

# ***The Book of Matthew***

## ***Son of David***

Lesson #1 for April 2, 2016

Scriptures: Matthew 1; 2:1-14; Mark 12:35-37; Isaiah 9:6-7; Romans 5:8; John 2:25; Jeremiah 29:13.

1. As we start our study of the book of Matthew, we will look at the genealogy of Jesus. We will also look briefly at what we know about Matthew himself.
2. Before he became a disciple, Matthew was a Jewish tax collector. Tax collectors or “publicans” were generally Jews who agreed to cooperate with the Romans to collect the taxes for Caesar, or Herod Antipas, who was the ruler of Galilee at the time of Jesus. Many tax collectors, with the permission of Rome, collected considerably more than Rome required and pocketed the difference. The other Jews felt that publicans had sold their souls to the enemy because those tax collectors actually paid Rome for the opportunity to collect taxes from the Jewish people. They were even regarded as traitors by the Jews. But, later in his life, Matthew gave humanity something of great value, not a tax receipt but a precious account of the life and teachings of Jesus.
3. 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? Some scholars think the book of Matthew was written in Hebrew or Aramaic and was later translated into Greek.
4. Levi Matthew, son of Alphaeus, (Mark 2:14) was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. His father probably was not the Alphaeus who was the father of James. (Mark 3:18) He was called by Jesus to be a disciple after working for some time as a tax collector. (Matthew 9:9-10) Probably, he was fairly well educated and spoke Greek as well as his native Aramaic.
5. Matthew was apparently fairly wealthy by Jewish standards. 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.) After Matthew became one of the disciples, many other so-called outcasts began to feel more comfortable with Jesus. Was Matthew happy to be a follower of Jesus?
6. We know little of Matthew’s life after the crucifixion. Early in the second century, Papias (Eusebius: *Historia Ecclesiastica* iii.39) referred to Matthew as the collector of the “oracles” of Jesus. Shortly thereafter, his Gospel was repeatedly attributed to Matthew. Later reports suggest that Matthew may have traveled to 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) It is possible that Matthew suffered a martyr’s death; but, we cannot be sure.
7. One of the great conundrums of the Person of Jesus Christ is that He was, according to Christian theology, fully God and fully Human at the same time. (See John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-23; Micah 5:2; Mark 12:35-37.)

From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was “the image of God,” the image of His greatness and majesty, “the outshining of His glory”....

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God’s thought made audible.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.1,2.

8. But, the divinity of Christ—greatly emphasized in the book of John—was not Matthew’s main concern. Matthew was writing primarily to Jews; and so, he gave the human ancestry of Jesus starting from Abraham through King David, through the Babylonian captivity, down to Jesus Christ. We must remember that, while to a Jew a person’s lineage is very important, in God’s eyes: “If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.” Galatians 3:29 (*GNB*)
9. There is a story told about an older African-American pastor in the south talking about the time when Jesus at age 12 was left behind in Jerusalem by His parents. Jesus was being quizzed by the scholars and the Pharisees, and they quickly recognized that He was a very unusually knowledgeable young man. As the pastor told the story, one of the elders asked Jesus, “How old are you, Son?” Jesus answered: “Well, on my mother’s side, I am twelve; but, on My Father’s side, I am older than time!”
10. Matthew, writing primarily to Jews, wanted to make it very clear that Jesus descended from the royal line of David. That is not all; that royal line would continue to reign forever. (2 Samuel 7:16-17; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 11:1-2; Acts 2:29-30) To the Jews that was very important.
11. Matthew traced the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to Jesus. In Luke 3:23-38, the genealogy is traced backwards from Jesus all the way to Adam and then to God. But, these two accounts are very different! Why is that? See the handout on the Genealogy of Jesus at: [www.theox.org](http://www.theox.org) then “Teacher’s Guides,” then “Gospels,” then “Genealogy of Jesus.” It is possible that Matthew traced His genealogy through Joseph, while Luke traced His lineage through Mary. See the handout for more details.
12. If we had time to study the life stories of all those in the genealogy of Jesus, it would be a sad and discouraging experience. Many of those who were even kings turned against God and worshiped Baal and Ashtoreth, etc.
13. There are some surprising individuals mentioned in Jesus’s genealogy. It is especially surprising to see the names of three women: Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth; and Bathsheba who is not named but is mentioned as “the woman who had been Uriah’s wife.” If we look at those four women, we note that three of them were Gentiles; and the other one was married to Uriah, a Gentile! How did they get into the lineage of Jesus?
14. Jesus is the only Person ever born in our world with 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 appear in the Bible? Would you have chosen that family? Would you have mentioned Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba by name or role? (Matthew 1:3-6) Why were the genealogies traced to Joseph and not to Mary? Or, were they? Do we even know who Mary’s ancestors were? (*LHU 74.4; 5BC 1130.7*)
15. Tamar, a Canaanite girl, was the daughter-in-law of Judah who had been married to two of his sons but never become pregnant. However, later, she became pregnant by Judah himself; and thus, she 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. (Genesis 19:30-38) They became the great grandparents of King David! David later committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite; and 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! Why did Matthew mention those women by name?

16. 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?
17. 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, a “Stepson”? The Bible strongly suggests that Mary was also of the tribe of Judah since Jesus is described as being a descendant of David of the tribe of Judah. (Romans 1:3; Acts 2:8,30; 13:23) Mary was not “immaculately conceived” as taught by the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics believe that Mary had to be essentially sinless in order to carry Baby Jesus in her womb. So, they believe that her birth was also miraculous. There is nothing in Scripture that suggests such a thing.
18. 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 about 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 over thirty years to spend most of them in the wicked town of Nazareth?
19. If Jesus had not been born as a human child 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.
20. 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. Read the chapters “As a Child” and “Days of Conflict” in *The Desire of Ages*.
21. One thing is very important to understand about the mission of Jesus to this earth: He came to this earth to live among sinners! (Romans 3:9-10,23; 5:8; John 2:25; Jeremiah 17:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20) We are all sinful, fallen, broken people; and that certainly included the lineage of Jesus Himself.

The genuineness, and unlikeliness, of this genealogy, must have stunned Matthew’s readers. Jesus’ ancestors were humans with all of the foibles, yet potentials, of everyday people. God worked through them to bring about his salvation. There is no pattern of righteousness in the lineage of Jesus. We find adulterers, harlots, heroes, and Gentiles. Wicked Rehoboam was the father of wicked Abijah, who was the father of good King Asa. Asa was the father of the good King Jehoshaphat..., who was the father of wicked King Joram. God was working throughout the generations, both good and evil, to bring about his purposes. Matthew shows that God can use anyone—however marginalized or despised—to bring about his purposes. These are the very

types of people Jesus came to save.—Michael Wilkins, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), p. 9.

22. No matter how discouraged or how disappointed we might be with our own behavior, we must remember that Jesus came to save sinners just like us.
23. It is a great irony that none of the Jewish leaders were among the first people to seek out and worship Jesus as Messiah. (DA 62.3) Those who did were humble shepherds and Gentile magi. (See GC 314.1-2.)

An angel visits the earth to see who are prepared to welcome Jesus. But he can discern no tokens of expectancy. He hears no voice of praise and triumph that the period of Messiah's coming is at hand. The angel hovers for a time over the chosen city and the temple where the divine presence has been manifested for ages; but even here is the same indifference....

**There is no evidence that Christ is expected, and no preparation for the Prince of life. In amazement the celestial messenger is about to return to heaven with the shameful tidings, when he discovers a group of shepherds who are watching their flocks by night, and, as they gaze into the starry heavens, are contemplating the prophecy of a Messiah to come to earth, and longing for the advent of the world's Redeemer. Here is a company that is prepared to receive the heavenly message.**—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* 314.1-2. [Bold type is added.]

24. 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 innocent children? Where did the wise men get their information about Jesus? (See Numbers 24:17; DA 59.3.) How did Moses get that information from Balaam? Was it revealed to him by God? 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? Or, did He and they did not listen? Had God already abandoned His chosen people?
25. It seems apparent that the book of Matthew, while clearly being written primarily for the benefit of the Jewish people, also extended 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.**
26. Jesus is 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. (John 1:11) 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 the Gentiles who are mentioned 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; 12:24; 15:21-28.)
27. Why the wise men went to Herod, and why God apparently led them there is a mystery. They may have thought 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 Jerusalem. 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.)

28. Herod probably construed the whole idea to be some sort of treasonous plot to eliminate him and place a real “Jew” on the throne. Herod had only one Jewish parent. (DA 62,63)
29. 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.
30. How sad! The Jews who believed they were the chosen people of God were not even ready to welcome Him because they were so spiritually proud. What should our attitude be?

It is thus that every sinner may come to Christ. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” Titus 3:5. When Satan tells you that you are a sinner, and cannot hope to receive blessing from God, tell him that Christ came into the world to save sinners. **We have nothing to recommend us to God; but the plea that we may urge now and ever is our utterly helpless condition that makes His redeeming power a necessity.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 317.1. [Bold type is added.]

31. Does it give you courage to recognize that it is your “utterly helpless condition” that might get you to go to Jesus Christ?
32. By the time Jesus was born, there had been 400 years of prophetic silence since the days of Malachi. The idea that the Messiah might be about ready to appear was being rumored among the Jews. Those who studied Scriptures carefully believed the prophecy of Daniel 9:24,27 and were looking for the Messiah. But, they were looking for a Messiah who would help them to conquer the Romans.
33. There was a famous Jewish male prayer recorded in the days of Jesus in which they would begin with the words, “Lord I thank thee that I am not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman....” Paul must have prayed that prayer many times. But, he said in Galatians 3:28-29 (GNB):  
<sup>28</sup>So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.
34. The Gospel of Matthew can be divided up in several ways. One interesting way is to note the major themes expressed in Matthew. There are at least five major themes:

**1. The kingship of Jesus.** He is clearly described as a Son of David, thus, being of the royal line. (Matthew 1:1) When the wise men found Him, they declared Him King of the Jews. (Matthew 2:2) Later, Jesus entered Jerusalem as a triumphant King. (Matthew 21:1-11) He told His disciples in Matthew 25:31-46 that, one day, He would sit as the eschatological King and Judge of all men and women. Finally, He acknowledged His royalty before Pilate, (Matthew 27:11) and even His title as King was placed on the cross above His head. (Matthew 27:37)

**2. Jesus is the fulfillment of much Old Testament prophecy.** The four Gospels mention this at least 27 times. Matthew does so the most: 14 times. Notice some of the prophecies that Matthew mentioned: Christ’s birth (Matthew 1:22; Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2); His flight to

Egypt (Matthew 2:14-15); His home in Nazareth (Matthew 2:23); His teachings in parables (Matthew 13:35); His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-5); His arrest (Matthew 26:54-56); His betrayal price (Matthew 27:9); and even the casting of lots for His robes (Matthew 27:35). Matthew was clearly attempting to prove that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

At the same time, it is quite clear that a number of these prophecies had an original application in the Old Testament and then, only later, an application to the birth and life of Jesus. Compare Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:21. Compare Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 2:18. Compare Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15. The prophecy about Jesus being a Nazarene as recorded in Matthew 2:23 is not found in any extant Old Testament, apocryphal, or pseudepigraphical work to which we have access. Compare Zechariah 11:12-13 and Jeremiah 18:2-12; 19:1-15; 32:6-9 to Matthew 27:9-10. And, finally, compare Psalm 22:1,7-8,18; 69:21 to Matthew 27:35,39,42,46.

**3. Matthew is the teaching Gospel, systematizing and summarizing the great teachings of Jesus in the kingdom context.** He wrote about the ethics of the kingdom (Matthew 5:7); the duties of the leaders of the kingdom (Matthew 10); the parables of the kingdom (Matthew 13); the greatness of the kingdom (Matthew 18); and the coming of the King (Matthew 24-25).

**4. The church.** Matthew was the only Gospel writer who spoke not only about Peter's confession in Matthew 16:13-23, suggesting it had to do with the establishment of the church, but also counseled that disputes should be settled within the church. (Matthew 18:17) Thus, he sowed very early seeds for what God wants to happen among church members.

**5. Eschatology.** Matthew 24 and 25 are some of the clearest passages in Scripture predicting final events.

35. But, Jesus came not just to save sinners on this earth. He also came to answer the questions in the great controversy that had troubled the entire universe for thousands of years. This was recognized clearly by Paul in Ephesians 1:8-10; 3:8-10; and Colossians 1:19-20; and was also recognized by John in Revelation 12-14.

36. When we think about the Gospels, many of us who have been Christians much of our lives turn first to the writings of Matthew. Is that a fair thing to do? What questions would you like to ask Matthew when you meet him someday in heaven? What is your favorite passage in the book of Matthew?

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Last Modified: February 14, 2016

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