

# GENESIS

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**Author:** *Moses*

**Theme:** *Beginnings*

**Date of Writing:** *c. 1445—1405 B.C.*

### **Background**

Genesis is the first book of the OT and essentially serves as an introduction to the whole Bible. The book's title in Hebrew comes from the first word of the book, *bereshit* ("in the beginning"). The English title, "Genesis," is the Greek translation of the Hebrew title and means "the origin, source, creation or beginning of something." Genesis is "the book of beginnings."

The author of Genesis is not mentioned in the book itself, but other parts of the Bible indicate that Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch (the first five OT books), including Genesis (e.g., 1Ki 2:3; 2Ki 14:6; Ezr 6:18; Ne 13:1; Da 9:11-13; Mal 4:4; Mk 12:26; Lk 16:29, 31; Jn 7:19-23; Ac 26:22; 1Co 9:9; 2Co 3:15). Also, ancient Jewish writers and leaders of the early church all testify that Moses was the author/editor of Genesis. Since the entire history of Genesis took place before Moses lived, his role in writing Genesis mainly was to integrate, under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, all the available written and oral accounts—from Adam to Joseph—that are now preserved in Genesis. Perhaps Moses is referring to some of these historical records the 11 times he uses the phrase, "this is the account of" (Heb *'elleb toledot*), which can also be translated "these are the histories by" (see 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2).

Genesis accurately records creation, the beginnings of human history and the origin of the Hebrew people and God's covenant relationship with them (based on God's laws and promises and the people's faithfulness to God) through Abraham's family line (see article on GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB, p. 64). The historical reliability of Genesis as part of God's inspired Word is confirmed in the NT by the Lord Jesus (Mt 19:4-6; 24:37-39; Lk 11:51; 17:26-32; Jn 7:21-23; 8:56-58) and by the apostles, i.e., Jesus' disciples, church leaders and pioneers as the church was starting out (Ro 4; 1Co 15:21-22, 45-47; 2Co 11:3; Gal 3:8; 4:22-24, 28; 1Ti 2:13-14; Heb 11:4-22; 2Pe 3:4-6; Jude 1:7, 11). Modern archaeological discoveries also confirm the accuracy of historical information found in Genesis. Moses was extremely qualified to write this unique first book of the Bible, as he was highly educated in Egypt (Ac 7:22) and, more importantly, chosen and prepared by God.

### **Purpose**

Genesis provides a necessary foundation for the rest of the Pentateuch (the first five OT books) and the entire Bible. It also preserves the only trustworthy record about the beginnings of the universe, humankind, marriage, sin, cities, languages, nations, Israel and God's plan to restore his personal relationship with people. Through Genesis, God gives his covenant people in both the OT and NT a basic understanding of himself, creation, the human race, the fall into sin (see below), death, judgment, covenant and the promise of salvation to those who put their faith in him.

### **Survey**

Genesis divides naturally into two major parts. (A) Chs. 1—11 provide an overview of human beginnings from Adam to Abraham and focus on five history-defining events. (1) Creation: God created all things, including Adam and Eve whom he placed in the Garden of Eden (chs. 1—2). (2) The "Fall" (i.e., humankind's original disobedience toward God which disrupted his special favor toward them and destroyed their perfect relationship with him): Adam and Eve defied God's instruction, bringing the curse of sin and death into human history (ch. 3). (3) Cain and Abel: This tragedy set in motion the two basic streams of history: humanistic or ungodly civilization, and the smaller portion of humanity that would follow God and show others the way to him (chs. 4—5). (4) The Great Flood: The ancient world had become so evil by Noah's time that God destroyed it by a worldwide flood. Only righteous Noah and his family were spared (chs. 6—10). (5) Tower of Babel: People of the post-flood world once again joined together in rebellion against God and instead followed their own prideful plans. So God

confused their plans by breaking up their language and culture and by scattering the human race throughout the earth (ch. 11).

(B) Chs. 12—50 reveal how the Hebrew people began and how God worked through Israel's four patriarchs (i.e., "founding fathers" or original ancestors)—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—to lay out his plans to bring people of all nations back into a relationship with God. God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants forms the foundation of God's purpose to eventually send a Redeemer—his Son, Jesus—who would provide a way for people's relationship with God to be restored. Genesis concludes with Joseph's death and Israel's impending slavery in Egypt.

### ***Special Features***

Seven major features characterize Genesis. (1) It was the first book of the Bible written (with the possible exception of Job), and it records the beginning of human history, sin, the Hebrew people and God's plan to repair and restore his relationship with people that was broken by their sin and rebellion against him. (2) The history in Genesis spans a larger period of time than the rest of the Bible combined. It begins with the first human couple, describes world history before the flood and then focuses on Hebrew history as the basis of God's plan traced through the rest of the OT. (3) Genesis reveals that the material universe and life on earth are distinctly God's work and not an independent process of nature. Fifty times in chs. 1—2 it describes God's actions as Creator. (4) Genesis is a book of firsts—recording the first marriage, first family, first birth, first sin, first murder, first polygamist (i.e., one who married more than one spouse), first musical instruments, first promise of redemption (i.e., salvation, a restored relationship with God) and many other original things. (5) God's covenant with Abraham (i.e., a "life agreement" based on God's laws and promises and on people's faithfulness to him), which began when God called him to leave his country (12:1-3), was confirmed in ch. 15 and ratified in ch. 17. That covenant is central to all of Scripture. (6) Genesis alone explains the origin of Israel's twelve tribes. (7) Genesis reveals how Abraham's descendants ended up in Egypt (for 430 years) and sets the stage for the exodus, which was the main OT event that exemplified God's plan to save people.

### ***New Testament Fulfillment***

Genesis provides the prophetic history of God's plan to bring people back into a relationship with himself. This would eventually happen through a specific Redeemer—God's Son, Jesus—who would come through the woman's offspring (3:15), through the family lines of Seth (4:25-26), Shem (9:26-27) and Abraham (12:3). The NT directly connects 12:3 to God sending Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16, 29). Many individuals and events from Genesis are mentioned in the NT in relation to faith and righteousness (e.g., Ro 4; Heb 11:1-22), God's judgment (e.g., Lk 17:26-29, 32; 2Pe 3:6; Jude 1:7, 11a) and Christ (e.g., Mt 1:1; Jn 8:58; Heb 7).

### ***Reading Genesis***

In order to read the entire Old Testament in one year, the book of Genesis should be read in 21 days, according to the following schedule:

☐ 1—2 ☐ 3—5 ☐ 6—8 ☐ 9—11 ☐ 12—14 ☐ 15—17 ☐ 18—19 ☐ 20—22 ☐ 23—24 ☐ 25—26  
 ☐ 27—28 ☐ 29—30 ☐ 31—33 ☐ 34—35 ☐ 36—37 ☐ 38—39 ☐ 40—41 ☐ 42—43 ☐ 44—45  
 ☐ 46—48 ☐ 49—50

### ***NOTES***

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**The Beginning**

**1** In the beginning<sup>a</sup> God created the heavens and the earth.<sup>b</sup> **2** Now the earth was<sup>a</sup> formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

**3** And God said,<sup>c</sup> "Let there be light," and there was light.<sup>d</sup> **4** God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."<sup>e</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

**6** And God said,<sup>f</sup> "Let there be an expanse<sup>f</sup> between the waters to separate water from water."<sup>g</sup> **7** So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it.<sup>g</sup> And it was so. **8** God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

1:1 <sup>a</sup>Jn 1:1-2  
bIsa 42:5; 44:24;  
45:12,18  
1:3 <sup>b</sup>Ps 33:6-9  
<sup>d</sup>2Co 4:6<sup>c</sup>  
1:5 <sup>c</sup>Ps 74:16  
1:6 <sup>e</sup>Jer 10:12  
1:7 <sup>f</sup>Ps 148:4

**9** And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place,<sup>b</sup> and let dry ground appear." And it was so. **10** God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

**11** Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. **12** The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. **13** And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

**14** And God said, "Let there be lights<sup>f</sup> in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons<sup>g</sup> and days and years, **15** and let them be

1:9 <sup>b</sup>Ps 104:6-9;  
Jer 5:22; 2Pe 3:5  
1:14 <sup>f</sup>Ps 74:16  
<sup>g</sup>Ps 104:19

<sup>a2</sup> Or possibly *became*

**1:1 IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED.** "In the beginning" is strongly emphasized here, drawing attention to the fact of a real beginning. Other ancient religions refer to things being created from something else that was already there. But God created everything out of nothing. Other religions view history as an endless series of cycles. But the Bible presents history in a linear way, with a definite beginning and a God-given goal. God had a plan in creation, and he will carry it out. For comments on God and his role as Creator, see article on CREATION, p. 32.

The first verse of the Bible contains several important truths. (1) Since God is the source of all that exists, human beings and nature are not self-existent, but owe their lives to him. (2) Everything that exists is good if it is in right relationship to God and dependent on him. (3) All life and creation can have eternal meaning and purpose. (4) As the Creator, God has sovereign rights— or complete authority and control—over all creation. In other words, he can do whatever he desires in regard to all he has made. In a fallen or damaged world—one in which people have chosen to defy God and go their own way—God claims his rights through redemption. This refers to his plan to "reclaim" or "restore" people from a state of rebellion against him and bring them back into right relationship with him (Ex 6:6; 15:13; Dt 21:8; Lk 1:68; Ro 3:24; Gal 3:13; 1Pe 1:18).

**1:2 EARTH WAS FORMLESS AND EMPTY.** This verse begins to describe the process of God's creation and introduces the Holy Spirit's role in creation (see article on CREATION, p. 32).

**1:3 LET THERE BE LIGHT.** The Hebrew word for "light" is *or*, which refers to the first waves of light energy that came on the earth. Later, God placed "lights" (Heb *ma'or*, literally, light-bearers, v. 14) in the heavens, some to produce light and others to reflect light. The primary purpose of these light-bearers was to mark seasons, days and years (vv. 5, 14). For comments about the role of God's word or speech in creation, see article on CREATION, p. 32.

**1:5 THERE WAS EVENING, AND THERE WAS MORNING—THE FIRST DAY.** This phrase is repeated six times in this chapter (vv. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). The Hebrew word for day is *yom*. It normally means a

twenty-four hour period (cf. 7:17; Mt 17:1), or sometimes just the daylight portion of the twenty-four hours ("day" as distinct from "night"). But it also can refer to a time period of undetermined length (e.g., "harvest time," Pr 25:13). Many believe the creation days were twenty-four hour days because they had "evening" and "morning" (v. 5; cf. Ex 20:11). Others believe that "evening" and "morning" simply mean that each evening marked an end to that step of creation and the next morning indicated a new beginning.

**1:7 THE EXPANSE.** The "expanse" refers to the atmosphere between the water on earth and the clouds above.

**1:10 IT WAS GOOD.** Seven times God states that what he created was "good" (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Each part of God's creation was exactly as he intended. God created the world to reflect his glory (i.e., beauty, splendor, wonder) and greatness and to be a place where humankind could experience life and joy. Notice how God created according to a specific plan and order:

Day 1	Light	Bringing order to creation
Day 2	Expanse	
Day 3	Dry Ground	
Day 4	Light bearers	Bringing life to creation
Day 5	Fish and birds	
Day 6	Animals and humans	Creation is complete and good
Day 7	Rest	

**1:14 SERVE AS SIGNS.** God intended for the sun, moon and stars to serve as signs drawing people's attention to him. They also marked days, seasons and years. Astrology has twisted these intended purposes with the false theory that the stars and planets guide people's lives.

lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made two great lights—the greater light to govern<sup>k</sup> the day and the lesser light to govern<sup>l</sup> the night. He also made the stars.<sup>m</sup> <sup>17</sup>God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

1:16 <sup>k</sup>Ps 136:8  
/Ps 136:9 <sup>m</sup>Ps 8:3;  
Isa 40:26

1:27 <sup>n</sup>Ge 5:2;  
Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6<sup>n</sup>  
1:28 <sup>o</sup>Ge 9:1,7;  
Lev 26:9

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth,<sup>a</sup> and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;  
male and female<sup>n</sup> he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth<sup>o</sup> and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the

<sup>a</sup>26 Hebrew; Syriac *all the wild animals*

**1:22 GOD BLESSED THEM.** God blessed all living creatures and declared nature and animals to be good (vv. 12, 21-22). (1) God took great pleasure in his work and considered it extremely precious. In the same way, those who follow God should look at nature and all creation as beautiful and extremely valuable—something to be enjoyed. (2) Although nature is now tarnished by sin—the effects and consequences of humanity’s rebellion against God—it still expresses God’s wonder, greatness and love for people (cf. Ps 19:1). God’s people should pray and look forward to a time when creation will be completely set free from the effects of sin and decay (Ro 8:21; Rev 21:1).

**1:26 GOD SAID, LET US.** The use of the plural word “us” suggests that God has a certain plurality, or multifaceted nature (cf. Ps 2:7; Isa 48:16). This seems to be an early implication of the trinity, or the existence of God in three distinct but interrelated and unified Persons. The tri-unity (i.e., “three-in-One” nature) of God does not become clear, however, until the NT (see Mt 3:17, note; Mk 1:11, note; see article on **THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**, p. 786).

**1:26 LET US MAKE MAN.** In vv. 26-28 we read about the creation of human beings. More specific details about their creation and environment are found in 2:4-25. These two accounts work together to teach several things. (1) Both man and woman are God’s special creation, not products of evolution (v. 27; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6; see articles on **CREATION**, p. 32 and **HUMAN PERSONHOOD: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN**, p. 860).

(2) Man and woman were both created in God’s “image” and “likeness,” which means they could respond to and have a personal relationship with God that uniquely reflected his love and character. People were created to know and obey God willingly (2:15-17). (a) They possessed a *moral* likeness to God in that they were created sinless and holy. They had wise minds, loving hearts and the desire to do right (cf. Eph 4:24). Their personal relationship with God involved moral

obedience (2:16-17) and intimate spiritual union. When Adam and Eve sinned, their moral likeness to God was corrupted (6:5). In order to restore their relationship with him, God renews the original moral likeness in those who turn from their own sinful ways and trust him to lead their lives (cf. Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:10). God provided this opportunity through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, who willingly gave his perfect life to pay the penalty for our rebellion against God (cf. 1Pe 3:18). (b) Adam and Eve possessed a *natural* likeness to God. They were created as personal beings with spirit, mind, emotions, self-awareness and power of choice (2:19-20; 3:6-7; 9:6). (c) Man and woman’s *physical* characteristics also reflect God’s image in a way not true of animals. God gave humans the same form in which he would visibly appear to them (18:1-2), and the form in which his Son, Jesus, came to earth (Lk 1:35; Php 2:7; Heb 10:5).

(3) Being made in God’s image does not mean that humans are divine (i.e., like “gods”). They have been created on a lower level than God and are dependent on him (Ps 8:5).

(4) All human life stems initially from Adam and Eve (Ge 3:20; Ro 5:12).

**1:28 BE FRUITFUL AND INCREASE.** God commanded man and woman to reproduce and to rule over the earth and animal kingdom. (1) People were created to form family relationships. God stated this specific purpose to show that he considers a godly family and the raising of children to be a top priority in the world (see Eph 5:21, note; Tit 2:4-5, note; see article on **PARENTS AND CHILDREN**, p. 1740).

(2) God expected them to consecrate—to set apart, commit or reserve—everything on earth to him and to take care of it in a way that honored God (cf. Ps 8:6-8; Heb 2:7-9).

(3) God placed the earth’s future under their authority. When they defied God and rejected his instructions, they brought ruin, hardship and suffering to God’s creation (cf. 3:14-24; Ro 8:19-22).

## Creation

*Ge 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*

**THE GOD OF CREATION.** (1) God is revealed in the Bible as an infinite, eternal, self-existent Being—without beginning or ending—who is the First Cause (i.e., the original Source, Initiator and Creator) of all that is. There was never a moment when God did not exist. As Moses testifies, "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Ps 90:2). In other words, God existed eternally and infinitely—forever and without beginning or end—before creating the finite (i.e., limited, temporary) universe. He is over and above, independent of and prior to all that has been created in heaven and on earth (see 1Ti 6:16, note; cf. Col 1:16).

(2) God is revealed as a personal Being who created Adam and Eve "in his own image" (Ge 1:27; see 1:26, note), which means that they could respond to and have a personal relationship with God that reflected his love and other character traits (see Ge 1:26, note).

(3) God is also revealed as a moral Being who created everything good and without sin. After God had finished creating and was looking over what he had made, he saw that it was "very good" (Ge 1:31). Since Adam and Eve were created in God's likeness, they were also without sin (see Ge 1:26, note). Sin entered human existence when Eve chose to give in to temptation by the serpent, or Satan, and she and Adam both defied God's command (Ge 3; cf. Ro 5:12; Rev 12:9).

**THE ACTIVITY OF CREATION.** (1) God created all things in "the heavens and the earth" (Ge 1:1; cf. Isa 40:28; 42:5; 45:18; Mk 13:19; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; Rev 10:6). The word "created" (Heb *bara'*) is used to describe activity that only God can do. It means that at a specific moment God called into existence something that did not exist before (see Ge 1:3, note).

(2) The Bible describes God's creation as formless, empty and covered with darkness (Ge 1:2). At that time, the universe and the world were not in the orderly form they are now. The earth was empty, lifeless and completely dark. But then God created light (Ge 1:3-5), gave orderly form to the universe (Ge 1:6-13) and filled the earth with living things (Ge 1:20-28).

(3) The method God used in creation was the power of his word. Over and over the Bible states, "And God said ..." (Ge 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). In other words, until God spoke the heavens and the earth into being, they did not exist in any form (cf. Ps 33:6, 9; 148:5; Isa 48:13; Ro 4:17; Heb 11:3).

(4) The entire Trinity (see Mt 3:17, note; Mk 1:11, note, and the article on THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, p. 786)—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—had a role in creation. (a) The Son is the powerful Word through whom God created all things. The beginning of John's Gospel reveals Jesus Christ as the eternal Word of God (Jn 1:1). "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (Jn 1:3). The apostle Paul writes that by Christ "all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... all things were created by him and for him" (Col 1:16). The author of the letter to the Hebrews emphasizes that by his Son, God made the universe (Heb 1:2).

(b) The Holy Spirit also had an active role in creation. He is pictured as "hovering" over the creation, preserving and preparing it for God's further creative activity. The Hebrew word for "Spirit" (*ruab*) may also be translated as "wind" and "breath." This is how the writer of one of the psalms describes the Spirit's role when he states: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath (*ruab*) of his mouth" (Ps 33:6). The Holy Spirit continues to be involved in sustaining creation (Job 33:4; Ps 104:30).

**THE PURPOSE AND GOAL OF CREATION.** God had specific reasons for creating the world. (1) God created the heavens and the earth as a visible expression of his glory, magnificence, beauty, majesty and power. David says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Ps 19:1; cf. Ps 8:1). By looking at the entire created cosmos—from the vastness of the universe to the beauty and order of nature—we cannot help but have a sense of awe about the greatness of God, our Creator.

(2) God created the heavens and the earth in order to receive the glory and honor he deserves. All the elements of nature—including the sun and moon, rocks and trees, rain and snow, rivers

and streams, hills and mountains, animals and birds—display God’s wonder, honor his creative abilities and express praise to the God who made them (Ps 98:7-8; 148:1-10; Isa 55:12). But God desires and expects to receive glory and praise from human beings even more!

(3) God created the earth to provide a place where his purpose and goals for humankind could be fulfilled. (a) God created Adam and Eve in his own image (see Ge 1:26, note) so that he could have a loving, personal relationship with people for all eternity. God designed people as triune, i.e., three-faceted beings (body, soul, spirit). Some have described the soul as the part of a human person that results from the union of body and spirit, including the mind, emotions and free will, with which they can choose to worship and serve God out of faith, love, loyalty and gratitude. The spirit is a person’s true God-given essence, which survives death to live forever either in heaven or hell. In this sense there is some overlapping in Scripture regarding the use of the terms “soul” and “spirit.” (For more details on these issues see the article on HUMAN PERSONHOOD: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN, p. 860.) (b) God desired this intimate relationship with people so much that, when Satan succeeded in tempting Adam and Eve to disobey God’s command, he promised to send a Savior to redeem (i.e., restore or buy back) humankind from sin’s consequences (see Ge 3:15, note). In this way, God would have people who would enjoy and honor him by living righteous and holy lives as he intended (Isa 60:21; 61:1-3; Eph 1:11-12; 1Pe 2:9). (c) The book of Revelation records the culmination, or ultimate fulfillment, of God’s purpose in creation. In it, John describes the end of history with these words: “He will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev 21:3).

CREATION AND EVOLUTION. In much of the scientific and educational community today, evolution is the main view regarding the origin of life and the universe. Bible-believing Christians should consider these four observations about evolution.

(1) Evolution is a *naturalistic effort* (without any supernatural activity or element) to explain the origin and development of the universe. This view assumes that there is no personal, divine Creator who designed the world. Evolutionists believe that everything came into existence by a series of chance happenings, or random events, that occurred over billions of years. Proponents of evolution claim to have scientific evidence that support their hypothesis.

(2) The teaching of evolution is *not truly scientific*. According to the scientific method, all conclusions must be based on indisputable evidence from experiments that can be duplicated. However, no experiments could test and prove assumptions like the “big bang” theory about how the present universe started. Nor can it be proven that living beings developed gradually from the simplest to the most complex forms (which actually defies the second law of thermodynamics that describes how physical matter tends toward disorder—not higher order—as it changes). Evolution is a hypothesis without scientific “evidence”; accepting it requires faith in a human theory. In contrast, God’s people put their faith in God’s inspired and time-tested Word, which reveals that he is the One who made all things out of nothing (Heb 11:3).

(3) It is undeniable that change and development occur within various species of living things. For example, some species are becoming extinct. On the other hand, we occasionally see new developments or mutations within species. But there is no evidence, not even in earth history or fossil records, which supports the theory that one kind of living thing ever evolved from another kind. Existing evidence supports the Bible’s declaration that God created each living creature “according to its kind” (Ge 1:21, 24-25).

(4) Bible-believing Christians must also reject the theory called *theistic evolution*. This belief accepts most of the conclusions of naturalistic evolution, except it proposes that God started the evolutionary process. This theory contradicts the Biblical revelation of God’s active role in all aspects of creation. For example, God is the subject of every action verb in Ge 1, except for Ge 1:12 (which fulfills God’s command from v. 11) and the repeated phrase “there was evening, and there was morning.” In other words, God is not a passive supervisor of an evolutionary process. He is the active Creator of all things (cf. Col 1:16).

birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.<sup>p</sup> <sup>30</sup>And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.<sup>q</sup>” And it was so.

<sup>31</sup>God saw all that he had made,<sup>r</sup> and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

**2** Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested<sup>d</sup> from all his work.<sup>s</sup> <sup>3</sup>And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

**Adam and Eve**

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens— <sup>5</sup>and no shrub of the

1:29 <sup>p</sup>Ps 104:14  
1:30 <sup>q</sup>Ps 145:15  
1:31 <sup>r</sup>Ps 104:24  
2:2 <sup>s</sup>Ex 20:11;  
Heb 4:4<sup>r</sup>

2:5 <sup>t</sup>Ge 1:11  
2:7 <sup>u</sup>Ge 3:19  
<sup>v</sup>1Co 15:45<sup>r</sup>  
2:9 <sup>w</sup>Ge 3:22,24;  
Rev 2:7; 22:2,14,19  
2:14 <sup>x</sup>Da 10:4

field had yet appeared on the earth<sup>b</sup> and no plant of the field had yet sprung up,<sup>i</sup> for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth<sup>b</sup> and there was no man to work the ground,<sup>6</sup> but streams<sup>c</sup> came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground— <sup>7</sup>the LORD God formed the man<sup>d</sup> from the dust<sup>u</sup> of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup>And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life<sup>w</sup> and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup>A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. <sup>11</sup>The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup>(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin<sup>c</sup> and onyx are also there.) <sup>13</sup>The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.<sup>f</sup> <sup>14</sup>The name of the third river is the Tigris;<sup>x</sup> it runs along the east

<sup>a2</sup> Or ceased; also in verse 3 <sup>b5</sup> Or land; also in verse 6  
<sup>c6</sup> Or mist <sup>d7</sup> The Hebrew for man (adam) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for ground (adamah); it is also the name Adam (see Gen. 2.20). <sup>e12</sup> Or good; pearls  
<sup>f13</sup> Possibly southeast Mesopotamia

(4) Jesus Christ alone will restore the earth to its perfect purpose when he returns at the close of history (Ro 8:19-25; 1Co 15:24-28; Heb 2:5-8; see Rev 21:1, note).

**2:3 GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY.** God blessed the seventh day (i.e., Sabbath) for both physical and spiritual reasons. He intends it to be a special day of rest and a memorial to the completion of his created work. God did not rest on the seventh day of creation for his own sake (as if he were tired), but as an example for us to follow. God wanted to show how important rest is for our spiritual, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Our Creator provided for the Sabbath as a special blessing for his people, to renew and refresh them on a regular basis. He designed it as a day of rest, service and fellowship with him. The Sabbath principle is so important that God made it one of the Ten Commandments for his covenant people (Ex 20:8-11; cf. Ex 16:29; 31:12-17; Dt 5:12-15; see Mt 12:1, note).

**2:4 THE ACCOUNT.** This second account of creation (2:4-25) does not contradict 1:1—2:3. It explains in greater detail the creation of man and woman, their environment and the consequences of their sin and rebellion against him. Ch. 2 gives details in a topical fashion, and ch. 1 gives the chronological order.

**2:4 THE LORD GOD.** Another name for God is introduced in 2:4, the name “LORD” (Heb *YHWH*, “Yahweh”). *Elohim*, the general name already given in 1:1, emphasizes God’s greatness and power (see article on CREATION, p. 32). But “LORD” is the personal name God uses to reveal himself to his own covenant people (see article on GOD’S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB, p. 64). The name reflects his love and concern for the human race and is used in situations

where he is seen in direct relationship to his people or to nature. The words “LORD GOD” coupled together point to God as the all-powerful Creator who has entered into a loving covenant (i.e., life agreement) relationship with humankind (see vv. 9-25; Ex 6:6; Lev 11:44-45; Isa 53:1, 5-6; see Ex 3:14, note).

**2:7 A LIVING BEING.** God gave life to human beings in a special way that was different from all other living things. He specifically gave his life and breath to the first man, showing that human life is higher than, and in a different category from, all other forms of life. There is a unique relationship between divine life (i.e., God) and human life (cf. Ge 1:26-27). God is the ultimate source of human life (see article on HUMAN PERSONHOOD; WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN, p. 860).

**2:8 GARDEN IN THE EAST, IN EDEN.** The garden was located near the flood plane of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (see v. 14). Some believe it was located in what is now known as southern Iraq. Others feel that the Bible does not give enough information (vv. 10-14) to determine a specific location.

**2:9 TREE OF LIFE.** Two trees in the garden had special importance. (1) The “tree of life” was probably intended to make physical death impossible. It is related to eternal life in 3:22 (cf. Rev 2:7). God’s people will have access to the tree of life in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 2:7; 22:2). (2) The “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” was designed to test Adam’s faith and obedience to God and his commands (see v. 16, note). God created humans as moral beings with the ability to freely choose whether to love and obey their Creator, or to disobey and rebel against his commands, guidelines and instructions.

side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup>but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>18</sup>The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

<sup>19</sup>Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam<sup>a</sup> no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs<sup>b</sup> and closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib<sup>c</sup> he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

2:17 <sup>7</sup>Ro 5:12; 6:23

<sup>23</sup>The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;<sup>2</sup> she shall be called 'woman,'<sup>d</sup> for she was taken out of man."

<sup>24</sup>For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>25</sup>The man and his wife were both naked,<sup>6</sup> and they felt no shame.

### The Fall of Man

**3** Now the serpent<sup>c</sup> was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

<sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

<sup>4</sup>"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup>"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be

2:23 <sup>7</sup>Eph 5:28-30

2:24 <sup>a</sup>Mt 19:5;

Mk 10:7-8";

1Co 6:16; Eph 5:31<sup>7</sup>

2:25 <sup>b</sup>Ge 3:7,10-11

3:1 <sup>c</sup>2Co 11:3;

Rev 12:9; 20:2

<sup>a20</sup> Or the man <sup>b21</sup> Or took part of the man's side <sup>c22</sup> Or part

<sup>d23</sup> The Hebrew for woman sounds like the Hebrew for man.

**2:15 PUT HIM IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN.** God created the first man holy (i.e., pure and reserved for God's purposes), free from sin and in perfect relationship with God. Adam was the peak of God's creation and was given the responsibility of working under God's direction in caring for creation. This perfect relationship between God and the human race was lost because of Adam and Eve's disobedience (3:6, 14-19).

**2:16 THE LORD GOD COMMANDED THE MAN.** From the beginning of the history of the human race, God has expected people to obey Him and to accept his Word as absolute truth. (1) Faith and obedience were the governing or guiding principles in Adam's relationship to God in Eden. God warned Adam that he would die if he defied God's will and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v. 17). Adam had to trust God's commands and instructions since Adam had not yet seen human death.

(2) God gave the command (vv. 16-17) as a moral test. It gave Adam a conscious, deliberate choice to believe and obey, or to doubt and defy his Creator's will.

(3) As long as Adam believed God and obeyed, he would enjoy eternal life and fellowship with God (see article on FAITH AND GRACE, p. 1590). But if he sinned by disobeying, he would experience moral disaster and suffer the tragic consequences of death (v. 17).

**2:18 HELPER SUITABLE FOR HIM.** Woman was created to be a loving companion for man and a helper for him. She was to share his responsibility and cooperate with him in fulfilling God's purposes. (See Eph 5:22, note; see Ps 33:20; 70:5; 115:9, where the term "help" is also used to describe God).

**2:24 LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER.** God originally ordained marriage and the family unit as the first and most important institution on earth (see 1:28, note). God's plan for marriage consists of one male and one female who become "one flesh" (i.e., united physically and spiritually). This instruction rules out adultery, polygamy (i.e., having

more than one spouse), homosexuality, immoral living and biblical divorce (Mk 10:7-9; see Mt 19:9, note).

**3:1 THE SERPENT.** The "serpent" is later identified with Satan, or the devil (cf. Rev 12:9; 20:2), who evidently took control of the serpent and used it as an instrument of temptation (cf. 2Co 11:3, 14; Rev 20:2; see Mt 4:10, note on Satan). The serpent attacked God through God's creation. He raised questions about God's motives and said that God's warning was not true (vv. 3-4). Adam and Eve believed Satan's lie. As a result, the curse of sin came upon humanity; and God pronounced severe consequences on his creation, including the human race (vv. 16-19).

**3:4 YOU WILL NOT SURELY DIE.** God expects people to obey him and to accept his Word as absolute truth (see 2:16, note). (1) Satan knew this and tried to destroy the woman's faith in God and his word by raising doubts about God's motives and instructions. Satan suggested that God did not really mean what he said (cf. 2:16-17). In other words, the first lie Satan proposed was to deny the judgment of death for sin (see article on DEATH, p. 658).

(2) One of people's primary sins is unbelief in God's word. It is doubting that he really means what he says about salvation, righteousness, sin, judgment and death. Satan's most persistent lie is that choosing to sin and rebel against God will not necessarily lead to separation from God and eternal punishment (see 1Co 6:9, note; Gal 5:21, note; 1Jn 2:4, note).

**3:5 YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD.** Satan has always tempted humans to believe that they can be like God and decide for themselves what is good and what is evil—what is right and what is wrong. (1) Ironically, in trying to be "like God," humans separated themselves from God Almighty and became false gods to themselves (see v. 22, note; 1Jn 10:34, note). People now try to gain moral knowledge and make ethical judgments using their own reasoning rather than God's Word. But God is still the

opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.<sup>d</sup> 7Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid<sup>e</sup> from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

10He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

11And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree

3:6 <sup>d</sup>Iti 2:14  
3:8 <sup>e</sup>Job 31:33

3:15 <sup>f</sup>1jn 3:8  
8Ro 16:20

that I commanded you not to eat from?”

12The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

13Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring<sup>a,f</sup> and hers; he will crush<sup>b</sup> your head,<sup>g</sup> and you will strike his heel.”

<sup>a</sup>15 Or seed <sup>b</sup>15 Or strike

49  
12  
10-12

ultimate judge of what is right and wrong. (2) Scripture says that all who act like they are their own gods “will perish from the earth and from under the heavens” (Jer 10:10-11). This will also be the fate of the antichrist, who will claim “to be God” (2Th 2:4).

**3:6 WHEN THE WOMAN SAW ... SHE TOOK.** See Mt 4:1-11, note on how to overcome temptation.

**3:6 THE WOMAN ... ATE IT ... HER HUSBAND ... WITH HER.** When Adam and Eve sinned, moral and spiritual death came immediately (cf. 2:17; cf. Jn 17:3, note), while physical death came later (5:5). (1) God had said, “when you eat of it you will surely die” (2:17). Morally, God’s life died in them and their nature became sinful (i.e., spiritually and morally corrupt, contrary to God’s perfect and pure nature). Spiritually, their former relationship to God was destroyed. Their former innocence was replaced by guilt and judgment. Since then, every person born comes into the world with a sinful nature (Ro 8:5-8). This corruption of human nature involves an innate (i.e., inborn) desire and tendency to go our own selfish way without concern for God or others. The sinful nature is passed on to all human beings (5:3; 6:5; 8:21; see Ro 3:10-18, note; Eph 2:3).

(2) The Bible does not teach that all sinned when Adam sinned or that his personal guilt was placed on the whole human race (see Ro 5:12, note). It does teach that Adam introduced the law of sin and death to the whole human race (cf. Ro 5:12; 8:2; 1Co 15:21-22) and since then, every person who ever lives chooses to go their own way (Isa 53:6).

**3:7 THEY REALIZED THEY WERE NAKED.** When Adam and Eve lived in moral innocence—before they rebelled against God’s command—nakedness was not wrong or shameful (2:25). However, after they sinned, the awareness of nakedness became associated with sin and the corrupt condition of humanity. In other words, this new awareness would lead to ungodly desires (or the temptation to use God-given desires in ways that contradicted his perfect plans for men and women). Because of the evil and immorality that nakedness and temptation would cause in the world, God decided that it should be covered. So he made garments and clothed Adam and Eve (v. 21), and now he commands all people to dress modestly (see Iti 2:9, note).

**3:8 THEY HID.** The awareness and guilt of sin caused

Adam and Eve to shun and avoid God. They were now afraid and uncomfortable in his presence, realizing that they had defied and displeased God. In this condition, they found it impossible to get close to God with confidence (see Ac 23:1, note; 24:16, note). In our sinful condition, we too are like Adam and Eve. However, God has provided a way to cleanse our guilty consciences, free us from sin, and restore our relationship with him. This “way” to a renewed relationship with God is through his Son, Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6), who came to earth and eventually gave his perfect life to pay the full penalty for our sin. Because of what Jesus did for us, we don’t have to run or hide from God. Instead, we can come to him with confidence that we will receive love, mercy, grace and help in times of need (see Heb 4:16, note; 7:25, note).

**3:13 THE SERPENT DECEIVED ME.** Satan used deception to cause the downfall of the human race. This is one of his main methods for leading people away from God and the truth. (1) The Bible teaches that Satan deceives and blinds the minds of those who don’t believe God so that they may not understand the gospel, or the true message about Christ (see 2Co 4:4, note). (2) Satan deceives some people within the church who think they can live immoral lives and still have a part in God’s kingdom (see 1Co 6:9, note; Gal 5:21, note). (3) Deception will be Satan’s primary means of leading many to rebel against God at the end of history (2Th 2:8-12; Rev 20:8). (4) All Christians must be prepared for, and committed to, an ongoing life-and-death struggle against Satan’s deception as it relates to their personal lives, marriages, families, schools, churches and work (see Mt 24:4, 11, 24; Eph 6:11, note).

**3:15 HE WILL CRUSH YOUR HEAD, AND YOU WILL STRIKE HIS HEEL.** This verse contains the first implication of God’s promise and plan to defeat evil and restore his relationship with people. It predicts the ultimate victory of God over Satan by prophesying of a spiritual conflict between the woman’s offspring (i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ) and Satan’s evil forces (see v. 1, note). God promised that Christ would be born of a woman (cf. Isa 7:14) and would be “struck” through his unjust execution on the cross. Yet, he would rise from the dead to completely “crush” Satan, sin and death in order to save the human race (cf. Isa 53:5; Mt 1:20-23; Jn 12:31; Ac 26:18; Ro 5:18-19; 16:20; 1Jn 3:8; Rev 20:10; see chart on OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN CHRIST, p. 794).

# MATTHEW

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**Author:** *Matthew*

**Theme:** *Jesus Christ: the Promised Messiah*

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### **Background**

The book of Matthew is one of the Bible's four Gospels (with Mark, Luke and John)—the narrative accounts of the “good news” (i.e., gospel) and true story of Jesus Christ. The Gospel according to Matthew is an appropriate introduction to the NT and to “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:16). Although the author is not identified by name in the Biblical text, the unanimous testimony of all early church leaders (beginning around A.D. 130) is that this Gospel was written by Matthew, one of Jesus' original twelve disciples.

While Mark's Gospel was written for the Romans (see the introduction to Mark) and Luke's Gospel for Theophilus and other Gentiles (i.e., people other than Jews, see the introduction to Luke), Matthew's Gospel was written specifically for Jewish believers. The Jewish background of this Gospel is evident in many ways. (1) It uses OT revelation, promises and prophecy to prove that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah (i.e., “Anointed One,” Savior, Christ). (2) It traces Jesus' family line, starting from Abraham, the “father” of the Jews (1:1-17). (3) It repeatedly declares that Jesus is the “Son of David,” the godly king who was the promised ancestor of the Messiah-King (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:41-45). (4) It uses preferred Jewish terminology such as “kingdom of heaven” (a synonym for “kingdom of God”) because the Jews respectfully refrained from saying the name of God directly. (5) It refers to Jewish customs without any explanation (unlike the other Gospels, which explain these things for people of other cultures).

Though this Gospel is focused on Jews, it is not for Jews alone. Like the message of Jesus himself, Matthew's Gospel was intended ultimately for the whole church (i.e., for all who would follow Christ). In this way, it faithfully reveals the cross-cultural and worldwide scope of the good news about Jesus (e.g., 2:1-12; 8:11-12; 13:38; 21:43; 28:18-20).

The date and location from which Matthew's message originates are uncertain. However, there are good reasons for believing that Matthew wrote prior to A.D. 70 while he was in the region of Palestine or Syrian Antioch. Some Bible scholars believe that Matthew was the first of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) to be written; others believe that Mark's Gospel was written first.

### **Purpose**

Matthew wrote this Gospel (1) to provide his readers with an eyewitness account of Jesus' life, (2) to assure his readers that Jesus was God's Son and the long-awaited Messiah foretold by the OT prophets and (3) to show that God's kingdom (i.e., his ultimate power, authority, purposes and way of life both on earth and into eternity) was revealed and demonstrated through Jesus in an unprecedented way. For an extensive overview of issues relating to the kingdom, see chart of THE KINGDOM OF GOD VERSUS THE KINGDOM OF SATAN, p. 1335.

Matthew is concerned that his readers understand a couple of key issues: (1) Israel, for the most part, rejected Jesus and his kingdom, refusing to believe that he was their promised Messiah (i.e., Savior, Christ) because he came as a spiritual leader rather than as a political leader, as they expected. (2) Only at the end of this age—in the last days following God's end-time judgment on earth—will Jesus come in glory as the King of kings to judge and rule the nations (Rev 17:14; 19:16).

### **Survey**

Matthew presents Jesus as the One who fulfilled all of Israel's hopes as inspired by God through the OT prophets. He fulfills OT prophecy in many ways, including: his birth (1:22-23), his birthplace (2:5-6), his return from Egypt (2:15) and his residence in Nazareth (2:23); his prophetic predecessor (John the Baptist, 3:1-3), his primary location of public ministry (4:14-16),

his healing ministry (8:17), his role as God's servant (12:17-21), his teaching in parables (13:34-35), his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (21:4-5) and his arrest (26:50). For an overview of more prophecies relating to Jesus, see the chart of OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN CHRIST, p. 794.

Chs. 5—25 record five of Jesus' major discourses (i.e., talks, addresses, discussions, teachings on specific subjects to particular people or groups). They also contain five major narratives (i.e., accounts or stories of real events) describing his mighty acts as the Messiah. Many of these are miracles revealing his ultimate power, authority and compassion (see chart of the MIRACLES OF JESUS, p. 1499). Jesus' five major discourses are: (1) his Sermon on the Mount, about the characteristics, behaviors and lifestyles of those who desire to follow Christ (chs. 5—7); (2) his instructions and encouragement for his followers before he sends them out to preach about the kingdom of heaven and do miracles for his honor (ch. 10); (3) his parables, or illustrative stories, that teach lessons about the kingdom of heaven (ch. 13); (4) the character of true disciples (ch. 18); and (5) the teaching from the Mount of Olives about end-time events (chs. 24—25).

The five major narratives in this Gospel describe: (1) Jesus performing powerful acts and miracles, which demonstrate the reality of his kingdom (chs. 8—9); (2) Jesus dealing with several challenging ministry issues that further demonstrate the principles of his kingdom (chs. 11—12); (3) how preaching about the kingdom of heaven provokes a variety of responses and reactions, including faith and resistance (chs. 14—17); (4) Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and his last week there (19:1—26:46); (5) Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection from the dead (26:47—28:20; see chart of PASSION WEEK, p. 1431). The last three verses of the Gospel record Jesus' "Great Commission" to his followers, commanding them to take his message to all the world and develop followers for him in all nations.

### **Special Features**

Seven major features characterize this Gospel. (1) It is the most Jewish-oriented of the NT Gospels. (2) It contains the most systematic and orderly arrangement and account of Jesus' teaching and ministry of healing and spiritual deliverance (i.e., release, rescue, freedom, salvation; see chart on the MINISTRY OF JESUS, p. 1494). Because of this, the church in the second century relied heavily on Matthew's Gospel for instructing new Christians. (3) The five major discourses (i.e., broad-ranging addresses or teachings) contain the most extensive blocks of material in all of the Gospels on Jesus' teaching (a) during his ministry in Galilee (see map of JESUS IN GALILEE, p. 1423) and (b) on the subject of eschatology (i.e., the end times or last things, see chart of THE LAST DAYS OF HISTORY, p. 1902). (4) Far more than any other NT book, this Gospel specifically identifies events in Jesus' life that fulfill OT prophecies and promises. (5) It mentions the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God twice as often as any other Gospel. (6) Matthew emphasizes (a) the righteous standards of the kingdom (chs. 5—7); (b) the present power of the kingdom over sin, sickness, demons and even death (see article on THE KINGDOM OF GOD, p. 1294); and (c) the future triumph of the kingdom in a final victory over evil in the end times. (7) It is the only Gospel to mention or predict the church (i.e., all true followers of Christ) as a powerful future entity belonging to Jesus (16:18; 18:17).

### **Reading Matthew**

In order to read the entire New Testament in one year, the book of Matthew should be read in 44 days, according to the following schedule:

□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5:1-20 □ 5:21-48 □ 6:1-18 □ 6:19—7:6 □ 7:7-29 □ 8:1-27 □ 8:28—9:17  
 □ 9:18-38 □ 10:1-23 □ 10:24-42 □ 11 □ 12:1-21 □ 12:22-50 □ 13:1-23 □ 13:24-43 □ 13:44—14:12  
 □ 14:13-36 □ 15:1-28 □ 15:29—16:12 □ 16:13—17:13 □ 17:14—18:14 □ 18:15-35 □ 19:1-15  
 □ 19:16—20:16 □ 20:17-34 □ 21:1-32 □ 21:33—22:14 □ 22:15-46 □ 23 □ 24:1-35 □ 24:36-51  
 □ 25:1-30 □ 25:31-46 □ 26:1-30 □ 26:31-56 □ 26:57-75 □ 27:1-26 □ 27:26-44 □ 27:45-66 □ 28

### **NOTES**

**The Genealogy of Jesus**

**1** A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David,<sup>a</sup> the son of Abraham:<sup>b</sup>

- 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac,  
Isaac the father of Jacob,<sup>c</sup>  
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,<sup>d</sup>  
3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,<sup>e</sup>  
Perez the father of Hezron,  
Hezron the father of Ram,  
4 Ram the father of Amminadab,  
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,  
Nahshon the father of Salmon,  
5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,  
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,  
Obed the father of Jesse,  
6 and Jesse the father of King David.<sup>f</sup>

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,<sup>g</sup>

- 7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam,  
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,  
Abijah the father of Asa,  
8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,  
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,

1:1 <sup>a</sup>Isa 11:1; Ro 1:3  
<sup>b</sup>Ge 22:18  
1:2 <sup>c</sup>Ge 25:26  
<sup>d</sup>Ge 29:35  
1:3 <sup>e</sup>Ge 38:27-30  
1:6/1Sa 16:1  
<sup>f</sup>2Sa 12:24

1:10 <sup>b</sup>2Ki 20:21  
1:11 <sup>f</sup>2Ki 24:14-16;  
Jer 27:20; Da 1:1,2  
1:12/1Ch 3:17

- Jehoram the father of Uzziah,  
9 Uzziah the father of Jotham,  
Jotham the father of Ahaz,  
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,  
10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,<sup>b</sup>  
Manasseh the father of Amon,  
Amon the father of Josiah,  
11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah<sup>a</sup> and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.<sup>f</sup>

- 12 After the exile to Babylon:  
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,<sup>f</sup>  
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,  
13 Zerubbabel the father of Abiud,  
Abiud the father of Eliakim,  
Eliakim the father of Azor,  
14 Azor the father of Zadok,  
Zadok the father of Akim,  
Akim the father of Eliud,  
15 Eliud the father of Eleazar,  
Eleazar the father of Matthan,  
Matthan the father of Jacob,  
16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>17 That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12 <sup>b</sup>17 Or *Messiah*. <sup>c</sup>The Christ (Greek) and "the Messiah" (Hebrew) both mean "the Anointed One."

**1:1-16 GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST.** Matthew's Gospel—his account of the "good news" and true story about Jesus Christ—opens with this list of Jesus' Jewish ancestors, which traces his family history through the paternal line (i.e., his earthly father's side), as was Jewish custom (v. 16). Although Joseph was not Jesus' biological father (Jesus was conceived by a miracle of the Holy Spirit, v. 20), he was his legal father. God had promised that the Messiah—the promised Savior who would be a blessing to the whole world—would be a descendant of Abraham (Ge 12:3; 22:18; Gal 3:16) and King David (2Sa 7:12-19; Jer 23:5). By tracing Jesus' legal ancestry back to these two men, Matthew demonstrates to the Jews that Jesus had the proper genealogy (i.e., family history) to qualify as the Messiah (see next note). Note the types of people mentioned in Jesus' family line (refer to the cross-references in the center column to trace other Bible verses about these individuals). Several have major failures in their past (e.g., Judah, Rahab, Manasseh), yet they represent the broad range of people who put their faith in God and become part of his family. They also serve as examples of how God can work his highest purposes through anyone—regardless of their background and failures—who ultimately submits to him.

**1:1 CHRIST.** The word "Christ" (Gk *christos*) means "anointed" (which implies being chosen, commissioned, empowered, set part for special service). It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term "Messiah," which refers to the Savior that the Jews were expecting (Da 9:25-26). (1) From the beginning of his message, Matthew affirms that Jesus is God's "Anointed One"—filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18; Jn 3:34; Ac 10:38). (2) He was anointed to fill three

specific roles: (a) as Prophet, to challenge people in regard to their relationship with God and to help them understand the truth (Dt 18:15); (b) as Priest, to be the mediator of a renewed relationship between God and people by offering the sacrifice (i.e., his own life) that would pay the full penalty for humanity's offenses against God (Ps 110:4; Heb 10:10-14); and (c) as King, to establish God's kingdom purposes on earth and to guide and rule his people with perfect justice (Ps 9:8; Isa 32:1; Zec 9:9).

**1:1 SON OF DAVID.** (1) Matthew establishes the fact that Jesus was a legal descendant of David by tracing the family history of his earthly father, Joseph, who was from the family line of King David (see article on **GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID**, p. 390). Although Jesus was conceived by a miraculous act of the Holy Spirit, in earthly terms he was still formally registered as Joseph's son, which meant that he was legally a "son of David."<sup>2</sup> (2) Jesus' family history outlined in Luke's Gospel (Lk 3:23ff) traces Jesus' ancestry through the males on his mother Mary's side (she was also from David's family line). Luke stresses that Jesus is the flesh and blood (i.e., physical "offspring") of Mary, emphasizing his humanity—the fact that he was one of us (cf. Ro 1:3). In this way, the Gospel writers show how Jesus had both a legal and biological claim as the true Messiah—the Christ.

**1:16 MARY ... JESUS.** The virgin birth of Jesus (the fact that he was conceived by a miracle of God, without a human sexual union) is safeguarded in this genealogy (i.e., family history). Notice how the words "the father of" are used with all the names down to Joseph, but then the statement is altered. It does not say that Joseph "was the father of" Jesus, but rather that Joseph was the "husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus" (see Mt 1:23, note).

### The Birth of Jesus Christ

<sup>18</sup>This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.<sup>k</sup> <sup>19</sup>Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce<sup>l</sup> her quietly.

<sup>20</sup>But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,<sup>m</sup> because he will save his people from their sins."<sup>n</sup>

1:18 <sup>k</sup>Lk 1:35  
1:19 <sup>l</sup>Mt 24:1  
1:21 <sup>m</sup>Lk 1:31  
<sup>n</sup>Lk 2:11;  
Ac 13:23,28

1:23 <sup>o</sup>Isa 7:14  
2:1 <sup>p</sup>Lk 2:4-7

<sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"<sup>b o</sup>—which means, "God with us."

<sup>24</sup>When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup>But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

### The Visit of the Magi

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea,<sup>p</sup> during the time of King Herod, Magi<sup>c</sup> from the east came to

<sup>a 21</sup> Jesus is the Greek form of *Joshua*, which means the *LORD* saves. <sup>b 23</sup> Isaiah 7:14 <sup>c 1</sup> Traditionally Wise Men

**1:21 JESUS.** The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *Yeshua* (Joshua), meaning "the LORD saves" (see Jos 1:1, note). This describes the future mission of Mary's son and is the initial promise of the gospel—the "good news" of spiritual salvation through Jesus. As the Savior, Jesus "will save his people from their sins"—their spiritual rebellion and offenses against God. Sin is the greatest enemy of the human race because it separates people from God and destroys their eternal souls and lives. However, Jesus broke the power of sin by sacrificing his own sinless life to pay the full penalty for our offenses against God. Those who accept God's forgiveness and entrust their lives to Jesus are spiritually transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit (the same Spirit by which Jesus was conceived and born into the human race). Such people are spiritually "saved"—rescued and set free from the guilt and slavery of sin (see Jn 8:31-36; Ac 26:18; Ro 6; 8:1-16).

**1:23 VIRGIN ... GIVE BIRTH TO A SON.** The Gospel accounts of both Matthew and Luke agree with no dispute that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit (v. 18; Lk 1:34-35) and born of a virgin mother without the intervention of a human father. Those who doubt the Bible's credibility as a literal historical account of God's plan and involvement with people have long opposed the doctrine (i.e., teaching or principle that forms the basis of a belief) of Jesus' virgin birth. However, it is undeniable that the prophet Isaiah promised a virgin-born child who would be called "Immanuel," a Hebrew term meaning "God with us" (Isa 7:14). This prediction was made 700 years before the birth of Christ (see chart of **OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN CHRIST**, p. 794).

(1) The word "virgin" in Mt 1:23 is the correct translation of the Greek *parthenos* found in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) in Isa 7:14. The Hebrew word for virgin (*almab*) used by Isaiah means a young woman who is old enough to be married but who has not yet had any sexual relations. The term is never used in the OT for any state other than literal virginity (cf. Ge 24:43; SS 1:3; 6:8). This means that Isaiah in the OT and both Matthew and Luke in the NT all recognize that Jesus' mother was a virgin all the way through the time of his birth (see Mt 1:25; see Isa 7:14, note).

(2) The importance of the virgin birth cannot be overemphasized. In order for Jesus to qualify as the only one who could pay the price for our sins and restore our broken relationship with God, he must be fully human, totally sinless and fully God (Heb 7:25-26). In order for

Christ's sacrifice to be able to cover sin once and for all, his life had to be perfect—undeserving of death—and only God himself could provide such a perfect sacrifice. The virgin birth satisfies all three requirements. (a) The only way Jesus truly could become a human being in every sense was to be born of a woman. (b) The only way he could be totally sinless—not only throughout his life but from birth—was to be conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:20; cf. Heb 4:15). (c) The only way he could be divine (i.e., fully God) was to have God as his Father. For these reasons, Jesus was conceived not by natural but by supernatural means: "the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). As a result, Jesus Christ is revealed to us as one Person with two natures—divine and sinless human.

(3) By living and suffering as a human person, Jesus understands and empathizes with our weaknesses (Heb 4:15-16). As the Son of God, he has the power to free us from sin's destruction and Satan's power and to restore our relationship with God (Ac 26:18; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14; 7:25). As both God and human, he qualifies to serve as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of every person who ever lives. He also qualifies as the ultimate high priest who serves as mediator between God and all who come to him for mercy and forgiveness (Heb 2:9-18; 5:1-9; 7:24-28; 10:4-12). Being fully God and fully man, Jesus was able to bridge the gap that sin had created between us and God.

**1:25 NO UNION WITH HER UNTIL.** The word "until" draws attention to the fact that Mary remained a virgin until after Jesus was born. Following that time, Joseph and Mary entered into the full physical union commonly associated with marriage. We are told that Jesus had brothers and sisters (12:46-47; Mk 3:31-32; 6:3; Lk 8:19-20).

**2:1 HEROD, MAGI.** Herod the Great (distinguished from other Herods in the Bible) was a non-Jew who was appointed king over the region of Judea by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. and ruled from 37—4 B.C. He was a ruthless man who murdered many members of his family, including a wife and three sons. His reign was also distinguished by the construction or refurbishing of many buildings and monuments, including the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, which he started in 19 B.C. (The sanctuary was finished in just 18 months, but the entire project was not completed until 68 years after his death.)

The Magi were probably members of a highly educated religious class from the region of Persia or southern Arabia, now called Iran. They likely specialized

Jerusalem <sup>2</sup>and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?<sup>2a</sup> We saw his star<sup>r</sup> in the east<sup>a</sup> and have come to worship him."

<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ<sup>b</sup> was to be born. <sup>5</sup>In Bethlehem<sup>s</sup> in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will be the shepherd of my  
people Israel."<sup>c</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

<sup>9</sup>After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east<sup>d</sup> went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup>On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.<sup>f</sup> Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts<sup>g</sup> of gold and of incense and of myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned<sup>h</sup> in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

2:2 <sup>q</sup>Jer 23:5; Jn 1:49  
<sup>r</sup>Nu 24:17  
2:5 <sup>j</sup>Jn 7:42  
2:11 <sup>h</sup>Isa 60:3  
<sup>s</sup>Ps 72:10  
2:12 <sup>h</sup>Heb 11:7

### The Escape to Egypt

<sup>13</sup>When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

<sup>14</sup>So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, <sup>15</sup>where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."<sup>e</sup> <sup>w</sup>

<sup>16</sup>When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. <sup>17</sup>Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 "A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more."<sup>f</sup> <sup>x</sup>

### The Return to Nazareth

<sup>19</sup>After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt <sup>20</sup>and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

<sup>21</sup>So he got up, took the child and his mother and returned to the land of Israel.

2:15 <sup>w</sup>Ex 4:22, 23;  
Hos 11:1  
2:18 <sup>x</sup>Jer 31:15

<sup>2</sup> Or star when it rose <sup>3</sup> Or Messiah <sup>4</sup> Micah 5:2  
<sup>5</sup> Or seen when it rose <sup>6</sup> 15 Hosea 11:1 <sup>7</sup> 18 Jer. 31:15

in natural science, medicine and astrology (the study of positions of objects in the heavens with the belief that their motions affect people). Since they were looking for "the king of the Jews" (v. 2), they naturally came to the Jewish capital city first. Their visit occurred when Jesus was between 40 days (cf. Lk 2:22) and 2 years old (cf. v. 16). The importance of this story is that (1) Jesus is worthy of royal honor from all people and (2) Gentiles (i.e., people of all nations who are not Jews) as well as Jews are included in God's plan to bring people back into a right relationship with God (cf. 8:11; 28:19; Ro 10:12).

**2:4 CHIEF PRIESTS AND TEACHERS OF THE LAW.** Chief priests were the temple ministers in charge of worship. The teachers of the law were the Jewish scholars of the day who were professionally trained in the history and application of OT law. They often served as scribes or people who copied manuscripts of Scripture, and they were considered experts "in the Law" (22:35). Together the teachers of the law and the chief priests comprised the Sanhedrin, or the Jewish Senate and Supreme Court. This governing body was composed of 70 or 71 men who were in charge of the civil (i.e., public, social) and religious activities and concerns of the Jews. Under Roman rule, these individuals were given considerable authority among their people.

**2:13 ESCAPE TO EGYPT.** Herod's attempt to kill Jesus and God's method of protecting the child reveal several

truths about how God guides and protects his people. (1) God did not protect Joseph and Mary and their child without their cooperation (vv. 13, 19-20, 22). Protection required obedience to God's directions, which in this case involved fleeing the country (v. 14).

(2) God may allow some things into our lives that are hard to understand so that we can learn some valuable lessons and so that he can accomplish his purposes in unexpected ways (see article on THE SUFFERING OF THE RIGHTEOUS, p. 638). In a real sense, Christ began life as a refugee and stranger in another country (vv. 14-15). To our limited understanding, it would have been easier if God had removed Herod immediately, avoiding the escape to Egypt and all the difficulty involved in that set of circumstances.

(3) Even after one tough situation is resolved, there may be other problems to face (vv. 19-23). God's protection, guidance and care are always necessary because our spiritual enemy (i.e., Satan and his demonic forces) never ceases the attack on God's followers (Eph 6:10-18; 1Pe 5:8; see article on THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, p. 90).

**2:16 KILL ALL THE BOYS.** Bethlehem (a village about five miles south of Jerusalem) and its vicinity were not large. It most likely had a population between one and two thousand. In this case, the number of male children slain would have been around twenty.

22But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream,<sup>23</sup> he withdrew to the district of Galilee,<sup>24</sup> and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth.<sup>a</sup> So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."<sup>b</sup>

2:22 <sup>1</sup>Ver 12,13,19  
<sup>2</sup>Lk 2:39  
 2:23 <sup>1</sup>Lk 1:26  
<sup>b</sup>Mk 1:24  
 3:1 <sup>1</sup>Lk 3:2-19  
 3:2 <sup>1</sup>Da 2:44;  
 Mt 4:17

"Prepare the way for the Lord,  
 make straight paths for  
 him."<sup>a e</sup>

<sup>4</sup>John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist.<sup>f</sup> His food was locusts<sup>g</sup> and wild honey.<sup>5</sup> People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.<sup>6</sup> Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

<sup>7</sup>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers!<sup>b</sup> Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"<sup>7</sup> <sup>8</sup>Produce fruit in

### John the Baptist Prepares the Way

**3** In those days John the Baptist<sup>c</sup> came, preaching in the Desert of Judea<sup>2</sup> and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven<sup>d</sup> is near."<sup>3</sup> This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the desert,

3:3 <sup>1</sup>Isa 40:3;  
 Lk 1:76; Jn 1:23  
 3:4 <sup>2</sup>Kl 1:8  
<sup>3</sup>Lev 11:22  
 3:7 <sup>1</sup>Mt 12:34; 23:33  
<sup>2</sup>Ro 1:18; 1Th 1:10

<sup>a3</sup> Isaiah 40:3

**2:22 WARNED IN A DREAM.** God's warnings to the Magi (v. 12) and to Joseph (v. 22) teach us that God watches over those whom he loves. This situation also shows that God knows how to frustrate the plans of the wicked and how to rescue his faithful followers from those who would harm them.

**3:2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.** This refers to God's ultimate power and authority over all, and it implies that his purposes are being fulfilled on earth as they will continue to be throughout eternity. This phrase occurs only in Matthew (33 times); the other Gospels (Mark, Luke, John) use the expression "kingdom of God" (see article on **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**, p. 1294). Most Jews avoided using the name of God, so the book of Matthew, written to Jews (primarily Jewish Christians to show them how OT prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus), used this phrase. Jesus himself likely used both phrases interchangeably.

**3:2 REPENT.** The basic meaning of repentance (Gk *metanoō*) is "to turn around"—to make a complete change. It is a turning away from evil and a turning toward God through faith in Christ (Jn 14:1, 6; Ac 8:22; 26:18; 1Pe 2:25). True repentance toward God leads to spiritual salvation and a personal relationship with God. Such repentance involves changing our attitude toward God, admitting our sin, turning from our own way, submitting to Christ's leadership and beginning to follow God's plans for our lives.

(1) The decision to turn from sin and from rebellion against God and to receive spiritual salvation involves accepting Christ as both Savior (who rescues us from the penalty of sin) and as Lord—the ultimate authority over our lives. In this way, repentance involves a change of lords, or leaders, in one's life—from the lordship of Satan and self (Eph 2:2) to the lordship of Christ and his Word (Ac 26:18).

(2) Repentance is a freewill opportunity available to all sinners, made possible by the grace (i.e., undeserved favor and love) God has shown us through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. The lives of those who hear and accept his message will be spiritually renewed and changed (Ac 11:21; see article on **REGENERATION: SPIRITUAL BIRTH AND RENEWAL**, p. 1454). But we all must take advantage of the opportunity and make the decision to follow Christ for ourselves.

(3) True saving faith—the kind that brings us back into a personal and eternal relationship with God—involves more than mere belief and intellectual agreement that Christ is the Savior. Just as genuine repentance requires a change of direction and behavior, real faith in God also requires action, including a radical break from sin and a deliberate demonstration of God-pleasing character and

lifestyle. Any other view of faith dangerously distorts the Biblical message about believing in and following Christ. Faith that includes repentance is always a condition for spiritual salvation (cf. Mk 1:15; Lk 13:3, 5; Ac 2:38; 3:19; 11:21; see article on **FAITH AND GRACE**, p. 1590).

(4) Repentance was a basic message of the OT prophets (Jer 7:3; Eze 18:30; Joel 2:12-14; Mal 3:7), John the Baptist (Mt 3:2), Jesus Christ (Mt 4:17; 18:3; Lk 5:32) and NT Christians (Ac 2:38; 8:22; 11:18; 2Pe 3:9). The challenge and opportunity to repent must always accompany the preaching of the gospel message—the "good news" about forgiveness and new life available through Christ (Lk 24:47).

**3:7 PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES.** Two of the most prominent religious groups in Judaism (the faith and religious culture of the Jews, based primarily on OT laws, customs and standards) were the Pharisees and Sadducees (see chart of **JEWISH SECTS**, p. 1306).

(1) The Pharisees were a Jewish religious group that adhered to the entire OT, but also to their own human interpretations of it (which often distorted or overlooked the real intentions and principles behind God's laws). They especially emphasized that salvation came by strict obedience to every aspect of God's law and their interpretations of that law. They taught that the coming Messiah would be an earthly ruler who would help Israel overcome and dominate the nations and force all people to obey God's law. However, their religion was only an outward display with no true inward godliness of heart (23:25). They refused to acknowledge the corruption of their own human nature (which greatly affected their interpretation of God's law and view of salvation). For the most part, the Pharisees opposed Jesus and his message that true religion is a matter of the heart and spirit and not simply a matter of obeying laws and rules—even the commands of Scripture (cf. 9:14; 23:2-4; Lk 18:9-14). God does require obedience, but it must be a heartfelt response that stems from true love for God (see Ro 1:5; 6:16; 2Co 9:13; 2Jn 1:6).

(2) The Sadducees were more of a political group who were non-traditional in their religious views. For the most part, they did not accept the reality of the supernatural. While appearing to follow God's law, they really denied many of its teachings. For example, they rejected the doctrines (i.e., teachings) of the resurrection, angels and eternal spirits (Ac 23:8), as well as miracles and the judgment to come. Their lives were morally lax and worldly. They also persecuted Jesus and his followers (16:1-4).

**3:8 FRUIT IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE.** In spiritual terms, to "produce fruit" implies showing outward evidence of true inward faith through obvious

Keeping with repentance,<sup>9</sup> And do not think you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father. I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham."<sup>10</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.<sup>11</sup>

**11** "I baptize you with<sup>a</sup> water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.<sup>12</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."<sup>m</sup>

### The Baptism of Jesus

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to

3:8 <sup>a</sup>Ac 26:20  
3:10 <sup>b</sup>Mt 7:19  
3:11 <sup>c</sup>Isa 4:4  
3:12 <sup>m</sup>Mt 13:30

3:16 <sup>n</sup>Isa 11:2  
3:17 <sup>o</sup>Ps 2:7  
P Mt 12:18; Lk 9:35  
4:2 <sup>q</sup>1 Ki 19:8

the Jordan to be baptized by John.<sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

<sup>15</sup>Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

<sup>16</sup>As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God<sup>17</sup> descending like a dove and lighting on him.<sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son,<sup>9</sup> whom I love; with him I am well pleased."<sup>p</sup>

### The Temptation of Jesus

**4** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into<sup>4</sup> the desert to be tempted by the devil.<sup>4</sup> After fasting forty days and forty nights,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Or in

growth in character, compassion and godly behavior (see article on **CAMPUS MISSIONS COMMITMENT TO LIVE**, p. 1776). Genuine repentance will always lead to an active faith and godly behavior (cf. 23:23; Lk 3:10-14; Ac 26:20; see 3:2, note; see Jn 15:16, note). Those who say they believe in Christ and are God's children, and yet do not live in a way that produces and demonstrates good fruit, are like trees that will eventually be cut down and thrown into the fire (vv. 8-10, 12).

**3:11 WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.** John teaches that the work of the Messiah will involve baptizing (i.e., immersing, empowering) his followers with the Holy Spirit and fire. This baptism would provide great spiritual power and enthusiasm to live for Christ and spread his message (see Lk 3:16, note on the baptism in the Holy Spirit; see article on **BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**, p. 1508). Many scholars view the reference to "fire" as referring to the spiritually purifying presence of God and refining work of God's Spirit. The context of this passage, however, may indicate that "fire" refers to judgment (see v. 12; cf. Lk 3:17); "unquenchable fire" is the same as the "lake of fire" in Rev 20:10, 14-15. Like the OT prophets, John did not see or describe the time gap between the first and second comings of Christ, Jesus came first as the Messiah, to save people spiritually and baptize them in the Holy Spirit (v. 11; cf. Ac 1:5). He will come again as the judge who separates the wheat from the chaff, the godly from the ungodly (v. 12; cf. Rev 20:15).

**3:13 JESUS ... BAPTIZED.** Jesus was baptized by John for the following reasons: (1) "To fulfill all righteousness" (v. 15; cf. Lev 16:4; Gal 4:4-5). Christ, through baptism, publicly acknowledged that he was set apart for God's purposes and was prepared to fulfill all of God's requirements. (2) To identify himself with sinners—although Jesus himself never sinned and did not need to repent or make a change in his life (2Co 5:21; 1Pe 2:24). (3) To associate himself with the new movement of God that was calling everyone to repent—to turn from their own ways, accept Christ and follow God—if they wanted to be part of God's spiritual kingdom. (Note the message of John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah, Jn 1:23, 32-33).

**3:16 SPIRIT ... ON HIM.** Everything Jesus did—his preaching, his healings, his suffering, his victory over sin and over Satan's power—he did by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though he was fully God, he willingly laid aside and limited his rights and privileges as God. In becoming fully human, he had to operate the same

way we must—as people dependent on God's Holy Spirit. If Jesus could do nothing apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, how much more do we need the Spirit's power (cf. Lk 4:1, 14, 18; Jn 3:34; Ac 1:2; 10:38). The Spirit equipped and worked powerfully through Jesus to accomplish God's plan of restoring his relationship with people (see Lk 3:22, note). Jesus himself would later baptize his followers with the Holy Spirit so that they too might have the Spirit's power to accomplish his purposes for them (see Mt 3:11, notes; Ac 1:5, 8; 2:4; see article on **JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**, p. 1408).

**3:17 THE TRINITY IN EXAMPLE.** Jesus' baptism is a striking revelation and demonstration of the Trinity (i.e., the three-in-One nature of God)—the fact that the One true God exists in three distinct, interrelated, unified persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (e.g., Mt 28:19; 2Co 13:14; 1Pe 1:2; see article on **THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**, p. 786). (1) Jesus Christ, who is himself God and equal with God the Father (Jn 1:1; 10:30), is baptized in the Jordan. (2) The Holy Spirit, who is also equal with the Father (Ac 5:3-4), comes upon Jesus like a dove. (3) God the Father declares that he is well pleased with his Son, Jesus. This situation reveals three distinct yet fully divine (i.e., fully God) and equal persons, each possessing all the attributes of God. Yet all three exist in such unity that they are not three Gods, but One. It is inconsistent with and contrary to the entire context of God's Word to explain this event in any other way (see Mk 1:11, note on the Trinity; cf. Mt 28:19; Jn 15:26; 1Co 12:4-13; Eph 2:18; 1Pe 1:2).

**4:1-11 JESUS ... TEMPTED.** Satan tempted Jesus in an attempt to lure him away from the path of perfect obedience to God's will (i.e., his plans, desires, purposes, ways). All of Satan's efforts appealed to some sort of selfish human tendency. Notice that in each temptation, Jesus relied on and submitted himself to the authority of God's written Word rather than giving in to Satan's selfish desires (vv. 4, 7, 10; see article on **THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE**, p. 1791). What can we learn from the temptation of Christ?

(1) Satan is our greatest enemy. We always must be aware that we are engaged in spiritual warfare with unseen but very real powers of evil (see Eph 6:12, note) that want to disrupt God's plans, destroy lives and ensure that people's souls remain spiritually lost and condemned for eternity (cf. Jn 10:10; 1Pe 5:8).

(2) Without the Holy Spirit and the proper use of God's Word, we ultimately cannot overcome sin and

he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The tempter<sup>r</sup> came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'<sup>a,s</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city<sup>t</sup> and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup>"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands,

4:3 <sup>1</sup>Th 3:5  
4:4 <sup>1</sup>Dt 8:3  
4:5 <sup>1</sup>Nk 11:1;  
Mt 27:53

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."<sup>b,u</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'<sup>c,w</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup>"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'<sup>d,w</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.<sup>x</sup>

4:6 <sup>1</sup>Ds 91:11,12  
4:7 <sup>1</sup>Dt 6:16  
4:10 <sup>1</sup>Dt 6:13  
4:11 <sup>1</sup>Lk 22:43

<sup>a</sup>4 Deut. 8:3 <sup>b</sup>6 Psalm 91:11,12 <sup>c</sup>7 Deut. 6:16 <sup>d</sup>10 Deut. 6:13

temptation. The following are suggestions on how to use God's Word in overcoming temptation: (a) Realize that through the Word you have the power to resist any appeal Satan can make (Jn 15:3, 7). (b) Get the Word of God into your heart and make it active in your life by constantly meditating on it (i.e., reading and pondering over and over what it means and how it can apply to specific situations in your life, see Dt 6:6, note; Ps 1:2, notes; 119:47-48, note). (c) Saturate your mind with God's Word by memorizing as much of it as possible (see Jas 1:21, note). (d) Quote memorized passages to yourself and to God the instant you are tempted (vv. 4, 7, 10). (e) Recognize and respond to the Holy Spirit as he inspires you to obey God's Word (Ro 8:12-14; Gal 5:18). (f) Surround all these steps with prayer for God's help and understanding (Eph 6:18).

Some key passages to memorize in facing temptation include: general encouragement on overcoming sin and living in the power of God's Spirit (Ro 6 and 8); specific passages concerning immoral behavior and lifestyles (Ro 13:14), lying (Jn 8:44; Col 3:9), gossiping (Jas 4:11), disobeying parents (Heb 13:17), discouragement (Gal 6:9), fear of the future (2Ti 1:7), lust (Mt 5:28; 2Ti 2:22), desire for revenge (Mt 6:15), neglect of God's Word (Mt 4:4), worry over finances (Mt 6:24-34; Php 4:6).

**4:2 FASTING FORTY DAYS.** After fasting (i.e., going without food in order to give greater attention to spiritual matters) "forty days and forty nights," Jesus "was hungry," so Satan's first temptation was simply to eat. This seems to indicate that Christ abstained from food but not from water (see Lk 4:2). To abstain from water for forty days would have required a miracle. Since hunger is one of the basic and most intense human drives, this was certainly a legitimate temptation that would have been difficult to resist. However, in order to relate to our human struggles (cf. Heb 2:17; 4:15) and overcome temptation in the same way we must, Jesus had to rely on the same power that is available to any Spirit-filled Christian (see Ex 34:28, note; 1Ki 19:8, note; Mt 6:16, note on fasting). During the forty-day fast, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus was strengthening and preparing himself through prayer and meditation on God's Word for the work the Father sent him to do.

**4:6 IT IS WRITTEN.** (1) The Greek verb *gēgraptai* ("it is written") is in the perfect tense, indicating both completed action and a continuing state that results from that action. The full force of the statement in Greek is: "It has been written and it still stands written." This emphasizes the ongoing authority and unchanging nature of God's Word. (2) Jesus used God's Word properly to resist temptation; Satan tried to misuse God's Word in order to tempt Christ to sin. At times, people who oppose God

will use the Bible in an attempt to persuade believers to do something they know is wrong or unwise. Some Bible passages, when taken out of context or not compared with other parts of God's Word, may even appear to say something they really are not saying—or even to condone sinful behavior (see, e.g., 1Co 6:12). Followers of Christ must know God's Word thoroughly and beware of those who try to distort Scripture in order to support their own opinions or satisfy their own selfish desires. The apostle Peter (one of Jesus' closest disciples and a leader in the early church) speaks of those who distort the Scriptures to their own destruction (2Pe 3:16; see article on **FALSE TEACHERS**, p. 1370).

**4:8 ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD.** See Lk 4:5, note.

**4:10 SATAN.** Satan (Heb, meaning "accuser" or "adversary") was originally a great angel created perfect and good. He was appointed to be a minister (i.e., to serve) directly around God's throne in heaven. Yet before the world began, he became filled with pride and rebelled against God. As a result, he became God's primary adversary and an enemy to all humanity (Eze 28:12-15). We must keep in mind, however, that Satan is not equal with God; he is a created being and is completely subordinate to God's power.

(1) In his rebellion against God, Satan misled a multitude of lesser angels (Rev 12:4) who could likely be identified, after their "fall" from heaven, with demons or evil spirits (see article on **POWER OVER SATAN AND DEMONS**, p. 1347). Satan and many of these lesser angels were exiled to the earth and the atmosphere around it and now operate within this sphere of influence as God allows. Their considerable control and influence in the world presents all people with a legitimate choice whether to follow God or to follow evil.

(2) Satan, also called "the serpent," caused the "fall" of the human race—influencing the first humans to question God's care and defy God's commands—introducing sin and its curse upon all humanity (Ge 3:1-6; see 1Jn 5:19, note).

(3) Satan's kingdom (12:26) is a highly organized empire of evil that has authority over "the kingdom of the air" (Eph 2:2, which may simply mean he is not bound to earth), over fallen angels (i.e., those who followed Satan in rebellion against God, 25:41; Rev 12:7), over people who have not accepted Christ's forgiveness and entrusted their lives to him (vv. 8-9; Jn 12:31; Eph 2:2) and over the present world system (Lk 4:5-6; 2Co 4:4; see 1Jn 5:19, note). Satan is not omnipresent (everywhere at the same time), omnipotent (all-powerful) or omniscient (all-knowing), so most of his activity is delegated to demons (8:28; Rev 16:13-14; see Job 1:12, note).

**Jesus Begins to Preach**

12When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. 13Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— 14to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

15 “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”<sup>a</sup> J

17From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven<sup>z</sup> is near.”

**The Calling of the First Disciples**

18As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19“Come, follow me,”<sup>u</sup> Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” 20At once they left their nets and followed him.

21Going on from there, he saw two

4:16 <sup>f</sup>Isa 9:1,2  
4:17 <sup>g</sup>Mt 3:2  
4:19 <sup>h</sup>Mk 10:21,  
28,52

4:23 <sup>b</sup>Mk 1:39;  
Lk 4:15, 44 <sup>c</sup>Mt 9:35;  
Mk 1:21 <sup>d</sup>Mk 1:14  
4:24 <sup>e</sup>Lk 2:2  
/Mk 1:32  
4:25 <sup>f</sup>Mk 3:7,8

other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

**Jesus Heals the Sick**

23Jesus went throughout Galilee,<sup>b</sup> teaching in their synagogues,<sup>c</sup> preaching the good news<sup>d</sup> of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24News about him spread all over Syria,<sup>e</sup> and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed/<sup>f</sup> those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. 25Large crowds from Galilee,<sup>g</sup> the Decapolis,<sup>h</sup> Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.<sup>g</sup>

**The Beatitudes**

5 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2and he began to teach them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>a</sup>16 Isaiah 9:1,2 <sup>b</sup>25 That is, the Ten Cities

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(4) Jesus came to earth to destroy the works of Satan (1Jn 3:8), to establish God’s kingdom (i.e., his demonstration of power, authority, purposes and way of life) and to free us from Satan’s control (12:28; Lk 4:18; 13:16; Ac 26:18). By his death and resurrection, Christ paid the penalty for sin and conquered its power, initiating Satan’s defeat and ensuring God’s ultimate victory over him (Heb 2:14).

(5) At the end of the age (i.e., following the tribulation period, during which God will execute his end-time judgments on the earth; see Rev 6—19), Jesus will return with the armies of heaven to defeat the antichrist and confine Satan to the Abyss (i.e., “bottomless pit”) for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3). After a brief release, Satan will make a final attempt to overthrow God; this will result in Satan’s final defeat and his being thrown into the lake of fire forever (Rev 20:7-10).

(6) Satan presently wars against God and his people (Job 1—2; Eph 6:11-18), trying to turn them away from loyalty to Christ (2Co 11:3) and bring them into slavery to sin and this present world system (cf. 2Co 11:3; 1Ti 5:15; 1Jn 5:16). Christ’s followers must pray constantly for God’s help in recognizing and avoiding Satan’s deceptions and temptations (Mt 6:13). They must also remain spiritually alert, relying on God’s strength and resources to conquer the devil’s evil schemes and maintain a strong faith (Eph 6:10-18; 1Pe 5:8-9; see chart of **THE KINGDOM OF GOD VERSUS THE KINGDOM OF SATAN**, p. 1335).

4:19 **FISHERS OF MEN.** Speaking in terms that were relevant to Peter and Andrew, Jesus calls them to a higher mission than they have ever known—to influence others for God and introduce them to Christ. One may be a pastor, evangelist, missionary, writer, computer programmer, nurse, factory worker, waiter, teacher or

student, but if they are not striving in some way to introduce others to Christ, they are not doing the most important work to which God has called them (see 28:19; Lk 5:10; Jn 15:16; Ac 1:8; 1Co 9:19; see article on **CAMPUS MISSIONS COMMITMENT TO TELL**, p. 1859).

4:23 **THE KINGDOM, AND HEALING.** Throughout the Gospels (the accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), the kingdom of God—his power, purposes and way of life on earth—is often associated with healing, miracles and driving demons out of people’s lives (4:23-24; 9:35; 10:7-8; 12:28; Lk 9:1-2; cf. Ac 8:6-7, 12). God’s kingdom includes benefits for the body and mind, as well as for the soul and spirit (see article on **DIVINE HEALING**, p. 1286, and chart of the **MIRACLES OF JESUS**, p. 1499).

5—7 **SERMON ON THE MOUNT.** Chs. 5—7, commonly called Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, contain a powerful yet practical revelation of the principles and standards by which God expects all Christians to live. Of course, this life is possible only through faith in Jesus, the Son of God (Gal 2:20), and through the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Ro 8:2-14; Gal 5:16-25). In this message, Jesus teaches a large group of potential followers what it really means to follow him and be a part of God’s kingdom. All who belong to the kingdom are to demonstrate godly character and have an intense hunger and thirst for righteousness (i.e., to do what is right and maintain a right relationship with God (see 5:6, note).

5:3 **BLESSED ... POOR IN SPIRIT.** The word “blessed” refers to the well-being and joy of those who, because of their relationship to Christ and his Word, find their place in God’s kingdom. The benefits of that “membership” include God’s constant love, care, presence and spiritual salvation (see 14:19, note; Lk 24:50, note). There are