



MATTHEW

Author. Nowhere is the author named within the first Gospel. There is however, a long tradition that has assigned it to Matthew. Little is known about Matthew except that he was a tax collector. As such he would have been bitterly hated by the general populace in Israel, because tax collectors worked for Rome and made their living by charging above and beyond what Rome required. Matthew the tax collector stands in contrast to the poor and middle-class fishermen who composed the main body of the disciples.

Date. When Matthew was written is uncertain, but likely between AD 50 and 70.

Theme. Jesus is the long-promised Messiah and authoritative teacher.

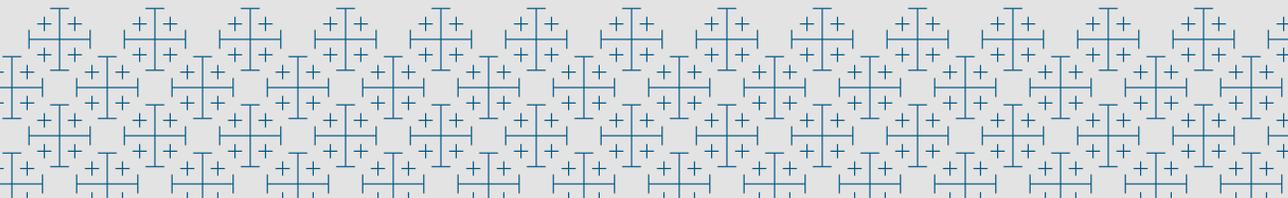
Historical Background. The first three Gospels are quite similar, agreeing in much of the material they include. They are typically referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because of their similarities in wording and order. *Synoptic* is based on a Greek word that means “seen together”; these Gospels can be placed parallel to one another in order to see their similarities. Many scholars believe that Matthew and Luke used Mark as their primary source in compiling their writings. About 97 percent of the material in Mark is paralleled in Matthew. These similarities, however, do not mean that the Gospels are merely restatements of one other. Matthew adds many teaching sections and other details not found in Mark. Matthew seems to direct his material toward a Jewish readership as he cites numerous Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’s life and ministry. His purpose was to show that Jesus is the promised Son of David, the Messiah, who had come to establish the kingdom of God.

Characteristics. Matthew is the most Jewish of all the Gospels. It was written by a Jew to other Jews to convince them that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah foretold by Old Testament Scripture. Thus, the author cites numerous Old Testament prophecies, which were fulfilled by Jesus. He uses the phrase, “All this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet” some sixteen times.

Yet one of the most interesting features of Matthew is that, although he is Jewish in his concerns, in his book we discover the universal nature of the gospel—that it is for all the peoples of the world. This emphasis emerges right at the beginning when the Gentile magi bring gifts to the child Jesus, and it runs through to the end when Jesus sends his followers out to “make disciples of all nations.”

Other features include references to the church (this is the only Gospel to use the word “church”) and references about the end times—the second coming of Jesus, the end of the world, and the final judgment.

Structure. Matthew is the most orderly in structure of the four Gospel accounts. After an introductory section, the material is organized into five blocks of narrative alternated with five blocks of discourse or teaching. We can see that this is not an accidental arrangement, because Matthew ends each teaching section with a similar statement (compare 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1).



The opening chapter of Matthew is filled primarily with the historical record of Jesus's family. This was important because Matthew was written primarily to a Jewish audience as proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

CHAPTER 1



OPEN: How far back can you trace your family tree?



CONSIDER (Vv. 1-17): What names do you recognize from this genealogy? Which names surprise you from these verses? Why? Why is it significant that Matthew traced Jesus's lineage back to Abraham?



CONSIDER (Vv. 6-7): Why is it significant that David and Solomon were ancestors of Jesus?

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID

- 2** Abraham fathered^A Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,
- 3** Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram,
- 4** Aram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,
- 5** Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse,
- 6** and Jesse fathered King David.

FROM DAVID TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

- David fathered Solomon^B by Uriah's wife,
- 7** Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa,^C
 - 8** Asa^C fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram,^D Joram fathered Uzziah,
 - 9** Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,
 - 10** Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon,^E Amon fathered Josiah,

^A1:2 In vv. 2-16 either a son, as here, or a later descendant, as in v. 8 ^B1:6 Other mss add *King* ^C1:7,8 Other mss read *Asaph* ^D1:8 = Jehoram ^E1:10 Other mss read *Amos*

● **1:1 AN ACCOUNT OF THE GENEALOGY.** It seems curious to the modern reader that Matthew would begin his Gospel with a long list of names. However, this makes perfect sense given the fact he was writing to a Jewish audience. There was a great interest in genealogy on the part of the Jews, as the many genealogies in the OT demonstrate (Gn 5; 10; 11:10-32). **JESUS CHRIST.** This became almost the proper name for the Lord, but it is literally, "Jesus the Messiah," i.e., the Anointed One. "Christ" is the Greek term for "Messiah." **SON OF DAVID.** David was the king of Israel from whom the Messiah would come. That Jesus was, indeed, David's son was a fact of great significance for Matthew (12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9,15) as well as for the early church (Ac 2:29-36; Rm 1:3; 2Tm 2:8; Rv 22:16). **SON OF ABRAHAM.** Abraham was the father of the race. By tracing the line of Jesus back to Abraham, Matthew was indicating that Jesus was a true Jew. **1:3-6** Four women are mentioned in these verses (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah's wife).

It is surprising that women are mentioned at all in the genealogy since a man's line was never traced through his mother. All four were non-Jews, and in each case, there was something suspect about them and their marriage. They are an unlikely group of women to be named as part of the line of the Messiah. However, they draw attention to the fact that God works in unusual ways. **TAMAR.** Tamar was a Canaanite who tricked Judah, her father-in-law, into sleeping with her. From this union came the twins, Perez and Zerah (Gn

38). **RAHAB.** She was a prostitute who assisted Joshua's spies when they were in Jericho (Jos 2:1-21). **RUTH.** A Moabitess who married a Jew by the name of Boaz. She is included in the royal line although Dt 23:3 forbids any Moabite from entering "the LORD's assembly." **URIAH'S WIFE.** David seduced Bathsheba, the eventual mother of Solomon, and got her pregnant. He then caused her husband Uriah to be killed in battle (2Sm 11-12). Bathsheba may have been an Israelite, though she was married to a Hittite.

- ¹¹ and Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

FROM THE EXILE TO THE CHRIST

- ¹² After the exile to Babylon
Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel,
Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,
¹³ Zerubbabel fathered Abiud,
Abiud fathered Eliakim,
Eliakim fathered Azor,
¹⁴ Azor fathered Zadok,
Zadok fathered Achim,
Achim fathered Eliud,
¹⁵ Eliud fathered Eleazar,
Eleazar fathered Matthan,
Matthan fathered Jacob,
¹⁶ and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary,
who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Christ, fourteen generations.

THE NATIVITY OF THE CHRIST

¹⁸ The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged^A to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

^A1:18 Or betrothed

1:18-25 Matthew and Luke record different aspects of the birth of Jesus. The role of the Holy Spirit in Mary's pregnancy and the relationship between Mary and Joseph are the only facts they share in common. Matthew does not actually describe the birth of Jesus but concentrates on its circumstances and significance. While Mary is the dominant person in Luke, Matthew focuses on Joseph, perhaps to establish Jesus's legal connection to Joseph in order to counter charges of Jesus being an illegitimate child.

1:18 **ENGAGED.** A first-century Jewish marriage had three parts to it: the engagement (which often took place when the couple were children and which was usually arranged by a marriage

broker); the betrothal (a one-year period in which the couple were considered virtually "married," though they did not have sexual relations); and the marriage. Mary and Joseph were at the second stage in their relationship. **SHE WAS PREGNANT.** The penalty in the OT for sleeping with a woman betrothed to another was death by stoning for both parties (Dt 22:23-24). By this time, however, the breaking of the engagement was the course that was followed. **THE HOLY SPIRIT.** Both Matthew and Luke make it quite clear that the agent in Jesus's birth was the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35).

1:19 **HER HUSBAND.** According to the law, Joseph was required to break off his relationship with Mary (Dt 24:1). However, out of

compassion for her he decided not to do this publicly. Although the marriage had not yet taken place, a betrothed couple were considered to be husband and wife. **DIVORCE.** During betrothal, a divorce was required should either party wish to terminate the relationship. **SECRETLY.** To break off his engagement privately, he would have needed only two witnesses.

1:20 **A DREAM.** Dreams were often the means by which God revealed himself to people. Matthew records four other occasions when dreams were crucial during the birth and childhood of Jesus (2:12-13, 19, 22). **SON OF DAVID.** The crucial link between Joseph and David is made quite clear by the angel. **TAKE MARY AS YOUR WIFE.** The marriage

was completed when the husband took his betrothed from her parents' home, where she lived during the betrothal, to his own home.

1:21 **YOU ARE TO NAME HIM.** It was necessary for Joseph to name Jesus and thus, formally accept him as his son. **JESUS.** A common name. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua" which meant "God is salvation." His name defines his mission. **HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.** It will not be his goal to establish a Jewish state in what was then Roman territory. Jesus did not come to be a warrior-messiah who would engage in battle against the oppressors of Israel; he would bring liberation from a far deeper problem, namely sin.



CONSIDER (V. 23): How have you experienced God being “with” you throughout your life?



APPLY: When did Jesus become more than just a name to you? Where is God currently asking you to trust him and obey, even when you don’t understand?



FOR GROUPS (VV. 1-17): Give group members a chance to express themselves artistically by passing out paper and colored pencils. Encourage everyone to create a family crest they think suits their family’s history. Allow volunteers to share what they created.



DIG DEEPER (VV. 3-6): The two women in these verses are especially interesting as ancestors of Jesus. Read Genesis 38:1-30 to learn more about Tamar. Read Joshua 2:1-21 to learn more about Rahab. What can we learn about Jesus from the stories of these women?

CHAPTER 2



OPEN: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “Christmas”?



CONSIDER (VV. 3-8): Why would Herod be “disturbed” by this news? Why “all Jerusalem with him”? Why is it significant that Micah prophesied the place of Jesus’s birth? (Mc 5:2.)

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,^A

which is translated “God is with us.”

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her ²⁵ but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. ^B And he named him Jesus.

Matthew did not record much detail about the historical moment of Jesus’s birth, but he did provide important context for what happened next. Specifically, Jesus’s birth created a major impact in Bethlehem, in Jerusalem, and throughout the ancient world.

WISE MEN VISIT THE KING

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him.”^C

³ When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Christ would be born.

⁵ “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

⁶ And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah: Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”^D

⁷ Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.”^E

⁹ After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. ^F Then they opened their treasures

^A1:23 Is 7:14 ^B1:25 Other mss read to her firstborn son ^C2:2 Or to pay him homage ^D2:6 Mc 5:2 ^E2:8 Or and pay him homage ^F2:11 Or they paid him homage

● **2:1-12** Only Matthew tells this story, which anticipates how the official leaders of Israel (“Herod . . . and all Jerusalem”; v. 3) will reject Jesus as the Messiah, while Gentiles (the magi) will honor him.

2:1 KING HEROD. Herod the Great was a shrewd but cruel monarch who was appointed by Rome to rule over Palestine. His reign lasted from 40 to 4 BC. **WISE MEN.** These were astrolo-

gers who probably came from Babylon.

2:2 AT ITS RISING. An allusion to Nm 24:17. **WORSHIP.** In this context, “worship” implies paying homage.

2:8 WORSHIP HIM. This was a cynical statement on the part of Herod, which contrasts with the genuine worship of the magi (v. 11). By allowing the magi to search for the child, he had a better chance of find-

ing him than if he were to send troops.

2:11 FALLING TO THEIR KNEES, THEY WORSHIPED HIM. The first people to worship Jesus in Matthew’s account were Gentiles, was hinting at the fact that Jesus has come not just for the Jews but for all nations. The Jewish leaders knew where the child was to be found (vv. 4-5), but they had not bothered to search him out even though Bethlehem is less

than ten miles away. **PRESENT-ED HIM WITH GIFTS.** The giving of gifts signified allegiance. **GOLD.** A metal of great value, the currency of kings. **FRANKINCENSE.** A sweet-smelling gum that was burned during worship. **MYRRH.** Another gum used as a perfume and as medicine. It was also used to embalm bodies. Taken together, the gifts represent the identity of Jesus as the royal Son of God who gave his life for his people.

and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

¹³ After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him.” ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. ¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod’s death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: **Out of Egypt I called my Son.** ^A

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸ **A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping,^B and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
and she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more.** ^C

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead.” ²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. ²³ Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

CONSIDER (VV. 9-12): What can we learn from the fact that God used the wise men’s practice of astrology to lead them to Jesus? What can we learn from God’s use of pagan priests to supply the financial needs of Jesus’s family?

CONSIDER (VV. 13-18): How do these verses reflect God’s sovereignty? What was Matthew’s purpose in continually connecting Jesus’s story with prophecies from the Old Testament?

CONSIDER (VV. 19-23): How did Jesus’s journey as a child parallel that of the Jews as a people?

APPLY: How has your life been impacted by the events described in this chapter? What aspects of your life or lifestyle is God asking you to change?

DIG DEEPER (VV. 1-2): Read Genesis 12:1-3 to learn about God’s promise to Jesus’s ancestor Abraham. How does the appearance of these “wise men from the east” represent a partial fulfillment of that promise?



^A:2:15 Hs 11:1 ^B:2:18 Other mss read *Ramah, lamentation, and weeping,* ^C:2:18 Jr 31:15

2:12-13 A DREAM . . . A DREAM. God reveals his will twice more in a dream, for a total of three times in this narrative.

2:13 FLEE. Once he knew he had been tricked, Herod would search for the child and would have found him had he remained in Bethlehem. **EGYPT.** There were large colonies of Jews in Egypt, and it would have been easy for Mary, Joseph, and the child to lose themselves.

2:15 UNTIL HEROD’S DEATH. Herod died in 4 BC. Thus, Jesus was actually born a few years before the year later (mis)calculated as the beginning of the Christian era. **MIGHT BE FULFILLED.** Again Matthew connects an event in Jesus’s life to a prophetic statement. This time the reference is to Hs 11:1.

2:16 TWO YEARS OLD. This indicates that some time had elapsed since Jesus’s actual birth. That Herod was capable

of killing children is testified to by what he did before his death. He arrested a number of leading people to be executed at the time of his death to assure that there would be genuine mourning when he died.

2:22 ARCHELAUS. When Herod died, his kingdom was divided into three parts. His eldest son, Archelaus, ruled as governor of Judah, Idumea, and Samaria. Archelaus was never confirmed in this post by the

emperor Augustus. However, since he proved himself to be cruel and incompetent, he was removed.

2:23 HE WOULD BE CALLED A NAZARENE. There is no such quote in the OT. Matthew may have been using a play on words to describe Jesus with Hebrew words in the OT, which sound like “Nazarene.” For example, a “Nazarite” was someone wholly dedicated to God (Jdg 13:5-7).

John the Baptist was an important figure in Jerusalem and its surrounding areas prior to the public ministry of Jesus. In this chapter, John fulfilled his prophetic role of preparing the way for the Messiah.

CHAPTER 3



OPEN: What's the strangest food you enjoy eating?



CONSIDER (VV. 1-3): What does it mean to "repent"? How would you explain the "kingdom of heaven" to someone who has never heard of it?



CONSIDER (VV. 4-12): What was the primary theme or purpose of John's ministry? What are the key images John used in these verses? What do they communicate? What did John teach about the coming Messiah?



CONSIDER (VV. 13-17): Why was this a significant moment in Jesus's life and ministry? What role should baptism play in the church today?



APPLY: Where do you see a need to confront hypocrisy or ignorance within the church today? Are you following God's will when it comes to baptism? Explain.

THE HERALD OF THE CHRIST

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!" ³ For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said:

**A voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight!^A**

⁴ Now John had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

⁷ When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Therefore produce fruit consistent with ⁹ repentance. ⁹ And don't presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ "I baptize you with ^c water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove ^d his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out."

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ But John tried to stop him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?"

^A3:3 Is 40:3 ^B3:8 Lit *fruit worthy of* ^C3:11 Or *in* ^D3:11 Or *to carry*

● **3:1 JOHN THE BAPTIST.** There is a gap of some twenty-five to thirty years between the events in chaps. 1–2 and the start of Jesus's ministry. John the Baptist was an extremely popular figure whose influence spread from Alexandria in Egypt to Asia Minor. **THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA.** This was a desolate and blistering hot place, consisting of jagged limestone precipices and sparse vegetation.

3:2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. Pious Jews did not mention God's name. To speak of God they referred to his abode—heaven. Most believe this phrase means the same thing as does the phrase "kingdom of God" in Mark (Mk 1:15). It refers to the messianic age in which God will reign. **3:3 PREPARE THE WAY.** This is a

quotation from Is 40:3. The Jews expected that an Elijah-like figure would precede the Messiah and announce his coming (17:3; Mal 3:1; 4:5). This "voice" who would pave the way for the Lord was John the Baptist. Ancient roads were notoriously bad. The only time they tended to be smoothed out was in preparation for a royal visit.

3:4 LOCUSTS AND WILD HONEY. This description is similar to that of OT prophets, in particular, Elijah (2Kg 1:8; Zch 13:4). The locusts John ate could have been either an insect (Lv 11:22–23) or a kind of bean from the locust tree. Honey could refer either to what bees produce or to the sap of a certain tree. In either case, this was the food eaten by the poorest of people.

3:6 BAPTIZED. The Jewish sect at Qumran practiced frequent baptism as a cleansing from sin. Also, when Gentiles converted to Judaism, they were required to bathe in a river as part of the ceremony. This signified that their sins had been washed away. John's call to baptism was a radical act because it was performed on Jews.

3:7 PHARISEES. The Pharisees were a small (about six thousand members) but powerful religious sect of laymen who devoted their time, energy, and money to a strict observance of the religious law.

3:9 ABRAHAM AS OUR FATHER. John warns that they cannot retreat into an easy assumption that just because they are members of God's chosen

race, they will be spared judgment.

3:11 I AM NOT WORTHY TO REMOVE HIS SANDALS. This would be the task of a slave. **FIRE.** Fire is a symbol of judgment, which Matthew uses a number of times (5:22; 7:19; 13:40,42; 18:8; 25:41).

3:12 GATHER HIS WHEAT. In the harvesting of wheat, after the grain is separated from the straw, the mixture is tossed up in the air. The heavier kernels fall to the ground while the straw and chaff blow away to be burned. This is an image of the judgment that will take place at the return of Jesus.

3:13 BAPTIZED. By allowing himself to be baptized, Jesus identifies with the people of Israel and with their sin (though he himself was without sin; 1Pt 2:22).

¹⁵ Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized.

¹⁶ When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him,^a and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

DIG DEEPER (VV. 1-3): Read the full prophecy about John the Baptist in Isaiah 40:1-5. What do those verses reveal about John? What do they reveal about Jesus?



Jesus's baptism was an important spiritual moment in which he was affirmed by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Immediately after that moment, Jesus experienced an extended period of testing in the wilderness before launching his public ministry.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ Then the tempter approached him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴ He answered, "It is written: **Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**"^b

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

**He will give his angels orders concerning you,
and they will support you with their hands
so that you will not strike
your foot against a stone.**"^c

⁷ Jesus told him, "It is also written: **Do not test the Lord your God.**"^d

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me."^e

CHAPTER 4

OPEN: What's the longest you have gone without food?



CONSIDER (VV. 1-11): Why is it important that Jesus "was hungry" during his fast? What have you been taught about "the devil"—who is he and what does he do? What can we learn from Jesus in these verses about handling temptation?



^a3:16 Other mss omit for him ^b4:4 Dt 8:3 ^c4:6 Ps 91:11-12 ^d4:7 Dt 6:16 ^e4:9 Or and pay me homage

3:16 LIKE A DOVE. Matthew uses a dove as a symbol of the coming of the Holy Spirit. This is the promised anointing of the Messiah with the Holy Spirit (Is 11:2; 42:1; 61:1).

3:17 MY BELOVED SON. This is a royal title used in the OT to describe Israel's kings. Now it is applied to God's Son. **I AM WELL-PLEASSED.** This phrase is associated with the suffering servant of Isaiah (Is 42:1) who suffers while carrying out God's will in the service of Israel. In Jesus, the two OT figures of God's servant and God's royal Son are combined.

● **4:1 LED UP BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS TO BE TEMPTED.** Jesus's victory over temptation would demonstrate three things: his sinless character, an example of endurance through

times of testing, and how to use Scripture as a means of defense against the devil and a support in the face of evil.

4:2 FORTY DAYS. Moses fasted forty days on Mount Sinai while receiving the commandments (Ex 34:28), and Israel was in the wilderness forty years (Dt 8:2).

4:3 THE TEMPTER APPROACHED HIM. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, but it is Satan who tests him. His challenges to Jesus come only after Jesus has entered a condition of physical weakness because of his fast. **IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD.** This was a temptation to verify the truth of what God had declared (3:17). **BREAD.** Certainly it would be legitimate. Satan seemed to be saying it would be easy for God's own Son to do what God did when he supplied manna to

the hungry Israelites. If Jesus had used his power in this way, he would not have been able to truly know the experience and pain of humans, who do not have such power at their disposal when they are hungry. **4:4** Jesus's response is drawn from Dt 8:3. Originally this was a reflection on the meaning of the manna in the desert. True life involves not just the physical but also the spiritual (Word of God). Jesus will not heed Satan, but he will listen only to his Father, God.

4:5 TEMPLE. The second temptation takes place at the temple, which is the focal point in Israel of God's love and power. The challenge is to prove this love and power of God by creating a peril from which God alone can rescue him.

4:6 IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD. Once again the challenge is to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah. **IT IS WRITTEN.** Satan now quotes Scripture but does so in a way that tears it from its context. Psalm 91:11-12 are words of assurance to God's people that they can trust God to be with them even through difficult times. Satan twists this to mean that Jesus ought to deliberately put himself in a life-threatening situation to see if God really will bail him out.

4:7 Jesus responds that people are not to test God, as Dt 6:16 clearly states, but to trust him. **4:8-9** The final temptation has to do with gaining the kingdoms of the world without suffering the coming agonies of the cross.



CONSIDER (VV. 12-17): Why was it important that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies from the Old Testament? Why was it necessary for the people of Jesus's day to "repent"?



CONSIDER (VV. 18-22): What did Jesus mean by saying Andrew and Simon would "fish for people"? What are some ways Jesus calls people to follow him today?



CONSIDER (VV. 23-25): How have you seen Jesus influence your community for good?



APPLY: In what areas of life are you currently dealing with temptation?



FOR GROUPS (VV. 1-11): Create an object lesson for your group by bringing in an especially tasty snack and displaying it prominently at the front of your meeting space. However, inform group members that they will need to wait until the end of the discussion to partake.



DIG DEEPER (VV. 18-22): Read Luke 5:1-11 to learn more about Jesus's interaction with Simon Peter. What are some reasons why

¹⁰ Then Jesus told him, "Go away,^A Satan! For it is written: **Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.**"^B

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

MINISTRY IN GALILEE

¹² When he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

¹³ He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ **Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
along the road by the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles.**

¹⁶ **The people who live in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those living in the land of the shadow of death,
a light has dawned.**^{C,D}

¹⁷ From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near."

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

¹⁸ As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter), and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea — for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Follow me," he told them, "and I will make you fish for^E people." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, preparing their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

TEACHING, PREACHING, AND HEALING

²³ Now Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every^F disease and sickness^G among the people. ²⁴ Then the news about him spread throughout Syria. So they brought to him all those who were afflicted, those suffering from various diseases and intense pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics. And he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

^A4:10 Other mss read "Get behind me" ^B4:10 Dt 6:13 ^C4:16 Lit dawned on them ^D4:15-16 Is 9:1-2 ^E4:19 Or you fishers of ^F4:23 Or every kind of ^G4:23 Or physical ailment

4:10 Jesus quotes Dt 6:13 to affirm his allegiance to God and to reject Satan's offer.

4:11 ANGELS CAME AND BEGAN TO SERVE HIM. One function of angels is to bring comfort and aid to God's people (Heb 1:14). Thus prepared by his baptism and his temptation, Jesus begins his ministry.

4:12 JOHN HAD BEEN ARRESTED. John's imprisonment is described in more detail in 14:1-12. **GALILEE.** This was the northern province of Palestine. It was small, about twenty-five by thirty-five miles in size, but quite densely populated. In the

time of Jesus, approximately three hundred fifty thousand people lived there, one hundred thousand of whom were Jews. It was a rich farming and fishing region.

4:13 NAZARETH. This was a village located in the hill country of Galilee, twenty miles southwest of Capernaum. **CAPERNAUM.** This was a town on the north end of the Sea of Galilee, three miles west of the Jordan River. It was a center of the fishing industry. **THE REGION OF ZEBULUN AND NAPHTALI.** This was the region originally assigned to two tribes of Israel.

4:18 SIMON (WHO IS CALLED PETER). In asking Simon and Andrew to "follow" him, Jesus was inviting them to join his band of disciples. They would have been familiar with rabbis who had small groups of students and wandering Greek philosophers who had disciples. In telling them he would make them "fish for people," Jesus defined their task using a metaphor, which they as fishermen would understand.

4:20 IMMEDIATELY THEY LEFT. According to 4:12-17, Jesus had been living and preaching in Capernaum. These fishermen

probably had the chance to hear his message prior to their call. Still, what they did was an act of great faith and courage. **4:23 SYNAGOGUES.** In first-century Israel, the temple in Jerusalem was the site for sacrifices and attended by numerous priests and other officials. In addition, there were synagogues in each population center, which people attended each week for worship and instruction.

4:25 THE DECAPOLIS. A league of ten Gentile cities patterned after the Greek way of life. These cities were part of Syria.

This chapter begins Matthew's record of the most famous sermon in history: Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. As a traveling rabbi, Jesus likely delivered this sermon on many occasions during his public ministry.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

5 When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then^A he began to teach them, saying:

THE BEATITUDES

- ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
- ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- ⁵ Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.
- ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
- ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

¹¹ “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. ¹² Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

^A5:2 Lit *Then opening his mouth*

● **5:1 THE MOUNTAIN.** To the original Jewish readers, this would have been an inescapable allusion to when Moses delivered the law to Israel from Mount Sinai (Dt 18:15). **SAT DOWN.** When rabbis taught, they would sit rather than stand. This accents Jesus's authoritative position. **DISCIPLES.** This teaching is for everyone who would be a follower of Jesus. **5:3-10** The “Beatitudes” are so named because in the Latin Bible each of the eight statements began with the word *beatus*. Such pronouncements of blessedness were particularly common in the Psalms. **5:3 BLESSED ARE.** The Greek word *makarios* refers to people who are to be congratulated.

It does not necessarily mean they are happy or prospering. Instead, whether they feel it or not, they are fortunate because their condition reflects that they are in a right relationship to God. **POOR IN SPIRIT.** This phrase does not refer to those who are poor in the material sense but refers to those who acknowledge their need of God. **5:4 THOSE WHO MOURN.** This does not refer to the bereaved but refers to those who mourn over sin and its consequences. **5:5 THE HUMBLE.** This involves a lifestyle marked by gentleness, humility, and courteousness. **INHERIT THE EARTH.** The irony of God's reign is that, despite the efforts of those who grasp for the world, it will one day be giv-

en not to those who have been covetous but to those who have been generous.

5:6 HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. As hungry or thirsty people devote their entire energy to finding food and water, so those in the kingdom are marked by a deep-seated, intense longing for knowing and living in God's way.

5:7 THE MERCIFUL. Mercy is an act of deliberate kindness toward someone who has no claim upon the person rendering the kindness.

5:8 PURE IN HEART. The call is for single-minded pursuit of God's way with every facet of our being. **SEE GOD.** In the OT, this term described what it meant to experience God's favor.

both sets of fishermen “immediately” accepted Jesus's offer to fish for people?

CHAPTER 5

OPEN: What is a piece of advice you have remembered for years?



CONSIDER (VV. 1-12):

How should we understand the word “blessed” in these verses? Which of these characteristics seem most difficult to attain? Why?



BELIEVERS ARE SALT AND LIGHT

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty?^A It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

CHRIST FULFILLS THE LAW

¹⁷ “Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter^B or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

MURDER BEGINS IN THE HEART

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **Do not murder,**^C and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. ²² But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister^D will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults^E his brother or sister, will be subject to the court.^F Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire.^G ²³ So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against

^A **5:13** Or *how can the earth be salted?* ^B **5:18** Or *not one iota; iota* is the smallest letter of the Gk alphabet. ^C **5:21** Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17
^D **5:22** Other mss add *without a cause* ^E **5:22** Lit *Whoever says ‘Raca’*; an Aramaic term of abuse that puts someone down, insulting one’s intelligence ^F **5:22** Lit *Sanhedrin* ^G **5:22** Lit *the gehenna of fire*

5:13 SALT. Salt was a very valuable commodity in ancient times. It was not only used to flavor foods, but it was indispensable in preserving them. Salt solutions were used medicinally, specifically in washing newborn infants. Rock salt was also used as a fertilizer. Salt’s value then came from these many uses. Jesus was then attesting to the value of his disciples in the world. The disciples are to flavor the world around them with God’s love and direction, and they are to preserve that which is valuable in life from the spoilage of sin and hate.

5:14 LIGHT. Light is another basic element of life. The function of light is to illuminate the darkness. This is an image for the truth believers are to bring to the world. **OF THE WORLD.** Israel was to be a light for the Gentiles (Is 49:6). That function is now passed on to the followers of Jesus (Jn 8:12).

5:15-16 The very purpose of light is defeated if it is hidden away. In the same way, Jesus’s disciples are not to be living secretly but living openly so that others can see who and what they are.

5:16 LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS. What constitutes the “light” of believers is what they say and do. **GIVE GLORY TO YOUR FATHER.** While persecution is the response the world in general has toward those who embody the qualities of God’s kingdom (5:10), some people will recognize in these qualities the character of God and give praise to him.

5:17 THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS. The “Law” referred to the first five books of the OT, while the “Prophets” referred to the Major and Minor Prophets as well as the Historical Books. **FULFILL.** By his teaching, Jesus seeks to give expression to the intention of the law. In contrast, for all their concern about the

law (and by their preoccupation with its details), the Pharisees and other religious leaders often overlooked its purpose.

5:18 FOR TRULY I TELL YOU. Literally, this is “for truly I say to you,” a phrase characteristic of Jesus. No other teacher of his era was known to say this. **THE SMALLEST LETTER . . . ONE STROKE OF A LETTER.** Some Hebrew and Aramaic letters are distinguishable only by a small line or dot. Jesus accents the validity of the law as the ethical norm for all God’s people. **UNTIL ALL THINGS ARE ACCOMPLISHED.** Until God’s plan for history is complete, God’s ethical demands remain in force. Jesus’s mission was to call people to embrace these demands in a way that would penetrate their whole being.

5:20 SCRIBES AND PHARISEES. The teachers of the law were religious scholars who developed a set of regulations derived from the law. The demands of these regulations were such that the

majority of people simply did not have time to practice them. **5:22 ANGRY.** The Greek word used here describes deep-seated, smoldering, inner anger rather than a flash of anger. **YOU FOOL!** An Aramaic term of contempt: “You good-for-nothing” or “I spit on you.” **COURT.** The Sanhedrin (a group of seventy Jewish men) was the official ruling body of the Jews. This body was responsible for administering justice in matters related to Jewish law. **HELLFIRE.** Literally, “Gehenna,” a ravine outside Jerusalem where children were once sacrificed to the god Molech (1Kg 11:7). Jews considered it a defiled place, good only as a garbage dump, which was continually burning. Gehenna became a symbol for the place of punishment and spiritual death.

5:23 ALTAR. The picture is of someone going to worship. The gift is probably an animal for sacrifice. **HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU.** The responsibility

you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.²⁵ Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you're on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to^A the officer, and you will be thrown into prison.²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.^B

ADULTERY BEGINS IN THE HEART

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, **Do not commit adultery.**^C ²⁸ But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

DIVORCE PRACTICES CENSURED

³¹ "It was also said, **Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.**^D ³² But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

TELL THE TRUTH

³³ "Again, you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **You must not break your oath, but you must keep your oaths to the Lord.**^E ³⁴ But I tell you, don't take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God's throne;³⁵ or by the earth, because it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King.³⁶ Do not swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black.³⁷ But let your 'yes' mean 'yes,' and your 'no' mean 'no.' Anything more than this is from the evil one.

GO THE SECOND MILE

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, **An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.**^F ³⁹ But I tell you, don't resist^G an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on

CONSIDER (VV. 27-30): Should we understand these verses as literal truth or exaggerated language? Explain. What are practical ways to obey these instructions today?

CONSIDER (VV. 38-42): What are the core values behind Jesus's instructions in these verses? What can we learn from Jesus's "You have heard that it was said . . . But I tell you" pattern throughout this chapter?

APPLY: Are you currently living as "salt" and "light" in your community? Explain. Which portion of this chapter makes you feel most convicted? Why?

WORSHIP (VV. 1-12): Read these verses out loud several times. As you read, pay attention to specific words or phrases that catch your attention or strike you as especially significant. Take time to pray and talk through those words and phrases with the Holy Spirit.

^A 5:25 Other mss read *judge will hand you over to* ^B 5:26 Lit *quadrans*, the smallest and least valuable Roman coin, worth 1/64 of a daily wage ^C 5:27 Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18 ^D 5:31 Dt 24:1 ^E 5:33 Lv 19:12; Nm 30:2; Dt 23:21 ^F 5:38 Ex 21:24; Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21 ^G 5:39 Or *don't set yourself against, or don't retaliate against*

for initiating reconciliation lies with the one who, whether on purpose or by accident, has offended another member of the community.

5:25 THROWN INTO PRISON. The Jews were offended by the Roman custom of having debtors thrown in jail where it was impossible for them to earn money to pay off their debt, yet this is the image Jesus uses to describe the situation before God of the person who refuses to seek reconciliation.

5:26 PENNY. The smallest Roman coin.

5:28 A WOMAN. The Greek word generally refers to a married woman. **LUSTFULLY.** Just as anger is at the root of murder, so

lust is at the root of adultery. This does not condemn sexual attraction but rather the deliberate harboring of desire for an illicit relationship.

5:31-32 Jesus's statement on divorce needs to be understood in the context of the whole Sermon. Ideally, there should be no divorce. As seen from chap. 19 and Mk 10, divorce and remarriage is a departure from God's intention for marriage. It is important to note here that while the woman is called the adulteress, the fault for that situation is placed upon the husband who divorced her. In that culture, a divorced woman would have little choice for survival except to marry again. Jesus is not con-

demning her because of that social reality, but he is pointing out to the men involved that their casual attitude toward marriage and divorce is not much more than a "legal" way of indulging in the immorality of adultery. To the Jews of Jesus's day, divorce and remarriage were perfectly acceptable. Neither was considered a sin. Jesus's statement placed their attitude toward divorce and remarriage into the category of moral evil, a reality they had never before considered. While they held that their divorces and remarriages were legal, Jesus asserted they were not moral.

5:33 YOU MUST NOT BREAK YOUR OATH. Jesus does not so much

quote the OT as he summarizes various passages on the subject of oaths (Ex 20:7; Lv 19:12; Nm 30:2; Dt 23:21-23).

5:34 DON'T TAKE AN OATH AT ALL. Contrary to what the rabbis taught, according to Jesus it does not matter whether you took an oath upon God's name (which was considered binding) or on anything else (a nonbinding oath) since all objects are God's. **5:38 EYE FOR EYE.** This is said to be the oldest law in the world. It is found in the codes of Hammurabi (a king who lived in the eighteenth century BC) as well as three times in the OT (Ex 21:23-24; Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21). The law's original intent was not to require an "eye for an





FOR GROUPS (VV. 38-42): Work as a group to record some of the unwritten rules in today's society. (For example, "Hard work is the key to success.") Then, encourage group members to brainstorm "But I tell you" alterations to those rules that would connect them with God's kingdom.



DIG DEEPER (VV. 31-32): Read Moses's instructions about divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. What was Moses's original purpose for requiring this "certificate" of divorce?

CHAPTER 6



OPEN: What's one of your favorite charities? Why?



CONSIDER (VV. 5-8): Why are we often tempted to demonstrate hypocrisy in our spiritual lives?

your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, **Love your neighbor**^A and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies^B and pray for those who^C persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be^D children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary?^E Don't even the Gentiles^F do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus continued his Sermon on the Mount. Like the previous chapter, these verses are practical and instructive for everyday life—including instructions from Jesus on how to pray.

HOW TO GIVE

6 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness^G in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven. ² So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. ³ But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.^H

HOW TO PRAY

⁵ "Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your

^A 5:43 Lv 19:18 ^B 5:44 Other mss add *bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you,* ^C 5:44 Other mss add *mistreat you and*
^D 5:45 Or *may become,* or *may show yourselves to be* ^E 5:47 Or *doing that is superior; lit doing more* ^F 5:47 Other mss read *tax collectors*
^G 6:1 Other mss read *charitable giving* ^H 6:4 Other mss read *will himself reward you openly*

eye," but to limit punishment to the extent of the crime.

5:40 SHIRT. The law (Ex 22:25-26; Dt 24:10-13) prohibited a person from seizing a person's cloak as the payment of a debt, since this woolen outer robe was used as a blanket at night. Jesus's call here is for his followers to give beyond what even the law would require.

5:41 FORCES YOU TO GO ONE MILE. Roman soldiers had the right to press civilians into service to carry their gear for a distance up to one mile. The word used here is a technical term for such compulsory conscription.

5:43 LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. YOUR ENEMY. This command is found neither in the OT nor in the Talmud. Some OT passages even call for compassion toward enemies (Pr 25:21). However, passages that spoke of God's ultimate judicial action upon those nations, which threatened Israel (Dt 7:1-2; 20:16-18; 23:5-6; Ps 139:21), may have been misapplied in popular thought to justify personal animosity against those who are disliked, especially non-Jews.

5:44 LOVE YOUR ENEMIES. The word used here is *agapē*. This

is love that shows itself not by what a person feels but by what the person does. It is love done on the behalf of another without the expectation of reward. **PRAY.** One way this love is demonstrated is by prayer for those who harass you.

5:46 TAX COLLECTORS. Tax collectors grew rich by charging people more than what was required, keeping the excess for themselves. That they were doing this as agents of Rome made the offense even more grievous.

5:48 BE PERFECT. This means "having attained the end or

purpose." Therefore, people can be "perfect" if they realize that for which they were made, which is to reflect God's image, and hence to love.

● **6:1** In general terms, Jesus makes it clear that his followers are not to make a public display of religious devotion.

6:2 THE HYPOCRITES. It was not their lack of inner conviction that Jesus is faulting (they undoubtedly believed they ought to give to the poor), but it was that they wanted to make sure their observance of the traditions was seen by others.