

# Matthew

## Summary

The Gospel of Matthew is the first book of the New Testament and the first of four books in the Bible that records the life of Jesus. It has been more than 400 years since the last book of the Old Testament was written. It provides an excellent bridge between the Old and New Testaments because this Gospel emphasizes the fact that Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies found in the Old Testament. The Gospel of Matthew opens with the genealogy of Jesus beginning with Abraham, who was known as the father of the Jewish people. The genealogy and Matthew's frequent use of phrases such as, *to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah* (Matthew 4:14), indicate this book was written for a Jewish audience. Matthew continues his Gospel by recounting the birth of Jesus, His baptism by John the Baptist, and His temptation in the desert by Satan. Shortly thereafter, Jesus calls His disciples and begins His ministry. The Jewish leaders, however, consider His activities to be blasphemous and begin to look for a way to have Him killed. The Gospel concludes with His trial, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and appearance to His disciples.

## Author

Although the first Gospel is anonymous, scholars are unanimous in holding that Matthew, one of the twelve apostles, was its author. Matthew, who is also referred to as Levi, was a Jew and a tax collector. As such, his own people would have despised him because tax collectors worked for the Roman government and often collected more from the Jews than what was required, and kept it for themselves. Matthew describes how Jesus called him to be His disciple in Matthew 9:9.

## Date

The most probable date for the Gospel of Matthew is A.D. 50.

## Primary Characters

Jesus (Matthew 1-28)

Mary and Joseph (Matthew 1-2)

John the Baptist (Matthew 3-4, 11, 14)

The Disciples (Matthew 3-28)

The Pharisees (Matthew 3-27)

Caiaphas (Matthew 26)

Pilate (Matthew 27)

Mary Magdalene (Matt 27-28)

## Historical Moments

The Birth of Jesus (Matthew 1)

The Wise Men Visit Jesus, Joseph and Mary Flee to Egypt, and the Return to Nazareth (Matthew 2)

John Prepares the Way for Jesus (Matthew 3)

Jesus Is Baptized (Matthew 3)

Jesus Is Tempted in the Desert by Satan (Matthew 4)

The Most Important Sermon Ever Preached (Matthew 5-7)

Jesus Performs Several Miracles (Matthew 8-9)

Jesus Sends His Disciples Out to Preach and Perform Miracles (Matthew 9-10)

The Pharisees Become More Critical of Jesus' Ministry (Matthew 11-16)

Jesus Continues to Teach, Heal, and Prophecy in spite of Mounting Rejection (Matthew 16-25)

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and Cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21)

Jesus Celebrates the Passover with His Disciples (Matthew 26)

Jesus and His Disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26)

Jesus' Arrest and Trial (Matthew 26-27)

Jesus' Crucifixion and Death (Matthew 27)

Jesus Is Resurrected (Matthew 27)

Jesus Appears to His Followers and Gives the Great Commission (Matthew 28)

## Major Theological Themes

**Jesus Is the Messiah** - He is the Christ, the Anointed One. Jesus is the fulfillment of dozens of Old Testament prophecies. The Old Testament predicted everything from where He would be born to how He would die.

**The Great Commission** - *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20). God the Father, endowed Jesus the Son, with all authority in heaven and on earth. Given that authority, Jesus commissioned His disciples to travel far and wide, spread the gospel (Good News), baptize, and teach others all He had taught them. His commission to them, more than two thousand years ago, applies to us today.

## Lessons Learned from Matthew

Matthew records five major teaching episodes of Jesus. Each of these episodes provides valuable lessons for us:

**Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)** - This passage contains the Beatitudes (*Blessed are the...*), Jesus' teaching on Old Testament Law, and the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Instructions to His Disciples (Matthew 10)** - Jesus gave guidance to His disciples before He sent them out. He told them what to expect and how they should respond.

**Parables About the Kingdom (Matthew 13)** - Nine parables describe how things work in God's Kingdom. Topics include judgment, faith, evangelism, and the joy of salvation.

**Discipleship (Matthew 18)** - Jesus responded to the question, "*Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*" (Matthew 18:1). He also spoke about how to respond to someone who has offended us.

**The Mount of Olives (Matthew 24-25)** - Jesus told His disciples about His second coming and the judgment that awaits humankind.