

Discussion Guide: The Gospel of Matthew – Part 1

Let us examine the Scriptures like the Bereans who 'received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.'" Acts 17:11 (NIV)

April 25, 2004: "The Gospel of Matthew Part 1" by Pastor Kimber Kauffman, Senior Pastor College Park Church. Pastor Kimber began a new series on the Gospel of Matthew with introductory remarks on the context and history of the Gospel before expounding on the opening verses regarding the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1-17). Matthew was the first Gospel and was written some 25 years after Christ's ascension.

The primary audience was the Jews. The key theme of the book is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies through the man Jesus Christ. Matthew clearly delineates Christ's messianic purpose and title as he reminds the hearer of the numbers of prophecies fulfilled by this "prophesied" King of the Jews. An unlikely herald to the Jews, Matthew was tax collector and would have been despised by the Jews as a traitor and a thief. Not even an eyewitness like Matthew could stand up to the scrutiny of the Jewish people who would have had grave doubts about his trustworthiness and even contempt for his claims about Christ. This points to the importance of the genealogies to prove Christ's lineage. To the Jews, this was like a resume or a legal vitae that established both identity and position in the Jewish race. It is nothing less than miraculous that the line of Christ was not broken due to the Babylonian raid in 586 B.C. (see Psalm 137) and the various rulers that reigned before the birth of Christ.

Christ birth order is particularly significant. He was the seventh of seven generations mentioned in the scriptures. The number seven indicates perfection in the Bible. God always fulfills his promises and with perfect timing throughout the generations. Abraham was the father of Isaac and his seed did multiple throughout the earth and as promised David's seed did eventually result in the unbroken lineage of Christ Himself. A key point to meditation is that when God makes a promise He will always bring it to pass. We may doubt and try to help bring it about sooner, but it is always God's character to bring His word to pass. The people of Israel seemed to have right to doubt. Where was God? They were ruled and oppressed by foreign kings. The timing of God seemed so ridiculous to them. Remember when Sarah laughed and Abraham slept with her maidservant? Even men of faith look foolish when they doubt the Lord.

Pastor Kimber pointed out the infamous characters in the line of forerunners on this list. The four women mentioned (which is rare in the genealogies of the Bible) all had incredulous pasts. Tamar seduced her father-in-law, Rahab was a prostitute and a liar, Ruth was a gentile and most Moabites were likely products of incest, and Uriah's wife (Bathsheba) was part of a sad story of murder and adultery. Surely God would have picked more holy women and men to pass down this honorable seed. Studying the genealogies is meant to help us to remember that the Bible is not about great men and women but a great God of wicked men and women. Any shred of pride or legalism in our humanism is embarrassed and humiliated by the grace God showed to these notorious characters. That brings us to a final point. God's meets us where we are. He does not wait for us to clean up our act before he calls us to Himself. We are all unlikely candidates to carry on as Heir of Christ's Kingdom. The historical facts are not so dry and boring, and the genealogies come alive if we see Christ's preeminent grace in the story of each person's life. More importantly, the fact that God has fulfilled all His promises in Christ shines the spotlight of grace on every word of God.

Discussion Questions:

Read the key passage discussed in this message to start off the teaching/application time.

1. What promises of God are you living on this week? How do they change the way you suffer, hope and relate to others?
2. How do the notorious characters of the Bible give you hope? Who do you most relate to?
3. Have you ever had an experience where you asked “where are you God”? Have you ever doubted Him and His timing? Share with the group and if someone is in the midst of one of these times stop and pray.
4. Praise God for using broken and dysfunctional people to fulfill His promises. Share a favorite verse that speaks of His mercy to the contrite and broken hearted.
5. Pick one favorite from the verses shared and make it a theme verse for your group by having everyone memorize it and recite it at times throughout the year.