

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **MATTHEW LESSON 1 (Chapters 1-3)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21). Welcome to our study of the Book of Matthew. Matthew ushers us into the first phase of the New Testament—the gospel accounts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John teach us about the life of Christ, what Jesus did, how He died, and especially how He came to save men from their sins. As we think about the gospel of Matthew in particular, we see that Matthew is a Jew writing to Jews about the greatest Jew Who ever lived. Matthew is all about the teaching of the King, Jesus Christ. In fact, one of the key words in the book of Matthew is “kingdom.” Matthew uses the idea of the kingdom fifty-five times. He talks about the kingdom of heaven, which is a unique phrase that only Matthew uses. Thus, he is going to stress to the Jews that Jesus is the King of a new kingdom—a kingdom that came from God, that had been foreordained from eternity, and of which Jesus is the Head. Matthew, knowing that he was writing to Jews, used the only way he knew to reach these people. Matthew went back to the Old Testament over and over again, drawing out prophecies of Scripture that pointed to Jesus so he could say, “that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...” In essence, Matthew was showing the Jews—via their own Scriptures—that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He met every prophecy and every qualification necessary. So, the Book of Matthew is all about the life and teaching of the King, Jesus Christ.

In our study of Matthew 1-3, we will be introduced to the birth of the King. Matthew begins in Matthew 1 by discussing how Jesus was of royal lineage. This might seem somewhat odd to us, but to the Jews this would be the most fundamental step in showing that Jesus had the right to the throne of David. If Jesus was not of royal lineage, then there was no way that the Jews would accept Him. It is important to us, too, because it shows us the fulfillment of prophecy, and that Jesus is a descendant of David. As such, He has the right to sit on the throne of David. Matthew 1:1 opens the book by saying, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” Beginning with the two most important figures he knew—David and Abraham—Matthew stresses the correct lineage of Christ. The lineage is important for at least two reasons. First, it stresses that Jesus has the right to the throne and to the promises because He **is** the Son of David. He therefore has the right to succeed to the throne. Second, because Jesus also fulfills prophecy, this shows us that He carries out what the Old Testament said about Him in every way. For example, in Genesis 49:10 the Old Testament said that a kingly one would arise out of Judah. In Genesis 12:1-3, we are told that one of the seed of Abraham would bless all nations. That one—of the lineage of Abraham, from the seed of David, and out of the tribe of Judah—is none other than Jesus Himself. Thus, Matthew begins with the two great figures of Abraham and David. It is important, therefore, that we think about these two men for just a moment.

Matthew begins by talking about Abraham because of the important link that he had to the Jewish people. Abraham was the father of the Jewish faith. In Genesis 12, God had told Abraham to arise and go to a new country. Because of Abraham's unfeigned faith in God, he followed Him by going where God told him to go. God said in that text that He would bless Abraham and make his name great, and that in his seed "all nations would be blessed." Who is the seed? Why was it important for Matthew to begin by talking about Jesus as the Son of Abraham? We learn from Galatians 3:15-18 that **Jesus** is the seed ("not 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,'" who is Christ"). About whom was God speaking in the long ago in Genesis 12? Was it the descendants (plural) of Abraham? No, not at all. He was speaking of Jesus, the Christ. This is why Matthew begins by talking about Abraham. Abraham was the man to whom the promised blessing was given (both in Genesis 12:1-3 and in Genesis 22:18). Notice the promise. "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." This was the promise that was given initially to Abraham, but it also was given to Isaac, showing that Abraham's descendants would be the ones who saw the promise come true in Christ. As we think about God's promise, we can see that it was dependent on Abraham, Isaac, and their descendants obeying the voice of God. So here we see the promise to Abraham and the promise to Isaac ultimately being fulfilled in Jesus. It would be Jesus—not Abraham or Isaac—Who would bless all nations. There is a powerful and important point here. If people are going to be blessed by God, and if they are going to enjoy the benefits that God wishes to give them, they must understand that such blessings and benefits come only through Jesus. There is no hope, there is no joy, there is no peace, and there is no comfort outside of Christ. Jesus said in Himself in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." In Ephesians 1:3, we are told that all spiritual blessings are found only "in Christ." We cannot be blessed in Abraham. We cannot be blessed in Isaac. We cannot be blessed in either Moses or the Old Law. Rather, Jesus is the One Who gives us our hope.

As we think about Abraham being an important part in the lineage of Christ, we also note (in James 2:23) that Abraham is one of very few people who is referred to as "the friend of God." Wouldn't it be wonderful to have someone in **your** family's lineage who was referred to as "the friend of God"? That is part of the importance of Abraham in the lineage of Christ. The Jews had placed Abraham on a pedestal. And to say that Jesus came from the lineage of Abraham was a great tribute to Abraham. But more important, it was a tribute to those who would be Christ's followers (i.e., Christians) down the road.

But there is another important name on which we need to focus for just a moment—the phrase "Son of David." In Matthew 1:1, Jesus is referred to as "the Son of David." This is another very important part of the lineage of Christ, because David was known as the greatest king to ever live. According to Acts 13:22, there was no king greater than David. In fact, in Acts 2, even though David was a great king, and was held in great respect, David is quoted as actually referring to Jesus as "my Lord." So, even though David was a great king, David spoke of Christ (through prophecy) as his Lord. Here, then, we see David as an important king. But David refers to Jesus as being One Who is greater than he. David being in the lineage of Christ is very important, because the Messiah was predicted to arise out of the lineage of David. The Jews knew this. As they studied the Old Testament Scriptures, they knew that this Messiah was going to come through the lineage of David. For example, notice 2 Samuel 7:12-13—"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Here is God's promise to David. God said that He would set up "a seed after you." God would establish His throne, and He would establish a kingdom that would "last

forever.” Of whom is this speaking? It was none other than Jesus, for in Luke 1:32-33 (in the parallel account of Jesus’ birth) a prophecy was given to Mary that Jesus would be “great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” Jesus meets in every aspect the qualities of being the Son of Abraham and the Son of David. He has every right to be the King of the Jews. We need to know today that, in a very practical way, Jesus must be the King of our lives. What does it matter if we say today, “Yes, I agree that Jesus is the King of the Jews, and I even agree that Jesus is a King today?” Here is how it matters. If Jesus is King, then the practical lesson is that we need to allow Him to rule in our lives. We need to let Him be the King and Lord of our lives. In Acts 2:36, Peter preached, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” The idea of “lord” or “king” carries with it the idea of ownership or of being a master. It also carries with it the idea for us of a subject who is subservient. Therefore, if Jesus is King, then we must let Him be King of our lives, and we must live our lives in such a way that we show respect, that we show ourselves to be servants, and that we pay tribute to the King—just as Abraham did to God by obeying His voice and doing what He said to do.

In the lineage of Jesus, there are some other names that we find significant. Specifically, there are two Gentile women who are mentioned in the lineage. These women were not of Jewish descent, and did not carry any great power or prestige like Abraham or David, yet they found for themselves a place in the lineage of Christ. The two women about whom I’m speaking are Rahab and Ruth, Gentile women in the lineage of Christ. These women are known in the contexts of Judges and Ruth for their great faith. In fact, we see their faith mentioned several times. In the Book of Judges, spies enter the city of Jericho. Rahab hides them and helps them escape, even though she knows that she could lose her life. She told them that she had heard about their God, and that she would help them. Rahab was included in the lineage of Christ, even though she was not of the best background. She became a woman of great faith who trusted in God and helped the plan of God, even if she did not understand it at the time. Ruth is another woman of great faith who finds herself in the lineage of Christ. She was the daughter-in-law of Naomi. Their husbands had died, and they were now alone together. It is a very interesting scene. In Ruth 1, Naomi tells Ruth to return to her land and her people. Ruth then says, “Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” (vs. 16). As we think about these women, it ought to encourage us to know that even people who may not be as well known as Abraham or David still were able to play a very important role in God’s plan. “Who knows whether you may have been called to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14). If we will have faith in God, trust Him, and do what He wants us to do, He can use us for great things today (such as reaching out to the lost or being an encouragement to those who are around us).

One of the most important pieces of information for which the Jews would have been looking concerns the virgin birth of Jesus. There are two passages that deal with this—Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22-23. Let’s notice both of these passages. Isaiah promised 750 years before Christ was born, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” The fulfillment of this is one of the strongest points in Matthew 1. He shows that Jesus is the very fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy.

“So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, God with us” (Mt. 1:22-23).

When, in Matthew 1:21, the angel told Mary, “You shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins,” it was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. In Matthew 1:18ff., Joseph is betrothed to Mary, but learns that she is pregnant. Being a just man, and not wanting to cause her any public shame, Joseph was going to put her away in a private manner. But an angel told him, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.” This shows us that all of these events were a part of God’s plan, that they were a fulfillment of Scripture, and that we should have faith in Jesus as the Savior. Jesus is Immanuel—“God with us.” Perhaps we sometimes do not understand the importance of what that means. God did not send a prophet, a mere servant, or an angel. Jesus Christ Himself—God in the flesh—came to this Earth, was born of a virgin, walked the land of Palestine, lived, hungered, and thirsted, just like we do, and He died on a cross for each and every one of us. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is seen as being God in the flesh. The Bible says in John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Who is “the Word”? John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” As we think about Jesus being God in the flesh, it teaches us that God loved us so much that He sent His only Son. Part of the Godhead came to live on Earth to teach us and ultimately to die for us. Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus “was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.” If you want to talk about love, here it is. God left Heaven. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 8:9, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Jesus was in Heaven, but left, came to this Earth, lived among men, and died for His own creation. The Son—part of the Godhead—gave up His equality with God (Phil. 2:5-9). He left the realms of Heaven (where we are trying to go) all because He loved us so much. Matthew 1 gets us off to the right start by teaching us about Jesus being of the correct lineage, as well as showing us the wonderful love of God in the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham.

Matthew 2 then introduces us to the birth of Christ and how it is in accordance with promise and prophecy. Matthew refers to two prophecies, each of which would have been very important to the Jews. Micah 5:2 prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. We find the fulfillment of that in Matthew 2:1,5-6. At the time of the census, Mary was in labor, and as a result gave birth in Bethlehem—just as the Scripture promised. Hosea 11:1 (“Out of Egypt I called My son”) is another passage that is fulfilled in Matthew 2. After the birth of Jesus, Herod finds out about the birth of the Christ-child. He views this as a threat to His kingdom, and thus he orders that the male babies born around that time should be put to death. Hosea 11:1 is fulfilled in Matthew 2:13-15 when Joseph took his family to Egypt to escape Herod’s edict. Jeremiah 31:15 gives us more insight into this passage as we see the daughters of Jerusalem weeping and moaning because of the death of those children (reported in Matthew 2:16-18). Jesus (as prophesied in the Old Testament) was able to escape the slaughter of the innocents, but there were many who did not. Isaiah 11:1-2 is fulfilled in Matthew 2:23. We see here that Jesus is of the Nazarene branch. As such, He was the one Who was separated to do God’s will, and a special promise was made of Jesus (that He would save His people from their sins).

When we consider Jesus’ birth, there is something else of importance that we need to consider. In the Bible, Christians are never commanded to remember the birth of Jesus. Christmas may be a wonderful holiday and a good time to give gifts (something we all enjoy). But let’s remember that the Bible does not command us to remember the birth of Jesus. Many people have turned Christmas into a time to remember the birth of Jesus—as though

the Bible teaches us to do that. There is nothing wrong, per se, in remembering the birth of Jesus. But the Bible does not say that we are to do this as an act of worship. And it certainly does not say that we are to do it on December 25th. If you read the Bible, you will see that it does not tell you either the time of the year or the day on which Jesus was born. In fact, some evidence (like shepherds being out in the fields, etc.) suggests that Jesus was not even born during wintertime. Regardless, what does the Bible tell Christians that we **are** to remember? The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11:26 that we are to proclaim the Lord's **death** until He comes again. In Acts 20:7, the Scriptures teach that on the first day of the week Christians came together to break bread and to remember what Jesus did for them via His death. So, while the birth of Jesus is an important starting point in the plan of God, it is the death of Christ that we are commanded to remember each first day of the week. Nowhere in the Bible are we taught to remember the birth of Jesus as a religious holiday. That has been invented by men, and is not authorized by God.

But there is another powerful lesson that we learn from Matthew 2—specifically verses 2 through 6. Wise men saw the star in the sky and followed it. They found Jesus the Messiah. There is a wonderful lesson that we can learn from that. It is very simple: When wise men look for Jesus, they **can** find Him. Oh how true that is for us today. When wise men look for Jesus, **they can find Him!** How can they do that? They can look for Him within the pages of the Bible. When people who have an honest heart, and who want to do God's will, look for Jesus with spiritual eyes, they will not go to Palestine to look for Him. Rather, they will get out their Bibles and search for what they need to know about Christ. Wise men will always find Jesus in the Bible. But that is the only place you will find the Savior. You will not find Him in a gentle whisper in the middle of the night. You will not find Him in some church building today (as many might suggest). You will find Jesus in the Bible. And you can obey His Word and do His will just as God wants you to—by searching God's Word and doing what the Bible teaches.

However, there is another important aspect at the beginning of Christ's life, which we find in Matthew 3. It has to do with John the Baptist and all that he did. John is very important in the greater scheme of Christ's ministry because he prepared the way for Jesus. In Matthew 3:2, John cries out, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." This seems to be the sum of what John preached. It was prophesied in the Book of Isaiah that a forerunner would come "to prepare the way of the Lord." How did John do that? It was by preaching about repentance in order to get the people ready for Christ's arrival. This is why John preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." John repeated that over and over. Thus, his message was one intended to change people's hearts. It was a powerful message then, and it still is a part of the message of Christ today. Repentance is demanded if we are going to follow Jesus. We must be willing to change our evil ways. In Joel 2:13, "Rend your hearts, not your garments." Repentance is not about an outward tearing of clothes or an outward sign of sorrow. Repentance is about changing what's on the inside so that we make our will like God's will. In Acts 3:19, Peter preached, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Jesus Himself said in Luke 13:3, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." John prepared the way for Jesus by preaching repentance. It is interesting that in Matthew 3 and in Luke 3, as John preaches the idea of repentance, certain people came out to John to be baptized. But some of those, we know, were Jewish leaders. They apparently came out to be baptized just because everyone else was doing it. But John says, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt. 3:7-8). From that we learn that true repentance bears fruit as we are willing to change our lives. We must be willing to say, "I am no longer going to live in sin. The things I used to do that were not right, I will do no longer."

Another very important part in the early ministry of Jesus also is found in Matthew 3—Jesus' baptism by John. Jesus came to John to be baptized, but John did not feel worthy to carry out such a task. Jesus said, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (vs. 15). In Matthew 3, we see John baptizing Christ. After the baptism of Jesus, notice what is said in Matthew 3:17—"Suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Even though Jesus had no sin (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21), He submitted to the will of God "to fulfill all righteousness," and was baptized by John. Baptism is important in the New Testament plan of salvation because we all sin. The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Although Jesus had no sin, He submitted to God and was baptized. Today, since we all sin, we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Having believed, we then must repent and change our lives in order to make things right with God. Then we must confess Christ as the Son of God (Mt. 10:32-33). And, yes, we must be baptized for the remission of sins. Jesus said it so plainly in Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Matthew 1 teaches us to glorify the King of kings and Lord of lords, even from His birth.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MATTHEW LESSON 1 (CHAPTERS 1-3)

1. In Matthew 1:21, an angel speaks to Mary to tell her that her son will “save His people from their sins.” According to that verse, what was Mary to name her son?
2. Matthew 1:1 speaks of Christ as the “son of Abraham.” Why was it important for Matthew to get over to his readers that Christ had descended from Abraham?
3. Matthew 1:1 speaks of Christ as the “son of David.” Why was it important for Matthew to get over to his readers that Christ had descended from David?
4. Abraham was told in Genesis 12:3, “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” According to Galatians 3:16, what was that blessing?
5. According to Ephesians 1:3, is the blessing mentioned in Genesis 12:3 physical or spiritual?
6. According to Ephesians 1:3, where is the blessing to be found?
7. According to 2 Samuel 7:12-13, would King David himself be (or see) the blessing promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?
8. According to 2 Samuel 7:13, what was going to be established in the future?
9. According to 2 Samuel 7:13, how long would the thing mentioned in question #8 above last?
10. According to Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:36, what is Jesus Christ?
11. Name the two Gentile women who are included in Christ’s lineage in Matthew 1.
12. According to Isaiah 7:14, what was prophesied to happen in the future?
13. Isaiah 7:14 mentions a specific name. What is that name, and what is its meaning?
14. Explain the connection between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22-23.
15. John 1:1-3 states, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” According to John 1:14, who was “the Word”?
16. What prophecy is found in Micah 5:2?
17. What is the connection between Isaiah 11:1-2 and Matthew 2:23?
18. According to Matthew 3:2, what did John the Baptist preach?
19. Where in the Bible are Christians commanded to celebrate the birth of Christ?
20. According to 1 Corinthians 11:26, what are Christians commanded to celebrate?