



THE
PASSION
TRANSLATION

THE PASSION TRANSLATION

2020
edition

THE
NEW TESTAMENT

WITH PSALMS, PROVERBS, AND SONG OF SONGS

BroadStreet
P U B L I S H I N G

The Passion Translation® Masterpiece Edition
New Testament with Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Songs, 2020 Edition

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THE NEW TESTAMENT



MATTHEW

Introduction

AT A GLANCE

Author: Matthew, the former Jewish tax collector and disciple of Jesus

Audience: Originally, the Jewish Christian church and the Jewish people

Date: AD 55–80

Type of Literature: Ancient historical biography

Major Themes: Gospel-telling, Old Testament fulfillment, heaven's kingdom realm, kingdom-realm living

Outline:

Jesus' Birth and Ministry Preparation — 1:1–4:11

Jesus Teaches His Kingdom Realm — 4:12–7:29

Jesus Demonstrates His Kingdom Realm — 8:1–11:1

Jesus Is Opposed — 11:2–13:53

Jesus Disciples His Disciples — 13:54–18:35

Jesus Marches to the Cross — 19:1–25:46

Jesus Dies, Rises, and Sends — 26:1–28:20

ABOUT MATTHEW

Four centuries of silence. Where was the promised Messiah? The Jewish people were waiting for the word of the prophets to come true, for they had prophesied that he would come. Then suddenly, the angel Gabriel made an appearance to a teenage girl to announce his birth. Shepherds saw a brilliant angelic light show on the hillside.

Wise men went out in search of him.

The light of the star shone over his manger.

Insecure Herod wanted to kill him.

Satan cruelly tested him.

The prophet John presented him to Israel.

God anointed him with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then one day the King came into the synagogue and announced: "I'm here! I've come to set you free and to wash away sins, and liberate those who love and follow me."

4 ✦ MATTHEW – INTRODUCTION

We can thank God for Matthew, for in his Gospel he presents our eternal King. Matthew means “gift of Yahweh,” and he lives up to his name. Thank you, Matthew, for the gift of your life and for what you have left for us in your Gospel!

PURPOSE

Matthew is a natural bridge between the Old Testament and the New because it has the most Jewish character. From the first verse to the last, Matthew establishes Jesus as a direct descendant of King David, preserving and fulfilling his royal line as the rightful heir as well as a descendant of Abraham, the father of Israel.

Furthermore, Matthew portrays Jesus as the new and greater Moses, who not only upholds the Jewish Torah but intensifies it—not in a legalistic way, but in a spiritual way, because following his teachings is the way into his heavenly kingdom realm.

It would be a mistake, however, to say there is only one purpose for this book. While one primary purpose is to communicate the Jesus story to the Jewish people, Matthew also means to communicate Jesus’ story to us. One particular aspect of the Jesus story that Matthew wants to share is that Jesus is King of a heavenly kingdom realm. Mark and Luke also speak of God’s kingdom realm, but Matthew focuses on how people behave as citizens of that realm, with Jesus as their loving King.

AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE

It is believed that Matthew may have been the first apostle to write a gospel, and he possibly wrote it in Hebrew (Aramaic). Though some maintain that Matthew wrote his Gospel after the destruction of the temple in AD 70, it’s possible he wrote it anywhere from AD 55 to the mid-60s. He was a wealthy tax collector who profited greatly from his duty of representing Rome. And then one day, the man from Galilee stood in front of him and said, “Come, follow me.”

There continues to be debate over the original language of Matthew’s account. Eusebius, the Greek church historian, quoted Irenaeus as saying, “Matthew published his gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul in Rome were preaching and founding the church” (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* III. 24.5–6 and V. 8, 2.) This, along with numerous other quotations from church fathers (Origen, Jerome, Augustine) would mean that the original manuscript of Matthew’s Gospel was written in Hebrew. Regardless, it is without dispute that Matthew was a Jewish man who presents a Jewish King who now sits on the throne of glory for all people.

Perhaps an unbiased look at the Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts would yield further nuances of our Jewish heritage as believers in *Yeshua* (Jesus) and would strengthen our understanding of the inspired Scriptures. You will find ample footnotes throughout this translation to assist you in your study.

MAJOR THEMES

Gospel-Telling. The word *gospel* doesn’t simply mean “good news.” It is derived from the Greek verb *euangelizomai*, which means “to preach the good news.”

In other words, Matthew is writing to tell us heaven's truths embedded in the earthly events of the man Jesus. Matthew isn't giving us dry theology, but sharing stories and teachings designed in such a way as to unfold the majestic, magisterial person of Jesus, who embodies all of our theologies!

Old Testament. As the first book of the New Testament, Matthew connects the past with the present and with the future. He quotes sixty times from the Old Testament, showing us that the New was enfolded in the Old, while the New Testament is the Old Testament unfolded and explained. The Old Testament is more central in Matthew than in any other Gospel, both in frequency and in emphasis. If the Jewish story is always pointing forward, Matthew's Gospel is its final act. It brings resolution to the Old Testament by presenting King Jesus and his kingdom realm and community as fulfilling their prophetic expectations.

Parables. There are unique components to Matthew's Gospel. For example, he records extensively the allegorical teachings of Jesus known as parables. Twelve are detailed by Matthew, and nine of them are unique to this account. He gives us two miracles of Jesus that are found nowhere else: the healing of two blind men and the miracle coin found in the fish's mouth. It is through these simple stories that the nature of both our King and his kingdom really come to life!

Heavenly Kingdom Realm. Matthew brings us the realm of the heavenly kingdom and sets its virtue and reality before us. The phrase "kingdom realm" is used nearly forty times as Jesus offers it to you and me. And Jesus is described as the King fourteen times. This is the Gospel of the King and his kingdom, but a different kingdom than even his followers expected. For the kingdom realm that Jesus ushered in would not liberate the Jewish people from oppression from the Roman government as they expected—we can define neither the King nor his kingdom ourselves. Instead, he offers not only Jews but every person access to an eternal, heavenly realm free from the consequences of sin and an oasis to refresh our lives!

Kingdom-Realm Living. Matthew's Gospel isn't only about our loving King and his kingdom, it's also about his subjects who act and live within that kingdom. The church is the community of Christ's heavenly kingdom realm, and Jesus' sermon on the hillside is the final Torah of the kingdom realm. For Matthew, a godly lover (the "righteous") is someone who has chosen to submit to Jesus as King and whose life is lived in accordance with his ethics. The Gospel of Matthew will bring before your eyes the power and majesty of our loving King. Encounter the wonder of Jesus as you read this book!



MATTHEW

Our Loving King

From Abraham to Christ

1 This is the scroll of the genealogy^a of Jesus,^b the Anointed One, the son of David and descendant of Abraham.

²Abraham had a son named Isaac, who had a son named Jacob, who had a son named Judah (*he and his brothers became the tribes of Israel*).

³Judah and Tamar^c had twin sons, Perez and Zerah. Perez had a son named Hezron, who had a son named Ram, ⁴who had a son named Amminadab, who had a son named Nashon, ⁵who had a son named Salmon, who, along with Rahab, had a son named Boaz. Boaz and

Ruth had a son named Obed, who was the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse had a son named David, *who became the king*.

⁷Then David and Bathsheba^d had a son named Solomon, who had a son named Rehoboam, who had a son named Abijah, who had a son named Asa, ⁸who had a son named Jehoshaphat, who had a son named Joram, who had a son named Uzziah, ⁹who had a son named Jotham, who had a son named Hezekiah, ¹⁰who had a son named Manasseh, who had a son named Amos, ^ewho had a son named Josiah, ¹¹who was the father of Jeconiah.^f

a 1:1 Or “The book of the origin (genesis) of Jesus Christ.” The Greek text has no definite article (“This is the”) and is most likely to be considered as a caption or title. The Son of God is eternal and had no beginning (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1). The entire book of Matthew presents the beginning of the glorious story of Jesus, God’s Anointed One. The genealogy given by Matthew presents the legal claim of Jesus to be King through the lineage of David from Joseph all the way back to the promises given to Abraham. Some believe Luke’s account gives the genealogy of Jesus from Mary’s lineage through David all the way back to Adam.

b 1:1 The Hebrew name for Jesus is *Yeshua* and means “Yahweh is salvation.”

c 1:3 Matthew includes four women in this genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba.

d 1:7 Or “the wife of Uriah.”

e 1:10 Or “Amon.”

f 1:11 In Jer. 22:24–30 God pronounced a curse on Jeconiah’s family line, declaring that they were ineligible to sit on the throne as kings. However, Luke’s genealogy goes through David to Mary via Nathan, not Solomon, thus bypassing the curse of Jeconiah’s lineage. Matthew’s genealogy is meant to establish the legal right of Jesus Christ to be king. So Joseph, as Jesus’ *adoptive* father, passes the right of David’s throne legally to Jesus and avoids the curse of Jeconiah through Mary’s ancestry. Jesus is the Son of God paternally, and the Son of David maternally through Heli, Mary’s father. See footnote at Luke 3:23–38. From the beginning God said that the coming Savior would be the “seed of the woman.” See Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4.

It was during the days of Jeconiah and his brothers that Israel was taken captive and deported to Babylon. ¹²About the time of their captivity in Babylon, Jeconiah had a son named Shealtiel, who had a son named Zerubbabel, ¹³who had a son named Abiud, who had a son named Eliakim, ¹⁴who had a son named Azor, who had a son named Zadok, who had a son named Achim, who had a son named Eliud, ¹⁵who had a son named Eleazar, who had a son named Matthan, who had a son named Jacob, ¹⁶who was the father of Joseph, the husband^a of Mary the mother of Jesus, who is called “the Anointed One.”

¹⁷So from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the Babylonian captivity, fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian captivity to Christ, fourteen generations.^b

An Angel Comes to Joseph

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place.

His mother, Mary, had promised Joseph to be his wife,^c *but while she was still a virgin^d* she became pregnant through the power^e of the Holy Spirit.^f Her fiancé,^g Joseph, was a righteous man full of integrity and he didn’t want to disgrace her, but when he learned of her pregnancy he secretly planned to break the engagement.^h ²⁰While he was still debating with himself about what to do,ⁱ he fell asleep and had a supernatural dream. An angel from the Lord appeared to him and said, “Joseph, descendant of David, don’t hesitate to take Mary into your home as your wife,^j because the power of the Holy Spirit has conceived a child in her womb. ²¹She will give birth to a son

a 1:16 Notice that Joseph is named the husband of Mary, not the father of Jesus.

b 1:17 This would make a total of forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ. However, when the names are counted, there are only forty-one. There is a missing generation. What could this mean? Jesus gave birth to the forty-second generation when he died on the cross, for out of his side blood and water flowed. Blood and water come forth at birth. The first Adam “birthed” his wife out of his side, and so Jesus gave birth to his bride from his wounded side. Jesus wants to reproduce himself in us. His last name is not Christ. Christ is the title that explains who he is. He is the Anointed One. “Christ” is also now a corporate body, the body of Christ. We, as the body of Christ, are also anointed ones (Christians). See 1 Cor. 12:12.

c 1:18 In the Jewish culture the engagement was a prenuptial contract (*ketubah*), which was entered into before witnesses, that gave legal rights over the girl to the bridegroom. This agreement could only be nullified by going through the formal divorce process. Since the girl still lived with her family, sexual relations were prohibited until after the second event of the public marriage ceremony. This engagement period was usually entered into when the girl turned thirteen. Mary was just a teenager when she gave birth to Jesus.

d 1:18 Or “without them being united (sexually).”

e 1:18 Implied in the text. Although it is the genitive of source, not agency, “the power of the Holy Spirit” is supplied for clarity. See Deut. 20:7.

f 1:18 The “Holy Spirit” can also be translated “the Sacred Breath (Spirit-Wind)” or “the Spirit of Holiness.”

g 1:19 Or “Her husband.” The Hebrew culture makes no distinction between a fiancé and a husband. The engagement period was a vital part of the marriage custom. See Deut. 22:23–28.

h 1:19 Or “divorce her.” The Jewish custom of breaking off an engagement was tantamount to a divorce.

i 1:20 Or “during his inward passion about these things.”

j 1:20 Or “take Miriam your wife.” Once again, the Jewish culture considered the betrothal period as part of the marriage custom.

8 ✦ MATTHEW 2

and you are to name him ‘Savior,’^a for he is destined to *give his life*^b to save his people from their sins.”

²²This happened to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through his prophet:

²³Listen! A virgin^c will be pregnant, she will give birth to a Son, and he will be known as “Emmanuel,” which means in Hebrew, “God became one of us.”^d

²⁴When Joseph woke from his dream, he did all that the angel of the Lord instructed him to do. He took Mary to be

his wife,²⁵ but they refrained from having sex until she gave birth to her first-born son, whom they named “Jesus.”

The Wise Men Visit

2 Jesus was born in Bethlehem^e near Jerusalem^f during the reign of King Herod.^g After Jesus’ birth a group of spiritual priests^h from the East came to Jerusalem² and inquired of the people, “Where is the child who is born king of the Jewish people? We observed his star rising in the skyⁱ and we’ve come to bow before him in worship.”^j

³King Herod was shaken to the core when he heard this, and not only he, but

a 1:21 Or “Jesus.” The Hebrew name for Jesus is *Yeshua* (or *Y’hoshua*) and means “Yahweh is salvation, restoration, and deliverance.” Implied in the text is that Hebrew (Aramaic) speakers would obviously understand how the name *Yeshua* and *salvation* were linked, reinforcing the theory that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. This is lost in the Greek word *Iesous* (Jesus).

b 1:21 As translated from the Aramaic.

c 1:23 See also v. 25, which clarifies that Mary was indeed a virgin.

d 1:23 Or “God with us” or “God among us”; that is, God incarnated. See Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10 (LXX).

e 2:1 *Bethlehem*, or *Byt-lehem*, means “house of bread,” the prophesied birthplace of Messiah. However, the Hebrew word *lehem* can also mean “fighters.” Jesus was born in “the House of Fighters!” This is the city of David, one of the greatest fighters in the entire Bible. Perhaps this is why the people of Jesus’ day expected him to fight the Romans and free their land from foreign occupation. Jesus fulfilled both aspects of the meaning of Bethlehem in Gethsemane and on the cross, where he fought the “Goliath” of our souls and won, becoming Bread for the world. God controls all events, proven by the prophecy that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem even though his parents were living in Nazareth. See Mic. 5:2; Luke 2:1–19.

f 2:1 Or “in the land of Judea.”

g 2:1 Herod died in 4 BC, which helps in dating the birth of Christ.

h 2:1 Or “astrologers,” known as dream interpreters. These wealthy priests would have traveled with an entourage for protection as officials from the East. The Greek word *magos* is taken from the Mede language and means “spiritual advisors” or simply “priests.” They were appointed by Darius over the state religion as priests of Persia, which is modern-day Iran, and served as official advisors to the king. By the time of Jesus’ birth, Persia had been conquered and was being governed by successors to Alexander the Great. It is possible these *Magos* came from the Mesopotamian region of Seleucia. See also Dan. 2 and 5:11, where the prophet Daniel is given the title of “Chief of the *Magio*.” It is probable that these *Magos* were descendants of those who had been taught by Daniel, and because of his prophecy of the Messiah being “cut off,” they may have been able to decipher the date of his birth along with the interpretation of his star rising.

i 2:2 Or “his star in the east” or “shooting star” or possibly “comet.” Note that it is also called “his star,” not the star of Bethlehem.

j 2:2 With the visit of the wise men coming to bow in worship before Jesus, we see a preview of the nations one day worshiping our King. See Ps. 72:8–11.

Return

Before I
surrendered my robe
and dipped down to the depths
to raise you with me in the heights,
I had already embraced my Father's plan
to awaken you from night's cold slumber.

Before my first visitors cracked smiles bright as stars,
before they leaned over my shivery baby form
in that lowly Love-lit town,
I ached to clothe you in heaven.

Tuck you in, ever-so-safely.
Back to my heart where
you came from.



The First Coming

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother, Mary, had promised Joseph to be his wife, but while she was still a virgin she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:18

ARTIST NOTES

Christmas. The Nativity. The Virgin Birth. Christ was born in the open air of a manger. No one expected him, so no one had reserved a room. His parents lacked the influence needed to secure the kind of luxury a baby King deserved.

He grew up in meager circumstances and found himself subjected to misunderstandings and sky-high expectations. Even his neighbors and brothers couldn't fully grasp who he was. Consequently, he was teased and chastised. But he knew his identity and purpose. In fact, he showed us how to live in this confused world so that even amidst trials, we can count it all joy.

Although Jesus only lived on earth thirty-three years, he didn't shrink back from his assignment of fulfilling his Father's desires. He died for us in the most horrific way, giving freedom and eternal hope even to those who ignored him from the start. He didn't just die for his friends; he died for an unlimited number of people he loved very deeply. You and I are the beneficiaries of his life, death, and resurrection. Gifted givers. Handlers of his love and mercy.

I entitled this painting *The First Coming* because the good news of Christ's birth points to an even greater event when Christ will appear in the air to collect his treasured heirs. At *The Second Coming*, we will all bend the knee.

FIND YOUR STORY

Since God stepped out of his comfort zone for me, I am challenged to do the same for him. This could mean sharing a handful of poetic lines on social media. If I wanted to step out of the zone even further, I could bring someone a meal—although that might pose its own set of risks! God moves on each of us in various ways. You have been given a voice, a story, and gifts to share God's love with those in your sphere. Ask him to highlight a family member whose life would be brightened by a simple note, kind word, or act of service. He will lead you.

Describe a past rewarding experience where you stepped out of your comfort zone with your time or talent to make a difference in someone's life. What kind of a sacrifice did you make, and how did it build your faith?

If you have been on the receiving end of sacrifice, describe how this expression of love impacted you.

Christ's return is imminent, and he is passionate about getting us ready. What do you hope to accomplish before seeing him face-to-face?

Read Matthew 10:38–39 and describe what it might look like to surrender all to Christ.

all of Jerusalem was disturbed when they heard this news.”^a “So he called a meeting of the Jewish ruling priests and religious scholars, demanding that they tell him where the promised Messiah was prophesied to be born.

⁵⁴“He will be born in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,” they told him. “Because the prophecy states:

“And you, little Bethlehem,
are not insignificant among the
clans of Judah,
for out of you will emerge
the Shepherd-King^b of my people
Israel!”^c

⁷Then Herod secretly summoned the spiritual priests from the East to ascertain the exact time the star first appeared. ⁸And he told them, “Now go to Bethlehem and carefully look there for the child, and when you’ve found him, report to me so that I can go and bow down and worship him too.”

⁹And on their way to Bethlehem, the same star they had seen in the East suddenly reappeared! Amazed, they watched as it went ahead of them and

stopped directly over the place where the child was. ¹⁰And when they saw the star, they were so ecstatic that they shouted and celebrated with unrestrained joy.^d

¹¹When they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary, his mother, they fell to the ground at his feet and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests^e full of gifts and presented him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²Afterward they returned to their own country by another route because God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

They Escape to Egypt

¹³After they had gone, Joseph had another dream. An angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, “Get up now and flee to Egypt. Take Mary and the little child and stay there until I tell you to leave, for Herod intends to search for the child to kill him.”

¹⁴So that very night he got up and took Jesus and his mother and made their escape to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until Herod died. All of this fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through his prophet:

a 2:3 Although we are not told how many “wise men” came to visit Bethlehem, it was likely quite a large entourage. It is doubtful that three men from Persia would cause such an uproar and commotion in the city. There were possibly over one hundred who traveled in the caravan from the East arriving in Jerusalem.

b 2:6 As translated from the Aramaic. The Greek is “the Leader who will shepherd my people Israel.”

c 2:6 See Mic. 5:2. Both the Septuagint and the Hebrew Matthew have “out of you will come to me a Ruler who will be King of Israel.” The Septuagint adds, “He will shepherd my people in the strength of the Lord.”

d 2:10 The Greek is hard to translate since it contains so many redundant words for joy in this one verse. It is literally “They rejoiced with a great joy exceedingly.” They were ecstatic!

e 2:11 These “wise men” were extremely wealthy. They presented gifts that totaled a great sum of money—not tiny presents wrapped with bows, but treasure chests full of financial wealth. Although we are not given the monetary value of each type of gift, we know that frankincense and myrrh were extremely costly. These gifts would have financed Joseph and Mary and Jesus’ exodus to Egypt and supplied their living expenses for a number of years, even after returning to Israel. Gold is an often-used symbol of the deity of Christ. Frankincense points to his perfect life of holiness, excellence, and devotion. Myrrh, an embalming spice, speaks to us of the suffering love that would lead him to the death on the cross.

10 ♦ MATTHEW 3

I summon my Son out of Egypt.^a

¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated. So he sent soldiers with orders to slaughter every baby boy two years old and younger in Bethlehem and throughout the surrounding countryside, based on the time frame he was given from interrogating the wise men. ¹⁷This fulfilled the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸I hear the screams of anguish,
weeping, and wailing in Ramah.
Rachel is weeping uncontrollably
for her children.^b
And she refuses to be comforted,
because they are dead and gone.^c

They Return to Nazareth

¹⁹After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared again to Joseph in a dream while he was still in Egypt, ²⁰saying, “Go

back to the land of Israel and take the child and his mother with you, for those who sought to kill the child are dead.”

²¹So he awoke and took Jesus and Mary and returned to the land of Israel.

²²But when he heard that Archelaus, Herod’s son, had succeeded him as ruler over all of the territory of Judah, he was afraid to go back. Then he had another dream from God, warning him to avoid that region and instructing him instead to go to the province of Galilee.

²³So he settled his family in the village of Nazareth, fulfilling the prophecy that he would be known as the “Branch.”^d

John the Baptizer

3 It was at this time that John the Baptizer^e began to preach in the desert of Judah.^f His message was this: ²⁴“Heaven’s kingdom^g is about to appear—so you’d better keep turning away from evil and turn back to God!”^h

a 2:15 See Hos. 11:1. Both Jesus and the nation of Israel came up out of Egypt. Jesus applies Hos. 11:1 to himself and, in a sense, takes it out of context. There is a deeper level of understanding for every verse, for the Bible points us continually to Jesus.

b 2:18 As translated from the Septuagint. *Rachel* becomes a metaphor for all of Israel.

c 2:18 See Jer. 31:14–15.

d 2:23 Or “a Nazarene.” The Hebrew Scriptures give us a wonderful truth about the Branch (Sprout) of the Lord that would come and establish righteousness. The word for “branch” or sprout is *netzer*, the root word for Nazareth and Nazarene. The teaching of the Branch of the Lord is a concept taught throughout the Bible, from the Tree of Life, to the seven branches of the Lampstand, to Jesus the Vine calling us his branches. Jesus is a Scion, a Branch that can be transplanted and grafted into a human life. Another variant form of this amazing word *netzer* can be translated “keeper, watchman, one who keeps secrets, guardian, one who keeps watch.” All of these words are true of Jesus, the Branch who was raised in the village of the Branch (Nazareth). Additionally, the Aramaic word for Nazareth means “heir of a powerful family” or “victorious one.” So it is entirely possible to translate this “he will be called the Victorious Branch (of Nazareth).” See Dan. 11:7; Isa. 11:1; 60:21. See also Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 6:12, which use a Hebrew synonym for Branch, *tsemach*.

e 3:1 Or “John the Immerser.” The name John means “Yahweh has graced him.”

f 3:1 This was the desert region west of the Dead Sea including the lower Jordan. The prophet John was of a priestly family and possibly a member of the Qumran community of the Essenes.

g 3:2 Or “the kingdom realm of heaven.” The word *heaven* is found 238 times in the New Testament and *hell* 23 times.

h 3:2 Or “repent.” John was preaching in Aramaic, the language of the day. The word for “repent” in both Hebrew and Aramaic means “to return to God [and leave your sins behind].” This is much more than simply changing your mind; it is a powerful term for turning your life around and coming back to the holy God.

³Isaiah was referring to John when he prophesied:

A thunderous voice! One will be crying out in the wilderness,
 “Prepare yourself for the Lord’s coming
 and level a straight path inside your hearts for him.”^a

⁴Now, John wore clothing made from camel’s hair, tied at his waist with a leather strap, and his food consisted of dried locusts^b and wild honey. ⁵A steady stream of people from Jerusalem, all the surrounding countryside,^c and the region near the Jordan came out to the wilderness to be baptized by him. ⁶And while they were publicly confessing their sins, he would immerse them in the Jordan River.

⁷But when he saw many coming from among the wealthy elite of

Jewish society^d and many of the religious leaders known as Pharisees^e coming to witness the baptism, he began to denounce them, saying, “You offspring of vipers!^f Who warned you *to slither away like snakes from the fire of God’s judgment?*^g ⁸You must prove your repentance by a changed life. ⁹And don’t presume you can get away with merely saying to yourselves, ‘But we’re Abraham’s descendants!’ For I tell you, God can awaken these stones to become sons of Abraham!^h ¹⁰The axeⁱ is now ready to cut down the trees at their very roots. Every fruitless, rotten tree will be chopped down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹Those who repent I baptize with water, but there is coming a man after me who is more powerful than I. In fact, I’m not even worthy enough to pick up his sandals. He will submerge you into union with the Spirit of Holiness and with a

a 3:3 See Isa. 40:3, which is quoted in all four Gospels. The Aramaic has in place of Lord, “Lord Yahweh,” an obvious implication of the deity of Christ. Isaiah’s prophecy is more than a road-construction project. He uses the metaphor of clearing a path as a parable of cleansing our hearts and being prepared in our hearts to receive the Christ.

b 3:4 See Lev. 11:22; 2 Kings 1:8; Joel 1:4; Zech. 13:4; Mal. 4:5–6; Matt. 11:14.

c 3:5 Or “Judea.”

d 3:7 Or “the Sadducees.”

e 3:7 Or “separated ones.” The Pharisees and Sadducees were two of the sects of Judaism of that day.

f 3:7 The word *viper* in the Aramaic is *akidneh*, which is really a reference to a scorpion. When a male scorpion mates it quickly dies. The mother scorpion dies when giving birth, so every scorpion is born into this world as an orphan without the guidance of a set of parents. The dual meaning is simply this: The Pharisees were indeed cunning as vipers, but they were also spiritual orphans. John implied in using the word *akidneh* that Abraham died giving them birth and they have lost his guidance. But if the Pharisees would only turn to their true loving Father, Elohim, they would no longer be orphans.

g 3:7 John is telling them they can’t escape the fire of judgment just by getting wet.

h 3:9 There is an interesting word-play in the Hebrew and Aramaic that is lost in an English translation. The Hebrew words for sons (*bēnayyā*) and stones (*‘abnayyā*) are similar. God builds his house with sons, not stones. John baptized the people at the place of the crossing of the Jordan during the time of Joshua. After their miracle crossing of the Jordan they were instructed to set up twelve stones, representing the twelve sons of Israel, as a memorial. Perhaps John the Baptizer was referencing those very stones from which God could raise up sons.

i 3:10 The “axe” becomes a metaphor of the word of truth that judges hearts and nations.

12 ♦ MATTHEW 3

raging fire!^a ¹²He comes with a winnowing fork^b in his hands and comes to his threshing floor to sift what is worthless from what is pure. And he is ready to sweep out his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his granary;^c but the straw he will burn up with a fire that can't be extinguished!"

¹³Then Jesus left Galilee to come to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

¹⁴But when he waded into the water, John resisted him, saying, "Why are you doing this? I'm the one who needs

to be baptized by you, and yet you come to be baptized by me?"

¹⁵Jesus replied, "It is only right to do all that God requires."^d Then John baptized Jesus.^e ¹⁶And as^f Jesus rose up out of the water, the heavenly realm opened up over him^g and he saw the Holy Spirit descend out of the heavens and rest upon him in the form of a dove.^h ¹⁷Then suddenly the voice of the Father shouted from the sky, saying, "This is my Son—the Beloved!ⁱ My greatest delight is in him."^j

a 3:11 The text is somewhat ambiguous as to what fire is spoken of. Some see it as the fire of judgment, yet Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit, who baptized his church in fire at Pentecost. This last clause is a hendiadys and could be translated "He will baptize you in the raging fire of the Holy Spirit!"

b 3:12 This winnowing fork was like a pitchfork that would thresh grain by throwing it into the air so the wind could blow away the chaff.

c 3:12 See Isa. 41:15–16.

d 3:15 Or "fulfill all righteousness [complete every righteous requirement]." This was the presentation of the Lamb of God as the sacrifice for sins. It was important that John publicly wash the Lamb of God and fulfill the requirements of the law, proving to Israel that the Lamb that was soon to be offered was spotless and without blemish. There are four baptisms in this chapter: (1) John baptizing with water, (2) Father God baptizing Jesus with the power of heaven, (3) Jesus will baptize believers with the same Holy Spirit, (4) the baptism of fire.

e 3:15 Jesus would have been about thirty years old, the age when Levitical priests were ordained and qualified to serve. This was his ordination as the High Priest over the household of faith. Jesus' baptism was a form of dedication. Like Solomon, who dedicated the temple, John now dedicates the temple of Jesus' body, the dwelling place of God. In a sense, John was the true high priest who was ordaining his replacement. Jesus was not repenting, but offering himself as God's sinless Lamb.

f 3:16 There are Latin manuscripts and external evidence dating to Jerome indicating that the Hebrew Matthew included this sentence: "A great light flashed from the water, so that all who had gathered there were afraid." (Diatessaron and Romanos Melodos, *First Hymn on the Epiphany*, XVI.14.7–10.)

g 3:16 See also Acts 7:56.

h 3:16 The dove is a symbol for both meekness and purity. Two gentle animals are pictured at the baptism of Jesus, a dove resting upon a lamb. If you want the presence of the Dove you need to have the nature of the Lamb. The implication is that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus and never left him.

i 3:17 Jesus Christ is the Beloved referred to in the Song of Songs (Song. 1:13, 14; 2:3, 8, 9, 10; 6:10; 7:10).

j 3:17 Or "In him I find my delight." See also Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1. The church historian Jerome affirms that additional words were spoken by the Father: "My Son, in all the prophets I was waiting for you, that you might come and I might rest in you. For you are my rest and my firstborn Son, who reigns forever!" (*The Gospel of Matthew for the Hebrews and Commentary on Isaiah Chapter 4*. Throckmorton: 14 fn. Nicholson: 43. OMG II: 156 *et seq.*)

Jesus Tempted by the Devil

4 Afterward, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to experience the ordeal of testing^a by the accuser.^b ²And after fasting for forty days,^c Jesus was extremely hungry. ³Then the tempter came to him and said, “How can you possibly be the Son of God and go hungry? Just command these stones to be turned into loaves of bread.”

⁴He answered, “The Scriptures say:

Bread alone will not satisfy,^d
but true life is found in every word
that constantly goes forth from
God’s mouth.”^e

⁵Then the accuser transported Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem and perched him at the highest point^f of the temple ⁶and said to him, “If you’re really God’s Son, jump, and the angels will catch you. For it is written in the Scriptures:

He will command his angels to
protect you
and they will lift you up
so that you won’t even bruise your
foot on a rock.”^g

⁷Once again Jesus said to him, “The Scriptures say:

You must never put the Lord
your God to a test.”^h

⁸And the third time the accuser lifted Jesus up onto a very high mountain range and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and all the splendor that goes with it.

⁹“All of these kingdoms I will give to you,” the accuser said, “if only you will kneel down before me and worship me.”

¹⁰But Jesus said, “Go away, Satan! For the Scriptures say:

Kneel before the Lord your God
and worship only him.”ⁱ

a 4:1 Or “tribulation.” God also tested Israel for forty years in the wilderness. See Deut. 8:2.

b 4:1 Or “devil.” The Aramaic word for “devil” means “accuser.” The Greek word is “slanderer.”

c 4:2 Moses and Elijah both fasted forty days. See Ex. 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8. The number forty usually signifies passing a test or enduring a time of trial. It rained for forty days in the time of Noah, and Jonah warned Nineveh for forty days. God told Ezekiel to lay on his right side for forty days (Ezek. 4:6).

d 4:4 Or “Man will not live by bread alone.” Nothing can satisfy the Son’s appetite but the words of God.

e 4:4 See Deut. 8:3. God had not given Jesus permission to turn stones into bread, and Jesus would not be pushed into prematurely demonstrating his power. He was content with the timing of his Father. He refused to turn stones into bread to feed himself, but he multiplied bread for his hungry followers. Today he is still turning hearts of stone into living bread that will feed the nations with truth.

f 4:5 Or “wing.” See Ps. 91:4.

g 4:6 See Ps. 91:11–12; Matt. 26:53. This was a temptation to capitalize on being the Son of God and to force God to protect him as he jumped. Jesus was being tested over restraining his power as the Anointed One and waiting until the timing of his Father in publicly releasing him to work miracles and display his power. He was not sent to throw himself down from the temple, but to throw down the temple and establish a new order of worship—as a true relationship with God is internal with every believer now becoming the temple of God. See 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19.

h 4:7 See Deut. 6:16.

i 4:10 Or “Satan.”

j 4:10 See Deut. 6:13–14.

14 ♦ MATTHEW 4

¹¹At once the accuser left him, and angels suddenly gathered around Jesus to minister to his needs.

Jesus Preaches in Galilee

¹²When Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been thrown into prison, he went back into Galilee. ¹³Jesus moved from Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum,^a which is by Lake Galilee in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴He did this to make the prophecy of Isaiah come true:

¹⁵Listen, you who live in the land of Zebulun
and the land of Naphtali,
along the road to the sea
and on the other side of the
Jordan,
and Galilee—the land of the
Gentiles!

¹⁶You who spend your days
shrouded in darkness
can now say, “We have seen a
brilliant Light.”^b
And those who live in the dark
shadow land of death
can now say, “The Dawning Light
arises on us.”

¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to proclaim his message with these words: “Keep turning away from your sins and come back to God, for heaven’s kingdom realm is now accessible.”^c

Jesus Calls His Disciples

¹⁸As he was walking by the shore of Lake Galilee, Jesus noticed two fishermen who were brothers. One was nicknamed Keefa^d (later called Peter), and the other was Andrew, his brother. Watching as they were casting their nets into the water, ¹⁹Jesus called out to them and said, “Come and follow me, and I will transform you into men who catch people for God.”^e ²⁰Immediately they dropped their nets and left everything behind to follow Jesus.

²¹Leaving there, Jesus found three other men sitting in a boat, mending their nets. Two were brothers, Jacob^f and John, and they were with their father, Zebedee.^g Jesus called Jacob and John to his side *and said to them*, “Come and follow me.” ²²And at once they left their boat and their father, and began to follow Jesus.

a 4:13 Capernaum means “the village of Nahum.” It was a fishing village on the northwestern shore of Lake Galilee. Nahum means “comforted.” Jesus did many miracles and based his Galilean ministry in the “village of the comforted.”

b 4:16 Light is a common name for the Messiah in rabbinical literature. It speaks of both Christ and the revelatory teaching he brings. See Isa. 9:1–2. The Aramaic word for Galilee (*Galeela*) means “revelation of God.” Jesus was raised and ministered in the land of the “revelation of God.”

c 4:17 Or “close enough to touch!”

d 4:18 Or “Simon.” The Aramaic is *Keefa*, which means “the rock” or “pebble.” Peter (*Petros*) is his Greek name.

e 4:19 Or “fishers of men.” The Aramaic word can mean either “fishers” or “hunters.” See Ezek. 47:1–10.

f 4:21 Or “James.” Most translations of the Bible have substituted Jacob with James. Both Greek and Aramaic leave the Hebrew name as it is, Jacob. This translation will use the correct name, Jacob, throughout.

g 4:21 Zebedee’s name means “my gift.” The gift he gave to Jesus was his two sons. All parents have the privilege of giving their children back to God.



In the Wilderness

*The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness
to experience the ordeal of testing by the accuser.*

Matthew 4:1

ARTIST NOTES

Does it amaze you that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan? I must confess that it is still somewhat difficult for me to understand why it was necessary. It also makes me wonder what's ahead for me if the perfect Son of God had to endure such darkness.

In depicting the test of Christ's isolation, my interpretation begs the question: Did Jesus get weary? How difficult was temptation for him? Did the Son of God feel the pain of loneliness?

I hope he did—so he can more fully sympathize and connect with me when I feel overwhelmed. Scripture shows: “He understands humanity, for as a man, our magnificent King-Priest was tempted in every way just as we are, and conquered sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

We need to grab hold of the assurance in that last phrase, “and conquered sin.” Since Jesus was sinless, we, too, can conquer sin through him. The same Holy Spirit who empowered our Lord is alive and well in each of us today.

FIND YOUR STORY

Saying no to temptation starts with resisting the smaller ones. Don't laugh, but I was just tempted to raid the chocolate drawer. Yes, I have such a drawer. But I resisted—this time. When stressed, what or who do you reach for first? Think of a time when you were tempted but you turned to God for strength, refusing to be bossed by your flesh. How did God help you get to the other side of your test?

Read James 4:6–8 and 1 John 2:15–17. When we resist the enemy and grow closer to God, we feel his strength, and he develops our spiritual muscles. In what areas do you need to lean more into God, his Word, and his grace to overcome? Overcoming temptation starts with knowing, deep in our hearts, just how extravagantly the Father loves us, no matter what we do.

Shame and unconfessed sin lead to deeper sin-cycles, but when we humbly run to the Father, our source of unconditional love, he brings us to a place where we let him restore us and help us back on our feet.

Christ knew what it meant to remain in his Father's love. Read John 15:9–10. How was Christ empowered by love? How can you do the same? Meditate on how Christ conquered sin and how, in him, we, too, can live from a place of victory.

Jesus' Ministry of Healing

²³Jesus ministered from place to place throughout all of the province of Galilee. He taught^a in the synagogues, preaching the wonderful news of the kingdom and healing every kind of sickness and disease among the people. ²⁴His fame spread throughout all Syria! Many people who were in pain and suffering with every kind of illness were brought to Jesus for their healing—epileptics,^b paralytics, and those tormented by demonic powers were all set free. Everyone who was brought to Jesus was healed!

²⁵This resulted in massive crowds of people following him, including people from Galilee, Jerusalem, the land

of Judah, the region of the Ten Cities known as the Decapolis, and beyond the Jordan River.^c

Jesus' Sermon on the Hillside

5 One day Jesus saw a vast crowd of people gathering to hear him, so he went up the slope of a hill and sat down. With his followers and disciples spread over the hillside, ²Jesus began to teach them:^d

^{3a}"What happiness comes to you^e when you feel your spiritual poverty!^f For yours is the realm of heaven's kingdom.

^{4a}"What delight comes to you when you wait upon the Lord!^g For you will find what you long for.^h

a 4:23 The Greek word *didasko* is a word often used for providing skilled training.

b 4:24 Or "the mentally ill."

c 4:25 This was the first encounter the non-Jewish peoples of the Middle East had with Jesus. He was proclaiming his universal kingdom and inviting all to enter into it.

d 5:2 It should be noted that Matt. 5–7, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount, is the messianic Torah (law or teaching) and the Constitution of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus begins with giving his followers a superior way to live than the Ten Commandments of Moses. It is a superior version of all that God expects and provides for those who yield to him. Jesus gives us more than laws; he gives us promises of power to fulfill all that he asks of us. The emphasis is not on outward duty but on the inward transformation of our hearts by grace. God's kingdom is offered to those who will learn the ways of Christ and offer themselves to him in full surrender.

e 5:3 Or, "Blessed are they." The Aramaic word *toowayhon* means "enriched, happy, fortunate, delighted, blissful, content, blessed." Our English word *blessed* can indeed fit here, but *toowayhon* implies more—great happiness, prosperity, abundant goodness, and delight! The word *bliss* captures all of this meaning. *Toowayhon* means to have the capacity to enjoy union and communion with God. Because the meaning of the word goes beyond merely being "blessed," this translation uses different phrases for each of the Beatitudes. Verses 3–10 are presented with third-person pronouns; however, it is not abstract truth, but spoken directly to Jesus' disciples. This is why the translation is in the second person. The implication of this verse is that the poor in spirit have only one remedy, and that is trusting in God. This total reliance upon God is the doorway into the kingdom realm. Notice the obvious parallel between Isa. 61:1–2 and these "beatitudes."

f 5:3 Or, "humble in spirit," or, "poor in spirit," which means to be humble and totally dependent upon God for everything. It is synonymous with "pious" or "saintly," not just in the sense of those who possess nothing. It could be translated "Delighted are those who have surrendered completely to God and trust only in him." See also Isa. 41:17; 57:15; 66:2.

g 5:4 As translated from the Hebrew Matthew. (See also Ps. 27:14.) The Greek is "mourn (grieve)." The Hebrew word for "wait" and for "mourn" is almost identical.

h 5:4 As translated from the Aramaic word for comfort, *nethbayoon*, which can mean "to see the face of what (or who) you long for." The Greek is "They shall be comforted."