

# Through the Bible Book by Book

## New Testament

by Myer Pearlman

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### MATTHEW

#### Theme

The central theme of this Gospel is, Jesus the Messiah-King. Matthew, writing to the Jews, and knowing their great hopes, sets forth Jesus as the One fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures relative to the Messiah. By the use of numerous Old Testament quotations, he shows what the Messiah ought to be; by a record of the words and deeds of Jesus, he proves that He was that Messiah.

The frequent recurrence of the words “**kingdom**” and “**Kingdom of Heaven**” reveals another important theme of Matthew’s Gospel. He sets forth the kingdom of Heaven as promised in the Old Testament (Matthew 11:13), as proclaimed by John the Baptist and Jesus (3:2; 4:17), represented now by the Church (16:18, 19), and as triumphant at Jesus’ second coming (25:31, 34).

**Author:** Reliable tradition credits Matthew with the writing of this book. Very little is said concerning him in the New Testament. We learn that he was a tax-gatherer under the Roman government but was called by the Lord to be a disciple and apostle.

**To Whom Written:** To all mankind in general, but to the Jews in particular. That it was intended primarily for the Jew may be seen by the following facts:

1. The great number of Old Testament quotations - there are about 60. One preaching to the Jews would have to prove his doctrine from the ancient Scriptures. Matthew makes these quotations the very basis of his Gospel.
2. The first words of the book “**The book of the generations of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham,**” would suggest immediately to the Jew, those two covenants that contained promises of the Messiah - the Davidic and the Abrahamic. II Samuel 7:8-16; Genesis 12:1-3.
3. There is a complete absence of explanations of Jewish customs showing that he was writing to a people acquainted with them.

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**II. Ministry of the Messiah - 4:12 to 16:12**

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**IV. Sacrifice of the Messiah - Chaps. 24 to 27.**

**V. Triumph of the Messiah - Chap. 28.**

### **I. The Advent of the Messiah - Chaps. 1:1 to 4:11**

1. Genealogy. 1:1-17.
2. Birth. 1:18-25.
3. The Wise Men. 2:1-12.
4. Flight to Egypt and Return. 2:13-32.
5. Baptism of Jesus. Chap. 3.
6. Temptation of Jesus. 4:1-11.

The Jews paid great attention to genealogies. Before a person could be ordained to the priesthood, he was required to prove his descent from Aaron. In the time of Ezra some were rejected because of their failure to prove their right to the priesthood.

Matthew, setting forth Jesus as Messiah, is obliged to prove from the Old Testament that He is Son of David - the One having a right to be king of Israel. Psalm 132:11. This he does in the genealogy found in Chap. 1:1-17, which is that of Joseph.

The Old Testament teaches that Messiah is to be born of a virgin, and that He must be, not only the Son of David, but the Son of God. Isaiah 9:6. Matthew then records the virgin birth of Christ to show how these scriptures were fulfilled in Him.

The Wise Men are believed to have been a priestly tribe of Medes, whose chief functions were the study of astrology and the interpretation of dreams. They are representative of that class of Gentiles who worship the true God according to all the light they have. They may have been led to look for Messiah's coming by the testimony of the Jews living in their country.

Herod, though an able king, was a monster of cruelty. Knowing his own unpopularity and constantly fearing the loss of his throne, he ruthlessly slayed any whom he suspected in the least of aspiring to rulership. This will explain his perturbation at the news of the birth of a king of the Jews, and his act of slaying the children of Bethlehem. His murderous plan to kill the infant Christ was thwarted by a Divine warning.

Chapter 3 records the ministry of John the Baptist. His ministry was to prepare the nation for the coming of the Messiah, by the rite of baptism, which rite was symbolical of the cleansing from sin to be affected by the death of Messiah.

The question arises here, Why was Jesus baptized, since He did not require repentance? Verse 15 will give us one answer: **"For thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."** This signifies that Jesus wished to identify Himself with the Jewish nation and take upon Himself the obligation of keeping the whole law. See Galatians 4:4.

From the Gospel of John we learn that another reason for Jesus' baptism was that John the Baptist might have a revelation of His deity. John 1:31, 33.

Since Christ came as a representative of humanity and since His mission was to destroy the works of the devil, it was fitting that He should begin His ministry by a victory over the great adversary of the race. Chapter 4 records His great triumph. One writer has remarked that Satan did not corner Christ, but Christ cornered Satan.

## II. The Ministry of the Messiah - Chaps. 4:12-16:12

1. Starting point of ministry; first disciples; first works. 4:12-25.
2. The Laws of Messiah's Kingdom - the Sermon on the Mount. Chaps. 5 to 7.
3. Messiah's power manifested over disease, nature, demons, and death. 8 to 9:35.
4. The sending out of the twelve apostles. 9:36 to 11:1.
5. John the Baptist's question. 11:2-30.
6. Opposition of Pharisees. 12:1-45.
7. Teaching in parables. Chap. 13.
8. Herod's opposition; feeding of 5000. Chap. 14.
9. Opposition from leaders in Judea and Galilee. 15:1 to 16:12.

Matthew shows Galilee to be the starting point of Jesus' ministry in fulfillment of prophecy. Notice how often the expression "**that it might be fulfilled**" occurs in this Gospel. Jesus takes up John the Baptist's message; namely, the coming of the kingdom of Heaven. By the expression "**Kingdom of Heaven**" we mean God's rule in and through Christ. This was promised in the Old Testament, is represented now by the church, and will be triumphant at Christ's second coming.

Having proclaimed the nearness of His kingdom, Jesus explains its laws in that discourse known as the Sermon on the Mount. There we learn about the character of the members of that kingdom (5:1-16), the principles governing it (5:17 to 7:6), and requirements for entering it (7:7-29).

Matthew now shows Jesus presenting His credentials to the nation; i.e., manifesting His power as a proof of His Messiahship. But though the miracles were signs of His deity and proofs of His mission, they were never performed for mere display or to satisfy curiosity, but for the relief of suffering humanity. We may regard His miracles as symbols of His saving power.

1. His power over disease symbolized His power over sin.
2. His power over demons was typical of the complete overthrow of Satan's kingdom.
3. His power over death reveals Him as the One who will quicken all the dead.
4. His power over nature shows Him as the One who shall deliver the whole earth from the curse.

Jesus has already chosen some disciples. 4:18-22. No doubt many more have gathered about Him. Out of these He chooses twelve to help Him in preaching the Gospel, and to train them for their future work as leaders of the church. For the purpose of confirming their message, He imparts the power to work miracles. Since the time of Gentile evangelization has not yet come, He limits their ministry to Israel. 10:6.

The Jews' conception of the Messiah was that of a mighty prince who would set up a great temporal kingdom. Jesus did not measure up to their ideals for He proclaimed the coming of a spiritual kingdom. Though John the Baptist's conception of the Messiah was a spiritual one, it is possible that he expected Messiah's kingdom to be set up immediately with power. Feeling disappointed in his expectations, and seeing no signs of the Messiah's delivering him from prison, he yields to doubt and despondency. But fortunately he takes his doubts to Jesus, who quickly confirms his faith.

Chapter twelve records the Pharisees' opposition to Jesus. Their reasons for opposing Him were as follows: His lowly origin; His consorting with sinners; and His opposing their traditions.

Chapter 12 describes opposition for the last-named reason.

The Pharisees, though accepting the whole of the Old Testament, accepted as authoritative a mass of tradition which obscured the true meaning of the Scriptures. In verses 1-13 the Sabbath question is dealt with. By their traditional interpretation the Jewish teachers had made this day of rest a burden to man, whereas God had intended it to be a blessing.

Because His disciples plucked corn on the Sabbath, and because He Himself healed a man on that day, He was accused of breaking the law. In His answer our Lord taught that the Sabbath gives way before human necessity (vv. 3, 4, 12); that God desires practical goodness rather than outward observances (v. 7); and that He, as Lord of the Sabbath, had the right to decide how it should be kept (v. 8). In their bitterness to Jesus the Pharisees went the length of accusing Him of performing His works by the power of Satan, whereupon the Lord uttered a warning against blaspheming the Spirit.

Up to this point our Lord had been teaching in plain language, but on seeing the opposition to His message, He began teaching in parables when speaking of His Kingdom. He did this to prevent their distorting His words and using them against Him. See Luke 23:2. (A parable is a saying which teaches a heavenly truth by using an earthly illustration).

His object in thus doing was to conceal the truth from the mocker and the opposer (13:13-15), and to reveal it to the earnest seeker (vv. 11, 16). The general truths taught in the parables are that during the absence of Christ, the whole world will not be converted, that all the Gospel seed sown will not bear fruit; that good and evil will continue side by side until the second coming of Christ. The parables are intended to show the growth and development of the Church during this dispensation and its relation to sinners, professors, and the world in general.

Chapter 15:1-20 records further opposition of the leaders towards Jesus. They accuse Him of transgressing their traditions, whereupon in stern language He rebukes them for burying the true interpretation of Scripture beneath man-made traditions. In response to their request for a sign (16:1), He points them to signs of the times; i.e., the ripeness of the nation for judgment, the presence in their midst of preachers proclaiming the kingdom of God, and the working of the supernatural.

Jesus had already given them signs (Matthew 11:5), but they want something spectacular. Since Christ always performed His miracles for the relief of suffering humanity, He refuses their request.

### III. The Claim of the Messiah - Chaps. 16:13 to 23:39

1. His claim before the disciples. 16:13 to 20:28.
2. His claim before the nation. 20:29 to 23:39.

Thus far Jesus has not measured up to the people's ideal of the Messiah, for instead of proclaiming a temporal kingdom, He has been proclaiming a spiritual one. But though the people do not accept Him as Messiah, they consider Him a great prophet (16:13).

Because of the people's attitude, Jesus does not make a public proclamation of His Messiahship, for to do so would lead the Jews to look for the setting up of an earthly kingdom and their deliverance from the Romans. Because of this He makes His claim in private to His disciples (16:15-19) and forbids them to tell anyone that He is the Messiah (v. 20).

Following He makes known the means by which His kingdom is to be ushered in; namely, through His death and resurrection (16:21). Peter, sharing the common views of the people cannot conceive of a suffering and dying Messiah and tries to dissuade Jesus from submitting to death. Jesus rebukes him, and teaches the disciples that before the crown comes the cross (16:24-27).

Verse 28 of the same chapter refers to the transfiguration, which was a forelearning of Christ's entering into His glory.

The news of His coming humiliation and death has so disheartened the disciples that, in order to encourage them, He allows them to see Him for a short time in His glorified state, and to hear the voice of the Father approving His purpose. This takes place at the transfiguration (Chap. 17).

Notice that He charges His disciples to maintain silence concerning this event in order not to raise false hopes among the people (v. 9). He later repeats the prophecy of His coming death (17:23) in order to impress that fact on the minds of His disciples.

Though Jesus has not made a public proclamation of His Messiahship, it is necessary, in order that the scriptures be fulfilled, and that the nation have an opportunity of accepting or rejecting Him, that He take some kind of public claim. This took place at the triumphal entry in Jerusalem (21:1-16).

But notice that this was not a warlike demonstration, but the peaceful entry of a King, "**meek and sitting upon an ass and a colt the foal of an ass**" (21:5). As such it was not calculated to alarm the Romans who were always fearing an uprising, neither did it cause the nation at large to believe that Jesus was the great conquering Messiah they were expecting. Those who acclaimed Jesus at this time were mostly His disciples and those who had benefited by His ministry.

Jesus' claims are rejected by the nation as represented by the leaders (21:15, 23, 32, 45, 46; 22:15)). Following this He foretells, in parables, the rejection of the Jewish nation by God and His turning to the Gentiles (the Parables of the Wicked Husbandman and the Marriage Supper). Chapter 23 marks Jesus' final break with the religious leaders, and His weeping over Jerusalem.

#### IV. The Sacrifice of the Messiah - Chaps. 24 to 27

1. Discourse concerning Christ's second coming. 24:1-41.
2. Judgments to take place at the second coming. 24:42 to 25-46.
3. Betrayal, arrest, and trial of Jesus. Chap. 26:4.
4. The crucifixion. Chap. 27.

Concerning Christ's discourse in 24:1-41, we quote from Professor Moorehead:

“Two supreme objects occupy the field of this marvelous prophecy, one of which lies near to the Divine speaker, and the other remote from Him in point of view. But both are perfectly clear to His omniscient vision. The near is the fall of Jerusalem, the remote is His second advent. The first took place within forty years after the prediction - viz., 70 A. D.; the second is still future. The one was restricted to a very limited area, though it affected the whole world in its issues; the other embraces the planet.

“Some of the predictions apply to both these events but in different degrees. The fall of Jerusalem is insignificant in comparison with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet there is a striking resemblance between these two events; the destruction of the Holy City prefigures the more tremendous scenes which are to accompany the advent of the Lord. The one answers to the other as type to antitype.

“To illustrate: In chapter 24:14, our Lord says, ‘**And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.**’ That this prediction was fulfilled before Jerusalem's destruction Paul attests. Colossians 1:6, 23. The like world-wide proclamation is immediately to precede the final. Revelation 14:6, 7. So likewise the unequalled tribulation spoken of in 24:21 appears to belong to both the events referred to. That scenes of suffering, horror and crime almost indescribable took place at the siege and capture of Jerusalem by the Roman army is well known. But that another ‘**time of trouble,**’ an unparalleled tribulation immediately precedes the advent is certain. (Compare Matthew 24:21, 29; Daniel 12:1, 2; Jeremiah 30:7). Israel and the Gentiles alike will be in the tribulation.”

Notice the Judgments mentioned in 24:42 to 25:46.

- Judgment on unwatchful servants (24:42-51);
- judgment on unprepared servants (25:1-13);
- judgment on unprofitable servants (25:14-30);
- judgment on the nations (25:14-46).

Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53), finds its fulfillment in Chs. 26, 27.

## V. The Triumph of the Messiah. Chap. 28

The Gospel of Matthew reaches a happy consummation in the resurrection of the Messiah from the dead.

All power is given to Him in Heaven and in earth, for this reason He is able to send His followers into all the world with the message of salvation. Thus are fulfilled the words of Isaiah, **“Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles . . . he shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”** Isaiah 42:1, 4. **“It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.”** Isaiah 49:6.

For the purpose of fixing the contents of Matthew in his mind, let the student learn the following chapter and word outline:

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|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Genealogy and birth.       | 16. Peter’s Confession. |
| 2. Flight.                    | 17. Transfiguration.    |
| 3. Baptism.                   | 18-20. Discourses.      |
| 4. Temptation.                | 21. Triumphal Entry.    |
| 5-7. Sermon on the Mount.     | 22. Plots of Enemy.     |
| 8-9. Miracles.                | 23. Woes.               |
| 10. The Twelve Sent Forth.    | 24-25. Second Coming.   |
| 11-12. Discourses.            | 26. Betrayal.           |
| 13. Parables.                 | 27. Crucifixion.        |
| 14-15. Feeding the multitude. | 28. Resurrection.       |

~ end of Matthew ~

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