

Matthew 1

1. When you hear the word "gospel," what comes to mind?

Gospel hymn?

Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Gospel message vs. any other message?

2. Ancestry.com has over 3 million paying subscribers. AncestryDNA has over 15,000,000. Why do you think people are interested in genealogy?

Are you interested in your ancestry? Why?

3. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. Why do you believe God inspired Matthew to begin with the genealogy of Jesus?

Be honest. Do you read the genealogies when they appear in the Bible? Why or why not?

Why do you think Matthew begins with Abraham and not with Adam?

Look at *Genesis 22:18* and *Galatians 3:16*. How do these relate to Abraham and to his being the beginning of Matthew's genealogy?

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the three patriarchs of the nation of Israel and the fathers of our faith. What does that mean to you?

4. Verse 3 tells us that Perez and Zerah, twins, parents were Judah and Tamar. What can you learn about Judah? About Tamar? About the birth of the twins?

Today, we are removing any and all instances of people and events that we deem inappropriate or offensive. What is the significance of Tamar's being listed in the genealogy of Jesus?

Why do you believe the Lord recorded the good, the bad, and the ugly in His Word?

5. Verse 5 mentions another woman: Rahab. What can you learn about her?

The verse also mentions Ruth. What was Ruth's lineage?

What does the LORD say about the Moabites?

What does this tell us about the people God chooses to use to bring about His purpose?

Are there any other characters whom you recognize in the genealogy?

6. Verse 18 begins Matthew's description of the birth of Jesus Christ. Why do you think Matthew uses Jesus Christ instead of just Jesus?

We have heard the story of Jesus' birth so many times, that it may lose its impact. Notice, Matthew does not give us Jesus' lineage. Instead, he says he is going to explain the circumstances concerning His birth. Why does he begin the story of Jesus this way?

Why does Matthew list Mary as Jesus' only parent?

Matthew tells us that at the time of Jesus' birth, Mary was promised or pledged to Joseph. The following is a brief description of the traditions involved in ancient Jewish marriages. First, the two families would agree to the union and negotiate the betrothal, including a price for the bride that would be paid to the bride's father. Next, a public announcement would be made. At this point, the couple was "pledged." This is similar to engagement today, except that it was much more binding. At this point, even though the couple was not officially married, their relationship could be broken only through death or divorce. Sexual relations were not yet permitted. This second step lasted for a year. During that time, the couple would live separately, with their parents. This waiting period would demonstrate the bride's purity. If she were found to be pregnant during that time, the marriage could be annulled. Otherwise, the couple would be married and begin living together.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Matthew.

Do you think these traditions would strengthen or weaken marriages today? Please explain.

Why do you believe God chose to have His Son come into this world as the son of this couple?

How difficult do you think Mary's pregnancy was on her? Please explain. On Joseph? Please explain.

Why do you think God would put these two young people through this ordeal?

7. According to verse 18, how did Mary become pregnant?

Matthew does not go into detail about Mary's pregnancy, but Luke does. Read Luke 1:28-38. How might you react if an angel of the Lord appeared to you?

If this did happen, how might you react? Would you accept the angel and his words? Would you question? Doubt? What?

Verse 1:29 says that Mary was troubled. Why do you think she was troubled?

What qualities did Mary have that made her the best choice to give birth to the Messiah?

How would you describe the Holy Spirit to others?

What does this episode with Mary tell us about how the Holy Spirit interacts with us?

8. What does verse 19 tell us about Joseph?

What does being a righteous person mean to you?

Do you know anyone whom you would consider a righteous person? Please share if you feel comfortable doing so.

Try to describe how Joseph must have felt when Mary told the circumstances of her being pregnant? What does the fact that he was going to divorce her tell us?

Why was Joseph going to do this quietly?

How likely would you believe a person close to you if he/she told you that an angel had visited them during the night? Please explain.

Why do you believe the "virgin birth" is such a controversial topic even today?

What prevents Joseph from divorcing Mary?

How did the angel appear to Joseph?

Have you ever had a dream that you felt was from the Lord? If so, please share if you wish.

Why do you feel God speaks to some through dreams?

What can we learn about dreams from Ecclesiastes 5:3 and Isaiah 29:7-8?

Human logic cannot "make sense" of the why, how, or what of God. What is usually the result when we try to do so?

The birth of Jesus Christ is a supernatural event. What does that mean to you?

9. Mary and Joseph most likely became the object of speculation and gossip. How do you handle such talk when you are the object?

What does the angel tell Joseph about the baby in verse 21?

This one statement could be considered a summary of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What is that message?

Did you accept this simply truth when you first heard it? If not, why not?

Why do you believe it is so difficult for people to believe this truth?

What does the name "Jesus" mean?

10. Matthew then takes us back to the Old Testament. Matthew says that what happened to Mary was the fulfillment of what God had told the prophet. Who was that prophet?

What did the prophet Isaiah prophesy about the Messiah?

What does the name Emmanuel mean?

What was the significance of this child's being the fulfillment of a prophecy almost 1800 years old?

11. Has the Lord ever "told" you to do something difficult or uncomfortable? If so, please explain.

What did you do after He told you?

What did Joseph do after the angel had visited him? (See verse 24.)

What does this tell us about Joseph?

How difficult would it be for you to do what *God* asked if you knew it would cost you your reputation?

How easy is for you to share the gospel of Jesus Christ when people laugh at you? Why?

12. Why do you think Matthew included verse 25?

Read the following from an ancient commentary: The Virgin did not later enter into physical relations (Chrysostom), for it is not plausible that the one who bore *God*, who was worthy of carrying *God* in her womb, would subsequently have carnal relations with a man (Chromatius). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture - New Testament Ia: Matthew 1-13.

This is the reasoning behind the belief that Mary remained a virgin all of her life. This has given rise to the title, *Virgin Mother*. How you feel about this idea? Please explain.

Matthew 2

1. Before continuing, we need to look more closely at who King Herod was and what type of king he was. What can you learn about Herod?

Specifically, how did he become king?

What does the phrase, "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely," mean to you?

Read Matthew 20:25-27. How do these scriptures relate to the above phrase?

2. What does the name "Bethlehem" mean?

Why is this significant? (See John 6:31-36.)

How much time has passed from Jesus' birth to the arrival of the Magi?

Who were the Magi? What can we learn about them that they followed this star for a very long time?

What do they ask King Herod?

Why would Herod not like the idea that the "king of the Jews" had been born?

Why have the Magi come to find the new king?

What does it mean to you to worship Jesus?

3. According to verse 3, Herod and all Jerusalem were "disturbed" by this news. Why were they disturbed?

To whom did Herod go for advice about the Magi's news?

Herod was not a Jew, so he was not familiar with the Jewish prophecies. What does he ask the religious leaders?

What does the title "Christ" mean?

4. They tell Herod "the prophet" had written about the Christ. About which prophet are they speaking? Why do you think they did not use his name?

What did this prophet prophecy about the Messiah?

Why does Herod call the Magi secretly in verse 7?

Why did he want to know the exact time they saw the star?

What did Herod ask the Magi to do? What reason did he give to the Magi for this request?

What does the word "devious" mean to you?

How can we protect ourselves from being misled by devious people?

5. OK. Now we come to a very interesting part of the story that is often overlooked. According to verse 9, what did the Magi do when they left Herod?

How did they know where to go?

What does this tell us about the Star of Bethlehem?

How has Jesus guided you as you follow Him?

6. According to verse 11, where did the star stop?

By this time, Jesus was probably one or two years old and living in a house. What does this tell us about the family?

How did the Magi react when the star stopped "over the place where the child was"?

Can you remember a time when you were overwhelmed with joy at being in Jesus' presence?

Let's take a moment to look at the traditional Nativity Scene. We all grew up with a Nativity Scene that depicted the baby in a manger, Mary and Joseph, shepherds, animals, and the three wise men or magi. However, by the time the Magi arrived, Mary and Joseph had already moved into a house, and Jesus was no longer a newborn infant. In actuality, there is nothing factual about the traditional Nativity Scene. The first depiction of the nativity took place in 1223 by Sir Francis of Assisi. He displayed a manger with hay, an ox, and an ass. The nativity grew from there. Is there anything wrong with the current display of the nativity? Do you think we should be more accurate in its depiction? If so, how?

What did the Magi do when they saw Mary and Jesus?

What is the significance of bowing before the Lord to you?

Why do you think it is so difficult for us to bow before Jesus?

Notice, the Magi did not bring gifts to Mary and Joseph. They brought gifts to the baby Jesus. What type of gifts did they bring? Why do you think they brought these gifts?

Some teach that because the Magi brought expensive gifts, we also should bring expensive gifts to the Lord. Do you believe that is the "lesson" behind the Magi's story? Please explain.

7. Has the Lord ever given you a dream? If so, how did you know it was from the Lord?

Read Numbers 12:6 and Acts 2:17. What do they tell us about dreams?

What did the Lord tell the Magi through a dream?

After the Magi had left, what dream did God give Joseph?

When we receive dreams from the Lord, what part does faith play? Please explain.

How might you react to a dream that tells you to uproot your family and go to a land where your ancestors were slaves?

Why do Mary and Joseph need to flee from Herod?

Therefore, Mary and Joseph knew from the beginning that their son was a target. Read Luke 2:34-35. What does this prophecy mean?

Why would the sword only pierce Mary's heart and not Joseph's also?

What would you do with news like this?

Why do you think Mary, Joseph, and Jesus had to flee to Israel in the middle of night instead of God protecting them where they were?

What can we learn from this?

8. Verse 15 tells us that Joseph and the family stayed in Egypt until the death of Herod. This fulfilled what another prophet prophesied. What does Hosea 11:1 say?

Jesus' flight to Egypt parallels Joseph being sent to Egypt. How many parallels between the life of Joseph and life of Jesus can you find?

9. What was Herod's reaction when he learned that he had been outsmarted by the Magi?

Why do you think people in power commonly react with anger and desire for revenge when things do not go their way?

Look at Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 14:29; Ephesians 4:26; James 1:19-20. What do these passages tell us about anger?

How do you handle anger?

Because of Herod's anger and because of the threat to his throne, what does he order?

In his later years, Herod had three of his sons killed, as well as his wife and many actual or suspected conspirators. It did not bother Herod to spill some blood to secure his power. Life Application Bible Commentary - Matthew. What does this tell us about Herod?

10. What did the prophet Jeremiah prophesy in Jeremiah 31:15?

In this chapter alone, we find that God used three different prophets to prophecy about the coming of the Messiah. Why do you believe God did this?

What does Amos 3:7 mean to you? Do you believe Amos' word still applies to us today? Please explain.

Why do you think the church today has a difficult time accepting prophecy?

Do you believe God still reveals His words to us through prophecy? Explain

Have you ever prophesied or received a prophecy? Please share if you feel comfortable.

11. After living in Egypt for about three years, the angel of the Lord appears again to Joseph. What does the angel tell him?

What did Joseph learn when they returned to Israel?

Joseph was afraid because in many ways Archelaus was worse than Herod. He was noted for tyranny, murder, instability, and possible insanity. The Lord had taken care of this family from the very beginning. The word that describes Joseph means "to put in fear; terrify; to cause to run away." Does this show a lack of faith on Joseph's part? Please explain.

God tells not to be afraid. Does this mean we should never feel fearful? Please explain.

How might you have handled this news about Archelaus?

What does Joseph do in the midst of his fear?

Did the angel of the Lord instruct Joseph to live in Galilee?

What caused Joseph to move to Nazareth, where they once again fulfilled a prophecy?

12. What are some of the ways Jesus motivates you to do what He asks of you?

How does the Holy Spirit enable us to do those things?

What happens if or when you refuse to listen?

Did you learn anything new while studying this chapter? Please share.

Matthew 3

1. Matthew now moves about 30 years into the future. What significance do you attach to the fact that nothing was recorded about Jesus during this time?

Being careful not overstep the boundary of the Bible, what conclusions can we draw from this absence of information?

What do you know about John's background? See Luke 1:11-16.

What strikes you most about the prophecy concerning John's life?

The angel of the Lord told Zechariah that his son would be filled with the Holy Spirit before he was to be born. What is significant about this prophecy?

Look at Isaiah 40:3-4, Malachi 3:1, and Malachi 4:5-6. What do these passages tell us about John?

2. According to verse 2, what was Matthew's message?

What does it mean to repent?

Is there a difference between being sorry and repenting? Please explain.

What does the word "kingdom" bring to mind?

What is the kingdom of heaven?

John's message seems to be very limited, as he only preached this one topic. Yet, for centuries the prophecies foretold his coming. Why do you think God had given him this one message to proclaim?

3. Isaiah prophesied that John would be the voice calling in the desert. Why in the desert?

How does John's message of repentance prepare the way for the Lord?

What does it mean that John and we are to make straight paths for Jesus and others?

How does this same message prepare us for following Jesus?

What happens if this message of repentance is removed or changed? Please explain.

4. In verse 4, Matthew gives us details about John's clothing, which, at first, may seem out of place. However, every word of the Bible is inspired by God. How would you expect a person who was the fulfillment of countless prophecies to dress?

Compare John's clothes to the Pharisees clothes (see Mark 12:38). John's clothes were made of camel's hair. This usually refers to the coarse hair of the camel that was used for the poor. What message was the Lord sending us?

Read Leviticus 11:4. What can we learn about camels?

What is the significance that John the Baptist, who has come to prepare the way of the Lord, is wearing the clothes made from an unclean animal?

How does this fit with his message of repentance?

What did John eat? What can we learn from this?

So, just looking at the figure of John the Baptist, what can we learn about Jesus and His kingdom?

5. According to verse 5, people from all over came to hear John's message. What drew them to this strange man with a stark message?

After listening to John's message, what did the people do?

What does it mean to you to confess your sins?

Why do you think this is so difficult for some to do?

6. Read Numbers 19:7, Hebrews 9:10. What do these verses tell us about ritual cleansing using water?

Immediately after repenting, what did the people do?

What does it mean to you to be baptized?

The word for "baptized" means to be immersed. How does this help us understand the power of confessing our sins?

As with many other areas, many controversies have arisen round baptism. Do you have to be immersed or is sprinkling enough? At what age should or could a person be baptized? Is infant baptism scriptural? Is baptism necessary for salvation? What is your opinion on some of these questions?

What do you believe leads to these "controversies" about such a simple but powerful act?

Why do you think some people are not baptized?

7. We are now introduced to two of the ruling groups in Israel: the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees consisted of people from all areas. They stressed obedience to the law but also to the oral traditions that had been handed down for years. The Sadducees were from the priestly aristocracy who focused on the Pentateuch as the law. The Sadducees controlled the "temple business." The two groups were in constant opposition to each other, but their distrust of John and their hatred of Jesus brought them together. Why do you think they came to the Jordan where Matthew was baptizing?

Some commentaries state these two groups were more than curious. They wanted to be baptized along with the people. If so, why do you think they would do this?

What was John's response when he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees?

This message, by today's standards, seems harsh and divisive. How do you react to John's words to these religious leaders?

What can you find out about vipers? Why does John call them a brood of vipers?

Is there any place in the church for such a blunt message today? Please explain.

8. What does John say to these men in verse 8?

What does it mean to you that we are to produce fruit in keeping with repentance?

What would that fruit look like?

What fruit in keeping with repentance can you see in your life? Please share if you feel comfortable.

From John's statement, we can see that repentance from sins is not a one-time affair. Please explain.

9. What do you think John meant by his statement in verse 9?

The Jews believed that the Messiah was coming for the Jews and His kingdom was for them. This created a belief that simply because they were Jews, they were saved. How has this idea filtered into our society today?

What is the danger of presumption when it comes to Jesus, His Word, and His plans?

How can we guard against presumption?

If you were a Jew, how might you react to John's latter statement in verse 9?

What is the significance of God's being able to raise up stones as His children?

Were you, at one time, one of these "stones"? Please explain.

From this verse, what is John telling us that Jesus desires from us?

10. In verse 10 John gives the warning, "The ax is already at the root of the trees." What does this mean?

What do the trees represent?

John next gives us a qualification. The ax is at the root. What will determine if the "tree" is cut down?

What does "thrown into the fire" mean?

Paraphrase John's message contained in verse 10?

Is this message still true for us today? Please explain.

Many people today would consider this verse offensive. Many of the Jewish leaders did also. Why do you think John was so bold in making this statement?

Are we to be that bold? Please explain.

What are some reasons we may hesitate to be this bold?

11. In verse 11, John says more about baptizing. "Baptize" means "to dip; immerse; submerge for a religious purpose; to saturate." Why do think John submerged people?

Read Colossians 2:11-13 and Romans 6:3-5. According to these scriptures, why does John

John explains why He is baptizing. What does he say?

What does baptism have to do with repentance?

12. In verse 11, why did John baptize with water?

What does John say about the One Who is to come after him?

What does John mean he is not fit to carry the coming One's sandals? Why does he say this? Who would usually carry the sandals?

John then speaks of another baptism. What is it?

Remember, "baptize" means to immerse, overwhelm, or submerge. What does it mean to you to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?

Look at Ezekiel 36:26-27, Joel 2:28-29, and Isaiah 44:3. How did Jesus fulfill these scriptures?

How do you feel personally about the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

13. In addition, John says the Coming One will not only baptize us with the Holy Spirit but also with what?

What is the significance of being baptized with fire?

What does it mean for a person to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire?

Why might some people shy away from this?

What is the end result of being baptized with fire?

14. Verse 12 mentions Jesus will have a "winnowing fork" in his hand. What is a winnowing fork? (See Ruth 1:22.)

How would the Jews during Jesus' time harvest wheat?

What is the chaff? What happens to it?

How would explain John the Baptist's image to people today?

Is John's description still valid today? Please explain.

15. What happens in verse 13?

What was John's reaction? Why did John react this way?

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt inadequate to carry out Jesus' instructions? If so, would you share?

What was Jesus' response to John in verse 15? Jesus was without sin, so how would you explain Jesus' answer?

What does Jesus mean when He says, "Let it be so now"?

What does it mean to you that Jesus wanted to "fulfill all righteousness"?

16. What happens in verse 16 when Jesus came up out of the water?

What is the significance of the Spirit of God appearing as a dove?

Who saw the Spirit descending as a dove? (See Luke 3:22.)

What does God say and to whom is He saying it?

How might you have reacted if you were in that crowd?

17. The appearance of the Holy Spirit as a dove marked the beginning of a new covenant. The same Spirit that fell upon Jesus is the same Spirit that will fall on all believers. What does this mean to you?

With the appearance of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' public ministry begins. What does this tell us about our ministry?

Why do we need the Holy Spirit to carry out the work of Jesus Christ?

How has the Holy Spirit enabled you to minister in ways above your own ability?

Matthew 4

1. We now encounter a most interesting aspect of Jesus' public ministry. After being baptized and having the Holy Spirit rest upon Him, Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. How would explain who the adversary or the devil is?

Why do you think more people believe in heaven than in the adversary?

Read Isaiah 14:11-15. What does this tell us about the enemy?

Why would God send Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted?

What does it mean to you to be tempted? Who is doing the tempting?

The Greek definition of "tempt" means "experience, trial; to prove in either a good or bad sense; to put to the test." Why does God test us?

How do you usually react to being tested?

What are some of the temptations we might face that will tempt us to compromise our faith?

2. Why do you think Jesus fasted before the temptations started?

Why are we to fast?

Have you ever fasted? If so, why and what were the results?

In verse 3, by what name does the tempter call Jesus?

What can you learn about the name Son of God? Why is this title given to Jesus?

Some say that "if" is the biggest little word in any language. When someone begins a sentence with "if," what is their true intent?

Suppose someone said to you, "If Jesus is real, then prove it." Are they doubting His existence? Please explain.

Are they seriously searching for the truth?

How would you respond to such a question?

3. What was the first temptation?

What was the second temptation?

What was the third temptation?

The first temptation appealed to the desire of the flesh (physical needs and desires). The second, to the desire of the eyes (coveting, possessions, wealth). The third, to the desire of pride or self-worth. Look at *Genesis 3:6*. How are these three temptations similar to what Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden?

Some say that all temptations will fall into one of these three categories. Do you agree? Please explain.

Would you share some temptations that fall into each of these categories?

4. In each temptation, the enemy does not deny the truth or deny *God's* existence. Instead, he twists the truth just enough. Do you still see this happening today? If so, can you give some examples?

What is the purpose of twisting the truth instead of denying the truth?

How did Jesus respond to the first temptation?

What does it mean to you that we are to live on every word that comes from the mouth of God?

What would you say to someone who feels part of the Bible is no longer applicable?

In the second temptation, the enemy also uses scriptures, but he uses them to tempt Jesus. How can the misuse of scriptures be used to tempt us?

What does it mean to take scripture "out of context"?

How did Jesus respond to the enemy's use of scripture?

Why are we not to test or put God to the test?

What is the difference between praying for a miracle and putting God to the test?

Look again at the third temptation. What did the enemy offer Jesus?

For this to be a temptation, the enemy had to have the ability to give all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus. What does this tell us about the enemy? Look at John 12:31.

What was Jesus' response to the third temptation?

Look at Philippians 2:9-11. What has God promised Jesus?

What the enemy offered Jesus is what God promised. Why was this a temptation?

How important is it for us to wait for God's time instead of our time?

In each instance, Jesus quoted scriptures to resist the temptations. What does this tell us?

Also, each scripture Jesus quoted was from the Old Testament. Why is it important for us to know all of the Bible and not just part of it?

5. What does Jesus say to the tempter in verse 10? What does the tempter do?

What does this tell us about Jesus' authority?

Who comes to aid Jesus?

Read Hebrews 13:2. What does this tell us about angels?

6. What can we learn about being tested from Jesus' being tempted in the wilderness?

If you feel comfortable, what are some lessons you have learned from being tested?

What would you tell a new Christian about being tested?

7. What does Jesus learn when He returns from the wilderness?

Where does Jesus go after the temptations?

He grew up in Nazareth, but He goes to Galilee. Why?

Jesus was once again fulfilling prophecy that we might know He is the Messiah. Does this mean that Jesus did not have a choice? Please explain.

What does it mean that people were living in darkness?

In what way is Jesus the great light?

What does this mean for us?

What was Jesus' message as He arrived in Galilee?

This is the same message of John the Baptist. What can we learn from this?

Has this simple but profound message changed over the years?

8. How do you suppose an earthly king would go about securing his kingdom?

The Jewish people were looking for a mighty king who would deliver them from the Romans and reestablish the glory of Israel. Yet, whom does Jesus call to be His disciples?

What exactly does Jesus say to them?

What was their reaction?

At the moment when we truly understand Who Jesus is, He calls to us in the same way. How did you respond?

Do you feel "qualified" to follow in His footsteps and to be a "fisher of men?"

Why do you think James and John were the first two called?

How can this inspire and encourage us?

9. Verse 23 gives us a picture of Jesus' ministry. What does it tell us Jesus was doing?

Jesus was teaching, preaching, and healing. What is the difference between teaching and preaching?

Are we called to do the same things? Please explain.

Do you feel comfortable teaching others about Jesus? Please explain.

What qualifies us to teach, preach, and heal?

What was the result of Jesus' ministry?

Look ahead to Matthew 5:15-16. How does this relate to Jesus' ministry? What does it mean we are to do?

How can we let our light shine so others can see without becoming the focus?

