

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW**  
**AN OLD PLAN TO SHAPE NEW LIVES**  
**(2) GIVING BIRTH TO A NEW LIFE**

Matthew 8:1-11:1

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**SCRIPTURE**

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; <sup>2</sup>and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.” <sup>3</sup>He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” . . . <sup>14</sup>When Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; <sup>15</sup>he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. <sup>16</sup>That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. <sup>17</sup>This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.” . . . <sup>23</sup>And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup>A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. <sup>25</sup>And they went and woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” <sup>26</sup>And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. <sup>27</sup>They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (Matthew 8:1-4, 14-17, 23-27 NRSV)

<sup>9</sup>As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him. <sup>10</sup>And as he sat at dinner<sup>£</sup> in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting<sup>£</sup> with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup>When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” <sup>12</sup>But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup>Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.” . . . <sup>18</sup>While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” <sup>19</sup>And Jesus got

up and followed him, with his disciples. <sup>20</sup>Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, <sup>21</sup>for she said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.” <sup>22</sup>Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well. <sup>23</sup>When Jesus came to the leader’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, <sup>24</sup>he said, “Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. <sup>25</sup>But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. <sup>26</sup>And the report of this spread throughout that district (Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26 NRSV).

<sup>35</sup>Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few (Matthew 9:35-37 NRSV).

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup>These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup>Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. <sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup>but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ <sup>8</sup>Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. <sup>9</sup>Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, <sup>10</sup>no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. <sup>11</sup>Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. <sup>12</sup>As you enter the house, greet it. <sup>13</sup>If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup>If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. <sup>15</sup>Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. . . <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of

them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the hairs of your head are all counted. <sup>31</sup>So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup>“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; <sup>33</sup>but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. . . <sup>40</sup>“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup>Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; <sup>42</sup>and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward” (Matthew 10:1-15, 29-33, 40-42 NRSV).

<sup>1</sup>Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities (Matthew 11:1 NRSV).

## **MESSAGE**

Matthew’s Gospel is sometimes known as the “Teaching Gospel” because it is organized in such a way as to make it quite suitable for use in teaching. This may have been the reason it was the most widely used book in the early Church. Church teachers could easily draw upon it to instruct new believers on the life and teachings of Jesus. Church leaders could draw upon it to address a variety of concerns in the life of the congregation.

Matthew also seeks to answer the question, “What does the Gospel have to do with the Old Testament?” In keeping with his Jewish perspective, his Gospel seems to be modeled after the Hexateuch. There is a connection between the six sections that make up this gospel and the first six books of the Bible. The first section has to do with the conception of new life, just like Genesis. The second with birth, just like Exodus. The third with infancy, just like Leviticus. The fourth with adolescence, just like Numbers. The fifth with adulthood, just like Deuteronomy. The sixth with vocation, just like Joshua.

Each section includes material on the person of Jesus. Each section has a collection of Jesus’ teachings. Each section ends with the phrase, “Now when Jesus had finished saying these things” or the like.

The first section includes the family lineage, birth, baptism and testing of Jesus as well as the launch of his ministry. Through these Matthew wants to show us that Jesus is the “Son of David” – the prophesied Messiah.

The second section contains stories that depict the power and authority of Jesus. It includes three sets of three miracle stories. By the way, this is typical of Matthew. He always arranges things in a way that is easy for the reader to learn and even memorize. He arranges things in threes and sevens. There are three messages to Joseph; three denials of Peter; three questions of Pilate; seven parables of the Kingdom; seven woes to the Scribes and Pharisees and so on.

So the second section of Matthew contains three sets of three miracles. The first set involves the healing of three different individuals, each of whom belonged to a group denied full participation in society: a leper, a Gentile, and an elderly woman. The second set involves demonstrations of power: power over nature, power over the demonic, and power over sin. The third set involves the healing of two women, the healing of two men who were blind, and the healing of a man who was mute. All of these people were classified as “people of the land.” They were regarded as common and unimportant by the rest of society – but not by Jesus!

The story of the healing of the two women actually involved two separate miracles. A woman was healed of a hemorrhaging condition by touching the fringe of Jesus’ garment. This happened as Jesus was on his way to bring a girl who had died back to life. If you count this as two separate miracles then we have ten miracles in this section. Many think this was intentional on Matthew’s part in order to match the ten miracles of Moses found in Exodus. More than that. They point inescapably to the one who wields God’s power on earth, to one who is greater than even the greatest prophet – to Jesus the Son of God.

The collection of teachings in the first section can be found in chapters five, six, and seven. It is often called the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is about discipleship. It helps us to conceive in our minds what a disciple is. It answers the question, “What does it mean to enter into a new kind of relationship with God?” Jesus called his first disciples and then he set out for them an overview of the privileges and the demands of their new situation. He was looking for people who would acknowledge God as their King. This is what Matthew means by the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew is telling us that Jesus is looking for people who will acknowledge God as their King.

Matthew is the only New Testament writer to use the phrase, “Kingdom of Heaven.” All others use “Kingdom of God.” Matthew uses both and uses them interchangeably (See 19:23-24). C.S. Kenner adds:

The Jewish people recognized that God ruled the universe in one sense now, but they prayed daily for the day when his kingdom, or rule, would be established over all peoples of the earth. Then, they believed, everyone

would submit to God. Because the Gospels affirm that Jesus must come twice, they recognize that the kingdom comes in two stages: God's future rule is established in the lives of those who obey him in the present, and over all the world when Jesus returns.<sup>1</sup>

The second section of Matthew has a collection of Jesus teachings found mostly in chapter ten (9:35-11:1). This section is about mission. If the first section conceives the idea of a disciple the second section gives birth to it. The climax of the first section is the Sermon on the Mount telling us about the Kingdom of Heaven. The climax of the second section is the mission charge – disciples are sent out to spread the good news of the kingdom. The first section gives us the mission of Jesus. In the second section the mission of Jesus is extended to his followers.

The imagery of harvest (like that of fishing for people in 4:19) indicates that this mission is a call to win new disciples. This is the concern of God who is the Lord of the harvest. I find it somewhat amusing that the people who are asked to pray for more workers in chapter nine become those workers in the next chapter!

This section needs to be looked at on two different levels. On one level it is a historical description of the first mission of the original twelve apostles. It is limited in time and location. It is a preparation mission, a practice run if you will, among their fellow Jews that would get them ready for the wider mission that would follow the death and resurrection of Jesus.

On a second level we realize that we are not being asked to duplicate the particulars of the Apostles' first mission but the principles and purpose of their mission. We are to spread the good news of the kingdom relying upon the authority and power of Christ as we do so. We also recognize that adversity and persecution are ever present possibilities when it comes to Christian mission.

The first and only time Matthew uses the word "apostle" is in this section and it is found in Matthew 10:2 where he names the Apostles. Thaddaeus here is the same person named Judas, son of James in Luke's Gospel. Likely he changed his name because of the notoriety of the other Judas.

The word apostle means "one who is sent." It usually referred to someone who was more

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<sup>1</sup> Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Mk 1:14–15). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

than just a messenger or agent. A “sent one” acted on the full authority of the sender to the extent that he or she accurately represented the sender’s mission.

Twelve apostles were chosen to correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. This was not a unique idea. Other Jewish groups made use of this idea including the Qumran Community (Dead Sea Scrolls) near the Dead Sea. It conveyed the notion that this group was seeking to be faithful to God’s purposes for the nation.

Michael Green, British theologian and pastor, summarizes the mission charge in this section with five key words: see, care, pray, receive, and go. This is based on the observation that Jesus was training his disciples by his own example.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36 NRSV).

Jesus saw the needs of people. We need to see the needs of people. Jesus saw the situation: people were tormented, exhausted and led astray. Jesus perceived their need, as Ezekiel had done before him. This is the supreme motivation for mission, to see the need of those who are struggling in futility to live a life without God.

Jesus had compassion. The word literally means “to be stirred up in your guts.” Jesus was stirred deep inside. Does this describe us? Maybe not. Maybe we are apathetic. Maybe we are empty on the inside. Again and again the Gospels tell us that when Jesus saw, he had compassion. We need to look. We need to care.

He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields” (Matthew 9:37-38 NLT).

The third key word is pray. It is God’s harvest, and that is a relief. It does not all depend on us. We are not lords of the harvest. We are called on to pray.

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!” (Matthew 10:8 NLT).

“For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Matthew 10:20 NRSV).

The fourth key word is receive. Until our lives have been filled with the Spirit of God, we shall not be likely to engage enthusiastically in evangelism and mission. We need empowering if we are to achieve anything for God. The power of the Lord and the mission of the Lord belong together. We need to receive his power.

“See, I am sending you out” (Matthew 10:16a NRSV).

The fifth key word is go. Who is to go? All of them. In Luke’s Gospel we read that they went out two by two, for mutual encouragement and support. They were not all evangelists by temperament, but they were all sent to do the work of evangelism. So far as we know only two ever preached a sermon. But they all went out on mission. They were all witnesses. And so are we. We are to go. It may not be to the other side of the world. It may not be out of the country. It may be across town or across the street. But we need to be intentional about carrying out the mission of Jesus. We need to go.

R. J. Morgan tells the story about Don Curry. Curry served in the Sind desert region of Pakistan with the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship. He is a physician with a keen interest in community health and evangelism. Years ago he and his wife, Nancy, visited a village of animists and told them the story of Jesus. They were intrigued with Christ’s teaching about love and forgiveness, deeply moved by his compassionate ministry, stirred at the mention of our Lord’s death and resurrection. Someone asked Don, “When did this happen? Ten or fifteen years ago?” Don replied, “No, it took place almost two thousand years ago.” They began to cry. One man asked, “What terrible thing have we done, that God should have kept this wonderful story from us for so long?”

A disciple is born for the mission of Jesus. We need to see, care, pray, receive, and go. What are we waiting for?