



## Getting started with Matthew's Gospel

Matthew is one of 4 accounts of Jesus' life that tells the Good News story of Jesus. It takes us on a journey through his life starting with His family history (Chapter 1). Matthew records His birth in Bethlehem (Chapter 1-2), his life and teaching in and around Galilee (Chapters 4-20), His death and resurrection in Jerusalem (Chapter 21-28), and the commissioning of His disciples and His return to heaven (Chapter 28).

Matthew does not directly tell us his purpose in writing down the story of Jesus like some of the other gospel writers do. However a hint is given in the way Matthew begins and ends His story of Jesus. At the start we see Magi (wise men!) from the East bowing down before the child Jesus and worshipping Him (Chapter 2:11). At the end of the story we find the disciples worshipping the risen Jesus (Chapter 28:17). As we read through Matthews gospel it calls us to become worshippers of Jesus too. To worship Jesus means to treat Him as He deserves to be treated.

Throughout Matthew we are being shown who Jesus is so we can treat Him properly.

**Matthew shows us that Jesus is the Saving King that God promised in the Old Testament.** As you read watch out for how many times Matthew does dot-to-dot, joining together verses from the Old Testament with the life of Jesus. At least 11 times He says something like: *"This was written to fulfil what was said through the prophet..."* (e.g. 2:17; 3:3...). Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Son of Man, Immanuel, the one to whom the whole Old Testament points us.

As God's promised Saving King, Jesus came to show us God's mercy by **saving people from their sins** (Chapter 1:21). This saving work was completed at the cross and resurrection. The whole story of Matthew moves towards the cross as the climax of the story and only with the cross does the rest of Matthew make sense.

Matthew shows us that the people Jesus saves are those who **repent** (4:17), **come to Him** (11:28-30), and **follow Him** (16:24). As saved people they are also those who "Go" out for Him and make disciples of all nations (28:19).

In Matthew Jesus talks lots about the "**kingdom**." This is a way to describe the people who Jesus has saved who now live as worshippers of Him.

Here are some other repeated things to watch out for as you read through Matthews gospel...

- As you read look out for ways that Matthew shows us that Jesus was not just for the Jewish nation but for all nations. The kingdom of Jesus is for all types of people. Matthew ends with Jesus sending his followers to make disciples of ALL nations (Chapter 28).
- As you read Matthew you will also see Jesus does lots of teaching. In fact there are 5 big blocks of teaching mixed in between the stories about Jesus: 5:1-7:29; 10:11-42; 13:1-52; 18:1-35; 24:1-25:46. Each of these blocks ends with something like... *“When Jesus had finished saying these things.”*

These teachings of Jesus are hugely important for us today. He proclaims both how to enter the kingdom and how to live in the kingdom. As you read Matthew you will discover lots about how to live as a worshipper of Jesus today. This is true both in your individual lives (Chapters 5-7) and as a church community (Chapter 18).

These teachings of Jesus (as well as the opposition Jesus faced) also prepare his followers for the opposition they will face as the message of Jesus gets a mixed reaction in the world.

These big teaching blocks make it seem likely that as well as leading people to faith in Jesus, Matthews gospel was also a handbook for helping people to follow Jesus too.

- As you read watch out for how Matthew also speaks about the completion of Jesus’ kingdom when he returns.

Matthew shows us that the kingdom Jesus started in his death, resurrection and ascension continues today as believers of all nations submit to Jesus’ authority, overcome temptation, endure persecution, wholeheartedly embrace Jesus’ teaching, and take that message to the world.

As one man puts it:

*“What a wonderful way to begin the New Testament part of God’s story – of His saving a people for His Name through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and sending them into the world to be the bearers of His good news and to make disciples from all the nations, thus fulfilling the covenant He made with Abraham”*