



KINGDOM COME

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW
LEADER'S GUIDE
#NT18

NT LEADER'S GUIDE

MATTHEW

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GOSPEL TRAINING CENTER
AT LAKEWOOD



NT Leader's Guide: Matthew

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NT18

Welcome to NT18!

Authentic Community is more than a slogan or pithy phrase. It is really about LIFE TRANSFORMATION.

I am so excited about our NT18, especially as I consider the Life Transformation that I know will occur as you read God's Word.

God's Word is strong, powerful, and provides Truth and Light for every aspect of our lives.

This Leader's Guide will be extremely helpful to each of our community group leaders as Authentic Community occurs in and through the local church.

I am so very thankful for your love of God, HIS Word, and HIS Church.

Blessings, Dr. T

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Authorship

The author of this book does not mention himself in the text of the Gospel, but our earliest evidence suggests that this work always bore the title *kata Maththaion*, that is, “according to Matthew.” Similarly, early church fathers consistently affirm Matthew as the author of this Gospel. Papias (fl. c. 135), Iraneaus (130-202), and Origen (c. 184-c. 253) all ascribe authorship of the work to the Apostle Matthew.

The idea behind the title, the Gospel according to Matthew, is that this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that Matthew records. Matthew writes down the good news of Jesus. Together, the four Gospel accounts give us a fourfold witness to the good news of Jesus.

The Apostle Matthew who wrote this Gospel is the Matthew mentioned in chapter 9 of this book. Mark calls this same man, “Levi the Son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14), and Luke simply names him, “Levi” (Luke 5:27). It seems that Levi was given the apostolic name “Matthew,” which means “gift of of the Lord.” Just as Jesus gave Simon the name “Peter” (John 1:42), it seems that he gave Levi the name Matthew.

Our best evidence suggests that Matthew likely wrote this Gospel in the late 50s or early 60s. As many of the Apostles were dying, a need arose to record their testimony about Jesus in writing to pass on to future generations.

Purpose & Themes

Matthew writes his Gospel to testify to who Jesus is and to explain what Jesus does. Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah who fulfills God’s promises from the Old Testament by ushering in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Who Jesus Is: The Promised Messiah

As the promised Messiah, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He fulfills and surpasses the law and the prophets. This theme comes through clearly on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-13). Jesus is transfigured next to Moses, the giver of the law, and Elijah, the preeminent prophet. God the Father proclaims concerning Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (17:5). Next to the law and the prophet, God the Father calls us to listen to the Son.

Matthew demonstrates that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament through frequent allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures that show Jesus superseding a person or place from Israel’s past. One of the more prominent fulfillment themes is that Jesus is the new and better Moses. Jesus comes out of Egypt (2:15), successfully navigates 40 days in the wilderness (4:1-11), gives a new law from a mountain (5:1-7:27), miraculously feeds thousands in a desolate place (14:13-21; 15:32-39), and ultimately delivers his people not through the blood of a passover lamb but by his own blood.

Furthermore, Jesus is the new and better David. From the start of the Gospel, Matthew establishes Jesus as the Son of David (1:1), and several people Jesus encounters in his ministry will call him “Son of David” (12:23, 15:22, 20:30-31). The most poignant example of the people seeing Jesus as the Son of David is the triumphal entry where he is praised, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Jesus himself identifies with David as he discusses the Sabbath (12:1-8) and as he questions the religious leaders (22:41-45). Even as Jesus is mocked, beaten, and crucified, Matthew highlights that Jesus is the new and better king (27:27-31, 37), who conquers through his own death.

While the Mosaic and Davidic themes are some of the clearest in Matthew, there are a number of aspects of OT fulfillment that this Gospel highlights. Jesus is the new and better temple. He says in 12:6, “I tell you, something greater than the temple is here,” and in his trial and passion, references are made to Jesus speaking of himself as the

temple (26:61; 27:40).¹ Jesus is also portrayed as the new and better Jonah as he explicitly references Jonah (12:38-41), and there is a more subtle allusion to Jonah as Jesus, too, sleeps in a boat during a storm (8:24).

To understand how Jesus fulfills these Old Testament themes, we return again to the mount of transfiguration where God the Father declared that Jesus is the beloved Son (17:5) just as he did at his baptism (3:17). Jesus surpasses these Old Testament people and places because he is the Son.

While many will refer to Jesus as the “Son of God,” Jesus never uses this title for himself in Matthew’s Gospel. Instead, Jesus frequently refers to himself as the “Son of Man.” While “Son of Man” might sound less divine than

“Son of God” to our modern ears, the title “Son of Man” would have been particularly powerful to a first-century Jewish audience. Many claimed to be sons of gods, but in calling himself the Son of Man, Jesus was referencing Daniel 7. This prophecy speaks of one is human, “like a son of man,” who has divine authority: he came on the clouds and was “given dominion

¹³ I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
¹⁴ And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting
dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.
Daniel 7:13–14

and glory and a kingdom.” As Daniel’s vision continues, he explains that the dominion is everlasting, and the Son of Man’s kingdom will not be destroyed; these are the same attributes of God’s kingdom

¹Interestingly, only in John do we have a record of this saying alluded to during the passion narrative. John 2:19 recounts how Jesus pronounced, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Certainly, this fact should remind us of the need to read Scripture within its whole context and the blessing of having four Gospel accounts.

mentioned in Daniel 4:34. This Son of Man is at once human and divine.

What Jesus Does: Founds the Kingdom

The notion of an everlasting dominion and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed leads directly to the Gospel of Matthew's emphasis on what Jesus does: he ushers in the kingdom of heaven.

This kingdom is the fulfillment of all of God's Old Testament promises. In other words, the New Testament continues the Old Testament story of salvation: God will bless the whole world through Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3). This promised blessing comes by God establishing his kingdom. God the Father rules through King Jesus, and this rule brings blessing to the world.

Where Mark and Luke speak of the kingdom of God, Matthew typically describes this kingdom as the kingdom of heaven.² Some have suggested that this substituting of "heaven" for "God" stems from a Jewish practice of showing reverence for the name of God by not writing it. However more recently, a far more compelling case has been made that Matthew uses heaven in order to contrast the kingdom Jesus brings with the kingdoms of this earth.³ The contrast is between heaven and earth - between the ways of God and the ways of people. The kingdom Jesus brings is heavenly, and as its king, he exercises rule over all earthly kingdoms. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus teaches that his kingdom is both a present reality and has a future fulfillment. The kingdom has begun with Jesus, but it has not yet been completed. The kingdom is inaugurated but has not been consummated. Commentators speak of this as the "already - not yet" tension of the kingdom. It is here now, and yet it will be here more fully when Christ returns. In Matthew 12:28, Jesus declares, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." The kingdom has come in Jesus, and yet,

²In his Gospel, John uses the phrase "eternal life" or simply "life" to describe the same reality of the kingdom.

³For an in-depth look at the use of "heaven" in Matthew, see Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

at this time, we do not see all the Old Testament promises about the complete and utter defeat of God's enemies and the righteous being visibly blessed coming to fruition.

The kingdom was present in the person of Jesus, but it would not be consummated until after his death and resurrection when he will return in glory.

- Dr. Tom Schreiner

The kingdom has come, and it will come in fullness when Christ returns.

The cross of Christ is central to the kingdom. The Gospel of Matthew culminates with the crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus establishes the kingdom's victory in the most surprising way. He does not conquer

through power but through suffering. He puts death to death through his own gruesome death. Apparent defeat becomes the pathway to victory. He conquers by suffering.

His death, however, is not the end of the story. Because Jesus was obedient to death, God raised him up and exalted him to his right hand, placing all things under his feet (Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 2:5-11). He is seated at God's right hand, ruling over all things.

Again, we see the already-not yet tension, for "Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him" (Hebrews 2:8). King Jesus is ruling, but we do yet see everything as it should be. The kingdom has not yet been fully realized. As the Apostle Paul explains, the full realization of the kingdom will come when Christ returns:

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:22-26).

King Jesus will destroy the last enemy, death, and then hand this kingdom back to God the Father. Revelation 19 gives us two pictures of what the culmination of this kingdom will be. For those who do not trust in Christ, King Jesus will come as the warrior king and

judge to defeat God's enemies (Rev. 19:11-21). For those who are trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life, God the Father invites them as the bride to a great marriage feast (Rev. 19:6-10). The kingdom will come to its ultimate fulfillment when Christ returns. All things will be made new, and we will dwell in a new Eden - a new garden paradise - forever in God's presence.

Living in the Kingdom Now

The kingdom has not yet come in its completed form, and yet Jesus teaches that with him, the kingdom has already come. How then can we presently live as members of the kingdom of God? What does the kingdom of God mean for our lives today?

What does the kingdom of God mean for our lives today?

In his *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*, Vaughan Roberts speaks of the kingdom as God's people living in God's place under God's authority and thereby enjoying God's blessing. This grid proves particularly helpful in understanding how the kingdom applies to our lives today. Through faith in Christ, anyone who believes can become part of the people of God. Through Christ, God's place is no longer isolated to a single spot but extends to wherever his people are found. By his Holy Spirit, God dwells within each believer, and together as the church in Christ, the Apostle Paul teaches, "You [all] also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). As followers of Christ, we follow him and are empowered by his Spirit to live under God's rule. The same Spirit that helps us obey is also the blessing we receive as we live under his rule.⁴

To live in the kingdom now is to live a life of faith in Christ that is marked by Spirit-empowered obedience to the glory of God the Father.

⁴In Galatians 3:14, Paul describes the coming of the Holy Spirit to all kinds of people as the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham: "In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

Discussion Questions

Week 1 | Matthew 1-2

1. 1-2 | Between the genealogy and the quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures, these two chapters are filled with numerous references to the Old Testament. Why would Matthew spend so much of the opening of his Gospel alluding to the OT?
2. 2:1-19 | How is Jesus a different type of king than Herod was? As a follower of Jesus, what hope, encouragement, and comfort do you find in knowing that Jesus is king?

Week 2 | Matthew 3-7

1. 3:13-17 | Which persons of the Trinity do you see involved at Jesus's baptism? Why was Jesus baptized? Why should his followers be baptized?
2. 4:19 | What does it mean to follow Jesus? What does it mean to fish for men? Do you think following and fishing are separate in Jesus's mind? Where are you "fishing" now?
3. 5:20 | In Christ, how does our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, the most righteous people in Jesus's day? In answering this question, consider what Paul means in 1 Cor. 1:30 when he speaks of Christ as "our righteousness." Consider also Phil. 3:9 and Rom. 5:19.
4. 6:12, 14-15 | How seriously does Jesus take our need to forgive others? How do these verses mesh with the biblical teaching that we are justified before God through faith in Christ? Whom do you need to forgive?
5. 7:24-27 | According to v. 24, who does Jesus consider the wise builder? What is he calling you to do in response to his Sermon on the Mount? Reflect on which of his teachings you need to seek to apply in the coming week.

Week 3 | Matthew 8-12

1. 8:5-13 | What is remarkable about the faith of the centurion? Looking at vv. 10-11, what does this account teach us about who can come to God through Christ? In light of who can come, what do you

need to be doing to support efforts to proclaim the gospel around the world?

2. 9:35-38 | Where do you see that the harvest is plentiful? Are you consistently praying for laborers? Take time during group this week to pray for some of the missionaries Lakewood supports.

3. 10:16-25 | What does Jesus teach about how his followers will be treated? Where do you see this happening around the world today? How do you think believers endure such treatment? How does Christ call you to react in the face of opposition?

4. 11:25-30 | How does the message and ministry of Jesus provide comfort to you? What does it mean that Jesus is “gentle and lowly in heart”? How can we learn from him and live like him?

5. 12:33-37 | According to this passage, is making a decision for Christ the same as being saved? What does Jesus say following him will look like? How does his teaching on the need to bear fruit square with the biblical teaching that salvation is by faith alone? For the beginning of an answer, consider the source of good fruit (John 15:4-5; Gal. 5:22-24).

Week 4 | Matthew 13-17

1. 13:1-23 | What does Jesus teach in the parable of the sower? What does genuine faith look like? In what ways are we called to sow?

2. 14:13-21 | What does the feeding of the five thousand reveal about Jesus’s character and about his power? How do these truths help you to trust Jesus in your life?

3. 15:1-9 | Where are you tempted to hold onto tradition rather than follow God? Where do you see your own proneness to honor God with your lips but have your heart far from him?

4. 16:13-23 | What did Peter understand about who Jesus is? What did he fail to understand? How does 16:24-28 connect with 16:13-23? If we follow as savior who took up his cross and suffered, how should we live?

5. 17:1-13 | What does the transfiguration reveal to us about Jesus? How should the fact that Jesus is both God the Son and the one who suffers shape our devotion to him?

Week 5 | Matthew 18-22

1. 18:21-35 | How important does Jesus consider forgiving those who wrong you? How are we able to forgive others? Whom do you need to begin to forgive?

2. 19:16-29 | According to Jesus, why is worldly wealth such a hindrance to trusting God? Why are the disciples so shocked by this teaching? How is 19:26 a great hope for all people?

3. 20:1-16 | What does this parable teach us about the kingdom of God? Do you ever begrudge God's generosity toward others?

4. 20:20-28 | What would it look like for your life to be marked by the same servanthood, even slavery, as Jesus? Where and whom has the Lord called you to serve?

5. 22:34-40 | Why does Jesus answer the question about the greatest commandment with two commandments? How are the two commandments interconnected? Which part of these commands do you find more difficult?

Week 6 | Matthew 23-27

1. 23:23-24 | Where do you find yourself neglecting the "weightier matters" in your attempts to be careful in your obedience? What would it look like for you to pay more attention to these weightier matters?

2. 24:36-51 | How is 24:44 key to understanding Jesus's teaching on his return? What does he mean by being ready? How do you need to live in light of his teaching on his return?

3. 25 | How would you summarize the key teaching of this chapter? Do you find Jesus's teaching here encouraging or does it produce fear? Why?

4. 26:26-29 | According to this passage, what should our celebration of the Lord's Supper help us reflect upon and consider? Do you remember any particularly sweet memory of celebrating the Lord's Supper?

5. 27 | What stood out to you as you read the passion narrative this week? How does remembering Jesus's death and resurrection drive us to worship him?

Week 7 | Matthew 28

1. 28:1-10 | Who first saw the resurrected Jesus? Given the place of women in the first-century Mediterranean world, why is this significant?

2. 28:16-20 | Why is it significant that Jesus begins the Great Commission talking about his authority? How does Jesus describe what it means to make disciples? In what ways are you sharing the gospel with unbelievers? In what ways are you teaching believers the full counsel of God's Word?



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