

# Jesus Christ, Our Savior King

## Review of Matthew 1–17

**Before we resume our passage-by-passage exposition of Matthew's Gospel,** let's take a moment to recall what we have learned thus far.

**Genre.** New Testament Gospels are theological biographies about Jesus Christ. They declare God's fulfillment of promise in Jesus's Spirit-empowered person and work. Gospel writers ("evangelists") write to persuade readers/hearers to believe in, follow after, and call others to follow after this Jesus.

**Author.** Technically, the Gospel of Matthew is anonymous, since the author never explicitly identifies himself. Nor does he identify the particular audience to whom he writes. Early church tradition and early manuscripts of the Gospel attribute authorship to the apostle Matthew, the tax collector who leaves his tax booth to follow Jesus (Matt 9:9; "Matthew the tax collector" in 10:3).<sup>1</sup> Matthew relies on eyewitness testimony, his own and others', to retell the story of Jesus Christ and explain the significance of Jesus's suffering and exaltation.<sup>2</sup> Matthew possibly composes his Gospel during the AD 60's. He almost certainly composes the Gospel prior to AD 70 when the Jerusalem temple is destroyed, since in passages such as Matt 5:23–24, 17:24–27, and 24:1–2ff, the author makes no editorial comment indicating that the temple's destruction has already happened.

**Original Audience.** Matthew's strong emphasis on Scripture's fulfillment, as well as his characterization of Jerusalem and its establishment, suggest a predominantly Jewish audience for his Gospel. Yet Matthew goes to great lengths to confirm Jesus's purpose to spread his kingdom to all the nations. So, either Matthew's original audience includes Gentiles, or else Matthew simply stresses the inclusion of Gentiles to his Jewish audience so that believing Jews will embrace God's global salvation purposes in Christ. Ultimately, Matthew composes his Gospel for the church, both Jew and Gentile.

**Whole Gospel's Unifying Theme.** In fulfillment of Scripture, God the Father sends his Spirit-empowered Son, Jesus, to suffer, die, and be exalted in order to save his people from their sins, incorporate them into his kingdom, and send them to all nations as his disciple-making church.

**Opening Emphasis.** Matthew begins his Gospel by presenting Jesus as the long-promised Messiah, the Anointed One in whom God fulfills his old-covenant promises. Jesus brings redemptive history to its climax. Matthew's opening genealogy (1:1–17) introduces Jesus as the "Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (v. 1). Matthew includes two titles in the genealogy: "David the king" (v. 6) and "Jesus, the Christ" (vv. 1, 16, 17). Having established Jesus's genealogical "beginning" (1:1), Matthew narrates Jesus's "origin/birth" (1:18) by recounting the angel of the Lord's appearance to Joseph (1:18–25). The angel clarifies that this child, Jesus, will save God's people from their sins (1:21). Matthew further explains the child's significance in terms of his being the promised Immanuel, "God with us" (1:22–23).

**So What?** At the climax of Israel's story, we discover the climax of our story. Israel's tragic predicament of sin and consequent exile from God's presence is also *our* tragic predicament, apart from Christ. Jesus Christ is the Savior King who saves God's people from their sins and secures God's everlasting presence among them. So trust him, embrace his kingdom, and follow him.

<sup>1</sup>Matthew is also known as "Levi" (Luke 5:27) and "Levi the son of Alphaeus" (Mark 2:14; "Matthew" in Mark 3:18).

<sup>2</sup>It is reasonable to assume that Matthew's narration of those episodes for which he was not personally present derive from *his firsthand interviews of witnesses* or from *oral history* that developed immediately following Jesus's ascension. For an insightful study of the evidence of eyewitness testimony throughout the Gospels, see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

## STUDY QUESTIONS

**Opening Question:** What was the highlight of your past month?

### HEAR THE WORD

1. *For those who have studied Matt 1–17:* If you had to choose only four passages in Matt 1–17 that together clarify the main themes of the Gospel, which four would you choose? Why these four?
2. Read Matt 9:35–38. Describe the various characteristics of Jesus's ministry. Which characteristic stands out the most to you? Why?
3. Read Matt 10:1–8. In what ways does the ministry to which Jesus calls his disciples reflect Jesus's own ministry (as described in Matt 9:35–36)? How are they similar, and how are they different?
4. What does Matt 9:35–10:8 mainly reveal about Jesus?

### DO THE WORD

5. If you more fully believed what Matt 9:35–10:8 mainly reveals about Jesus and his desire for those who follow him, what's **one thing that would change** in your life this coming spring? How so? *Be specific.*

### RETELL THE WORD

6. What person you particularly want a God-given, fresh opportunity to share truths about Jesus this spring? What are the specific challenges of sharing truths about Jesus with this person?
7. How would you particularly value prayer from your small group regarding your desire to communicate the gospel with this person? *Be specific.*