

Preaching from Matthew

By Richard Cravy

In spending two years studying and preaching from the Gospel of Matthew, I was deeply touched by what I learned of the character of the disciple Matthew and the plan he crafted for his book. Being Jewish, but also despised and ostracized by accepted Jewish society, led him to have a special appreciation for how Jesus touched the untouchables and reached out to those otherwise unreachable. He also found in Jesus the fondest hopes that every son of Abraham had... the Messianic King! I tried to show in every message this unique perspective Matthew had.

Some of the thoughts I had and methods I used as I prepared and delivered these messages follow:

1. I constantly tried to weave into the presentation the historical, cultural, and geographical background. These were real events at a real time and place. I wanted my audience to “be there” and know what it must have been like.
2. The outlines I have are handwritten. In 37 years of preaching I have never gotten into the habit of typing my notes. Often my introduction and/or conclusion are missing or abbreviated in the notes. For me the moment often dictated what best to say at those times.
3. Looking back on my notes now, the heart and spirit of them have grown cold. At the time of delivery, for me and hopefully for my audience, the study and thoughts were dynamic, exciting and flowed easily.
4. Consider Matthew’s audience. I personally do not believe this Gospel was written for unbelievers, but for the early Christians. For Jewish Christians it strengthened their faith in Jesus as their Messiah and gave them ample ammunition from a Jewish point of view for teaching their families, friends and neighbors. For other Christians, it gave the historical and logical arguments sufficient to create faith when they shared it with their unbelieving associates. For the church as a whole it provided a clear set of teachings and practices by the Lord himself on evangelism, making disciples, and caring for others.
5. I was blessed with the luxury of having 35-40 minutes to present each lesson. This explains the amount of material covered, though often more material is in my notes than was actually spoken.

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Sermons from Matthew

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	PASSAGE	TITLE & SUMMARY
1	Overview	Called to Be a Disciple Who was Matthew (Jew, publican, wealthy) and how did this affect his being a disciple of Jesus References: Bible dictionary, ISBE, commentary introductions
2	Overview	Anticipation! Why were many Jews anticipating the Messiah, and how Matthew wrote a book to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of that hope. References: New Testament background, Daniel 9
3	Overview	The Book Unique characteristics of Matthew's book; what is a "gospel"; how the early church viewed this book; why first in the NT canon References: ISBE, commentary introductions
4	Chapter 1	Introducing the King The emphasis on Messiah as king in Matthew; his lineage and unusual birth
5	Chapter 2	The King Has Come! Acknowledged by Magi, Priests & Scribes, Herod... and prophecy!
6	3:1-12; 11:1-19	The King's Herald John's unique role, message, and baptism
7	3:13-17	The King's Baptism & Introduction Why Jesus was baptized; how God and John used this means to introduce Jesus
8	4:1-11	The Temptation Satan tests Jesus' resolve: Is he weakened by his flesh? (bread); Does he walk by faith or sight? (Pinnacle of Temple); How about a shortcut to the throne? (Mountain top).
9	4:12-25	His Ministry Begins A description of Galilee; A ministry of (1) Preaching, (2) Teaching, (3) Healing, and (4) Discipling
10	5:1-12	Sermon on Mount: The Beatitudes If Jesus is King, where is his kingdom & what are his laws? Matthew begins to provide the answer: Jesus reigns in people's hearts and lives
11	5:12-16	Sermon on the Mount: How the King Will Reign Over All Nations If Jesus is King, how will he conquer the world? Through the influence and teaching done by those who follow him (tie to Great Commission in 28:18-20)
12	5:17-20	Sermon on the Mount: Fulfilling the Law Throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus is accused by the Jews of breaking the law. Here, in Jesus' own words, is his response.
13	5:21-33	Sermon on the Mount: The Law's Core Meaning, I Murder, adultery and divorce begin with hate, lust, and covenant breaking.

14	5:33-48	Sermon on the Mount: The Law's Core Meaning, II Moving from overt outward sins, Jesus now addresses three areas over which the "legalists" often quibbled to justify themselves. The real answer to oaths, vengeance, and dealing with enemies.
15	6:1-4	Sermon on the Mount: Our Motivation Is... Jesus now shifts from sins to acts of righteousness. The first was one of the key Jewish good deeds: helping the poor.
16	6:5-15	Sermon on the Mount: When You Pray... Continuing his thoughts concerning motivation, Jesus addresses another key good deed: prayer.
17	6:16-24	Sermon on the Mount: Treasures in Heaven The third good deed discussed is fasting. In all three (benevolence, prayer, fasting) Jesus questions what men treasure, the praise of men or the pleasure of God.
18	6:25-34	Sermon on the Mount: God and Money Continuing the theme of treasures in heaven, Jesus says a life guided by trust in God rather than a wholesale pursuit of material things is a necessity for the child of God.
19	7:1-11	Sermon on the Mount: Commendable Kingdom Attitudes Here Jesus commends three attitudes which he demonstrated in his own life and ministry: Judging fairly, wise decisions, and ardent pursuit of righteousness.
20	7:12-27	Sermon on the Mount: Choose You This Day... Mindful of Joshua's challenge to Israel, Jesus pictures two pathways and two groups at the Judgment; these are determined by the choice of which foundation a person builds upon.
21	Chapters 8 & 9	The Power of the King, I Having presented the "manifesto" of the King, Matthew now demonstrates the power of the King. The role of miracles in Jesus' ministry: fulfilled prophecy, demonstrated his deity, revealed his love and grace, and convinced people he cared.
22	Chapters 8 & 9	The Power of the King, II Ten miracles of Jesus recorded in these two chapters. Besides demonstrating his power, Matthew seems clearly to emphasize that Jesus accepted those "outside" orthodox society – diseased, unclean, Roman, publican – all of whom the religious authorities considered under a curse from God (but God the Son accepted).
23	8:1-17	Jesus Helps a Soldier and Someone's Mother Detailed examination of these first two miracles recorded by Matthew and what we can learn about both Jesus and those he helped.
24	8:18-22	Who Will Follow Jesus? Another pattern emerges in Matthew: following stories of miracles are explanations of the nature of true discipleship.
25	8:23 – 9:8	Jesus Does the Impossible... Three Times! He demonstrates his power over nature, forces of evil, and sin by the miracles he performs.

26	9:9-13	<p>New and Different! For Matthew personally this section is the most personal in his gospel. This is when he learned for himself that “whosoever will may come” and follow Jesus. Another presentation of discipleship. (See Lesson 24)</p>
27	9:14-17	<p>Changing the Status Quo What Jesus was teaching and practicing could not fit within the framework of then current Jewish religion, thinking and culture. His was a revolution of the heart.</p>
28	9:18-30	<p>Faith Which Leads to a Decision Three more miracles are presented, all based on the faith of the recipients. Faith is based on evidence; real faith then acts!</p>
29	9:27-39	<p>Help for the Helpless Healing fulfilled prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-4). This section of Matthew concludes with a reminder to his readers that Jesus called them to imitate his ministry. The fields are still ready for harvest for those who minister like Jesus.</p>
30	10:1-42	<p>Sent to Lost Sheep of Israel Matthew’s acknowledgement that Jews were in need of the gospel. Jesus sends out missionaries (1-4) on a mission (5-16) to a mission field (17-33), and told them the mission response (34-42).</p>
31	11:1-19	<p>The Backlash Begins (Reactions to Jesus, I) John’s questioning shows that many were beginning to question if Jesus was The One because he did not meet their expectation. Matthew shows that Jehovah did not send Jesus to be what we expected, but to be who he was, and what we needed. Jesus re-assures John, praises John’s ministry, and critiqued the unbelieving response that both he and John received from the people who were supposed to waiting and prepared for his arrival.</p>
32	11:20-30	<p>Blessing or Woe (Reactions to Jesus, II) Continuing his condemnation of the unbelief of those who had the best opportunity to believe, he points out that the idolatrous Tyreans and Sidonians would have repented if he had gone to them, and (using hyperbole) says that Sodom would have more justification for their actions than his hearers. Then Matthew extends Jesus’ invitation to his readers... “come to me.”</p>
33	12:1-21	<p>Never Wrong to Do Right (Reactions to Jesus, III) Law allowed gleaning to satisfy hunger. It commended “mercy above sacrifice.” Pharisaic traditions took away from God’s intent for both the Sabbath and for mankind’s wellbeing.</p>
34	12:24-37	<p>Blaspheming Against the Spirit (Reactions, IV) Attributing Jesus’ power and ministry to Beelzebub (the Devil) made them guilty of the very thing the often accused Jesus of – blasphemy. Jesus shows the illogical nature of their unbelief.</p>
35	12:38-45	<p>We Want to See a Sign (Reactions, V) Review OT examples of unbelievers asking for a sign. Both Matthew and John note several examples of Jews ignoring clear evidence. Jesus again appeals to examples from Jewish history – this time to show people who believed when presented with the evidence.</p>

36	Chapter 13	<p>In Parables</p> <p>Matthew is systematically and persuasively presenting the evidence for Jesus identity as King: his genealogy, birth, fulfilling the law, miracles, teachings, and now parables. Two great prophets taught in parables and stories: Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Definition and characteristics of parables.</p>
37	13:1-23	<p>Parable of the Soils</p> <p>In a largely agricultural area, Jesus described a common scene. To his disciples he explained that it illustrated the various responses he (and they) would receive to the message from heaven.</p>
38	13:24-43	<p>Weeds and Mustard Seeds</p> <p>Jesus tells more stories reminiscent of OT stories, and illustrative of the work of the gospel in the hearts of men.</p>
39	13:44-58	<p>Three Parables and a Proverb</p> <p>Jewish people judged a rabbi by his teaching ability and wisdom. The parables of Jesus had both qualities to such a degree that many would say, “Never have we heard anyone speak like this.” Words are often more powerful than actions.</p>
40	13:54-14:13	<p>A Prophet Without Honor</p> <p>Jesus is rejected at Nazareth. Then Matthew shows us the dishonor heaped upon John – executed by Herod without any open complaints by Jewish leaders. Matthew concludes his section on Reactions to Jesus here.</p>
41	14:14-21	<p>Great Miracles I: Feeding 5,000</p> <p>Now begins a series of even greater miracles by Jesus. In effect, Matthew wants his readers to answer the question, “Is anything too great for Jesus?”</p>
42	14:22-36	<p>Great Miracles II: Walking on Water</p> <p>These miracles by Jesus could only be compared to those done by Moses. His power over nature is demonstrated here.</p>
43	15:1-20	<p>Traditions of Men</p> <p>Jesus found himself being judged based on keeping traditions, not faithfulness to God’s law. He accused them of adding to God’s law, replacing God’s law, and defining righteousness in terms of keeping the traditions.</p>
44	15:21-28	<p>Also to the Greeks</p> <p>Paul will later say (Romans 1:16-17) the gospel is for both Jew and Greek. Matthew will conclude his gospel with the Great Commission. Jesus did not judge men by their faces (color, gender, or race) but by their hearts.</p>
45	15:29-39	<p>Power of All Creation</p> <p>As Jesus returns from Gentile lands, he demonstrates by his healings and feeding the crowds that he wields the power of the Creator himself. Emphasis is made here (by me) that Jesus even created missing hands, legs, and eyes. (Check the meaning of “maimed” as compared to “lame.”)</p>
46	16:1-12	<p>The Leaven of Unbelief</p> <p>Jesus is having to deal with entrenched hypocrisy and unbelief among Jewish leaders. (Matthew is explaining to his readers why the Jewish nation under its leaders rejected Jesus.) No sign would be sufficient for them, not even the coming resurrection!</p>

47	16:13-20	<p>Who Am I? Jewish leaders have rejected his claims, the crowds are divided and/or apathetic... what about his own disciples? The issue still needs to be pressed today, both in our evangelism and in our congregations.</p>
48	16:21-28	<p>Victory Only Through Death The disciples (and Matthew's readers) could not fathom that the Christ must die and then rise from the grave. Further, the same awaits every follower of his.</p>
49	17:1-13	<p>We Saw His (Shekinah) Glory The transfiguration for the disciples confirmed their earlier confession of Jesus' identity. On the mount they saw the glory of Jehovah himself.</p>
50	17:14-27	<p>Sorting Out Difficulties Jesus goes from a mountaintop experience to a valley of needy people.</p>
51	18:1-7	<p>Humility in the Kingdom Again Matthew lets his readers hear Jesus teach key attitudes necessary among his disciples: humility and acceptance.</p>
52	18:6-20	<p>Acts of Humility More teaching for disciples: sacrificing to protect brothers, seeking the wayward, and earnest to restore.</p>
53	18:21-35	<p>A Parable about Forgiveness Necessity of forgiveness among his disciples taught by Jesus.</p>
54	19:1-12	<p>Jesus Teaches on Divorce We believe Matthew saw Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce as a vital doctrine for the early church. However, he is not implying that this answers every question, situation, and problem that might arise; instead it laid down a foundation of teaching from the Master himself to guide the early church.</p>
55	19:13-30	<p>The Rich Young Man Jews largely seemed to believe that wealth, health, and orthodoxy were the signs of a right relationship with God. Jesus has already debunked the orthodoxy (keeping traditions) and health (sick and disabled people) false perceptions. Now he rejects wealth and riches as a criteria of right standing with God.</p>
56	19:27-20:16	<p>What Will There Be for Us? After telling the rich, young ruler to give up his wealth to follow Jesus, the disciples wanted to know (Jesus had not ever actually said), "What's in this for us?" Jesus answer, given in the parable, is that God will give each of us more than we deserve out of his grace and goodness.</p>
57	20:17-28	<p>Lords & Servants Perhaps the lesson above prompted the disciples to openly start speculating about their coming positions of authority. Instead Jesus said crosses, not crowns, were awaiting them all. The ugly specter of the Herods, Roman governors, and even the priestly rulers showed what those who aspire to power look like. Jesus aspired to serve others. So does his disciple.</p>

58	20:29-34	<p>Have Mercy on Us!</p> <p>Now comes an object lesson on being a servant. While addressing Jesus as King (son of David), the blind men sought mercy. Two blind men could see by faith what others could not see with two good eyes – who Jesus was. And all this while Jesus ought to be concerned about himself as he approached Jerusalem.</p>
59	21:1-11	<p>Hosannah!</p> <p>“The king comes riding on a colt...” Fill in background on Passover in Jerusalem, and of the Maccabean victory almost 200 years before.</p>
60	21:12-16	<p>God’s House Has Become a Den of Thieves</p> <p>The priestly aristocracy had granted franchises for the sale of animals and exchange of money into the temple coins. These shops were set up in the Court of the Gentiles, so that gentiles who came to worship or observe or pray were both robbed of their money (exorbitant prices and exchange rates) and a place to worship God. Here again we see Matthew presenting the evangelistic heart of Jesus toward outsiders.</p>
61	21:23-31	<p>By What Authority</p> <p>The people honored him as king as he came into Jerusalem. Now the leaders deny he has any authority. Essentially Jesus asks them if they know what “1 +1 equals.” They could see what he did but they refused to add it all up and accept the conclusion.</p>
62	21:17-22, 28-46	<p>The Unfruitful Nation</p> <p>The fruitless fig tree and two parables demonstrate the king’s view of state of the Jewish nation and leadership. This would prove important to later believers who watch in horror as God would use the Romans to destroy the fruitless nation.</p>
63	22:1-14	<p>Missing the Wedding</p> <p>The king’s son is about to be married to his bride. Those invited have rejected the invitation. Others will take their place while they and their city are destroyed. The church (just about 55 days from coming into existence) is the bride of Christ.</p>
64	22:15-40	<p>Trying to Entrap Him</p> <p>The leaders take their best shot at trapping and discrediting Jesus. Taxes were a touchy subject to all – Romans, zealots, and ordinary citizens. The resurrection doctrine separated Pharisees and Sadducees. The most important commandment was loving God and neighbor; all others were only expressions of it.</p>
65	22:41-46	<p>Fresh Thinking</p> <p>Again, Jesus puts their “feet to the fire” by pressing them about his identity based on the obvious evidence. We must press the same issues today with people, not being sidetracked by other issues.</p>
66	Chapter 23	<p>Woe to You... Hypocrites</p> <p>Jesus pronounces deep grief (woe – <i>ouai</i> – an exclamation of grief, not anger) over the seven hypocrisies he sees in those who were supposed to be leading God’s people.</p>
67	24:1-34	<p>Coming! Matthew 24, Part I</p>
68	24:1-34	<p>Judgment! Matthew 24, Part II</p>

69	24:35-25:30	<p>When the Bridegroom Cometh</p> <p>Here Jesus uses teaching and more parables to explain clearly what is coming upon the Jews, both as fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy and as punishment for rejecting their King who has come.</p>
70	25:31-46	<p>On the Right Hand or Left?</p> <p>A lesson for his disciples, not the Jews. The unbelievers will be judged for rejecting the king, but the believers will also be judged by the king for how they treat each other!</p>
71	26:1-16	<p>She Has Done a Beautiful Thing</p> <p>No doubt, Jesus’ disciples were exulting at his powerful leadership and courage in Jerusalem. Then he reminds them again, “I will be crucified.” Here is a tale of three people and their relationship to Jesus: the woman, Simon the leper, and Judas.</p>
72	26:17-29	<p>The Last Supper, Part I</p> <p>The plot has been hatched between Judas and leaders. Celebrating the Passover with his disciples, Jesus does not reveal Judas’ treachery to the others. He institutes a memorial for the future, already knowing what lies beyond Calvary.</p>
73	26:17-29	<p>In Remembrance, Part II</p> <p>The Bread and the Cup; His Body and His Blood</p>
74	26:30-46	<p>In Gethsemane Alone</p> <p>Friends will fall away, Jesus will surrender to God’s will and his mission, and will walk this road alone.</p>
75	26:47-58	<p>The Kiss of Betrayal</p> <p>The leaders did not want to arrest Jesus during the Passover but now they are forced to. Betrayed by friends, lawbreaking by the law keepers... who is in charge through all this? Jesus!</p>
76	26:59-27:25	<p>The Question of the Hour</p> <p>Matthew clearly lays out the real “crime” Jesus would be executed for. This helped later Christians answer their critics that his crucifixion was not the execution of a criminal, but execution for who he claimed to be.</p>
77	27:26-66	<p>Handed Him Over to Be Crucified</p> <p>How the King of Heaven, the Son of God, and the Lamb of Passover, surrenders himself to be killed.</p>
78	28:1-15	<p>Alive!</p> <p>Matthew barely sketches out the evidence that Jesus was alive. The early church was already well aware of the eyewitnesses and evidence to which Matthew refers. Remember he speaks as one who was there. Even the rulers acknowledged the empty tomb.</p>
79	28:16-20	<p>All Nations (Great Commission, I)</p> <p>By the time Matthew writes his gospel (somewhere between 50 and 80 AD), the evidence of who Jesus was and the evidence of his resurrection have stood the test of time. Throughout Jerusalem, Judea, and the Roman Empire and beyond untold thousands of thoughtful and intelligent people have heard and believed. But the rest of the world still was waiting to hear. Thus we hear the Great Commission.</p>

80	28:16-20	Go! (Great Commission, II) Jesus' ministry and example before his disciples illustrated the Great Commission. Now they must go – go to all people everywhere – go making disciples – go teaching them to obey everything he had commanded – go with Him accompanying them.
81	Overview	Matthew – the Final Chapter The value of the book of Matthew for the early church and for us today.

This series of messages was delivered between June, 2004 and May, 2006 at the Tanglewood Church of Christ in Odessa, Texas (www.tanglewoodcofc.org). A total of 90 sermons were preached (some of the above 81 titles were split over two weeks). The above message descriptions simply try to capture the essence of what I was trying to communicate in that sermon.

If you would like to have a complete set of my handwritten notes and outlines, they would cost \$10 per set (about 170 pages bound) plus postage. You may call our offices at 800-687-2121 if you wish to order them. You may also e-mail me at rcravy@sibi.cc.