

# Route Sixty-Six

*Part Forty*

*Matthew*

*A Promise Kept*

*(John 5:39; Matthew 1:22, 23)*

*With Study Questions*

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**So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: <sup>23</sup> “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us” (Matthew 1:22, 23).**

## **Introduction**

Ezekiel opens with a description of angelic beings having four faces: of a man, of a lion, of an ox and of an eagle (Ezekiel 1:10). There are various explanations for why God presents us with these creatures. We see men, wild beasts, domestic beasts and flying beasts. Each face reveals a slightly different facet of the same creature.

As we enter into the New Testament, we are met with four gospels. Each one will highlight different, yet harmonious, features in their accounts. But the centerpiece of their narratives could not be more clear—the person and work of Jesus Christ. By person and work we mean who He is and what He did.

We have been pursuing the theme put forth in the fifth chapter of John, where Jesus taught that the Scriptures are about Him. This was a striking comment to be made by any human—to suggest that books written fifteen hundred years before your birth were specifically about you!

For thirty-nine books we’ve hunted out where Jesus is to be found in these Old Testament books. For the most part, the task was not terribly difficult. We found Him in promises, types, foreshadows and prophecies. For the most part, Christians are more acquainted with the New Testament than the Old Testament, so the Old Testament feels almost like a prequel. When it spoke of a sacrificial lamb or a king coming as a donkey’s colt, we saw it plainly.

On other occasions it was not so easy to see the Christian message. Now, as we enter the New Testament, the quest is as plain as day. The

entire Old Testament promised and anticipated a Savior, a Messiah-one who would succeed where Adam failed. The Healer of the nations has arrived. He is the one who will restore and renew and wipe away all tears (Revelation 21:4).

**He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. <sup>9</sup>It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:8, 9).**

The first four books of the New Testament contain the story of God keeping His promise and what it looks like. The next book (Acts) is the story of the expansion of that promise. Then, what we will largely see through the remaining books are corrections to the errors people have about what God has done through His Son.

The gospels might be compared to a battlefield where that which was necessary happened for the victory of lost souls. The remaining books is God's way of correcting our thinking in terms of what has actually happened.

## **A Survey of Matthew**

It is widely held that the intended audience for Matthew (similar to the Old Testament books) were Jews. Matthew either directly quotes, or makes allusions, to the Old Testament more often than Mark and Luke put together (Matthew, Mark and Luke-called the synoptic gospels because they are more similar to each other than John).

For thirty-nine books we've been reading about a promise God has made. In Matthew we see the promise kept. I recall, as a new believer in Christ, being told to read the New Testament. It opened with the genealogies (what we called the 'begats'). I remember thinking, this is going to be a tough read. But now, having spent so much time in the Old Testament, there is a new appreciation for how Matthew begins his gospel.

It is likely that every Jew knew that the promised seed would come through Abraham. So that is where Matthew begins. He traces the seed

from Abraham to Jesus. God has kept His promise, Hallelujah!!! We will often see in Matthew the words, “that it might be fulfilled.” What is immediately astonishing is the response to God’s faithfulness. Foreigners (the wise men) are anxious to find and worship Him. But Herod, the king **“was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him” (Matthew 2:3).**

The church, the covenant people of God, had grown corrupt and there was found no place in the inn or in their system for the truth of God promises. Recall our study of Malachi. **“Behold, He is coming...But who can endure the day of His coming” (Malachi 3:1, 2)?** The light does not blend easily with the darkness.

**For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?  
And what communion has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> And what  
accord has Christ with Belial (2 Corinthians 6:14b, 15a)?**

Herod, upon hearing of Christ’s birth orders the hideous and unthinkable murdering of all the male children in the district. This was the welcome the world gave to Truth and Life.

We then see (again in a fulfillment of Malachi 3) John the Baptist. One of the very first things John does is dispel the notion that any person should take comfort in their physical or ethnic lineage. Nor should a person take comfort with their mere external association with the church. That is not to say there should be no external association. We also read of John baptizing Jesus. This, among other things, was the outward sign Jesus would be associated with His church-His bride.

We then read of the devil tempting Jesus and Jesus succeeding where Adam had failed. We also see Jesus reaching out beyond Israel. His fame spread as He healed so many. Then there is, some would say, the greatest sermon ever given in chapters five through seven. He instructs on the attributes of those in His true kingdom in the beatitudes. He doesn’t destroy the law but fulfills it and actually strengthens force of it, reaching to the heart and mind. It is here that we learn the Lord’s Prayer and what it means to build your house upon the rock.

After the Sermon on the Mount there is a record of His many healings and miracles. He heals lepers, paralytics, casts out demons, calms the sea and brings the dead back to life. The spiritual landscapes grieves Him as He looks at the masses with compassion. Compassion on those who He

loves, heals, instructs, yet will eventually betray, deny and stand against Him. It is truly a high call to seek to walk in His steps.

He then sends the apostles the power to canvas all of Israel. He confers to them the power of heal and raise the dead. Yet He also warns them that they will not be well received. It is here where we learn that Jesus did not come to **“bring peace but a sword” (Matthew 10:34)**. But He also comforts them with the knowledge that a sparrow does fall **“to the ground apart from your Father’s will” (Matthew 10:29)**.

It is here that Jesus rebuke the cities that would normally be associated with God’s covenant promises. The people lived under great political (under Rome) and spiritual (under the Pharisees and Scribes) oppression. For those who by grace come to recognize their weakness under the formidable opponents of an evil state and a corrupt religion, He offers this kind and tender invitation.

**Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28, 29).**

But it is not as if His detractors are going to take this in stride. We read here that they will begin to plot to destroy Him. And I don’t think I reach too far that this same spirit lies in the sons of disobedience, who seek to destroy right thoughts about who Jesus is and what He has done. Yet rest assured that Jesus will bind the strong man (Matthew 12:29 - similar to what we will see in Revelation 20) and take back that which is rightfully His.

In chapter thirteen He will begin telling many parables. Parables are designed both to reveal and conceal. His ministry will continue as He feeds the five thousand and the four thousand.

He then teaches about how He will build His church and how all the powers of darkness will fail to prevail against it. He also explains how He must go to Jerusalem and be crucified; a message not well received by His followers (Matthew 16:22, 23). We read of the Transfiguration, healing more who are sick possessed and continued confrontations with the clergy.

It is here that we see Jesus departing from Galilee and, as it would be anticipated in the Old Testament, He set His face like flint toward Jerusalem (Isaiah 50:7; Luke 9:51). It is here that we read of His encounter with the rich young ruler instructing us of the impossible nature of entering the eternal life through our best efforts (Matthew 19:16-26).

Jesus, now in Judea, will continue His instruction. It is a terribly hostile environment, but He does not shrink back. He seems to very much go on the offense. He enters Jerusalem (the Triumphal Entry) as a king, albeit humble, sitting on a colt. He clears the temple which had become a den of thieves (Matthew 21). He continues to teach in parables which contain a scathing rebuke to the Pharisees who came to realize that they were the culprits in His parables (Matthew 21:45).

There is a great deal of talk among men (both in Scripture and in history) about whether we will receive or reject Jesus. There is generally not a great deal of talk about whether He will receive or reject us. But this is what we see in His encounter, and destruction, of the fig tree which bore no fruit (Matthew 21:18-20).

And if things were unclear regarding Jesus' disposition toward the clergy, we have the scathing chapter twenty-three. He, with unvarnished tones, denounces their hypocrisy. They were whitewashed tombs of dead men's bones. They travel land and sea to win one convert who they make twice as much a son of hell as themselves.

We then read another great sermon generally called the Olivet Discourse. In this sermon He will prophesy of the destruction of the temple and the cataclysmic ending of the Old Covenant. In this sermon He will also teach of the final judgment.

In chapters twenty-six and twenty-seven the passion (suffering) of Christ will reach its apex. It is difficult to express the depth of the conflict: pure light and deep darkness. We begin to feel the explosive nature of two highly incompatible elements. Every earthly institution, the church (Pharisees), the state (Pilate) and the family (His closest friends) will either out-and-out betray and cry out for His death, or, at best, deny their association with Him and scatter like sheep. Alone, He will face the wrath of God. Alone, He will secure life for those who belong to Him.

It is difficult to express the power of that which is conveyed in the final, brief chapter of this opening book of the New Testament. The tomb is empty, death is defeated, and eternal life is purchased and secured for those who trust in His Name. I cannot help but think of a dear brother

who, had been aware of his own terminal illness. I reached out to him, seeking to comfort him. But it was he, who comforted me with the words, "The price has been paid."

The gospel ends with Jesus teaching us that He has received all authority in heaven and on the earth. This is the framework, the substance, which surrounds the Great Commission to bring that message to all the world. But it is not a mission that we are merely sent on. He promises to be with us. So, as we seek to walk and work in obedience and faithfulness, we are not merely working for Him, we are working with Him.

## Questions for Study

1. Why, do you suppose, there are four gospels? What is meant by the phrase, “the person and work of Jesus” (page 2)?
2. In what respect is the Old Testament like a prequel (pages 2, 3)?
3. To whom was Matthew primarily written? Why? (pages 3, 4)?
4. Discuss how Jesus was received into this world. Why was it so (page 4)?
5. What did John the Baptist immediately dispel (page 4)?
6. Why was Jesus tempted in the wilderness (page 4)?
7. How did Jesus comfort the apostle when He sent them out (page 5)?
8. What was Jesus’ great invitation in the midst of an evil state and a corrupt church (page 5)?
9. Why did Jesus leave Galilee and turn toward Jerusalem (page 6)?
10. How does this gospel end? What is the comfort and what is the call (pages 5, 6)?