

INTRODUCTION // I'm convinced that Jesus will speak to us through the Holy Spirit when we give our attention to His Word. Let me encourage you to start a healthy practice. Make a daily habit of reading through the gospels. Each day give attention to Jesus' life and ministry; and when you finish Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, immediately start again.

- **RATIONALE:** If I see Jesus more consistently it helps me know Him and follow Him more closely. By reading the gospels daily we hear, see and learn from Jesus what his disciples heard, saw and learned. We become true followers of Him.

Last week Pastor Ackland began our Christmas series - Savior. Where else do we learn the "Good News" of our Savior except in the four Gospels? You probably can list all four from memory: [1] Matthew, [2] Mark, [3] Luke, and [4] John. These accounts were written by different men each with a unique perspective on the truth of Jesus.

- We see their opening lines as the trailhead for how each author skillfully leads us to know Jesus as they knew Him.
 - **JOHN** // Lyrical defines Jesus as eternally one with God. "*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning*" (John 1:1-2 NIV).
 - **LUKE** // Apologetically explains the facts of Jesus' life. "*...I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, ...to write an orderly account for you ...4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*" (Luke 1:3-4 NIV).
 - **MARK** // Rapidly shares Jesus' life events and mission. "*The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God*" (Mark 1:1 NIV). Mark barely has time for an opening; he loves to go right in, "immediately."
 - **MATTHEW** // And then we have Matthew's opening: "*1 This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham*" (Matthew 1:1 NIV). What follows is a list of 41 names (...which sounds about as fun as a trip to the RMV.)

Each author describes the arrival of Jesus to the next generation within the context of the Bible's big picture. From cover to cover, the Bible is a salvation story with Jesus at its center.

- Matthew, Mark, and John all directly walked with Jesus, Luke believed in Him later. Each of these gospel writers knew Jesus, and they wanted others to know Him too.
 - Today we examine Matthew's biography of Jesus; his account of how Jesus' life began. Let's look at Matthew's Savior.

MATTHEAN FEATURE // Of all four gospels, Matthew's is the most Jewish. It bridges the OT and NT. Matthew draws on the hopes and ideals of the Old Testament to reveal Jesus—in His person and activity—as the expected Messiah and King (Adams 61).

- If you surveyed the Jewish people of Jesus day they may have given a verity of answers as to what kind of Messiah was expected. "The term *Messiah* (literally, the Anointed) could be applied to any person who held office by the gift, grace, and anointing of God" (Scott, 309).
 - The Jewish people were searching for external indicators. John the Baptist was asked, "*Are you the Messiah? Elijah? the prophet?*" — all messianic titles (John 19-21). At least once, when Jesus was in the temple, "*the Jews...said to him, if you are the Messiah, tell us plainly*" (John 10:24).
 - There seems to be an informal screening process. But generally most people looked for the Messiah to be a political, military king who would teach the Romans a lesson.
 - ▶ They fixated on the hope for deliverance, independence (Scott, 322).
 - ▶ No wonder so many failed to see Jesus as God's true anointed Messiah. He didn't conform to the image they held in mind. It was not Jesus' goal to be a social reformer.

- There are strong themes of Jesus' kingship in Matthew's gospel: This baby comes from the line of David (1:20); later, Magi present Him with extravagant gifts (2:2); Herod feels his rule threatened (2:16).
 - Yet even with the kingly themes, Jesus arrives in a humble manner. We are left scratching our heads at this "kingly" yet "lowly" Messiah. What many struggled to grasp was that God had bigger plans than an earthly kingdom.
- Though Jesus was not what people expected, Matthew wrote to show how Jesus exceeds expectations. One Greek word used over sixty times is *idou* (G2400) meaning "behold," "look," "see". While recounting Jesus' life, Matthew points out (one by one) the OT prophecies fulfilled by Jesus.
 - "This is the Anointed One who we've all been waiting for!"
- "Fulfillment" is Matthew's key word; it is how Matthew shows us his Savior. He distinctively repeats a formula of fulfillment statements: "*This took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophets*" (see 1:22-23; 2:5-6, 15, 17-18, 23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:9-10) (Adams 68).
 - The first five fulfillment statements all take place in the birth narrative (France 14).
 - ▶ Matthew 1:22-23 // The virginal conception fulfills Isaiah 7:14.
 - ▶ Matthew 2:5-6 // Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfills Micah 5:2.
 - ▶ Matthew 2:15 // His return from Egypt fulfills Hosea 11:1.
 - ▶ Matthew 2:17-18 // The massacre of the infants fulfills Jeremiah 31:15.
 - ▶ Matthew 2:23 // The settling down in Nazareth fulfills prophecy that Jesus 'will be called a Nazarene'.
 - Your thumbprint is unique. The chances of coming across a match are roughly 1 in 80 billion. When you compound the probability of one person fulfilling just eight biblical prophecy—Jesus fulfilled over 300—the statistic is something like 1 in 10 to the 17th.

Between the lines of Matthew's Gospel we catch a sense that he wants us to do something with the information. It is a historically styled book showing the real-life events surrounding Jesus and all that He fulfilled. But Matthew did not mean for the account to be read and then placed on the shelf.

- Readers are expected to make a decision with the information. There is a choice each one of us has to make in light of Jesus' life: "Will I accept Jesus?"

MESSIAH BORN // The "fulfillment" pattern carries throughout Matthew's Gospel. I don't have time to go through the whole book, you'll be relieved to know. So for this morning the first of the fulfillment statements will have to be enough. Here Matthew shows the birth of Jesus.

- Matthew 1:18-25 (NASB)

"18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, since he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20 But when he had thought this over, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "She will give birth to a Son; and you shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: 23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN WILL CONCEIVE AND GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND THEY SHALL NAME HIM IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." 24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took [Mary] as his wife, 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he named Him Jesus."

The months leading up to a baby's arrival are an exciting time for mommy, aren't they? Mommy has checkups, a gender reveal, a baby shower, maternity photos, preparation for the nursery, baby clothes, etc. Everybody wants to know how mommy is doing.

- In this way, Luke's gospel closely follows Mary's experience; but Matthew interestingly shows Jesus' birth through the viewpoint of Joseph.

- We meet Joseph at a point where it must have felt like his world was crumbling: pledged to be married and he finds out his bride is pregnant. In such a situation the man would cancel the marriage and the woman would be hung.
 - But verse 19 says, *“And her husband Joseph, since he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly”* (v. 19). Hardly any of us would have come up with a more graceful solution in that situation.
 - How fitting, Jesus had an adoptive father who shared His heavenly Father’s heart to cover people’s shame.
 - At that point God sent an angel to fill Joseph in on the plan. *“But when he had thought this over, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream...”* (v. 20). Joseph was faced with the decision: *“Will you receive Jesus?”*
 - What I love about Joseph: Described as “a righteous man” (1:19). Loved Mary and kept her from disgrace (1:19). Heard from God, and obeyed (1:20-24; 2:13-14, 19-23).
 - We learn from Matthew that Joseph is not a mere side character; instead, he is shown as the sole man whom God selected to adopt and name baby Jesus.
 - ▶ Joseph’s family tree—not Mary’s—is given in the opening genealogy (vv. 1-17). Jewish readers understood the lineage that would produce the Messiah (Begg).
 - How does the angel address Joseph? Watch carefully, *“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”* (v. 20).
 - The angel told Joseph, *“She will give birth to a Son; and you shall name Him Jesus”* (v. 21). Through Mary we have the virgin birth. Because of Joseph’s obedience to adopt, Jesus holds the royal pedigree of David’s kingly line.
 - ▶ Realizing this leaves us wanting to include Joseph in the baby shower, take his paternity photos, and help him pick out baby clothes.

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OUR CHOICE // We looked at the choice presented to Matthew’s readers, and the choice Joseph had to make, but what about the choice we must make? They are all the same choice, really. *“Will I receive Jesus?”*

- Many people don’t know how to answer this question. We can only rightly make our choice when we have the right assessment of our problem.

In 2021 I had some bizarre health stuff spring up. Randomly, I began experiencing a sharp pain in my back. I did not know the problem but my attempted solution was to treat it by laying on a hot pad. Within a week of using the hot pad my pain increased and a nasty rash began to form on my side.

- Finally, my doctor took one look and said, *“Woah! This is shingles.”* [...explain shingles]
 - What did I think was my problem? Back pain. Solution: Heat pad.
 - My actual problem: Shingles. Guess what is one of the worst things for shingle: Heat pad.
- You cannot find the right solution when you are wrong about the problem. My doctor needed to diagnose the actual problem, otherwise I would have been left without the right solution.
- Medically, we need a proper diagnosis of the problem if we are to receive the solution. Can I tell you something, friend? The same is true of our spiritual condition.
 - Many people fail to see their true problem of sin, so they struggle to receive Jesus.
 - Matthew 1:20-21 (from earlier) acknowledges Jesus as the solution to our very real sin problem: *“and you shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins”* (v.21).
 - Miss this passage and Jesus’ life makes no sense. When we don’t grasp our problem of sin, then of course all this Jesus stuff seems irrelevant to us.

A misdiagnosis of the problem means we miss the solution. One pastor I heard this week pointed out how this is the exact scene of Jesus and the disabled man in Matthew 9:2-8.

- “[Jesus] comes upon a disabled man, the guy is disabled and he doesn’t want to be disabled anymore so Jesus says to the guy, ‘My son, your sins are forgiven you.’
- “And the Pharisees said, ‘What’s that about? The guy is disabled, and Jesus is on this *sin business* again. Why doesn’t Jesus deal with the issue?’
 - “Well the fact is Jesus didn’t deal with the [perceived] issue when He raised the man to physical wholeness, but He was making the point:
 - ““You think that your problem is the fact that you’re in a chair. Your actual problem is the fact that you are a cripple inside.
 - “What you need far more than physical wholeness is spiritual wholeness. And the good news is this: sure, I can raise you up from your mattress, but the fabulous news is that I can take what is crippled inside you and make it absolutely straight” (Begg).

We must get right our true problem if we are to realize Jesus as our only solution. *“and you shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins”* (v.21).

CONCLUSION // What Matthew shows is that Jesus—while not the Messiah we’d expect—is God’s chosen solution to our sin problem. All that’s left is the choice: “Will I receive Jesus?”

- The eternal destiny of men and women is directly related to the response that we make to Jesus (Begg). John 3:18 says this, *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son”* (NIV).

WILL I RECEIVE JESUS? // You can know Jesus today. Has anyone ever asked you that important question—maybe on the street or in a foyer? “Do you know Jesus?” For a minute, let’s think on it introspectively. “Do I know Jesus?” Have I received Him as King Messiah?

Honestly, we can know a lot of details *about* a person without ever having met the individual. There are probably several athletes, musicians, politicians, and celebrities, that I know facts *about*. So its possible to know *about* Jesus with mere “head knowledge.”

- But see, the gospel writers emphasize *knowing* Jesus with an “experiential knowledge.” If I’m reading their reports accurately then I realize I can know Jesus like any of my closest friends. Jesus is alive and He can be known personally and intimately today, right now. It’s not “Do I know *about* Jesus?”, but instead, “Do I know Him personally?”

Prayer to receive Jesus for those needing to...

- Know Him for the first time,
or
- Know Him more closely

Matthew 9:2-8 NASB

“2 And they brought to Him a paralyzed man lying on a stretcher. And seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.’ 3 And some of the scribes said to themselves, ‘This man is blaspheming!’ 4 And Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, ‘Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? 5 ‘For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’ 6 ‘But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’--then He said to the paralyzed man, ‘Get up, pick up your stretcher and go home.’ 7 And he got up and went home. 8 But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men”