

Reading Matthew

The Big Picture [*bold italics* = large blocks of Jesus' teachings]

1-2	The Birth of Israel's Messiah	16-17	Jesus' reveals that the Messiah must suffer
3	John prepares Israel for Jesus	18-20	<i>Jesus teaches about life in the community of his followers</i>
4	Jesus announces the Kingdom	21-23	Jesus asserts his authority in Jerusalem
5-7	<i>Sermon on the Mount</i>	24-25	<i>Jesus foretells judgment and salvation</i>
8-9	Jesus shows the power of the kingdom	26-27	Jesus is arrested and crucified
10	<i>Jesus teaches and sends his disciples out</i>	28	Jesus' resurrection and commission of the disciples
11-12	Israel's leaders challenge Jesus		
13	<i>Jesus' parables of the kingdom</i>		
14-16	Jesus' identity as Messiah is revealed		

Key Themes in Matthew

- Jesus's life, death, and resurrection are the continuation and fulfillment of the Old Testament story
 - The genealogy at the beginning ties Jesus to the exile, David and Solomon and Abraham.
 - Key Words:** Look for instances where Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecy: "And thus the word of the LORD was fulfilled" (1:22; 2:5,15,17,23; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:3; 26:31,54; 27:9)
- Jesus' mission is to announce and inaugurate the "kingdom of heaven/God"
 - NOTE: "kingdom of heaven" is the same thing as the "kingdom of God": God's reign over all the earth and humanity is being restored in and through Jesus (see Matt 4:17).
 - Key Words:** Take note of every time Jesus mentions, explains, talks about the "kingdom of heaven/God"
 - The kingdom is brought into being by Jesus mighty wonders (see chs. 8-9), and by his teaching (see ch.13).
- Jesus is portrayed as a new Moses, Israel's authoritative teacher and the one who sealed the covenant between God and Israel:
 - Matthew 4 + 5-7: Jesus is tested for 40 days in the wilderness (like Moses' 40 yrs in the wilderness) then goes to a "high mountain" to teach about the Torah (like Moses at Mt. Sinai) – The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' "new Torah" for the kingdom of God.
 - Key Passage:** 5:17 "Don't think I came to set aside the Torah or the Prophets; I haven't come to set them aside, **but to fulfill them.**"
 - Obedience to God is not about rules, but about the transformation of the broken human heart:
- Jesus tries to teach his disciples that the kingdom of God is totally upside down from their expectations: Matthew includes more of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom than any other Gospel: chs. 5-7, 10, 13, 18
 - The Sermon on the Mount reverses many ideas about obedience to the Torah
 - Jesus' teachings reverse many of our ideas about life: love your enemies, forgive those who wrong you, be extra-generous to those who have no way to compensate you, lose your life to really live, etc...
- Jesus says the kingdom of God challenges many of the cherished symbols of Jewish identity rooted in the Sinai covenant.
 - Jesus redefines the meaning of Israel's key covenant practices:
 - Sabbath (12:1-21), the kosher food-laws (15:1-20): these are not meant to be stifling regulations, but liberating reminders of God's grace
 - Jesus offers the kingdom of God to people thought to be excluded from God's grace
 - "sinners": 9:9-13 and the ritually impure who were typically excluded from the temple: lepers (8:2-4), the blind (9:27-31), the disabled (12:9-14)...
 - Jesus challenges and rejects the temple and Israel's authorities: he believes they have distorted what it means to be the covenant people: chs. 21-23
- Jesus' death is the sacrificial offering to inaugurate the new covenant of God's kingdom (the last supper, 26:17-30, is a Passover meal), and the resurrection (ch.28) means that Jesus is enthroned as the Lord of the world who sends out his followers to announce the kingdom and help people learn to follow Jesus (28:18-20)

