

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

How could an obscure Galilean peasant and carpenter with no academic training and no social status, one who died the most ignominious death imaginable, establish a movement that would conquer the Roman world and become a worldwide religious force? Moreover, how do we affirm the historical trustworthiness of such incredible stories about a man who controlled nature's forces, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and was raised himself after being crucified?

The Gospels tell us the story of Jesus—his virgin birth and childhood; his inauguration to ministry; his impact on the people of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Phoenicia during his messianic ministry; and his death and resurrection. It is the most important story that history will ever tell, for it chronicles the life of the extraordinary Son of God who has come into this world.

SETTING

The setting for the Gospels includes both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures (see also "The Historical Background of the Intertestamental Period," p. 1552). Jesus lived and died in the Jewish world of the first century, and Jesus and his disciples ministered primarily to the Jewish people. But Jesus was raised in Galilee and conducted his ministry mainly in "Galilee where so many Gentiles live" (Matt 4:15), so he also reached out to Gentiles, and his resurrection inaugurated the mission to Gentiles (Matt 28:19).

During the time of Jesus, Jewish territories were ruled by the descendants of Herod the Great and by Roman governors like Pontius Pilate who resided at Caesarea but came to Jerusalem for festivals. Jewish civic affairs were handled by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high council that consisted mainly of Sadducees and Pharisees (see "The Pharisees" at Matt 3:7, p. 1581; "The Sadducees" at Matt 16:1-12, p. 1610).

THE FOUR GOSPELS

Each of the four Gospels presents Jesus' life in a different way with different themes, showing different nuances of Jesus the man and of the various groups who encountered him.

- Matthew's Gospel is the Jewish Gospel. It shows how Jesus fulfilled the Torah and provided the final understanding of it. It represents Jesus as the descendant of David who fulfills the OT promises for the Messiah, the King of Israel. In Matthew, Jesus

gives the principles for living as citizens of God's Kingdom (e.g., Matt 5-7). Jesus leads the disciples to overcome their failures and find understanding, in spite of their "little faith."

- Mark centers on Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. Mark reports the disciples' difficulties: They misunderstand and fail as they try to follow Jesus. Mark shows the nature of true discipleship through characters who appear briefly, like the woman from Phoenicia, the father of the demon-possessed boy, and blind Bartimaeus.
- Luke has more on the subject of social concern than any other Gospel. Luke also highlights the importance of prayer, the Spirit, and worship. He shows how, through Jesus, God has worked out his salvation in human history and become Lord of all.
- In John, Jesus is the living revealer of God who encounters all people with the "light of the world" and the "bread of life" and with the need to believe. Jesus is "the unique One, who is himself God" and has entered this world and brought the glory of God's presence into the world and among his own people.

Each Gospel is meant to be studied on its own. Each has unique perspectives and theological messages that supplement the others and challenge readers in important ways. God chose to inspire four different writers because each perspective is important for the church.

SUMMARY

All four Gospels tell the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Two of the Gospels (Mark and John) contain prologues that describe Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, the "Word" or living voice of God, and God incarnate. The other two Gospels (Matthew and Luke) begin with accounts of Jesus' genealogy, birth, and childhood. Matthew relates how God supernaturally overcame Herod's evil attempt to thwart the divine plan of Jesus' coming into the world. Luke relates the births of the prophet John the Baptist and Jesus, the greater prophet.

Only John tells of the early months of Jesus' ministry, how he drew his first disciples from the group following John the Baptist and then traveled frequently from Galilee to Jerusalem for festivals (John 1-7). Matthew, Mark, and Luke—the "synoptic" Gospels that have the "same look"—focus on Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

None of the Gospel writers take a chronological approach to Jesus' life. Instead, the Gospels are more topical, organized to provide a theological portrait of Jesus' actions, teachings, and impact.

From the start Jesus combined miracles with teaching, so that the crowds were astounded with his words and deeds (Mark 1:21-28). He controlled every aspect of his creation: He could stop the forces of nature, heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons (Mark 3:27), and he gave the same authority to his disciples (Mark 3:14-15). He chose twelve disciples, included them in his ministry, and frequently sent them out on missions (Luke 9-10). The

crowds were enamored with Jesus and flocked after him, but they were unwilling to commit themselves to him. In the end, they called for his death (Mark 15:8-15). The Jewish leaders, by contrast, utterly opposed him and plotted to kill him almost from the beginning (Mark 3:6).

The turning point in Jesus' ministry was at Caesarea Philippi, when Peter called him Messiah but refused to accept that it meant suffering and death (Mark 8:27-33). Shortly afterward Jesus was transfigured, his preexistent glory radiating through his humanity (Mark 9:1-8). Then Jesus "resolutely set out for Jerusalem" to fulfill his mission (Luke 9:51). His journey to his God-ordained destiny saw him gradually retreat from public ministry and focus on his disciples (Luke 9:51-19:27). He knew that he was destined to die as the substitute for our sins in order to ransom us from judgment (Mark 10:45).

Jesus arrived at Jerusalem one week before Passover, was anointed for burial, and then entered the city on a donkey. In doing this, he announced that he did not come as a conqueror but as the humble Messiah, the King who brings peace (John 12). Throughout the week leading up to Passover, when the people purified themselves for the festival, Jesus prepared the nation for judgment by cleansing the Temple, cursing the fig tree, and teaching on the Mount of Olives about the coming judgment. He also debated the Jewish leaders and showed himself to be the true interpreter of the law. He then concluded the preparation of his disciples at the Last Supper. There he prophesied his betrayal by Judas, his desertion by all of them, and the giving of his body and blood for the forgiveness of humanity. He had four "trials" that night—a meeting with Annas (John 18:13), then with the Sanhedrin, a trial before Pilate, and a meeting with Herod (Luke 23:7-12). Though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, he relented to the demands of the Jewish leaders and turned him over to be crucified.

Jesus was crucified at 9:00 a.m. It turned absolutely dark at noon, and he died at 3:00 p.m. He was given a royal burial in an unused tomb that Friday before dusk and was in the tomb until Sunday morning (three

days and nights in Jewish reckoning). Jesus was then vindicated and exalted by rising as Messiah and Lord. He showed himself to his followers for forty days in three venues: in Jerusalem (Luke, John); in Galilee (Matthew, John); and finally at his ascension on the Mount of Olives (Luke, Acts). During this time Jesus also met his brothers who had never believed in him, and they became followers (see 1 Cor 15:7; James Introduction, p. 2110; Jude Introduction, p. 2156). Jesus also strengthened and commissioned his disciples to carry on his work (Matt 28:18-20; John 21:1-25).

AUTHORSHIP

The Gospels are anonymous; they do not explicitly name their authors. Thus it is common for critical scholars to assume the title of each Gospel does not reflect the author. Yet the Church Fathers were nearly unanimous in asserting the reliability of each Gospel's authorship. For example, Papias wrote early in the 100s AD that Matthew wrote in the Aramaic dialect, and affirmation of authorship by Matthew was widespread (e.g., Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Origen). For more about authorship, see the introduction to each Gospel.

COMPOSITION AND SOURCES

Mark was most likely the first Gospel written. The synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are related literarily. Many passages have nearly the same wording (e.g., Matt 19:13-15 // Mark 10:13-16 // Luke 18:15-17) or order of events (Matt 12:46-13:58 // Mark 3:31-6:6 // Luke 8:19-56). From the time of Augustine it was thought that the order of composition was Matthew, Mark, Luke. But in the last 200 years the majority of scholars have come to the conclusion that Mark was first and that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source. Matthew tended to abbreviate Mark while adding his own emphases.

There are also 250 verses of Jesus' sayings that are shared by Matthew and Luke but not found in Mark, so most scholars believe that they both used a common source, perhaps oral, referred to as Q (from German *Quelle*, meaning "source").

John is separate from the others. Over 85% of his material is unique, and he follows a very different organization. John has long been thought of as the "spiritual Gospel," but scholars have been realizing that John actually has more on the historical and chronological aspects of Jesus' life than the others (although his organization is still not strictly chronological). He is the one who tells us that Jesus' ministry included three Passovers and several trips to Jerusalem. Some scholars think John was written by a group of John's disciples, but the book has a literary unity that belies that thesis, and there is nothing in it that could not have been written by the apostle John himself.

HISTORICAL RELIABILITY

There has been significant debate regarding the historicity of the Gospels. In the twentieth century, Rudolf Bultmann and his disciples (along with the more recent Jesus Seminar) argued that very little trustworthy material was to be found in the four canonical Gospels, that the sayings and stories about Jesus had been composed for the preaching needs of the early church. However, the 1970s and 1980s saw a reappraisal. More and more scholars began to assert that history and theology were not antithetical but complementary in the Gospels. A renewed "quest for the historical Jesus" began in the mid-1980s. Looking at the Jewish background, scholars like J. P. Meier, N. T. Wright, Craig Blomberg, and Darrell Bock have shown that the deeds and words of the Gospels can be affirmed as serious objects of historical study. Historical narrative can be differentiated from fictional narrative, and the Gospels are seen as combining narrative and historical interests. The historical narrative in the Gospels claims to portray real, eyewitness material (Luke 1:1-4; John 19:35, 21:24; 1 Cor 15:6; 2 Pet 1:16-18). These claims should be taken seriously.

INTERPRETATION

The word "Gospel" (Greek *euan-gelion*) means "Good News." In its verb form, it means "to proclaim Good News," so the Gospels are in a sense sermons about Jesus. They do not just tell the facts about Jesus' life;

they interpret his life. Each Gospel has as much theology as it does history. Therefore, the task of the reader is to catch the theological message as much as the historical story.

1. Study the context in which the passage is embedded

Each Gospel has its own structure, and sometimes stories or sayings are found in different contexts. The authors of the Gospels were not providing a day-by-day description of Jesus' ministry, but rather a topical or thematic presentation. Each Gospel's order has a theological purpose. For instance, Mark 4:35-5:43 collects four different types of miracles—controlling nature, casting out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead—into a single episode to emphasize the authority of Jesus. In light of this type of arrangement, it is important to study how the larger sections of the Gospels are organized and then how individual episodes are related to that arrangement. For example, Matt 8-9 has a careful outline: It consists of three blocks of three miracles each (8:1-17; 8:23-9:8; 9:18-34) divided by sections about discipleship (8:18-22; 9:9-13, 14-17).

2. Study the grammar and words of the passage

The words an author chooses are the key to the meaning of the sentence, and it is necessary to determine how they are being used. For instance, does the Greek word often translated "to save" mean, in a given context, to give a person spiritual salvation, or does it mean more generally to rescue that person from some danger? Does the Greek word translated "shameless persistence" in Luke 11:8 have that meaning in that context, or does it mean "avoiding shame"? Either meaning is possible, but it changes the meaning of the passage.

3. Study the cultural background behind the passage

Both the historical narrative and the parables assume cultural situations in the first-century Jewish world. Understanding that world helps greatly in understanding the Gospels. For instance, the man who wanted to go bury his father (Luke 9:59) could have meant it as an idiom for helping his father until he

died, thus asking for an indefinite postponement, but it more likely refers to the sacred responsibility of a son's burial duties (Gen 25:9; 35:29). The background behind the parable of the shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-8) could be commercial, reflecting a loan of money, or a tenant farm situation where the farmers owed the owner half the crops. Understanding the background helps in determining what is happening in such situations.

4. Study the editorial differences in the texts

Each Gospel author tells the story of Jesus in a way that fits his theological purpose. There were far more events in Jesus' ministry and far more of his sayings than the Gospel writers could include, so they chose those details that fit their purpose. We can study the authors' editorial decisions by comparing the same story in, say, Mark and Matthew. For instance, in the story of walking on water in Mark 6:45-52, Mark ends at the point where the disciples failed to recognize Jesus, so Mark's account centers on their hardened hearts. Matthew tells the rest of the story, relating how Jesus allowed Peter to try walking on the water; he failed, but in the process they came to understand that Jesus really is "the Son of God" (Matt 14:33). Matthew and Mark tell the same story but highlight different messages from it.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

The Gospels teach about God the Father and Jesus Christ as his Son. Jesus has a unique relationship with his Father and ours—Jesus' every prayer except the one from the cross (Mark 15:34) begins with "Father." The coming of Jesus makes new intimacy with God available to those who put their trust in Jesus.

Jesus is the expected Messiah, the promised King of Israel. But he did not come to fulfill the Jewish expectations of a divine warrior who would defeat the Romans. He is the suffering servant who came to die for the sins of mankind. At the same time he is the Son of Man (the glorified figure of Dan 7:13-14 who will have dominion over all) and the "unique One, who is himself God" (John 1:1, 14, 18; 10:30).

Jesus brought God's Kingdom,

God's reign, into this world. Jesus has achieved a new age of salvation through his atoning death on the cross, along with a new certainty about the afterlife through his resurrection. Through him the last days have begun, and those who trust in him have become God's people, citizens of his Kingdom. They have been given a new direction for living "righteous" lives through Jesus' teaching, and they have new authority as Jesus has constituted the church and given it the "keys of the kingdom" (Matt 16:18-19).

The disciples are the nucleus of the church, and they represent the church in their struggles to understand, in their failures, and in their triumphs due to the presence of Jesus. In contrast are the crowds and religious leaders. The crowds sought Jesus without being willing to commit. The leaders rejected Jesus at every turn and implacably opposed all that he stands for. Finally, the demons alone knew exactly who Jesus is and yet they are engaged in cosmic war against him. Above all this, Jesus is sovereign and reigns supreme. He went to the cross because it was his God-appointed destiny, and he knew he would be the substitute for our sin (Mark 10:45; 14:24).

Although Jesus has inaugurated the Kingdom age, the final consummation is still to come. God is the final Judge who will come with a final harvest to reward the righteous and doom the wicked to eternal suffering (Matt 13:40-43, 49-50; 24:29-31). Jesus will come again with his holy angels to bring about a final accounting with God.

FURTHER READING

CRAIG L. BLOMBERG
Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey (1997)

DARRELL L. BOCK
Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels (2007)

JOEL B. GREEN,
SCOT MCKNIGHT, AND
I. HOWARD MARSHALL
Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (1992)

DAVID WENHAM AND
STEVE WALTON
Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Gospels and Acts (2005)

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF JESUS

Jesus' life is recorded in the four Gospels, which include quite a few details that help us to set Jesus' life chronologically into the flow of history. Nevertheless, some of the key dates in Jesus' life are uncertain. Three central issues are the date of his birth, the beginning of his ministry, and the date of his crucifixion and resurrection.

JESUS' BIRTH *The Reign of Herod the Great.* When Jesus was born, Herod the Great was king of the Jews (Matt 2:1; Luke 1:5); Herod reigned from 37 to 4 BC and died in mid-March 4 BC. Jesus was a small child at the time, probably having been born at least several months before Herod died.

The Census Recorded in Luke. Jesus was born during a census of the Roman world commanded by Augustus Caesar, according to Luke (Luke 2:1-5). Roman historians, however, make no mention of a census around 4 BC. Yet we know that the Romans took their censuses throughout the empire, and we have documentation that censuses were taken in Egypt every fourteen years from AD 33/34 to AD 257/258. Furthermore, recent evidence has revealed that censuses were taken in Egypt in 11/10 BC, 4/3 BC, AD 4/5, and AD 11/12. It is reasonable to suppose that the census of Egypt in 4/3 BC also included Judea, or that a similar one was carried out there, in harmony with Luke 2:1.

Another difficulty is that Luke locates the census in the time when Quirinius served as governor of Syria. Josephus noted that Quirinius became governor after AD 6, and subsequently took a census (*Antiquities* 18.1.1; 20.5.2). Some scholars have argued, though, that according to ancient inscriptions, Quirinius also served in Syria as a special legate of Emperor Augustus before 6 BC. That could be the period to which Luke 2:2 refers. Another possibility is that Luke 2:2 could be translated as, "the previous census, before Quirinius was governor of Syria"; in this case, Luke would simply be noting Quirinius's term as governor and the census he

conducted as a reference point to highlight the difficult time when Jews were first subjected to a Roman census and taxation, losing the last semblance of self-rule (see "The Historical Background of the Intertestamental Period," pp. 1552-1554).

Jesus was therefore born around 6~4 BC,¹ within about two years of the death of Herod.

John the Baptist. The beginning of Jesus' ministry can be dated after the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry. According to Luke 3:1-2, John the Baptist began preaching and baptizing in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (AD 14-37), so John's ministry began about AD 27. Although the length of time from the beginning of John's ministry to the baptism of Jesus is not stated in the NT, Jesus' ministry seems to have begun shortly after John's, perhaps in AD 28.

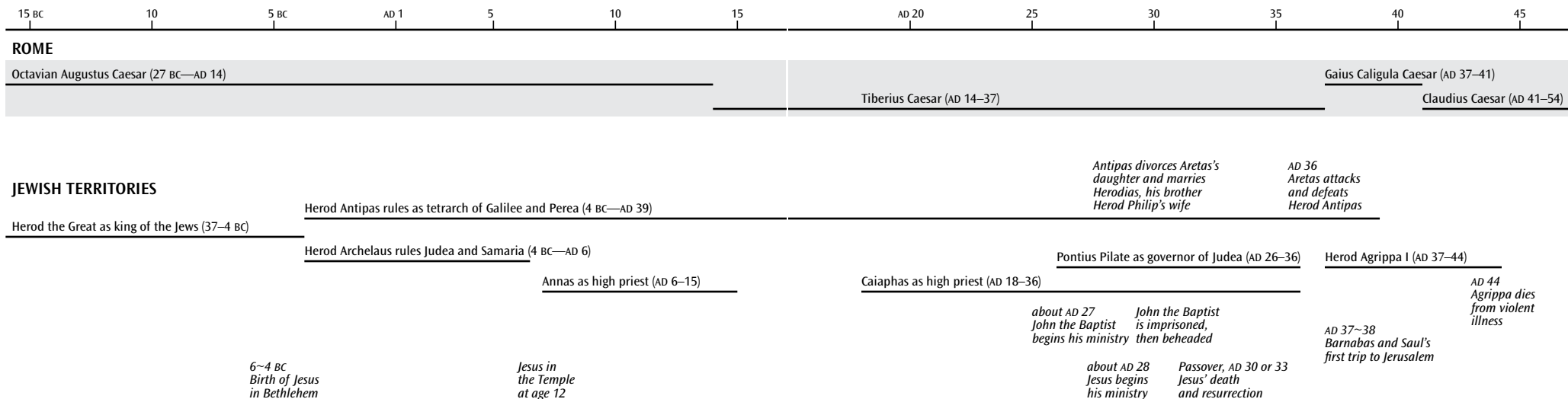
JESUS' MINISTRY

The Temple. When Jesus visited Jerusalem at Passover early in his ministry (John 2:13-3:21), he was told that the Temple had been under construction for forty-six years (John 2:20). Herod's work on the rebuilding of the Temple began in the eighteenth year of his reign (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.11.1), which was 20/19 BC. So that occasion of Jesus' visit to the Temple occurred about AD 28.

Jesus' Age at the Beginning of His Ministry. According to Luke, Jesus began his ministry when he was "about thirty years old" (Luke 3:23). This description is approximate, giving a rough indication of time (cp. John 8:57). Luke, as a responsible historian, placed the public ministry of Jesus in relation both to world history (Luke 3:1-2) and to the national repentance movement spearheaded by John the Baptist. If Jesus' ministry began around AD 28, he was 32~34 years old.

The Length of Jesus' Ministry. Although the synoptic Gospels only mention one Passover festival during Jesus' ministry (Matt 26:17; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:1), the Gospel of John records three (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). Thus, different scholars have proposed that Jesus' ministry was as short as one year and as long as four. Most scholars see Jesus' ministry as lasting at least three years.

¹ Jesus' birth has a BC or "before Christ" date because Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century made a mistake in calculations, and this mathematical error has remained in our calendar.



JESUS' DEATH *The Day of Jesus' Death.* All four Gospels report that Jesus was crucified on a Friday, the day before the beginning of the Sabbath (Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31, 42). They all agree that Jesus was raised on Sunday, the third day according to Jewish reckoning.

Jesus' last supper with his disciples occurred in conjunction with the Passover celebration. According to the synoptic Gospels, the Last Supper was the Passover meal (Matt 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-38). In these three accounts the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus take place on the day following the Passover meal. John's account seems to suggest that the Last Supper took place one day before Passover, but a careful reading of John's description indicates that he is in harmony with the other Gospel writers (see note on John 19:14).

The Year of Jesus' Death. In the Jewish calendar, the Friday on which Jesus died was 14 Nisan, the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (see charts, "Israel's Annual Calendar," p. 145, and "Israel's Festivals," p. 235). Therefore, Jesus' death occurred in a year in which 14 Nisan fell on a Friday. He must have died after AD 29 (even by the shortest calculation his ministry was at least a year) and before AD 36, the year that Caiaphas ended his high priesthood and Pontius Pilate ceased governing Judea. The two years that meet these criteria are AD 30 and 33. If his ministry was no longer than two or three years, he died in AD 30 at about 35 years old. If his ministry was longer, he died in AD 33 at about 38 years old.

CONCLUSION The record of Jesus' life can be set into known historical facts without much difficulty, and the available evidence gives us confidence to believe that Jesus' life is historical and that the record of his life in the four Gospels is accurate. Yet there are many gaps in our historical knowledge of Jesus' life. As the apostle John later said about Jesus' ministry, "Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25).

THE NLT HARMONY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

Ever since the time of Christ, many attempts have been made to harmonize the four Gospels, either into a single narrative or into a synopsis showing the relationships among the Gospel passages. Tatian's *Diatesseron* (about AD 170) is the earliest example of a single narrative made from the Gospels. Later, Eusebius of Caesarea (early 300s AD) developed a well-known synopsis and tables of cross-references for use in comparing the four Gospels. Many other similar works have since been done.

The *NLT Harmony of the Four Gospels* is a synopsis. Its primary purpose is to help readers understand the relationship among the Gospel passages, not to establish a strict chronology of Jesus' life. The authors of the Gospels themselves were more concerned with Jesus' message and the meaning of his life, death, and resurrection than with the details of historical chronology. By comparing and contrasting similar accounts in the different Gospels, readers can understand the message that each Gospel writer was emphasizing and their differences in perspective concerning the events of Jesus' life and his teachings (see "Introduction to the Four Gospels: Interpretation," p. 1562).

In addition to this synopsis, the *NLT Study Bible* includes parallel passage notations in the NLT text of the four Gospels. Those parallel notations are somewhat different from this synopsis, because they serve a different purpose. Whereas this synopsis provides an overview and includes every passage in the Gospels, the parallel passage notations provide much finer detail in comparing the different Gospel accounts. The reader is encouraged to use this synopsis for general overview and comparison, and then to use the parallel passage notations to compare the Gospel parallels more closely.

FURTHER READING

KURT ALAND, ED.
*Synopsis of the Four
Gospels* (1987)

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1. The Prologue to John's Gospel				1:1-18
2. The Preface to Luke's Gospel			1:1-4	
3. The Record of Jesus' Ancestors	1:1-17		3:23-38	
4. The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold			1:5-25	
5. The Birth of Jesus Foretold			1:26-38	
6. Mary Visits Elizabeth			1:39-45	
7. Mary's Song of Praise			1:46-56	
8. The Birth of John the Baptist			1:57-66	
9. Zechariah's Prophecy			1:67-79	
10. The Growth of John the Baptist			1:80	
11. The Birth of Jesus	1:18-25		2:1-7	
12. Shepherds Visit Jesus			2:8-20	
13. Jesus Is Circumcised			2:21	
14. Jesus Is Presented in the Temple			2:21-24	
15. The Prophecy of Simeon			2:25-35	
16. The Prophecy of Anna			2:36-38	
17. The Visit of the Wise Men	2:1-12			
18. The Escape to Egypt	2:13-18			
19. The Return to Nazareth	2:19-23		2:39	
20. The Growth of Jesus			2:40	

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
21. Jesus Speaks with the Teachers			2:41-50	
22. Jesus Grows in Wisdom and Stature			2:51-52	
23. John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-18	1:19-28
24. The Baptism of Jesus	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	
25. Satan Tempts Jesus in the Wilderness	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
26. John the Baptist's Testimony about Jesus				1:29-34
27. The First Disciples				1:35-51
28. The Wedding at Cana				2:1-12
29. Jesus Clears the Temple (cp. #163)				2:13-22
30. Jesus Ministers in Jerusalem				2:23-25
31. Jesus and Nicodemus				3:1-21
32. John the Baptist Exalts Jesus				3:22-36
33. Jesus Leaves for Galilee after Herod Arrests John	4:12	1:14a	3:19-20	4:1-3
34. Jesus Passes through Samaria				4:4-38
35. Many Samaritans Believe				4:39-42
36. Jesus Preaches in Galilee	4:13-17	1:14b-15	4:14-15	4:43-45
37. Jesus Heals an Official's Son				4:46-54
38. Jesus Is Rejected at Nazareth (cp. #79)			4:16-30	
39. Fishermen Follow Jesus	4:18-22	1:16-20	5:1-11	
40. Jesus Exorcises a Demon and Teaches with Authority		1:21-28	4:31-37	
41. Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law and Others	8:14-17	1:29-34	4:38-41	
42. Jesus Preaches throughout Galilee	4:23-25	1:35-39	4:42-44	
43. Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	
44. Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
45. Jesus Calls Matthew and Dines at His House	9:9-13	2:13-17	5:27-32	
46. A Discussion about Fasting	9:14-17	2:18-22	5:33-39	
47. Jesus Heals a Lame Man				5:1-15
48. Jesus Claims to Be the Son of God				5:16-47
49. The Disciples Pick Wheat on the Sabbath	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
50. Jesus Heals on the Sabbath	12:9-15a	3:1-6	6:6-11	
51. Large Crowds Follow Jesus	12:15b-21	3:7-12	6:17-19	
52. Jesus Selects the Twelve Disciples		3:13-19	6:12-16	
53. Jesus' Sermon	5:1-7:29		cp. 6:20-49	
54. The Faith of a Roman Officer	8:5-13		7:1-10	
55. Jesus Raises a Widow's Son from the Dead			7:11-17	
56. Jesus Eases John the Baptist's Doubts	11:1-19		7:18-35	
57. Judgment for the Unbelievers	11:20-24			
58. Jesus' Prayer of Thanksgiving	11:25-30			
59. A Sinful Woman Anoints Jesus			7:36-50	
60. The Women Who Traveled with Jesus			8:1-3	
61. Jesus Is Accused of Being Empowered by Satan	12:22-37	3:20-30	cp. 11:14-23	
62. The Sign of Jonah	12:38-45		cp. 11:24-32	
63. Jesus' True Family	12:46-50	3:31-35	8:19-21	
64. The Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed	13:1-9	4:1-9	8:4-8	
65. Jesus Explains the Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed	13:10-23	4:10-25	8:9-18	
66. The Parable of the Growing Seed		4:26-29		
67. The Parable of the Wheat and Weeds	13:24-30			
68. The Parable of the Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19	
69. The Parable of the Yeast	13:33		13:20-21	
70. Comment on Jesus' Use of Parables	13:34-35	4:33-34		
71. Jesus Explains the Parable of the Wheat and Weeds	13:36-43			
72. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure	13:44			

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
73. The Parable of the Pearl Merchant	13:45-46			
74. The Parable of the Fishing Net	13:47-52			
75. Jesus Calms the Storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
76. Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Man	8:29-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
77. Jesus Heals a Woman and Raises a Girl from the Dead	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	
78. Jesus Heals the Blind and Mute	9:27-34			
79. Jesus Is Rejected at Nazareth (cp. #38)	13:53-58	6:1-6a		
80. Prayer for More Workers	9:35-38			
81. Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Disciples	10:1-15	6:6b-13	9:1-6	
82. Jesus Warns the Disciples of Persecution	10:16-42			
83. Herod Mistakes Jesus for John the Baptist Back from the Dead	14:1-2	6:14-16		
84. Herod Executes John the Baptist	14:3-12	6:14-29	9:7-9	
85. Jesus Miraculously Feeds 5,000	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
86. Jesus Walks on Water	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:16-21
87. All Who Touch Jesus Are Healed	14:34-36	6:53-56		
88. Jesus Is the True Bread of Heaven				6:22-59
89. Many Disciples Desert Jesus				6:60-71
90. Jesus Argues with the Pharisees	15:1-20	7:1-23		
91. A Woman from Phoenicia Believes in Jesus	15:21-28	7:24-30		
92. Jesus Heals Many People	15:29-31	7:31-37		
93. Jesus Miraculously Feeds 4,000	15:32-39	8:1-10		
94. Religious Leaders Demand a Sign	16:1-4	8:11-13		
95. Jesus Warns the Disciples about Corrupt Teachings	16:5-12	8:14-21		
96. Jesus Heals a Blind Man		8:22-26		
97. Peter Declares Jesus Is the Christ	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21	
98. Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection the First Time	16:21-28	8:31-9:1	9:22-27	
99. The Transfiguration of Jesus	17:1-13	9:2-13	9:28-36	
100. Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43a	
101. Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection the Second Time	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43b-45	
102. Jesus Is Questioned about the Temple Tax	17:24-27			
103. Argument about Who Is the Greatest	18:1-5	9:33-37	9:46-48	
104. The Disciples Forbid Another Man from Using Jesus' Name		9:38-41	9:49-50	
105. Jesus Warns against Temptation	18:6-10	9:42-50		
106. Correcting Another Believer	18:15-20			
107. The Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor	18:21-35			
108. Jesus' Brothers Ridicule Him				7:1-9
109. The Mistaken Zeal of James and John			9:51-56	
110. The Cost of Following Jesus	8:18-22		9:57-62	
111. Jesus Teaches Openly at the Temple				7:10-39
112. Division and Unbelief				7:40-52
113. Jesus Forgives an Adulterous Woman				7:53-8:11
114. Jesus Is the Light of the World				8:12-20
115. Jesus Warns the Unbelieving				8:21-30
116. Jesus Identifies God's True Children and Claims Deity				8:31-59
117. Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind				9:1-34
118. Spiritual Blindness				9:35-41
119. Jesus Is the Good Shepherd				10:1-21
120. Jesus Sends Out Seventy-Two Disciples			10:1-24	
121. The Parable of the Good Samaritan			10:25-37	
122. Jesus Visits Mary and Martha			10:38-42	
123. Jesus Teaches about Prayer			11:1-13	
124. Jesus Is Accused of Being in League with Satan			11:14-28	
125. The Sign of Jonah			11:29-32	

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
126. The Light Within			11:33-36	
127. Jesus Criticizes the Religious Leaders			11:37-12:12	
128. Jesus Speaks about Worldliness and Spiritual Alertness			12:13-59	
129. Jesus Calls the People to Repent			13:1-9	
130. Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman			13:10-21	
131. Jesus Claims to Be God's Son				10:22-39
132. Jesus Departs Jerusalem				10:40-42
133. The Narrow Door into the Kingdom			13:22-30	
134. Jesus Grieves over Jerusalem	23:37-39		13:31-35	
135. Jesus Heals on the Sabbath			14:1-6	
136. Jesus Teaches about Humility			14:7-14	
137. The Parable of the Great Feast (cp. #169)			14:15-24	
138. The Cost of Being a Disciple			14:25-35	
139. The Parable of the Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:1-7	
140. The Parable of the Lost Coin			15:8-10	
141. The Parable of the Lost Son			15:11-32	
142. The Parable of the Shrewd Manager			16:1-13	
143. Jesus Confronts Scoffing Pharisees			16:14-18	
144. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31	
145. Jesus Teaches about Forgiveness and Faith			17:1-10	
146. Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead				11:1-44
147. The Religious Leaders Plot to Murder Jesus				11:45-57
148. Jesus Heals Ten Men with Leprosy			17:11-19	
149. The Coming of the Kingdom			17:20-37	
150. The Parable of the Persistent Widow			18:1-8	
151. The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector			18:9-14	
152. Jesus Teaches about Marriage and Divorce	19:1-12	10:1-12		
153. Jesus Blesses the Children	19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17	
154. The Rich Young Ruler	19:16-30	10:17-31	18:18-30	
155. The Parable of the Vineyard Workers	20:1-16			
156. Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection the Third Time	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34	
157. Jesus Teaches about Service	20:20-28	10:35-45		
158. Jesus Heals the Blind	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
159. Jesus Brings Salvation to Zacchaeus			19:1-10	
160. The Parable of the Ten Servants			19:11-27	
161. A Woman Anoints Jesus	26:6-13	14:3-9		cp. 12:1-11
162. Jesus Rides Triumphantly into Jerusalem [Sunday]	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:28-44	12:12-19
163. Jesus Clears the Temple (cp. #29) [Tuesday]	21:12-17	11:15-19	19:45-48	
164. The Significance of Jesus' Approaching Death				12:20-50
165. A Lesson from the Fig Tree [Wednesday]	21:18-22	11:12-14, 20-25		
166. Religious Leaders Challenge Jesus' Authority	21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8	
167. The Parable of the Two Sons	21:28-32			
168. The Parable of the Evil Farmers	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-19	
169. The Parable of the Wedding Feast (cp. #137)	22:1-14			
170. Taxes for Caesar	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
171. Discussion about the Resurrection	22:23-33	12:18-27	20:27-40	
172. Discussion about the Greatest Commandment	22:34-40	12:28-34		
173. A Question about the Messiah	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	
174. Jesus Denounces the Religious Leaders	23:1-36	12:38-40	20:45-47	
175. The Widow's Offering		12:41-44	21:1-4	
176. Jesus Foretells the Future	24:1-51	13:1-37	21:5-38	
177. The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids	25:1-13			

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
178. The Parable of the Three Servants	25:14-30			
179. The Final Judgment	25:31-46			
180. The Religious Leaders Continue Their Plot to Murder Jesus	26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2	
181. Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
182. Preparation for the Passover [Thursday]	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	
183. Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet				13:1-20
184. The Last Supper	26:20-30	14:17-26	22:14-30	13:21-30
185. Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial	26:31-35	14:27-31	22:31-38	13:31-38
186. Jesus' Farewell Discourse				14:1-16:33
187. Jesus' Intercessory Prayer				17:1-26
188. Jesus Agonizes in the Garden	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	
189. Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested [Friday]	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:1-11
190. Annas Questions Jesus				18:12-23
191. Jesus Is Brought before Caiaphas	26:57-68	14:53-65	22:54a, 63-65	18:24
192. Peter Denies Knowing Jesus	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:54b-62	18:25-27
193. Religious Leaders Condemn Jesus	27:1-2	15:1	22:66-71	
194. Judas Hangs Himself	27:3-10			
195. Jesus' Trial before Pilate	27:11-14	15:2-5	23:1-7	18:28-37
196. Jesus' Trial before Herod			23:8-12	
197. Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:38-19:16a
198. Roman Soldiers Mock Jesus	27:27-31	15:16-19		
199. Jesus Is Led Away to Be Crucified	27:32-34	15:20-23	23:26-32	19:16b-17
200. Jesus Is Crucified	27:35-56	15:24-41	23:33-49	19:18-37
201. Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42
202. Guards Are Posted Outside the Tomb [Saturday]	27:62-66			
203. Women Come to the Empty Tomb and Report This to the Disciples [Sunday]	28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-11	20:1-2
204. Peter and John See the Empty Tomb and John Believes			24:12	20:3-10
205. Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene and Another Mary	28:9-10	16:9		20:11-17
206. Mary Magdalene Tells the Disciples She Has Seen Jesus		16:10-11		20:18
207. The Guards Report to the Sanhedrin	28:11-15			
208. Jesus Appears to Cleopas and His Companion		16:12-13	24:13-35	
209. Jesus Appears to the Disciples in Jerusalem		16:14	24:36-49	20:19-23
210. Jesus Appears to the Disciples with Thomas				20:24-29
211. Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples				21:1-23
212. Jesus Gives the Great Commission	28:16-20	16:15-18		
213. Jesus Ascends into Heaven		16:19-20	24:50-53	
214. The Reason John Wrote His Gospel				20:30-31
215. The Epilogue of John's Gospel				21:24-25

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

Matthew

Matthew demonstrates that Jesus of Nazareth is the long-awaited Messiah, the king of Israel, who fulfills the Old Testament promises yet turns the expectation of his contemporaries on its head. The Gospel of Matthew shows how both Jewish and non-Jewish people fit together in God's unfolding Kingdom. It challenges the reader to live with total commitment to Jesus Christ as king.

SETTING

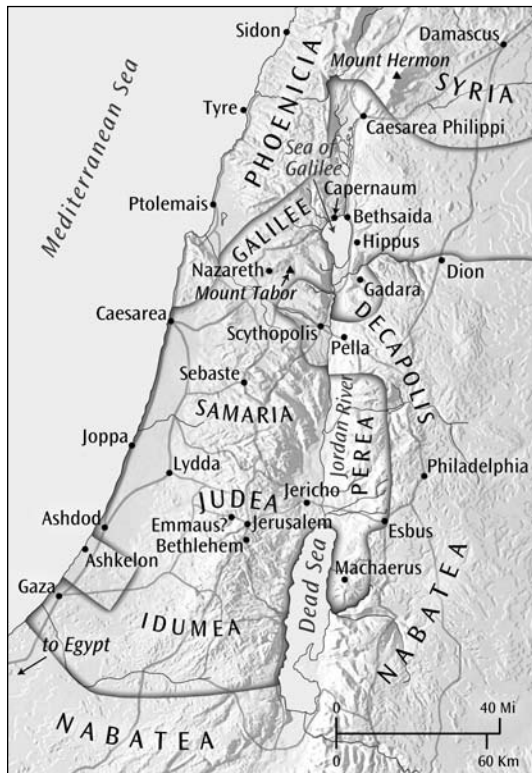
Matthew wrote his Gospel when the early Christian community was at a crossroads. Would it remain a sect of Judaism or separate itself from Judaism and become a separate faith? Matthew's Gospel derives from a Christian community near Jerusalem, surrounded by Jews who had not left their Jewish faith. This community, unlike the Christians of Paul's churches, had to answer socially to the stipulations of Jewish law on a daily basis.

The Christians reading Matthew's Gospel were challenged to live as Jewish Christians among Jews who were fully committed to the Torah.

The letter from James similarly evokes a Christianity that is still firmly attached to the synagogue (Jas 2:1-13). It uses categories so typical of Judaism that one is unsure if it is Christianity or Judaism (Jas 1:26-27; 2:14-26) as it presents its own vision of Christianity in terms of wisdom and obedience (Jas 3:13-18; 4:1-12). Here is a Jewish Christianity that remains as firm in its commitment to the Jewish community as to its glorious Lord (cp. Acts 15).

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◀ **Key Places in the Gospel of Matthew.** Jesus was born in BETHLEHEM (1:18-25), grew up in NAZARETH (2:19-23), began his ministry in GALILEE (4:12-17), and died in JERUSALEM (26:36-27:66). At the time of Jesus' birth, Herod the Great ruled as king of GALILEE, SAMARIA, JUDEA, IDUMEA, PEREA, the part of DECAPOLIS encompassing HIPPIUS and GADARA, and the regions NE of the SEA OF GALILEE (borders shown). Upon Herod's death in 4 BC, his kingdom was divided among his sons: Antipas became tetrarch of GALILEE and PEREA; Archelaus became ethnarch of JUDEA (see 2:22); and Philip became tetrarch of the regions NE of the Sea of Galilee. When Archelaus died in AD 6, Judea began to be ruled by Roman governors (*prefects*), including Pontius Pilate (AD 26-36), until the kingship of Herod Agrippa I (AD 37-44), who acquired all the territory that his grandfather Herod the Great had held.



tians, Matthew answered the pressing question, "How are we to follow Jesus in our day, surrounded as we are by Judaism, while seeking to declare the Good News of the Kingdom to all?"

SUMMARY

Matthew's story follows Jesus from before his birth until after his death and resurrection. Jesus experiences a series of potential dangers as a child (2:1-23). As an adult, he embarks on a very short career, proclaiming God's righteousness (5:1-7:29) and performing astounding miracles (8:1-9:34); he broadens his reach by sending out twelve apostles (9:35-11:1). Most of Jesus' experience, however, is

utter rejection at the hands of Galilean and Judean Jews (chs 11-17). He confronts the Jewish leaders in the Temple during his last week (chs 21-22), announces a final series of woes against authority figures who lead people astray (ch 23), and predicts that God will judge and destroy Jerusalem (chs 24-25). Jesus is arrested, tried, and executed by crucifixion (chs 26-27) for opposing the Jewish leaders and challenging the status quo. Then he is vindicated by his resurrection and gives the great commission to his disciples, to make disciples of all the nations (ch 28).

Matthew shapes his Gospel according to two structural principles. First, following an introduction (chs 1-4), Matthew alternates teaching material with narrative material. Thus, we have discourse and teaching in chs 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23-25; and we have narrative in chs 8-9, 11-12, 14-17, 19-22, 26-28. Second, Matthew records Jesus' confrontation of Israel with God's message about the arrival of his Kingdom in the last days (4:12-11:1; see 4:17), followed by the responses this message evoked from various people (11:2-20:34). Matthew then tells of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection (21:1-28:20) for the salvation of humankind.

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AUTHORSHIP

Matthew therefore composed the oracles in the Hebrew language [or, "in a Hebrew style"] and each interpreted them as he was able.

PAPIAS OF HIERAPOLIS, *Eusebius, Church History* 3.39.15-16

Matthew was a tax collector whom Jesus befriended and called to a life of justice and obedience (9:9). Matthew invited many friends to spend an evening with Jesus (9:10-13), and Matthew is named among the twelve apostles (10:2-4; see also Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13). Early church tradition reports that after he composed the first Gospel, Matthew

TIMELINE

about 6-4 BC
Birth of Jesus

about AD 28
Jesus' baptism by John

Passover, AD 30 or 33
Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection

AD 49-50
The council in Jerusalem

AD 65-80
Matthew writes the Gospel of Matthew

AD 66-70
War between Romans and Jews at Jerusalem

AD 70
Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed

moved from Palestine in the AD 60s to evangelize India (Eusebius, *Church History* 3.24.6).

An important statement was made in the early AD 100s by Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (see above). Papias's statement is traditionally understood to mean that the apostle Matthew wrote a Gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic, and that this Gospel was later translated into Greek, perhaps by someone who also knew the Gospel of Mark. Recent studies suggest that Papias was referring to Matthew's Jewish style, not to his language (Hebrew or Aramaic), because Matthew's Gospel does not appear to be "translation Greek" (i.e., the type of Greek that is often found in materials translated from other languages).

In the 1800s, scholars became convinced that Matthew had used Mark's Gospel as a source. These scholars argued that since an apostle would not have used another Gospel (and one written by a non-apostle at that!) to record Jesus' life, Matthew was not the author of the Gospel bearing his name. Early tradition connects the Gospel of Mark with the apostle Peter, a fact that makes Matthew's dependence on Mark more understandable. There is no conflict with one apostle (Matthew) using the accounts of another apostle (Peter) as a convenient source from which to shape his own report.

The Gospel according to Matthew is among the most influential books ever written. . . . It is wonderfully complete, linking Jesus with his Jewish origins and Old Testament background, pointing forward to the growth of the Gentile Christian mission, and embodying . . . the teaching, actions, parables, miracles, death, and resurrection of the central figure.

Michael Green,
The Message of Matthew,
p. 11

OCCASION OF WRITING

Unlike the letters of Paul or the Revelation of John, the settings of the Gospels must be inferred from comments and emphases within the books themselves (see 24:15; 27:46; 28:15), since direct evidence is unavailable. Matthew appears to have been written at a time when Christians and Jews were fiercely debating such issues as how to obey the law (5:17-48; 15:1-20), who the Messiah is (1:1-2:23), who the true people of God are (Israel or the church; 21:33-46), who the rightful leaders of God's people are (4:18-22; 10:2-4; 21:43; 23:1-36; 28:16-20), and how Gentiles are related to the church and to Israel (2:1-12; 3:7-10; 4:12-16; 8:5-13; 15:21-28; 28:16-20).

There is serious debate as to whether Matthew's Gospel sprang from a community that was still within Judaism or one that was already outside Judaism. In other words, had Matthew's Christian community separated from Judaism, or was it still within Judaism's umbrella? Or, was Matthew written for a general audience rather than a specific community? Early Christianity was diverse; some Christian leaders, such as James, maintained a long-term relationship with the Jewish communities. In discussing this question, scholars examine the following passages: 2:1-12; 4:12-16; 8:5-13; 10:5-6; 15:21-28; 17:24-27; 19:28; 21:43; 22:7; 23:1-39.

DATE AND LOCATION

Matthew was probably written sometime between AD 65 and 80. Those who argue that Matthew used Mark's Gospel as a source usually date Matthew after AD 70; those who claim it is independent tend to date it earlier. Some have suggested that Matthew's Gospel was written in the AD 50s. Many today think that Matthew was first written at Antioch in Syria, which is more probable than any other proposed setting.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

Matthew argues the case that Jesus fulfills the ancient faith of Israel and the OT hope: In him the Messiah and the day of the Lord have come.

A few do follow Jesus. In following the instruction of Jesus, these disciples would evangelize the whole world and build a community (the church) that would include both Jews and Gentiles. In general, however, Israel refuses to follow its Messiah, and Jesus utters disastrous warnings that they will experience the judgment of God (chs 23-25) unless they repent.

Matthew's Gospel is distinctive in its presentation of Jesus as Messiah and Teacher, its emphasis on the Kingdom of Heaven, its strong call to discipleship, its constant pattern of OT fulfillment, its incisive criticism of the Jewish religious leaders, and its universal outlook that includes Gentiles in the Kingdom.

The Messiah (Christ). Matthew emphasizes Jesus as the Messiah (Christ) (1:1, 16-18; 11:2-3; 16:16, 20; 23:10). He focuses on Jesus as the fulfillment of OT expectations, though not in the manner his Jewish contemporaries expected. For Matthew, Jesus is clearly the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary in order to bring salvation to his people (1:21). In short, Jesus is "Immanuel, God with us" (1:23; 28:20).

The Kingdom of Heaven. The expression "Kingdom of Heaven," used thirty times by Matthew, is a roundabout way for Jews to say "Kingdom of God." Matthew uses this term to evoke (1) the invisible but present rule of God on earth through the saving work of Jesus the Messiah; (2) the fulfillment of OT promises (4:17; 11:11-15); (3) the saving activity of God, often through quiet and humble means (11:25; 13:24-30, 36-43); (4) the power and strength of God's activity (11:2-6, 12-13; 12:28); (5) the coming of the Kingdom within a "generation" (10:23; 16:28; 24:34); (6) the final, climactic judgment of God (25:31-46); and (7) the final, perfect fellowship of all God's holy people with the Father (8:11-12; 13:43; 22:1-14; 26:29). The Kingdom of Heaven shows God's perfect reign through Jesus the Messiah among his people, beginning with the church and consummated in the eternal Kingdom of glory and fellowship.

Discipleship. Matthew's Gospel stresses Jesus' call to men and women to be baptized, to follow him as disciples, to obey his teachings (28:20), and to enjoy fellowship with him. Jesus summarizes the requirements of discipleship in his Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29), and this theme recurs throughout Matthew (e.g., 10:1-42; 16:24-26). Matthew shows the disciples overcoming their failures through Christ's help (see 14:28-33; 16:5-12).

Fulfillment of the OT. More than any other Gospel, Matthew stresses the deep correspondence between OT expectations and promises and their fulfillment in Jesus. In the style of a Jewish commentary, Matthew links OT texts to events in the life of Jesus that fulfill those texts and frequently draws out analogies between the OT and the NT. Matthew's procedure is anchored in the belief that what God has done once in Israel, he is doing again, finally and fully, in Jesus the Messiah.

Universal Outlook. In a book so strongly Jewish in orientation, it is surprising to find such an emphasis on the inclusion of Gentiles in the Messiah's saving work. More than any other, this Gospel emphasizes that the Good News is for all, including Gentiles. This stance put Matthew at odds with the Jewish community of his time on two

Matthew's story of Jesus . . . is a masterpiece. . . . More often than not we know the teaching of Jesus in . . . Matthew's formulations.

Donald A. Hagner,
Matthew 1-13, p. xi

FURTHER READING

CRAIG L. BLOMBERG
Matthew (1992)

D. A. CARSON
Matthew in Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 8 (1984)

R. T. FRANCE
Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher (1989)

MICHAEL GREEN
The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven (2000)

CRAIG S. KEENER
A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (1999)

DAVID TURNER
Matthew in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (2005)

fundamental questions: Who are the people of God? What future is there for the nation of Israel? The birth narratives show that God saves Gentiles, and throughout the book Gentiles are portrayed positively. Since God is sovereign, his Messiah is King of all creation. Though God has worked especially in and through the nation of Israel (see 10:5-6; 15:24), the inauguration of the Kingdom of Heaven shares God's good favor with the nations as well (see 28:18-20).

1. PROLOGUE—THE BIRTH OF JESUS (1:1–2:23)

The Ancestors of Jesus the Messiah (1:1-17)
Matt 1:1-17; cp. Luke 3:23-38

1 This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham:

- ² Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.
- ³ Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar). Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram.
- ⁴ Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
- ⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab). Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth). Obed was the father of Jesse.
- ⁶ Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).
- ⁷ Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.

- Abijah was the father of Asa.
- ⁸ Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram. Jehoram was the father of Uzziah.
- ⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.
- ¹⁰ Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amon. Amon was the father of Josiah.
- ¹¹ Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).
- ¹² After the Babylonian exile: Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
- ¹³ Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor.
- ¹⁴ Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Akim. Akim was the father of Eliud.
- ¹⁵ Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob.
- ¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

1:1-17 //Luke 3:23-38
1:1
Gen 22:18
2 Sam 7:12-14
1 Chr 17:11
Ps 89:3-4; 132:11
Isa 9:6; 11:1
Matt 22:42
John 7:42
Rom 1:3
Gal 3:16
Rev 22:16
1:2
Gen 21:3, 12; 25:26; 29:35
1 Chr 1:34
1:3
Gen 38:29-30
Ruth 4:12, 18-19
1 Chr 2:4-5, 9
1:4-5
Ruth 4:13, 17-22
1 Chr 2:10-12, 15
Heb 11:31
1:6
Ruth 4:17, 22
2 Sam 12:24
1 Chr 2:13-15
1:7-10
1 Chr 3:10-14
1:11
2 Kgs 24:14-16
1 Chr 3:15-16
Jer 27:20
Dan 1:1-2
1:12
1 Chr 3:17, 19
Ezra 3:2
1:16
Matt 27:17, 22
Luke 2:11

1:1–2:23 This account demonstrates that Jesus' lineage and birth (ch 1), as well as the geography of his early years (ch 2), fulfilled OT expectations, and that attempts to thwart God's will do not succeed (2:1-15; see also 27:62-66).

1:1 The phrase *a record of the ancestors* introduces 1:1-17. A similar phrase is used in Genesis to introduce each section of that book (see Genesis Introduction, "Summary," p. 15). • *Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham* (literally *Jesus the Messiah, Son of David and son of Abraham*): These names are repeated in reverse order in the genealogy, an example of a literary form known as *chiasm* (arrangement of elements in mirror-image). Being identified as a *descendant of David* introduces Jesus as Messiah (see 12:23; 22:42-45), while the connection to *Abraham* emphasizes God's covenant with Israel and the extension of that

covenant to include all nations (see Gen 12:3; Matt 28:16-20).

1:3 Ram: Greek *Aram*, a variant spelling of Ram; also in 1:4. See 1 Chr 2:9-10.

1:5 Rahab was the Gentile prostitute who risked her life to harbor Joshua's two spies in Jericho (Josh 2:1-21). Her inclusion in the ancestry of the Messiah emphasizes the grace of God. Elsewhere she is commended for her faith in the God of Israel and for righteous deeds (Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25).

1:7 Asa (Greek *Asaph*, a variant spelling of Asa; also in 1:8. See 1 Chr 3:10): Probably the OT king (1 Kgs 15:9-24; 1 Chr 3:10) and not the psalmist (Asaph; 1 Chr 6:39; 25:1-2; Pss 50, 73–83). Matthew's focus is on the ancestral line from David to the Messiah.

1:8 Jehoram: Greek *Joram*, a variant spelling of Jehoram. See 1 Kgs 22:50 and note on 1 Chr 3:11. • *father of* (or *ancestor of*; also in 1:11): The term

includes several generations here (2 Chr 21:1–26:1), as it does in the case of Josiah (1:11) and Shealtiel (1:12). The genealogy omits Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah (2 Kgs 8:24; 1 Chr 3:11; 2 Chr 22:1, 11; 24:27), perhaps because of their association with Ahab and Jezebel.

1:10 Amon: Greek *Amos*, a variant spelling of Amon. See 1 Chr 3:14.

1:11-12 father: Josiah was the grandfather of *Jehoiachin* (Greek *Jeconiah*, a variant spelling of Jehoiachin); see 2 Kgs 23:34; 24:6; note on 1 Chr 3:16.

1:12-16 Although the OT is clearly the source for 1:1-11, Matthew is probably also dependent upon royal archives and oral traditions for 1:12-16.

1:12 Shealtiel: See 1 Chr 3:17-19; Ezra 3:2.

1:16 This genealogy is traced through *Joseph*, who stands in David's line (see also notes on Luke 3:23-38).

1:18-25 //Luke 2:1-7
1:18
Luke 1:27, 35
Gal 4:4
1:19
Deut 24:1
1:20
Luke 1:35
1:21
Luke 1:31; 2:11, 21
Acts 5:31; 13:23
Heb 7:25

¹⁷All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

OT Patterns Fulfilled (1:18–2:23)
The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

Matt 1:18-25; cp. Luke 2:1-7

¹⁸This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she

became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

²⁰As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17)

Both Matthew and Luke provide genealogies of Jesus (1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38). The two genealogies differ from David to Joseph, Jesus' legal father. Matthew follows the line of David's son Solomon, while Luke follows the line of Nathan, another of David's sons. One possible explanation is that Matthew records Joseph's genealogy while Luke records Mary's (see note on Luke 3:23).

Genealogies were kept quite accurately in Judaism, as Josephus confirms (Josephus, *Life* 1). Genealogies were important in the OT and in Judaism because land rights were apportioned to families in Israel and because certain offices, such as priest and king, were inherited from father to son. Genealogies sometimes ran a record from the past to the present to illustrate religious themes, family descent, or political ties, as well as simple chronology (1 Chr 1–9). Most such lists were representative rather than a complete list of every individual.

The purpose of Matthew's genealogy, unlike Luke's (Luke 3:23-38), is to show Jesus' heritage as running from Abraham through David. Jesus' genealogy confirms him as a legitimate heir to the throne of David. While Jesus' genealogy in Matthew goes back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, the genealogy in Luke goes all the way back to Adam. This is consistent with Luke's emphasis on Jesus as the Savior for all people everywhere.

The unusual mention of women with stained reputations (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba), several of them Gentiles, is noteworthy in Matthew's genealogy. Their mention here emphasizes God's gracious acts of redeeming even those deemed unworthy by others.

Jesus' genealogy does not prove that Jesus is the Messiah, but it does make him a possible candidate. His identity as the Messiah becomes evident in other ways (11:2-6). God had providentially guided the course of history to its climax in Jesus Christ. Jesus is presented as the anticipated Messiah of the OT, the Savior of his people, and the King descended from David assuming his throne (see 2 Sam 7:16). He is heir to Abraham and ultimately fulfills God's promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3).

1:17 Matthew states that each period has *fourteen generations*, but the first and third periods list only thirteen. A legitimate Jewish and OT approach would count David in both the first and second groupings and include Jesus in the third grouping. This further reinforces that Matthew is probably stressing the *gematria* (letters representing numbers): The letters in the Hebrew word *dawid* ("David") also add up to fourteen. Matthew is highlighting Jesus' credentials as the Messiah (1:1).

1:18 Jesus the Messiah (literally *Jesus the Christ*): Using *Messiah* in the translation accurately communicates that it is a title rather than a personal name ("Jesus Christ"). • *engaged to be married*: In Judaism, engagement (or betrothal) meant

a permanent relationship (Mal 2:14) that could be broken only by legal process; thus, Mary was considered Joseph's wife and he her husband (see 1:20; Deut 22:23-24), even though they had not had sexual relations. Mary's status as a *virgin* at the time of Jesus' conception *through the power of the Holy Spirit* helps authenticate Jesus' divinity.

1:19 As a *righteous man*—that is, as one who obeyed the law (see Luke 1:6)—Joseph could not take Mary as his wife since she was a suspected adulteress. He could exonerate himself by publicly exposing Mary to trial and having her put to death (Deut 22:23-27; Num 5:11-31), or pay a fine and *break the engagement* (literally *divorce her*; see also *Mishnah Sotah*

1:1-5). Joseph mercifully decided to do the latter *quietly*.

1:20 The *angel of the Lord* declared to Joseph *in a dream* (see 2:12-13, 19, 22) that Mary had been neither seduced nor violated; instead, the baby *was conceived by the Holy Spirit* (Luke 1:34-35), who often has a creative and life-generating role (Gen 1:2; Ezek 37:1-14; John 3:5-8).

1:21 *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Yeshua*, which means "The LORD saves." The name appropriately describes his role: *he will save his people from their sins*. • *His people* may refer either to Israel as a nation (2:6) or to the Messiah's people, the church, which is comprised of both Jews and Gentiles (4:15-16; 16:18; 28:18-20).

²²All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

²³“Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Visitors from the East

2 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About

that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.”

³King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the ^aMessiah supposed to be born?”

⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,

1:23
^aIsa 7:14; 8:8, 10
 John 1:14
 1 Tim 3:16
 Rev 21:3
1:25
 Luke 1:31
2:1
 Luke 1:5; 2:4-7
2:2
 Num 24:17
 Jer 23:5
 Matt 2:9
 Rev 22:16
2:4
^achristos (5547)
 • Luke 2:11
2:5
 John 7:42
2:6
^aMic 5:2

Herod the Great (2:1-20)

Luke 1:5

Herod the Great was the Roman-appointed king of Judea (37–4 BC) at the time of Jesus' birth (2:1; Luke 1:5). He was a strong military leader, a brilliant politician, and a cruel tyrant. Born into an Idumean (Edomite) family with links to the Romans, he rose to power by gaining Roman favor and retained it by cruelly suppressing his opponents. Herod was known for his large building projects, especially his magnificent reconstruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, begun 20~19 BC (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.8.1). Herod earned the title “the Great” because of his reputation as a great builder. He was the one who built Caesarea and made it the Roman headquarters in Palestine.

Herod the Great was also known for his family troubles and his brutal treatment of those who opposed him or whom he considered threats. He murdered two of his wives and three of his own sons when he suspected them of plotting against him. Caesar Augustus once said that he would rather be Herod's *swine* than his *son* (a play on words in Greek since the two words sound alike—*hus*, *huios*). When Jesus was born toward the end of Herod's reign and Herod heard him referred to as a future “king,” Herod attempted to have him killed also. Unable to locate the boy, Herod then ordered the massacre of all the boys less than two years old in the Bethlehem area (see 2:1-20)—an act typical of his ruthlessness and paranoia.

Though Herod gained the title “king of the Jews,” the Jewish people never accepted him as a legitimate king because he was not from the line of David and because he was an Edomite (a descendant of Esau) rather than a Jew. His greatest accomplishment was the rebuilding and beautification of the Jerusalem Temple, making it one of the most magnificent buildings in the ancient world.

1:22-23 *Look! . . . Immanuel:* Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10 (Greek version). Jesus' birth from a *virgin* fulfills Isa 7:14. The Hebrew term *‘almah* (*virgin* or *young maiden*) was translated *parthenos* (“virgin”) in the Greek OT that Matthew quotes. Matthew understands the *‘almah* of Isaiah as foreshadowing the Virgin Mary.

1:25 *Until* probably implies that Joseph had *sexual relations* with Mary after the birth of Jesus. • *And Joseph named him Jesus*, thus showing his acceptance of the child as his own.

2:1-2 Attentiveness to the *star* indicates that the *wise men* were astrologers; their awareness of the OT (perhaps Num 24:17) suggests that they were from Babylonia, where Jews were numerous. The men were Gentiles, which anticipates Gentile acceptance

into the Kingdom of God (8:11-12; 15:21-28; 28:16-20). Throughout the entire Gospel, unlikely Gentiles worship the Jewish Messiah, while the Jewish leaders (Herod, high priests, teachers of religious law, Pharisees) oppose him.

2:1 *Bethlehem* (see note on 2:6) was David's hometown (1 Sam 16:1-13; John 7:42). • *King Herod*, or Herod the Great, had a meteoric career; he rose from being governor of Galilee to being king of Galilee, Judea, and Samaria (37–4 BC). His career was marked by unflinching loyalty to Rome, magnificent building enterprises (including a substantial renovation of the Temple in Jerusalem), family hostility, suspicion, and ruthless murder of his own family members (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.7.1-5) and of innocent children (2:16-18). • *wise men:*

Or *royal astrologers*; Greek reads *magi*; also in 2:7, 16.

2:2 *star as it rose:* Or *star in the east*. • Matthew regularly describes Jesus as receiving *worship* (2:2, 8, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17), thus identifying Jesus as God.

2:3 *Herod was deeply disturbed* because he feared this child would rival him as king of the Jews.

2:4 *The leading priests* had political and religious clout and ministered predominantly in the Temple (see 21:23). Herod gathered the *teachers of religious law* because they were trained to know OT prophecies and were often influential Pharisees.

2:6 The quotation is from Mic 5:2-4; 2 Sam 5:2. • *Bethlehem*, a small village,

^bpoimainō (4165)
 • Matt 9:36
2:9
 Matt 2:2
2:11
 Ps 72:10
 Isa 60:6
2:12
 Matt 2:22
2:13
 Matt 1:20; 2:19
2:15
^aHos 11:1
2:18
^aJer 31:15
2:19
 Matt 1:20; 2:12

are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the ^bshepherd for my people Israel.”

⁷Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

⁹After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹²When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

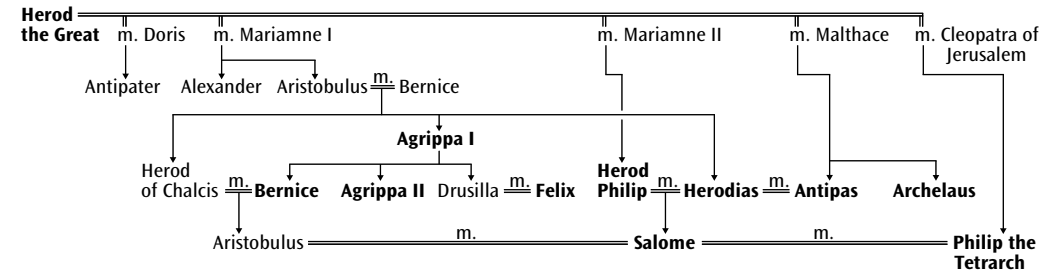
¹⁴That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, ¹⁵and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”

¹⁶Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. ¹⁷Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ “A cry was heard in Ramah— weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead.”

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.



▲ **The Herod Family (2:1-20).** Those whose names are in bold type appear in the NT. • **HEROD THE GREAT:** See profile, facing page. • **HEROD PHILIP:** See Mark 6:17. • **ARCHELAUS:** See 2:22. • **HEROD ANTIPAS:** See profile, p. 1659. • **PHILIP THE TETRARCH:** See Luke 3:1; notes on Mark 8:22-26, 27-28. • **HEROD AGRIPPA I:** See profile, p. 1851. • **HERODIAS:** See 14:3-11; Mark 6:17-29. • **SALOME:** See 14:6-8; Mark 6:22-28. • **HEROD AGRIPPA II:** See profile, p. 1879. • **BERNICE:** See Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30. • **FELIX:** See Acts 23:24–24:27. • For more about the Herod family, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 17–18.

had a privileged status as the birthplace of King David. The religious leaders knew from the prophets (1:22) that the Messiah would be born there. • *the ruling cities:* Literally *the rulers*. • King David had been a *shepherd* in his youth, and as king he became the shepherd of Israel (2 Sam 5:2). Micah 5:2-4 foresees the Messiah as a shepherd (cp. Ps 23:1).

2:8-10 The *star* was placed by God to guide the *wise men* to the Messiah (see Num 24:17); the details are unknown.

2:11 The wise men offered extravagant *gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh* to the King (see Ps 72:10-17; Isa 60:1-22).

The tradition that there were three wise men originated from the number of gifts, but the text does not specify how many wise men there were.

2:13-15 *Flee to Egypt . . . until I tell you to return:* This fulfills Hos 11:1 (see note on 4:1-11; see also Gen 15:13-16; 46:1-5; Exod 15:1-21).

2:15 *I called my Son out of Egypt:* See Hos 11:1, which refers to the Exodus.

2:16 *kill all the boys:* Herod was notorious for his viciousness—he killed his own son to protect his throne, which led to the saying, “It is safer to be

Herod's swine [Greek *hus*] than his son [Greek *huios*],” because Herod kept kosher. • *two years old and under:* Herod calculated the probable age of the child from the *wise men's report*.

2:18 The quotation is from Jer 31:15. • *Ramah*, a village near Bethlehem, is the place of *Rachel's* burial (Gen 35:18-20; Jer 31:15-17).

2:19 After *Herod the Great died* in 4 BC, Caesar split up his kingdom. Herod's son Archelaus (2:22) was appointed over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, while Antipas (14:1-12; Luke 13:31-32) was appointed over Galilee and Perea.

20“Get up!” the angel said. “Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead.”

21So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. 22But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod’s son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. 23So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

2. INTRODUCTION—PREPARATION FOR JESUS’ MINISTRY (3:1–4:11)

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for the Messiah

Matt 3:1-3 // Mark 1:2-3 // Luke 3:2b-6 // John 1:23
Matt 3:4-6 // Mark 1:4-6
Matt 3:7-10 // Luke 3:7-9
Matt 3:11-12 // Mark 1:7-8 // Luke 3:15-18 // John 1:24-28

3 In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” 3The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,

“He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming! Clear the road for him!’ ”

4John’s clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. 5People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. 6And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

7But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize, he denounced them. “You brood of snakes!” he exclaimed. “Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? 8Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. 9Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. 10Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

11“ I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will

2:20
Exod 4:19

2:22
Matt 2:12

2:23
Judg 13:5, 7
Luke 2:39

3:1-12
//Mark 1:1-8
//Luke 3:1-18
//John 1:19-28

3:2
Matt 4:17; 10:7
Mark 1:15
Ouranos (3772)
• Matt 16:3

3:3
Isa 40:3
Mal 3:1
Luke 1:76
Kurios (2962)
• Matt 12:8

3:4
Lev 11:22
2 Kgs 1:8

3:6
Mark 1:4

3:7
Matt 12:34; 23:33
John 8:44
Rom 5:9
Eph 5:6
Col 3:6

3:8
Acts 26:20

3:9
John 8:33, 37, 39
Acts 13:26
Rom 2:28-29; 4:12

3:10
Matt 7:19
Luke 13:7
John 15:6

3:8 *Prove . . . that you have . . . turned to God (literally make fruit that accords with repentance):* John calls for action and true ethical change; mere lip service will not do (see Luke 3:10-14; cp. Matt 5:19-20, 46; 7:21; 23:3).

3:9 *We’re safe:* Some had wrongly assumed that, since they were descendants of Abraham, they were exempt from judgment. • A prominent theme in Matthew is how God will create new children of Abraham by bringing the Gentiles into God’s people and removing from his people Jews who reject the Messiah (see 8:11-12; 21:43; 22:1-14; 28:16-20; Rom 4:9-25; Gal 3:6-14, 29).

3:11 *with water:* Or in water. • who is greater than I am: Despite his popularity and growing following, John had a clear sense of his role as subordinate to the Messiah. • I’m not worthy even to be his slave: In Jewish culture, to remove and carry someone’s sandals, even those of a rabbi, was too lowly a task even for the rabbi’s disciple. It was a job reserved for slaves. • with the Holy Spirit and with fire (or in the Holy Spirit and in fire): This happened at Pentecost (see Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2); the ministry of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit (see 12:28; Luke 4:14), may also be included. Fire may refer to purification (Zech 13:9) or judgment (Mal 4:1; see Isa 1:25; 4:4;

God (see Jer 3:11-22). John’s message included specific practical application (Luke 3:11-14).

3:3 *Isaiah* had spoken of a messenger preparing a highway in the wilderness for Israel’s God to return to the land (Isa 40:1-11). John’s ministry prepared the way for Jesus’ arrival (see 11:10; cp. John 12:41). • The quotation is from Isa 40:3 (Greek version).

3:4 *John’s clothes* and *food* correspond to those of his prophetic predecessor, Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8; Mal 4:5; Sirach 48:10-11).

3:5-6 John’s ministry became so popular that many people from Jerusalem and Judea came to hear him. • they confessed their sins: Those who responded to John’s preaching and turned away from sin were prepared to receive Jesus’ ministry (Luke 7:27, 29). • he baptized them: John’s practice of baptism may have originated with the OT idea of purification (see Isa 1:16; 4:4; Ezek 36:25).

3:7 The *Pharisees’* name derives from the Hebrew term *perushim*, meaning either *separated ones* or *exact interpreters*. • The *Sadducees*, a priestly class, probably derive their name from Zadok the priest (2 Sam 15:24-29; Ezek 44:10-16). • *coming to watch him baptize:* Or *coming to be baptized*.

2:20-21 Jesus’ return to Israel fulfills Hos 11:1 (see 2:13-15).

2:22 *Archelaus*, like his father, governed brutally, immorally, and tyrannically. • Joseph fulfilled prophecy in moving to Galilee to avoid Archelaus’s jurisdiction (cp. 4:12-16).

2:23 “*He will be called a Nazarene*”: Matthew associates the name *Nazareth* with words in *the prophets* (see Isa 11:1, where the Messiah is called a “Branch,” [Hebrew *netser*]; and Judg 13:5, where Samson is called a “Nazirite”).

3:1 *John the Baptist* announced Jesus’ coming (see Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:6-8, 19-34) and prepared people to receive him (3:3). John attracted large crowds (3:5) and a group of disciples (9:14). This group continued for a short time as a movement, even as the Christian church emerged (see Acts 18:24-28). • John’s locale in *the Judean wilderness* had symbolic significance: The wilderness was associated with the giving of the law (see Exod 19:1) and with God’s final redemption of Israel at the end of history (see Isa 40:3).

3:2 *is near* (or *has come, or is coming soon*): The prophetic call to return to God in repentance (cp. Isa 1:16-20) involves total reorientation from pride and sin to humble obedience to

• baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 12He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.”

The Baptism of Jesus:

God Proclaims His Messiah

Matt 3:13-17 // Mark 1:9-11 // Luke 3:21-22 // John 1:29-34

13Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. 14But John

tried to talk him out of it. “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,” he said, “so why are you coming to me?”

15But Jesus said, “**It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.**” So John agreed to baptize him.

16After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. 17And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”

The Pharisees (3:7)

Matt 5:20; 9:10-14, 34; 12:1-14, 22-24, 38-40; 15:1-14; 16:1-12; 19:3; 21:45; 22:15, 34; 23:1-7, 13-31; 27:62-64
Mark 2:23-25; 3:1-6; 7:1-13; 8:11-12; 12:13-17
Luke 5:17-21, 29-32; 6:6-11; 7:28-30, 36-49; 11:37-54; 12:1-3; 13:31; 14:1-6; 15:1-2; 16:13-15; 17:20-21; 18:9-14; 19:38-40
John 1:24-25; 3:1; 7:31-32, 45-52; 8:3-10, 13; 9:13-34, 40; 11:46-57; 12:17-19, 42; 18:3
Acts 5:27-40; 15:5; 23:6-10; 26:4-5
Phil 3:5-7

The Pharisees were one of three major Jewish sects, along with the Sadducees and the Essenes. The Pharisees were a non-political lay movement within Judaism. They arose from the *hasidim* (pious ones), who opposed the syncretizing (combining together) of Greek culture and religion with Judaism in the 100s BC. They attempted, by rigorous examination of the details of the OT law, to make the law accessible and practical to people seeking to be obedient Jews. They taught strict adherence to the law, not only the written law of Moses (*torah*), but also the oral traditions which they claimed Moses had passed down to them. Their goal was to defend the written law against any possible infringement. They were God-fearing and law-abiding people. They were famous for passing their interpretations from generation to generation by word of mouth, establishing an oral tradition concerning legal matters. They made the law applicable by extracting from it specific guidelines for many possible situations. They argued that if the law were obeyed by all, the nation would be purged of sin and God would establish his Kingdom over all the nations. This gave their concern for obedience a goal in the future. Although the Pharisees were small in number, their influence on Israel was widespread (e.g., 15:12-14; see Josephus, *War* 2.8.14; *Antiquities* 13.10.5). The primary influence of the Pharisees was in the local synagogue communities, while the Sadducees were more influential in the Temple worship in Jerusalem and in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high council. The traditions of the Pharisees developed into the rabbinic writings known as the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*.

Unlike the Sadducees (see “The Sadducees” at 16:1-12, p. 1610), the Pharisees had a strong belief in the resurrection of the dead (see Acts 23:8). After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the Pharisees provided leadership and direction for the people of Israel.

Jesus often came into conflict with the Pharisees, accusing them of hypocrisy and of elevating human rules over God’s righteous standards. Jesus opposed the Pharisees because they were leading people away from God’s plan for redemption. In Matthew, the Pharisees oppose the work of God from the outset (3:7), mostly because of their meticulous observance of the law (23:23-26) and Jesus’ shocking disregard of their traditions (15:1-20). They were the theological shepherds of Israel (12:38; cp. 9:36), but Jesus castigates them as hypocrites for their perversions of doctrine and practice (see ch 23).

Mal 3:2-3). It is a “Spirit-and-fire baptism”; the Messiah puts into effect what John could only prepare—thoroughgoing judgment and purification.

3:12 Farmers would use a *winnowing fork* to toss harvested grain into the air, allowing the useless husks (*chaff*) to blow away. The Messiah’s ministry divides all humanity into two groups: (1) *the wheat*, that is, those who respond, forming the new people of God; and (2) *the chaff*, the unrepentant (see 3:8).

3:14 As John had already confessed (3:11-12), he was lesser than the Messiah, so he felt unfit to baptize him.

3:15 *for we must carry out all that God requires: Or for we must fulfill all righteousness.* This statement refers to accomplishing what the OT demanded or foreshadowed (e.g., Jer 31:31-34). “Righteousness” in Matthew refers to behavior that conforms to God’s will (see 5:20; 6:1, 33; 21:32).

3:16 *opened:* Some manuscripts read *opened to him*. • *The Spirit of God descending like a dove* was anointing Jesus, through whom salvation would come. This event was like a king’s being anointed with oil at his coronation. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to accomplish God’s salvation and defeat Satan

(see 12:18, 28). This same Spirit empowers Jesus’ followers (10:20; Acts 1:8).

3:17 *my dearly loved Son* (see Ps 2:7): The title “Son of God” reveals and clarifies Jesus’ nature and role (see 4:3, 6; 14:33; 16:16; 17:5; 26:63; 27:54; 28:19). In his unique relationship to the Father, Jesus accomplishes salvation as the trusting and obedient Son. • *who brings me great joy:* God the Father confirmed his Son’s ministry with language from Isaiah (Isa 42:1) and so prepared Israel for his ministry.

The Temptation of Jesus: Satan Tests the Messiah

Matt 4:1-11 // Mark 1:12-13 // Luke 4:1-13

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the ¹devil. ²For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

³During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴But Jesus told him, “**No! The Scriptures say,**

‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

‘He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’”

⁷Jesus responded, “**The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the LORD your God.’”**

⁸Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹“I will give it all to you,” he said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.”

¹⁰“**Get out of here, Satan,**” Jesus told him.

“**For the Scriptures say,**

‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’”

¹¹Then the devil went away, and ^hangels came and took care of Jesus.

3. THE MESSIAH CONFRONTS ISRAEL (4:12–11:1)

Narrative: Introduction to Jesus’ Ministry (4:12-25)

The Ministry of Jesus Begins

Matt 4:12-17; cp. Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:14-15

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

¹³He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

4:1-11
//Mark 1:12-13
//Luke 4:1-13

4:1
Gen 3:1-7
1 Thes 3:5
diabolos (1228)
• Matt 25:41

4:2
Exod 34:28
1 Kgs 19:8

4:4
*Deut 8:3

4:6
*Ps 91:11-12

4:7
*Deut 6:16

4:10
*Deut 6:13
satanas (4567)
• Matt 16:23

4:11
1 Kgs 19:4-8
Luke 22:43
Heb 1:14
Jas 4:7
angelos (0032)
• Matt 22:30

4:12-17
//Mark 1:14-15
//Luke 4:14-15

4:1-11 Parallels between Adam and Jesus are obvious in this account of Jesus’ temptation. Jesus is the second Adam (see Rom 5:12-19) and the second Israel (2:15). In contrast to the ancient Israelites, he fulfilled Israel’s history by successfully wandering through the desert without sinning. He proved himself the obedient Son of God by defeating Satan in spiritual combat. And because he underwent temptation himself as a human, Jesus is able to sympathize with the temptations we face (see Heb 2:14-18; 4:15) and help us overcome them as he did (1 Cor 10:13).

4:1 *Jesus was led by the Spirit:* The temptation was providentially arranged by God as a test of the Messiah’s character (see Deut 8:2). • *to be tempted there by the devil:* This test of character, initiated by God (who tempts no one; see Jas 1:13-14), was accomplished through the devil’s own desire to lure Jesus into sin.

4:2 *forty days and forty nights* (see Exod 24:18; 34:28; 1 Kgs 19:8): Israel was tested in the wilderness for forty years (Exod 16:35; Deut 1:3).

4:3-4 Jesus refused to use his supernatural power to obtain the food that he trusted God to provide. Unlike the people of Israel, who sorely tested God through complaint and unbelief (see

Exod 16), Jesus refused to question God’s faithfulness. Instead, he trusted God to provide for his true need, the sustenance of *every word that comes from the mouth of God*.

4:3 *the devil:* Literally *the tempter*.

4:4 Jesus was quoting Deut 8:3.

4:5-7 Jesus refused to test God by presuming upon God’s protection.

4:6 Now the devil quotes Ps 91:11-12.

4:7 *The Scriptures also say:* Countering the devil’s appeal to Scripture, Jesus invoked a deeper scriptural principle of honoring God, which the devil ignored. See Deut 6:16.

4:8-10 Satan, called the ruler of this world (John 12:31), offered to hand over *all the kingdoms of the world and their glory* to Jesus to keep him from accomplishing the will of his Father. • *Glorify* refers to political power and dominion (e.g., 6:29). Satan’s strategy was to get Jesus to abuse his sonship, thus diverting him from the path of suffering and obedience that climaxed at the cross. • *You must . . . only him:* Deut 6:13.

4:11 *Then the devil went away:* Jesus’ rebuff of Satan here foreshadows his victory over demons (12:28), Satan’s defeat through the Cross (Col 2:14-15), and the final victory at the end of history (Rom 16:20; Rev 12:7-17; 20:2-3, 10). • *Angels*, who had already been involved in the Messiah’s arrival and

protection (1:20, 24; 2:13, 19), now *came and took care of Jesus* after his temptation, in fulfillment of the OT (4:6; see Ps 91:11-12).

4:12–11:1 Having been announced by John and the Father (3:13-17), and having obediently endured the testing in the wilderness (4:1-11), the Messiah was prepared for his ministry. He first confronted the Galilean Israelites with the message of the Kingdom.

4:12 *John had been arrested* by Herod Antipas (see 14:1-12). Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, where John was probably working at the time. • *When Jesus heard . . . he left Judea and returned to Galilee:* As in Joseph’s flight to Nazareth (2:22-23), an escape from danger can also be God’s providential direction (4:14-16). Jesus withdrew to avoid martyrdom before finishing his work of revealing the Kingdom.

4:13 *Capernaum* was in Galilee, a district viewed negatively by the religious establishment in Judea and Jerusalem (see John 1:46; 7:41-42, 52). Many Judeans considered Galileans to be uncultured, with a lazy command of the language (cp. 26:73), a factor sometimes thought to affect the accuracy of their teachings. Galilee also had a proportionately larger Gentile population than Judea did.

4:14-16 *through the prophet Isaiah:* See Isa 9:1-2 (Greek version).

4:15-16
Isa 9:1-2; 42:6-7
Luke 2:32
John 1:5

4:17
Matt 3:2; 10:7

4:18-22
//Mark 1:16-20
//Luke 5:1-11

4:19
Matt 16:17-18
John 1:43

4:20
Mark 10:28
Luke 18:28

4:23-25
Luke 6:17-19

4:23
Matt 9:35
Mark 1:39
Luke 4:15

¹⁵“In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River, in Galilee where so many Gentiles live,

¹⁶the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined.”

¹⁷From then on Jesus began to preach, “**Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.**”

The First Disciples

Matt 4:18-22 // Mark 1:16-20

¹⁸One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹Jesus called out to them, “**Come, follow me, and I will show you**

how to fish for people!” ²⁰And they left their nets at once and followed him.

²¹A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. ²²They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

Crowds Follow Jesus

²³Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. ²⁴News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. ²⁵Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.



◀ **Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee** (Matt 4:12–15:20; see also 15:29–16:12; 17:22–18:1; Mark 1:14-21; Luke 4:14-31; John 4:43-54). After Jesus learned that John the Baptist had been put in prison (4:12), he moved to the Galilean seaside town of CAPERNAUM and made it his base of operations for much of his ministry. CAPERNAUM 4:13; 8:5; 11:23; 17:24 SEA OF GALILEE 4:13, 18; 15:29 NAZARETH 2:23; 4:13

main features: *teaching, announcing . . . the Kingdom*, and healing. • *The synagogues* were centers for prayer, study, and exposition of Scripture and tradition. They were the social centers of many Jewish villages. The hypocrisy and hostility of the Jewish leaders was evident at the synagogues (6:2, 5; 10:17; 12:9-14; 13:54; 23:6, 34). • *Announcing the Good News* means presenting the message *about the Kingdom of Heaven* (9:35; 24:14; 26:13; also Mark 1:1; Rom 1:16). Most often, the message evokes hostility (see 9:32-34; 10:27-28; 13:1-9, 18-23).

4:24-25 During Jesus’ day, much of Palestine was in the Roman jurisdiction of Syria (a term that could refer to the entire eastern shore of the Mediterranean). Matthew mentions *Syria* to show how widespread the news of Jesus was. • The word translated *epileptic* refers to epilepsy or demonic oppression. In 17:15, one so described “falls into fire and water,” that is, the boy was unable to control himself. • The *Ten Towns* (Greek *Decapolis*) was a federation of ten cities, most of which were east of the Jordan and southeast of the Sea of Galilee (Damascus, Raphana, Hippos, Abila [or Canatha], Gadara, Scythopolis, Pella, Dion, Gerasa, and Philadelphia [Amman]). These cities were predominantly Gentile and Hellenistic in culture.

4:17 Jesus’ message centered on the imminent arrival of the *Kingdom of Heaven* and the repentance that it necessitates (see 3:2; 10:7). • *is near:* Or *has come, or is coming soon*.

4:18-22 The call of the first disciples illustrates one of the purposes of Jesus’ ministry: to call people to follow him in self-denying obedience (cp. 4:17, 23-25).

4:18 *Simon, also called Peter*, became the leader of the apostles (see 14:28; 15:15; 16:16) and the representative disciple (14:29-30; 16:15-19, 22-23).

4:19 *Come, follow me:* This involved accepting the beliefs and lifestyle of a master as one’s own (16:24; Deut 5:33; 1 Kgs 19:19-21). • *fish for people:* The

disciples would participate in the saving and judging work of the Kingdom (see 10:5-15; 13:47-51; Ezek 29:4-5; Amos 4:2).

4:20-22 *leaving the boat and their father:* Following Jesus as his disciples involved both commitment and cost on the part of the brothers (see 8:18-22; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21).

4:23-25 This summary marks the central theme of the section (4:23–9:38): the ministry and message of the Messiah. In ancient writings, chapter divisions were unknown; authors would instead begin and end a section with the same expression (called an *inclusio*; see 9:35).

4:23 The Messiah’s ministry has three

The Sermon on the Mount: Jesus' Call to Righteousness (5:1–7:29)

Introduction

5 One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him,² and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

Matt 5:3-12 // Luke 6:20-23

- ³ “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
⁴ God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
⁵ God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.
⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.
⁷ God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

- ⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.
⁹ God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.
¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

¹¹ “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹² Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Teaching about Salt and Light

Matt 5:13; cp. Mark 9:49-50; Luke 14:34-35
 Matt 5:15 // Mark 4:21 // Luke 8:16; 11:33

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But what

5:1 Luke 6:12
 John 6:3
 5:3-12 // Luke 6:20-23
 5:3 Isa 57:15
 Matt 25:34
 makarios (3107)
 * Luke 6:20
 5:4 Isa 61:2-3
 5:5 Ps 37:11
 Rom 4:13
 5:7 Jas 2:13
 5:8 Ps 24:3-5
 kardia (2588)
 * Matt 15:18
 5:9 Heb 12:14
 Jas 3:18
 5:10 2 Tim 2:12
 5:11 1 Pet 4:14

5:1–7:29 This is the first of five lengthy discourses in Matthew (see also 9:35–11:1; 13:1-53; 18:1–19:2; 23:1–26:1). The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is the Messiah’s call to righteousness. Paul understood righteousness in terms of God’s saving acts and of a person’s standing before God. Jesus uses the term for moral behavior that conforms to God’s will, as James does. Specifically, righteousness is doing the will of God as Jesus reveals it. This “revelation of righteousness” unifies the entire Sermon.

5:3 *poor and realize their need for him* (literally *poor in spirit*; cp. Luke 6:20, 24): In the OT, the poor are often depicted as especially pious because oppression by the wealthy leads them to trust in the Lord for salvation and deliverance rather than relying on the power of wealth (11:5; Ps 37:14-15; 40:17; 69:28-33; Isa 61:1; 66:2). In both Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts, the “poor” are indeed physically poor, but their trust in God, not their poverty, is what makes them blessed (Isa 57:15; 66:2).

5:4 *Those who mourn* were those who lamented the spiritual and national condition of Israel (see 23:37-39; Isa 61:2-3; Joel 1:8-13; 2:12-13, 18-19; Rom 9:1-5; 1 Cor 5:2; Jas 4:9). Personal grief, whether caused by sin or tragedy, may also be in view (Mark 16:10; Rev 18:11, 19). • *will be comforted*: The passive voice is used out of reverence for the holy name of God; the phrase could also be rendered *God will comfort them* (see also 5:6-7, 9). Comfort will accompany the fulfillment of all that God has promised (Isa 40:1-2; 61:2-3).

5:5 *those who are humble*: See Ps 37:11, which Jesus practically quotes

here. Elsewhere, Jesus describes himself in similar terms—in contrast to other teachers (11:29) and as one who shuns pride (12:17-21; 21:5). This trait of Jesus is exemplified in his death on the cross (1 Pet 2:23; 3:9). • *The whole earth* could also be rendered *the land*, thus referring to God’s promise of land to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:7; 17:8; see Isa 60:21). A wider sense may also be intended, such as God’s reign over the entire earth (19:28; 28:18-20; Ps 115:16).

5:6 *those who hunger and thirst for justice* (or *for righteousness*): This refers either to the follower of Jesus whose driving purpose in life is to obey the Lord (cp. 3:15; 5:10, 20) or to the disciple’s desire to see justice for all people (Ps 11:7; 85:10-12; Isa 11:1-4; Jer 23:5-6; 33:16). One with such a longing often prays, “May your will be done on earth” (6:10). • Christ has brought *justice* and righteousness (Rom 3:21-22; 5:1); the disciples *will be satisfied* with it (cp. Ps 42:1-2; 63:1-2).

5:7 Jesus made a cardinal virtue of being *merciful*, that is, showing kindness to those in distress (see 6:12, 14-15; 9:13; 12:7; 18:23-35; 23:23; 25:31-46). Those who are merciful now will find God’s mercy in the final judgment.

5:8 *Those whose hearts are pure* (see Ps 24:3-5; 51:7; Isa 6:5) are contrasted with those who thought that they had satisfied God’s will through ceremonial conformity to tradition (23:25-26). Jesus insisted on simple, true heart-righteousness (see 6:1-24; 15:1-20; 23:23-28; Deut 6:5). • *They will see God* and thereby attain even more than Moses did (see Exod 33:18-23; 34:5-7; see also Ps 73:1).

5:9 This beatitude probably targeted zealots—Jewish revolutionaries who advocated the overthrow of Roman domination through violent resistance. The Messiah’s Kingdom would be established by other means. • *those who work for peace*: Jesus is not calling for pacifism per se, but rather a different kind of activism. • *Peace* is the absence of enmity and the presence of God’s salvation (Lev 26:6; 1 Sam 16:4-5; Isa 9:5-6; Zech 8:16; Eph 2:14; Col 1:20). Jesus’ disciples are to work for justice, righteousness, reconciliation, and mercy as the *effects* of God’s salvation through Christ (5:43-47; Luke 10:5-6).

5:10-11 Jesus’ first disciples were *persecuted* by hostile Jewish leaders who were offended by Jesus’ new and authoritative revelation (see 10:17-23; 11:2-6; 12:1-8; 15:1-20; 23:34-36). Since then, *doing right* by associating with Jesus and obeying his teachings has often been a source of persecution (10:24-25; 2 Tim 3:12).

5:12 The *great reward* Jesus mentions is not something earned by suffering for doing right; it is God’s blessing to those who have expressed his grace to others (see 10:41-42; 20:1-16). • The *ancient prophets* are closely connected with the NT apostles (see also 13:16-17; 23:29-36; Eph 2:20).

5:13-16 The disciples’ good deeds will have profoundly positive effects on the world around them, to the glory of God. With this comes a warning from Jesus: Do nothing that might jeopardize that positive impact.

5:13 *Salt* was used for cleansing and preservation from decay (Ezek 16:4), in forming covenants (Lev 2:13;

5:12 2 Chr 36:16
 Acts 7:52
 Jas 5:10

5:14 Phil 2:15

5:16 1 Pet 2:12
 patēr (3962)
 * Matt 6:9

5:17 Rom 3:31

5:18 Luke 16:17; 21:33

5:19 Jas 2:10

5:21 *Exod 20:13
 *Deut 5:17
 Rom 13:9
 Jas 2:11

5:22 Eph 4:26
 Jas 1:19-20

good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Teaching about the Law

Matt 5:17-20; cp. Luke 16:17

¹⁷ “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not

even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁰ “But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

Teaching about Anger

Matt 5:25 // Luke 12:57-59

²¹ “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ ²² But I

The Blessings of Jesus (5:3-12)

Matt 11:6; 13:16;
 16:17; 24:46; 25:34
 Ps 1:1-3; 106:3;
 112:1; 119:1-2
 Isa 56:1-2
 Luke 6:20-26

The blessings of Jesus are called Beatitudes because the Latin Vulgate translates the Greek word for *blessed* as *beati*. No single word can capture all that Jesus is communicating with this term here. He is describing the special favor of God toward his people, both physically and spiritually, and the consequences of living within that favor. Jesus calls men and women to follow him as he proclaims the message of the Kingdom to Israel (see also 11:6; 13:16; 16:17; 24:46). The Beatitudes describe the lifestyle and character of a follower of Jesus. Those who are blessed had repented in response to the proclamation of the Kingdom (4:17-22). The Beatitudes (5:3-12) are connected with Isa 61:1-3. The Spirit endows, leads to proclamation, and blesses the poor, the humble, and the righteous.

The NLT’s use of “God blesses” conveys the ideas of divine origin and approval (see 25:34), fulfillment (see 11:6; 13:16; 16:17), reversal (see Luke 1–2; 6:20-26), and the condition of obedience required in order to enjoy the blessings (see Ps 1:1, 3-6; 106:3; 112:1; 119:1-2; Prov 8:32; Isa 56:2). The blessings are inaugurated with the Messiah’s coming, with a confident hope that they will be enjoyed eternally and completely.

Nun 18:19; see note on 2 Chr 13:5), and as flavor (Job 6:6; Mark 9:50).

• *Salt that lost its flavor* became useless, insipid, or dull (see Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34).

5:14 *light of the world . . . city on a hilltop*: The attractive quality of the disciples’ lives will draw other people to live similarly and to glorify God (see Isa 2:2-5; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 56:6-8; 60:1-3; Phil 2:15).

5:16 *praise your heavenly Father*: Religious hypocrites seek praise for themselves; Jesus’ disciples should seek praise for God (see 1 Pet 2:12).

5:17 *Abolish* would mean to eliminate and replace *the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets* (i.e., the whole OT) as the revelation of God’s will. • *Accomplish their purpose* might mean to obey perfectly, to complete the teaching of, or to bring about OT prophecies (see 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23). Jesus himself is the realization of all that both the Prophets and the Law taught and ex-

pected. Now that Christ, the fulfillment, has come, the OT must be understood in light of him (Luke 24:26, 44).

5:19 The realization of the law in Christ means that obedience to all of his commands (see 28:20) is the only acceptable response for his disciples. • *Commandment* refers to the OT commands (5:18) as now fulfilled in Christ’s teaching (see 5:21-48). • *the least in the Kingdom of Heaven*: Jesus may mean that such an individual will enter the Kingdom, but only barely and with low status; alternatively, some Jewish evidence suggests that he is referring to damnation (cp. 8:12, where “those for whom the Kingdom was prepared” are eternally excluded).

5:20 *unless your righteousness is better*: Jesus’ disciples must have the substantially new kind of righteousness that Jesus teaches and makes possible (illustrated in 5:21-47 and summed up in 5:48); it is both quantitatively and qualitatively distinct. Just as Jesus

is greater than the Temple (12:6) and Jonah (12:41), so the righteousness of his followers far outstrips that of the *teachers of religious law and the Pharisees* (see 3:7-9).

5:21-47 *You have heard. . . . But I say*: Jesus contrasts his own teaching to six misinterpretations of the law. Each antithesis provides an example of the surpassing righteousness of Jesus. Jesus reveals the will of God as it contrasts with traditions.

5:21 *our ancestors were told*: The expression refers to the traditional interpretation of the teachers of religious law and Pharisees. Though their traditions prohibited *murder*, they did not prohibit hatred. The surpassing righteousness of Jesus demands reconciliation (5:23-24); merely refraining from committing murder is not sufficient (5:22). • *“You must not murder . . .”*: Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17.

5:22 *angry with someone*: Some manuscripts add *without cause*.

say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

²³“So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

²⁵“When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.

Teaching about Adultery

²⁷“You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹So if your eye—even your

good eye—^bcauses you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your hand—even your stronger hand—^bcauses you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Teaching about Divorce

Matt 5:31-32; cp. Matt 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18
³¹“You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’ ³²But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

Teaching about Vows

³³“You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’ ³⁴But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. ³⁵And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not

^ageenna (1067)
 • Matt 5:29
5:25-26
 Matt 18:34-35
 Luke 12:58-59
5:27
^aExod 20:14
^aDeut 5:18
 Matt 19:18
 Mark 10:19
 Luke 18:20
 Rom 13:9
 Jas 2:11
5:29-30
 Matt 18:8-9
 Mark 9:43-47
^bskandalizō (4624)
 • Matt 16:23
^ageenna (1067)
 • Matt 11:23
5:31
^aDeut 24:1
 Matt 19:7
 Mark 10:4
5:32
 1 Cor 7:10-11
5:33
 Lev 19:12
 Num 30:2
 Deut 23:21
5:34
 Isa 66:1
 Matt 23:22
 Jas 5:12
5:35
 Ps 48:2
 Isa 66:1
5:37
 Jas 5:12

• *judgment . . . the court . . . hell*: The second and third punishments are more severe than would have been typical in Jesus’ day, emphasizing the surpassing righteousness of Jesus and his followers (see 5:20). They did not tolerate unrec- onciled relationships or any devaluation of others. • *If you call someone an idiot*: The Greek uses an Aramaic term of contempt: *If you say to your brother, “Reqa.”* The Aramaic term *reqa* means something like “empty head,” and the clause probably means the same as *if you curse someone* (literally *if you say, “You fool!”*; see Jas 2:20). Devaluation of people is a sin that manifests itself in various ways. • *hell*: Greek *Gehenna*; see note on 5:29.

5:23-26 Jesus gives two illustrations of reconciliation in community and society.

5:23 sacrifice: Literally *gift*; also in 5:24.

5:26 the last penny: Greek *the last kodrantes* (i.e., quadrans), the smallest Roman coin (cp. Luke 12:59).

5:27-30 Jesus’ righteousness uncovers sin at a deeper level than the external; he reveals the true intent of the law.

5:27 You must not commit adultery: Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18.

5:29-30 good eye . . . gouge it out . . . stronger hand . . . cut it off: These graphic images call for radical separation from sin. But even self-mutilation, radical as it would be, cannot stop a lustful mind. Jesus is calling for the surpassing righteousness that only he can bring.

5:29 your eye—even your good eye: Literally *your right eye*. • *hell* (Greek *Gehenna*): Gehenna originally referred to a valley outside Jerusalem where some of the kings of Judah worshiped idols and performed human sacrifice by fire (2 Chr 28:3; 33:6; Jer 7:31; 32:35). The site was eventually destroyed by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:10). In the NT, Gehenna describes the place of punishment by God. Unless disciples have surpassing righteousness, they will not enter the Kingdom (5:20) but will be punished eternally (5:22; 23:33).

5:30 your hand—even your stronger hand: Literally *your right hand*.

5:31-32 Jesus challenges the mis- application of the OT provision for *divorce* (see Deut 24:1-4; cp. Matt 19:3-9): Following the rules does not make divorce acceptable. Jesus allows only one legitimate reason for divorce, sexual infidelity, and forbids casual divorce (see also 1 Cor 7:10-11).

5:31 A man can divorce his wife . . . notice of divorce: Deut 24:1. A notice of divorce is a document stating the legal- ity of a divorce. Evidence suggests that such a document permitted remarriage. “The essential formula in the notice of divorce is, ‘Lo, you are free to marry any man.’ . . . The essential formula in a writ of emancipation is, ‘Lo, you are a freedwoman: lo, you belong to yourself’” (*Mishnah Gittin* 9:3).

5:32 The exception clause permits but

does not demand divorce when one partner has *been unfaithful* (see also 19:9). Notably, Jesus does not demand death for the guilty party (see Deut 22:21-22). • The implication seems to be that by divorcing his wife for illegitimate reasons, the man *causes her to commit adultery* by wrongly putting her in a situation where she remarries and so breaks the law. • *anyone who marries a divorced woman*: It is not clear whether Jesus is referring to any woman who is divorced, regardless of the reason, or only to a woman who is divorced without an acceptable reason (unfaithfulness). The underlying assumption in Jewish divorce law was simple: Legitimate divorces permitted remarriage.

5:33-37 Jesus here summarizes the OT teaching on oaths (Lev 19:12; Num 30:2-4; Deut 23:21-23; Ps 50:14; Zech 8:17). The Pharisees had degrees of commitment for oaths—for example, ones that did not mention God were not as binding. Jesus shows that because God is related to all things (*heaven, earth, Jerusalem, my head*; see also 23:16-22), breaking any oath breaks God’s com- mand (see Exod 20:7). The point is that one must be altogether truthful. Jesus’ righteousness elevates the disciple’s everyday yes and no to the level of binding oath. Oaths become superfluous to the honest person (Jas 5:12).

5:33 You must not break your vows . . . to the Lord: Num 30:2.

5:38
^aExod 21:24
^aLev 24:20
^aDeut 19:21
5:39
 Rom 12:17
 1 Cor 6:7
 1 Pet 3:9
5:40
 1 Cor 6:7
5:42
 Deut 15:7-11
5:43
^aLev 19:18
 Rom 13:9
 Gal 5:14
 Jas 2:8
5:44
 Exod 23:4-5
 Prov 25:21
 Luke 23:34
 Acts 7:60
 Rom 12:14, 20
 1 Cor 4:12
5:45
 Eph 5:1
5:48
 Lev 19:2
 Deut 18:13
 1 Pet 1:16
^dteleios (5046)
 • 1 Cor 13:10
6:1-2
 Matt 23:5
6:2
^ehupokritēs (5273)
 • Matt 6:5
6:5
 Luke 18:10-14
^fhupokritēs (5273)
 • Matt 15:7
6:6
 2 Kgs 4:33

say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. ³⁶Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. ³⁷Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

Teaching about Revenge

Matt 5:38-42; cp. Luke 6:27-31

³⁸“You have heard the law that says the pun- ishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. ⁴¹If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. ⁴²Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

Teaching about Love for Enemies

Matt 5:43-48; cp. Luke 6:32-36

⁴³“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶If you love

only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸But you are to be ^dperfect, even as your Father in heaven is ^dperfect.

Teaching about Giving to the Needy

6“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ²When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the ^ehypocrites do—blow- ing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the re- ward they will ever get. ³But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Prayer

Matt 6:9-13 // Luke 11:1-4

⁵“When you pray, don’t be like the ^fhyp- ocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the

5:38-42 The OT permitted proportion- ate retribution (Exod 21:24-25; Deut 19:16-21), which was to prevent punish- ments from far exceeding the severity of the offense. Jesus, however, does not permit personal retaliation at all among his followers. Jesus’ way is not to insist on justice but to find victory through suffering and the cross (1 Pet 2:23). Some have taken this passage as a guide for all of life (including politics). Others understand it merely as the will- ingness to forgo one’s personal rights and to forgive as God has forgiven (see 5:48; 18:23-35). Like the servant in Isa 50:4-9 and 53:7 (see also Matt 12:15-21), Jesus’ followers are to apply the same virtue to honor, possessions, time, or property. Righteousness does not insist on its own way.

5:38 the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’: Literally *the law that says: ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’* Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21.

5:41 Forced labor was a humiliating fact of Roman occupation (see 27:32); Jesus turned it into an occasion for exuberant service to God. This saying shows Jesus’ opposition to Jewish revolutionaries, who advocated violent resistance (see 5:9). • *mile*: Greek

milion (4,854 feet or 1,478 meters).

5:42 See Deut 15:7-11.

5:43-47 Love your neighbor: Lev 19:18. • *hate your enemy*: Jesus is opposing not the OT, but a traditional, though mistaken (cp. Exod 23:4-5), interpreta- tion of the OT. The “hate” clause is not in the OT (but see Ps 139:21-22).

5:44 love your enemies: Some manu- scripts add *Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you*. Cp. Luke 6:27-28.

5:45 By loving all people, Jesus’ follow- ers would not *become* children of God; they would show by their actions that they are indeed God’s *true children*, ac- cording to his nature and will (see Deut 10:18-19).

5:47 If you are kind only to your friends (literally, *If you greet only your brothers*): Jews were instructed to greet Gentiles for the sake of maintaining peaceful relations, but such greetings were not the same as those for “broth- ers”—i.e., fellow Jews.

5:48 This verse ties 5:20-48 together as a unit (see note on 4:23-25). • *you are to be perfect*: The term means maturity and wholeness in response to Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom, and complete consecration to God (19:21;

Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28; 4:12; 1 Jn 4:18). Perfection has love at its core (see Luke 6:36).

6:1 This verse introduces the theme of 6:2-18, that righteousness should not be done for public recognition but as a service to God. • *Good deeds* are acts that conform to God’s pattern for proper behavior: e.g., gift giving (6:2-4), prayer (6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18). Jesus urges secrecy to counteract the human propensity to seek praise for oneself rather than for God (cp. 5:16).

6:2 the hypocrites: See note on 23:13. • *The blowing of trumpets* accompanied major rituals, including public fasts.

6:4 your Father . . . will reward you: Both now and at the final judgment at the end of history (25:31-46).

6:5 When you pray: Jews prayed regularly at 9 AM and 3 PM (see Acts 3:1) and had frequent times of public prayer. Hypocrites deliberately sought to be in public places at such times, to be seen by all. • *the hypocrites*: See note on 23:13.

6:6 go away by yourself: Jesus is not prohibiting corporate prayer (see 18:19-20; Luke 11:2-4), but is instruct- ing his followers to avoid using prayer as a means of drawing attention to themselves.

door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

⁷“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! ⁹Pray like this:

Our ⁸Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
¹⁰May your Kingdom come soon.
 May your will be done on earth,
 as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us today the food we need,
¹²and forgive us our sins,
 as we have forgiven those who sin
 against us.
¹³And don’t let us yield to ^htemptation,
 but rescue us from the evil one.

¹⁴“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Teaching about Fasting

¹⁶“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get.

¹⁷But when you fast, ⁱcomb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Money and Possessions

Matt 6:19-21 // Luke 12:33-34
 Matt 6:22-23 // Luke 11:34-36
 Matt 6:24 // Luke 16:13

¹⁹“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

²²“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

Teaching about Worry

Matt 6:25-34 // Luke 12:22-32

²⁵“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough

6:7
 Eccl 5:1-2

6:9-13
 //Luke 11:2-4

6:9
⁸patēr (3962)
 • Matt 7:11

6:10
 Matt 26:39, 42

6:11
 Prov 30:8
 John 6:32

6:13
 Luke 22:40; 22:46
 2 Thes 3:3
^hpeirasmos (3986)
 • Mark 1:13

6:14
 Mark 11:25
 Col 3:13

6:15
 Matt 18:21-35

6:16
 Isa 58:4-14

6:17
^laleiphō (0218)
 • Mark 6:13

6:18
 Matt 6:4, 6

6:19-21
 //Luke 12:33-34

6:19
 Prov 23:4
 Jas 5:2-3

6:20
 Matt 19:21
 Mark 10:21
 Luke 18:22
 1 Tim 6:19

6:22-23
 //Luke 11:34-36

6:23
 Matt 20:15
 Mark 7:22

6:7-8 God cannot be coaxed by endless repetition. The Lord’s Prayer (6:9-13) is a model of simplicity in contrast with pagan wordiness.

6:9-13 The Lord’s Prayer is similar in form to a common Jewish prayer (the *qaddish*). Jesus gave this prayer to his followers as a succinct expression of their new faith.

6:9 *Pray like this:* In contrast to the vain repetition of pagan prayers (6:7-8), “the Lord’s Prayer” is a model of simplicity. • *Jews rarely addressed God as Father*, but Jesus did so in every prayer but one (Mark 15:34). • *may your name be kept holy:* God’s name is profaned by the sin of his people (Isa 29:22-24; Jer 34:15-16; Ezek 39:7; Amos 2:7).

6:10 In praying for God’s *Kingdom to come soon*, Jesus’ disciples pray for his justice, righteousness, peace, and mercy to be established. • *Outside God’s will*, no person will be permitted into God’s presence (7:21; 12:50; 21:28-32). • *on earth, as it is in heaven:* This probably refers to all of the first three petitions, not just the third.

6:11 *Give us today the food we need* (or *Give us today our food for the day*; or *Give us today our food for tomorrow*):

The disciple, after confidently asking God to provide for daily needs, can go about Kingdom ministry relieved of care (6:25-34).

6:12 *as we have forgiven* (see also 6:14-15; 18:21-35): Forgiving others is a reflection of a repentant, regenerate heart, which makes our own forgiveness possible. Those who have experienced God’s forgiveness will forgive. Jesus implies that those who are unwilling to forgive have not perceived God’s mercy, and perhaps have never truly repented.

6:13 *And don’t let us yield to temptation* (or *And keep us from being tested*): Just as Jesus was tested (4:1-11), temptation will test the disciple’s character. Jesus urges prayer for God’s enabling to stand the test (see 26:41; Ps 141:4). • *from the evil one:* Or *from evil*. The alternate reading refers to sin in general; the NLT reading refers to Satan, the tempter (see Jas 1:13). • Some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*; this doxology was added later (probably based on 1 Chr 29:11-13) to tailor the prayer to the liturgy.

6:16 Prayer and fasting are frequently connected (Lev 23:27-32; Neh 9:1-2; Zech 7:3-5; 8:19; Luke 18:12). The

practice had been abused before Jesus’ time (Isa 58:3-12). • *the hypocrites:* See note on 23:13.

6:20 *treasures in heaven:* This was a common image for Jews of Jesus’ day; doing God’s commands became virtually equivalent to accumulating treasures with God. The context (6:19; Luke 12:33) suggests that Jesus primarily had acts of charity in mind.

6:22 *Your eye is like a lamp:* It gives light to the *body* and so enlightens the entire person. • *Healthy* means morally healthy, with simple, wholehearted devotion to God (6:24). Here it connotes generosity.

6:24 The term for *money* (traditionally *mammon*) is an Aramaic term for profits or material possessions. Since God tolerates no rivals, Jesus repeatedly warns of the danger of accumulating riches (13:22; 19:16-30; 26:14-16; 27:3-10; 28:11-15), which can be an idol (see Eph 5:5; Col 3:5). We must trust God to meet our needs (4:3-4; 6:8, 11, 25-34; 7:7-11; 10:9-14; 14:15-21; 15:32-38), and the community of disciples is to be mutually supportive (6:2-4; 10:40-42; 19:21; 23:23-24; 25:31-46; 26:6-13; 27:57-61).

6:25-34 Jesus taught an anxiety-free existence of simple trust in God for

6:24
 //Luke 16:13

6:25-34
 //Luke 12:22-31

6:25
 Phil 4:6
 1 Tim 6:6, 8
 1 Pet 5:7

6:26
 Job 38:41

6:29
 1 Kgs 10:4-7

6:30
 Matt 8:26; 14:31; 16:8

6:32
 Matt 6:8
 Luke 12:30

6:33
 Ps 37:4, 25
 Mark 10:29, 30

6:34
 Exod 16:4

7:1-2
 //Luke 6:37-42
 Rom 2:1-3; 14:4
 1 Cor 4:5; 5:12
 Jas 4:11-12

7:3-5
 //Luke 6:37-38, 41-42

Matt 7:21-28; 8:26;
 13:58; 14:31; 16:8;
 17:20; 22:34-40
 Luke 12:28
 Jas 1:6-7

food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, ²⁹yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³²These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your

needs. ³³Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Wisdom: Do Not Judge Others

Matt 7:1-5 // Luke 6:37-42

7“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ²For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

³“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? ⁴How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? ⁵Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

Little Faith (6:30)

The term “little faith” and related Greek terms are used five times in Matthew (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20) and only once elsewhere (Luke 12:28; cp. Jas 1:6-7). The term refers to a specific event rather than to ongoing and permanent failure. In Matthew, this is due either to lack of knowledge on the part of Jesus’ disciples (16:8) or to acting without faith in a particular incident. If someone always lacks faith, it would be described as “unbelief” (see 13:58). As examples of “little faith,” the disciples in 6:30 do not understand their value or God’s providential protection; in 8:26 and 14:31 they do not understand God’s protection in the midst of physical danger; in 16:8 they do not understand Jesus’ saying regarding yeast; and in 17:20 they are not able to exorcise a demon. These are instances of failure to be consistent with a calling rather than of having no faith whatsoever.

The term *faith* reflects at least two ideas: *trust* (personal reliance upon the Lord) and *belief* (affirmation of truths). Matthew’s concern with “little faith” is about lack of trust by a follower of Jesus in a specific situation, rather than a failure to have basic belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Jesus wants his followers not only to believe in him, but also to trust, love, and obey him (see 7:21-28; 22:34-40).

provisions. Jesus’ disciples had abandoned all (4:18-22; 9:9; 10:5-14); Jesus gave them comforting reassurance that God would provide for their needs.

6:26 Jesus’ logic progresses from lesser to greater: If the Father tends to *birds* (the lesser), and the disciple is *far more valuable to him* (the greater), then he will certainly tend to the disciples’ needs (see also 10:29-31).

6:30 *Little faith* results from the failure to understand one’s value to God and the extent of God’s providential protection.

6:32 *unbelievers* (literally *Gentiles*): Those who fail to know God and follow his will (see also 20:19). • *your heavenly Father already knows:* Prayer does not inform God about *needs*; it

expresses trust in his provision.

6:33 Here Jesus gives the positive alternative to worrying. Single-minded commitment to God and seeking his reign through Christ (see 6:19-24) must be the primary concern of Jesus’ disciples. • Some manuscripts do not include *of God*.

7:1 Jesus calls for people to stop oppressively controlling others in the name of pastoral concern. Mercy is a dominant theme in Jesus’ teaching and practice (9:9-13; 12:1-7), but not at the expense of clear opposition to sin (see 18:15-20; 23:13-33). The judgment Jesus prohibits often involves rigorous scrutiny of trivial matters (see 23:23-24). God alone has the right to judge (see Jas 4:11-12). • *you will not be judged:* This might refer to God’s judgment at the

end of history (see 5:7). God measures us by our treatment of others (see 6:12; 18:21-35).

7:2 *For you will be treated as you treat others: Or For God will judge you as you judge others.* • *The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged:* Or *The measure you give will be the measure you get back.*

7:3-5 Jesus exhorts his disciples to minister to others rather than condemning them. Reference to a *speck* (speck of dust, chip of wood) versus a *log* in the eye is hyperbolic imagery, intended to heighten the contrast (see 5:29; 23:23-24; Mic 6:6-8).

7:3 *your friend’s eye:* Literally *your brother’s eye*; also in 7:5.

7:4 *your friend:* Literally *your brother*.

Wisdom: Do Not Throw Pearls to Pigs

6“Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

Wisdom: Effective Prayer

Matt 7:7-11 // Luke 11:9-13

7“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. **8**For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

9“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? **10**Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! **11**So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

Wisdom: The Golden Rule

Matt 7:12 // Luke 6:31

12“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

Call to Decision: The Narrow Gate

Matt 7:13-14; cp. Luke 13:24

13“You can enter God’s Kingdom only

through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. **14**But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

The Tree and Its Fruit

Matt 7:15-20; cp. Matt 12:33-35 // Luke 6:43-45

15“Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. **16**You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17**A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. **18**A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. **19**So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. **20**Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

True Disciples

Matt 7:21-23; cp. Luke 13:25-27

21“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. **22**On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ **23**But I will reply,

7:7-11
//Luke 11:9-13

7:7
Matt 21:22
Mark 11:24
John 14:13-14; 15:7;
16:23-24
Jas 1:5-6
1 Jn 3:21-22; 5:14-15

7:11
Jas 1:17
¹patēr (3962)
• Rom 4:11

7:12
Luke 6:31
Rom 13:8-10
Gal 5:14
¹nomos (3551)
• Matt 23:23

7:13
//Luke 13:24

7:14
John 14:6
Acts 14:22

7:15
Jer 23:16
Matt 24:11, 24
Luke 6:26
Acts 20:29
Rom 16:17
2 Pet 2:1
1 Jn 4:1

7:16-20
Matt 12:33
//Luke 6:43-44

7:21-23
//Luke 13:25-27

7:21
Luke 6:46
Jas 1:22

7:22
Acts 19:13-15

7:6 Rabbis often referred to important ideas or Scripture verses as *pearls*. The mysteries of the Kingdom (13:11) are *holy* (see Exod 29:33; Lev 2:3; 22:10-16; Num 18:8-10). • **Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy:** Literally *Don’t give the sacred to dogs*. Jews often referred to Gentiles as dogs (see 15:26; see Ps 22:16, 20) or *pigs* because those animals were unclean (Lev 11). Some interpreters understand this statement as warning that the message of the Kingdom would not be well received by many Gentiles. Others see it as a warning about offering the message of the Kingdom to the resistant Jewish leaders (see 5:20; 10:11-14; see also Heb 10:29) or to unbelievers in general (see 18:17; see also 1 Cor 2:13-16; 2 Pet 2:21-22).

7:7-8 This passage teaches persistence in prayer, but Jesus does not teach that God will grant extravagant desires. God’s people are to seek daily provision and spiritual blessing (6:10-11).

7:12 the law and the prophets: The teaching of Jesus in 5:21–7:6 is the goal and true expression of the law of Moses. Love is at the core of discipleship (see also Gal 5:13-14, 18).

7:13-27 The Sermon on the Mount closes with a call to decide about Jesus and his teaching (see 4:23; 9:35). Those

who hear Jesus’ message regarding the Kingdom must follow him to obtain eternal life or disown him and experience God’s condemnation. There is no middle way (Deut 30:15-20; Ps 1; Prov 12:28; Jer 21:8).

7:13 Entering *through the narrow gate* refers to the decision to follow Jesus as the Messiah. The *wide gate* and *broad highway* refer to the decision not to follow Jesus and his teachings. • **The highway to hell** (literally *The road that leads to destruction*): The reference to hell means being thrown into the fire, not entering the Kingdom of Heaven, being banished from the presence of Jesus, and being ruined (7:19-23, 27).

7:14 *Few* people come to the light that is revealed in Christ (see 19:23; 20:16; 22:14; see also John 3:19; 6:66-71).

7:15-20 *False prophets* speak what people want to hear rather than calling people to live according to God’s will. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and 18:21-22 set standards for evaluating a prophet’s truthfulness: His words must conform to God’s word, and his predictions must come true. Jesus unpacks the first requirement: A prophet’s actions must match his words in order to be believable; accordingly, a true prophet’s actions will also match God’s word. Just as the *fruit* indicates the

nature of a *tree*, so one’s life indicates either a regenerate or unregenerate heart. False prophets are expected at the end of the age (see 24:11, 24; Acts 20:28-35; Rev 13:11-18; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). In order not to be deceived, Christians must be discerning (see 1 Cor 12:10; 14:29; 1 Thes 5:21; 1 Jn 4:1-3; Rev 2:20).

7:16-17 *Good and bad fruit* refers to moral behavior (see 3:8, 10; 12:33-37; 13:8; 21:43; Gal 5:19-23).

7:18 Spiritual rebirth is absolutely necessary if one is to *produce the good fruit* that Jesus demands. Good works flow from faith; good works and faith cannot be separated (see Jas 2:14-26).

7:21 *The will of my Father* is expressed in Jesus’ teachings (see also 12:50; 21:28-32; Rom 2:13; Jas 1:22-27).

7:22 *judgment day:* The OT concept is the “day of the Lord,” when God will come to rescue the faithful and judge the oppressors (Isa 13–14; Joel 2; Zeph 1:14-16). In Jesus’ teaching, this day is when all will be judged for their response to him (see 10:15; 11:20-24; 12:36; 24:19-50; 25:13, 31-46; Acts 17:31; Rom 2:16). • Neither charismatic gifts nor public accomplishments in Jesus’ *name* will necessarily bring God’s acceptance; the decisive issue is obedience (7:21).

7:23
Matt 25:12, 41

7:24-27
//Luke 6:47-49

7:24
2 Tim 2:19
Jas 1:22
¹petra (4073)
• Matt 16:18

7:26
Jas 1:23-24

7:27
Ezek 13:10-12

7:28
Matt 13:54
Mark 1:22; 6:2
Luke 4:32
John 7:46

8:1-4
//Mark 1:40-44
//Luke 5:12-14

8:4
Lev 14:1-32
¹marturion (3142)
• Luke 9:5

8:5-13
//Luke 7:1-10

8:5-7
John 4:43-54

8:8
Ps 107:20

‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

Building on a Solid Foundation

Matt 7:24-27 // Luke 6:47-49

24“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. **25**Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. **26**But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. **27**When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

Response to the Sermon

Matt 7:28-29; cp. Mark 1:21-22 // Luke 4:31-32

28When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, **29**for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

Narrative: Jesus’ Ministry (8:1–9:34)

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

Matt 8:1-4 // Mark 1:40-45 // Luke 5:12-16

8Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. **2**Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and

7:23 *I never knew you:* These people were never converted, even though they did great things in God’s name. They *break God’s laws* through rejection of the Father’s will as taught by Jesus. Having never known Christ, they never learned to do what he commanded.

7:24-27 The emphasis in this whole sermon (5:3–7:27) is on doing what Jesus teaches by walking in righteousness (5:20). To hear and not obey is to choose the wide gate and the broad highway that lead to destruction (Jas 1:22-25; 2:14-26). Decision is necessary in light of what has been revealed. See Lev 26; Deut 28; 30.

7:24 *A wise . . . person* perceives that Jesus is the fulfillment of OT promises, willingly submits to him, and walks the path that ultimately leads to blessing (5:3-12; 7:13-14). • **Building a house** directly on *rock* provides a much stronger foundation than would a dry, sandy riverbed or floodplain (7:26).

7:25-27 The storm is a metaphor for God’s all-knowing judgment (see Jer 23:19; Ezek 1:4).

7:28-29 Jesus began teaching only his disciples (5:1), but *crowds* had followed up the mountainside as well. • Unlike the *teachers of religious law*, whose authority was derived from the Scriptures they quoted or from the teachings of previous scholars, Jesus taught *with*

real—that is, direct—*authority*. He quoted Scripture in the Sermon, but his teaching was based on his own authority as the Messiah.

8:1–9:34 Here the Kingdom of God is manifested with supernatural power (see 4:23-25; 11:2-6). It reaches people who had been excluded from the blessing of God: Gentiles, lepers, blind people, sick women, demoniacs, tax collectors, those with a chronic hemorrhage, and the dead. Jesus shows compassion, but the religious leaders are provoked to opposition. Jesus calls his followers to faith and discipleship.

8:2 *Leprosy* refers to various skin diseases. Lepers were ceremonially unclean; they were excluded from society unless they became symptom-free and a priest pronounced them *clean* (see 8:4; Lev 14:2-32). On some occasions, leprosy was a judgment from God (Num 12:9-15; 2 Kgs 5:27; 15:5).

8:3 *Be healed:* Jesus’ healing of lepers was tangible evidence of the Kingdom in his person and ministry (11:2-6).

8:4 The leper’s healing would be a *public testimony*—either that the religious leaders were wrong not to trust in the Messiah (10:18) or that Jesus was not against the *law of Moses* (5:17). • **the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy:** See Lev 14:2-32.

knelt before him. “Lord,” the man said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.”

3Jesus reached out and touched him. “**I am willing,**” he said. “**Be healed!**” And instantly the leprosy disappeared. **4**Then Jesus said to him, “**Don’t tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed.**”

The Faith of a Roman Officer

Matt 8:5-13 // Luke 7:1-10

5When Jesus returned to Capernaum, a Roman officer came and pleaded with him, **6**“Lord, my young servant lies in bed, paralyzed and in terrible pain.”

7Jesus said, “**I will come and heal him.**”

8But the officer said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. **9**I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.”

8:5-13 Jesus once again ministered to the marginalized or ostracized. The centurion was a Gentile soldier, and ministry to him would have evoked strong resentment from both the nationalistic and the separatist wings of Jewish society.

8:5 *Capernaum* is located on the Sea of Galilee, about two and a half miles west of the Jordan River outlet. In Jesus’ day, it was a prosperous fishing village. Standing at a crucial junction on the Great Trunk Road linking Mesopotamia and Egypt, it was an international village, and much of Jesus’ Galilean ministry was based there (e.g., 4:13; 8:14-17). • **a Roman officer** (Greek *a centurion*; similarly in 8:8, 13): A centurion, one of sixty commanders in a legion, commanded 100 Roman soldiers (see also Mark 15:39; Acts 10:1; 27:1).

8:6 *young servant:* Or *child*; also in 8:13.

8:7 *I will come* (cp. Acts 10:9-35; Gal 2:11-14): Some have rendered this as a question: *Shall I [a Jew] come [into the house of a Gentile, risking defilement] and heal him?*

8:8-10 The centurion recognized Jesus’ *authority*. From his own experience, he knew that when he gave orders, they were quickly obeyed. He perceived that God had entrusted Jesus with authority to work miracles. The centurion’s