

THE WHOLE BIBLE

MATTHEW

This Bible study, one of 66 studies covering the entire Bible, is made up of one-page lessons covering short sections of the book. The electronic format (student's and leader's guides) allows adaptation to individual needs.

Benefits of one-page lessons:

- Hand out only what you need, relative to the length of the class session and how much content you wish to cover. Taken at a steady pace, a page can be covered in about 20 minutes.
- See at a glance all the material that pertains to the section being covered. Use the discussion questions as your basic outline and draw in material from the "Look" and "Apply" sections as you wish.

Suggestions for using these lessons:

- Teach an entire book, or teach just part of a book.
- Use a single lesson sheet for a "19 Minute" style Bible study.
- Use a single lesson sheet as a meeting opener, either as a devotion or a short Bible study.
- Build your own Bible studies. The possibilities are endless. For example:
 - Assemble all the lessons on the penitential psalms, psalms of praise, or David's early years.
 - Assemble sections that deal with predestination, and teach the pertinent passages in their context.
 - Study all references to mountains, cities, nations, etc., pointing out their importance in the lives of God's people.

Note: The appropriate pages in The People's Bible commentary volumes are referenced. However, the authors were given the freedom to develop their own studies, so these lessons are not, in a strict sense, study guides to those volumes.

We pray these lessons will help God's people grow in faith and in service to his kingdom.

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Matthew 1:1-17

The genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth

(The People's Bible, Matthew, pages 8-19)

Look

- Verse 1 *“A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham”*—Matthew wrote his gospel primarily for Jewish converts to Christianity. His purpose here was to point out that the line of Jesus of Nazareth was traceable to David and Abraham, thereby identifying Jesus of Nazareth as the bona fide Messiah promised to both Abraham and David. The genealogy omits certain names. Fourteen names from each of the three major divisions of Israel’s history were chosen, probably to make remembering them easier.
- Verses 11,12 *“At the time of the exile to Babylon . . . after the exile to Babylon”*—The Messiah’s line was still eminently intact and traceable, even from a time of great national collapse and confusion.

Discuss

1. The people listed in each section of the genealogy teach us lessons.
 - Of what did the great men of faith remind Matthew’s readers? (verses 2-6)

Their faith was centered on Jesus, whom they knew to be their Savior.

- Of what did the list of kings remind Matthew’s readers? (verses 6-11)

That Jesus descended from David, and that he was a king as they were.

- Of what did the list of unknowns remind Matthew’s readers?

During the turbulent time of the exile and the years afterward, the Lord still kept David’s line alive until Christ, the Savior, was born.

2. Find the four women mentioned in the genealogy. Discuss the story of each of these women. Why do you think they were included? (Extra credit: Why did Matthew not record Bathsheba’s name but rather label her “Uriah’s wife” [verse 6]?)

Consider the relation of Judah to Tamar or the way by which Salmon’s mother, Rahab, once gained an income. Ruth was from Moab and, therefore, a Gentile. The woman who bore Solomon to David is described as one who had been another man’s (Uriah the Hittite’s) wife. (Note: By labeling Bathsheba “Uriah’s wife,” Matthew is turning his accusing finger from Bathsheba and pointing it at David. David was the sinner who committed adultery and murder.) Jesus came to save sinners. He came to save Gentiles. He came from men who had sinful relations with women. (Consider the fact that Matthew was a tax collector when Jesus found him.)

Apply

3. The listing of Jesus’ ancestors includes highborn and lowborn persons, kings and commoners, wealthy and poor, men and women. Where would you fit in? How so?

Barriers of race, gender, wealth or poverty, education or lack of it are removed in Christ. All are sinners, and we all need forgiveness.

Matthew traced Jesus’ family line from Abraham to David, from David to the captivity in Babylon, and from the return from captivity to Christ. God is in control of human history.

Matthew 1:18-25

The birth of Jesus Christ

(The People's Bible, Matthew, pages 19-23)

Look

Verses 18,20 *“She was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. . . . What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”* Twice in close succession for emphasis' sake, Matthew points out that Jesus was not conceived through the union of man and woman but rather that God the Holy Spirit was the cause of Mary's pregnancy. In its three universal creeds, the church has always confessed this truth in childlike faith, knowing that with God nothing is impossible.

Verse 23 *“Immanuel”—which means, ‘God with us.’*—God is no longer alienated from sinful human beings. He crossed the gap that was brought about by Adam's sin of breaking perfect fellowship with God. In the union of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ, God is with us.

Discuss

1. When Joseph discovered Mary was “showing,” he was of a mind to discretely put her away. Do you gain any insight into the man from this?

Joseph was a “righteous man” (verse 19), that is, he had a high regard for how God's Word applied to his personal life. Joseph was also concerned about the spirit in which he took action. He wanted to do so “quietly” (verse 19) and not subject Mary to public ridicule. God provided the boy Jesus with a stable and devout earthly father.

2. The way Matthew recorded the account of Joseph showed that Jesus was born of a virgin through the power of the Spirit. How does it become clear that Joseph was not the father? How does it become clear that no other human being was Jesus' father?

First, if Joseph himself had been unfaithful with Mary, it would have been the height of hypocrisy for him to divorce Mary. The fact that he wanted to divorce her shows he was not the father of her child. And then, for him to reverse his decision shows that he believed God that no other human was the father. The entire account is meant to teach us that Jesus was born of Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. *Jesus* means “he will save the people from their sins.” This wasn't an uncommon name for Hebrew boys. It is a version of the name Joshua. What, however, was unique about Mary's son receiving the name Jesus?

Jesus would actually fulfill what *Jesus* means. There has never been a lack of people claiming to be saviors of one kind or another. But only Jesus of Nazareth gives his name its fullest and truest meaning. He alone saved all people from their sins.

Apply

4. Joseph was asked to believe that Mary was faithful to him, even though all the evidence pointed in the opposite direction. God asks us to believe some pretty unbelievable things too. What are some that come to your mind? What does God want our reaction to be?

That corpses can and will take on new life; that Jesus' body and blood are truly present in the bread and wine; that through Baptism infants can believe in God; that your sins are no longer held against you for Jesus' sake. God wants us to react to his promises just as Joseph did.

Jesus, the Savior, was born! He is truly the Son of God, as the Lord revealed to Joseph.

Matthew 2:1-12

The visit of the Magi

(The People's Bible, Matthew, pages 23-28)

Look

- Verse 1 “*Magi*”—These were men of knowledge and influence. Perhaps they came from Babylon, where many Jews still lived. They may have had access to the Jewish writings and had come to faith in the expected King of the Jews.
- Verse 3 “*King Herod*”—Historians tell us of the many public works he erected. But he was prone to savage acts of violence against the Jews and their religion. The people of Jerusalem had every reason to fear that he would do something unspeakably rash to rid himself of what he perceived to be a threat to his throne.

Discuss

1. The star the Magi saw was miraculous. It seems they saw it and then went in the general direction of Israel, stopping at Jerusalem to find specific directions. After they received specific directions, they again saw the star guiding them in a more specific direction. Show why the following words are important for understanding this:

- Bethlehem

Matthew includes seven prophecies that Jesus fulfilled to prove that he was the Messiah. The first was in the previous section, where Jesus is called Immanuel. The second was the one the Jewish leaders used to indicate where the Savior was to be born.

- exact time

Herod wanted to discover when the King had been born. That would narrow down his deadly search to find and kill the child.

- house

It had been some time since Jesus' birth. By this time Mary and Joseph were living in a house in Bethlehem. This fits with the fact that Herod killed the baby boys who were two years old and younger.

- bowed down and worshiped him

How odd it must have seemed to Mary and Joseph to have these foreign dignitaries bow down and worship their child. Yet how important to their faith in light of what would soon happen.

2. In his genealogy of Jesus, Matthew singled out Rahab and Ruth as two of the women in the line of the Savior. They were both Gentiles, and the gospel was meant for them. How does the story of the Magi support this theme?

The Magi were also Gentiles. God not only pointed them to the Savior using a star but he also protected them from Herod through a special revelation. They were important to God.

Apply

3. To what lengths has the Lord gone to bring you to the Savior?

Like the Magi, the Lord has set up miraculous strings of events to bring us to faith and keep us in the faith. These events may seem ordinary, but they are just as remarkable as the events the Lord used to lead the Magi into Jesus' presence.

Jesus' birth, as prophesied in the Old Testament, is confirmed by the account of the Magi.