

unit  
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## Goals

Throughout these lessons, our students will examine whether they truly know and believe in God. Do they see God as the supreme ruler of heaven and earth, time and eternity or merely as One who provides for them in times of need? Our students will consider whether they have truly placed the Lord Jesus as King in their hearts and lives, and whether the Lord Jesus plays a role in the infinite choices that they make in their everyday lives.

Our students will also learn that as people of God, we need to abide by the principles and values of His kingdom. These values are often in direct conflict with those of the world. This conflict is reflected in the tug-of-war situations our students often experience between what they like to do and what they are expected to do as citizens of God's kingdom. However, Jesus Christ promises that those who abide by the principles and laws of God will be ultimately blessed with life everlasting.

**Teacher Devotional**

Our Lord Jesus reminded us that we are the light of the world (Matt 5:14). However, why is it that we often hide our faith? Instead of taking a stand for our beliefs, we often avoid trouble by compromising our beliefs or ignoring crises that will help us build a stronger faith. The bottom line? We are too concerned about others' reactions that we fail to shine for Him or even show God's love to them.

Take a moment to reflect on how you stand up for your faith. How can you set a better example for your students? How might your students be standing up for their faith?

*Do Not Love the World*

*"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."  
(1 John 2:15-16)*

## Lesson 1

The Gospel of Matthew  
The King**Listed Scriptures**

Mt 1:18-2:1-23, 8:18-9:1-17, 12:1-50, 14:13-21, 15:1-20, 29-31, 16:13-17;  
Lk 2:25-35

**Lesson Aim**

- 1) To enable students to recognize that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal King
- 2) To enable students to evaluate and improve upon their understanding of the Lord Jesus

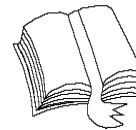
**Memory Verse**

"And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Mt 1:21)

**Bible Reading For This Week** (for students and teachers)

Matthew 1-9

## B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D

**Author:**

The author of the Gospel of Matthew is commonly believed to be Matthew. Matthew was also called Levi, which means "joined". He was the son of Alphaeus, a Jew from the Province of Galilee. Before his call to follow the Lord, Matthew occupied the unpopular post of tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government. However, when the Lord called him, he repented and became a disciple and later an apostle of Christ (Mt 9:1-11). Matthew followed the Lord Jesus and wrote down in full detail all that he heard and saw. According to tradition, Matthew preached in Palestine for quite a number of years. Later, he traveled to other countries and ended up in Ethiopia where he preached and established churches till he was killed in 60 AD.

**Time of writing:**

There is no record of the exact time of when the Gospel of Matthew was written. But it is generally believed to have been written before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. This is based on the fact that when Matthew Chapter 24 was written, the city of Jerusalem did not seem to have been under attack.

**Purpose of writing:**

For centuries, the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah who the prophets of the Old Testament had foretold. They believed that the Messiah (“the anointed one”) would rescue them from their Roman oppressors, establish a new kingdom and rule the world with justice. Over the years, various figures came and went, some claiming to be the Messiah, while others were regarded by the people as likely candidates. But none proved convincing. However, many Jews overlooked prophecies which also spoke of this king as a suffering servant who would be rejected and killed. It is no wonder then, that few recognized the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. How could this humble teacher from Nazareth be their king? Hadn’t He been rejected by the nation’s leaders? Was He really Israel’s long-awaited Messiah? Matthew’s gospel answers with a resounding yes! In this first gospel, Matthew fills his account with Old Testament prophecies that point to the Lord Jesus as God’s chosen one. He wants his fellow Jews to study their scriptures and find Jesus to be the Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, the son of God. In his gospel, Matthew constantly uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” to tell the Jews that the Lord Jesus is here to establish a kingdom, but that it’s different from the one they anticipated. The Lord was not sent to be an earthly king, but a heavenly king. He did not come to rescue them from their Roman oppressors, but from the oppression of sin and Satan. The Lord did not come to reign over people’s land but to rule over people’s lives and hearts. His kingdom would be much greater than David’s because it would never end. Matthew tries to convince his audience (the Jews) and us today to recognize Jesus Christ for who He really is and worship Him as king of our lives.

## W A R M U P



Have you tried convincing someone of something they don’t believe in? How hard was it? How did you remove the obstacles? What was the stigma that prevented them from seeing the truth?

Part 1  
Who is  
Lord Jesus?



“Who is Lord Jesus?” was a question that baffled the minds of many. As the Lord Jesus went about preaching the kingdom of heaven, healing the sick and casting out demons, much debate and confusion arose regarding His identity. The multitude, the Pharisees and teachers of the law, and even the close circle of disciples who followed Jesus constantly questioned who He was.

## A . Who is Lord Jesus?

**a. The Multitude**

The multitude was perplexed and curious about the man Jesus and the wonderful works He performed. Often the question, “who is He?” arose among the people as they sought to know His identity. But the Lord did not want to reveal He was the Messiah for fear that the people would think He had come to be the king who would overthrow the Roman Empire. Who did the multitude say Lord Jesus was?

**1. The Lord Jesus was a prophet**

In Matthew 16:13-20, the Lord asked His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of man is?” The disciples reported a variety of answers. Some thought He was John the baptist who had come back; others suggested Elijah, or Jeremiah or another of the ancient prophets. This common view may have stemmed from Deuteronomy 18:18, where God said He would raise up a prophet from among the people. The populace thought the Lord Jesus was a prophet because of the signs and miracles He performed (Lk 7:16, Jn 6:14; 7:40-43; 9:17).

**2. The Lord Jesus was a teacher**

Often the Lord was regarded as a great Teacher, or Rabbi. The teachers of the law or rabbis in those days were those who were familiar with the law and who gave spiritual instruction to the people. Yet the people recognized that the Lord Jesus was not like the ordinary teachers. He did not

**Teaching Tips**

*Students can be divided into various groups representing “the multitude,” “the Pharisees,” and “the disciples” to discuss who they thought the Lord Jesus was. Students can then come together to present their findings.*

teach like the scribes and the Pharisees who often quoted from well-known rabbis to give their words or arguments more authority. The people perceived that the Lord spoke with great authority, wisdom and power (Mt 7:28-29; Mt 13:54-58; Mt 22:15-22).

### **3. The Lord Jesus was a provider**

John 6:1-14 records an incident where the Lord Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. After they had their fill, the crowds came again the next day looking for Him. The Lord saw their real intentions, and He said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves" (Jn 6:26). During His ministry, the people saw Jesus Christ as a provider, a healer, or someone who could satisfy their physical needs. They had failed to truly understand who He truly was. They came to Him for physical healing, but had neglected to come to Him for spiritual healing. They came for food for their bodies, but had failed to seek the Bread of Life, the Lord Jesus Himself.

## **b. The Pharisees**

Who did the Pharisees and scribes think the Lord Jesus was?

### **1. The Lord Jesus was a blasphemer**

When the Lord Jesus appeared before Caiaphas, the high priest asked Him bluntly, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" The Lord answered, "I am." The leaders were outraged that the Lord had made Himself equal with God, and they condemned Him as deserving death (Mk 14:61-64). According to the law, anyone who blasphemed against God was guilty and punishable by death (Lev 24:16). However, the religious leaders did not realize that the very person they were accusing and condemning was in fact God Himself.

### **2. The Lord Jesus was a lawbreaker**

John 9:1-14 records how on the Sabbath, the Lord Jesus healed a man with congenital blindness. When the Pharisees realized this, they were infuriated because according to the Jewish law, no work was to be done on the Sabbath. The Lord, by kneading the clay and healing the blind man, had "worked." This made Him a lawbreaker. In their eyes, He was not a man from God for He did not obey the many traditions and laws as they did. On several occasions, the Lord violated the Sabbath or did not perform certain rites such as the washing of hands (Jn 9:16; Lk 13:10-17; Lk 14:1-6; Jn 5:1-16; Mt 15:1-6).

### **3. The Lord Jesus was a threat**

The zeal and commitment that the Pharisees showed in following the Old Testament law and traditions won them the admiration of the common people. They were highly respected in the community and had great influence in the synagogues. But they hated the Lord because He challenged their proud attitudes and dishonorable motives. Although the Jewish leaders had turned against Him, they were jealous of His popularity and authority. Matthew 21:15 records that they were jealous and indignant about the wonderful things that the Lord did. They valued their status in the community and their opportunity for personal gain so much that they lost sight of their goal as religious leaders – to point people toward God. Of all people, they should have recognized the Messiah, but they refused to acknowledge Him because they were not willing to give up their treasured position and power. When the Lord exposed their attitudes, He became their enemy instead of their Messiah.

## **c. The disciples**

Who did the disciples think the Lord Jesus was?

### **1. The Lord Jesus was an earthly Messiah**

Although the disciples followed the Lord Jesus throughout His ministry, they too also wondered who He was (Mk 4:41). Despite seeing the miracles that the Lord performed and hearing His words, the disciples were often slow in comprehending the works and teachings of the Lord (Mt 4:13; 4:40; 6:52; 8:33; 16:8) and did not understand the real purpose for His coming to the world. Like the rest of the Jews, the disciples were waiting for the expected Messiah who would overthrow Rome and establish His kingdom. But the Lord came not to establish a kingdom of this world centered in palaces and thrones, but centered in the hearts and lives of His followers. They could not grasp that the values of God's eternal kingdom were different from the values of the world. But only when the Lord completed His earthly mission and when the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost did the disciples come to truly know the Lord.

## **B . Who Knew Lord Jesus?**

Who were those who truly knew the Lord Jesus?

- a. John the baptist (Jn 1:29)
- b. Simeon (Lk 2:25-35)
- c. Anna the prophetess (Lk 2: 36)
- d. The wise men (Mt 2:2)
- e. Demons (Mt 8:28-29; Lk 4:33, 34)

### Part 2 Who is the Messiah?



The Jews had preconceived notions of what the Messiah should be like. He should come from an extraordinary background and be a great military commander who would free Israel from Rome's oppression. When the Lord came professing that He was Christ, they did not recognize that He was the Messiah. They could not believe in His wisdom or great power. They could only see what was before them, and that was an ordinary man like themselves. What were the various aspects about the Lord that prevented the Jews from accepting Him as their Messiah?

## **A . Lowly Background**

- a. In Bethlehem, the city of kings, the Lord Jesus was born in a small stable (Micah 5:2). He entered the world and became a part of a family so poor that Mary, His mother, had to offer two doves rather than the prescribed lamb as the sacrifice for her purification.
- b. Although the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He grew up in the city of Nazareth. Nazareth was a small insignificant town despised by the Jews. In John 1:46, Nathanael commented, "What good can come out of Nazareth?" The bad reputation that Nazareth had could be attributed to the Galileans' lack of culture and rude dialect, but also because of the laxity of morals and the Roman garrison that was housed there.
- c. The Lord Jesus was the son of a carpenter (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). The Lord Himself would have followed the same trade. The people of Jesus' hometown saw Him not as their Messiah, but someone very much like themselves. Their preconceived notions made it impossible for them to accept His message, and their prejudice blinded them to the truth.

- d. Because He had a poor background, the Lord Jesus did not receive much education. In John 7:15, the Jewish leaders were surprised when they heard the Lord teach with such authority even though He had never studied.

## **B . Without Outward Appearance**

The Lord Jesus did not have any outward appearance or charisma that attracted the people. Isaiah 53:2 tells us that "He had no form or comeliness that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him." Due to hardships and suffering, the Lord looked beyond His years (Jn 8:57).

## **C . Without Status**

During the time of the Lord Jesus, the tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners were social outcasts, and yet He associated himself with them (Mt 9:9-13). The Lord was also "despised and rejected by men .... like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not" (Is 53:3).

## **D . Not Like a King**

The Jews were expecting a very different king. In their eyes, the Lord did not have what it took to crush the Roman Empire. He did not act, behave, or speak as a king should. Kings lived in palaces whereas the Lord did not even have a place to lay His head (Mt 8:20). Kings and rulers of this world expect to be served, but the Lord came to serve. The Lord emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Phil 2:5-8). He came to serve the needy, the poor, the sinners and the outcasts in society. He was humble, gentle and loving. The Lord walked the roads of Palestine teaching the truth of salvation and healing the sick. He pointed the people's hopes and hearts to the kingdom of heaven. He raised no army, He sought no earthly glory. He humbled Himself to the point of dying on the cross.

### C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



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Who did the multitude, Pharisees and disciples think the Lord Jesus was?

- 2 When and how did you come to recognize Christ?
- 3 What were the people's motives for seeking the Lord?
- 3 What are our motives for following the Lord Jesus?
- 4 What were the things that prevented the Pharisees and scribes from recognizing the Lord Jesus' true identity?
- 5 What can we learn from the way the Pharisees saw the Lord Jesus and the way we see and judge others?
- 6 How does knowing the Lord's background contribute to our understanding of the kind of Messiah He set out to be?
- 7 Which other characters in the Bible showed biased thoughts when judging others?

## L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



### *We Understand So Little*

Once there were two brothers who had spent all their lives in the city and had never even seen a field or pasture. So one day they decided to take a trip into the countryside. As they were walking along, they spied a farmer plowing and were puzzled about what he was doing.

*“What kind of behavior is this?” they asked themselves. “This fellow marches back and forth all day, scarring the earth with long ditches. Why should anyone destroy such a pretty meadow like that?”*

Later in the afternoon they passed the same place again, and this time they saw the farmer sowing grains of wheat in the furrows.

*“Now what’s he doing?” they asked themselves. “He must be a madman. He’s taking perfectly good wheat and tossing it into these ditches!”*

*“The country is no place for me,” said one of the brothers. “The people here act as if they have no sense. I’m going home.” And he went back to the city.*

*But the second brother stayed in the country, and a few weeks later, he saw a wonderful change. Fresh green shoots began to cover the field with a lushness he had never imagined. He quickly wrote to his brother and told him to hurry back to see the miraculous growth. So his brother returned from the city, and he too was amazed at the change. As the days passed they saw the green earth turn into a golden field of tall wheat. And now they understood the reason for the farmer’s work. Then the wheat grew ripe, and the farmer came with his scythe and began to cut it down. The brother who had returned from the city couldn’t believe it.*

*“What is this imbecile doing now?” he exclaimed. “All summer long he worked so hard to grow this beautiful wheat, and now he’s destroying it with his own hands! He is a madman after all! I’ve had enough. I’m going back to the city.”*

*But his brother had more patience. He stayed in the country and watched the farmer collect the wheat and take it to his granary. He saw how cleverly he separated the chaff, and how carefully he stored the rest. And he was filled with awe when he realized that, by sowing a bag of seed, the farmer had harvested a whole field of grain. Only then did he truly understand that the farmer had a reason for everything he did. (A Jewish folktale)*

### **Questions to think about:**

1. Coming from the city, the two brothers had no idea what the farmer was doing and sometimes ridiculed him for his actions. How do the brothers’ responses reflect those of people today?  
(As humans, we often make the common mistake of judging by outer appearances. We often react and pass judgement too quickly. We like to stick to things we are familiar or comfortable with. We are quick to reject what we don’t understand or can’t accept. We often lack patience to seek and observe. Thus, we miss a lot of chances to learn and see the truth.)
2. Compare the two brothers’ actions. During the time of the Lord Jesus, only a few recognized who He truly was, whereas the majority missed the mark altogether. How do you see this in the people we preach to? How do you react when we do not understand God’s will or His actions?
3. Today, we may take pride in the fact that we are baptized, attend church regularly, pray and know the Bible. But do we really know the Lord? How much do we know Him? How do we perceive Him? How can we see and know our Lord better?

(Oftentimes we come to church and merely go through the motions of worshipping God. Even though we pray or read the Bible, we do not get much out of it. The key to seeing God more clearly lies in our hearts. Jeremiah 29:13 reads, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." To know God better, we need to actively pursue God and seek Him with our hearts.)

## R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



*The Pharisees knew a lot about God, but they didn't know God. The people knew the Lord as someone who could heal them physically and provide for their material needs, but they did not know that He could provide with eternal life. Many came for physical blessings, but not many came for the Lord alone. The Lord Jesus was more than just a great leader, good example, good influence, or a prophet. He is the Son of God. May God grant us the spirit of revelation and understanding so that we may truly know the Lord.*

## Lesson 2

### The Gospel of Matthew The Kingdom of God

#### Listed Scriptures

Mt 4:23-25; Mt 13; Jn 18:33-37; Heb 12:28; Rev 21:1-4; 1 Cor 4:20; Lk 11:20

#### Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to know about the kingdom of God
- 2) To enable students to realize the importance of having God as king of our lives

#### Memory Verse

"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Lk 17:20-21)

#### Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Matthew 10-19

## B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" was the message that John the baptist went about proclaiming. Not long later, the Lord Jesus too began His ministry with those very same words (Mt 3:2; 4:17, 23). Throughout the entire book of Matthew, the message of the kingdom of heaven ring; it is mentioned about 50 times. Why was this message so important? What was its significance to the people then and to us today?

Since the beginning of time, God kept the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven a secret (1 Cor 2:7-10; Col 1:26-27). But now with the coming of the Lord Jesus, God was bringing into fulfillment what He had kept hidden from the beginning of the world and what had been prophesied in the Old Testament. Prophets of old had spoken powerfully of a coming kingdom governed by a ruler who was to come from David's line. The king would be God Himself in human form (Is 9:6-7). The ruler would bring peace, comfort, justice, knowledge, prosperity and holiness. All