

## MATTHEW – INTRODUCTION – DECEMBER 1, 2019

This morning we begin our study in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew is first in our New Testament because it was first for the early church.

- In virtually every list of New Testament books, Matthew is listed first.
- It is said that for at least two centuries, the Church was built upon the Gospel of Matthew.
- Matthew was the most quoted book by second century pastors and teachers.
- The Gospel According to Matthew was written in the early years of the church; it is quoted in the *Didache*, a Christian training manual that existed as early as 70 A.D., which means that Matthew not only had to exist, but be well enough known to be reliable and useful.

We tend to know the stories of Jesus so very well that we can gloss over them, and miss their importance. I want to tell you how we must NOT approach Matthew, and then how we WILL approach Matthew.

**We must not approach the Gospel According to Matthew as A SERIES OF UNRELATED STORIES.** Most of you have seen those books that are called “children’s Bibles,” which are not Bibles at all, but storybooks. They are fine for small children, but they break up the Gospels into a series of unrelated stories: “Jesus and the Blind Man”, or “Jesus and the Woman at the Well.” If we think of the Gospels as just a random collection of stories about Jesus, open to whatever interpretation occurs to us at the time, we will miss virtually everything they mean to tell us. By the way, as helpful as headings in our Bibles can be, they never show how the Gospels are knit together. We’ll be careful to keep it all in context.

**We must also not approach the Gospel According to Matthew as A SET OF MORAL LESSONS.**

A well-known pastor said not long ago that people who come to his church learn to live like Jesus taught us to live, and some of them even become Christians. He has reduced the Bible and the Gospels to nothing more than a system of morality and ethics, and he tells non-Christians a horrific *i.e.*

they can successfully live the life Jesus taught His disciples to live. Are there lessons in Matthew? Of course. But those lessons are not “How to live a happy life” or “Three ways to pray effectively”, but “What is a Christian?” and “What are the principles of following Christ?” Jesus’ words at the end of Matthew tell us what the entire Gospel is for:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”  
(Matthew 28:18–20, ESV)

**And, we must not approach the Gospel According to Matthew as MYTHOLOGY OR FAIRY TALES.**

Surely no one would do that, would they? But that is exactly what we do when <sup>WE</sup> mythologize a statement like Matthew 6:24 – **You cannot serve God and money** – thinking that Jesus really meant that as long as we are nice to others and go to church, we can serve money as much as we like. Jesus calls us to live as His disciples, carrying our crosses, and devoted to Him in every way, and to live as His servants in this world with its politics, economy, culture of abortion and death. There is nothing remarkable about the person who hopes for heaven someday, but there is something remarkable about the person who lives as though the Laws of heaven apply here and now.

So how are we going to approach the Gospel According to Matthew?

**We will approach the Gospel According to Matthew as HISTORY.** These are real events. These things really happened, just as they are recorded. You can go to Israel now, and go to the village of Bethlehem. If you stood there on the Hebron road, which comes down from Jerusalem, and go back about 2,024 years, you would see Joseph and Mary come down the road. You would hear the sound of their footsteps on the dirt, see the dust kicked up by the donkey's feet, hear Mary breathe a sigh of relief as the "little town of Bethlehem" came into view. If you could go back to the Jordan River north of the Dead Sea, perhaps to the Shueib, a small tributary, and went back about 1990 years, you would see John the Baptist baptizing people, and see a 30 year old Galilean walk down into the water and speak to John, and John baptizing Him, followed by a thunderous voice from heaven. These are incredible and wonderful events, often miraculous and astounding events, but they are also historical events; they really happened.

**We will approach the Gospel According to Matthew as REVELATION.** The content of the Gospels is not stories about Jesus, but Jesus' teachings from His own lips. There are almost 1,100 verses in Matthew; Jesus speaks in 644 of them, or 60%. Most of the 40% not spoken by Jesus is there to describe what Jesus was doing, or to establish the context for what He said. Little of Matthew can stand alone. So we will approach Matthew as God-breathed, Christ-centered revelation. Now, some of you may have Bibles where the words of Jesus are printed in red. That's fine, as long as you remember that the red words aren't MORE Bible than the black words, and that whether spoken by Jesus or written by Peter, all Scripture is equally God-breathed, equally inerrant, infallible, and authoritative. That being said, there is still something very moving about *hearing* what Jesus Himself said. It's odd; many people have the idea that Jesus was this easy-going, nonchalant kind of teacher, who just wanted people to be nice to each other, and then Paul came along and made it hard-nosed and challenging. Listen, Jesus is Lord, and He speaks as Lord.

**And, we will approach the Gospel According to Matthew as A CURRICULUM FOR DISCIPLESHIP.** What do I mean by that? I mean that the purpose of the Gospels is not simply evangelism, or even mainly evangelism. Most of Jesus' teaching in Matthew is not attempting to evangelize non-Christians, but to educate Christians. Jesus tells us what it means to be His follower, and how we should live as His followers. He tells us about His victory over sin and death and the devil. He tells us about His own crucifixion and resurrection, and why they matter so much. He tells us how we are to relate to God and other Christians and the world. Jesus' emphasis at the very end of Matthew is not, "Go and evangelize by sharing the Four Spiritual Laws" but "Go and *make* disciples by baptizing sinners who devote themselves to Jesus, and teaching them to obey Him carefully and passionately." J. Gresham Machen said in 1949, "There can be no greater mistake than to suppose that Jesus ever separated theology from ethics." That is to say, we are in eternal danger if we think that having the right beliefs is enough without the right life. Jesus Himself said, **Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father in heaven.** (Matthew 7:21).

Let me give you a brief outline of the Gospel According to Matthew.

## A BRIEF OUTLINE OF MATTHEW

### THE REVELATION OF THE KING (Matthew 1-10).

**The Person of the King (1-4).** He is the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, the King of the Jews, and the King of kings. He had a holy birth and was protected by God from a terrible threat. He was baptized by the forerunner, and then driven into the wilderness to be proven holy by temptation. He preached His first sermons, called His first disciples, and began His three years of ministry with power and fame.

**The Principles of the King (5-7).** Jesus took His disciples to a mountain and began teaching them as the crowds gathered around Him. We called this “the Sermon on the Mount,” and it was the core of Jesus’ teaching. Luke contains a greatly abbreviated version of this teaching, but it seems that Jesus repeated it consistently as He traveled. In it He explains what it means to be His disciple, challenges and corrects the traditions and misinterpretations of the Pharisees, establishes the will of God for spiritual life, and calls His disciples to complete commitment, not simply to have a good life, but to have eternal life. Just as important, the Sermon On The Mount also reveals the holiness of Jesus in detail, since He alone perfectly met these qualifications.

**The Power of the King (8-10).** Jesus exercised power over sickness, demons, sin, and His own disciples. Matthew records a number of healings and other miraculous events. Jesus’ miracles were never isolated events; they always served to confirm His claims, His authority, and the truth of His teachings. In the process of confirming His own role as Savior, He confronted the religious leaders and the multitudes, warning them of judgment for sin, and promising mercy for repentance and faith.

### **REBELLION AGAINST THE KING (Matthew 11-13).**

**The King’s Messenger Rejected (11:1-19).** John the Baptist arrested and executed for preaching the message of the Kingdom.

**The King Rejected (11:20-12:50).** Those most *theologically trained* refused to repent and believe. He shows Himself to be Lord of the sabbath and mercy, which only enrages the Pharisees, who accuse Jesus of working by the power of Satan.

### **JESUS FOCUSES ON THE DISCIPLES (Matthew 13-20).**

**The Mysteries Of The Kingdom Revealed (13).** Jesus explains why He was rejected by so many, and explains the nature of the Kingdom.

**A Very Public Private Ministry (Matthew 14:1-16:12).** Jesus keeps trying to get away privately with His disciples, but the forcefulness of the Pharisees and the

needs of the people keep intruding. He teaches His disciples through these moments.

**The Son Revealed (16:13-28).** The Father reveals Jesus' deity to Peter and the other disciples.

**The Son Glorified (17).** He is temporarily transfigured, so that His glory is visible.

**Emphasis on Humility (18-20).** With the revelation of Christ's glory, His disciples begin to wonder which of them will be the greatest. Jesus reveals the essential humility of His Kingdom, which means submission to God in all things.

**THE FINAL WEEK (Matthew 21-27).** These days are arrived at by comparing all four Gospels.

**Sunday (21:1-11).** Jesus enters at the triumphal entry. According to Mark, Jesus briefly entered the temple and then left.

**Monday (21:12-17).** Jesus enters the temple a second time and clears it out.

**Tuesday (21:18-26:13).** After cursing a fig tree for being unfruitful, Jesus enters the temple a third time to teach at length. He then returned to Bethany and was anointed for His burial.

**Wednesday (26:14-16).** Judas agrees to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

**Thursday (26:17-35).** Jesus celebrates Passover with His disciples. Late in the evening they go to the Garden of Gethsemane.

**Friday (26:36-27:61).** Jesus spends time in prayer before His arrest, trials, crucifixion, death, and burial.

**Saturday (27:62-66).** The religious leaders ask Pilate to set a guard over Jesus' tomb.

**Sunday (28:1-15).** Jesus is raised from the dead.

## THE GREAT COMMISSION (Matthew 28:16-20).

Jesus commissions His disciples for a lifetime of ministry, revealing the ongoing nature of His Kingdom, which comes not through conquering nations or winning people groups, but by **making disciples** through baptism (personal identification with Christ) and training (teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded).

I'll let you in on a little secret; it's in the area of obedience that false converts are unmasked; those who are unwilling or unable to obey are not Christians.

## BRINGING IT HOME

1,600 years ago John of Antioch – who was called *chrysostom*, “golden mouth,” because of his preaching – said this as he came to preach this Gospel.

*The Jews, when they were to approach the mountain that burned, and fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest, were commanded for three days before to abstain from their wives, and to wash their garments, and were in trembling and fear, both themselves and Moses with them. Much more we, when we are to hear such words, and to enter into Heaven itself, ought to show a greater self-denial; not washing our garments, but humbling our souls, and turning away from worldly things. They saw blackness and smoke and a tempest, but we shall see the King Himself sitting on the throne of His glory. Here stands the trophy of the cross, glorious and conspicuous, the spoils won by Christ, the first-fruits of our salvation. If we come in humility, we will see where death is crucified, where sin is hung up. We shall see the tyrant in chains, and the freed multitude following the Savior.*

*Consider what it is to hear how, on the one side, God in heaven arose from His royal throne and leaped down upon the earth and into the grave, and on the other side, the Devil set himself against Him, veiled though He was in human nature.*

*You will see Death destroyed by death, and Curse extinguished by curse, and the domination of the Devil destroyed by the very weapons by which he once held man captive. Let us rouse ourselves thoroughly and not sleep, for the gates of the King open to us: the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.*

Let's pray! Our Father in heaven, we commit these weeks and months of study to You. We thank You for the precious gift of the Gospel According to Matthew. We know that we will Jesus in His incarnation. We know that we will hear Him speak to us as if He were standing with us each week. Please grant us full faith in His authority and presence, that we may know Him fully, and glorify Him in every way. Amen.

This is a wonderful time for communion. We come to the communion table together as the people of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. We come to Him to be served and saved, sanctified and preserved.

Our Lord has instructed us to examine ourselves before partaking of communion. We do not examine ourselves to see whether we are worthy of taking communion, but to see whether there is sin to be confessed. The church in Corinth came to treat communion in a casual way, rather than recognizing the depth and wonder of the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In sharing in communion, we proclaim Jesus' death for us. We act on our faith before the Lord, trusting fully in His body and blood. We proclaim our faith before one another: this He did for ME, and it is my hope! And let me say that you remind yourself as well: I believe that Jesus Christ died in my place, bearing my cross, suffering in His body, and shedding His blood for my forgiveness and redemption. The Father raised Jesus from the dead because His death was sufficient for our justification. If Jesus could not save you, He would still lie in His grave. So come today in gratitude and faith and confidence in His cross, and worship Him!