

# **MATTHEW - A TEACHER'S GUIDE**

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## **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?
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1. Who was Matthew? Why did he write about Jesus? If Matthew was a Jew writing primarily to Jews, why did he write in Greek? Or did he?

Levi Matthew, son of Alphaeus, (Mark 2:14) was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. His father probably was not the Alphaeus that was the father of James. (Mark 3:18) After working for some time as a tax collector or “publican,” (Matthew 9:9-10) he was called by Jesus to be a disciple. Probably, he was fairly well educated and spoke Greek as well as his native Aramaic. Publicans were generally Jews who agreed to cooperate with the Romans to collect the taxes for Caesar, or Herod Antipas, who was the current ruler of Galilee. They were regarded as traitors by the Jews. Many publicans or tax collectors, with the permission of Rome, collected considerably more than Rome required and pocketed the difference.

Thus, when Jesus called Matthew to be one of His disciples, it was not looked upon favorably by the Jews. Furthermore, Matthew had been one of the tax collectors working in the city of Capernaum, the hometown of Peter and Andrew. It must have been very hard for them to accept this “outcast” from their society as an associate! Matthew may have been fairly well-off financially. At least he had enough money to throw a large banquet for Jesus. (See Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32) It appears that after Jesus called Levi Matthew, many of society’s “outcasts” began to feel much more comfortable around Jesus! We know very little about Matthew’s life after the ascension of Jesus. However, his book seems to imply that he worked and wrote primarily for Jews. Matthew became a follower of Jesus during the Galilean ministry of Jesus less than two years before the crucifixion. Early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Papias (Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39) referred to Matthew as the collector of the “oracles” of Jesus; shortly thereafter, the Gospel as a whole was attributed to Matthew.

Later traditions about Matthew are mixed and unreliable. Eusebius said only that Matthew first preached to “the Hebrews” and then to “others” (*Historia Ecclesiastica* iii.24.6), the latter being amplified in later sources to include residents of such places as Ethiopia, Persia, Parthia, Macedonia, and Syria. Clement of Alexandria provided the interesting note that “the apostle Matthew partook of seeds, and nuts, and vegetables, without flesh” (*Paedagogus* ii.1). The traditions about Matthew’s death are contradictory. According to some, Matthew was a martyr for his faith, although the place and means of his martyrdom vary considerably in different reports. Part of the confusion in these later traditions may be due to the similarity of the names Matthew and Matthias. Probably more reliable is the conclusion that Matthew died a normal death, as implied by Heracleon (recorded by Clement of Alexandria in *Stromata* iv.9). (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* - vol. 3, p. 280)

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.***

Tamar, a Canaanite girl, was the daughter-in-law of Judah who became pregnant by him and thus, became an ancestor of David and of Jesus. (See Genesis 38) Rahab, a former prostitute from Jericho, (Joshua 2) married Salmon and had a son named Boaz. Boaz married Ruth, (see the book of Ruth) a descendant of Lot and his oldest daughter through Moab. They became the great grandparents of king David! David later committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Then David arranged for Uriah's murder. (2 Samuel 11) Bathsheba gave birth to Solomon, the son who inherited David's throne! (2 Samuel 12:24-25) Their family line did not lack for interesting characters!

If we knew that we had such people as our ancestors, most of us would probably keep quiet about them! Jesus did not hesitate to let people know that He was descended from such people! What does that tell us about Him and about His Father?

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?

This is primarily a thought question since the Bible does not seem to comment on it. Unfortunately, we know very little about either Mary or Joseph. We seem to be told just enough to make it clear that Jesus was not Joseph's son, but rather, a Divine Messiah, "come from heaven," born to a human mother. Since we know so little of Jesus's childhood, why didn't He just show up one day and begin His ministry? Was it really necessary for Him to leave heaven for thirty years to spend them mostly in the wicked town of Nazareth?

If Jesus had not been born as a human and if He had not struggled through the normal stages of childhood with things like sibling rivalry, etc., it would, no doubt, be argued that He was never really a human being, but rather, just an angel or some sort of supernatural being who could never understand our temptations or our problems. Thus, it was essential for Him to go through all of those struggles as a human in preparation for His three and one-half years of ministry. God wanted to remove every possible question about His Son's humanity.

Perhaps the real reasons why Jesus came and lived among us as a child and youth will be hidden until we are able to review the records in Heaven. It may be that the onlooking universe learned a great deal about the nature of Satan as he did everything possible to destroy God's mission to planet Earth.

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?

It seems apparent that the book of Matthew while clearly being written primarily for the benefit of the Jewish people also extends the mission of Christ to include the entire world. (See Matthew 28:19-20) **From the very beginning, Matthew repeatedly showed how different the responses of the Jews and the Gentiles were to Jesus.**

Jesus was portrayed as a King who came to “rescue” His people and set up His kingdom, and when He did, His own people rejected His conditions. They did not want the kind of kingdom that He offered. They wanted a Messiah who would help them to conquer the Romans and rule the world! While some Gentiles exhibited enormous faith and went to great effort and expense to see Jesus, His own people, even when confronted with wonderful miracles performed by Jesus, accused Him of working by the power of the prince of demons! (See Matthew 2:1-12; 8:5-13; 15:21-28; 12:24)

Why the wise men went to Herod, and why God apparently led them there is a mystery. They may have felt that Jesus would naturally be born to the king’s family! Or, they may have decided to inquire about the baby while in Jerusalem since all the main roads led through there. However, their visit to Jerusalem did bring the fact of the Messiah’s birth to the attention of all the leaders in Jerusalem. They must have been quite excited when they first learned that someone had received news that the Messiah had been born! But when they realized that the message had come through Gentiles instead of directly to them, no doubt they were offended. (See DA 61,62)

Herod probably construed the whole idea to be some sort of treasonous plot to eliminate him and place a real “Jew” on the throne. (DA 62,63)

One wonders how long the people of Jerusalem spent considering the message brought by the wise men. Already, the special privileges that the Jews considered theirs exclusively from God were being shared with the Gentiles. The Jews were not ready to accept that.

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?

Apart from the obvious historical parallels with the story of the Jewish people as a whole, it is possible that God led Joseph to take his little family down to Egypt so they would get a larger world view. It also eventually led to their settling in Nazareth in Galilee instead of remaining near their ancestral home in Bethlehem.

It is important for us to remember that there were probably more Jews living in Egypt at that point in history than there were in Palestine. They were descendants of the exiles who fled to Egypt in Jeremiah’s day. There were other Jews, also, who moved there to take advantage of the profitable commercial business opportunities around Alexandria. No doubt, Joseph and Mary settled briefly among the Jewish people in Egypt and worked and lived there until they returned to Israel after the death of Herod.

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)

Prophecy	Old Testament meaning	New Testament meaning
Isaiah 7:14	In the context of Isaiah 7:1-9:6, the original prophecy referred to Isaiah's son, Maher-shalal-hashbaz, and referred to the lifting of the siege by Kings Rezin and Pekah before Isaiah's son was old enough to say "mama" or "dada"	In Matthew 1:21 the verse clearly referred to the virgin birth of Jesus. It is clear that this was the long-term meaning of the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6.
Micah 5:2	A future leader will be born in Bethlehem	The Messiah was indeed born in Bethlehem as a descendant of David
Jeremiah 31:15	In the original context, this referred to the weeping of the people taken off into Babylonian captivity. (See Jer. 31:16,17)	Matthew 2:18: The overwhelming grief that must have struck the mothers of the area when all their male children were killed was comparable to the weeping of those going into captivity.
Hosea 11:1	Hosea was reviewing the history of ancient Israel and was clearly referring to their exodus from Egypt.	Matthew 2:15: Matthew noted the very interesting parallel between the personal life story of Jesus and the history of Israel as a nation.
"Nazarene" Matthew 2:23	There is no equivalent prophecy in the Old Testament Scriptures that we have today or in any of the Old Testament Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha that is still in existence.	
Isaiah 9:1-2	A prophecy of the future King	Matthew 4:14-16: Jesus began His ministry in Galilee
Isaiah 53:4	Jews regard this as a prophecy about the sufferings of the Jewish people	Matthew 8:17: Matthew took this to refer to Jesus's healing of the sick and suffering in His day.
Isaiah 42:1-4	A prophecy about the future Messiah	Matthew 12:18-21 applied this to the life of Christ.
Psalms 78:2	This was a poem by Asaph to the people of Israel.	Matthew 13:35: Matthew applied it to the parables of Jesus.

Zechariah 11:12-13; Jeremiah 18:2-12; 19:1-15; 32:6-9	This was primarily an experience that happened to Zechariah. There are some possible similarities in Jeremiah.	Matthew 27:9-10: This prophecy was a mixture of ideas coming from Zechariah and Jeremiah. Matthew noted how they all seemed to fit the life of Christ.
Psalms 22:1,7-8,18; 69:21	Psalms 22 was a poem about a terrible experience that David had, but there are many interesting parallels in the death of Jesus.	Matthew 27:35,39,43,46 all have parallels in Psalms 22, but it is clear from verses like Psalms 69:22-28 that these Old Testament passages had a different primary application in the original setting!

It should be apparent from the table above that some of these passages were meant to refer to the future Messiah while others are simply interesting parallels.

7. What do the temptations of Jesus reveal to us about God and about Satan? (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1.12-13; Luke 4.1-13) Would you be tempted to do any of those things?

None of us have ever been “tempted” to turn a stone into a loaf of bread because we could not do it anyway! Few, if any, of us would be tempted by the other two temptations either. Jesus was being tempted at a level that we do not understand. The real issue at stake in these temptations was the identity of Jesus Himself. The Devil was hoping to get Him to doubt that He was the Son of God. One only has to prove something if there is some question about it. The Jewish people had a “legend” that the Messiah would appear on the pinnacle of the temple and proceed to help them chase out the Romans. If Jesus had been willing to do that, they might have readily accepted Him!

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’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount were actually new (not taught in the Old Testament)?

Comparison with other gospels suggests that Matthew summarized in this single location major points from a number of Christ’s sermons. It is also possible that on this occasion, Jesus intentionally pulled together many things that He had been preaching about previously and gave a fuller exposition of His teachings. The entire Sermon on the Mount, if simply stated verbatim, takes only a few minutes. Jesus apparently spent much of the day giving this “sermon.” There must have been many illustrations and a lot of additional information given by Christ that we do not have recorded in the sermon in its present form. It would be very interesting to know what additional information Christ might have given. We seem to have a mere outline of the major points.

Many of Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount are actually found in the Old Testament, but they certainly were not prominent in the thinking of the Jews! Jesus was trying to help them realize that real obedience happens when one acts from principle and

not out of obligation to some law. (See COL 97)

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?

One of the Jew’s most cherished beliefs was the idea that if you are good, you will be blessed. And if you are blessed, you will be rich. That made life very easy for them in one sense. One could easily tell who the good people were because they were the ones with all the money and the nice things. They were certain that no poor person was blessed! But since they had that idea, the rich saw no need of spiritual help! They already had proof that they were good people! Wasn’t God blessing them? It was also obvious to all that Jesus was not a “good” Person because He was poor!

Jesus suggested that it was very important to recognize one’s spiritual need. If one does not recognize any need, there is little incentive to change. The poor in Jesus’s day believed that they were condemned and needed help. Thus, they sought it out and were ready to listen carefully to Jesus. The rich felt only the need to maintain and perpetuate their superiority and control. When Jesus began to teach, the rich recognized that His teachings would destroy their cherished positions, so they chose to destroy Him rather than change their ideas.

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”?

When the Jews referred to “the Law and the Prophets” they meant the Old Testament. The Old Testament was formally divided into three divisions by the Jews:

**The Law (The Torah):** the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy;

**The Prophets:** Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi;

**The Writings:** Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

But often, people of the time would simply say “the Law and the Prophets” to mean the whole Scripture which they had—which we call the Old Testament. They even sometimes would shorten it to only “the Law.” (See John 10:34 where Jesus quoted Psalms 82:6, a part of “the Writings.”)

Jesus was suggesting a whole new interpretation and application of the teachings of the Old Testament! Not that the Old Testament had not been understood in that way in the past, but His “new interpretations” of the Old Testament teachings were very different from their usual understanding. Thus, it was necessary for Jesus to stop and suggest that these were not new teachings!

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?

The Greek word used in this verse is *agape* meaning “to treat with kindness, respect, and caring.” God is not commanding you to feel “love” toward someone. However, God knows that treating people in that way and actually coming in contact with them so we get to know them and understand their situation, in time, will probably lead to greater “love” in our usual sense of the word.

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?

This word *know* is used in the Bible to mean two very distinctly different things. “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the LORD.’” (Genesis 4:1, *NKJV*) In this context the word *know* suggests a very personal and intimate kind of “knowing.” The other meaning of the word is the general meaning of “being informed.”

In this passage Jesus was clearly referring to those who may have made all kinds of professions of their faith and have apparently performed even miracles, but they had never come to really know their God. They were not God’s friends.

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?

To the Jews in Jesus’s day, authority came from quoting the “Fathers” who had made up all the rules that they lived by. These Fathers did not always agree with each other! So, there were constant arguments about who had the greatest authority among the Fathers.

Jesus ignored all of that and explained things in simple but elegant ways that to the minds of the people who were familiar with His illustrations were very clear. When you recognize that something is true based on your past experience, you do not need a Father to tell you it is true. To Jesus’s audience, His statements were true because they were based on evidence that they were all familiar with or were based on clear logic that they all could follow. Such truth does not need to be confirmed by some outside “authority”!

14. Why did Jesus say that Jairus’s 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?

To Jesus, death is always just a sleep. He could arouse anyone He wanted to from death as easily as we might awaken them from a quiet nap. As John’s Gospel suggests, the first death is only a sleep because everyone who has ever died will be awakened again some day by the Lord of Life. (John 5:28-29) Some will arise in the first resurrection of the righteous at the second coming of Christ, and others will not arise until the second resurrection of the wicked at the third coming of Christ. Of course, not all will be safe to admit to heaven, and the wicked will perish, finally, after they and all others recognize that God has done everything He could do for their salvation.

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)

No doubt, John was discouraged by being confined to a prison cell in the fortress east of the Dead Sea known as Machaerus. (See Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.5.1,2) But the real question in his mind was whether his whole mission had actually accomplished its goal of preparing the way for the Messiah, particularly since Jesus did not seem to be acting like the Messiah that John expected! (See John 1:27-31) John had been influenced by the Jewish belief that the Messiah would help the Jews conquer the Romans. Furthermore, he himself had predicted that Jesus would cause a time of judgment to begin: "The ax is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire." (Matthew 3:10, *GNB*) John had predicted that Jesus would "baptize with...fire" (verse 11) and have "his winnowing shovel with him to thresh out all the grain. He will gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out." (verse 12, *GNB*)

John realized that his life might be cut short at any time, and he was not seeing the fulfillment of his dreams. But, Jesus did not just make a claim that He was the Messiah and say that He expected John to exercise some "faith." Jesus asked John's disciples to watch for awhile and look around them and see what was happening. A widely-recognized Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 35:5-6 was being fulfilled right before their eyes! Here was not just a claim but evidence. John's disciples may have stayed with Jesus for some time watching all the exciting things that were happening. Jesus finally turned to the crowd and stated plainly that John was the "Elijah" who was to come. (See Malachi 4:5) When they returned to John and began to recount what they had seen and heard, John accepted that new evidence and his faith was confirmed. (See *DA* 216-218) No doubt, John began to pray fervently that Jesus would fulfill the rest of Isaiah's prophecy found in Isaiah 61:1-2! As on many previous occasions, God did not ask John to believe on the basis of a claim; God provided adequate evidence on which John could establish his faith in the Messiah. What does that tell us about what God expects of us today?

16. Why did Jesus make so much use of parables? (Matthew 13:10-17,34,-35) Was He trying to hide something?

There are several reasons why Jesus used parables. First of all, the simple illustrations that the people were familiar with helped to remind them of His lessons each time they would see that example in real life. Second, by teaching in parables or object lessons, they could comprehend the story and later spend time thinking through His meaning.

But Jesus also used parables because His enemies were constantly spying on Him, and His every word was criticized by them. The simple parables left each person to come to his own conclusion as to Jesus's meaning! Thus, it was much more difficult for His enemies to claim that He had made a statement that they could twist to call heresy.

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)

This is a very important part of the history of Christ's life. Jesus had claimed that He was sinless. (See John 8:46) Here, He demonstrated it by standing in the very presence and glory of God. If Jesus had been a natural sinner, He would have been consumed by that event. The disciples were terrified by it even at a distance from Him.

In addition to providing evidence that He was sinless, it provided additional evidence to the disciples of His divinity. That would be very precious during those very difficult days ahead.

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.

Children were of little value in ancient times. So many of them died in early infancy and childhood that they were only considered to be of value after they had reached a certain stage in their development! But in God's kingdom, the humility, sincerity, and transparency of children are essential qualities. It was time for the disciples to forget about who was going to be greatest in an earthly kingdom and start learning about God's kingdom. In that kingdom the qualifications for admission are very different from what they were still striving for!

Money and power rule in most cases here on planet Earth, but it will not be so in God's kingdom. Only those with the openness and trusting spirit of a little child will be there. But that is not all. The most important thing about a child is his capacity to grow. He is willing to learn. He is willing to change. Those characteristics will be absolutely essential for entry into God's kingdom.

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)

A careful reading of these passages should make it very clear how God feels about divorce. From the beginning, God intended for a man and a woman to bond for eternity and become one. God hates to see the pain and separation caused by divorce. But, God also recognized that He must work with erring human beings. He knew very well how much women had suffered at the hands of men who had little or no regard for their well-being. So, God gave them a rule that at least showed some compassion for the women. Instead of following the ancient custom of simply throwing an unwanted wife and her children out, a Jew who felt compelled to divorce his wife was required to at least give her a legal document showing that she had at one time been his legitimate wife. That prevented her from being treated like a prostitute. It also gave her children some legitimacy and made them legal heirs of their father's property.

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?

This is a parable about the "unfairness" of God's generosity. None of the righteous will get what they deserve! In fact, those who are working to earn their salvation may find themselves "last," if not outside the kingdom altogether! God is so busy being generous to all of us that if any of us should start to complain about His favoring someone else, it would ruin heaven! God cannot admit such a person into that kingdom. There is no room for those who are so selfish as to begrudge what God does for others.

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)

Unfortunately, there are many passages, even in Matthew, that suggest that the majority are going to be lost. (See Matthew 7:13-14; 13:1-23; 24:10) While God will do all that He can to help us to enter the kingdom, He cannot admit anyone who would not be happy there, and He cannot admit anyone who would disturb the peace for others. That eliminates a lot of people!

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’s death necessary for your salvation? If so, why?

The death of Jesus is the most important event in the history of this planet. But, there is little explanation about the reason for His death in any of the Gospels. Paul seems to be the one who dealt with this question in the greatest depth. Romans 3 and Hebrews 9 and 10 are probably the key passages to look at.

Jesus died of “sin.” God had said in the very beginning that sin would cause death, (see Genesis 2:17) but almost no one believes it even now! The death Jesus died was the death that is described in the Bible as the second death. (See Revelation 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8) So far, no other human has died that death. The Jews tried to kill Him by crucifixion. But crucifixion is a long, slow death. Jesus died in six hours. He was already dead when the spear pierced His side.

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*)

Capernaum was in the former area of Naphtali, and Nazareth was in the former area of Zebulun. When this prophecy was first made in Isaiah’s day, Galilee had just been conquered, and its people carried off by Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria—probably shortly before 722 B.C. when Samaria was captured. The northern tribes were being dispersed throughout the nations and were never to be heard from again. A mixture of pagan peoples from many other areas was brought in and Galilee was inhabited almost entirely by non-Jews. After the return from Babylonian captivity, Jews began, once again, to settle in the area until it had become a very cosmopolitan area. The great light that was to come to Galilee was the “light of the world,” Jesus Himself.

24. Why did Jesus repeatedly tell people He had healed not to tell anyone about what had happened? (Matthew 12:16; 16:20; Mark 3:12; 5:43; Luke 8:56; 9:21)

Is it possible that Jesus told them not to tell anyone about their healing or about what they had come to know about Jesus because they would have misrepresented Jesus if they had begun to speak about Jesus when listeners would ask questions? Some stories seem to suggest that. It is also likely that He told them not to tell because when people did tell, it stirred up so much excitement that huge crowds flocked to see Him, and that impeded some important parts of His teaching. At times, He needed time with His disciples, but when the crowds were pressing around Him continuously, it was impossible to spend any quiet

time with them.

### ***Some Notes on the Organization of Matthew***

25. Matthew is organized somewhat topically (see *Daily Study Bible*, Matthew):

- Five discourses: 1. The Sermon on the Mount: the principles of the Kingdom: Matt. 5-7  
2. The duties of the leaders (disciples) of the Kingdom: Matthew 10  
3. The parables of the Kingdom: Matthew 13  
4. Greatness and forgiveness of the Kingdom: Matthew 18  
5. The coming of the Kingdom: Matthew 24,25

26. Matthew was written, especially to the Jews, to accomplish the following:

1. To prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah/Christ/Anointed One.
2. To present the significant events in the life of Jesus.
3. To provide a teaching manual for the Christian community: organized often in groups of 3s and 7s.
4. To make memorization easier.

27. Matthew is divided into three major divisions, each with a summary near the end saying, Jesus is the “Son of God” (Matthew 3:17; 16:16; 27:54):

- 1) 1-4:16.
- 2) 4:17-16:20.
- 3) 16:21-28:20.

28. Jesus’s ministry was divided into three major parts, all connected to events in the life of John the Baptist.

1. After His baptism by John, He began His public ministry. For approximately one and one-half years, He traveled fairly widely, predominantly in Judea, and often by Himself, teaching and healing.
2. When John was arrested and put into prison, Jesus called the twelve disciples, and shifted His ministry mostly to Galilee and focused on teaching the multitudes.
3. After John’s death, Jesus focused on teaching His own disciples and preparing them for His death and the future when they would be on their own.

29. Major points emphasized in the book of Matthew:

1. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.
2. We need to focus all eyes on Jesus.
3. We need to understand the Kingdom of heaven.
4. The ethical implications of the Kingdom of heaven.
5. Conflicts between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the evil one.

6. Concern for the salvation of the Gentiles.
7. Planning for the “church.” (Matthew is the only Gospel writer to mention the church)
8. Jesus’s death and resurrection: Matthew 12:40 and 16:16+.

30. For young people:

Did Jesus have brothers and sisters? (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:16-30)

Would you like to have Jesus as a brother?

If you lived in Nazareth in those days, would you have been a friend of Jesus?

If Jesus enrolled in your school, would it make you happy or uncomfortable?

If Jesus asked you for a date, would you go?

If you got a chance to talk to Him, what would you want to talk about?

Would you want Him in your classroom at school?

What would you think about someone who came to your school who had no human “father”?

What would you say if He told you that God was His Father?

What did the other children of Nazareth say about Jesus?

What age of children do you think of when you read Matthew 18:1-5?

At what age do you think it is easiest to “be good,” “be saved,” “be an example to others”?

Is it easier to be a Christian when you are a: 1) Child? 2) Teenager? 3) Young adult? 4) “Middle-aged” person? Or, 5) Senior citizen?

Would you have given your lunch to Jesus’s disciples? (See Matthew 14:17; Mark 6:38; Luke 9:14; **John 6:8-9**)

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