

## The Gospel of Matthew

### Week 1 – Who is Jesus?

**Transition:** Moving from our study in Nehemiah to the gospel of Matthew is a natural step. One reason for this is because Nehemiah is nearly the last of the Old Testament books to be written. (The only one written later is Malachi.) From the writing of Malachi to the birth of Jesus is about 400 years. During this time, God did not inspire any new revelation that He wanted preserved in His word. Scholars call this time period ‘the 400 years of silence/darkness.’ With the birth of Jesus, however, the darkness is shattered by the blinding light of God’s own glory and the silence is broken by God’s own voice (through His Son). What Nehemiah was unable to do, God will do Himself.

**Context:** As we start this study, there is much to know about Matthew (the person as well as the gospel). Matthew the person was a tax collector (who were severely despised by the Jews) when he was asked by Jesus to follow Him (become a disciple), which he did immediately (9:9). Later, he was also chosen to be one of Jesus’ apostles. As a devoted follower of Jesus, he was an eyewitness to Jesus’ ministry. In regard to the gospel itself, from very early on, church tradition holds that it was written by Matthew. This gospel was most likely written primarily for a Jewish audience as it begins with Jesus’ genealogy, quotes from the Old Testament (the Jewish scriptures) more than any other gospel writer, and it uses the term ‘kingdom of heaven’ rather than ‘kingdom of God,’ which was potentially offensive to conservative, religious Jews of this era.

#### Opening Question:

- Do you have any famous/influential relatives? Who were/are they? What did they do that made them famous/influential? If they’re from a bygone era, how did you find out about them?
- What about the rest of your family tree? ...do you have any ne’er-do-wells or relatives who broke the law or did disreputable things? What kinds of things did they do? Without naming anyone who is still around, what effects (if any) did they have on your family? How does knowing that there are no ‘perfect’ families affect you?

#### Scripture/Storying: Matthew 1:1-17

#### Discipleship Questions:

- Why did Matthew call out Abraham and David specifically in verse 1? (For help in answering this question read Genesis 12:1-3 and 2 Samuel 7:8-17.) Assuming this was written primarily to Jewish readers, what would this mean to them? What meaning does it have for you today?
- Matthew includes 5 women in Jesus’ lineage (which is highly unusual for that day). What is each one’s story? If you need help, read Genesis 38, Joshua 2, Ruth 1-4, 2 Samuel 11, and Luke 1:26-38. (You might consider asking different people to read one of these passages privately and then be prepared to share with the group what they read.) What impact does the inclusion of these women in Jesus’ ‘official’ genealogy have on you?
- Matthew also includes some who did sinful and/or foolish things in Jesus’ genealogy. Read Genesis 25:29-34, Genesis 38 (again), 1 Kings 12:1-24, Isaiah 39, and 2 Kings 21:1-18. What are some ‘skeletons in Jesus’ closet?’ How does knowing this impact your understanding of God (since this is all part of His plan of redemption)?
- The genealogy doesn’t end with calling Jesus by name, but by calling Him Christ (v16). The word Christ is Greek for the Hebrew word Messiah. Both are translated into English as ‘Anointed One.’ What does it mean that Jesus is the Anointed One? Read Psalm 2 for one Jewish understanding of who the Anointed One was to them. By using this term, what is Matthew communicating to his readers? What meaning does it have in your own life?
- The format of the genealogy ends when Joseph is not called “the father of” Jesus, but instead says “and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born.” Why is this significant?
- What has made an impression on you from looking into Jesus’ lineage?

**Prayer time:** Pray that we will mature in our faith through this study in Matthew.