



ATTHEW

PART ONE
A BROKEN LINE





WELCOME TO MATTHEW

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

MALACHI 4.5-6

The above verse is the last portion of scripture found in the Old Testament. It is a closing of an era, but also a looking to the future. What is fascinating is that in one turn of the page, a reader goes from Malachi in the Old Testament to the first page of the first book of the New Testament, Matthew. What is hidden to many readers is the massive gulf between the page turn—between Matthew and Malachi. In that one turn of the page 400 years transpire.

For 400 years the people of God lived in this silence. In this time, there was much violence and war. Invaders from far off lands, evil tyrants, rulers who have no right to rule, exercised their power. Although at times it seemed as if hope was lost, the faithful clung to promises of old, promises that one day a good King would come to rule over his people. This King would exercise wisdom and implement the will of God. This King would be more than a King... he would be a Messiah.

Matthew tells his story in this context. When hope seems all but lost, when dictators rule, and when the promises of God seem like a long forgotten hope, Matthew introduces us to a man named Jesus of Nazareth. This is his story.

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CONTENTS

Genealogy 4

MATTHEW 1:1-17

A King's Birth 8

MATTHEW 1:18-25

Royal Rivals 12

MATTHEW 2:1-23

The Baptism 16

MATTHEW 3:1-17

The Temptation 20

MATTHEW 4:1-11

Ministry Begins..... 24

MATTHEW 4:12-25



ENEALOGY

MATTHEW 1:1-17

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, ⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, ⁸ and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰ and Hezekiah

the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. ¹² And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵ and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.





INTRODUCTION

All of history is remembering. Some memories are positive and some are negative. Matthew is beginning to tell a story that is part of a much larger story. The story Matthew is telling will change everything. More specifically, Jesus whom the story is about will change everything.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Do you remember your parents teaching you about your family's history? Why do you think they did it? Was it helpful? Why/why not?
- 2 Read the first few verses of each of the Gospels and compare them. How does the start of each Gospel set the tone for each Gospel?
- 3 While many translations use the word "genealogy" in Matthew 1:1, the Greek word γενέσεως can translate "genesis." Some scholars believe that this verse may be a title for the whole book. If this is true, what might Matthew be getting at? What might a reader think they are about to read?
- 4 Matthew 1:1 also calls Jesus the "son of" two key figures from the Old Testament. Read Genesis 15:1-21 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17. Who are these two characters and why do you think Matthew uses them to announce Jesus?

- 5 Do you know what a covenant is? Describe it in your own words. How is it different than a contract? How are the parties related? (The story from Genesis 15 in the previous question can be helpful).
- 6 Pick one of the names mentioned in the genealogy in vv. 2-16 (preferably a less obvious one). What do you remember about their story? How does that story affect your understanding of Jesus story?
- 7 The third section of the genealogy is “after the deportation to Babylon” (Matt. 1:12). Why is this an important part of Israel’s history? What did it represent to them and why might Matthew use it as a break point in his genealogy of Jesus?
- 8 Find the women noted in the genealogy. Do you know their stories? What do they have in common? Why would they be included here?
- 9 Do you tend to skip over genealogies in the Bible? Why?



GOSPEL MOTIVATION

Matthew is not writing a video replay, but he is picking, choosing and arranging his Gospel with a purpose. It is true and historic, but it is deeply theological. His words were put together after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and they are profoundly tied to the Old Testament. You are at the beginning of a story that has already started millennia ago. Promises have been made and if you were a first century Jew, when you hear “Messiah” something inside of you leaps. When we read these words, are we caught up with the same excitement? Do we read on with anxious expectation? You too are on the other side of the resurrection. The promises are coming true and if you call Jesus “King” you are a beneficiary of his promises. Start out right. As a group, pray together that this study will fill you with hope and security. Confess among each other if you feel that the excitement of what Jesus has done has lost its luster. Take some time to commit in prayer to being changed by Matthew as we read it together.



KING'S BIRTH

MATTHEW 1:18–25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.





INTRODUCTION

We do not remember our own birth stories, and though they are beautiful, they are never without pain. Witnessing my children being born, I am convinced of that truth. In many ways, Jesus came in the same way we all did, but his was a different beginning—a divine one. This did not remove the pain or realities of normal birth. In fact, the circumstances surrounding it were challenging, especially in the very different world of first century Israel. It was not a good beginning for Mary, Joseph or Jesus, because culturally they would have questionable reputations. Jesus would be dubbed a *mamzēr*, illegitimate. Mary would be seen as an adulteress and Joseph likely seen as a weak man. This is the scene from which Matthew's Gospel proceeds.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Do you have an entertaining birth story? If you are comfortable, share it with your group.
- 2 Read Luke 1:26-38. Compare and contrast the birth accounts in the two Gospels. Why would each have different details?
- 3 In the Matthew text for this session, where did Jesus the child “come from” (twice)? What significance might this have?
- 4 To understand Joseph's desire to divorce quietly, one must understand Old Testament law. Read Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 20:10, and Deuteronomy 22:22.

Joseph is willing to sacrifice on behalf of the one he was to marry. Is this type of sacrifice of reputation something you have done before? Explain. If not, why not?

- 5 Read Matthew 1:17 and 1:20. Why is David so important to the beginning of this story?
- 6 Read Isaiah 7:10-17. Immanuel means "God with us." What is Matthew's purpose for using this image as he describes the birth of Jesus?
- 7 Read Genesis 1:1-2 and Matthew 1:18-20. How is the Holy Spirit involved in these two texts? The same Spirit empowered both of these events, and you too have become a new creation. Do you ever consider the Holy Spirit's participation in your conversion? How is that Spirit creatively at work in your life now?
- 8 What are the key points that this birth narrative is communicating to the reader? What will matter to the rest of the Gospel?
- 9 Have you ever felt "illegitimate" in a particular place or role? Why did you feel this way? Considering Jesus' humble beginnings and how his reputation may have been impacted, how can we better manage our own feelings of illegitimacy or being out of place?



GOSPEL MOTIVATION

The reference from Isaiah reinforces God's presence with his people. God. With. Us. Jesus' name has a similar purpose. It comes from the Hebrew name Yeshua which is the equivalent of Joshua, meaning "the LORD is salvation." Before Jesus does anything in Matthew's Gospel, we are given a preview of his presence and saving work. The savior has arrived and is present to those of us who call him King and accept his offer to become part of his family. Do we live like it? Honestly, in our culture most of us have everything we really need. Supermarkets in the Western world have more variety and quantity than we could ever need. Our toilets flush water that is cleaner than most of the developed world. Do you feel like you need to be saved? Our excess and comfort can make our faith weak and shallow. What are you doing to deepen your faith? Who is along the same journey with you? What are some steps you can take to deepen the connection between life and faith?



ROYAL RIVALS

MATTHEW 2:1-23

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶ "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" ⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they

had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. ¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children





in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." ¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

INTRODUCTION

You know that moment in a movie when you are introduced to the first bad guy or first conflict in the story. A sinister chorus may begin to slowly roll in the background. As a viewer you might feel a bit uneasy and you may even shift in your seat a little. In our story, we are introduced to King Herod, but make no mistake. While he is a false king holding tightly to his self-interest, he is simply a pawn of the other great usurper that will enter the scene soon enough. Herod is just one in a long line of low level thugs with high level egos introducing us to the methods of their master—manipulation, deceit, and death. But God's plan cannot be thwarted and his Chosen One will be protected. Listen close enough and you will hear echoes of previous stories played out from Israel's past.

DISCUSSION

- 1 When you think of the idea of royalty, what comes to mind? Are you generally positive, negative or neutral to the idea of a king? Explain.
- 2 An “angel of the LORD” shows up again and again. Take a moment to find the four times the “angel” has showed up in Matthew 1 and 2. What has been their primary purpose/role?
- 3 What other stories from the Old Testament include traveling in and out of Egypt? Which story do you think Matthew may be echoing and why?
- 4 What do you learn about the “wise men” from this session? How many are there? Where are they from? Why did they come? What did they bring? How is it different than what you have been taught?
- 5 Compare and contrast the “wise men” and Herod.
- 6 Herod was the current King of the Jews. How would you respond if someone came to you asked if they could talk to the person who was going to replace you? How would you describe King Herod’s actions throughout Matthew 2?
- 7 Read Hosea 11:1-2 and compare to Matthew 2:13-15. How is the intention of the two texts different? Who is Jesus being compared to and how does this reveal what Matthew is getting at?
- 8 Read Matthew 20:25-28. What is the context of these words from Jesus? How do they relate to his birth and what he experiences as a child?



- 9 Describe a time when you used your “authority” at work or in your home to control or master someone else. How did it turn out? Why did you do it?
- 10 Can you imagine leaving your country to go and worship an unknown king in another country? Why is this idea so foreign to us? Does your faith in Jesus compel you to make such commitments in the future? Why/why not?

GOSPEL MOTIVATION

Matthew 2 reveals a royal challenge. A throne is being threatened through the birth of baby Jesus. Herod’s bloodline and his rule is being challenged and Matthew gives us a vision of how a challenged throne responds. It is not pretty, but it should make us think. Do we act like King Herod when we are challenged? How do you respond when someone cuts you off on the freeway? We have a bit of Herod in all of us, but we have been called to a different kind of living. Which royal bloodline will you reveal by how you live today? Maybe a bit of repentance is necessary. It is a good exercise to get on our knees and ask God for forgiveness when we act more like the Herods of this world. Maybe you “Lord it over” your children or maybe you want to usurp your parent’s throne. Either way, take a moment in your group and in your home every day this week to repent of your tendencies to be a king rather than a servant.



THE BAPTISM

MATTHEW 3:1-17

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.' "

⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now

the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." ¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."





INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist is an unusual fellow and he can be equally difficult to understand. He appears briefly and does not linger long. If you look carefully, these few verses split this scene with John into water and fire. His offer is forgiveness through baptism, but his speech is ferocious. Water cleanses but what John offers is only temporary. His fiery speech is met with the one who brings true cleansing but it will come like fire. The One who brings the fire, the One whose way John has prepared, will come to the waters of baptism himself.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Compare John the Baptist with King Herod from the previous chapter. How do they operate differently?
- 2 John the Baptist is in all four gospels. Why? What makes him so important?
- 3 Why are John's wardrobe and eating habits mentioned?
- 4 Read 2 Kings 1:5-8 and Malachi 4. Malachi is written several generations after the life of Elijah. How do these two texts help us understand the ministry of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' ministry?

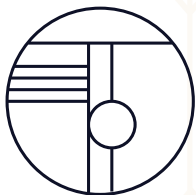
- 5 Locations are important in the Bible. Where is John baptizing? Where does Jesus go to get baptized? There is an echo from the Old Testament here. Can you identify it? What might Matthew be telling his readers by using these locations?
- 6 Crossing the Jordan is a theme in scripture. Read Deuteronomy 11:26-32 and Joshua 3:14-17. How does Jesus' baptism pick up on this idea? Compare what happens in Joshua 3 with Matthew 3:16-17.
- 7 Read Isaiah 40:1-5. What is the context of the words from Isaiah that Matthew is using?
- 8 Two major ideas sit as the foundation John's teaching—confessing sins or repentance, and fruit-bearing. How do you think that they are connected? When you think of the Christian faith, what is "fruit bearing"? What does it look like in your life?
- 9 John's words are harsh. When you consider your own faith, how do you think about his words of fire for those that are not fruitful? Do you dismiss them? Do you ignore them? Are they motivating? Discuss.
- 10 The Spirit of God is introduced as descending upon Jesus here. How is the image of the dove used elsewhere in scripture? Why might Matthew use it here?





GOSPEL MOTIVATION

John the Baptist serves as a dividing line. He sits at the transition from Old to New. Mosaic Law to Gospel. It is as if he is the “turning page” that introduces the start of the beautiful conclusion to the biblical story. Grace like never before has come, and the Father is all about this plan. Do you think about the Father’s words, “with whom I am well pleased”? What Jesus has started pleases the Father. The plan of salvation from which you and I benefit has hit another milestone that pleases our triune God. He is pleased to save you, to give everything for you, to empower you for fruit bearing. Do you let life’s anxieties get in the way of this wonder? Today, consider how you sometimes live life as if God’s gift and grace were not true. What will remind you that this grace and Spirit is ever-present and accessible no matter what your current circumstances are? Remind someone consistently this week that God is pleased to save them and enables them to bear good fruit in the world.



HE TEMPTATION

MATTHEW 4:1-11

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, " 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and " 'On

their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' " ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' " ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, " 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.' " ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.





INTRODUCTION

Adam and Eve were tempted. Israel was tempted. These wilderness moments bring truth to the surface and temptation seems to be the catalyst. Even people that have no real barometer for what's right and true use "temptation" in their vocabulary. At minimum, "temptation" is being pulled toward something that should not happen because it will come at a cost. The temporal benefit of succumbing to such a temptation is more costly than delaying the gratification for something better. But, who does it cost? Culturally, an individual's pleasures and desires are at the center, but in the Bible it is deeper. There are consequences that stretch beyond our individual sphere. Succumbing to temptation can have a domino-effect that damages others and even have cosmic consequences. One need only read the first few pages of the Bible to understand this truth.

DISCUSSION

- 1 How do you judge whether something is a temptation or simply a reasonable desire?
- 2 Read Exodus 15:22-27. What has just occurred in the Book of Exodus before this? Are you expecting Israel's response? Why/why not?
- 3 Who leads Jesus into the wilderness? Note the difference between the one who "leads" and the one who "tempts." Have you ever considered that sometimes you may be lead into hard moments for good reason? Share an example of such a time. Looking back, how have you found the good that came from such a struggle?

- 4 When you see the number forty, what other events from the Old Testament might be called to mind? Share all the ones you can think of.
- 5 Describe your understanding of fasting. Why do you think Jesus fasted? Do you think he chose to fast or simply was forced to fast due to lack of resources in the wilderness? When and why do you fast?
- 6 What are the other two titles given the “devil” in this passage? What do these names mean and how do they help us understand what’s happening in this text?
- 7 Read Psalm 91. Matthew tells us the “devil” knows scripture. He tries to use it to compel Jesus to act. Have you ever had scripture quoted to you in a way that seemed deceitful or manipulative?
- 8 Jesus correctly uses scripture to counter the devil’s manipulation of it. How well do you know scripture on a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being a master of scripture)? How can you get better at it?
- 9 Read Matthew 7:1-5 and take great care as you listen to others present their own answers to the following question. Read James 1:14-15, and if you are comfortable, describe one of your greatest temptations. What are things that bring you to the brink of a temptation? What are the desires over which you feel the least control? Have you ever asked anyone to help you when you are struggling?





GOSPEL MOTIVATION

Just as in Genesis 3, a challenger to God and his throne raises a question. The devil uses three “ifs” to formulate his strategy. Ultimately, the Gospel of Matthew will pose just one. How blessed is the Christian when considering that God has only one “if”—if you believe in Jesus Christ and his work? Brother and sister, you are not asked to enroll yourself into some special intellectual pursuit, nor achieve levels of living success to be a part of this team, but simply have faith in the One who bests the devil where Adam failed with the serpent. His success becomes your success. His Spirit is the one inside you. What failures in temptation have left you feeling outside of his embrace? How are you trying to gain your way back into his good graces? Do you trust that the Spirit of the Living God is with you even in the wilderness? Confess your temptations, and moments of failing to trust God, and lean into his success knowing that you only need to trust in his work as you learn to live out your faith with fear and trembling.



INISTRY BEGINS

MATTHEW 4:12-25

¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." ¹⁷

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.





INTRODUCTION

John's arrest has triggered a new movement in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus changed locations and "began to preach." This section includes broad strokes of kingdom proclamation, healing, and exorcism, but it only summarizes what will soon become detailed teaching and narrative accounts over the next chapters. We can't miss the point that Jesus has invited others into the work. Much like God's original creative work, this work is personal and is intended to require a community who are on the same page.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Once again, we have an Old Testament reference. Read Isaiah 9:1-7. Describe the tone of the Isaiah passage. How is Matthew using this reference in the current context?
- 2 What was John's message in Matthew 3:2 compared to Jesus' message here in Matthew 4? What can we conclude from this comparison?
- 3 Jesus has spoken to John the Baptist and the devil so far. His first words to others are "Repent" and "Follow me." These are commands. How do you they go together? Which do you have more trouble with and why?
- 4 When we think fishing, we think rods, reels and hooks. Usually, one hook catches one fish. First century folks used nets. Think of the difference in these two methods when the disciples would hear "I will make you fishers of men."

How do you think about sharing the gospel with others? How can this difference in methods influence how we think about sharing the gospel with others?

- 5 Jesus went “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom” but as a reader you haven’t heard specifically what that means. Based upon what Matthew has written so far, how would you define the “gospel” and what would influence your definition so far?
- 6 The miraculous followed Jesus proclamation. Are you a skeptic when it comes to the miraculous? How does your skepticism affect how you read scripture?
- 7 When a Christian says “I follow Jesus” what are they doing and where are they going? As best you can, map out what this means from beginning to end.
- 8 Other than Jesus, what are some other things you follow? Are they healthy or unhealthy?



GOSPEL MOTIVATION

The gospel calls us to change. This is literally what we can interpret from the words behind “repent” in both Hebrew and Greek. It is a turning of our lives. Most important is what we are turning towards. Like the hand of a compass, we are drawn in directions, but in the midst of all of our twists and turns, the compass is actively pulled in one direction. An anchor point. A true North. Some of us struggle with things that pull at the hand of the compass—addictions, pleasures, identities. What moves you in ways that it shouldn’t? What has hijacked what you should be focusing on? How can a Christian brother or sister help you on the journey of turning toward your King?



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