

(S) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. First, we will learn about the origin of each Bible book: who wrote it and when and where he wrote it. Second, we will learn about how the Bible book may be divided into parts. Third, we will learn the main contents and messages of each Bible book. Finally, we will learn how to understand some difficult parts of the Bible book.

Today's teaching is: THE INTRODUCTION OF MATTHEW - PART 3. Today, we will learn about the main messages of the Gospel of Matthew.

POINT 7. MATTHEW TEACHES THAT JESUS IS THE GREAT PROPHET

First. Jesus was the Prophet in the Old Testament and fulfilled the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

1 Peter 1:10-11 says that "the Spirit of Christ" in the prophets of the Old Testament was pointing to and predicting about the sufferings and glories of the Coming Messiah, Jesus Christ! Thus, *Jesus Christ himself was the eternal Prophet who prophesied through the Old Testament prophets!* Matthew looks backwards and his purpose is to show that Jesus Christ, who lived as a human on earth, is the Messiah and that the major events of his life took place in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. More than forty times Matthew says, "What was said through the prophet ... was fulfilled" (2:17).

For example, many details of the prophecies concerning his suffering, death and burial were fulfilled. Zechariah 11 prophesied that he would be sold for thirty pieces of silver. Psalm 41 prophesied that he would be betrayed by one of his friends. Zechariah 13 prophesied that his disciples would be scattered. And at his crucifixion, Psalm 22 prophesied that the people would offer Jesus gall and vinegar to drink; they would divide up his clothes by casting lots; and the passers by would shake their heads and insult him, challenging him to rescue himself and even challenging God to rescue him from the cross. Amos 8 prophesied that there would be three hours of darkness from noon onwards. Psalm 22 prophesied that Jesus would shout "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Isaiah 53 prophesied that Jesus would be buried in a rich man's grave. And Jonah 2 prophesied that he would be dead for three days.

Second. Jesus was the Prophet in the New Testament and fulfilled the prophecies he made during his life on earth.

In Exodus 18:15-19, Moses prophesied, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people" (Act 3:22-23). In Matthew 17:5 God himself said that Jesus Christ is this Prophet and that all people must listen to him! Thus, Jesus Christ himself is still the eternal Prophet who speaks the words of God and who prophesies in the New Testament!

Matthew also looks forward and describes how Jesus as Prophet prophesies his own suffering, death and resurrection. At least five times Jesus prophesied his future suffering, for example, in Matthew 20:18-19 he says, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" In Matthew 26:2 he even prophesied *when* this would happen. He says, "As you know, the Passover is two days away - and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." Everybody can read in Matthew 26-28 how all this was literally fulfilled!

Third. Jesus was the Prophet in the New Testament who prophesied what will happen in the future in this present world.

In Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Jesus as Prophet prophesies clearly that before the end of the history of this present world, the gospel will be preached to every nation in the world and that Christians will be persecuted by non-Christians. He prophesied that there will be many wars and disasters in the world, a Great Tribulation in the end unequalled in the history of the world and that many false Christs and false prophets will appear trying to mislead the Christians. He prophesied that he himself will finally come on the clouds with power and great glory, and everybody in the east and in the west will see his coming! Then the resurrection from the dead and the Great Judgement of all people will take place. He will send out his angels to gather the elect from every country in the world and he will judge all people in the world on the basis of their relationship to Jesus Christ.

POINT 8. MATTHEW TEACHES THE REVELATION OF GOD'S HISTORY OF SALVATION

Matthew shows that Christianity is *not an interval of Judaism, but supersedes the Old Testament Israel* and is far more comprehensive than Israel. Jesus came to make atonement for the sins of very many people of all the nations in the world. The gospel will be preached to all the nations in the world.

First. Jesus came to fulfil God's promises to the natural nation of Israel and to warn Israel.

Matthew begins by pointing out clearly that Jesus Christ *first* came to the Jews in order to fulfil the promises that God made to his Old Testament people. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them (5:17-20). Jesus was first of all sent to the lost sheep of Israel (15:24) and he sends his disciples with the clear instruction not to go among the Gentiles or to enter any town of the Samaritans, but rather to go to the lost sheep of Israel (10:5-6). The gospel is *the good news* that the long-expected Messiah has indeed come!

But at the same time, the gospel of the kingdom was a warning to the Jewish nation, that if they continued to harden their hearts in unbelief, God would exclude them from his kingdom, while he would take very many Gentiles into his kingdom as his people.

For example, in Matthew chapters 5-7, the interpretations of the Law, which were highly regarded in Israel, were rejected by Christ.

In Matthew chapters 8-9, in spite of the miracles Jesus performed in Israel, the religious leaders of Israel continued in their unbelief and opposition. When Jesus forgave sins, they accused Jesus of blaspheming (9:2-3). When he ate with tax collectors and sinners, they despised him (9:10-11;11:19). When he raised a girl from the dead, they laughed at him (9:23-24). When he drove out demons, they said that he did it by the power of Satan (9:32-34).

In Matthew chapter 11, he denounced the unrepentant cities of Israel.

Matthew chapter 12-13 describes how the Jews through their leaders hardened their hearts and rejected their Messiah. When he showed mercy on the Sabbath to the hungry, the Pharisees mercilessly condemned the innocent (12:1-8). When he healed a person on the Sabbath, they plotted to kill him (12:11-14). When he healed a blind and mute person, they accused him of being an agent of Satan (12:22-24). Therefore, Jesus said that the prophecy in Isaiah (6:9-10) had come into fulfilment. The Israelites had stopped their ears for his teachings and now they could not hear nor understand it anymore. They had shut their eyes for his miracles and now they could not see its significance anymore. Israel had hardened their hearts and now their hearts would be hardened and they could not repent anymore (13:13-15).

In Matthew chapter 15, Jesus exposes the Jewish religious leaders as putting their man-made traditions above God's word, of worshipping God in vain and of being blind guides who lead their people into a pit. Jesus warns, "Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots" (15:13).

In his parables in Matthew chapter 21, he teaches that the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom ahead of the unrepentant chief priests and elders of Israel (21:31). And he says to them, "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." As a result, they started to look for a way to arrest him.

Second. Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God among every nation in the world.

Matthew makes it very clear that Jesus did not only come for the Jews, but that he came for all people in the world. He came to establish the kingdom of God among all the nations of the world.

For example, in Matthew chapter 13, Jesus teaches that the field of his work is *the whole world* and that he sows "sons of the kingdom" everywhere in the world right up to the end of the age when the last judgement will take place (13:38,40).

And in Matthew chapter 28, when Jesus had fulfilled the demands of the Law and the prophecies of the Old Testament by his atoning death and resurrection, he tells his disciples that all authority in heaven and *everywhere on earth* has been given to him. And he gives his disciples the great commission, "Go and make disciples of *all nations* and ... teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (28:18-20).

Third. Jesus reveals how the kingdom of God will be perfectly completed at his second coming.

In Matthew 13:31-34, Jesus teaches that at his second coming, he will send out his angels to weed out of *his kingdom in its present form* "everything that causes sin" and "all who do evil". At the last judgement, the wicked people will be

thrown in hell, while the righteous will inherit the kingdom in its final form. *The kingdom of God in its final form* will be the new heaven and the new earth, which is described in Revelation 21-22. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful. Only those people whose names are written in Christ's "book of life" will enter the kingdom in its final form (Rev 21:27).

POINT 9. MATTHEW TEACHES THE REALITY AND GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

First. The Messiah as King in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament clearly prophesies the coming Messiah and his everlasting kingdom. For example, in Isaiah 9:7, Isaiah prophesied, "Of the increase of his government and peace *there will be no end*. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness *from that time on and for ever*." And in Daniel 7:14, Daniel prophesies, "He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is *an everlasting dominion* that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that *will never be destroyed*. In spite of these clear prophesies, the Jews in the time of Jesus expected a *nationalistic kingdom of the Jews*, in which the Messiah would conquer all their earthly enemies and establish an earthly kingdom in the world of which the Jews would be the rulers.

Second. Jesus as King in the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew shows that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah and that he has already come to establish his kingdom! In Matthew chapter 3, the herald of the Messiah, John the Baptist, goes before this ruler, just like a Roman officer had to go before his ruler, commanding that the roads be repaired over which his master would travel. According to the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3, this ruler is nobody less than "JaHWeH", "the LORD" himself (3:3)! And in fulfilment of Psalm 2, Jesus as "the Son of God" is established by God as the One who will inherit all the nations on earth (3:17; Ps 2:7-8).

Third. The kingdom of God in the Gospel of Matthew.

In the Gospel of Matthew the word "kingdom" is used 55 times and 13 of its 19 parables deal with the kingdom.

One. The kingdom of God is the kingdom of heaven.

"The kingdom of *heaven*" emphasises that this kingdom is established from heaven and it means essentially the same as "the kingdom of God" (Mt 13:31-32; Mk 4:30-32). In Daniel 2:44 the prophet says, "In the time of those kings, *the God of heaven* will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever!"

Two. The kingdom of God has a present and a future form.

The kingdom has a present form and is "among us" in the world, but it is "not of the world" (12:28; Jn 18:36). In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5-7 Jesus teaches how in the present time the citizens of the kingdom should live in his kingdom. The kingdom is *revealed* to the disciples of Jesus, but remains *a mystery* (obscure) to those who have hardened their hearts (13:11-17). The kingdom has presently *a mixed character*: there are weeds sowed among the wheat and there are bad fish among the good fish (13:25,48). But the kingdom also has a future form. At his second coming, Jesus will send his angels to weed out of his kingdom "everything that causes sin and all who do evil" (13:41; cf. 1 Cor 15:24-26).

Three. The entering of the kingdom has a cost.

A person's relationship to the kingdom determines his eternal destiny (13:36-43,47-50). The rich, young ruler had to learn that it is impossible to enter the kingdom through one's riches, power or position (19:23). Jesus teaches that the kingdom and its righteousness must be sought first (6:33). It must be entered through the narrow gate that leads to life, that is, it must be entered through faith and obedience to God's will (7:13,21). Only those who have a humble, trustful and submissive spirit of a child will enter the kingdom (18:3-4). The kingdom is very precious to possess, just like a treasure in a field. And it costs very much to establish. Just like buying a pearl, it costs everything a person has (13:44-46).

Four. The growth of the kingdom is spectacular, both outwardly and inwardly.

It grows like a small mustard seed into a tree and it pervades or influences everything like yeast in the dough (13:31-33). The gospel of the kingdom is now preached in every town and village (9:35) and it will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations (24:14). The kingdom is forcefully advancing and forceful men are laying hold of it (11:12).

Five. The people of the kingdom are different than the people in the world.

They forgive their brothers again and again from their heart (18:23f). Even the teachers of the kingdom are different than the Jewish teachers of the Law. According to Matthew 13:52, a genuine teacher of God's word must first become "a trained disciple of God's kingdom". Such a teacher is able to continually use the "old" and eternal truths of the Bible and apply them again and again to the "new" situations in the world!

Fourth. The institutions of the kingdom in the Gospel of Matthew.

One. What is the kingdom?

A short definition of the kingdom is the following: The kingdom of God is the kingship, sovereign rule and complete power of God over all people and all things. In particular it is the kingship and rule of God through Jesus Christ that is recognized in the hearts and operative in the lives of God's people (6:10; 5:20). It is based on the work of salvation of Jesus Christ for his people and the application of that work by the Holy Spirit in his people. It results in the complete salvation of believers from beginning to end (19:24-25), in their constitution as a Church on earth (16:18-19), in their intellectual-, physical-, social- and spiritual influence on every aspect of human society (6:10; 13:33) and finally in a redeemed universe, the new heaven and new earth at the second coming of Jesus Christ (25:34).

Two. What are the visible institutions of the kingdom?

Jesus did not only preach the message of the kingdom, he gathered people around himself and organised them into his Church. Jesus called people into his fellowship and trained them to carry on his work. He called them his *disciples* and later send them out as his *apostles*. They formed the foundation for the visible Church everywhere in the world (16:18, Eph 2:20). Thus, the visible expression of the kingdom of God in the world in the present is the Church and the Church has both a missionary form (10:5-15) and a local form (18:17).

POINT 10. MATTHEW ALSO HAS AN APOLOGETIC PURPOSE

In all probability there is also an apologetic purpose behind the Gospel of Matthew. It answers a lot of questions about the Lord Jesus Christ that may well have been raised against him by his enemies.

The history about his childhood answers any charge of illegitimacy against Jesus.

The history about his flight to Egypt and return to Nazareth accounts for his residence in despised Nazareth rather than in Bethlehem.

The record about bribing the guard refutes any allegation that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus.

The inclusion of Gentiles and notable sinners in the genealogy of Jesus helps the Jewish Christians to realise that the Gospel is for sinners of all nations and thus makes a clear distinction between Judaism and Christianity.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read through Mark chapters 11 to 16.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".