

Notes & Outlines

MATTHEW

J. Vernon McGee

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Although it is not alleged that the arrangement of the books of the Bible is inspired, it is a historical fact that spiritual and scholarly men supervised the arrangement of the books of the New Testament canon. Therefore, it is no accident that the Gospel of Matthew is first. Even Renan, the French skeptic, said of this Gospel, "...the most important book in Christendom — the most important book that ever has been written." This Gospel stands like a swinging door between the two Testaments. It swings back into the Old Testament and gathers up prophecies fulfilled at the first coming of Christ, and it swings into the New Testament and speaks of the "new creation" of God, "Upon this rock *I will build my church*" (Matthew 16:18).

WRITER:

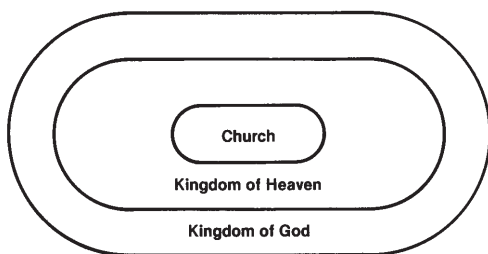
Matthew was a converted publican (Matthew 9:9) who was chosen to write to the Jews concerning their Messiah.

KEY:

Matthew presents the program of God. The "kingdom of heaven" is an expression which is peculiar to this Gospel. It occurs 32 times. The word "kingdom" occurs 50 times. A proper understanding of the phrase "kingdom of heaven" is essential to any interpretation of the Bible. *The kingdom of heaven and the church are not the same.* John the Baptist was the first to use the expression "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 3:2). He began his ministry with the bold and startling announcement, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When the Lord Jesus Christ began His ministry, He likewise began with this very announcement (Matthew 4:17). Neither John nor Jesus attempted to explain the meaning of the term. It is reasonable to assume that the people to whom the message was given had some conception of its meaning. The Jews of the first century in Palestine had a clearer understanding of the term than the average church member in Christendom today. They were not confused by the theologians of 19 centuries who have attempted to fit the term into some system of theology. In this they were fortunate. They understood the term to be the sum total of all the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the coming of the King from heaven to set up a kingdom on this earth with heaven's standard. The concept is not new (Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27).

To read into this expression the history since John and Jesus made the first announcement is a presumption which the Scriptures will not countenance. The kingdom was near in the person of the King. The kingdom has not been postponed, as God still intends to carry out His earthly purpose on schedule — "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6). God's dealing with

men since the rejection and crucifixion of the King has been in the framework of the kingdom of heaven. He is carrying out a heavenly purpose today “bringing many sons unto glory” (Hebrews 2:10). The calling out of the church is not synonymous with the kingdom of heaven, though the church is in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13). Neither is the term “kingdom of God” synonymous with “kingdom of heaven.” The “kingdom of God” is a broader term that encompasses all of God’s creation, including angels. The following chart may be helpful in thinking of these terms with the proper distinction.



The church is in the kingdom of heaven, but it is not the same; likewise it is in the kingdom of God. Los Angeles is in the state of California, but it is not the same. California is in the United States and is part of it, but it is not identical to the whole country — in spite of what the Chamber of Commerce claims.

It will be seen that the term “kingdom of heaven” is a progressive term in the Gospel of Matthew. It assumes the mystery form during the days of the rejection of the King, but the King becomes a sower in the world (Matthew 13). The kingdom will be established on this earth at the return of the King (Matthew 24, 25).

The four Gospels constitute a modern newspaper: Matthew contains the announcements and advertising, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”; Mark carries the flaming headlines, “Behold my servant” (we need to know the headlines, at least, of God’s program); Luke has the special features — he alone records the songs connected with the birth of Christ, the stories of the Good Samaritan and of the Prodigal Son; John has the editorial section — he has written on the bread of life, the water of life, the true vine, and the Christian life.

OUTLINE: “Behold Your King” — Matthew presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the King.

- I. Person** of the King, Chapters 1, 2
- II. Preparation** of the King, Chapters 3:1 — 4:16
- III. Propaganda** of the King, Chapters 4:17 — 9:35

IV. Program of the King, Chapters 9:36 — 16:20

V. Passion of the King, Chapters 16:21 — 27:66

VI. Power of the King, Chapter 28

There is a movement in Matthew. Learn to think your way through the entire Gospel from the first chapter through the twenty-eighth. *You must know Matthew to understand the Bible.* You can no more understand the Bible without understanding the Gospel of Matthew than you can write without an alphabet.

Moving Through Matthew

CHAPTER

- 1 Genealogy and record of virgin birth of Jesus
- 2 Visit of wise men — flight to Egypt — return to Nazareth
- 3 John the Baptist, forerunner of King, announces kingdom and baptizes Jesus, the King
- 4 Testing of the King in wilderness — begins public ministry at Capernaum — calls disciples
- 5, 6, 7 Sermon on the Mount
 - (1) Relationship of subjects of kingdom to self, 5:1-16
 - (2) Relationship of subjects of kingdom to Law, 5:17-48
 - (3) Relationship of subjects of kingdom to God, 6
 - (4) Relationship of children of King to each other, 7
- 8 Six miracles of King demonstrate His dynamic to enforce ethics of Sermon on the Mount
- 9 Performs six more miracles — calls Matthew — contends with Pharisees
- 10 Jesus commissions twelve to preach gospel of the kingdom to nation Israel
- 11 Quizzed by disciples of John — rejects unrepentant cities — issues new invitation to individuals
- 12 Conflict and final break of Jesus with religious rulers
- 13 Mystery parables of kingdom of heaven
- 14 John the Baptist beheaded — Jesus feeds 5,000 — sends disciples into storm at sea — walks on water to them
- 15 Jesus denounces scribes and Pharisees — heals daughter of Syrophenician woman and multitudes — feeds 4,000
- 16 Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees — confession from disciples, Peter spokesman — Jesus first confronts them with church, His death and resurrection
- 17 Transfiguration — demon-possessed boy — tax money provided by miracle

- 18 Little child — lost sheep — conduct in coming church — parable on forgiveness
- 19 God's standard for marriage and divorce — little children blessed — rich young ruler — apostles' position in coming kingdom
- 20 Parable of laborers in vineyard — Jesus makes 4th and 5th announcements of His approaching death — mother requests places of honor for James and John — Jesus restores sight to two men
- 21 King offers Himself publicly and finally to nation — cleanses temple — curses fig tree — condemns religious rulers with parables of two sons and householder
- 22 Parable of marriage feast for king's son — Jesus answers and silences Herodians, Sadducees, Pharisees
- 23 Jesus warns against and pronounces woes upon scribes and Pharisees — weeps over Jerusalem
- 24, 25 Olivet Discourse:
Jesus answers questions about sign of end of age and sign of His coming — parable of ten virgins — parable of eight talents — judgment of sheep and goat nations
- 26 Jesus plotted against — anointed by Mary of Bethany — sold by Judas — observes last Passover and first Lord's Supper — agonizes in Gethsemane — arrested and tried by religious rulers — disowned by Peter
- 27 Trial, death and burial of the King
- 28 Resurrection of the King — His great commission

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS

There are approximately 400 years which take place between the days of Nehemiah and Malachi and the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. This is a great yawning chasm of silence as far as Scripture is concerned. Nevertheless, this period was a thrilling time when momentous and world-shaking events were transpiring. A brief understanding of these days is at least essential to a right appreciation of the New Testament.

World history made rapid strokes in this interval. The internal condition of Judah experienced a radical transformation. A new culture, different institutions, and unfamiliar organizations arose in this period which appear in the New Testament.

The Old Testament closed with the Medio-Persian Empire being the dominant power. Also, Egypt was still a power to be reckoned with in world politics. During the interval between the Testaments both faded from the scene as

outstanding nations. World power shifted from the East to the West, from the Orient to the Occident, from Asia to Europe, and from Medio-Persia to Greece. When the New Testament opens, a new power, Rome, is the world ruler. A consideration of some important, approximate dates will give a rapid succession of major events which mark the transition.

- 480 B.C. Xerxes, the Persian, was victorious against the Greeks at Thermopylae, but he was defeated at the battle of Salamis. This was the last bid of the East for world dominion.
- 333 B.C. Alexander the Great led the united Greek forces to victory over the Persians at Issus.
- 332 B.C. Alexander the Great visited Jerusalem. He was shown the prophecy of Daniel which spoke of him; therefore he spared Jerusalem.
- 323 B.C. Alexander died, and the world empire of both East and West was divided among his four generals.
- 320 B.C. Judea was annexed to Egypt by Ptolemy Soter.
- 312 B.C. Selucius founded the kingdom of the Selucidae. Judea became the battleground between Syria and Egypt as a buffer state.
- 203 B.C. Antiochus the Great took Jerusalem, and Judea passed under the influence of Syria.
- 170 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes took Jerusalem and defiled the temple. He had been mentioned in Daniel as the little horn (Daniel 8:9). He has been called the “Nero of Jewish history.”
- 166 B.C. Mattathias, the priest of Judea, raised a revolt against Syria. This is the beginning of the Maccabean period. The Jews have never suffered more than during this era, and never were they more heroic than in this interval. Judas Maccabaeus, “the hammer,” was the leader who organized the revolt.
- 63 B.C. Pompey, the Roman, took Jerusalem, and this people passed under the rulership of a new world power, where they were at the time of the birth of Jesus.
- 40 B.C. Roman Senate appointed Herod to be King of Judea.
- 37 B.C. Herod took Jerusalem and slew Antigonus, the last of the Maccabean king-priests.
- 27 B.C. Caesar Augustus became emperor of Rome.
- 19 B.C. The rebuilding of the Herodian temple was begun.
- 4 B.C. Anno Domini — “in the year of the Lord” — Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

The experiences of the nation of Judea during the inter-testament period

affected its internal life. In fact, a radical change took place. After the Babylonian captivity, they turned from idolatry to a frantic striving for legal holiness. The Law became an idol to them. The classic Hebrew gave way to the Aramaic in their everyday speech, but the Hebrew was retained for their synagogues. The synagogue, which seemed to have come in right after the Captivity, became the center of their life in Judea and also everywhere they went into the world.

Many parties appeared among them. In Judea there were several prominent ones. They were:

1. *Pharisees* — The Pharisees arose to defend the Jewish way of life against all foreign influences. They were strict legalists who believed in the Old Testament and who were nationalists in politics.

2. *Sadducees* — The Sadducees were made up of the wealthy and social minded who wanted to get rid of tradition. They rejected the supernatural and were opposed to the Pharisees who accepted it. The Sadducees were closely akin to the Greek Epicureans.

3. *Scribes* — The scribes were a group of professional expounders of the Law which stemmed from the days of Ezra. They became “hair-splitters” and were more concerned with the “letter of the law” than with the “spirit of the law.”

4. *Herodians* — The Herodians were a party in the days of Jesus who arose as political opportunists seeking to maintain the Herods on the throne.

There was great literary activity during this period in spite of the fact that there was no revelation from God. The Old Testament was translated into Greek in Alexandria in Egypt during the period 285-247 B.C. It was made by six members from each of the 12 tribes; hence, the name given to this translation was “Septuagint,” meaning seventy.

The Apocrypha of the Old Testament was written in this era. These are 14 books which bear no marks of inspiration. They are as follows: 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, 2 Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Song of the Three Holy Children, History of Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasses, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. There are two books which are classified as the Pseudepigrapha because they bear the names of two characters of the Old Testament, but there is no evidence that these two were the writers. These two books are the Psalter of Solomon and the Book of Enoch.

Although this is a period marked by the silence of God, it is, nevertheless, evident that God was preparing the world for the coming of Christ. The Jewish people, the Greek civilization, the Roman Empire, and the seething multitudes of the Orient were all being prepared for the coming of a Savior, insomuch that these events produced the scene which Paul labeled “the fulness of time.”

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Frank, Harry Thomas, editor. *Hammond's Atlas of the Bible Lands*. Maplewood, New Jersey: Hammond Inc., 1977. (Excellent and inexpensive.)
- Gaebelein, Arno C. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1910.
- Ironside, H. A. *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., n.d. (Especially good for young Christians.)
- Kelly, William. *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1868.
- McGee, J. Vernon. *Matthew*, Vols. 1 & 2. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1975. (A comprehensive study.)
- McGee, J. Vernon. *Moving Through Matthew*. Pasadena, California: Thru the Bible Radio, 1955. (An outline study.)
- Pentecost, J. Dwight. *The Parables of Our Lord*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982.
- Pentecost, J. Dwight. *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981.
- Scroggie, W. Graham. *A Guide to the Gospels*. London: Pickering & Inglis, 1948. (Excellent for personal or group study.)
- Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *Outline Studies in Matthew*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1961.
- Vos, Howard F. *Beginnings in the Life of Christ*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1975.
- Vos, Howard F. *Matthew: A Study Guide Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979.
- Walvoord, John F. *Gospel of Matthew*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1975.

These notes, prepared by J. Vernon McGee, are for the purpose of giving assistance to the listeners of the THRU THE BIBLE RADIO program. They are to be used with the Bible and will be more meaningful as you look up all the Scripture references. Due to the necessary brevity of both notes and broadcasts, a list of recommended books is included for those wanting a more detailed study. These books may be obtained from a Christian library or bookstore or ordered from the publishers.



THRU THE BIBLE RADIO NETWORK
Pasadena, California 91109-7100



