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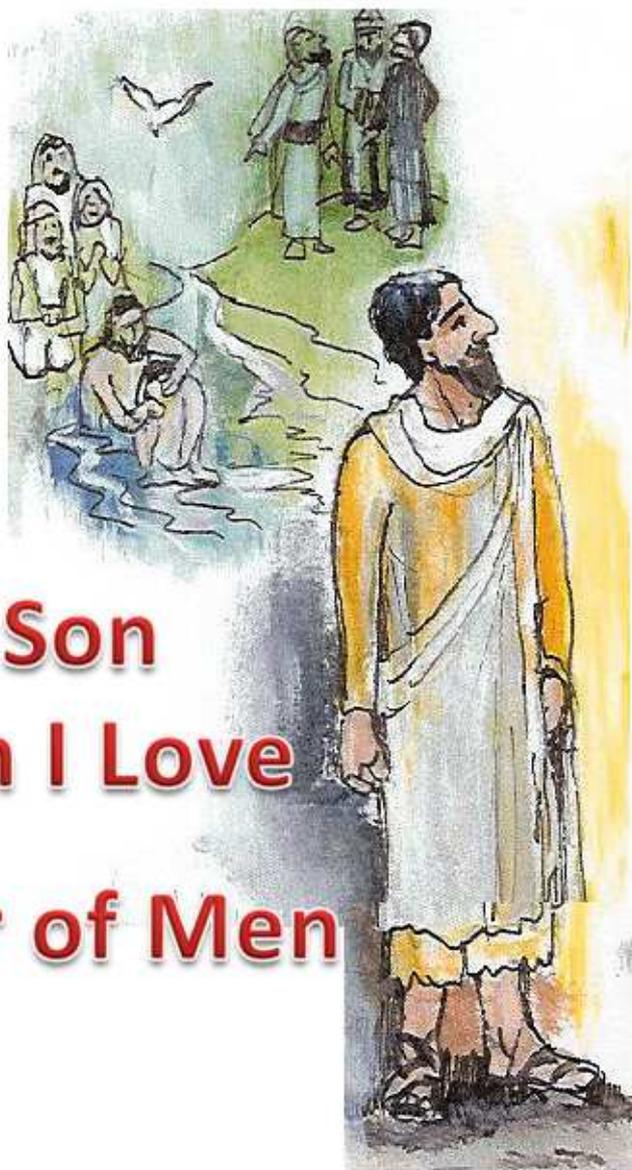
TWO

to

FOUR

The Lord

A Great Light



**My Son
Whom I Love
Fisher of Men**

King of the Jews

Leader's notes & Thoughts
Personal Bible Studies January 2017

MATTHEW 2-4:

SERMONS AND STUDIES.

In this New Year we continue our series of sermons and readings/devotions/studies in Matthew's Gospel*.

In these stories we move from Jesus' Birth through His childhood and adolescence to the beginnings of His adult ministry (a period of some 30 years).

Date	Passage	
Sun 1 Jan	Matthew 2:1-23	'King of the Jews'
Sun 8 Jan	Matthew 3:1-12	"The Lord'
Sun 15 Jan	Matthew 3:13 – 4:11	'My Son Whom I Love'
Sun 22 Jan	Matthew 4:12-17	'A Great Light'
Sun 29 Jan	Matthew 4:18-25	Fisher of Men

In these we see the beginnings of the preaching of the Gospel and the nature of the opposition Jesus will face. We are also introduced to the demands of the Gospel. We are forced to confront the rule of God for our lives ('the kingdom of heaven') and the right response ('repent').

As we work through these chapters consider these wise words:

"In your reading let not your end be to seek and find out curiosities and subtleties, but to find and meet with Christ."

Thomas Taylor (1576-1633) English Puritan Theologian

*We will continue in Term 1 of 2017 with the Gospel of Matthew in a full series of Studies and Sermons on 'The Sermon on the Mount'.

Matthew 2:1-23

Study 1 '**King of the Jews**'

What does it **Say**?

1. What new information are we given about the details of Jesus' birth?

Place – Bethlehem in Judea : Time – King Herod's reign.

Accompanied by a star.

Other details re 'stable', more precise dating, Angels, shepherds etc come from Luke 2.

Note that it is now about 18 months to two years after Jesus' birth.

2. Who now comes to pay homage to Jesus? How many are there? Where do they come from? Why is their 'gentileness' significant?

Who – 'Magi', Three of them – probably – the text does not say. We get our 'traditional' three from the number of gifts.

From the 'east' – that is they are not Jews, they are gentiles – possibly not even Yahweh worshippers –

Osbourne: *"Worship permeates this story. These exalted personages represent the rest of the world, come to bow at the feet of the infant Jesus. Their great efforts to find the baby show their resolve. This is a real fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise that the Jewish people would be a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:3; 15:5)."*

3. Where do they go first? What is Herod's reaction at first and subsequently?

They go first to Jerusalem and their questions bring them to the attention of Herod.

He is at first worried that there is a 'king of the Jews' born – a possible rival. The language implies that this One is already king.

Then he schemes (something he is good at) to discover the who, where and when.

Speaks to the Magi.

Of course his subsequent reaction, the 'slaughter of the innocents' speaks clearly of his character and his paranoia.

4. What are Joseph and Mary instructed to do and how does that work out?

Joseph and Mary (and the baby Jesus) are instructed to flee to Egypt.

They subsequently return when Herod's reign ends.

What does it Mean?

1. Why Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

Firstly they are all significant and expensive gifts.

Note that the prophets spoke of the rest of the world bringing their wealth to Israel (Isaiah 2:2-4; 60:1-7; Psalm 45:7-9; 72:10-15)

Would have made the escape to Egypt and subsequent return much more viable.

Further, Carson: *“Bringing gifts was particularly important in the ancient East when approaching a superior (cf. Ge 43:11; 1Sa 9:7–8; 1Ki 10:2). Usually such gifts were reciprocated. That is not mentioned here, but a first-century reader might have assumed it and seen the Great Commission (28:18–20) as leading to its abundant fruition.*

Frankincense is a glittering, odorous gum obtained by making incisions in the bark of several trees; myrrh exudes from a tree found in Arabia and a few other places and was a much-valued spice and perfume (Ps 45:8; SS 3:6) used in embalming (Jn 19:39).

Commentators, ancient and modern, have found symbolic value in the three gifts — gold suggesting royalty, incense divinity, and myrrh the passion and burial. This interpretation demands too much insight from the Magi.” (Then again

2. What points of Old Testament fulfillment are mentioned in this passage? Why is this important to Matthew?

First v6 – Micah 5:2 and Matthew adds the shepherd language of 2 Samuel 5:2

Second v15 – Hosea 11:1

Third v88 – Jeremiah 31:15

Fourth v23 – No specific reference in OT (but enough allusions).

From Chapter 1v1 Matthew is keen for us to see Jesus as part of a much larger story.

3. What do the ‘kings of this world’ have to fear from Jesus, The King of the Jews?

Herod, it seems, fears this little baby. (With appalling consequences)

But this child, this Jesus is indeed the King of all Kings (not to mention Prime Ministers, Presidents, Chancellors, Emperors, Caliphs, Sultans and whatever else.)

Jesus is not thereat to them if they submit to his rule. But if they do not – Rule HE will.

What should I Do?

1. What do we learn from the contrasting attitudes of the Magi and Herod?

Well one is worshipful and one is resistant, fearful and eventually violent.

Our resistance might not be as overt as Herod's but our worship should be as committed as the Mag.

2. Where does your 'safety' come from?

Our Safety comes from the LORD.

What others have said:

"Today many of us wear the name "Christian" with relative ease. But in our own way, the name indicates for us both honor and scorn or suffering. Discipleship to Jesus will come to mean in Matthew's Gospel that we become like him (10:24–25)."

Michael.J. Wilkins Matthew (NIVAC) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004)

Matthew 3:1-12

Study 2 '**The Lord**'

What does it Say?

1. Who is the main character in this story? What does he look like?

The main character is John the Baptist (Jack the Dipper as one wag from my theological college days called him.) He looks pretty wild – a wilderness prophet – camel hair, leather belt. Diet of locusts and wild honey. (A Hippie indeed), See Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6

2. What are people's reactions to him?

They come out to have a look (not much on the telly then). Even the 'hierarchy' come to check him out. The 'people' hear and confess their sins and get baptized. Note Isaiah 40:3

3. What is John's message? What is he doing?

Baptism – for repentance.
Repentance: Carson: *"a radical transformation of the entire person, a fundamental turnaround involving mind and action and including overtones of grief, which results in "fruit in keeping with repentance" (v. 8). Of course, all this assumes that human actions are fundamentally off course and need radical change."*
There is another one coming – the kingdom of heaven is near.

4. What does John say about his baptism?

That it is a preliminary a making way for the great thing God is about to do in Israel.
There is another one coming whose baptism will be 'with the Holy Spirit'

What does it Mean?

1. Note the other stories of John the Baptist in the Gospels (Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:6-8,15,19-36). Why do all the Gospels include John the Baptist?

And of course there are the stories surrounding John's birth in Luke 1.

The Baptist in all the gospels is the forerunner the announcer, the introducer who points forward. Note John 3:30

2. What, therefore, is John's role?

He is the herald – announcing the Messiah's arrival

Wilkins: *“John wasn’t just another religious zealot drumming up support for a new following. As a road must be cleared of obstacles before an approaching king, John is calling for the people to clear the obstacles out of their lives that might hinder their reception of the Lord. He calls for the people to get themselves ready—to prepare their heart and life—for the arrival of the Coming One with the kingdom of heaven. In this sense, then, we can say that the kingdom of God has come near in the person of Jesus, but the full manifestation of that kingdom had not yet arrived.”*

What should I Do?

1. How do we ‘flee from the wrath to come’?

Turn to the one John is announcing – Jesus, God with Us.

2. How is John’s message both ‘a warning of judgment, ... also an invitation to life and an expectation of real change in the lives of those who respond’?

Like all good messages about Jesus it points to our sin, suggest we do something about by pointing us to one who can save: JESUS.

What others have said:

“Messiah’s coming will separate grain from chaff. A winnowing fork tossed both into the air. The wind blew the chaff away, and the heavier grain fell to be gathered up from the ground. The scattered chaff was swept up and burned and the threshing floor cleared (cf. Ps 1:4; Isa 5:24; Da 2:35; Hos 13:3). The “unquenchable fire” signifies eschatological judgment (cf. Isa 34:10; 66:24; Jer 7:20) — hell (cf. 5:29). “Unquenchable fire” is not just metaphor. Fearful reality underlies Messiah’s separation of grain from chaff. The “nearness” of the kingdom therefore calls for repentance (v. 2).”

Carson D.A. *“Matthew”* in *EBC (Rev)* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010)

Matthew 3:13-4:11

Study 3 'My Son Whom I Love'

What does it Say?

1. What is the focus of v13-16?

Jesus comes to John the Baptist to be baptized.

Note John's response.

Jesus comes to John for baptism, not to repent of any sins – he is sinless - but to identify with those he has come to save

2. What is the focus 4:1-11?

Jesus is tempted, by Satan in the desert.

Note that there are three temptations each challenging a different aspect of the work Jesus has come to do.

3. What, in broad terms, are the four temptations?

That should be three temptations (OOPS)

To use his power to provide for his own needs – and thus to be a provider of mere food for others – would make him greatly popular. – “manna” in the desert. Remember he will ‘create’ food in the feeding of the 5000

To put on a spectacular display – to ‘show off’ God's care for Him.

To gain all the kingdom's of the earth by worshipping Satan.

4. From where does Jesus draw his strength?

God alone – both in the Baptism and in the Temptation.

In the temptations note that he draws strength for his argument from the scriptures – even though Satan can also quote them to his own, seeming, advantage.

What does it Mean?

1. What are the contrasts and comparisons between the two events here? Why does Matthew record both?

They are both revelatory of who Jesus is and what his mission is and they both express a commitment to Jesus' God given task.

In both the main other player knows who Jesus is.

By contrast one is in a ‘friendly environment’ with those who recognize Him and his task and the other in a hostile environment.

One expresses encouragement for the task, the other provides opportunity to express commitment to the task.

2. What is Satan trying to do here? What would have happened had Jesus given in to just one of these temptations?

Satan is working to divert Jesus from his task, the cross. If Jesus had given in to any one of these, had taken the easy road, and given in to temptation. Then the cross and the salvation through it would be placed outside his reach. BUT of course he does not give in, he does go on to suffer on the cross that we might be saved. That after all is what his name means.

Note that Jesus succeeds against temptation in the desert when Israel had failed at the Exodus.

Note also that Jesus resists Satan's temptations in a bleak desert after 40 days of fasting where Adam and Eve failed in the midst of perfect garden.

Jesus is both the new Adam and the new Israel.

What should I Do?

1. In what areas do your strongest temptations come? How does Jesus' example help?

Really for personal meditation.

But a good knowledge of scripture is a good place to start – to know what God requires and his encouragement to do so.

Also, never forget that in Jesus there is forgiveness, even again and again.

What others have said:

“The one who can make us most uncomfortable here is, of course, Jesus. How hard, really, was it for him to appear humbly at the waters of John's baptism? Did he really wrestle with such mundane things as self-image, and appearances, and his role? I think so. He was that human. All the things that we struggle with, he experienced (cf. Heb 4:14–16). That is why he is our example.”

Michael.J. Wilkins Matthew (NIVAC) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004)

Matthew 4:12-17

Study 4 'A Great Light'

What does it Say?

- 1. Where does Jesus set up his home base? Why is that significant?**

Jesus goes to live in Capernaum.

Matthew points us to the prophecy of Isaiah (9:1-2)

Worth noting that this is the sixth prophecy referred to so far.
(1:22-23; 2:5-6, 15, 17-18, 23)

- 2. What does Isaiah (9:1-2) have to say about Jesus' life and work?**

Essentially that it is a light shining in darkness,

Note John 1:4-5, 9

The shadow of death overcome by the light.

- 3. What does Jesus preach?**

It's there in black and white: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Two main elements

Repentance – an action by the people prompted by ...

The nearness of the Kingdom – Which is the fulfillment of God's promises and the exercise of his rule.

- 4. What had happened to John the Baptist? (see Mark 6:14-29 for further information.)**

The powers that be had 'got' him.

Read the Mark passage for the full story.

It seems that now that John has vacated the stage – or been dragged off it – Jesus now begins his public ministry.

What does it Mean?

- 1. What does the 'Kingdom of Heaven' mean?**

The Kingdom of Heaven (usually the Kingdom of God in the other Gospels) is not a place but a reign – it speaks of God's rule over all that is. Jesus is saying that this 'rule' is now standing before them in the form of Jesus, Emmanuel, Son of David, Son of Abraham.

Jesus is the King in the Kingdom

- 2. What does it mean to repent?**

Wright: *"They had better get their act together while there's time. And the good old word for that is: 'Repent!'... The trouble with that word is that people have often not understood it. They have thought it means 'feeling bad about yourself'. It*

doesn't. It means 'change direction'; 'turn round and go the other way;' or 'stop what you're doing and do the opposite instead'. How you feel about it isn't the really important thing. It's what you do that matters."

What should I Do?

- 1. Does 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near,' require you to do anything? What should repentance look like in your life?**

For your meditation.

Remember what the Wright quote above says – it is about what you do.

What others have said:

"Light possesses powers essential to true life, so "to be in the light" comes to mean simply "to live." This indicates life eternal, but also life temporal on earth. ... The darkness of our own world is real even when we, or those around us, don't notice it. Darkness is most directly the absence of light, so to be away from Jesus is to be in darkness."

Matthew 4:18-25

Study 5 '*Fisher of Men*'

What does it Say?

1. Where does the action take place (v18-22)? What is Jesus message/demand to the fishermen?

Consistently with the previous passage the action takes place beside the sea of Galilee.

Jesus message:

I will make you fishers of men

That is from v17 - they will call men into the Kingdom.

Jesus demand:

Come, follow me.

2. What is the Fishermen's response?

Note v20 and 22

20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

The response is immediate and total. They leave their tools of trade and their family to follow Jesus.

It appears they were not mere fishermen but were probably owners of fishing boats — they had somewhat of a good trade to leave behind.

Osborne: *"From Luke 5:3-7 the four were partners with two boats and hired hands (Mark 1 :20) and so probably were in the /owner-middle class economically. Fishing was second only to agriculture as the economic staple of the region, so they were relatively well off in the Palestinian peasant culture."*

It is worth noting that they may well have had some previous contact with Jesus. (see the early chapters of John)

3. What does Jesus proceed to do, in general and specifically?

Preaching and Healing.

The specifics are:

Preaching: The good news of the kingdom.

Healing: every disease, sickness, pain, demon possession, epilepsy (seizures), paralysis.

4. What is the result?

Spectacular news like this spreads.

Crowds gather — from everywhere.

Blomberg: *“Jesus miracle working understandably attracts crowds, but those in the crowds will need to be instructed on what true discipleship involves if they are to become genuine followers.”*

And it is to that we turn next in the Sermon on the Mount.

What does it Mean?

1. What priorities do you note in Jesus’ ministry?

Preaching the Kingdom is the priority 4:17 makes that clear. The healings are the evidences, the tokens, of the Kingdom breaking into this world.

2. Why fishermen?

A significant portion of the 12 Apostles are ‘fishermen’. I don't actually have an answer but it is worth pondering. My musings:

Maybe they are people of perseverance, patience, not afraid of hard work.

It may have helped in some of the circumstances Jesus finds himself in that they were fit, strong men.

Carson: *“It may also be reminiscent of Jeremiah 16:16. There Yahweh sends ‘fishermen’ to gather his people for the exile; here Jesus sends ‘fishermen’ to announce the end of the exile and the beginning of the messianic reign. But this allusion is uncertain. In any case, there is a straight line from this commission to the Great Commission (Mt 28:18—20) Jesus’ followers are indeed to catch men.”*

What should I Do?

1. What has Jesus called you to do?

Be a fisher of men — just like Peter, Andrew, James and John. See Carson quote above.

What others have said:

“The church throughout the centuries has struggled with the temptation to be “keepers of the aquarium instead of fishers of men.”

.....

As Jesus’ disciples, we all have the incredible privilege, and obligation, to carry the message of the gospel of the kingdom to those who live in the darkness all around us.”