
AN OVERVIEW OF MATTHEW

IN 6 PARTS

As we journey into Matthew together, pray and ask God for fresh understanding of Jesus. There is no precise day by day or week by week Bible reading plan associated with the church-wide reading of the Gospel of Matthew. This is to release everyone from having to follow a precise calendar/plan or having to feel like you're falling behind. However, you decide to read through Matthew, make it work for you. The point is simply to read the Scripture, even when we're busy, sleepy, distracted, or feeling outright rebellious. Read a few verses a day or read through the whole book, then come back and work through more slowly paying attention to the portions that speak especially to you. There's no wrong way to read. May the good Lord bless your reading.

A couple of observations:

- The authors of Scripture (including Matthew's author) are usually *way* smarter and more intentional than they are given them credit for.
- The 66 books of the Bible aren't choppy, disjointed accounts of historic episodes. They actually speak to and through one another to tell one long story about God and how God works to build relationships with humans.

Questions, even hard ones, aren't threatening to God. Ask them. Wrestle hard. If what we believe is true, it can withstand pressure, doubt, or critique. When you don't understand something, try "standing under it," the way you would a piece of art—looking at it from different angles, trusting it has something to say.

An excellent overview of the Gospel of Matthew is available free online from The Bible Project in 2 short (approx. 8 minute) videos. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/matthew-1-13/>
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/matthew-14-28/>

Gospel of the Kingdom | The Bible Project (video)

The Gospel of Matthew is often broken into sections by scholars to denote what teachings of Jesus form some coherent theme. One of the ways those divisions occur is listed here.

Part One: Announcing God's Kingdom (Chapters 1-7)

In the first part of Matthew's Gospel (Ch. 1-7), we're introduced to the man, Jesus of Nazareth. Throughout the book, Matthew portrays Jesus as reliving Israel's story. Jesus' birth is linked to the creation story and the founding fathers of Israel from the Book of Genesis. Jesus is then forced to flee an evil king bent on killing him, just as the Israelites fled from Pharaoh in Exodus. To begin his ministry, Jesus passes through the waters of baptism, just as the Israelites crossed through the waters while escaping Egypt. Jesus then enters the wilderness to be tested, leading up to a moment on a mountaintop where he presents a new teaching, or "torah." All of this points to Jesus as the new and greater Moses who reveals to God's people what it means to faithfully follow God and love one another.

Part Two: The Transforming Power of God's Kingdom (Chapters 8-10)

In part one, Jesus announces the good news that God's kingdom has come. But what kind of kingdom will it be? The Sermon on the Mount revealed what it looked like to live in God's kingdom, where everyone is equal and where the first becomes last and the last first. In other words, Jesus speaks of an upside-down kingdom, where the powerful are brought low and the humble are lifted up. In Ch. 8-10, Jesus puts into practice everything he just spoke about in the previous chapters. Matthew weaves together nine stories of Jesus performing miracles, bringing healing, or saving people in danger. These stories demonstrate the transforming power Jesus brings to our lives. In the midst of these testimonies, we find two stories of Jesus calling someone to follow him. In this way, it's like the author is reaching out to you, extending the same invitation: Are you ready to experience the healing and saving power of the gospel? Then follow Jesus!

Part Three: How People Respond to Jesus (Chapters 11-13)

As Jesus' influence grows and news of the kingdom continues to spread, many respond positively to his message. But those in power in Jerusalem, the religious elite, do not take kindly to his teachings. In chapters 11-13, we encounter several stories depicting the myriad ways people respond to Jesus. John the Baptist is unsure about who Jesus is and sends a messenger to ask him directly, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matt. 11:3). We're told the crowds who hear the message of Jesus are left astonished, wondering, "Could this be the Son of David?" (Matt. 12:23). But the Pharisees outright reject Jesus, accusing him of being in league with demons! (Matt. 12:24). Together these stories ought to prompt you to ask the same question to yourself: Who do you say Jesus is?

Part Four: The Upside-Down Kingdom (Chapters 14-20)

The people of Jesus' day had many different thoughts about what it would look like when the Messiah came. Most pictured the Messiah as a victorious conquering hero like King David, who would overthrow the Romans and free God's people from oppression. But over and over again, Jesus reveals that the kingdom he is ushering into the world couldn't be more different. He opens up to his closest disciples about what it really means for him to be the Messiah. Jesus tells them that in Jerusalem, he will suffer and die at the hands of the religious leaders. Surprisingly, Jesus' victory wouldn't come as the result of a successful military campaign, but through laying down his life as a servant for all. In Chapters 18-20, Jesus expands on the upside-down kingdom of God, where honor comes through serving others, forgiveness wins the day, and true riches come through radical generosity.

Part Five: A Clash of Kingdoms (Chapters 21-25)

The moment has come, Jesus' ministry in Galilee has ended and he has arrived triumphantly in Jerusalem, riding on the back of a colt as the people shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Jesus wastes no time calling attention to the corruption running rampant in the Temple and lamenting over the state of Israel as a whole. Jesus reveals that in his kingdom, those who are typically excluded will now be included, and at the end of the day, what matters most is not a person's empty religious rituals, but rather the character and content of their faith. This section ends with the fifth and final discourse which makes up ch. 23-25 and consists of Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees and the Olivet Discourse.

Part Six: Conclusion (Chapters 26-28)

Everything has led to this climactic event in the Gospel of Matthew: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus gathers his closest disciples around a table in the upper room of a home in Jerusalem for Passover. During the meal, Jesus reinterprets this traditional Jewish meal, saying that the bread now symbolizes Jesus' broken body and the wine Jesus' blood poured out for them. But even though Jesus warns the disciples about what will happen to him, they are still unprepared to see their Messiah arrested and nailed to the cross. It's a crushing defeat for his followers, but what they don't know is the joy that will come in only three days' time.



GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

ANNOUNCING GOD'S KINGDOM

CHAPTERS 1 - 7

Chapter 1

Read chapter 1. Matthew opens his Gospel with this: *The book of the **genealogy** of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

Here's what you should know:

- ❖ The Greek word for genealogy is: *genesis*. The beginning. The origin story.
- ❖ Jesus was a common name in the first century BCE. Christ isn't his last name. *Christos* means "anointed" or messiah.
- ❖ Calling Jesus the son of David, and the son of Abraham would have made the headlines to Matthew's original audience of faithful Jews. He's saying: "THIS IS THE GUY WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!"

Matthew is taking his pen and drawing a through-line to the left, all the way through the Old Testament, back to page one. He wants us to see that this is not a *new* story—it's a fulfillment of the original story.

The genealogy is not a factual, literal explanation of Jesus' family tree. That doesn't mean it's not *true*, it's just not a family tree the way we think of one. Matthew has crafted this genealogy on purpose—to say something. To understand what Matthew is communicating through the genealogy, [read this brief article](#). It will blow your mind.

Sure, Matthew has left some people out of the genealogy, but what's *most* interesting to me is who he has left *in*: [Tamar](#), [Rahab](#), [Ruth](#), and [Bathsheba](#). Women weren't typically included in Jewish lineages, much less women who were outsiders embroiled in scandal. Tamar was a widow twice over, impregnated by her dead husbands' father. Rahab was a prostitute who hid Hebrew spies. Ruth was an immigrant widow, collecting grain at the heels of the man she would remarry. And Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah, who was killed by King David after he got her pregnant. Scandal, right?!?

Questions:

- If *these* people are included in the genealogy of a king, what kind of kingdom is this?
- What surprised you about the genealogy?

