

“Matthew”

Fall Series 1

Lesson 14

“Makeup and Review Lesson”

Objective: To understand the message that Matthew meant to convey to his audience and then to come to understand what that message means for us today as those living in the 21st century. We will seek to ascertain what this message means and to determine how we are intended to live our lives as those who are disciples of Christ in our modern context, in light of the message it contains. We will place special emphasis upon application.

Materials: I will begin by examining carefully the Greek text of Matthew, examine other early translations such as the Syriac Peshitta, various modern translations, and any other sources relevant to the historical setting of the first century Roman world that can help us to understand the original meaning. I will then examine early interpretations and understandings and examine commentaries and modern interpretations to enlighten our understanding, help us make application to our current situation.


Procedures

1. We will begin by examining the text from the Greek text.
2. We will examine the contextual setting and seek to understand as much as we possibly can about the historical, cultural, and social settings, in order to understand the message Matthew intended and that God still intends for us.
3. From here, we will seek to find out how to best apply the words of Matthew, for the early disciples, then to our modern contextual framework as disciples of Jesus.
4. We will seek to understand the attitudes that we are called to have as disciples and to reflect not only the actions that are the calling of a disciple, but also to learn how to form our attitudes and thoughts in order to reflect our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

Lesson

If you are behind a lesson this week can be used to catch up for a week missed. You can also choose to go back and focus on a previous lesson or some aspect of Matthew that you would like to give more time and focus more detail. If you wish to review all that has been covered there are a number of ways to use this review document.

1. I have taken the introduction to each of the week's lessons and given you those week after week. You can summarize the beginning of those lessons as a tool to help elicit memory of the lessons.
2. I have also given the first section of synopsis for each chapter and this gives less detail and more of a general introduction to each lesson.
3. I have given an outline of the whole book of Matthew in the **Week 1** lesson. You could use this to summarize and elicit conversation regarding the Gospel of Matthew.
4. You will find all of the main points from the first eleven chapters of Matthew given in the main points section. You could review by giving those main points.
5. I have pulled out questions from each of the eleven chapters that should stimulate conversation regarding the Gospel of Matthew. I hope this is helpful to you in your study and your walk of discipleship.



This lesson is designed to be a review/makeup for the previous thirteen weeks of study in the Gospel of Matthew. It is good to be reminded of what we have studied in the previous chapters. Because of the way we so often focus in detail on elements of the Gospel we can often miss the bigger picture. It is good for us to be reminded of the emphasis that Matthew gives to us and His purpose for the writing of His Gospel. This also provides us with the opportunity to review the ways that this Gospel has begun to initiate change, transformation in our lives during this period. This is, after all, the reason that this Gospel was written and the reason that it has been preserved down through the centuries. It has changed the lives, the hearts, of so many people down through the ages. It still does that today.

Week 1 - Introduction to Matthew


It is good for us to be reminded that the ancients in fact found the Gospel of Matthew to be most useful in their lives. according to the citations that have been found recorded in the writings of early Christian writers, Matthew was used more than any of the other Gospels in those writings.¹ Just reading this text,

¹ Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), p. 21.

or studying this text, in some detached, or purely academic, manner, is not a sufficient use of time and effort for the person who seeks to truly follow Jesus: More is required, considerably more. We are called to “understand” the message of this account and in that understanding will come transformation of who and what we are. “Understanding can be expressed in two ways: (1) by restating, paraphrasing, or describing; and (2) by acting in a particular way or by doing something.”²

While it is the case that restatement is something that is certainly desirable. It is only desirable for the disciple of Jesus Christ as an initial step toward the application of the words of Matthew’s Gospel. Applying the words in such a manner that a person is transformed in their actions, in their thoughts, in their attitudes and in their responses to become more like Jesus is the actual objective of Matthew. The goal of a disciple is to be like their master. In this instance, the desired goal is to be more like Jesus, in every way. Any study of Matthew should always aim to challenge, empower, and enable, those seeking to follow Jesus; those seeking to be more fully able to become participants in the

² Warren Carter, *Matthew Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004), p. 1.



mission and the goals of Jesus Christ. His mission is the continuing mission of His followers. We are “called” upon to continue what He began. We are “called” to continually answer His calling to join Him in the expansion and progression of God’s plan to redeem all things to God; to seek, and to save, the lost.³

No one is exempt from this calling. The challenge is, will we individually, and as a community of faithful believers, answer this calling? The reason that the Gospel of Matthew has been preserved down through the centuries is because people of faith saw in it the message of their Lord. This is a document meant to be read and shared in a faith community, as a communal experience. It is a book that challenges each of us to respond and to participate.

Contents

- I. The Infancy Narratives (1:1-2:23)
- II. The Preparation for the Ministry (3:1-4:11)
- III. The Galilean Ministry (4:12-25)
- IV. The First Discourse Section (5:1-7:29)
- V. Narrative (8:1-9:34)

³ Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 19:10.

VI. The Second Discourse Section: The Mission Discourse

(9:35-10:42)

VII. Narrative (11:1-12:50)

VIII. The Third Kingdom Discourse Section: The Kingdom

Parables (13:1-52)

IX. Narrative (13:53-17:27)

X. The Fourth Discourse Section: Various Sayings (18:1-35)

XI. Narrative: The Judean Period (19:1-22:46)

XII. The Fifth Discourse Section: Teaching on Eschatology

(23:1-25:46)

XIII. The Passion and Resurrection Narratives (26:1-28:20)⁴

Week 2 - Chapter 1

The Gospel of Matthew begins by giving a genealogical chart that is very much reminiscent of the one found in Genesis 5. The one in Genesis 5 gives a list of the descendants of Adam, this one gives us the earthly ancestors of the New Adam.⁵ Matthew appears to be seeking to associate the genealogy in his Gospel with the genealogy of Adam in Genesis in some manner. The comparison he seeks to draw

⁴ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 48-50.

⁵ *Βίβλος γενέσεως - Biblios geneseos* - The same two words occur in the Septuagint (Old Greek Translation) of both Genesis 5 and Matthew 1. This would have made the connection stronger for those familiar with the Bible in Greek than it is for us today.

is that the birth of Jesus is an event along the lines of importance comparable to (even greater than) the original beginning of the human race. The birth of Jesus is a crucial component in God's plan of redemption of creation and of such significance that Matthew goes to great lengths to draw our attention to this fact. As the Book of Genesis recounts the origin of humanity and all creation, now Matthew indicates that Jesus is the progenitor of a new phase of human development, a new creation, and a new era in God's plan of redemption. It is in a great many ways different from the former origin, beginning, and it is powerfully linked with the promises of God for redemption given to His people Israel. This is a "record of origin," of "beginning."⁶

There is a lot of discussion about whether the phrase **Βίβλος γενέσεως** - *Biblios geneseos* that is used here by Matthew: Asking if it refers simply to the genealogy section itself, or does it more broadly refer to the entire Gospel account? The best evidence indicates that it was meant to refer to the entire book and not simply to the beginning, genealogical, portion. That would mean that this phrase then represents the title of the entire Gospel, meaning the title given by

⁶ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, in the Word Biblical Commentary series, Vol. 33A (Dallas TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1993), p. 9.

Matthew to his work is “The Book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ.”⁷

This then begins at the starting point of a new era in history and a new era in God’s dealing with His creation. In this account, Matthew puts forward the view that what he is about to recount represents the fulfillment of the great promise given by God to Abraham so many centuries before this time.

This Gospel begins mapping out the past activity of God and then demonstrates the continued activity of God while all along forecasting that there is more to come. God was the source of meaning, and of being in the past, He is the source of strength in the present, and He is the hope for the future. When we truly look we will see that He has always been there, throughout history, seeking the restoration of relationship and the redemption of His creation. He seeks people of community; people that will be true family, that will be loyal, and will be true to God. He demonstrates continuously that He is loyal and true to us, especially in the midst of our repeated disloyalty and disobedience to Him. God creates real community, real family, real loyalty. He seeks to dwell in the midst of His family, a family of loyalty, and of trust in His goodness and of His way.

⁷ Ulrich Luz, James E. Crouch, trans, *Matthew 1-7*, in the Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible series (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 69.

Week 3 - Chapter 2

It is into this mix of chaotic internal Jewish politics and the Pax Romana that Jesus was born in the little town of Bethlehem (“House of Bread” the Bakery), in the territory of Judea. Bethlehem was famous for being the birthplace of the greatest king to rule Israel, David. It was also known as a place where the people were traditionally loyal to YHWH. Matthew will contrast the character and goals of Herod against the backdrop of the workings of God as he introduces us to the birth of Jesus. We will see a contrast between Herod and between the foreigners who come to honor and worship Jesus as the newborn king of the Jews. The joy of foreigners stands in stark contrast to the fear and feeling of unease directed toward the news of the coming king by those that are meant to be His family, His kin. All of this is intended to help us comprehend that the stage has been set for the conflict of two ways of seeing the world and for two ways of understanding how to use power and influence.

The birth of Jesus challenges us to see God differently, to see life differently. It challenges us to live in a way that reflects the nature of God, rather than the way that the world says is wise and prudent. This story challenges us to take risks, to risk being rejected, hated, misunderstood, or even killed in our following of God and His will.

We are challenged by this birth narrative to not always take the safest path. We are called to be followers of God and His image-bearing Son Jesus Christ. We are called to live, think, and give of ourselves like Jesus.

Week 4 - Chapter 3

“Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!” John was a proclaimer of the change that God was about to initiate in, and through, Jesus. The announcement of the coming of the “kingdom of heaven” was an indication that things were about to change. The world, the universe, was coming to be fully under new management. In light of this impending change, people needed to change their hearts, they needed to “repent,” to change their direction. As a tangible marker of the beginning of this change of direction, this change of heart, John would immerse those who committed to this change in the waters of the River Jordan. The word that is used by Matthew here is not a word that means just to change once and then the change would be over (μετανοεῖτε - *metanoete*) and complete: The meaning of this word, in this context, is that they are to begin to change and then continually participate in that change process. It is to be a process that is one of perpetual change.

Week 5 - Chapter 4

In chapter 3 we are given the account of the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus. As chapter 4 begins we find the Spirit leading Jesus into the wilderness. In some ways, this leading into the wilderness reenacts the leading of Israel into the wilderness when they left Egyptian slavery. For all of us who know that story, we are cognizant of the fact that Israel will remain there for forty years as again and again they failed the tests that were placed before them. Here, in Matthew, we are told specifically that the purpose for Jesus being led into the wilderness is so that He might be “tempted,” or “tested.” An additional indication that we are intended to connect this event to the forty years wandering in the wilderness is the length of time that Jesus fasted, which is forty days and forty nights. Whereas it is the Spirit which leads Jesus into the wilderness it is “the enemy,” “the adversary,” “the devil” (διαβόλου - *diabolou*) that “tempts,” “tests,” or “tries,” (πειρασθῆναι - *peirasthenai*) Jesus.

This chapter also sees the beginning of the ministry of Jesus as John is arrested. He calls His first disciples, begins to heal the sick, drive out demons, and to proclaim the “good news.”

Week 6 - Chapter 5:1-26

Chapter 5 of Matthew brings us to one of the most sacred, inspiring, and holy, parts of Scripture. We come to the *Sermon on the*

Mount. The discourse of Jesus begins by laying out the manifesto of the values of the kingdom of heaven. The words of Jesus are carefully crafted so as to make them easy to memorize. Most of the statements that Jesus makes here stand as polar opposites to the values of this world. Conventional societal values are dismissed. As the world would dismiss as losers the people that are described as winners in the Kingdom of God. These people would be dismissed as wimps and losers by the world's standards. Now they are declared as those who are favored by God and valued in the Kingdom of Heaven. There is a huge paradox set out here by Jesus that seeks to challenge the very fabric of human values and human interactions with one another and with their God. His statements counter much of the fabric that human civilization is founded upon. It reverses those values and aligns them, for the followers of Christ, with the values and heart of God.

Lesson 7 - Chapter 5:27-48

In the second half of chapter 5, Jesus will continue His instructions in the ways of the Kingdom of heaven and contrast those with the ways that people had come to apply the Law, and the ways of the world. In the words of Jesus here, He is not telling them that the Law was wrong, what He was telling them was that they were wrong in their understanding of its message and its intent. Instead of looking

for how the Law might transform the hearts of the people they looked for where the boundaries were. Really, the idea seems to be the same for most of human kind; they look for the boundaries and not to the way the Law could transform the heart and soul. They want to know where the boundary is so that they can get as close to it as possible, to the boundary, without crossing the line. In such instances, it is possible to continue to pat oneself on the back and claim to be a good person while failing to be changed. The message of Jesus is that this is the wrong approach. He seeks to set out the goal differently, not aiming at what is “good,” but at what is “excellent.” What is the most excellent way? To change your heart and let your heart be formed by what is truly right, and excellent is the way of Jesus.

Lesson 8 - Chapter 6

At Chapter 6, Jesus will turn His attention to the practicing of “religion,” or “piety.” This, at least, is the way that English translations translate a word that is most frequently translated as “righteousness,” or “justice” (*δικαιοσύνην - dikaisunen*). To be fair, finding a translation for this word in English is really challenging, but I think the word “religion” carries so much baggage in a modern context as to make it unacceptable as a translation. The word “piety” is a somewhat pretentious word that is more old-fashioned and does

not really work well either, but essentially gets the point across. The word used here, in this context is used to describe something along the lines of “right conduct,” or to “practice righteousness.”⁸ The issue that Jesus addresses in 6:1 would be to “practice righteousness” in any of its various forms such as in giving to the poor, fasting, prayer, and worship are in view here as Jesus speaks to His audience.

The idea is that such people are doing deeds of righteousness and the focus of Jesus is upon challenging His audience to insure that these deeds are not done in order to come to the notice of men. The focus is on the attention, the praise, or notice, that is given by doing these deeds. The focus for doing such deeds should be different for kingdom people. Their focus is to be upon doing the right thing with no thought of reward from this life, but with the focus for reward coming from the “Father who is in heaven.” In verses 6:2-4, clarification of this will be added. These verses also explain the textual variant that is found

⁸ R.T. France, The Gospel of Matthew, in The New International Commentary on the New Testament series (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), p. 234. Cf. 1 John 2:29 **If you know that he is righteous, you also know that every person who practices righteousness is born from him.** CEB. 1 John 3:7 **Little children, make sure no one deceives you. The person who practices righteousness is righteous, in the same way that Jesus is righteous.** CEB. 1 John 3:10 **This is how God’s children and the devil’s children are apparent: everyone who doesn’t practice righteousness is not from God, including the person who doesn’t love a brother or sister.** CEB. Revelation 22:11 **This is how God’s children and the devil’s children are apparent: everyone who doesn’t practice righteousness is not from God, including the person who doesn’t love a brother or sister.** CEB.

in some manuscripts indicating “almsgiving” at 6:1.⁹ The issue addressed by Jesus again relates to the heart, to the motivation for doing the things that a person does. In one instance, the reward for doing right is focused upon receiving rewards from earthly benefactors and in the other the focus is upon receiving a reward from God the Father. One is focused upon the kingdom of this world and the other upon the kingdom of heaven.

Week 9 - Chapter 7

In chapter 7, Jesus will turn to the matter of “judging” others. The word used here (κρίνω - *krino*) is used as a technical word in judicial settings of passing judgment, however it is also used in reference to being critical and drawing conclusions regarding other people. The verb does not necessarily have a negative connotation in itself, but the illustration that Jesus gives following it, here, indicates that it is used in this context for being critical of another person. How often is it the case that you have seen the failings in others and perhaps even commented upon them to others? How easy it is to do that for others and yet to be

⁹ Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlos M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Revised Edition (Münster/Westphalia: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), p. 13. Most of these manuscripts are from the 9th century, though one is from the 4th/5th century. It is likely that the textual variant came into the text as the result of an interpretive understanding of what Jesus meant with the more general term used here.


totally blind to our own shortcomings and failings. Jesus here challenges those who would engage in such activity. He issues the warning that people must beware of such judgment and scrutiny, because as you judge others so to you will be judged. If you judge others in this way, that same standard of judgment will come back to haunt you and it will be applied to you. Jesus calls for them to seek a different path, a different way. Jesus calls for His disciples to have different motivation from their hearts.

Week 10 - Chapter 8

As Jesus came down from the mountain there were many crowds following Him. In this section, we will see the authority of the Messiah revealed not just in the power of His words, but also in the actions that He performs. The first of these actions comes when a man who is said to be “*lepros*” (λεπρός - *lepros*) approaches Jesus with a request for Jesus to cleanse him. It is perhaps the case that in the era of Covid we can begin to have at least a better conception of the stigma and the strong feelings of fear that exist in the context of the shadow of becoming infected. There has been, and still is a degree of stigma involved with testing positive for Covid in our country today.

Perhaps today, we are somewhat blinded by the miracles that we see so often in the form of modern medicine. However, as we have seen over this past period of Covid we can once again begin to get a taste for the confusion, the fear, and the paranoia, that exists when the fear of contracting a fatal disease is involved. It is interesting that the original request that the man made of Jesus was to be made “clean” (καθαρίσαι - *katharisaí*). This is a word which is not just used to cleanse someone from leprosy, but also to “purify” someone from their sins.¹⁰ There is here a foretaste of that which is to come. A real and significant change, more significant than simply the healing of all disease, but also a cleansing, a healing, of the truly fatal disease of all humanity, sin. Even today, with all of the wonders of modern medicine, it is still the case that all still die even with all the many cures and treatments available to us. The indication that is given here, in the midst of this miracle, is that things are about to change and that Jesus will cure, not simply the physical, but something deeper and more lasting, the spiritual ailments of the soul. In this chapter

¹⁰ *Sirach* 38:10 **Stay far from error, direct your hands rightly, and cleanse your heart from all sin.** CEB.



Jesus will do many great miracles, each means to call people into trust, into understanding into following Him.

Week 11 - Chapter 9

At 9:1, we find Jesus returning once again to familiar territory, in Capernaum, responding to a request to heal a physical complaint.¹¹ It is perhaps not surprising that the initial appeal to Jesus often begins with the pursuit after something physical, something more closely aligned with the current kingdom of this world. Even today, it so often remains the same, people seek Jesus for relief from their physical pain, from their fear of the current uncertainty in their life, or because of their deeper emotional pain. In a manner reminiscent of seeking after a doctor, a psychiatrist, or a counselor, people come to Jesus because they feel a need. In this current account, Jesus will begin to address this issue of felt needs and seek to divert the focus elsewhere; to matters of greater importance, and greater longevity.

This story begins as others have begun before it, but then the narrative will take a surprising turn as Jesus initially offers the forgiveness of sins rather than healing of the paralysis. The

¹¹ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 343.


healing turns out to be a subplot that is made secondary by the more primary issue; the forgiveness of sins.¹² How often is it the case that people seek relief from a symptom of their illness rather than a cure for the source of their illness. It is not the man who is paralyzed who takes exception to the actions of Jesus, but the legal experts, the scribes, who accuse Jesus of blasphemy. They do not believe that Jesus, as a Man, has the authority to forgive sins. They understand this to be the sole purview of God. How close they were to the truth and yet still so far from understanding it. In this chapter Jesus will call Matthew, perform more miracles and demonstrate compassion for lost sheep. He will express the need to pray to the Lord of the Harvest, for workers.

Week 12 - Chapter 10

Just after the teaching that Jesus gave regarding the harvest and pleading with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for the harvest Jesus calls His twelve disciples to Himself. Here, rather than just speak of His disciples in general terms, Matthew gets specific, naming each one by name.¹³ Matthew will also give a few additional details in order to identify them more specifically.

¹² R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 343.

¹³ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 375.



It is interesting that the text speaks of Matthew, as being the tax collector. He wears this title as a mark of the transformation that had been brought about in his life when he became a disciple of Jesus. He informs them of the great challenges and hardships that they will face as His followers.

Week 13 - Chapter 11

As we come to chapter eleven, Matthew reports that Jesus “finished” teaching His twelve disciples and then He went on to teach and preach in their cities. This verse acts as a transition from one section to another. It concludes the previous section and introduces the section that follows. It is of note that Matthew does not seem to be interested in the mission of the apostles as he gives no report regarding the outcome of their mission or its happenings. The focus remains upon the mission of Jesus here just as it had before this chapter. It will only be after the resurrection of Jesus (28:19-20) that we will find Matthew giving any real focus to the disciples going out on their own. It appears that when Jesus preaches and teaches the disciples are with Jesus.¹⁴

¹⁴ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 416-417.

At 11:2, we are fully into the next part of the narrative. We are told that John the Baptist heard about what Jesus was doing, and sent word by his disciples asking Jesus if He was the one, or if they should look for another? What happens here will set the stage for the discussion that will come in chapter 13. The parables which make up chapter 13 focus upon the divided responses that people have to the word of God, and it will highlight the problems of discerning the reality of the kingship of God in a world where this truth is not yet universally acknowledged. The parables of chapter 13, which make up that discourse will speak to the divided responses that are possible when hearing the word of God, and the problem of discerning the reality of God's kingship in the world for one's life. This means that in chapters 11-12 Matthew will introduce His readers to a variety of people who are responding in differing ways to what they are seeing and hearing. There are different ways that people respond to the coming of the Messiah and each of these ways receives a different response from God.¹⁵ Jesus calls people to

¹⁵ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 417.

follow Him, to trust Him, to be like Him. In this way they will find the way to the kingdom of heaven.

Synopsis

Lesson 1 - Introduction

The reason that this Gospel has been preserved down through the centuries is because people believed the message they found recorded there and that message challenged them in the ways they viewed the world and in the ways they sought to live their lives. This is an account that calls people to follow Jesus as His disciples. It challenges them to be transformed in their thinking in the ways that they act, and in ways that treat others. The words recorded here, challenge its readers to hear the calling of Jesus to participate in His mission of redemption and restoration of God's creation. A strong emphasis in this Gospel is the focus on the "presence" of God among His people.

Lesson 2 - Chapter 1

Matthew begins his account of the story of Jesus by laying the foundation for His birth firmly within the context of Israel's history. He connects the ancestry of Jesus within the context of the line of Abraham, Judah and David. The way he gives us the names of different women in the genealogy perhaps draws us into

comprehending that the nature of God's calling stresses loyalty and faithfulness in rich and powerful ways. Perfection does not seem to be greatly highlighted with the trait of loyalty seen as being expressed by those acting in good faith toward the calling of God in confusing and challenging circumstances.

Lesson 3 - Chapter 2

In this chapter Matthew will contrast the varying responses indicated by the magi on the one hand and Herod, the king of the Roman province of Judea and the people of Jerusalem on the other hand. Herod focuses upon serving Rome and in exercising political savvy and power, while the magi are concerned about honoring/worshipping the king of the Jews because of seeing a sign from God regarding His birth. This contrast will point to the universal nature of God's plans for humanity. God intends to redeem all of humanity and not just Jews. In this account the unlikely heroic figures are those who unexpectedly focus upon God and His agenda rather than upon self, power, and the agenda of the world.

Lesson 4 - Chapter 3

People came from far and wide throughout Israel in order to hear the preaching of John and to be immersed by him in the Jordan River. Many came to hear his message, repented of their sins, and were immersed by him. He had especially harsh and stark warnings for the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to hear. He proclaimed loudly and clearly the coming of the “kingdom of heaven.” His warnings reflect the tremendous gravity of the choice placed before them.

Lesson 5 - Chapter 4

In this chapter, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness so that He might be tested by Satan. This is after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights. We are meant to find a connection with the first exodus where the Israelites were tested in the wilderness and with the temptation of Jesus. Whereas the Israelites largely failed those tests of being loyal and obedient to God, Jesus does not fail and continually expresses loyalty to God. Jesus continues to focus on the things of God, the kingdom of God, and orders Satan to leave Him. John is arrested and this seems to be the trigger for Jesus to begin His public ministry.

Lesson 6 - Chapter 5:1-26

As Jesus begins to teach those gathered to hear Him He lays out His manifesto. The kingdom of heaven will stand in stark contrast to the kingdom of the world. The values held near and dear by this world will be cast aside and those that are so often ridiculed and discouraged are held up as values greatly prized by God and in the kingdom of heaven. Those that will be blessed by God are those regarded as too weak, too humble, too focused on righteousness, too merciful, and too focused on purity of heart by the standards of this world. Such people are often persecuted and harassed and it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.

Lesson 7 - Chapter 5:27-48

Jesus calls upon those listening to His words to have a positive effect on the world. He calls upon them to act as seasoning, as preservative, to keep bringing true flavor to life. He calls upon them to be useful as kingdom people and not to be useless and something that will only be good as something to be discarded and trampled. They are to be light and to be and to do things that cause people to praise God because of the way their good thoughts and deeds shine before others.

Lesson 8 - Chapter 6

In this section of Jesus great sermon on the mount, He will challenge His listeners to see, and to begin to follow, the ways of the kingdom of heaven. He begins by challenging one of the most difficult and fraught topics to face humanity, the issue of adultery. The real matter is relationship and marriage, as one of the most sacred of all relationships stands as a beacon demonstrating the faithfulness that should be exhibited in all relationships, but especially those that are made before God. Jesus warns here of the dangers of failing to honor the terms of our agreements made before God.

Lesson 9 - Chapter 7


Jesus teaches His listeners that they need to take care regarding the motivation for the acts of piety, their acts of righteousness. They need to insure that they do them in such a way that they are focused on gaining honor from men, but rather are focused upon honoring God. They are to be actions that are genuine and from the heart not to gain the praise of men. Rewards are to be sought from God, not from men and from this earthly world.

Lesson 10 - Chapter 8

Jesus begins this section by challenging His listeners not to judge others so that they will not be judged. He then lays out a parable that challenges people to examine themselves with a view to being able to help others. He portrays our dilemma in terms of that which is ludicrous and startling. The focus is upon helping others. He ends this first section by warning them about casting that which is holy and sacred before those who will not have appreciation for it and will treat those things with contempt.

Lesson 11 - Chapter 9

In this section, we have a narrative that recounts not so much the teachings of Jesus as it does the actions of Jesus. Jesus encounters a *leper* and He does that which is unexpected, unprecedented, so powerfully human, as to be shocking: He touches the man. He heals, and cleanses, the man of his infirmity and sends Him away with the warning not to tell anyone. He will perform many great miracles in this chapter and here we will learn that the motivation that drives the ministry of Jesus is compassion.



Jesus will then travel to Capernaum and be approached by a centurion, a Gentile, who pleads with Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus agrees, but then the man objects and says as a man of authority He can just command it to be done and it will be done. Jesus is amazed by the faith of this man that stands outside the chosen people of God. Jesus issues a warning to those within the fold of God's chosen people to take care and remain faithful, indicating that there is an impending judgement coming for all, even those that consider themselves to be faithful. Some will be punished; it will be those who are found to be without faith.

Jesus will challenge people to see that the focus of His ministry is greater, more decisive, and more persuasive than just healing the sick, raising the dead, and driving out demons. Jesus will make it clear that He comes to challenge the source of evil and He begins doing this by forgiving sins. For those who are open to change, open to new possibilities, the words and actions of Jesus elicit fear and praise for God.

Lesson 12 - Chapter 10

Jesus calls His twelve disciples to Himself and gives them authority to go out in His name to proclaim that the kingdom of

heaven is near. He gives them specific parameters of where they were to go; only amongst the people of Israel. They are to take no provisions for the journey, but they are to expect provision to come from people to whom they give this good news. Their mission will involve both blessing on those who receive the message and judgment upon those who reject the message of hope.

Lesson 13 - Chapter 11

John sends his disciples to ask Jesus if He is the Messiah or if he should in fact expect another. He does this while Jesus is preaching and teaching in the towns of Galilee. The answer that Jesus gives is that they should report to John that the deaf hear, the blind see, people are cured of their diseases, the dead are raised. After hearing this answer, and I am sure seeing some of these things happening, they left to go and report back to John. Jesus goes onto to challenge people to understand the significance of John and the change that takes place with His coming as the one who reveals the Father in a way that has never happened before, nor will it happen in this way again.

Main Points

Lesson 1 - Introduction

- To seek to understand the message of the Gospel.
- The Calling of God.
- Revealing of God's Rescue Plan.
- Background of the Gospel.
- The Structure of the Gospel.

Lesson 2 - Chapter 1

- To give an account of the genealogy of Jesus that would powerfully demonstrate the active hand of God throughout history.
- Matthew wants his readers to understand that Jesus represents a new beginning, a new creation, for the cosmos and especially for human beings.
- Matthew wants us to understand that the coming of Jesus is the way God keeps His promise to Abraham and the way He creates the one family of Abraham of both Jew and Gentile.
- God will dwell in the midst of His people Jesus is the dwelling of God amongst His people and He will not ever leave them abandoned. His disciples are never left alone by Him.

Lesson 3 - Chapter 2

- To narrate the historical reality of the birth of Christ.
- To highlight the greatness of God in reaching not just the people of Judea, but people far away even in the east.

- To see the contrast in response between true seekers of God (magi, Joseph and Mary) and the pretenders (Herod, and the people of Jerusalem).
- To see how the people of power in the world seek to enforce their will and how God by contrast gently persuades and loves.

Lesson 4 - Chapter 3

- People are called to change the direction of their lives in order to prepare for life in the kingdom of heaven.
- People are called to confess their sins and make a tangible and real commitment to a changed life.
- Failure to live a life that produces good fruit will bring judgement.
- A time of judgement will come.
- Jesus stands as the primary example of how to live a life that pleases God.

Lesson 5 - Chapter 4

- The account of the testing of Jesus in the wilderness after His baptism.
- The tests Jesus encountered challenged His loyalty to God and His agenda for ministry.
- Jesus begins His ministry after the arrest of John. He begins in Galilee of the Gentiles. Jesus repeats the same message that John had proclaimed.
- Jesus calls people into discipleship and they respond by leaving everything behind and following Him.
- Jesus preaches in the synagogues, heals the sick, and drives out

demons. The kingdom of God advances.

Lesson 6 - Chapter 5:1-26

- Jesus teaches His listeners the values and ways of the kingdom of heaven.
- Jesus also teaches His listeners that His words are meant to elicit a response.
- Jesus challenges His listeners to be useful and functional in the world as agents of God.
- Jesus challenges His audience to fulfill the Law rather than just keep it.
- Jesus teaches a different perspective on resistance of evil and persecution for doing what is right in the eyes of God.

Lesson 7 - Chapter 5:27-48

- Jesus raises the standards of what is considered sin to the thoughts of the heart.
- Jesus warns of the dangers of hell.
- Jesus teaches them that divorce is not what God wants and that faithfulness in relationship is crucial.
- Jesus teaches them that according to kingdom of heaven values there is no need for pledges or solemn agreements. “Yes” should be “yes” and “no” should be “no.”
- Jesus teaches His followers to not seek retribution from those who have wronged them.
- Jesus teaches His followers to love their enemies.

Lesson 8 - Chapter 6

- Jesus gives warnings regarding taking care to practice our good deeds for the right audience, God.
- Jesus calls for genuine prayer, from the heart directed to God.
- Jesus gives His listeners a model prayer.
- Jesus challenges His readers to fast in a way that draws no attention from people, but is for God alone.
- Our treasure and our heart are connected, our master is where our heart is.
- Jesus challenges His listeners to live each day in trust of God.

Lesson 9 - Chapter 7

- Jesus challenges people to avoid judging others in a way that they do not wish to be judged.
- Jesus challenges His listeners to examine themselves.
- Jesus challenges His listeners to seek God.
- Jesus challenges people to treat others the way they would wish to be treated.
- Jesus challenges His listeners to choose the narrow way rather than the path most well-travelled.
- Jesus warns people regarding false-prophets and tells them how to identify them.
- Jesus challenges His listeners to be doers of the word and not just hearers.

Lesson 10 - Chapter 8

- Jesus heals and cleanses people and crowds follow Him.

- Jesus encounters great faith in a Gentile, a centurion and challenges everyone to exercise faith.
- Jesus heals many, drives out demons and fulfills another Old Testament prophecy.
- Jesus challenges would-be followers in their commitment to Him.
- Jesus commands the winds and the waves and once again challenges His disciples to faith.
- Jesus drives demons into swine and is asked to leave an area.

Lesson 11 - Chapter 9

- Jesus reveals his authority to forgive sins.
- Jesus challenges people to stop filling their minds with evil.
- Jesus calls unhealthy people to be His disciples.
- God desires mercy not sacrifice.
- Jesus initiates that which is new and replaces the old.
- Jesus highlights the role of compassion in His mission and the need for workers in the kingdom.

Lesson 12 - Chapter 10

- Jesus gives authority to the twelve.
- They are to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of heaven with words, with healings, with cleansing, and by casting out demons.
- Jesus challenges His apostles to seek out those who are “worthy” and to be “worthy.”

- Jesus warns His apostles that they are to be like sheep among wolves, and that they will face much persecution and harassment.
- Jesus challenges them with the expectation that they will be treated in the same way that they will treat Him.
- Jesus came to bring trouble not peace and tranquility.

Lesson 13 - Chapter 11


- Jesus came to issue God's calling to enter into the dominion of the "kingdom of heaven."
- Jesus fulfills the purpose of God foretold by the Law and the Prophets.
- Jesus challenges His audience to hear His words and to act upon them.
- Failure to respond to the message of Jesus will have consequences.
- Jesus reveals the nature of God.
- Jesus came to bring rest and true purpose to those who would follow Him.

Questions

1. How does your reading of the Bible change the way you live your life and perceive of the world in which you live?
2. What are some ways that you express your understanding of the Gospel of Matthew?
3. How do you see understanding and application to be connected?
4. How are the actions of humans related to God's redeeming of creation?
5. What are some ways that you think Jesus expected His disciples to be different from others in the world?
6. What are some ways that you seek to apply things that you learn from the Bible in your own life?
7. What are some ways that knowing your family history helps you to understand your life and your family better?
8. What does it mean to be "righteous?"
9. What are some things that fill you with joy?
10. What are some things that steal your joy?
11. When you think of someone "changing their heart" what do you think this actually entails?
12. What are some of the ways that you perceive the kingdom of heaven to be different from the kingdom of this world?
13. What do you think the implications are if people do not change their lives and produce fruit in keeping with repentance?

14. When is a time in your life that you have been led by the Spirit to do something?
15. What are some ways that you face temptation in your life?
16. How do you overcome temptations?
17. Where are some places that you go to calm your spirit?
18. What are some of the core values by which you live your life?
19. How do you seek to fulfill the needs of your spirit?
20. What are some ways that you pursue the kingdom of God?
21. What are some things that have caused you to mourn in your life?
22. What is your view of people that are humble? Why?
23. Why do you think people consider many of the words of Jesus to be hyperbole?
24. Why do you think Jesus preaches so often about the dangers of hell?
25. How is marriage seen in our world today? As a legal contractual arrangement, or as a covenant before God? Explain.
26. How is covenant related to trust in a relationship?
27. How important for relationship is it for people to be honest and trustworthy?
28. What motivates you to attend church?
29. Why do you think it is important to do good deeds in secret?

30. What reward do you think Jesus expects His audience to understand will be given by the Father?
31. What are some ways that you focus on God when you pray?
32. Why do you think we need to pray if God already knows what we need?
33. What is the purpose for prayer?
34. What are some ways that people can show honor to God?
35. Why do you think we are so prone to critique others and less prone to examine our own motives and actions?
36. What are some ways that we can become better at self-examination?
37. When is a time in your life that you have felt lonely and isolated?
38. How important do you think it is for people to have human contact?
39. Why do you think Jesus continually warns people of the dangers of not having faith in God?
40. Why do you think the legal experts found the words of Jesus regarding the forgiving of sins to be insulting to God?
41. What are some ways that people fill their hearts with evil thoughts?
42. What do you think it was like for the apostles to be chosen and told of all the hardships that they would face because of Jesus?
43. Why do you think the apostles chose to accept the role of being an apostle after all the things Jesus told them would come as a consequence of His choosing them?

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44. Should we, as ordinary Christians today, expect to be treated better than Jesus was treated? Why?
 45. What does it mean to betray Jesus?
 46. What are some things that you have learned about living your life from Jesus?
 47. What are some ways that you deal with doubts in your life?
 48. What are some ways that you distinguish between good and evil?
 49. What are some things that cause people to stumble and fall in this life?
 50. What is it about Jesus that draws people toward Him?

To Take Home

What is Important to know?

It is important to know that the Gospel was not written simply as an academic exercise or as a merely historical document. The words of Matthew are meant to convey the message of the Good News of God that He is redeeming creation and He is calling humanity to participate in the plan of reconciliation. Understanding of a Gospel entails more than a cognitive grappling with the words, it entails transformation of life, thoughts, and actions. What are some ways that you think God is calling human beings into His mission through this Gospel?

Where is God in these words?

God is in these words pouring out to us the nature of His being. He demonstrates for us how much He cares for us and how that caring nature displays gentleness and kindness even in the face of great hostility and evil. God honors those who truly seek to find Him and reaches for them where they are in their journey and continues to guide them into His presence. What are some ways that you think we as the people of God can continue to express the nature of God in the world today?

What does any of this mean for how I live my life?

Sometimes as we read the words of the Bible we fail to recognize that they are still meant to impact us today. These are not just ancient words that have long since lost their ability to impact us today. These are living words that challenge us to something better, something greater, and something far more lasting than this life. What are some ways that you think the words of Matthew, in this chapter, should impact the reality of the way you see, and live, your life?

What is the word of God calling us to do?

The word of God is calling upon us to join Him in the redemption and the transformation of this world and the transfer of it into the rule and reign of heaven. God has initiated this change and transformation. He has called His children to join Him in this task. Those who answer His call to follow are also those who are His children. How do you think that you are best able to serve God in advancing His kingdom?