

Context for Units 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20

The Gospel of Matthew:

Jesus As the Fulfillment of God's Promises

Each of the four Gospels has a unique perspective of Jesus' life and ministry. Together they provide a fuller glimpse into the person and mission of Christ. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is introduced as the Son of David, the promised Messiah who triumphantly brings the Kingdom of God. Matthew, a disciple of Jesus and former tax collector, included many of Jesus' teachings on money (See Matthew 18:23-35). His writing is carefully organized with attention to detail as expected of a man of his training.

It appears that Matthew wrote this gospel specifically to convince fellow Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is shown to fulfill God's story of redemption first introduced in the Old Testament. Matthew is careful to present Jesus as the final piece in the redemption story. Jesus doesn't reject the teaching of the Old Testament, but rather triumphantly completes God's message of love to His people.

With these purposes in mind, one can appreciate Matthew's distinct features. Like the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' ministry is told with concise narratives, but Matthew includes many more teachings of Jesus. This is the only gospel to make specific mention of the church (Matthew 16:18; 18:17). Matthew also stresses the "last things" referring to the events associated with Jesus' Second Coming.

Matthew's gospel quotes freely from the Old Testament, particularly using the book of Isaiah as a source. Matthew points to Jesus as the fulfillment of the law and prophecies- the long awaited Messiah. Throughout the book, Matthew assumes his audience is familiar with the Jewish customs of the day. In fact, the book of Matthew may be seen as a handbook for Jewish converts.

In contrast to the litany of laws with which first century believers had been constantly subjected to, Matthew introduces the idea of an earthly life lived in obedience to Christ through faith. Keeping laws that are attainable in our own power do not require much faith, just a lot of will power. But Jesus' demands are higher than any written law. In order to live in obedience to Him we must have a change of heart and daily seek Him for the power to continue in obedience. We miss the point entirely if our focus is on keeping man-made interpretations of God's call on our lives.

Baptist Press, Dallas. Author not specified.