

BE

LOYAL

BE

LOYAL

FOLLOWING THE KING OF KINGS

NT COMMENTARY

MATTHEW

Warren W. Wiersbe

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*Dedicated to some gifted friends whose keyboard ministries have greatly
enriched my own life:*

David Brackley

Merrill Dunlop

Bill Fasig

John Innes

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THE BIG IDEA

An Introduction to *Be Loyal*
by Ken Baugh

In 1804, Thomas Jefferson sat down in the White House with a copy of the New Testament in one hand and a razor blade in the other and proceeded to cut and paste a Jesus of his liking. Being a Rationalist, Jefferson cut away the parts of the Gospels that spoke of Jesus' divine nature and miracles and left only what he believed to be the ethical teachings of Jesus. He titled this work *The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth*. Later, in 1819, Jefferson cut and pasted another version of Jesus' teachings, titling this edition *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. The real Jesus, according to Jefferson, was merely a man—a good man, an ethical man, and a moral teacher—but a mortal man nonetheless.

I find it interesting that so many people, like Thomas Jefferson, want a god made in their own image—one that they agree with, one that they can understand, and maybe even control. But a god made in the image of man is a god that is too small: too small to offer comfort during seasons of doubt and personal crisis, too small to provide answers to our questions, calm our fears, and give assurance in the face of death. The only God that can meet these needs is found in the person of Jesus Christ, and He did not give permission to anyone to redefine His nature. In fact, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus' identity is clearly stated: Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:16 NIV). The phrase “*the Christ*” is another way to say that Jesus is the Messiah, and according to Jesus' genealogy in Matthew chapter 1, we know

that as the Messiah, Jesus is the King whom the prophets foretold would come to save the world.

You see, Matthew wrote his gospel with a Jewish audience in mind, to reveal Jesus' identity and nature and prove to Israel that Jesus was and is their one true Messiah and only King. Jesus performed miracles that supported the claims of the prophets, and He is the only person to have ever done so! The examples are many: Isaiah said that the coming King would give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf (Isa. 29:18–19; Matt. 5:3; 11:5). Jeremiah said that the coming King would be from the lineage of King David (Jer. 23:5–6). Ezekiel declared that the King would be a tree planted by God (Ezek. 17:22–24; Matt. 13:31–32). Hosea said that He would take flight to Egypt (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15). Amos said that the sun would go dark when He died (Amos 8:9; Matt. 24:29). Micah stated that He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:1–5; Matt. 2:1). Zechariah said that He would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9–10; Matt. 21:4–5). In total, there are over 456 prophecies stating specific things that the King would do, and Jesus fulfilled them all right down to the smallest details.

In addition to all the prophecies that foretold of Jesus' coming, Matthew records nineteen of the twenty-nine prophecies that Jesus fulfilled just in the last twenty-four hours of His life. What more convincing evidence should the nation of Israel need? According to the signs that have been laid out, for Jesus not to be the King in light of all this overwhelming prophetic evidence would be impossible! The evidence is overwhelming, Matthew's point is clear: Jesus is the One, the Messiah. It was Jesus alone who in thirty short years was able to make a sacrifice for our sins, reconcile man to God, provide an example for all believers, destroy the Devil and his works, heal the brokenhearted, give abundant life, and glorify God the Father. Right now, at this very moment, Jesus is preparing a place for His loyal subjects a home in heaven where their will be no more death, crying, or pain—a paradise where we will live with Him for eternity. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. Are

you getting the picture yet? The evidence is clear, compelling and overwhelming: JESUS IS THE KING.

As you read and study the book of Matthew with Dr. Wiersbe's exceptional commentary as your guide, I challenge you to keep your own running list of the supporting evidence of Jesus' identity as well as His instructions for His loyal subjects to follow. During our time on earth before we are reunited with Jesus for eternity, we are commanded to carry out His Great Commission (28:19–20), and in so doing we will be faithfully going about the King's business.

Dr. Wiersbe's commentaries have been a source of guidance and strength to me over the many years that I have been a pastor. His unique style is not overly academic, but theologically sound. He explains the deep truths of Scripture in a way that everyone can understand and apply. Whether you're a Bible scholar or a brand-new believer in Christ, you will benefit, as I have, from Warren's insights. With your Bible in one hand and Dr. Wiersbe's commentary in the other, you will be able to accurately unpack the deep truths of God's Word and learn how to apply them to your life.

Drink deeply, my friend, of the truths of God's Word, for in them you will find Jesus Christ, and there is freedom, peace, assurance, and joy.

—Ken Baugh

Pastor of Coast Hills Community Church

Aliso Viejo, California

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

“The Gospel According to Matthew” has been called by many Bible scholars the most important single document of the Christian faith. Historians tell us that this book was the most widely read, and the most quoted, in the early church. While all four gospels are important to us, it is not without reason that Matthew stands first.

This book is an expository survey of Matthew, presenting Jesus Christ as the King. It is not a detailed commentary, although I have tried to cover all the important passages and the “problem areas.” The limitations of space have prevented me from arguing the pros and cons of various views. I have tried to present what I feel Matthew wanted to convey to us about Jesus Christ and His ministry. If I should disagree with your position, at least I trust I have not been disagreeable!

May our study of this important book lead all of us into a deeper love for, and loyalty to, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings.

—Warren W. Wiersbe

A SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Theme: The King and His kingdom

Theme verses: Matthew 2:2; 4:17

- I. The Revelation of the King (Matthew 1—10)
 - A. His person (Matthew 1—4)
 - B. His principles (Matthew 5—7)
 - C. His power (Matthew 8—10)

(Note: The message during this period of His ministry was, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” [Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7].)
- II. The Rebellion against the King (Matthew 11—13)
 - A. His messenger rejected (Matthew 11:1–19)
 - B. His works denied (Matthew 11:20–30)
 - C. His principles refused (Matthew 12:1–21)
 - D. His person attacked (Matthew 12:22–50)
 - E. Result: the “mysteries of the kingdom” (Matthew 13)
- III. The Retirement of the King (Matthew 14—20)

(The Lord seeks to leave the multitudes to be alone with His disciples.)

 - A. Before Peter’s confession (Matthew 14:1—16:12)
 - B. Peter’s confession (Matthew 16:13–28) (First mention of the cross—Matthew 16:21)
 - C. After Peter’s confession (Matthew 17:1—20:34) (Second mention of the cross—Matthew 17:22; third mention of the cross—Matthew 20:17–19)
- IV. The Rejection of the King (Matthew 21—27)

(“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you” [Matthew 21:43].)

 - A. His public presentation as King (Matthew 21:1–16)
 - B. His conflict with the rulers (Matthew 21:17—23:39)
 - C. His prophetic message (Matthew 24—25)
 - D. His suffering and death (Matthew 26—27)
- V. The Resurrection of the King (Matthew 28)

HERE'S GOOD NEWS!

Twenty or thirty years after Jesus had gone back to heaven, a Jewish disciple named Matthew was inspired by the Spirit of God to write a book. The finished product is what we know today as “The Gospel According to Matthew.”

Nowhere in the four gospels do we find a single recorded word that Matthew spoke. Yet in his gospel, he gives us the words and works of Jesus Christ, “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Matthew did not write to tell us about himself. But let’s get acquainted with him and the book he wrote. Then we can learn all that he wanted us to know about Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit used Matthew to accomplish three important tasks in the writing of his gospel.

1. THE BRIDGE-BUILDER: HE INTRODUCED A NEW BOOK

That book was the New Testament. If a Bible reader were to jump from Malachi into Mark, or Acts, or Romans, he would be bewildered. Matthew’s gospel is the bridge that leads us out of the Old Testament and into the New Testament.

The theme of the Old Testament is given in Genesis 5:1: “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” The Old Testament gives the history of

“the Adam family,” and it is a sad history indeed. God created man in His own image, but man sinned—thus defiling and deforming that image. Then man brought forth children “in his own likeness, and after his image” (Gen. 5:3). These children proved themselves to be sinners like their parents. No matter where you read in the Old Testament, you meet sin and sinners.

But the New Testament is “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ” (Matt. 1:1). Jesus is the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), and He came to earth to save the “generations of Adam.” (This includes you and me, by the way.) Through no choice of our own, we were born into the generations of Adam, and this made us sinners. But by a choice of faith, we can be born into the generation of Jesus Christ and become the children of God!

When you read the genealogy in Genesis 5, the repeated phrase *and he died* sounds like the tolling of a funeral bell. The Old Testament illustrates the truth that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). But when you turn to the New Testament, that first genealogy emphasizes *birth* and not death! The message of the New Testament is that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

The Old Testament is a book of promise, while the New Testament is a book of fulfillment. (To be sure, there are many precious promises in the New Testament, but I am referring to the emphasis of each half of the Bible.) Beginning with Genesis 3:15, God promised a Redeemer; and Jesus Christ fulfilled that promise. *Fulfilled* is one of the key words in the gospel of Matthew, used about fifteen times.

One purpose of this gospel is to show that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament promises concerning the Messiah. His birth at Bethlehem fulfilled Isaiah 7:14 (Matt. 1:22–23). Jesus was taken to Egypt for safety, and this fulfilled Hosea 11:1 (Matt. 2:14–15). When Joseph and the family returned and decided to settle in Nazareth, this fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies (Matt. 2:22–23). Matthew used at least 129 quotations or allusions to the Old Testament in this gospel. He wrote primarily for Jewish readers to show them that Jesus Christ was indeed their promised Messiah.

2. THE BIOGRAPHER: HE INTRODUCED A NEW KING

None of the four gospels is a biography in the modern sense of the word. In fact the apostle John doubted that a complete biography of Jesus could ever be written (John 21:25). There are many details about the earthly life of Jesus that are not given in any of the Gospels.

Each of the four gospels has its own emphasis. Matthew's book is called "the gospel of the King." It was written primarily for Jewish readers. Mark's book, "the gospel of the Servant," was written to instruct Roman readers. Luke wrote mainly to the Greeks and presented Christ as the perfect "Son of Man." John's appeal is universal, and his message was "This is the Son of God." No one gospel is able to tell the whole story as God wants us to see it. But when we put these four gospel accounts together, we have a composite picture of the person and work of our Lord.

Being accustomed to keeping systematic records, Matthew gave us a beautifully organized account of our Lord's life and ministry. The book can be divided into ten sections in which "doing" and "teaching" alternate. Each teaching section ends with "When Jesus had ended these sayings" or a similar transitional statement. The chapters can be divided like this:

<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Teaching</i>	<i>Transition</i>
1—4	5—7	7:28
8:1—9:34	9:35—10:42	11:1
11:2—12:50	13:1—52	13:53
13:53—17:27	18:1—35	19:1
19:1—23:39	24:1—25:46	26:1
26:1—28:20 (the Passion narrative)		

Matthew described Jesus as the *Doer* and the *Teacher*. He recorded at least twenty specific miracles and six major messages: the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5—7), the charge to the apostles (chap. 10), the parables of the kingdom (chap. 13), the lesson on forgiveness (chap. 18), the denunciation of the Pharisees (chap. 23), and the prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives (chaps. 24—25). At least 60 percent of this book focuses on the teachings of Jesus.

Remember, Matthew focuses on the *kingdom*. In the Old Testament, the Jewish nation was God's kingdom on earth: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and [a] holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). Many people in Jesus' day were looking for the God-sent Deliverer who would release them from Roman bondage and reestablish the glorious kingdom of Israel.

The message of the kingdom of heaven was first preached by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1–2). The Lord Jesus also preached this message from the very beginning of His ministry (Matt. 4:23). He sent out the twelve apostles with the same proclamation (Matt. 10:1–7).

However, the good news of the kingdom required a moral and spiritual response from the people, and not simply the acceptance of a ruler. John the Baptist called for repentance. Likewise, Jesus made it clear that He had not come to overcome Rome, but to transform the hearts and lives of those who trusted Him. Before He could enter into the glory of the kingdom, Jesus endured the suffering of the cross.

One further word about this gospel. Matthew arranged his material in a topical order, rather than chronological. He grouped ten miracles together in chapters 8—9 instead of putting them into their historical sequence in the gospel's narrative. Certain other events are totally omitted. By consulting a good harmony of the Gospels, you will see that, while Matthew does not contradict the other three gospel writers, he does follow his own pattern.

Matthew was not only a bridge-builder who introduced a new book, the New Testament; and a biographer who introduced a new King, Jesus Christ; but he also accomplished a third task when he wrote his book.

3. THE BELIEVER: HE INTRODUCED A NEW PEOPLE

This new people, of course, was the church. Matthew is the only gospel writer to use the word *church* (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). The Greek word translated *church* means "a called-out assembly." In the New Testament, for the most part, this word refers to a local assembly of believers. In the Old Testament, Israel was God's called-out people, beginning with the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff.; Deut. 7:6–8). In fact, Stephen called the nation

of Israel “the church [assembly] in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), for they were God’s called-out people.

But the New Testament church is a different people, for it is composed of *both* Jews and Gentiles. In this church there were no racial distinctions (Gal. 3:28). Even though Matthew wrote primarily for the Jews, he has a “universal” element in his book that includes the Gentiles. For example, Gentile leaders came to worship the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:1–12). Jesus performed miracles for Gentiles and even commended them for their faith (Matt. 8:5–13; 15:21–28). The Gentile Queen of Sheba was praised for her willingness to make a long journey to hear God’s wisdom (Matt. 12:42). At a crisis hour in Jesus’ ministry, He turned to a prophecy about the Gentiles (Matt. 12:14–21). Even in the parables, Jesus indicated that the blessings which Israel refused would be shared with the Gentiles (Matt. 22:8–10; 21:40–46). The Olivet Discourse stated that the message would go “unto all nations” (Matt. 24:14); and the Lord’s commission involves all nations (Matt. 28:19–20).

There were only believing Jews and believing Jewish proselytes in the church at the beginning (Acts 2–7). When the gospel went to Samaria (Acts 8), people who were part Jewish and part Gentile came into the church. When Peter went to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10), the Gentiles became fully accepted in the church. The Conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15) settled the decision that a Gentile did not have to become a Jew before he could become a Christian.

But Matthew anticipated all of this. And when his book was read by members of the early church, both Jews and Gentiles, it helped to settle differences and create unity. Matthew made it clear that this new people, the church, must not maintain a racial or social exclusiveness. Faith in Jesus Christ makes believers “all one” in the body of Christ, the church.

Matthew’s own experience with the Lord is recorded in Matthew 9:9–17, and it is a beautiful example of the grace of God. His old name was Levi, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). “Matthew” means “the gift of God.” Apparently, the name was given to commemorate his conversion and his call to be a disciple.

Remember that tax collectors were among the most hated people in Jewish society. To begin with, they were traitors to their own nation because they “sold themselves” to the Romans to work for the government. Each tax collector purchased from Rome the right to gather taxes, and the more he gathered, the more he could keep. They were considered thieves as well as traitors, and their constant contacts with Gentiles made them religiously suspect, if not unclean. Jesus reflected the popular view of the publicans when He classified them with harlots and other sinners (Matt. 5:46–47; 18:17), but it was obvious that He was the “friend of publicans and sinners” (Matt. 11:19; 21:31–32).

Matthew opened his heart to Jesus Christ and became a new person. This was not an easy decision for him to make. He was a native of Capernaum, and Capernaum had rejected the Lord (Matt. 11:23). Matthew was a well-known businessman in the city, and his old friends probably persecuted him. Certainly Matthew lost a good deal of income when he left all to follow Christ.

Matthew not only opened his heart, but he also opened his home. He knew that most, if not all, of his old friends would drop him when he began to follow Jesus Christ, so Matthew took advantage of the situation and invited them to meet Jesus. He gave a great feast and invited all the other tax collectors (some of whom could have been Gentiles), and the Jewish people who were not keeping the law (“sinners”).

Of course, the Pharisees criticized Jesus for daring to eat with such a defiled group of people. They even tried to get the disciples of John the Baptist to create a disagreement (Luke 5:33). The Lord explained why He was fellowshiping with “publicans and sinners”: They were spiritually sick and needed a physician. He had not come to call the righteous *because there were no righteous people*. He came to call sinners, and that included the Pharisees. Of course, His critics did not consider themselves “spiritually sick,” but they *were* just the same.

Matthew not only opened his heart and home, but he also opened his hands and worked for Christ. Alexander Whyte of Edinburgh once said that when Matthew left his job to follow Christ, he brought his pen with

him! Little did this ex-publican realize that the Holy Spirit would one day use him to write the first of the four gospels in the New Testament

According to tradition, Matthew ministered in Palestine for several years after the Lord's return to heaven, and then made missionary journeys to the Jews who were dispersed among the Gentiles. His work is associated with Persia, Ethiopia, and Syria, and some traditions associate him with Greece. The New Testament is silent on his life, but this we do know: Wherever the Scriptures travel in this world, the gospel written by Matthew continues to minister to hearts.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How is Matthew's book a bridge from the Old Testament to the New?
2. The Old Testament is about man and his sinfulness. What is the New Testament about?
3. Why is the word *fulfilled* used so many times in Matthew? About whom is it used?
4. For whom was Matthew's book written?
5. What is the focus of Matthew's book?
6. What kind of Deliverer were most Jewish people in Matthew's day looking for?
7. How was Jesus a different kind of Deliverer?
8. Who were "the new people" Matthew introduced in his book?
9. How was Matthew's life changed by his decision to follow Jesus?
10. How did Matthew witness to his fellow tax collectors and old friends? How can we learn from him?