. 22:3–4.

5:9 peacemakers. See vv. 44–45 for more on this quality.

5:10 persecuted. Cf. James 5:10–11 and 1 Pet. 4:12–14. See note on Luke 6:22.

you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely ^hon my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for ⁱso they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

¹³“You are the salt of the earth, ^hbut if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵“Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so ⁿthat they may see your good works and ^ogive glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

¹⁷ ^p“Do not think that I have come to abolish ^qthe Law or the Prophets; I have not

¹¹^hJohn 15:21
¹²Acts 5:41; Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 12:10; Col. 1:11, 24; Heb. 10:34; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 4:13
^jSee ch. 21:35
¹³^hMark 9:50; Luke 14:34
¹⁴Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15; [John 8:12]
¹⁵^mMark 4:21; Luke 8:16; 11:33
¹⁶ⁿPhilem. 6; 1 Pet. 2:12
^oJohn 15:8; 2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 1:11; [ch. 9:8]
¹⁷^pRom. 3:31 ^qch. 7:12

^r[Rom. 10:4; 13:8; Gal. 3:24]

¹⁸^sLuke 16:17; [ch. 24:35]

¹⁹^t[1 Cor. 3:12-15] ^u[Gal. 3:10; James 2:10] ^vch.

11:11; 18:1-4

²⁰^w[Rom. 10:3; Phil. 3:9]

^xJohn 3:5

²¹^yver. 33; [ver. 27, 31, 38,

43] ^zCited from Ex. 20:13;

Deut. 5:17; [ch. 19:18; Mark

10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom. 13:9;

James 2:11] ^{aa}[Deut. 16:18]

²²^b1 John 3:15 ^{ab}[see ver. 21

above] ^{ac}ch. 18:9; Mark 9:43;

James 3:6; [ver. 29]

come to abolish them but ^rto fulfill them.

¹⁸For truly, I say to you, ^suntil heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes ^uone of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least ^vin the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great ^win the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds ^wthat of the scribes and Pharisees, you ^xwill never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Anger

²¹ ^y“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ^z“You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable ^ato judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that ^beveryone who is angry with his brother ^lwill be liable ^ato judgment; whoever insults ²his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to ^cthe hell ³of fire.

¹ Some manuscripts insert *without cause* ² Greek says *Raca* to (a term of abuse) ³ Greek *Geenna*; also verses 29, 30

5:13 salt . . . lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? Salt is both a preservative and a flavor enhancer. No doubt its use as a preservative is what Jesus had mostly in view here. Pure salt cannot lose its flavor or effectiveness, but the salt that is common in the Dead Sea area is contaminated with gypsum and other minerals and may have a flat taste or be ineffective as a preservative. Such mineral salts were useful for little more than keeping footpaths free of vegetation.

5:16 light shine. A godly life gives convincing testimony of the saving power of God. That brings him glory. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:12.

5:17 Do not think . . . abolish the Law or the Prophets. Jesus was neither giving a new law nor modifying the old, but rather explaining the true significance of the moral content of Moses’ law and the rest of the OT. “The Law or the Prophets” speaks of the entirety of the OT Scriptures, not the rabbinical interpretations of them. **fulfill.** This speaks of fulfillment in the same sense that prophecy is fulfilled. Christ was indicating that he is the fulfillment of the law in all its aspects. He fulfilled the moral law by keeping it perfectly. He fulfilled the ceremonial law by being the embodiment of everything the law’s types and symbols pointed to. And he fulfilled the judicial law by personifying God’s perfect justice (cf. 12:18, 20).

5:18 until heaven and earth pass away . . . until all is accomplished. Here Christ was affirming the utter inerrancy and absolute authority of the OT as the word of God—down to the smallest stroke or letter. Again (see note on v. 17), this suggests that the NT should not be seen as supplanting and abrogating the OT, but as fulfilling and explicating it. For example, all the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic law were fulfilled in Christ and are no longer to be observed by Christians (Col. 2:16–17). Yet not the smallest letter or stroke is thereby erased; the underlying truths of those Scriptures remain—and in fact the mysteries behind them are now revealed in the brighter light of the gospel. **not an iota, not a dot.** An “iota” refers to the smallest Hebrew letter, the *yohd*, which is a meager stroke of the pen, like an accent mark or an apostrophe. The “dot” is a tiny extension on a Hebrew letter, like the serif in modern typefaces.

5:19 will be called least . . . will be called great. The consequence of practicing or teaching disobedience of any of God’s word is to be called least in the kingdom of heaven (see note on James 2:10). Determining rank in the kingdom of heaven is entirely God’s prerogative (cf. Matt. 20:23), and Jesus

declares that he will hold those in lowest esteem who hold his word in low esteem. There is no impunity for believers who disobey, discredit, or belittle God’s law (see note on 2 Cor. 5:10). That Jesus does not refer to loss of salvation is clear from the fact that, though offenders will be called least, they will still be in the kingdom of heaven. The positive result is that whoever keeps and teaches God’s word, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Here again Jesus mentions the two aspects of doing and teaching. Kingdom citizens are to uphold every part of God’s law both in their living and in their teaching.

5:20 unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. On the one hand, Jesus was calling his disciples to a deeper, more radical holiness than that of the Pharisees. Pharisaism had a tendency to soften the law’s demands by focusing only on external obedience. In the verses that follow, Jesus unpacks the full moral significance of the law and shows that the righteousness the law calls for actually involves an internal conformity to the spirit of the law, rather than mere external compliance to the letter. **will never enter the kingdom of heaven.** On the other hand, this sets up an impossible barrier to works-salvation. Scripture teaches repeatedly that sinners are capable of nothing but a flawed and imperfect righteousness (e.g., Isa. 64:6). Therefore the only righteousness by which sinners may be justified is the perfect righteousness of God that is imputed to those who believe (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:5).

5:21–22 You have heard . . . But I say to you. See vv. 27, 31, 33, 38, 43. The quotes are from Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17. Jesus was not altering the terms of the law in any of these passages. Rather, he was correcting what they had “heard”—the rabbinical understanding of the law (see note on Matt. 5:38).

5:22 You fool! Lit., “empty-headed.” Jesus suggested here that the verbal abuse stems from the same sinful motives (anger and hatred) that ultimately lead to murder. The internal attitude is what the law actually prohibits, and therefore an abusive insult carries the same kind of moral guilt as an act of murder. **hell.** A reference to the Hinnom Valley, southwest of Jerusalem. Ahaz and Manasseh permitted human sacrifices there during their reigns (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6), and therefore it was called “the Valley of Slaughter” (Jer. 19:6). In Jesus’ day, it was a garbage dump where fires burned continually and was thus an apt symbol of eternal fire.