Matthew

Author: Matthew, also called Levi
Audience: Greek-speaking Jewish Christians
Date: Between AD 50 and 70

Theme: Matthew presents Jesus as the Jewish Messiah sent by God to bring salvation to Israel and the nations in fulfillment of OT Scriptures.

PERSPECTIVE

It is probably safe to say that the most-often read part of the Gospel of Matthew in our day is the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5 – 7). It is easy to imagine why. We live in a moralistic, legalistic, individualistic age. The Sermon on the Mount can be read as a guidebook for ethical living, to be followed regardless of what you think of God, the Jewish community, or the Christian church. Unfortunately, this is the wrong way to read the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of Matthew as a whole.

Why? Because reading it this way assumes that the way we choose to behave determines who we are and determines our identity. And that's not true at all. What the Gospel of Matthew teaches us in general and what the Sermon on the Mount teaches us in particular is that who we are (or more precisely, *whose* we are, i.e., whom we choose to follow or identify with) determines how we behave. If we choose to follow Jesus as Messiah, Matthew tells us, then the Sermon on the Mount is a description of how we will behave.

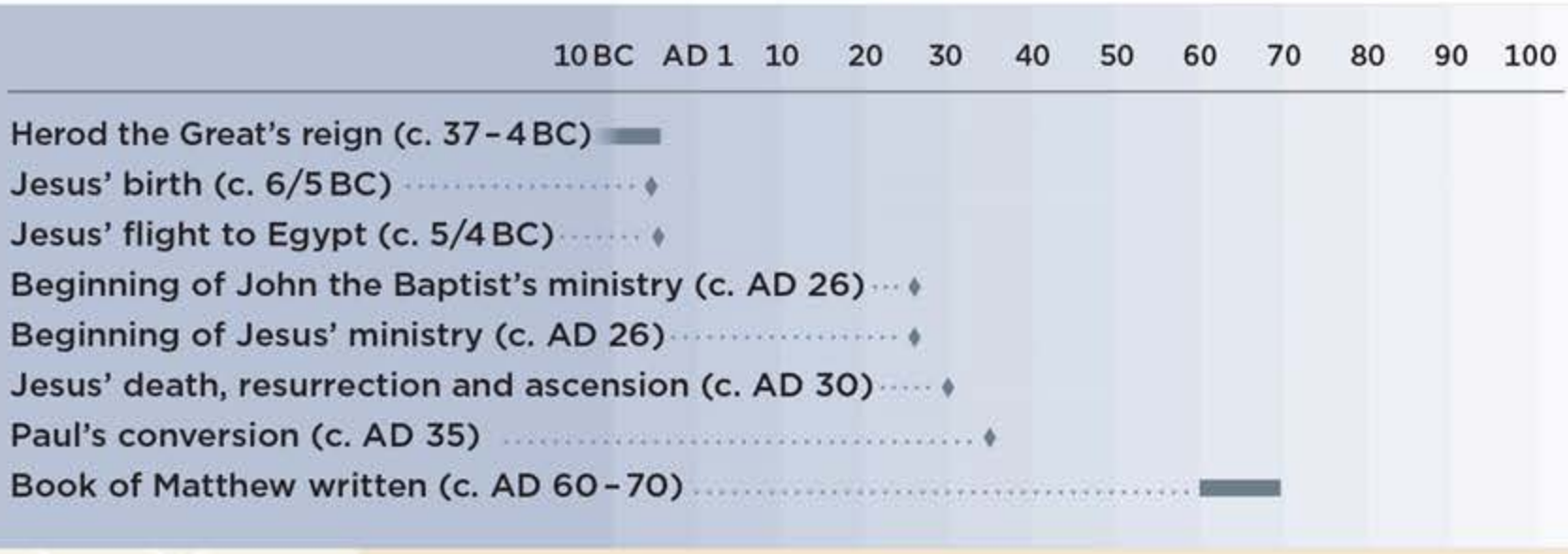
Three important things happen, all of them bad, when we read the Sermon on the Mount incorrectly.

First, we overestimate our goodness. It is tempting to think of our characters as something we carefully craft, using a brick of honesty here, a two-by-four of generosity there, built on a cement foundation of discipline and energy. In such a scenario we choose the goal and we choose the building methods and materials we need to achieve the goal. And it is up to us to make the grade. Matthew says we are not that good (e.g., Mt 5:27–28; 12:34, 36; 15:11, 19).

Second, we underestimate our capacity for evil. The reason we cannot let our innate, God-created goodness dominate our personalities

Reading Matthew

This Gospel begins with a genealogy of Jesus and the story of his birth. Starting with chapter 3, it can be divided into five main sections, each telling first what Jesus did and then what Jesus said; each section closes the same way (see 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). The last three chapters tell the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus.



Key Verse

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth . . ."

—Matthew 5:1-5

is because we have been infected with a pervasive force that has radically impaired our ability to let our lights of goodness shine. We all feel this force and perhaps wish it weren't true. Matthew says we choose to identify with the Messiah because when it comes right down to it, we have no other choice. "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:3).

Third, we rely less on God than we should. Because we are tempted not to choose first of all to identify with the Messiah and let our characters emerge as a result of that choice rather than vice versa, we decide to do a little remedial work to make ourselves a little more acceptable to God before we submit. When we make that choice, however, we make it impossible to rely on God as we should: that is, completely. The Sermon on the Mount is an impossible ideal if read as an ethical treatise to which we need to measure up. It is a wonderful description of what we can become if we identify ourselves with Christ and allow his love to express itself through us. Read that way, it is a glorious promise of what we are and what we will become: the hope of Christian living that Matthew saw so clearly.

APPLICATION

This account of the life of Jesus has been attributed to Matthew, one of the disciples of Jesus. Matthew seemed to have primarily a Jewish audience in mind, for he presented Jesus as the promised Messiah who fulfilled the prophecies, sacrifices, commands, and teachings of the Old Testament. He portrayed Jesus as the Son of God who showed throughout his life that he had divine authority that was acknowledged by both humans and angels. Matthew carefully outlined for those who professed to be Christ's followers the instructions that Jesus gave on true discipleship and on proper pastoral care in the church. And he reminded his readers that Jesus was the Savior of all nations, who had sent his followers on a worldwide mission with the message of the gospel.

Several important messages stand out in this Gospel. (1) We can be sure that God's Word is true, for the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Messiah came true in Jesus. (2) Jesus wants us to acknowledge him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and to follow his instructions for our daily lives. (3) The Sermon on the Mount is one of the best summaries on how to serve God and love our fellow

human beings. (4) We learn in the Gospel of Matthew how to relate to and care for fellow church members, particularly those who are experiencing difficulties. (5) Jesus wants us to tell our friends and neighbors, as well as people throughout the entire world, the good news about salvation in his name.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN MATTHEW

- Jesus' birth and the visit of the Magi (chs. 1–2)
- The Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7)
- Some miracles of Jesus (chs. 8–9; 14–15)
- Jesus sending out his disciples (ch. 10)
- Some parables of Jesus (chs. 13; 18; 20–21; 25)
- Peter's confession and Jesus' prediction of his own death (ch. 16)
- Judgment on the Pharisees (ch. 23)
- Jesus' prediction of the future (ch. 24)
- Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection (chs. 26–28)

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1:1–17pp // Lk 3:23–38
1:3–6pp // Ru 4:18–22
1:7–11pp // 1Ch 3:10–17

1 This is the genealogy[a] of Jesus the Messiah[b] the son of David,[a] the son of Abraham:[b]

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac,[c]
Isaac the father of Jacob,[d]
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,[e]
3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,[f]
Perez the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
4 Ram the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse,
6 and Jesse the father of King David.[g]
David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,[h]
7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,
8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
9 Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,[i]
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,
11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah[c] and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.[j]

12 After the exile to Babylon:
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,[k]

1:1 [a] 2Sa 7:12-16; Isa 9:6, 7; 11:1; Jer 23:5, 6; Mt 9:27; Lk 1:32, 69; Ro 1:3; Rev 22:16
[b] Ge 22:18; Gal 3:16
1:2 [c] Ge 21:3, 12 [d] Ge 25:26 [e] Ge 29:35
1:3 [f] Ge 38:27-30
1:6 [g] 1Sa 16:1; 17:12
[h] 2Sa 12:24
1:10 [i] 2Ki 20:21
1:11 [j] 2Ki 24:14-16; Jer 27:20; Da 1:1, 2
1:12 [k] 1Ch 3:17 [l] 1Ch 3:19; Ezr 3:2

[a] *1* Or *is an account of the origin* [b] *1* Or *Jesus Christ. Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) both mean *Anointed One*; also in verse 18. [c] *11* That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12

1:1 In tracing the ancestry to Abraham, Matthew holds a light of hope to the entire world. The covenant God made with Abraham was a promise of blessing to all the nations.
1:2–6a "Abraham was the father of Isaac." This expression emphasizes the human background of each generation, which paves the way for a dramatic change in v. 16, where Matthew points to the divine origin of Jesus.
1:6b–11 The alternating series of godly and wicked kings is striking.
1:12–16 After the return of Israel from the exile, the Davidic line continues through Jeconiah.

TOPIC PATHWAYS

1:1 Jesus as the son of David. B Isa 9:6–7. Jer 23:5–6 ↔ Mt 9:27.

ISRAEL IN EARLY NEW TESTAMENT TIMES
Extent of Herod's kingdom
Herodian fortress city
Decapolis city (time of Herod)
Other city
Mediterranean Sea
ABILENE
Litani R.
ITUREA
Abana R.
Damascus
Pharpar R.
SYRIA
PHOENICIA
Sidon
Leontes R.
Tyre
Mt. Hermon
Caesarea Philippi
GAULANITIS
Lake Hula
TRACONITIS
GALILEE
Jebel Jarmak
TETRARCHY OF PHILIP
Chorazin
Capernaum
Bethsaida
Gennesaret
Sea of Galilee
Raphana
Ptolemais
Cana of Galilee
Gergesa (Kursi)
Magdala (Magdala)
Tiberias
Hippos
Mt. Carmel
Nazareth
Mt. Tabor
Gadara
Yarmuk R.
BATANEA
AURANITIS
Dor
Kishon R.
Nain
Mt. Moreh
Abila
Megiddo
Bethany on the other side of the Jordan?
Caesarea
Mt. Gilboa
Scythopolis
Pella
Dion
DECAPOLIS
SAMARIA
Salim?
Jordan R.
Gerasa
Samaria
Jabbok R.
Mt. Ebal
Sychar
Amathus
PEREA
Yarkon R.
Mt. Gerizim
Joppa
Antipatris
Alexandrium
Philadelphia
Jericho
Jamnia
Emmaus
Cyprus
Bethany on the other side of the Jordan?
Mt. of Olives
Heshbon
Ashdod
Jerusalem
Bethany
Mt. Nebo
Medeba
Bethlehem
Hyrcania
Ashkelon
JUDEA
Herodium
Machaerus
Adora
Hebron
Dead Sea
Gaza
Besor Valley
Arnon R.
Masada
IDUMEA
NABATEA
Raphia
Beersheba
Arad
Malatha
Zered R.
0 20 km.
0 20 miles

Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,[l]
13 Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
14 Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,
15 Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the
husband of Mary,[m] and Mary
was the mother of Jesus who
is called the Messiah.[n]

17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about[a]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.[o] 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[b] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce[p] her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,[cq] because he will save his people from their sins."[r]

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:
23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"[ds] (which means "God with us").

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.
25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.[t]

1:16 [m] Lk 1:27 [n] Mt 27:17
1:18 [o] Lk 1:35
1:19 [p] Dt 24:1
1:21 [q] Lk 1:31 [r] Lk 2:11; Ac 5:31; 13:23, 28
1:23 [s] Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10
1:25 [t] ver 21

[a] *18* Or *The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this* [b] *19* Or *was a righteous man and* [c] *21* *Jesus* is the Greek form of *Joshua*, which means *the* LORD *saves.* [d] *23* Isaiah 7:14

1:16–17 The original Greek emphasizes that Mary is the biological parent, preparing the reader for the virgin birth.

1:1–17 // APPLICATION | *The* covenantal promise includes all humanity. Matthew shows us that we have another set of roots—roots of faith. Once a person becomes a Christian, he or she is immediately adopted into a family of faith that has a long and well-documented genealogy.

1:18–19 The marriage customs of Jewish culture at that time usually included two basic stages of the relationship, the betrothal and the wedding. The betrothal stage involved a legally binding contract and could only be broken by a formal process of divorce. In a formal ceremony about a year after the betrothal, the wedding took place.

1:20–21 The angel dramatically announces to Joseph in a dream that the conception of the child is from the Holy Spirit. Here at the beginning of the NT age, the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role. Jesus Messiah is God incarnate, whose miraculous conception and origin are only explained through the work of God the Holy Spirit.

The name *Jesus* was popular in Judaism of the first century, given to sons as a symbolic hope for Yahweh's anticipated sending of salvation. Many expected a messiah who would save Israel from Roman oppression. The angel draws on a less popular theme: salvation from sin.

1:22–23 At the time of Ahaz (734 BC) Isaiah prophesied that a woman who was a virgin would bear a son named Immanuel. Since Isaiah's prophecy was first fulfilled in his time (Isa 7:16), this prophecy is fulfilled in a more incredible way with Jesus. In Isaiah the reference is to a woman who had yet to bear a child, but Matthew clarifies that not only had Mary not yet born a child, she had also never had a sexual experience. So Matthew declares that Jesus ultimately fulfills the prophecy of Isa 7:14.

1:24–25 When Joseph awakes from his sleep, he is obedient to the angel's directive and carries out the second phase of the marital process by engaging in the formal wedding ceremony. Matthew emphasizes Joseph's remarkable character. Not only is Mary seen as a godly woman, but Joseph takes the lead in carrying out the angel's instructions.

1:18–25 // The explicit nature of the role of the Holy Spirit in this passage enables us to begin to see the unfolding revelation of God throughout Scripture. This activity of the Spirit is more plain in the expansion of the church in the book of Acts and in the teaching of later

1:19–20 Human fear. Ⓑ Ge 21:15–17. 1Ki 19:3 ↔ Lk 2:9–10.
1:20–21 God's revelation in dreams. Ⓑ Ge 20:3–7. Da 4:4–26 ↔ Mt 2:12–13.
1:20–21 Jesus and his Father. → Mt 11:25–27.
1:20–24 The angel of the Lord appears. Ⓑ Ge 16:7–13. 2Ki 19:35 ↔ Ac 12:6–10.
1:21 Jesus as our Savior. → Lk 2:11.
1:21–23 Names of Jesus. Ⓑ Isa 9:6 ↔ Mt 16:16.
1:23 God's presence with us. Ⓑ Ge 28:15. Hag 1:13 ↔ Mt 28:20.
1:23 Jesus as God. Ⓑ Isa 9:6 ↔ Jn 1:1.

HOUSE OF HEROD

1ST GENERATION

♛ **Herod the Great** King of Judea, Galilee, Iturea, Traconitis (37–4 bc)

Birth of Jesus (Mt 2:1–19; Lk 1:5)

2ND GENERATION

♕ **Herod Philip II** *(MOTHER: CLEOPATRA)* Tetrach of Iturea and Traconitis (4 BC–AD 34) (Lk 3:1)

♕ **Archelaus** *(MOTHER: MALTHACE)* Ethnarch of Judea, Idumea and Samaria (4 BC–AD 6); when Mary and Joseph left Egypt, they avoided Judea and settled in Nazareth (Mt 2:19–23)

Aristobulus *(MOTHER: MARIAMNE)* (died 10 BC)

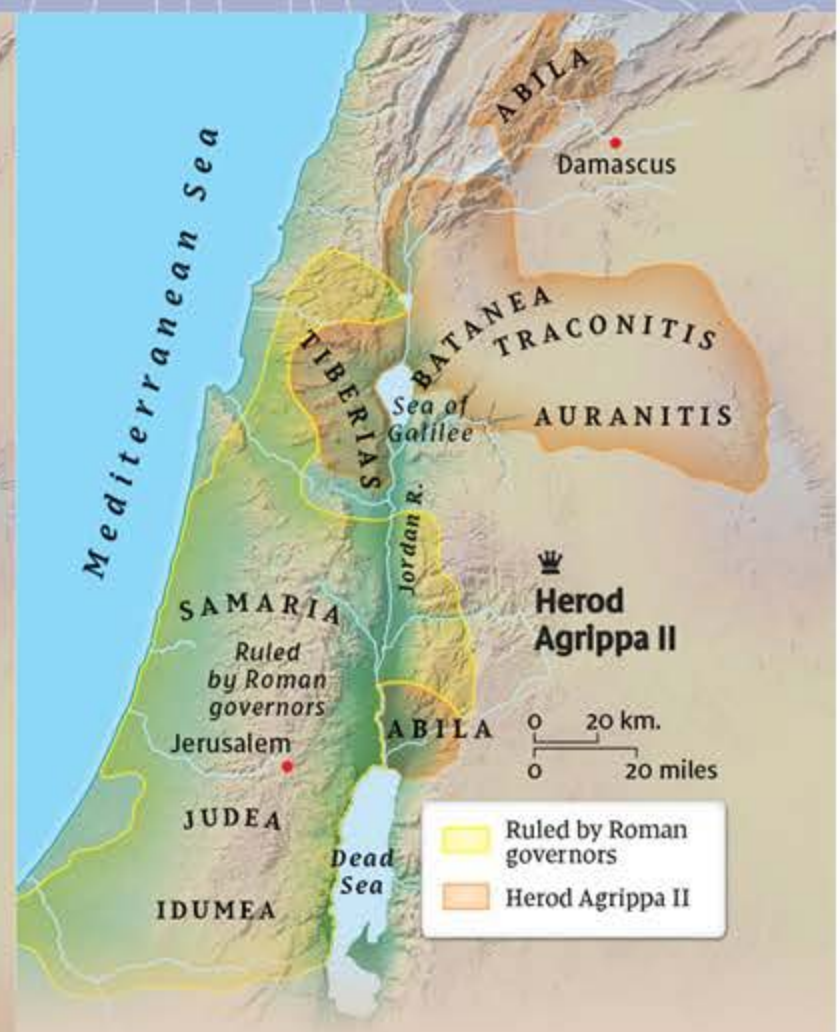
♕ **Herod Antipas** *(MOTHER: MALTHACE)* Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 BC–AD 39) (Lk 3:1); second husband of Herodias; he put John the Baptist to death (Mt 14:1–12; Mk 6:14–29); Pilate sent Jesus to him (Lk 23:7–12)

Herod Philip I *(MOTHER: MARIAMNE)* He did not rule; first husband of Herodias (Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17) (died c. AD 34)

Antipater *(MOTHER: DORIS)*

KEY:

♛	King
♕	Ethnarch/Tetrarch
BERNICE	italic capitals denote females
Antipater	bold type: bloodline of Herod the Great
Felix	light type: non-bloodline



3RD GENERATION

Herod of Chalcis

♛ **Herod Agrippa I** King of Judea (AD 37–44); killed James; put Peter into prison; struck down by an angel (Ac 12:1–24)

HERODIAS Married her uncle Herod Philip I, and then a second uncle, Herod Antipas (Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17)

Denotes Herodias's marriage to Herod Antipas

Denotes Herodias's marriage to Herod Philip I and daughter of that marriage

4TH GENERATION

Felix (Governor of Judea)

DRUSILLA
Married Felix, governor of Judea (AD 52–59); Felix tried Paul (Ac 24:24)

♛ **Herod Agrippa II**
King of Judea; Paul makes a legal defense before him (Ac 25:13—26:32)

BERNICE
With her brother at the time of Paul's defense (Ac 25:13)

SALOME
Daughter of Herodias and Herod Philip I; danced in exchange for the head of John the Baptist (Mt 14:1–12; Mk 6:14–29)

Mt 1:24 ❖ Sometimes God's commands are not easy. How can we better follow God's will when the calling seems difficult?

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem
in Judea,[u] during the time of King
Herod,[v] Magi[a] from the east came to Je-
rusalem 2and asked, "Where is the one
who has been born king of the Jews?[w]
We saw his star[x] when it rose and have
come to worship him."
3When King Herod heard this he was
disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.
4When he had called together all the peo-
ple's chief priests and teachers of the
law, he asked them where the Messiah
was to be born. 5"In Bethlehem[y] in Ju-

2:1 [u] Lk 2:4-7 [v] Lk 1:5
2:2 [w] Jer 23:5; Mt 27:11; Mk 15:2; Jn 1:49; 18:33-37 [x] Nu 24:17
2:5 [y] Jn 7:42

[a] 1 Traditionally *wise men*

NT authors, but we begin to see it come into play with the conception and birth of Jesus Messiah.

What a privilege and responsibility we now have to live at this stage of history. In their obedience to the work of the Spirit, young Joseph and Mary give us a precursor of how godly relationships can be pure and characterized by serving one another. Today, that is the real basis on which we can pursue a godly marriage and family and, indeed, see the transformation of any of our relationships, both within and outside the church, through the transforming work of God's Spirit.

2:1–2 Herod most likely died in March of 4 BC. Since Herod is still alive when the magi arrive in Jerusalem, the dating of Jesus' birth is placed by most scholars somewhere between 6 and 4 BC.

The universal significance of the birth of the child Jesus is announced immediately because magi from the east arrive in Jerusalem. The term "magi" originally referred to a priestly caste in ancient Persia. The arrival of Gentile religious leaders from the east implies they had been regularly exposed to Hebrew Scriptures, prophecy, and teachers. The magi may have become familiar with Balaam's prophecy of a messianic deliverer (Nu 24:17).

2:3–8 The word "Jerusalem" represents the religious and political leadership of Israel. The leadership know the consequences they might suffer if Herod were to fly into a rage at the perceived threat. They have aligned themselves politically with Herod, and if his power base is threatened, so is theirs.

The central leadership of the Jews was lodged

2:1 "The wise" as a special class of people. Ⓑ Ge 41:8. Jer 8:8–9 ↔ Mt 23:34.
2:1–18 Prophets predict the future. Ⓑ 1Sa 10:2–9. Mic 5:2–5 ↔ Ac 11:28.
2:3 Persons experiencing anxiety and worry. Ⓑ 1Sa 9:20. Eze 4:16–17 ↔ Mt 6:28–34.

PEOPLE TO KNOW // HEROD THE GREAT

MATTHEW 2:1–12: Herod the Great was a tyrannical and vengeful king, yet he was also an architectural genius. Some of his building achievements still stand today.

Herod's story in the Bible shows only his paranoid and vengeful side. When Magi from the east came to his palace asking about a new king born in the area, "he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him" (Mt 2:3). As king, his mental state affected his entire community.

Herod hid his wrath from the Magi and disguised it with interest. Learning from the religious leaders that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem nearby, Herod sent the Magi to find baby Jesus and to report back to him when they had done, "so that I too may go and worship him" (Mt 2:8). The Magi, however, were warned in a dream not to return to Herod. They went home by another route.

When Herod realized he had been duped, he flew into a rage. Like Pharaoh killing the baby Hebrew boys (Ex 1:22), Herod demanded that all the boys around Bethlehem under the age of two be put to death (Mt 2:16). He could not abide the thought of a challenger to his authority. Joseph, Mary and Jesus escaped; an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him to flee to Egypt.

APPLICATION: Herod's legacy is a warning about the danger of sin in the life of a person in the position of power. Herod was a brilliant man, but his pride, jealousy and anger made him a terrible and terrifying leader. While we may not wield the same power as Herod, our hearts are susceptible to the same danger. In any position of leadership or authority, we need to examine our motivations and calling. Instead of seeking to preserve our own control and authority, we need to humble ourselves to God's authority and allow him to guide us as we acknowledge that he is the true king and leader of all.

dea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'[a]"[z]

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.[a] Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts[b] of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned[c] in a dream[d] not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

2:6 [z] 2Sa 5:2; Mic 5:2
2:11 [a] Isa 60:3 [b] Ps 72:10
2:12 [c] Heb 11:7 [d] ver 13, 19, 22; Mt 27:19

Mt 2:10 ❖ What does it look like to give our best to Jesus?

The Escape to Egypt

13 When they had gone, an angel[e] of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.[f] "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."[bg]

16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said

2:13 [e] Ac 5:19 [f] ver 12, 19, 22
2:15 [g] Ex 4:22, 23; Hos 11:1

[a] 6 Micah 5:2,4 [b] 15 Hosea 11:1

in the "chief priests" and the "teachers of the law" (v. 4). The chief priests were members of the Sanhedrin, joining the high priest in giving oversight to the temple activities, treasury, and priestly orders.
2:9–12 The purpose of the magi's pilgrimage to see the child is accomplished as they "bowed down and worshiped him" (v. 11). It is doubtful that at this time these quasi-pagan religious figures understand Jesus' divine nature. Yet their worship is far more than even they understand.
"Gold" is the most-often mentioned valued metal in Scripture. "Incense" was used in Israel ceremonially as part of a recipe for the only incense permitted on the altar (Ex 30:9, 34–38). A dead body was prepared for burial by washing, dressing it in special garments, and packing it with fragrant "myrrh" and other spices to stifle the smell of a body as it decayed.

Joseph was visited in a dream by an angel. It seems plausible that the same angel appears in the magi's warning dream (v. 12). If so, the warning in a dream is consistent with the view that the star guiding them was an angel.

2:1–12 // The very act of sacrificial giving defines what it means to love each other. The magi did not know the full identity of Jesus as we are privileged to know, yet they demonstrated worship and gift-giving at the arrival of the king of the Jews. Our sacrificial worship and love of Jesus will produce true, sacrificial love for one another.

At this most fundamental level, Matthew teaches us that Jesus' arrival in history to initiate the salvation of his people from their sins surely requires that we give ourselves to him. When we do so, his life becomes the pattern for our own lives.
2:13–15 Once the magi escape safely, the angel of the Lord again appears in a dream to warn Joseph about Herod's scheme to murder the child. Joseph is again immediately obedient, escaping to Egypt by night.

Matthew points to the flight and later return from Egypt as a "fulfillment of Scripture." Matthew has a multifaceted perspective on the way that Jesus "fulfills" the OT Scriptures. (1) In some cases, "fulfill" can indicate the way in which the events of Jesus' earthly life and ministry enact what the prophets predicted. (2) In other cases, "fulfill" can indicate the way in which Jesus brings to its intended full meaning the entire OT Scripture. (3) In still other cases, Matthew's use of "fulfill" can indicate the way in which Jesus' earthly life and ministry mirror certain aspects of the national history of Israel.
2:16–18 No other historical records exist of this incident, which is not surprising since Bethlehem was a somewhat small, rural town at this time. The

2:12–13 God's revelation in dreams. Ⓑ Ge 20:3–7. Mt 1:20–21 ←.
2:16–17 Murders committed for various reasons. Ⓑ Ge 4:3–8. 2Ki 11:1 ↔ Mt 14:3–11.
2:16–18 Grief because of the death of a loved one. Ⓑ Ge 23:2. 2Ch 35:24–25 ↔ Ac 8:2.

through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 "A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."[ah]

The Return to Nazareth

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream[i] to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream,[j] he withdrew to the district of Galilee,[k] 23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth.[l] So was fulfilled[m] what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.[n]

2:18 [h] Jer 31:15
2:19 [i] ver 12, 13, 22
2:22 [j] ver 12, 13, 19; Mt 27:19
[k] Lk 2:39
2:23 [l] Lk 1:26; Jn 1:45, 46
[m] Mt 1:22
[n] Mk 1:24

Mt 3:2 ❖ To repent means to change our behavior. What repentance still needs to happen in your life?

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3:1–12pp // Mk 1:3–8; Lk 3:2–17

3 In those days John the Baptist[o] came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven[p] has come near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the
wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"[bq]

4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist.[r] His food was locusts[s] and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

3:1 [o] Lk 1:13, 57-66; 3:2-19
3:2 [p] Da 2:44; Mt 4:17; 6:10; Lk 11:20; 21:31; Jn 3:3, 5; Ac 1:3, 6
3:3 [q] Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1; Lk 1:76; Jn 1:23
3:4 [r] 2Ki 1:8
[s] Lev 11:22

[a] *18* Jer. 31:15 [b] *3* Isaiah 40:3

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events of Jesus' earthly life repeat the pattern of earlier attempts by a foreign power to wipe out God's chosen people.

2:19a Herod died at the age of sixty-nine in March, 4 BC. Herod divided his kingdom between his sons, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Herod Philip. Herod Antipas ruled the region of Jesus' primary ministry.

2:19b–23 The family probably stayed in Egypt no more than a year. When they discover that Archelaus is ruling over Judea, Joseph detours to Nazareth in the region of Galilee, a region governed by Herod Antipas.

Nazareth was originally settled by people from the line of David. Matthew also uses "Nazarene" to refer to an individual from a remote, despised area. To his followers, the expression "Jesus the Nazarene" marked him as the messianic deliverer (Ac 2:22; 3:6; 10:38). When used by his enemies, it was a title of scorn.

Matthew says nothing about Jesus' early years in Nazareth. Jesus' education would have also included learning the skills of his father—carpentry. Jesus grew up in a multicultural environment in which a number of languages were spoken by the common people—Aramaic, literary Hebrew, and some Latin, which was spoken especially by Roman military personnel.

2:13–23 // As the name "Nazarene" was for Jesus, so the name "Christian" is a badge of honor, but it is also a badge of scorn and a designation for persecution. For many in the world today, wearing the name "Christian" is similar to what it was like for the early church. In places around the world, buildings are burned just because they are known to be "Christian" houses of worship. In many countries, people are placed in jail simply because they possess and distribute "Christian" literature. And in the face of worldwide radical Islamic terrorism, persecution for being a Christian has come even closer to home.

Our walk with Jesus in this world will involve some kind of suffering for his name. Jesus suffered when doing the right and good thing. Persecution marked the fate of the church from its earliest days, yet it did not dim their passion for following Jesus, no matter what the cost.

3:1–3 John is the one foretold by Isaiah who would be designated to prepare the way for the Lord's arrival and kingdom (v. 3; cf. Isa 40:3).

3:4 John's appearance stirred up recollections of the prophecies of Elijah's return. John's diet and clothing embody in his lifestyle the message of repentance he preaches.

3:5–6 John's baptism was symbolic of purification. But in contrast to forms of baptism such as those at Qumran and by the Pharisees—both of which were highly structured and had regular, repeated washings—John's was a one-time baptism. His baptism called for a personal commitment to God's new activity within Israel.

3:7–10 The Pharisees were a lay fellowship or brotherhood connected with local synagogues

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3:1 The call to repentance. Ⓑ 2Ki 17:13. Eze 14:6 ↔ Mk 1:14–15.
3:6 Individual confession of sin. Ⓑ Lev 5:5–6. Pr 28:13 ↔ Mt 6:12.

7But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers![t] Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?[u] 8Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.[v] 9And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.[w]

11"I baptize you with[a] water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with[a] the Holy Spirit[x] and fire.[y] 12His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."[z]

3:7 [t]Mt 12:34; 23:33 [u]Ro 1:18; 1Th 1:10
3:8 [v]Ac 26:20
3:10 [w]Mt 7:19; Lk 13:6-9; Jn 15:2, 6
3:11 [x]Mk 1:8 [y]Isa 4:4; Ac 2:3, 4
3:12 [z]Mt 13:30
3:13 [a]Mk 1:4
3:16 [b]Isa 11:2; 42:1
3:17 [c]Mt 17:5; Jn 12:28 [d]Ps 2:7; 2Pe 1:17, 18 [e]Isa 42:1; Mt 12:18; 17:5; Mk 1:11; 9:7; Lk 9:35

The Baptism of Jesus

3:13–17pp // Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21,22; Jn 1:31–34

13Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.[a] 14But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God[b] descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17And a voice from heaven[c] said, "This is my Son,[d] whom I love; with him I am well pleased."[e]

[a] *11* Or *in*

and thus were popular with the common people. Their most-pronounced characteristic was their dedication to following oral tradition, which they obeyed rigorously to make the written law relevant to daily life. The Sadducees, by contrast, were a small group with aristocratic and priestly influence who took their authority from the activities of the temple.

The Pharisees and Sadducees are united in coming to where John is baptizing. John sees through their hypocrisy and has harsh words for them. Of all people, they should be the ones who prepare their hearts for the coming of the Messiah. Based on their intensive Scripture study, they should have been the first to prepare themselves to receive kingdom life. Instead, they will receive judgment.

3:11 John points ahead and beyond himself to another person. John especially emphasizes the contrast between himself and the Coming One. (1) John himself knows clearly the identity of the One to come. John is the herald; the Coming One is the messianic deliverer. (2) John's baptism was only preparatory. The Coming One will baptize with the blessing of the Holy Spirit. But the unrepentant he will baptize with the judgment of eternal fire.

3:12 At the end of a harvest, the farmer took a pitchfork and tossed the wheat into the air, where the wind blew the lighter chaff away. The wheat was then stored in the granary. The chaff was burned.

3:13–17 What does Jesus mean that in his baptism he and John will "fulfill all righteousness"? Jesus fulfills the hope of the Davidic king and righteous Servant. But more important, he is also Immanuel, "God with us," and Jesus, the one who will "save his people from their sins" (1:21).

Jesus experiences a threefold revelation: (1) "Heaven was opened." God himself is opening the gates to reveal something momentous. (2) Jesus' anointing by the Spirit is both the coronation of Israel's Messiah and the commissioning of God's righteous Servant for the work he will now carry out in the power and presence of the Spirit. (3) Jesus is heralded as the unique Son who is the triumphant messianic King (Ps 2), yet the humble Servant (Isa 42).

3:1–17 // We don't like to offend. But John does warn us, as will Jesus later, of the coming judgment for those who reject the message of the arriving kingdom of God. We can create a warped view of God and the gospel by overemphasizing the judgment to come, but we just as surely distort people's view if we minimize the reality of judgment.

John is inviting those who respond to his message to experience life, to escape from the wrath to come, and to await the baptism of the Holy Spirit that the Coming One will bring. No message of judgment should ever be given without the accompanying message of promised life for those who respond.

Jesus laid aside both the glory and the independent exercise of his deity to live a life like ours on earth. That is why he is the very real, very tangible example of what our lives are being transformed into when we choose to follow him.

3:9–10 Physical ancestry insufficient for salvation. Ⓑ Eze 18:10–13 ↔ Jn 4:22–24.
3:11 Baptized with the Holy Spirit. Ⓑ Isa 61:1–3. Eze 36:25–27 ↔ Lk 3:21–22.
3:11 The Holy Spirit and water baptism. → Mt 3:16.
3:12 The final harvest. Ⓑ Jer 51:33. Joel 3:12–13 ↔ Mt 13:24–30.
3:15 Christ and the law. → Mt 5:17–18.
3:16 The dove as a symbol. Ⓑ Ps 55:6–7. Na 2:7 ↔ Mt 10:16.
3:16 The Holy Spirit and water baptism. Ⓑ Mt 3:11 ↔ Jn 3:5.
3:16–17 Father, Son, Holy Spirit together. → Mt 28:19.
3:16–17 Jesus as the anointed Christ. Ⓑ Ps 2:2. Da 9:25–26 ↔ Mt 16:16.
3:17 Love of God. Ⓑ Ex 34:6–7. Hos 11:1 ↔ Jn 3:16.

PEOPLE TO KNOW // JOHN THE BAPTIST

MATTHEW 3:13–17: John was the son of Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah, who was a priest. When the angel Gabriel announced Elizabeth would have a child, he said the baby would be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born. Furthermore, he would bring the people back to God, have the spirit of Elijah the prophet and prepare the way for the Lord (Lk 1:15–17).

John became a fiery preacher. He lived in the wilderness, eating honey and locusts. His words of judgment were especially aimed those who believed that they were God's chosen and thus didn't have to be righteous. He called them a "brood of vipers" and said they must change their ways (Lk 3:7–8). John attracted great crowds to the Jordan River where he taught and baptized. He instructed listeners to follow God and repent from their sin.

John said he came to prepare the way for One greater than himself who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Lk 3:16). John was pointing to Jesus, and he had the honor of baptizing Jesus in the Jordan River. After this, John encouraged his disciples to follow Jesus instead of himself (Jn 1:35–37).

John was arrested by Herod Antipas after John had condemned Herod for marrying Herodias, the former wife of Philip, Herod's own brother. Though Herod took an interest in John, Herodias plotted John's death. Herod eventually had John beheaded (Mk 6:17–28).

APPLICATION: John's prophetic task was to prepare the way for Jesus. Crowds of people, from the most pious to the most sinful, came to hear John speak. Rather than enjoying the fame and trying to amass crowds and honor for himself, John always pointed away from himself and toward Christ. John is an example for how each believer should live and a model and guide for Christian leadership. Our lives should be focused on bringing others to Christ. John spoke God's message shamelessly, even to the point of his own death. May we also be unashamed of the gospel (Ro 1:16).

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

4:1–11pp // Mk 1:12,13; Lk 4:1–13

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil. [2]After fasting forty days and forty nights,[f] he was hungry. [3]The tempter[g] came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God,[h] tell these stones to become bread."

[4]Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'[b]"[i]

[5]Then the devil took him to the holy city[j] and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. [6]"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"'He will command his angels
concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their
hands,
so that you will not strike your
foot against a stone.'[b]"[k]

[7]Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'[d]"[l]

4:2 [f] Ex 34:28; 1Ki 19:8
4:3 [g] 1Th 3:5 [h] Mt 3:17; Jn 5:25; Ac 9:20
4:4 [i] Dt 8:3
4:5 [j] Ne 11:1; Da 9:24; Mt 27:53
4:6 [k] Ps 91:11,12
4:7 [l] Dt 6:16

[a] 1 The Greek for *tempted* can also mean *tested*.
[b] 4 Deut. 8:3 [c] 6 Psalm 91:11,12 [d] 7 Deut. 6:16

4:1–2 The Spirit that came on Jesus at his baptism leads him to the desert and empowers Jesus to withstand Satan's temptations. The Father uses Satan's evil intention to strengthen Jesus for his messianic role.

4:3–4 Satan does not doubt Jesus' identity as the Son of God, nor is he trying to get Jesus to doubt it. For Jesus to have turned the stones into bread would lead Jesus outside the Father's will for the Son's human experience. Temptations are one of the enemy's ways of trying to get a person to abandon God's will.

4:5–7 By intentionally putting himself in harm's way, Jesus would be inappropriately testing his Father's love, manipulating him to send a rescuing force of angels. Such a spectacular display would not honor the Father's pathway for Jesus: obediently proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and suffering whatever consequences may come.

4:8–10 Satan tries to sidetrack Jesus by getting

4:1–11 The devil's deceitful schemes. Ⓑ Ge 3:1–6 ↔ Mt 24:23–24.
4:1–11 Jesus' victory over Satan. → Lk 10:17–18.
4:2 The number "forty." Ⓑ Ge 7:12. Jnh 3:4 ↔ Ac 1:3.
4:3–4 Bread as a basic life-sustaining food. Ⓑ Ex 16:3–4. Am 4:6 ↔ Mt 6:11.

8 Again, the devil took him to a very
high mountain and showed him all the
kingdoms of the world and their splen-
dor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said,
"if you will bow down and worship me."
10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me,
Satan![m] For it is written: 'Worship the
Lord your God, and serve him only.'[a]"[n]
11 Then the devil left him, and angels
came and attended him.[o]

4:10 [m] 1Ch 21:1 [n] Dt 6:13
4:11 [o] Mt 26:53; Lk 22:43; Heb 1:14

Mt 4:11 ❖ How does God help us stand firm against temptation in our lives?

Jesus Begins to Preach

12 When Jesus heard that John had
been put in prison,[p] he withdrew to Gal-
ilee.[q] 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and

4:12 [p] Mt 14:3 [q] Mk 1:14

[a] *10* Deut. 6:13

him to take a shortcut to gain the kingdom that will someday be his via the hard way of the cross. "Away from me, Satan!" In this response Jesus exerts his rightful authority over Satan by issuing his first command. He quotes for the third time the book of Dt.

4:11 Matthew adds a comforting comment: "and angels came and attended him." That is, angels attend to Jesus' physical needs after his long period of fasting. This comment indicates the cosmic significance what has just happened. The Son has begun the invasion of Satan's domain.

4:1–11 // A temptation is not always something inherently "evil" but rather consists of a good thing used for wrong purposes. Therefore, one of the most important considerations when addressing temptation is to understand the proper purpose for anything we face. Said in another way, what does God want for us in a situation? Being tempted is not a sin. Succumbing to the temptation is when it becomes sin.

4:12–17 Jesus makes Capernaum, located in the ancient region of Naphtali, his base of operations. Having moved there from Nazareth in what had been the ancient territory of Zebulun, Jesus fulfills another OT prophecy (v. 16). Here, these Jews are the first to see the great light of God's deliverance in Jesus.

The phrase "from that time on . . ." (v. 17) marks a significant turning point. The preparations for

JESUS' BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION

Events surrounding Jesus' baptism reveal the intense religious excitement and social ferment of the early days of John the Baptist's ministry. Herod had been cruel and power-hungry; Roman military occupation was harsh. Some agitation centered around the change of governors from Gratus to Pilate in AD 26. Most of the people hoped for a religious solution to their intolerable political situation, and when they heard of a new prophet, they flocked out into the desert to hear him. The religious sect (Essenes) from Qumran professed similar doctrines of repentance and baptism. Jesus was baptized at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan (see Jn 1:28). John also baptized at "Aenon near Salim" (Jn 3:23).

Many interpreters place John's baptismal ministry at a point on the middle stretch of the Jordan River, where trade routes converge at a natural ford not far from the modern site of Tel Shalem.

lived in Capernaum,[r] which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali — [14]to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

[15]"Land of Zebulun and land of
Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the
Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles —
[16]the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the
shadow of death
a light has dawned."[as]

[17]From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven[t] has come near."

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

4:18–22pp // Mk 1:16–20; Lk 5:2–11; Jn 1:35–42

[18]As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee,[u] he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter[v] and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. [19]"Come, follow me,"[w] Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." [20]At once they left their nets and followed him.

[21]Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John.[x] They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, [22]and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals the Sick

[23]Jesus went throughout Galilee,[y] teaching in their synagogues,[z] proclaiming the good news[a] of the kingdom,[b] and healing every disease and sickness among the people.[c] [24]News about him spread all over Syria,[d] and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed,[e] those having seizures,[f] and the paralyzed;[g] and he healed them. [25]Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,[b] Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.[h]

4:13 [r] Mk 1:21; Lk 4:23, 31; Jn 2:12; 4:46, 47
4:16 [s] Isa 9:1, 2; Lk 2:32
4:17 [t] Mt 3:2
4:18 [u] Mt 15:29; Mk 7:31; Jn 6:1
[v] Mt 16:17, 18
4:19 [w] Mk 10:21, 28, 52
4:21 [x] Mt 20:20
4:23 [y] Mk 1:39; Lk 4:15, 44
[z] Mt 9:35; 13:54; Mk 1:21; Lk 4:15; Jn 6:59
[a] Mk 1:14
[b] Mt 3:2; Ac 20:25
[c] Mt 8:16; 15:30; Ac 10:38
4:24 [d] Lk 2:2
[e] Mt 8:16, 28; 9:32; 15:22; Mk 1:32; 5:15, 16, 18
[f] Mt 17:15
[g] Mt 8:6; 9:2; Mk 2:3
4:25 [h] Mk 3:7, 8; Lk 6:17

[a] *16* Isaiah 9:1,2 [b] *25* That is, the Ten Cities

Jesus' messianic ministry are complete. The prophesied miraculous birth and infancy of Messiah have been established.

Matthew's summary of Jesus' message is the same as that of John the Baptist: "repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (v. 17). When people hear the kingdom of heaven is near, they expect Jesus to inaugurate the kind of kingdom consistent with their hopes.

Jesus will indeed fulfill the prophetic hope. But he will bring this hope to complete fulfillment only when he returns as the Son of Man in glory (cf. 24:29–31). This dual phenomenon is the "already but not yet" nature of the kingdom. Jesus has *already* inaugurated the kingdom, but it has *not yet* reached its final form.

4:18–22 Jesus approaches two men and calls out, "Come, follow me . . . and I will send you out to fish for people." They immediately leave their nets and follow him.

Next, Jesus sees two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who are mending their fishing nets. Caring for this equipment took up much of a morning after a night of fishing. Jesus interrupts their busy activities and calls them. By obeying Jesus' call, they are relinquishing commitment to the family business, their assets, and their livelihood.

Discipleship to Jesus was going to be different from what many might have anticipated. It was not going to be simply an apprenticeship program. Discipleship was a life that began in relationship with the master and moved into all areas of their experience. This is the beginning of kingdom life.

4:23–25 "Teaching" is often related to explaining truth to those already familiar with the content. "Proclaiming" or preaching is generally related to the teaching truth to those unfamiliar with the content. This good news is also demonstrated through Jesus' "healing" every disease and sickness among the people. Both teaching and miracles announce that Israel's hoped-for kingdom promise is at hand.

4:12–25 // The darkness of our own world is real even when we, or those around us, don't notice it. To be away from Jesus is to be in darkness. We can't let the superficial appearances of people mask the real needs that even they might not recognize. To reach them most effectively we must take as our calling the joy of living in the light of Jesus and continually allowing our lives to shine into theirs with the true kingdom life.

Whatever our profession, discipleship means that we prioritize joining with Jesus in reaching our daily world with the good news of life in the kingdom of heaven. We follow Jesus' call to join him in advancing the kingdom of heaven.

4:16 Christ as the light of the world. Ⓑ Isa 9:2 ↔ Jn 1:4.
4:17 Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. → Mt 13:31–33.
4:23–24 Healing miracles of Jesus. → Mt 8:1–17.
4:24 Demon possession in the New Testament. → Mt 8:16.

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

5:3–12pp // Lk 6:20–23

He said:

3"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.[i]
4Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.[j]
5Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.[k]
6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.[l]
7Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
8Blessed are the pure in heart,[m]
for they will see God.[n]
9Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.[o]
10Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,[p]
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11"Blessed are you when people insult you,[q] persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12Rejoice and be glad,[r] because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.[s]

Salt and Light

13"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.[t]

5:3 [i] ver 10, 19; Mt 25:34
5:4 [j] Isa 61:2, 3; Rev 7:17
5:5 [k] Ps 37:11; Ro 4:13
5:6 [l] Isa 55:1, 2
5:8 [m] Ps 24:3, 4 [n] Heb 12:14; Rev 22:4
5:9 [o] ver 44, 45; Ro 8:14
5:10 [p] 1Pe 3:14
5:11 [q] 1Pe 4:14
5:12 [r] Ac 5:41; 1Pe 4:13, 16 [s] Mt 23:31, 37; Ac 7:52; 1Th 2:15
5:13 [t] Mk 9:50; Lk 14:34, 35

5:1–2 Matthew specifies three primary groups of people around Jesus in his earthly ministry. The *disciples* are those who have made a commitment to Jesus as the Messiah. The *religious leaders* are Jesus' opponents for much of his ministry. The *crowd* is a curious group of people who have not yet made a commitment to him.

> **5:1–2 //** Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is not for a few more-committed believers. Matthew is a manual on discipleship, and throughout most of church history this Gospel has been used to provide the content of instruction for fully formed Christian living.

5:3 The "poor" are those who have encountered unfortunate circumstances from an economic point of view, and persons who are spiritually and emotionally in need of God's help. These people will experience their most complete fulfillment as they draw on the resources of the kingdom of heaven to guide their lives.
5:4 Mourning characterizes life in the "already but not yet" presence of the kingdom. We mourn oppression, persecution, personal sin, and social evil because we mourn the things that God mourns. We can also become instruments of the good news of the kingdom as we share with others the comfort of God.
5:5 The meek are people who do not assert themselves over others to advance their own causes. This does not imply weakness, however, for this same term is applied to Jesus.
5:6 Persons who "hunger and thirst" will die if they are not filled. Those who respond to Jesus' invitation to kingdom life will find he fills their deepest personal hunger and thirst for righteousness.
5:7 In God's great mercy he does not give humans what they deserve; rather, he gives to them what they need. True disciples have experienced God's merciful forgiveness that they can then demonstrate toward others.
5:8 Jesus declares here that a pure heart is what produces external purity, not vice versa. Those who have set their heart on God will see God in the life and ministry of Jesus.
5:9 The theme of peace permeates the biblical record. Biblical peace is more than the absence of strife and conflict. It is a condition of human flourishing that indicates completeness and wholeness in every area of life, including one's relationship with God, neighbors, and nations. The true peacemakers are those who wait and work for God.
5:10 Persecution especially points to the way that the religious leaders hounded the people and excluded from their association any who did not embrace their particular brand of righteousness. Jesus says that the kingdom of God belongs to these oppressed people, not the religious leaders.
5:11–12 Jesus prepares his disciples for the time when persecution will indeed come to them. The kingdom is theirs, and in it they will truly rejoice.
5:13 The metaphor of salt and light indicates that the disciples of Jesus are themselves necessary for the welfare of the world. Imposter disciples, who simply attempt to put on the flavoring of the kingdom life, will be revealed.

5:5 Meekness in Jesus and others. Ⓑ Ps 37:11. Zep 3:12 ↔ Mt 11:29.
5:6 Spiritual hunger and thirst. Ⓑ Isa 30:20. Am 8:11–12 ↔ Lk 6:21.
5:7 Mercy expected of us. Ⓑ Hos 6:6. Mic 6:8 ↔ Lk 6:36.
5:8 Living a life of purity. Ⓑ Ps 24:4–5. Ps 51:10 ↔ 2Co 7:1.
5:11–12 Joy in the midst of suffering. Ⓑ Hab 3:17–18 ↔ Ac 5:41.
5:11–12 Suffering for New Testament saints. → Lk 21:12–17.
5:12 Reward in the New Testament. → Mt 6:1–6.
5:13 Salt as a symbol. Ⓑ Ge 19:26. Eze 43:24 ↔ Mk 9:50.