

Foreword

Welcome to this special edition of Matthew's Gospel.

This account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his teaching represents the heart of the Christian story – a story that describes the gift of new life, offered to each one of us. Through the lens of Matthew's account, we perceive a rich and compelling depiction of Jesus. We see him in the vulnerability of a baby, the inquisitiveness of a child, the gentleness of a healer, the force of a prophet, the determination of an activist and the humility of a servant. We encounter Jesus – fully God, fully man.

The words of this Gospel echo throughout the centuries precisely because the God who speaks continues to invite us to be transformed and gradually conformed to the likeness of the One who was the gift to others. These are not dead words on a page, but a living message addressed to each of us personally.

I invite you now, in prayer, to discover again the gift of Christ through this sacred book. Allow yourself to be challenged and persuaded. Permit yourself to be refreshed and surprised. My prayer for you is that in reading Matthew's account, you will once again discover the joy of the gospel, and – renewed in your faith – you will live that gospel message aloud in the world around you as a gift to all those whom you encounter.

+Peter

Peter M. Brignall, Bishop of Wrexham

Matthew's Gospel

Matthew's Gospel is written like a handbook or catechism for the early Church, providing models for teaching, preaching, mission, community worship and disputes with outsiders. These are carefully woven into the story of Jesus and his mission. Matthew presents a coherent perspective on Jesus, giving a rich account of his miracles and teachings while also placing them in their historical and religious context.

As Matthew is writing for a Jewish readership, his structuring of Jesus' teachings into five discourses is modelled on the five books of Moses, the Torah. The whole narrative of Jesus' life unfolds over 28 chapters. He presents Jesus as a new Moses giving a new Law. For example, he ascends the mountain in the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7) to deliver the new Law. His discourses go on to include mission (chapter 10), the parables (chapter 13), teachings on the Church (chapter 18) and teachings on the future (chapters 24–25). Matthew tells us early on, through the angel Gabriel, the Messiah to be born will be called 'Emmanuel, which means, "God is with us"' (1.23). And, right at the end, Matthew completes his Gospel with Jesus' statement of his divinity, when he said, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (28.19–20).

Matthew's Gospel is unique among the Gospels in other ways – for example, in Jesus' giving of 'the keys' to Peter in 16.19 and the description of the Magi in chapter 2.

In the second century, St Irenaeus famously began to associate specific symbols from Ezekiel 1.1–21 and Revelation 4.6–8 with each of the four Gospels. He suggested that the winged man represented Matthew, saying, 'This, then, is the Gospel of his humanity; for which reason it is, too, that the character of a humble and meek man is kept up through the whole Gospel.'

Ways to read the Bible

When we read a book of the Bible, whether from the Old or New Testament, there are a variety of ways in which we can do it. This is because the Bible consists of very different styles of writing – from history and law to wisdom and songs, from poetry and prophecies to letters and Gospel accounts.

We may wish to read a chapter or verse on its own and reflect on it slowly throughout the day. Or we may wish to read a whole story, a poem, a parable, a letter or Gospel. Reading from the Bible can be as long or as short as we feel is right at the time. Some people find it helpful to read about a particular person and their place in the Bible, not just the kings, prophets and leaders but the families, brothers and sisters or other more ordinary characters. Others are drawn to the rich array of the Psalms or specific historical events.

When we read or listen to the Bible, it is more than simply reading or hearing about people, places and events. It is an act of prayer and meditation. It is food for the soul which can nourish our faith and transform our lives. We can also engage with the Bible more widely through looking at paintings of biblical scenes, listening to music that honours and praises God and watching religious drama retell the stories creatively.

It is always inspirational to read about God's plan for salvation, our Lord Jesus Christ's life and teachings, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

During the Mass, we hear plenty of Bible readings throughout the year due to the structure of our Lectionary. In the Lectionary cycle, the readings selected from the Old Testament, the Psalms and the epistles or letters always relate to the four Gospels, so that there is a coherent revelation being given. In this way, God's plans for humanity are seen as being fulfilled in Christ – thus the Gospels are the light through which we read and understand the Old Testament.

The God who Speaks: The Year of the Word

In partnership with Bible Society, this exciting initiative focuses on celebrating, living and sharing God's word throughout the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The year 2020 sees the tenth anniversary of *Verbum Domini*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI on *The Word of the Lord*.

The year 2020 is also the 1,600th anniversary of St Jerome's death. St Jerome was above all a Scripture scholar, translating the Old and New Testaments from the Hebrew and Greek into the Latin Vulgate. He wrote many commentaries and letters which are a great source of scriptural inspiration for us today. Saint Augustine said of him, 'What Jerome is ignorant of, no mortal has ever known.'

These are strong reasons for us to embark at this time on a creative and deeper engagement with the Holy Scriptures across the life of each diocese.

Our Vision for the year

Scripture is foundational to the life of the Catholic Church and so we want to enable deeper scriptural engagement in every diocese.

We want to create new and renewed encounters with Christ through the Scriptures. We want to achieve transformation in the faith and life of our Church and in the public arena through evangelisation, education, creative arts and social action.

Our Themes

- **Celebrating God's Word** – enriching our worshipping and spiritual community.

In discovering and renewing a genuine love for the word of God, we nurture our relationship with Christ. Through the Bible, we meet Christ who is alive in his word. We can listen to him speaking to us and guiding us in our daily lives.

- **Living God's Word** – enriching our social action and outreach.

Scripture teaches us how to live in society, to respect the wonder of creation, especially each human being, and to work towards the common good. The Scriptures inspire us to put faith into action, living God's word and doing God's word.

- **Sharing God's Word** – enriching our formation, proclamation and evangelisation.

The Bible has inspired, and continues to inspire, learning, culture, art, music and literature. It enables science and faith to build up mutual understanding through dialogue. It challenges technology and social media to open up new ways to encounter and share Christ in the world.

Through our vision and themes, we have a unique opportunity to nurture and inspire our faith through attentiveness to the Bible and the great riches of our spiritual history and traditions.

For more information about this year, go to godwhospeaks.uk

The Gospel According to Matthew

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1 An account of the genealogy^a of Jesus the Messiah,^b the son of David, the son of Abraham.

²Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram,⁴ and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,^c ⁸and Asaph^c the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah,⁹ and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,¹⁰ and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos,^d and Amos^d the father of Josiah,¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

a Or *birth* **b** Or *Jesus Christ* **c** Other ancient authorities read *Asa* **d** Other ancient authorities read *Amon*

¹²And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.^e

¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah,^e fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah^f took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' ²²All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital

^e Or *the Christ* ^f Or *Jesus Christ*

relations with her until she had borne a son;^g and he named him Jesus.

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men^h from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising,ⁱ and have come to pay him homage.’ ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah^j was to be born. ⁵They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶ “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd^k my people Israel.” ’

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men^l and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising,^m until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped,ⁿ they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

g Other ancient authorities read *her firstborn son* **h** Or *astrologers*; Gk *magi* **i** Or *in the East* **j** Or *the Christ* **k** Or *rule* **l** Or *astrologers*; Gk *magi* **m** Or *in the East* **n** Gk *saw the star*

The Escape to Egypt

¹³Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' ¹⁴Then Joseph^o got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

The Massacre of the Infants

¹⁶When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men,^p he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.^p ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ 'A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no
more.'

The Return from Egypt

¹⁹When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' ²¹Then Joseph^q got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. ²³There he made his home in a town called

Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.'

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

3 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'^r ³This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight."'

⁴Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

⁵Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹'I baptize you with^s water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with^s the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented

^r Or *is at hand* ^s Or *in*



**CELEBRATING
GOD'S WORD**

Baptism of Jesus
Matthew 3:13-17

him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved,^t with whom I am well pleased.'

The Temptation of Jesus

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. ³The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' ⁴But he answered, 'It is written,

"One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth
of God." '

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you",
and "On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against
a stone." '

⁷Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; ⁹and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' ¹⁰Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

"Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him." '

^t Or *my beloved Son*

¹¹Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee

¹²Now when Jesus^u heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ ‘Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee
of the Gentiles—

¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow
of death
light has dawned.’

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’^v

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People

²³Jesus^w went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news^x of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness



**SHARING
GOD'S WORD**

Disciples' Charter
Matthew 5:1-16

among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. ²⁵And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

The Beatitudes

5 When Jesus^y saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

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

⁴‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹‘Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely^z on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

¹³‘You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

^y Gk *he* ^z Other ancient authorities lack *falsely*