

MATTHEW - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
-

1. Who was Matthew, and why did he write about Jesus? If Matthew was a Jew writing primarily to Jews, why did he write in Greek? Or did he?
2. Jesus is the only person ever born in our world who had the privilege of choosing His ancestors! Why did He choose the ancestors He did? Why would He allow the names of His ancestors who had dubious reputations to be named in the Bible? Would you have chosen that family? Would you have mentioned Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba by name? (Matthew 1:3-6) Why were the genealogies traced through Joseph and not to Mary? Or, were they? Do we even know who Mary's ancestors were?

See the handout entitled: *The Genealogy of Jesus*.

3. Why would God choose the widowed father of several children (Matthew 13:55,56; Mark 6:1-4) to be the "father" of Jesus through whom the inheritance was traced? Today, would we consider Jesus to be an adopted son or stepson?
4. Why did God go to such trouble to guide the three Magi to see baby Jesus? (Matthew 2:1-12) Why did God allow them to approach Herod and inquire of him about the Child if He knew that the result would be the death of all those children? Where did the wise men get their information about Jesus? (Numbers 24:17) Why did God send those heathen strangers hundreds of miles to see Jesus while He apparently made no effort to guide any of the Jewish religious leaders from Jerusalem just a few miles away? Had God abandoned His chosen people already?
5. Why would God send His Son as a baby, with Mary and Joseph, all the way down to Egypt instead of just hiding them in Galilee?
6. Matthew referred to many Old Testament "prophecies" about the Messiah and showed their fulfillment in Jesus. How do you explain the fact that many of those prophecies had distinctly different meanings when they were originally given in the Old Testament? (See Isaiah 7:14; Jeremiah 31:15; Hosea 11:1; compare Matthew 1:23; 2:15; 2:18) Where did Matthew get the prophecy, "He will be called a Nazarene"? (Matthew 2:23)
7. What do the temptations of Jesus reveal to us about God and about Satan? (Matthew 4:1-11) Would you be tempted to do any of those things?
8. Do you think the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5-7 was originally given as one single sermon? If so, how much of the sermon do we actually have recorded? Does it seem like the picture many people have of Jesus as a teacher to suddenly launch into a sermon in which He attacked many of their most cherished religious traditions, one after another? Do you think His hearers were amused, annoyed, disturbed, shocked, or angry? On that occasion did Jesus overlook the fact that one cannot antagonize and persuade at the same time? Or, did Jesus use a way of saying those things that was not upsetting? How many of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount were actually new (not taught in the Old Testament)?
9. Why did Jesus start the Sermon on the Mount by saying, "Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor"? (Matthew 5:3, *GNB*; compare Luke 6:20) This seemed to contradict logic and many passages in the Old Testament! Would this passage describe "Laodiceans" living in our day? What is the meaning of "poor in spirit"? Does that mean lacking spirit, maybe? **If you were a new young teacher, would you begin by trying to revise all the textbooks?** How does this passage relate to Matthew 19:24 which says, "It is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." (*GNB*) Isn't it true that if you are good, you will be blessed? And if you are blessed, you will be rich?

10. Why do you suppose Jesus found it necessary to say, “Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them, but to make their teachings come true”? (Matthew 5:17, *GNB*) “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” (Matthew 5:17, *KJV*) Was it that what He had already said did not seem to be in harmony with the Old Testament? What was He referring to when He mentioned “the law and the prophets”?
11. Was it reasonable for Jesus to ask us to “love our enemies”? (Matthew 5:44) In what sense could we do such a thing? What kind of love is this?
12. Who are the people to whom Jesus will finally have to say, “Go away, I never knew you”? (Matthew 7:21-23) Doesn’t God know everything about everyone, even the number of hairs on our heads? (Matthew 10:30) If so, what kind of “knowing” is this?
13. What does it mean when it says that Jesus was not like the teachers of the law, instead He taught “with authority”? (Matthew 7:28,29) What kind of “authority” did Jesus have?
14. Why did Jesus say that Jairus’ daughter was just “sleeping” when He knew very well she was dead? (Matthew 9:18-26; compare John 11:11-15) What does that imply about death?
15. Why did John send his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the expected Messiah? Hadn’t he himself announced that Jesus was the expected Messiah? (Matthew 11:1-19; Luke 7:18-35)
16. Why did Jesus make so much use of parables? (Matthew 13:10-17,34,35) Was He trying to hide something?
17. What was God trying to teach us through the experience of the transfiguration? (Matthew 17:1-13; compare Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1 :16-18)
18. The book of Matthew describes Jesus as being particularly kind and considerate of children. This seems to be a new teaching or at least a new emphasis not found in the Old Testament. Why did Jesus talk about becoming like children? What does that imply about God? (Matthew 18:1-5; 19:13-15) Compare to Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 5:11-6:3.
19. Why did Jesus seem to contradict His Own Old Testament teaching about divorce? (Matthew 5:31,32; 19:1-12; see Deuteronomy 24:1-4) How does God really feel about divorce? (Malachi 2:16)
20. Review the parable of the workers in the vineyard. (Matthew 20:1-16) Doesn’t it appear that the vineyard owner was intentionally inciting those who began working earliest in the morning? Why couldn’t he have at least paid them first and dismissed them before paying the ones who worked only a short time? What do you think this teaches us about God? Would you regard those who were hired first as legalists?
21. What does it say about us and what does it say about God that “many are invited but few are chosen”? (Matthew 22:14)
22. Does Matthew seem to be clear about why Jesus had to come and die? Who or what actually killed Jesus? What was different about His death than that of any ordinary human? Was His death a murder (Matthew 17:22,23—if so, who killed Him)? A suicide (John 10:17,18)? Or, a natural result of some process (Matthew 27:46; Romans 4:25—the Greek simply says He was given up; *DA* 772)? Was Jesus’ death necessary for your salvation? If so, why?
23. Why was a portion of Galilee, formerly the tribal areas of Zebulun and Naphtali, known as “the land of the shadow of death”? (See Job 38:17; Psalms 23:4; Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:16; Luke 1:79; John 1:4-9; *DA* 34,35)
24. Why did Jesus repeatedly tell people He had healed not to tell anyone about what had happened?

© 1997-2014, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: June 28, 2014 (from TG March 20, 2011)

Z:\My Documents\WP\HTML Docs\TG-HTML\TG-Edited-Logos\SSG\MATTHEWssg-Fin+.wpd