

MATTHEW

Lesson 1 w/Answers

Matthew Chapters 1-2

We begin a brand new study, the study of the book of Matthew. In this lesson, we will look at the lineage and birth of Christ, and sort out some old myths about the Nativity story.

Matthew used his extensive knowledge of Old Testament scriptures in his preaching. We will see why our having a good knowledge of these scriptures as well will help us better understand the impact of Christ on the Jews of the day and the growth of the early church. The Christians at that time only had the "Old Testament" as their "scriptures", and yet the evidence that Christ was the true Messiah was so overwhelming that it gave birth to the church. A solid grounding in the Old Testament and prophecy enables us to clearly see that Christ is indeed our promised Savior!

Matthew wrote this gospel to show the Jews that Christ was the King, the Messiah, the Savior; and in doing so, he penned a gospel full of insight regarding how to live the Christian life. Matthew's gospel is packed with practical instructions from Christ on how we are to live and conduct ourselves as His followers. Our study will teach us much about His kingdom, the Church, and living in the midst of a lost world.

Covering everything from Jesus' lineage to His Second Coming, Matthew's gospel is an exciting and powerful one, and one that has great relevance for us today.

Read Matthew Chapters 1 and 2 and consider the following:

1. Let's start by debunking a few of the Christmas, or Nativity, myths. After reading the story of Christ's birth, answer the following questions. Be sure to cite the verse in which you found the answer.
 - a. What was Mary riding on when she arrived in Bethlehem?
 - i. ANSWER: The Bible doesn't tell us. The assumption is that she was riding a donkey, but we are not actually told.
 - b. What did the innkeeper actually say to Mary and Joseph?
 - i. ANSWER: Absolutely nothing. In Luke Chapter 2, verse 7, we read that "she wrapped him swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."
 - c. How many Magi visited the baby Jesus?
 - i. ANSWER: No one knows, and in point of fact, the Magi came much later after Jesus' birth and not when he was a baby. They visited him in "a house," and based on what they told Herod, Jesus was probably two years old, or close to it. No Magi visited the manger. Note also that in Chapter 2 of Matthew, Herod says "Go and search carefully for the Child.", He didn't tell them to look for a baby in a manger.
 - d. Where did the Magi visit Jesus?
 - i. ANSWER: In Chapter 2, verse 11, Matthew tells us that the Magi, "...after coming into the house...", thus indicating Jesus' at that time. Of course, the contemporary Christmas scene with the Magi visiting Jesus in the manger is not correct—it's simply a way of telling the whole Christmas story in one scene. Further, we also have no idea how many Magi came; three is the traditional number based on the three gifts mentioned.
2. Why was it so important that Jesus' mother be a virgin? (Matt. 1:22-23 and Isaiah 7:14)
 - a. ANSWER: This is foundational to our belief that Jesus is the true Messiah. Isaiah tells us that the Virgin Birth is a sign from the LORD that Jesus is Immanuel—God with us. It also tells us the Jesus is truly God's only son.
3. Compare Matthew 1:21 and Philipians 2:9-11. What do these verses tell us about the name of Jesus?
 - a. ANSWER: They tell us that it is very special, that it is the name that shall be above every name. The Messiah, the Anointed One—the one whom so many have looked for—is now among us, risen from the grave and preparing to return again.

4. Compare Matthew 1:6 with Isaiah Chapter 11, especially verses 1-5. Can you see why Jesus' lineage would be so important to the Jews? Do you suppose that this is why Matthew cites it here? Is it reasonable to expect that Matthew would have had knowledge of Isaiah's writings?
 - a. ANSWER: Absolutely. Matthew is trying to show everyone that Jesus is a descendant of David the King, and rightly entitled to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Not only would Matthew have understood this, but so would all of Judaism. All scripture, from Genesis through Revelation, points to the coming of the Messiah, including all of the Old Testament, the Jewish Bible in that day. But they rejected him and crucified him, not wanting to believe.
 5. Compare Matthew 2:2 with Matthew 27:29, Matthew 27:32 and Isaiah 53:3. What did you observe?
 - a. ANSWER: We see that, as a baby and young child, wise men came from the east to worship Jesus, but by adulthood we see that he was mocked and despised as the king of Jews. We also see that this was in direct fulfillment of prophecy written hundreds of years earlier--and yet the Jews still did not receive Him as their king.
 6. Did the Jewish leaders of the day know of the prophecies about Christ and the coming Messiah? (Matt. 2:4-6)
 - a. ANSWER: Clearly they did know, and Herod knew that they would. This is why he called together "all the chief priests and scribes"--these were the sages, the wise and learned Jews of the day; they were the most and best educated, so they definitely knew. We know this by their response to Herod in verse 5: "They said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet.'"
 7. Review Matthew Chapter 2; and for each of the verses below, jot down the prophecy reference.
 - a. Matthew 2:5-6
 - i. ANSWER: Micah 5:2, He will come from Bethlehem.
 - b. Matthew 2:15 (see Hosea 11:1)
 - i. ANSWER: He will come out of Egypt.
 - c. Matthew 2:16-18
 - i. ANSWER: Jeremiah 31:15, Rachel weeping for her children because they are no more--referring to Herod's slaughter of the young boys in Bethlehem who were two years old or younger.
 - d. Matthew 2:19-23
 - i. ANSWER: Bible scholars are not aware of any specific prophecies being fulfilled in these passages--there is no mention of Jesus being a Nazarene in prophetic literature. Perhaps Matthew was thinking of the prophecies about the Messiah's lowly character, as in Isaiah 42:1-4.
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Based on our findings in this lesson, it is very evident that Matthew wanted to ensure from the outset that the Jews understood that Christ was the Messiah. Matthew clearly wanted them to see that Christ fulfilled all of the prophecy regarding the Messiah. Yet, in spite of this evidence, the Jews rejected Christ and crucified him.

So, we have begun our study with a lesson that examines the prophecy and birth of our Savior, and we will ultimately end our study of Matthew by studying Christ's death, resurrection and return for us as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

What a powerful God we serve, who is faithful in fulfilling all of his promises to us, even when we are not deserving of them. Keep the hope of heaven in you and let the Holy Spirit radiate through you as you face the many challenges laying ahead of you, knowing that Christ our Savior lives!

In Christ,

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