

Moving Into Matthew

An Introduction to the Gospel

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~ If you travel this Spiritual Safari through the entire Word of God with us it will be life transforming for you; because accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior through His death, burial and resurrection as payment for your sins will revolutionize your family, home, business and personal life. I promise you that – because the Word of God also promises you that. If you receive the Holy Spirit then He will change your heart and life profoundly. The cares of the world will grow strangely dim to you. You might even bless someone else with your good works if you're not careful. That's what happens when you follow through with a competent and sincere study of the Word of God.

Now that we have carefully examined and reported on Genesis properly, correctly and completely, we need to bridge the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In order to succinctly correlate the Old Testament and the New Testament, it is absolutely essential that we learn, understand and know what happened according to secular history in the approximately four hundred years between the prophecy of Malachi and the Gospel of Matthew.

After Malachi, God stopped writing. He shut down His computer, put down His pencil, and went silent. Then, one day, when Zechariah the priest was standing at the altar in Jerusalem, God commanded the angel of the Lord to break in at a time of prayer; and for Scripture to be written proclaiming the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist. Those silent years were some of the best times for the nation Israel. World history records and mankind produces extreme advances during this time in world history. The tribe of Judah has experienced a radical transformation. Israel has an all-new culture and institutions; and new discoveries and unfamiliar organizations are breaking out in every direction at the time in which we are studying - and they continue to appear throughout the New Testament.

The Old Testament closed with the Median-Persian Empire in power and dominating the world. Egypt was also a world power at that time and a formidable foe, to be sure, particularly concerning international politics. Both have faded from history as this new book opens the New Testament. World power has completely shifted from east to west - from orient to occident - from Asia to Europe. As we open the New Testament today, Rome is the new world order in our Spiritual Safari. Our tone in these reports will now change from that of a worldly literature writing style to that of a structured and formal report. Matthew is the book whereby Jesus is presented as our King! I dare say we're going to wax intellectual here. I don't want to bore you with facts and figures - but some things – these things - are crucial to an educated, competent and sincere examination of Holy Writ.

Alright, let's do some time traveling to these silent years - and our first destination is 480 BC when Xerxes the Persian was victorious against the Greeks at Thermopolis but was ultimately defeated at Salamis. Actually, the weather defeated Xerxes this time; and this represents the last bid for world dominion from the east precisely as had been foretold by Daniel the prophet.

Move on to 330 BC and out of the west comes the goat that Daniel also records in the eighth chapter of his prophecy. That is Alexander the Great; the goat with a great horn. Alexander led the Greeks to a united front victory over the Persians at Issus. During Alexander's crusades he made a stop at Jerusalem and the Book of Daniel was shown to him. Jerusalem was one of the only cities that Alexander ever spared from utter destruction, and it was because they had shared with him the Word of God. Are we going to be seeing Alexander in Heaven may be a fair and legitimate question?

Fast forward to 323 BC and we see Alexander the Great die all the way over in Persia. It would stand to reason he planned to move the seat of his Greek Empire there. He had divided the east and west territories amongst his four generals. Judea was next to fall to Egypt when Ptolemy Soter I, a.k.a. Ptolemy Lagides conquered it. Syria attempted to take Judea and Judea becomes the battleground between Syria and Egypt.

Antiochus then takes Jerusalem in 203 BC and Judea passed under the influence of Syria. In 170 BC Antiochus IV Epiphanes took Jerusalem and defiled the temple. He is prophesied of by Daniel as the little horn; also, in his eighth chapter at the ninth verse. This man, Antiochus, was called the Nero of Jewish history. He made Hitler seem like a Sunday school boy.

Okay, on to 166 BC and Mattathias ben Johanan led a revolt of Israel against Syria. This will mark the beginning of the Maccabean period. Never has Israel suffered more than in this time and never were they more vibrant as a nation then at this time in their history. It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. Judas Maccabeas, the hammer, was the organizer and also led the revolt.

Fast forward and press play again in 63 BC and Pompeii the Roman took Jerusalem and brought them under the dominance of this new world superpower; and that brings us back and up to the time of the Lord Jesus.

Now, in 40 BC, the Roman Senate appoints Herod to be king of Judea. This man's ilk of debauchery is the sickest and most debased successive rule that has ever been in the history of the world and/or mankind. Being Italian, it simply must have been the origin of the mafia. You can talk about Adolph Hitler, Mussolini, Saddam Hussein and the Chinese dynasties all rolled into one and you wouldn't get NEAR the level of human degradation that this man, Herod, and his family descended to.

Three years later we arrive in 37 BC when Herod slew every single one of the last in the line of the Maccabean priests. In 31 BC Cesar Augustus rises as emperor of Rome. In 19 BC was the commencement of construction on the building of the Herodian temple, which never was completed but had been under construction for approximately fifteen years when Jesus was born. That brings us to: that glorious day that is definitely NOT December 25, 4 BC; however, was in 4 BC – but more likely spring or summer 4 BC - when the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.

We quickly covered a thumbnail sketch of history, and I don't think that was so bad as far as a history lesson is concerned. It could have been exhaustively exaggerated. Most of you who think I am being facetious when I talk about a 70,000-year study of Matthew, when I teach in Eternity University, I could not be more abstemious, I assure you. I am probably selling myself way short and should reserve 700,000 years to examine this Gospel completely, properly and correctly. Back on point, during this history, there arose powerful parties and factions that we heard nothing about in the Old Testament. Let's consider those four main sects very briefly:

(1) Pharisees: the Pharisees arose to defend the Jewish way of life against all foreign influence. Pharisees were extremely strict legalistic nationalists that wanted a place in politics. They wanted their own party with their own laws and, actually, wanted to restore the kingdom to the magnificence of the days of David. What we have in the Pharisees is a religio-politico party. Their cause was born of good intentions; but their hearts were far from God. They were conservative fundamental theologians, to be sure – but only theoretically – it wasn't from the heart; which took them way right as far as politics in the nation Israel was concerned.

(2) Sadducees: the Sadducees were wealthy, liberal, socially minded pillars of society; and they very much wanted to get rid of conservative religious tradition. No, I am not talking about current events. We are still in the history at the time of the Book of Matthew. John the Baptist's life will not require any effort at all for many of us to identify with. Interestingly, the richest of the rich in this country are liberals, to be sure. We have wealthy conservatives – but not of the liberal magnitude, by any means. In Jesus day the crumbs fell from rich men's tables. Today, the rich don't want the poor to even have dirt to eat – but I digress. Either way, they didn't give from their hearts. It was all to be seen.

Sadducee's were liberal in their theology. They rejected wholesale anything supernatural; including the resurrection. They were opposed to every single one of the Pharisees programs and plans and protested profusely while drawing close to the doctrine of the Greek epicureans, whose philosophy was to eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. Sadducee's were completely opposite of stoics, of which we have a total misconception of also as their ulterior motive was

to obtain the good life. The stoics subscribe to the theory of psychology that says if we give free, unbridled reign to the body and flesh we can have peace in our minds. Many think that's the answer today. Make a note: none of this will work in your life.

(3) Scribes: the Scribes were the lawyers and writers of the law. They expounded, professionally, of course, on matters of legalism. Their foundation and guiding principals were a doctrine stemming from the days of Ezra. They could split a legal hair until no one received anything – except them, naturally. They were much more concerned with the letter of the law than the truth and spirit of the law; and certainly justice was not part of the equation.

When Herod called the scribes to ask about Jesus they knew all about Him; but they weren't interested in Him – only in the letter of the law. We must be extremely careful of the danger of desiring only the information and knowledge from the Bible and not applying obedience to our lives as the balance. That imbalance is what creates spiritual hurricanes, monsoons, earthquakes and tsunamis all on a same spiritual day. If competent correct, complete, educated, systematic, sincere, proper and Spirit-led knowledge of the Bible is what you desire, as limited as it is for us, I applaud that; but I'm afraid most people aren't really interested in growing their relationship with Christ. They talk about studying to show themselves approved – but they never get around to the studying part.

If you're still reading this report then you're one of a very, very few and you are in a highly elite Club Safari today; and it's free – although I do take donations. The other safaris that seem to know all about the antichrist and the devil and predestination and free will and election – they may be correct in how they lay it all out theologically; but it's possible to lay these out without them having possession of our heart - and that makes for one cold, dead fish, friends. This is the picture of the scribes and, I've said this before, the most hard-hearted, stiff-necked people I meet are cold-blooded fundamentalists who will rip you apart just to maintain some small-minded point. Many of them do not know the point they are really even trying to make – they just know they don't like you if you oppose them in any fashion. The wise point always knows that the Word of God is a laudable attainment; but it's not for our personal benefit. It is only given to us to pass on to others by translating it into reality. As you can see, Scribes were a rather large group.

(4) Herodian's: this is a party strictly confined to the Roman Empire in the days of Jesus. They represent political opportunists. That means they were determined to perpetuate the Herodian lineage on the throne; they wanted to attach themselves and their families to that. All they were interested in were self-serving interests and in their own party retaining power - and no one else.

This period between the Old Testament and the New Testament is a time of spectacular literary activity, too. The Old Testament was translated into Greek

during this time in Alexandria in Egypt by six members from each of the twelve tribes; hence the name Septuagint. The Lord Jesus knew and quoted from it; and Paul regarded it as Holy Writ. The apocrypha of the Old Testament was written during this period. They are a collection of fourteen books that bear no marks of inspiration at all. There are two books in this collection of the Septuagint that strike close to acceptable, the book of Enoch and the Psalter of Solomon. I take it on great authority that these two books raise questions that disqualify their place in the canons of Scripture. The fact that they are not there seals my thinking.

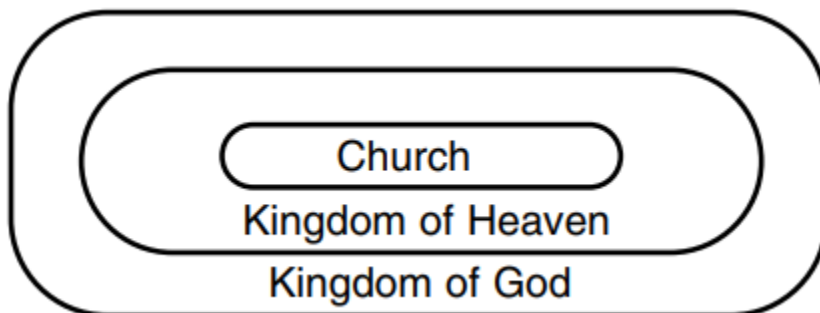
So, we have a period marked distinctly by the silence of God in the Word of God. I wonder how this relates to the thirty minutes of silence in Heaven in the eighth chapter of Revelation? There are many things we don't know about the Bible, friends; and another of them is what God was doing up there while He was silently preparing the world for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ – His Son – our Holy High Priest – during this era? I would like to know!

The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are each individually directed at the four major groups of people in the days in which we are studying; those four groups that we just met. Matthew is written, first in Hebrew, to the nation Israel and to the religious man. Mark, we shall see, is directed at the Romans as he presents government and law and order as a means to control world societies and the disastrous failure of attempting such. Historically, we know the Romans learned the world will not be ruled like that. At this time there was a world that needed to hear about Christ and the forgiveness of sins and the grace and mercy of God. Luke will write very definitely to the Greek intellectual thinking man. Our so-called safari becomes quite complicated during the consideration of physician Luke's Gospel. John writes only to believers and all unbelievers will do well to just keep out of that area; except for it's indirect application to the orient where the mysterious millions were all crying out for deliverance in that day. They're still crying out in India, Pakistan, North Korea, China - and every single one of the other oriental countries - without exception.

We need Christ in the hearts and minds of individuals who deign call themselves "Christians" today, my beloved – not religion – not more religious people. They have religion en masse in each of those countries I mentioned. The Roman man of strength needs a Savior with tangible and demonstrable superpowers. The thinking man needs a Savior that can meet the mental and psychological demands in tandem with spiritual needs as only Christ can; and, certainly, that oriental man, likewise, needs a Savior Who can build him up and bring him to a place where He can serve the True and Living God. That's what they all desire in their hearts – they just don't always recognize their problems – and, if they don't internalize their conflict of hypocrisy, lies and coldness and indifference, then, naturally, they'll never admit to bearing a feeling which troubles them but that they can neither personally define nor articulate to others.

The Gospel of Matthew was written by a publican that the Lord Jesus had His Hand upon in a very definite way. Matthew was a follower and an apostle. Matthew wrote in Hebrew. All of the apostolic fathers confirm this Hebrew origination of this book of the Bible, by the way. They all agree it was written by Matthew in Hebrew for the nation Israel - and that was a Jewish people, friends. We're not going that deep into this topic in our Spiritual Safari - and we're certainly not going to argue about it. Simple research can bear it all out for you. Israel had been prepared for nearly a thousand years at this time for the coming of Christ into the world. That preparation is exactly how Christ arrived! Salvation is of the Jews, saith the Lord Jesus. The heathen – the nations surrounding Israel – were prepared for the coming of Christ, too; they needed Him equally as much and are given equal access to Him today. The world needs Christ. There is no other hope for mankind or the planet we inhabit.

This remarkable, key Gospel reaches back further in the Old Testament than any other book. Matthew gathers more prophecies than any other and reaches further ahead in the New Testament than any other Gospel moves. Matthew is the only writer to mention the church by name when he records, "...on this rock I will build my church." Even the most hard core skeptics agree this is the most important book in Christendom. Our Spiritual Safari takes this dramatic and dogmatic position: Matthew is the single most important book ever written or introduced into the literary world. Matthew, the converted publican, was chosen by the Holy Spirit of God to give this Gospel to these people at this time primarily to present the program of God. The Kingdom of Heaven is in full view now and "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God" are peculiar phrases found only in Matthew's writing, "Kingdom of Heaven" occurs thirty-two times and "Kingdom" occurring an even fifty times.



A correct and succinct understanding of what those terms mean is critical to an understanding of any Gospel or any book in the Bible itself. That's what deems Matthew the key to the entire Bible. I must be emphatic, categorical and dogmatic when I say now: the Kingdom and the church are NOT the same things; they are simply sans synonymous. The church is IN the kingdom but the church and the kingdom are as different as a car and a wheel. Orlando is in Florida but Orlando is not Florida. To simply state the definition of the Kingdom of God, which we will fully develop soon - it is the reign of Heaven over the earth.

Our earthly atmospheres are polluted by modern theologians who have complicated this when there's no reason to; no Godly reason, that is. That is one reason why I am so compelled to simplify this entire process for you.

The great theme of Matthew is the reign of Heaven over the earth as Matthew presents Christ as the King! Of course, the One that will establish that rein is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an all important subject. The three major discourses in this Gospel all concern the kingdom: (1) the Sermon on the Mount is the law for the kingdom age (2) the Mystery Parables all concern the coming Kingdom (3) the Olivet Discourse looks forward to the establishment of the future Millennial Kingdom. This is very important information you have just received if you plan to understand your Bible correctly, completely and properly. If you miss this movement it's like missing the exit off the freeway - you'll be taking the long way home! There is a likelihood you won't get home.

So, we're going to leave it at that today except to say that in Matthew we have the Person of the King, the preparation of the King, the propaganda of the King, the program of the King, the passion of the King and the power of the King. Our divisions will be different and sharp and strictly Biblically based. So, that's where we leave off in this leg f our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God - and we'll get right into this Gospel in our next report ~

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