

## THE BIG READ (1)

### Matthew

#### A. Introduction

1. The New Testament begins with four books which tell the story of Jesus' earthly life and together paint a beautiful portrait of who Jesus is.

Matthew is the first of these.

Two reasons for this:

- a) The early church believed that Matthew was the first Gospel to be written – more likely it was Mark.
- b) It is appropriate that Matthew comes first because it bridges the Old and New Testament.

2. Matthew (also known as Levi) was a Jewish tax collector who was called by Jesus to be one of His 12 disciples.

"As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him." (Matthew 9:9)

"He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him." (Matthew 10:2-4)

As a tax collector he would have been used to and skilled in making detailed notes and most likely continued to do this as he listened to Jesus.

Some 20 or 30 years after Jesus returned to heaven, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote this book known as 'The Gospel according to Matthew'.

Ireneaus (130-202) in *Against Heresies* wrote that: "*Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church.*"

3. Matthew presents the story of Jesus' life in three main sections.

Chapters 1-4: Connecting.

Matthew introduces Jesus by connecting Him to the Old Testament – His genealogy puts Him in the line of Abraham and David; His birth and events of His infancy fulfil Old Testament promises; and His preparation for ministry show Him to be the True Israel.

Chapters 5-25: Catechising.

In the central section Matthew alternates between recording what Jesus said and recounting what Jesus did.

We see Jesus' authority as a teacher and healer (5-9); opposition to His ministry (10-12); two responses to Him (13-16); what it means to be His disciple and how His disciples are to live together in local churches (16-18); and learn about the judgment that is coming on those who reject Jesus (19-25).

Chapters 26-28: Commissioning.

Matthew closes his Gospel with his account of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus which He commissions His followers to make known to all nations.

#### B. Things to look for

## 1. The word 'fulfilled' which explicitly connects the story of Jesus to the Old Testament.

This appears throughout the Gospel.

"All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" – which means, "God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

"And so was fulfilled what the Lord has said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." (Matthew 2:15)

"Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali – to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah." (Matthew 4:13-14)

"This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." (Matthew 8:17)

"So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." (Matthew 13:35)

"But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." (Matthew 26:56)

Matthew wants his readers (originally would have been primarily Jewish) to see that Jesus is the promised King (Messiah) the Old Testament was pointing to, who has come to save His people from their sins.

"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matthew 1:1)

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28)

## 2. The phrase 'When Jesus had finished...'

This appears five times in the central section.

"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Matthew 7:28-29)

Matthew arranges his record of what Jesus said into five teaching blocks that parallel the five Books of the Law of Moses (Torah). He wants his readers to see that Jesus fulfils the Law of Moses enabling His followers to understand and keep it.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished... For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-18, 20)

## 3. The people who accept Jesus.

Magi.

"On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him." (Matthew 2:11)

Fishermen.

"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him." (Matthew 4:18-20)

Roman Centurion.

"When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." (Matthew 8:10)

The Paralytic and his friends.

"Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." (Matthew 9:2)

Matthew the tax collector.

"As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him." (Matthew 9:9)

A woman who had been bleeding for 12 years.

"Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment." (Matthew 9:22)

Canaanite woman.

"Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Matthew 15:28)

Who did not accept Jesus? The religious and the Jewish elite.

Matthew wants his readers to recognise that a place in the kingdom of heaven is only for those who recognise that they are spiritually bankrupt, sick sinners, who know they are helpless and trust wholly on Jesus to save them.

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 4:17)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

"He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

### **C. Who is Jesus?**

1. He is the One who was promised.

The Son of David – God had made a promise to the people of Israel about a King (Christ) who would reign forever (see 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus is that promised King (Matthew 1:1, 16:16).

The Son of Abraham – God promised Abraham that one of his offspring would bring blessing to the nations by saving His people from their sins (see Genesis 12:3, 22:18). Jesus is that promised Offspring (Matthew 1:1, 21).

2. He is the One who fulfils.

Our Priest – the priests' offered sacrifices so that God could be present among His people.

"I tell you that one greater than the temple is here." (Matthew 12:6)

Our Prophet – Israel had a prophetic mission to the nations.

"He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here." (Matthew 12:39-41)

Our King – Israel was waiting for a King who would reign on David's throne and over his kingdom with justice and righteousness for ever.

"The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here." (Matthew 12:42)

### 3. He is the One who is God.

Jesus' origin is not only human. It is also divine.

"This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 1:18)

The only reason Jesus can save His people from their sins is because He is God (see Genesis 3:15).

When Jesus' followers gather and wherever they go to make disciples He is with them.

"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20)

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

Jesus is Immanuel – God with us (see Matthew 1:23).

## **D. How then shall we live?**

### 1. We are to repent and follow Him.

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 4:17)

"...and followed him." (Matthew 4:20, 22)

### 2. We are to listen to Him.

"His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying." (Matthew 5:1-2)

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24)

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5)

### 3. We are to live like Him.

"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." (Matthew 3:8)

"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

### 4. We are to proclaim Him to all nations.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19)