

INVITING US INTO THE STORY

Jesus invites us into the story by describing the heart and character of the people who will enjoy God's blessing and fulfill his mission in the world. He invites us to take his yoke and learn from him. Unlike the yokes we fashion for ourselves, his yoke is easy and his burden is right.

MATTHEW 5:1-10 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said: 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 be shown 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 because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:13-16 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

MATTHEW 11:28-29 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

1. How does Jesus describe the heart and character of those who will enjoy God's blessing in Matthew 5:1-10?
2. How does he describe their overarching purpose in verses 13-16?
3. How does Jesus describe what it means to be his disciple in 11:29-30?
4. Taken together, how do these verses describe Jesus' invitation to join him in the story he is writing?

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LIFE



DEATH



RESURRECTION



REIGN

THE LIFE OF JESUS

FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Apostle's Creed offers a rich summary of the essential teachings of the early church. When we recite the Creed we confess.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*

As much as I love the creed, there is a big hole right in the middle. In affirming our belief in Jesus, we move far too quickly from "he was born of the Virgin Mary," to "he suffered under Pontius Pilate." There is so much more to the life of Jesus than his birth and his death. The life he lived is every bit as important as the death he died. Apart from the life Jesus lived, the death Jesus died would have been little more than a sentimental gesture and the resurrection nothing more than a passing curiosity.

During the next few weeks we will be considering the "The Life, Death, Resurrection and Current Reign of Jesus the Messiah." These are far more than simple theological categories, they are a vital part of our identity in Christ.

He lived the life we could never live and because we are united with him by faith we enjoy the benefits of his faithfulness. He died the death we should have died and because we are united with him by faith we enjoy the benefits of his atoning sacrifice. Christ rose from the dead on the third day and because we are united with him by faith we enjoy the power and vitality of new life which he freely offers to us. We are rich beyond measure because we are united with Christ in his life, death and resurrection, and are living as his people under his gracious rule.

As we consider the life of Christ, we turn to the gospel of Matthew. Matthew tells us that Christ completes an old story, writes a new story, and invites us into the story.

COMPLETING AN OLD STORY

While our eyes glaze over every time we read a genealogy, for Jesus' original audience it would have been like seeing the credits role at the end of the movie and recognizing every name on the list. Matthew's genealogy is far more than a list of names, it is a rich retelling of Israel's story. He gives us the highpoint of the story, introduces us to the one who will bring the story to its fitting conclusion, and reminds us of a few missteps along the way.

MATTHEW 1:1 This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

MATTHEW 1:17 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 Messiah.

1. Verses 1 and 17 offer a summary of Israel's story. How is Jesus described in these verses?
2. Who are the other important players in the story? How is Jesus related to them?
3. What is the exile, and why is it a poor place to end the story? How will Jesus bring his people out of exile?

WRITING A NEW STORY

One of Matthew's favorite words is "fulfilled." He uses the word to describe how Jesus is rewriting Israel's story and filling it with far richer and deeper meaning. Let's look at a couple of these passages and the Old Testament citations Matthew has in mind, in order to get an idea of how Jesus is entering the story and filling it with new meaning.

MATTHEW 2:14-15: So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 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."

HOSEA 11:1-2 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. 2 But the more they were called, the more they went away from me.

1. Both Israel and Jesus are described as the Son of God. How are they similar? How are they vastly different? How is Jesus the far greater son? How is Jesus rewriting Israel's story?

MATTHEW 3:13-15: Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

2. Israel needed to turn to God and be cleansed (as signified by John's baptism). Jesus, obviously, did not. How is Jesus identifying with Israel in this scene? How is he "fulfilling all righteousness?" How is Jesus rewriting Israel's story?

MATTHEW 4:1-4: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread. 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

DEUTERONOMY 8:2-3 Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. 3 He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

3. Both Jesus and Israel were tested in the wilderness. What are some of the similarities? What are some of the differences? How did Jesus succeed where Israel failed? How is Jesus rewriting Israel's story?

MATTHEW 5:17-18 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

4. We expect to hear Jesus say, Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to keep them (or uphold them, or do them, or obey them). Instead he uses the words "fulfill" and accomplish." How does Jesus fulfill and accomplish everything written in the Law? How is he rewriting Israel's story?