

ABIDE: A BIBLE READING CHALLENGE

JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

THY KINGDOM COME

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

In coming to this first book of the New Testament you're going to need to know a little something about the characteristics of this Gospel. In fact, you'll notice this trend as we come to all four of our Gospel writers. The information discussed will reveal that each author had an original and specific audience to whom they were trying to appeal.

Many people want to read the Gospel as a biography and then get confused when they see that the events sometimes are out of order and then 40% 50% and even 60% of the Gospel story is dedicated to the telling of Jesus' final days and weeks of His earthly ministry.

The reason for this is because the Gospels are not a biography, they are a message of redemption and each writer has a specific purpose and a specific original audience in mind. Now, this by no means suggests that these messages are less important to us— God forbid we ever think that! But it is to suggest that information that tells us the background of the author, who his audience was, and what were they originally trying to accomplish, is critical to know before we weigh in to a particular Gospel.

For instance, one thing you'll notice as you travel through the first three Gospels is while you will notice some differences, you'll notice more so their similarities. These gospel messages are largely known as the "Synoptic Gospels" which means, "to see together." the reason for this is because that is exactly what you are able to do— see them together. You are able to see the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke together in terms of their events and structure as it relates to the life and ministry of Jesus. However, when you get to John and try to plug him into the equation of Gospel understanding, if you don't know his purpose for writing this particular Gospel, get ready to be thrown into a tale spin.

So with this in mind, let's learn a bit about Brother Matthew.

Matthew serves as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. In fact, Matthew quotes the Old Testament 129 times and uses twenty-five out of the thirty-nine book to do so.

Matthew's Gospel is known as the "Kingly Gospel" and the reason there are so many quotes from the Old Testament and expressed phrases and titles used in the Old Testament is because he is answering every question that a Jew would ask about Jesus being the Messiah. It's the Gospel of Apologetics— answers for the Jewish Worldview!

Matthew wrote this Gospel around A.D. 58 and what helps determine this date is the fact that there were a number of

references to the Jewish Temple and language which provides undeniable information that it was still functional and in operation at the time of this writing. The reason this is important is because the Temple fell to the Roman General Titus and so the conclusion is that Matthew's Gospel had to have been written prior to its fall in A.D. 70.

The author of this work is none other than Matthew, himself. In the Gospels, you will learn that Matthew had two names: A Greek name (Matthew) and his Hebrew name (Levi). This Hebrew name was no doubt an indication of what his parents would have liked him to do with his life; they would have wanted him to become a priest.

However, this is a far cry from what Matthew became. He became a traitor to his own people. The profession Matthew chose was that of a tax collector for the Roman government. But this all changed once Jesus stepped into his life and told Matthew to follow him. Matthew got up from his job and never looked back. Further, Matthew, by his own account, expresses that he was very happy about this decision since he had thrown a party to celebrate the occasion (Matthew 10:2).

How to Think About Matthew

One thing you absolutely have to know is that some of the writing of this Gospel is not done in chronological order. Once again, this is not a biography, it is a gospel, and the reason this book was written in the fashion you see it, is not because he was trying to confuse you, he is simply trying to carry certain thoughts through in your mind.

Matthew has everything to do with proclaiming that Jesus is the predicted Messiah of the world but was rejected by His own people. However, as is the very nature of the Gospel, Matthew proclaims, and gives evidence for the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is coming again!

To this point, you'll notice that Matthew begins with a list of genealogies. As stated in our previous work (Grace and Fire), if you were looking at the design of the Hebrew Bible, you would notice that the Old Testament ends with a list of genealogies, and Matthew begins with a list of genealogies. This is no accident. Matthew is piecing together the fact that Jesus has a claim that can be said by no other individual. It is only Jesus who can prove His family line and thus lay claim to the title of Messiah. It is by these genealogies that springboard Matthew into the revealing of this King of Glory.

The Announcement of the King (Matthew 1-10): In these chapters, we discover more about who Jesus is, what He said about who He is, and what He did to prove who He is.

Matthew 1-4— These chapters focus on the revelation of the person of Christ. Once again, this is where we find information on the genealogy of Jesus and then Matthew moves toward prophecy fulfillment in terms of where Jesus was raised, His baptism into ministry, and His temptations in the wilderness after a forty-day and forty-night fast.

Matthew 5-7— These chapters are often referred to as the Sermon on the Mount and what Jesus does in preaching this sermon is outlining exactly how the kingdom of heaven operates. These are principles that Jesus verbally set forth, and then spent the rest of His ministry living before His disciples.

Matthew 8-10— Here you will notice that there is a heavy emphasis on Jesus' power. Healings were performed, demons were cast out, and Jesus displayed His power by sharing it with His disciples whom he commanded to perform the same work that He had been doing.

The Agitation of the King (Matthew 11-13): Once Jesus became more specific about who He was, the people became agitated at the message. Even though Jesus was performing miracles, His message toward the people as a whole, and especially to the religious leaders was very offensive to them. Jesus accused the religious leaders of picking and choosing which laws to follow and which laws to do away with and further charged them with enforcing laws that were not laws at all. Along with this, Jesus accused these men of not understanding Scripture and then imposed their own lack of understanding on the people. For instance, in Matthew 12, Jesus and His disciples were walking through a cornfield and because the disciples were hungry,

they began gleaning portions of the corn to eat. But ever vigilant against distractions, a few of the Pharisees saw this and immediately accused Jesus' disciples of an infraction of the law. Jesus went on to explain that their interpretation was wrong and cited an Old Testament passage to prove it (Matthew 12:1-4).

The Anathema of the King (Matthew 14-20): What was once an agitation with Jesus before by the religious leaders, became an all-out discontented anathema for Him. Jesus knows this, and that is why we read a great deal about Jesus preparing the disciples for His death on the cross. This is also where you read the famous "Who do you say that I am passage" in Matthew 16, and then Peter's famous response, often called the Great Confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus became so specific about the work He would accomplish in these chapters, He told them exactly what would happen to Him in Matthew 17:22-23, "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."

The Assassination of the King (Matthew 21-27): The Jews officially reject Jesus and then plot, and carry out the Assassination of Jesus.

The Authority of the King (Matthew 28): This is the reason we have Good News! Jesus was killed, Jesus was assassinated, but it was all part of the plan. Jesus laid down His life as a willing sacrifice in order to take on sin, and in order to take on death. Jesus displayed His authority over both of these great enemies of mankind and the way Jesus showed His authority is by being raised from the dead. Further, it is by the authority that Jesus explained that all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth. The Authority of the King commands His people to move out for the sake of the lost.

What to Look for in Matthew

Several features in Matthew's gospel are unique to his writing style and the people to whom he was originally writing.

Words and Phrases—

The Kingdom of Heaven: This phrase appears thirty-two times during the course of your reading in Matthew, and it is the key to unlocking the book. This phrase is used in a special way, and would have had a special and particular meaning to the Jew. You'll notice as you read this phrase that it is used with a mixture of good and bad, true and false as Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven. It referred to a future time, but also a present time. You can see this clearly in Matthew 13, as Jesus told several parables that began with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." Many of these parables express the eternal courses of heaven but also provide valuable information for how we live on earth.

Blessed: This word is, and has always been a little hard to define into the English language. It means "fortunate" or "happy" but it also means more than that. It conveys a deeper meaning of these commonly known emotions. In the New Testament, it describes the individual who truly knows God. If a person is truly saved, they know they are happy about it— that's a given, but they would also tell you that it is so much more than that. God only brings this kind of happiness as He brings blessing and favor to His children.

Old Testament Prophecies—

Along with your study of Matthew, make sure to backtrack the prophecies mentioned in this Gospel. This will keep you a little busy because there are over sixty uses of Old Testament prophecies in this work.

Old Testament Titles—

Son of David: Matthew also employs Messianic titles unique to the Old Testament. For instance, Matthew uses the term "Son of David" to describe Jesus. This is a term that referenced Jesus' royal heritage straight from the line of King David

from the Tribe of Judah.

Christ: Sometimes we use this title so often and so close to the name Jesus that people may think that it could be Jesus' last name. But this is actually the appropriate title for Jesus— He is Jesus the Christ or, in other words, Jesus the Anointed One. To say Jesus Christ is actually a confession of faith. The Hebrew equivalent for this word would be the word Messiah. It was a word used of kings and priests (1 Kings 19:16; Leviticus 4:5) when they were anointed with oil for their office of service. That said, Jesus as the Anointed One would be to say that He occupied and fulfilled the Ultimate office and it is only He who could do so.

What to Gain from Matthew

Jesus Is The King The World Has Been Looking For— A theologian named Ray Stedman told a story once about finding a king. He wrote:

“Nearly a century ago, an Englishman named Greene was walking through the woods when he came upon a stranger in the path. He was startled when the stranger smiled and waved at him. ‘Oh, hello, Mr. Greene!’ said the stranger. Obviously, this ‘stranger wasn’t a stranger at all— but for the life of him, Mr. Greene could not place him.

Embarrassed, but unwilling to admit to a poor memory for names and faces, Mr. Green offered his hand. ‘Ah, yes! Hello! Good to see you, old boy! How long has it been?’

‘Well,’ said the other man, ‘it was at Lady Asquith’s reception last October wasn’t it? Nearly a year, then.’ Mr. Greene remembered Lady Asquith’s reception and tried to recall all the people he had met. This gentleman’s face looked familiar, but he just couldn’t place it. Still groping for clues to this fellow’s identity, Greene decided to ask a few questions. ‘And how is your wife?’

‘Quite well,’ said the other man.

‘And you? Still the same in the same business, I presume?’

‘Oh, yes,’ said the other man, with a merry twinkle in his eye. ‘I’m still the king of England.’

Mr. Greene, behold your king!” Pg. 487 *Adventuring Through the Bible*

Jesus is the King that mankind is looking for. What is done so often is that we try to make ourselves, or some system king of our lives, but that never turns out very well and it never will.

But Matthew rolls out the regal carpet for Christ and asks us to behold, recognize, and trust in King Jesus.



THIS RESOURCE IS OWNED BY LAKE WORTH BAPTIST CHURCH AND IS FREE FOR PERSONAL USE.
PLEASE DO NOT COPY OR DISTRIBUTE THE MATERIALS WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE AUTHOR.

WWW.LAKEWORTHBAPTIST.ORG