

THE BIG READ – MATTHEW

He is the One who is God

Jesus' origin is not only human. It is also divine (see Matthew 1:18, 23).

Jesus' work of salvation is only possible because He is God (see Genesis 3:15).

Jesus' promise to be with His disciples and to be with them always (see Matthew 18:20, 28:20).

How then shall we live?

As we recognise that Jesus is the One who was promised, who fulfils the Old Testament, and who is God, how should we respond?

We are to follow Him

“Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matthew 4:17)

We are to listen to Him

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him!” (Matthew 17:5)

We are to live like Him

“Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance.” (Matthew 3:8)

We are to proclaim Him

“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.” (Matthew 28:19)

Introduction

The New Testament begins with four books that tell the story of Jesus' earthly life.

Matthew's Gospel is the first of these.

Two reasons for this:

- i) The early church believed that Matthew was the first Gospel to be written (more likely it was Mark's).
- ii) It is appropriate that Matthew comes first because it bridges the Old and New Testament.

The author of Matthew's Gospel

He was a Jew. Matthew is a Hebrew name. He also went by the name Levi, another Hebrew name (see Matthew 9:9; also Mark 2:13-14; Luke 5:27-28).

He was a tax collector (see Matthew 10:3). Being a tax collector, he would have been unpopular with other Jews. Rabbi's listed tax collecting alongside prostitution among the occupations that no law-abiding Jew could undertake.

He was a disciple of Jesus. One of the 12 called to be apostles. His encounter with Jesus transformed his life (see Matthew 9:9).

He was an evangelist. He wanted other people to hear about Jesus (see Matthew 9:10).

He was a writer. 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.

The story of Matthew's Gospel

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 shows Him to be the True Israel.

Chapters 5-25: Catechising.

In this central section, Matthew alternates between recording what Jesus said and recounting what Jesus did, to instruct us about who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him.

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 the judgment that is coming on those who reject Jesus (19-25).

Chapters 26-28: Commissioning.

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

The purpose of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is the promised King who has come to save His people from their sins (see Matthew 1:1, 21; 20:28). The word 'fulfilled' appears through the Gospel and explicitly connects the story of Jesus to the Old Testament.

Matthew wants us to see that Jesus fulfils the Law of Moses, enabling His followers to understand and keep it. His record of what Jesus said is

arranged into five teaching blocks to parallel the five books in the Law of Moses (Torah).

Matthew wants us to see that Jesus came for everyone who recognises that a place in the kingdom of heaven is only for those who recognise they are helpless and put their faith in Him to save them (see Matthew 4:17). Matthew writes about people from the nations believing in Christ – Magi, Roman Centurion, Canaanite woman.

Jesus in Matthew

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 (see 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 (see Matthew 1:1, 21).

He is the One who fulfils

Our Priest. The priests' offered sacrifices so that God could be present among His people in the temple. What the priests and sacrifices pointed and what the temple was, is now found in Jesus (see Matthew 12:6).

Our Prophet. Israel had a prophetic mission to the nations. In Jesus, Israel's prophetic mission to the nations comes to life, literally, following three days and nights in the heart of the earth before rising to send His followers to and make disciples of all nations (see 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. In Jesus the wait is over (see Matthew 12:42).