

Place: Lurgan Baptist 3:11:2015

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Matthew 1:1-2 , 16-17

41. THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Between the book of Malachi and the book of Matthew are about four hundred “ *silent years.* ” (Neh 13:4-30 Mal 4:6 Lk 1:5-25) You see, after Malachi had spoken, heaven went silent. We could say that the Lord went off the air and there was no broadcasting for four hundred years. Until one day the angel of the Lord broke in upon Zacharias the priest with the announcement that his son John the Baptist would be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. Now although *the voice of God* was silent during these years the *hand of God* was active directing the course of events during these centuries. Indeed the history of these years followed the pattern predicted in the prophecy of Daniel. (2:24,45 7:1-28 8:1-27 11:1-35) Yet so much that meets us when we turn from the Old Testament to the New Testament is new. You see, things have changed,

1. POLITICALLY:

Do you recall that Daniel predicted that control of the land of Israel would pass from the empire of Medo-Persia, to Greece and then to Rome ? (Dan 2:39-40) The Old Testament closed with the Persian Empire ruling the Jews

(539-332 B.C.) But in about 333 B.C. Alexander the Great defeated the Persian King Darius the Third and that gave him control of the lands of the Persian Empire. The land of Israel thus passed into Greek control in 332 B.C. (Dan 8:5-7 20,21, 11:3) Tradition has it that in the same year Alexander the Great visited Jerusalem and was shown the prophecy of Daniel which spoke of him, and he therefore spared the city. When Alexander died in 323 B.C. the empire was divided and the land became a pawn in the power struggles of Syria and Egypt being ruled by whichever power happened to be the strongest at the time. *Do you ever tell of boys called the Ptolemies and the Seleucids ?*

Well in 198 B.C. Palestine came under Seleucid control and a man by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes, a Syrian king came onto the stage of history. He was a Jew hater. He desecrated and plundered the temple of Jerusalem in 170 B.C. He was called “ *the Nero of Jewish history.* ” His persecution of the Jews provoked the Maccabean Revolt. Judas Maccabaeus, whose name means “ *the hammer,* ” was the leader who organized the revolt, and after a twenty four year war (166-142 B.C.) the Jews were able to gain their independence from Syria because of the growing Roman pressure on the Seleucids. It might interest you to know that the descendants of Mattathias founded the Hasmonean dynasty and that ended in 63 B.C. when Pompey the Great conquered Palestine and brought the country under the iron rule of Rome. (Dan 2:40 7:7) Continuing unrest led the Romans to make Herod the Great King of Judea, and he ruled Palestine from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C when our Lord Jesus was

born in Bethlehem. My when God wants to accomplish His purposes He just sets aside one nation and takes up another nation. Are you not glad this That God is still on the throne ?

2. RELIGIOUSLY:

For when we come into the New Testament we read of sects and parties that were unknown in Old Testament times. There were,

The Pharisees: They arose to defend the Jewish way of life against all foreign influences. They were strict legalists who believed in the Old Testament. They were nationalists in politics and wanted to restore the kingdom to the line of David.

The Sadducees: the liberals of their day who wanted to get rid of tradition. These were the folk who denied the supernatural and although numerically they were much smaller than the Pharisees they were wealthy and influential.

The Scribes: These stemmed from the days of Ezra. They were the interpreters and teachers of the Scriptures but they became the “ *hair splitter*,” and Christ denounced them for making the Scriptures of no effect by their traditions.

The Herodians: they were a political party who sought to maintain the Herod's on the throne. They looked on Christ as a revolutionary and opposed Him on those grounds.

The Zealots: who were fanatical defenders of theocracy and engaged in acts of violence against the Romans.
(Lk 6:15)

So when we step on to the pages of the New Testament we have all these parties. Moreover far and wide among the Jews synagogues have sprung up as places of worship and the Sanhedrin was the supreme civil religious body within the Jewish nation. So are you starting to see how things have changed 1, 2,

3. CULTURALLY:

Bible scholars talk about the Diaspora, the dispersion of Jews in the Greek and Roman Empires and they did much to spread abroad the basic ideas on which the gospel was to be founded. The Jewish Messianic hope was kept alive so that when the apostles began to preach that Christ had come many were ready to believe. The Greeks had also left an indelible mark on the ancient world. Indeed the Greek language greatly expedited the missionary outreach of Paul. And what about the Romans ? Well, they hammered the world into one vast empire and had flung their roads across the world. Indeed a “ *Roman peace*,” had descended on the world. Added to all this was the emptiness of pagan religions. My although this was a period marked by the silence of God, it is evident that

God was preparing the world for the coming of Christ. The Jewish people, the Greek civilization, the Roman Empire, and the seething multitudes of the Orient were all being prepared for the coming of a Saviour, insomuch that they produced the scene which Paul labelled, in the book of Galatians “ *the fulness of time.*” (4:4) My Can you see it in a different light now ? Politically, Religiously, Culturally, “ *But when the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman made under the law to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons.*” (4:4) Now the four gospels are directed to the four major groups in the world of that day.

The Gospel of Matthew: was written to the nation of *Israel*. It presents *Christ as the King and is Lion-like.*
(Ezekiel 1:10)

The Gospel of Mark: was directed to the *Roman*. It presents *Christ as the Servant and is Ox-like.*

The Gospel of Luke: was written to the *Greeks*. It presents *Christ as the Perfect Man and is Man-like.*

The Gospel of John: was written to *Believers*. It presents *Christ as the Mighty God and is Eagle-like.*

So the four gospels are the good news about the most significant events in all of history, the life, sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Taken together they weave a complete portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in Him were blended perfect humanity and deity making Him the only sacrifice for the sins of the world and the worthy Lord of those of us who believe. You see, it takes all four aspects to give the full truth. *As Sovereign*

He comes to reign and rule. As Servant He comes to serve and suffer. As Son of Man He comes to share and sympathise. As Son of God He comes to reveal and redeem. Ray Steadman tells the story that a century ago an Englishman named Greene was walking through the woods when he came upon a stranger. He was startled when the stranger smiled and waved at him. “ *Oh, hello, Mr. Greene,*” the man said. Obviously this stranger was not a stranger at all but for the life of him Mr. Greene could not place him. Embarrassed but unwilling to admit what a poor memory he had. Mr. Greene said, “ *Hello, good to see you old boy. How long has it been.*” “ *Well,*” said the other man, “ *it was at Lady Asquith’s reception last October, wasn’t it ? Nearly a year then.*” Mr. Greene remembered Lady Asquith reception and thought that the gentleman’s face looked familiar but he just could not place it.

Still groping for clues, Greene asked “ *And how is your wife ?*” “ *Quite well,*” said the other man. Mr. Greene then added “ *And you ? Still in the same business I presume ?*” “ *Oh, yes,*” said the other man, *George the Fifth of the House of Windsor, I’m still the King of England.*” **Mr. Greene, behold your king.** Now that is the message of the gospel of Matthew “ *Behold your King.*” Matthew meaning “ *gift of the Lord,*” was the other name of Levi (9:9) the tax collector who left everything to follow Christ. (Lk 5:27-28) Matthew was one of the twelve apostles (10:3 Mk 3:18) and scholars believe that Matthew lived and taught in Palestine for fifteen years after the crucifixion, then began to travel as a missionary first to Ethiopia and then to Macedonia, Syrian

and Persia. Some historians believe that he died a natural death in either Ethiopia or Macedonia but this is not certain. One thing that is certain is the Jewish flavour of his gospel. For example in the opening genealogy Matthews traces back only as far as Abraham. Matthew abounds in quotes from Old Testament prophetic passages. He constantly refers to Christ as “ *the Son of David.*” (1:1 9:27 12:23 15:22) And abounds in references “ *to the kingdom of heaven.*” (3:2 4:17 5:3, 10 10:7 25:1) an expression that occurs nowhere else in all of Scripture. Warren Wiersbe says. “ *the kingdom of heaven refers to the rule of God on the earth.*” For centuries the Jewish people had awaited their Messiah and Deliverer and the kingdom on earth He would establish. But when the King came He did not please them and they rejected Him and His kingdom. Thus the kingdom was postponed until the time that Israel would receive her King. That time will be at the second coming of Christ when He will establish His earthly kingdom for a thousand years.

Christ’s external visible kingdom was postponed but an ***internal*** kingdom was established because “ *as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name.*” (Jn 1:12) So here was Matthew’s aim to convince the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah. Let’s see how he does it.

(1) THE KING IS IDENTIFIED CH’s 1-9

For in these opening chapters we have the *Revelation of the King*. He reveals Himself to the Jews as to His Person

(1-4) His Principles and His Power (8-9) Now remember Matthew is seeking to prove that Jesus Christ is the King “ *the Son of David.*” His aim is to convince the Jews that Jesus Christ was their Messiah. And so he begins with,

(a) HIS PERSON: Ch’s 1-4

Can you see *His Ancestry here:* (1:1-17) You see, every Jew knew at least this, the Messiah had to be of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10) and of the family of David. (2 Sam 7:12-16) Do you see how the gospel begins ? (1:1) The line of Abraham places Him in the nation, and the line of David puts Him on the throne. He is in that royal line. Do you recall Isaiah’s challenge to the Jews who would murder the Messiah ? “ *Who shall declare his generation ?*” (Acts 8:33) Matthew challenged them to investigate the claims of Jesus Christ to be the Son and Heir of David, and they probably did. (Ezra 2:62) This is interesting because they challenged every move of Christ Even offering a substitute explanation for the resurrection, but they never did question His genealogy. The reason must be that they checked it out and found that it was accurate.

He was born in the line of David and in the line of Abraham. This is what Matthew is putting before us. He is the fulfillment of everything that had been mentioned in the Old Testament. “ *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*” (1:1) “ *The book of the generation,*” that is unique to Matthew in fact it’s not found anywhere else in the New Testament.

But come back to (Gen 5:1) “ *This is the book of the generations of Adam.*” So there are two books. The book of the generations of Adam and the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. How did you get into the family of Adam ? You got in by a birth. We got there by birth. But in Adam all die. (Rom. 5:12) Adam’s book is a book of death. Then there is the other book, the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. How did you get into that family, into that genealogy ? By another birth, a new birth. We all are in the first book, the book of the generations of Adam. But I I trust that you are in the second book. Can you see *His Ancestry here ?*

Can you see *His Advent here ?* (1:18-2:23) Every Jew knew that Messiah had to be born in one place and only one. No matter how pure his pedigree he had to be born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2) Jesus Christ was and that was another piece of evidence that would impress the unbiased Jew. Now in the Bible only four ways are noted to get a body.

1. Without a man or a woman, as Adam did made from the dust of the ground.
2. With a man, but no woman, as Eve did made from Adam’s side.
3. With a man and a woman, as all men are born.
4. With a woman, but no man, as Jesus Christ was born, having an earthly mother but no earthly father. You see, it was important that the Lord was born of a virgin that He might have a sinless nature, conceived by the Holy Spirit. (Lk 1:35)

Can you see *His Ambassador here ?* Every Jew knew also that the Messiah had to be preceded by a prophet (Is 40:3) And as the forerunner of the King John the Baptist fulfilled the promise of (Is 40:3) “ *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*” John was the last Old Testament prophet and his cry was “ *Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” (Matt 3:2) John is asking the people to repent and prepare for the King and when the nation rejected the King the kingdom was taken from them. (21:42-43) Incidentally, are you pointing people away from yourself to the Lamb of God ?

Can you see *His Adversary here ?* “ *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*” (4:1) “ *Command that these stones be made bread,*” what was that ? ***The lust of the flesh***, “ *the devil taketh him into an high mountain and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them,*” (4:8) What was that ? ***The lust of the eyes***. “ *Cast thyself down for it is written he shall give his angels charge concerning thee*” (4:6) What was that ? ***The pride of life***. Is this not the way the devil tempts us ? In the area of Performance: the lust of the flesh. The world will try to get you to do things that are wrong to fulfil desires that are right. In the area of *Possessions*: “ *the lust of the eyes*,” (2:16) Achan first saw, then coveted, then took, and his disobedience cost him his life. (Jos 7:21) In the Area of *Pride*: “ *the pride of life.*” It describes someone who desires to be something. Do you know something ? The only way we can defeat the devil is with the Sword ?

The “ *sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.*”
(Eph 6:17) (a)

(b) HIS PRINCIPLES: Ch's 5-7

What has been called “ *The Sermon on the Mount.*” Some tell us that this sermon only applies during the kingdom age. That these (Chs 5-7) must await the Millennium for their fulfilment. I think we can hold to prophetic character of Matthew without losing the Sermon on the Mount for today. (6:19 5:17-20 6:10) Something else. This sermon is not Christ's advice to non-Christians on how to live. It is a tough enough for a believer to live in this way never mind a unbeliever. *No, this sermon teaches how believers are to live now they are in the kingdom.* We are not saved **by** such a lifestyle we are saved **for** such a lifestyle. John Phillips says “ *In sweeping statements the King revealed His concept of the kingdom as otherworldly, spiritual and yet intensely practical.*” He saw adultery in the lustful look, He saw murder in the angry though, and He saw theft in the covetous wish.
(a) (b)

(c) HIS POWER: Ch's 8-9

For Matthew groups together a series of ten miracles to prove to his readers that Jesus Christ possessed the power of the King that the Old Testament promised the Messiah would have. Isaiah promised that in the Kingdom Age the blind would see, the lame would walk, the deaf would hear. (Is 35:5-6) The Saviour referred to this passage when He sent a word of encouragement to John the

Baptist. Do you recall what John's disciples said ? “ *Art thou he that should come ? Or look we for another ? Then Jesus answering said unto them, ‘ Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.’*” (LK 7:19-23) The King was on earth and sharing with needy people the blessings of the coming kingdom. Now it is important for us to realize that Christ's miracles were the supreme proof of Christ's Deity and the credentials of His Messiahship. *You see, Matthew's purpose in recording the miracles was to confirm His Deity and His claim to be the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world.* Why Christ Himself said, “ *the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.*” (Jn 5:16-36 10:25,30 20-30-31) My only God could perform such supernatural feats.

Now when Christ healed He healed with a word or touch. (8:6-7 Mk 5:25) Without gimmicks, formulas or fanfare. He healed instantaneously with no drawn out period of waiting. (Matt 8:13) He healed totally not partially. (Lk 4:39) Christ healed everybody. Unlike the healers today, Christ did not leave long lines of disappointed people who had to return home in their wheelchairs. Luke says, “ *Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him, and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.*” (Lk 4:40) Christ healed organic disease. He did not go up and down Palestine healing lower back pain, heart palpitations, headaches and other invisible ailments. No ! Christ healed obvious kinds of organic disease.

People who were crippled from birth, people who were blind could see, people who were deaf and dumb could speak and hear. Christ raised the dead. Do you what modern faith healers say ? “ *If you have enough faith, you will be healed.*” Well, Lazarus (Jn 11:1) Jairus's daughter (Matt 9) and the widows son (Lk 7) were all dead. My they were incapable of displaying faith. Yet they arose from the dead, by the power of Christ. I wish the people who claim to have the gift of healing would spend a little time in funeral parlours. They could sure make some exciting things happen. I mean wouldn't it be wonderful if the next time you went to a funeral someone with the gift of healing came in and said, “ *I feel bad about this situation. Would you please get up.*” Now why did Christ heal the way He did ? Did He do it to infatuate or play games with the people. My the gift of healing authenticated who Jesus Christ was, God, the true Messiah. What power He demonstrated. (1)

(2) THE KING IS VILIFIED Ch's 10:1-16:12

To “ *vilify*, ” means to speak very badly of someone. Do you recall what the Pharisees said of Christ ? Look at (12:24) Because Christ's power was supernatural and the only sources of supernatural are God and Satan and because they refused to recognise Christ as being from God, they were forced to conclude that He was an agent of Satan. Now in no other gospel are the attacks against the Lord Jesus portrayed as strongly as here. There was,

(a) THE RESISTANCE TO THE KING: 10:1-12:50

One would have thought that the world would be delighted to know that One had come who would conquer all ills. But the world resisted Him. You see, when the Jewish leaders realized that the kingdom He offered was in truth “ *the kingdom of heaven*, ” and that to get into that kingdom you needed a new birth, (Jn 3:3) they weren't interested. What they wanted was a king who would smash the power of Rome, make Israel an empire, Jerusalem capital of global power and themselves heirs apparent to it all. Do you see what He says to His twelve disciples in (10:16) ? Hostility lay head. For in (Ch 11) John the Baptist was incarcerated and in (Ch 12) the Jews blasphemed the Holy Ghost for they said that Christ was in league with the devil and performed His miracles in the power of Satan. Christ turned his back on them, walked out of their affairs and prepared for the journey home.

History informs us that the church has often been persecuted by bigoted religionists. Think of the zeal of the Romanists against the Reformers. Think of the apostate churches in our land who deny the inerrancy of Scripture. They cast scorn on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They have forsaken the Word of God. They do not preach the true gospel of Christ. (a) But notice,

(b) THE REACTION OF THE KING: 13:1-16:12

You see, the rebellion against Christ had reached its peak and He turned from the nation to all who will come to Him. (11:28-30) The big question now is, “ *What about the kingdom, now that the King has been refused ?* ” The

answer to that question is in (Ch 13) John F. Walvoord observes “ *The thirteenth chapter of Matthew marks a new division in the gospel, in which Jesus addresses Himself to the problem of what will occur when He goes back to heaven as the rejected King.*” You see, the period between Christ’s first and second comings has been called the parenthesis, the interim. It is a period that was not revealed in the Old Testament, a period to which the Lord refers here as “ *the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.*” (13:11) So “ *the kingdom of heaven*” in (Ch 13) is in mystery form. It does not refer to the earthly kingdom of the Messiah but rather to the kingdom here on earth during the King’s absence. Warren Wiersbe says,

“ *The kingdom of heaven is a mixture of good and evil, true and false. It is not the church. The church is in the kingdom of heaven but distinct from it. The kingdom of heaven is equivalent to our term “ Christendom. It is made up of all who profess allegiance to the King whether in truth or pretence.*” And so these parables reveal the course of this present age from a spiritual perspective. Now by now there was growing opposition to the new age John the Baptist had been killed and the scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees began to oppose Christ in every possible way. It all culminated in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

(3) THE KING IS CRUCIFIED Ch’s 16:3-28:20

For here we see,

(a) HIS PRONOUNCEMENTS 16:13-20:34

Look at just one of them. (16:21-23) He was now heading directly for the cross but the idea horrified them. Peter remonstrated with the Lord but he was soundly rebuked. Isn’t it so easy to come from the place where we do things in the Spirit, (16:16) to the place where we do things in the flesh ? From the place of helpfulness to the place of hindrance ? Mathews tracks the Lord’s journey to the cross by highlighting,

(b) HIS PRESENTATION: 21:23:39

You see, in our Lord’s triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem we are meant to understand that He was offering Himself to the nation as Israel’s Messiah. Knowingly and deliberately Christ fulfilled (Zechariah 9:9) “ *Tell ye the daughter of Zion behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*” Sadly, the Jews did not know the time of their visitation (Lk 19:41) and rejected their King. And He whose ministry began in Galilee with eight “ *Blessed’s,*” closed in Jerusalem with eight “ *Woes.*” (Matt 23:13)

My can you hear the anguish in the voice of the Saviour as He cries “ *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate.*” (23:19) He called the temple “ *my house,*” in (21:13) but now it is “ *your house.*” (23:38) My as the shadows darken Christ gives us,

(c) HIS PREDICTIONS: 24:1-25:46

This is his last great sermon in Matthew. The first one was given on a mountain, so was this last one. The first one we call the Sermon on the Mount, this one we call the Olivet Discourse, the first was given in Galilee, this one in Jerusalem. In that one we have *precepts*, in this one we have *prophecy*, the first had to do with *His Rule*, this one has to do with *His Return*. This the 70th week of Daniel, this is the same period described in Revelation (Chs 6-19) This is the time Israel will come back on the scene and God will pour His wrath on a rebellious world. The disciples cry “ *what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world ?* ” (24:3) Do you know what the Lord said, “ *Watch the fig tree.* ” (24:32) Watch Israel. When the nation of Israel comes back to life again, then you can expect My return. In the mean time we can live under the shadow of the cross. “ *Jesus keep me near the cross,* ” for do you see here,

(d) THE PASSION OF THE KING: 26:1-27:66

Matthew takes us to Gethsemane (26:26) and lets us hear the *prayer* of the King. He takes us to Gabbatha and lets us see the *pain* of the King. (27:27) He takes us to Golgotha and lets us glimpse at the *pardon* of the King. (27:54)

*But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost*

It's Matthew who tells us that the death of Christ marked “ *the end of the Sabbath,* ” and that it was “ *as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,* ” (28:1) The end of the Sabbath. Judaism was obsolete, the rent veil signalled that. And now “ *the end of the Sabbath,* ” had come. There was to be a new day, a new age, a new dispensation, why,

(e) THE POWER OF THE KING: 28:1-15

Was displayed on that first day of the week, as “ *up from the grave He arose.* ” My the King is alive. Some of you are very fond of Elvis Presley. Well, Elvis died on 16th **August 1977**, at the age of 42. I was in Portrush on holiday. Do you know what the papers said ? “ *The King is dead.* ” I am here to tell this that the King is alive. That's the news we need to proclaim for there is to be,

(f) THE PROPAGATION OF THE KING: 28:16-20

For no longer is the message to be kept inside the confines of the Jewish fold for it has become a message for all mankind. “ *Go ye therefore and teach all nations,* ” (28:19-20) “ *King of my l crown Thee now,* ” Matthew challenges us with this question. Is Jesus Christ king of your life ? He demands every corner of our hearts. He deserves every inch of our lives. A king is more than a Saviour, a king is a Sovereign. Is the Lord Jesus Sovereign in your life ?

