

Rise of the Messiah

Facilitator Guide



DATE _____	Session 1	_____	Session 7	_____	Session 13
_____	Session 2	_____	Session 8	_____	Session 14
_____	Session 3	_____	Session 9	_____	Session 15
_____	Session 4	_____	Session 10	_____	Session 16
_____	Session 5	_____	Session 11		
_____	Session 6	_____	Session 12		

About This Guide

The Bible is communal literature, designed to be read and studied by groups of people learning to live within its story. BibleProject Classroom seeks to model this communal approach to Bible study and provide individuals and communities with the opportunity to participate. We designed this guide to support folks leading others through a BibleProject class. So grab a friend or gather with your small group to journey together!

Suggested Formats

To get started, we recommend picking a regular meeting rhythm. While many groups find that weekly meetings work well, every group is different. There's no single "right" way to facilitate this class, so choose what works best for your group. Here are a couple of possible formats.

FORMAT 1 Watch Together	FORMAT 2 Watch Individually
1. Welcome Start by welcoming the group and creating space for connection. This might look like sharing a meal, doing a brief icebreaker, or opening in prayer—whatever helps your group relax and feel united.	1. Watch Before each meeting, everyone watches the assigned session(s) on their own. This can be helpful for groups that would like more time for discussion or for group members who prefer to watch the sessions at their own pace.
2. Watch Most groups choose to watch about an hour of content at a time (1-2 sessions). We've found that connecting to a larger screen (e.g., via cable or AirPlay) is often helpful. Some groups pause for reflection and discussion throughout the session.	2. Welcome Start by welcoming the group and creating space for connection. This might look like sharing a meal, doing a brief icebreaker, or opening in prayer—whatever helps your group relax and feel united.
3. Discuss Reserve some time at the end of your meeting (we recommend 30 minutes-1 hour) to discuss questions from this guide or from your group. It's also a great time to re-read and meditate on any passages covered during the session.	3. Discuss Discuss questions from this guide or from your group. It's also a great time to re-read and meditate on any passages covered during the session.

Tips for Facilitators

Create space for connection and questions

You don't have to be a Bible nerd to be a facilitator! As a facilitator, your role is to guide the group's discussion rather than to teach the content. We try to model curiosity and humility, inviting questions and encouraging deep meditation on the biblical text, rather than rushing to interpretation and application.

We want to build a community where our unique perspectives help us see the bigger picture together, finding unity in our diversity, and where everyone feels comfortable enough to voice their real questions, even the messy ones. Rather than reaching for quick fixes, we seek to invite the group to practice holding hard truths in tension, consistently going back to the text to discover what God is revealing through the biblical writers.

A little prep goes a long way

Each session includes Teacher Notes that can be a valuable digital or printed resource for note-taking or reference during your meetings. Many past facilitators have recommended watching the session(s) and reviewing the Teacher Notes for each meeting (or even the entire class!) in advance. This guide contains key takeaways to help your group recall core ideas and reflection questions to seed discussion. Some facilitators also find it helpful to prepare their own discussion questions, tailored to their group, before the meeting. If you are planning to watch the sessions together, consider setting up your viewing plan and testing the technology beforehand.

Finally, take a few minutes at the end of each meeting to confirm the date of the next meeting and which session(s) you'll cover.

Bible Study Guide

Some sessions will dive deep into a specific passage. For those sessions, you can reference this guide to help your group meditate on Scripture together. This Bible study method encourages you to allow your curiosity to drive you, and it honors the Bible as both literary art and divine wisdom.

1. **Read the Passage.** Read the selected passage slowly and with the expectation of discovery.
2. **Collect Questions.** Every question is good. Let's get them all out and write them down. The Bible is inviting us to lean in and be curious.
3. **Watch the Session.** The corresponding video shows the literary design of the passage and encourages deeper discussion.
4. **For discussion time:**
 - **Make Observations.** Continue the conversation! What other details can we observe about the passage? What is the point of repeated words or phrases? What can we see by comparing lines or comparing sections?
 - **Choose One Question and Discuss.** Which one of the questions collected during step 2 does the group find most interesting? Which question seems most aligned with what the passage wants us to ask? Choose one and discuss it.
 - **Examine Hyperlinks.** What other passages in the Bible discuss the same question? What other passages have the same key words or themes? Let's find one or two and compare them.
 - **Discern Wisdom.** What is God's invitation to us as a community through this passage?



WATCH

SESSION 1: What Does “Gospel” Mean?

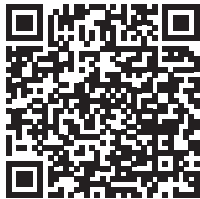
What is the meaning of the word “gospel”? To better understand this word, step back in time to imagine the world as it first encountered Matthew’s Gospel.

Key Takeaways

- Learning about the origin of the gospels and how they were put together helps us understand what Matthew is trying to tell us on Matthew’s own terms.
- The Greek word euangelion (“gospel,” “good news”) was used by others, like Caesar, to promote their own agendas. The good news about Jesus confronts these other gospels and offers a vision of God’s plan for the world.
- The gospels came into existence not as library archives but out of the life mission of actual communities of a persecuted religious minority.

Reflection Questions

1. How can an understanding of the origins of Matthew’s Gospel help us better grasp what the author is trying to communicate?
2. How does the euangelion (“gospel,” “good news”) of Jesus differ from the euangelion of others, like Caesar?
3. As you consider the cultural and religious environment that gave rise to the gospels, how might that affect how you approach them?



WATCH

SESSION 2: The Formation of the Gospels

From eyewitnesses to the fourfold Gospel in our Bibles, trace the development of these books to learn about the unity and diversity of the gospel accounts.

Key Takeaways

- The Gospels are carefully designed theological biographies of Jesus that focus on his announcement of the good news about the arrival of God's Kingdom here on Earth.
- The gospel accounts are not merely historical records; they are designed to advance a claim that will challenge the reader's thinking, loyalties, and behavior.
- The four gospel accounts offer different perspectives and carry different emphases. But from the beginning of the Jesus movement, these differences have been celebrated as providing a fuller portrait of the good news about Jesus through their unity and diversity.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the relevance of seeing the Gospels as carefully designed theological biographies?
2. How does Matthew signal that he isn't just recording interesting information, but is trying to challenge his reader?
3. What is challenging for you about the differences in the four gospel accounts? What is encouraging or helpful?



WATCH

SESSION 3: Macro Design of Matthew's Gospel

Study the design of Matthew's Gospel to learn about its message and themes.

Key Takeaways

- Matthew structures Jesus's teaching to reflect Moses, showing how Jesus came to fill full the Torah.
- Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of David, emphasizing how Jesus is the fulfillment of the historical messianic hopes of the people of Israel.
- Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of Abraham, emphasizing how Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise of blessing to all nations through Abraham and his descendants.
- Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of God and Son of Humanity, focusing on the claim of Jesus's divine and human identity.

Reflection Questions

1. Matthew begins with a long genealogy. What themes are introduced here and developed throughout the rest of Matthew's Gospel?
2. What are some ways that Matthew connects Jesus to Moses? What is the wider significance of this connection?
3. Why is it important for Matthew to emphasize that Jesus is a descendant of David? What comes to mind when you connect Jesus to David's story and to the promises God made to David and his family?
4. Why do you think Matthew emphasizes Jesus' connection to Abraham?
5. What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Humanity (Son of Man)?



WATCH

SESSION 4: The Origins of Matthew's Gospel

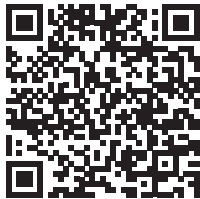
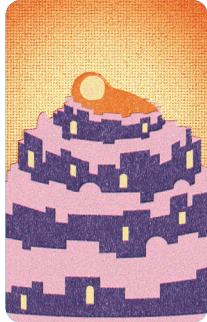
Who wrote the Gospel of Matthew? Examine the internal references, early traditions, and historical clues about the authorship of Matthew.

Key Takeaways

- Ancient literature, like Matthew, is usually connected to authoritative figures, but they don't necessarily need to have written it to justify this association.
- Many of the earliest (second to third century) manuscripts of the gospels are titled "According to Mark/Matthew/Luke/John."
- The earliest Christian communities accepted this account as coming from the tradition of the apostles, channeled through Matthew.

Reflection Questions

1. What is being implied or claimed when the label "According to Matthew" is applied to this text?
2. What internal and external evidence do we have about the authorship of Matthew? How important are these questions to you?
3. What role do early traditions—like the association of this book with Matthew—play in how we receive and interpret these texts?



WATCH

SESSION 5: A Messianic Genealogy

What can we learn by studying a genealogy? Discover how biblical authors use genealogies to introduce themes and build anticipation for the story to come.

Meditate on Scripture

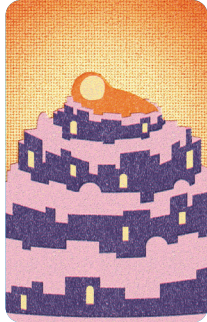
Matthew 1:1-17

Key Takeaways

- Matthew shapes Jesus's genealogy to focus on Jesus as the Son of David, Son of Abraham, and promised Messiah.
- Biblical authors employ numbers as vehicles of meaning. Matthew highlights numerical wordplays in this genealogy, inviting readers to contemplate deeper layers of meaning.
- The focus on "brothers" in the first two sections of the genealogy invites readers to look for the missing brothers in the third section.
- Matthew's inclusion of these five women in the genealogy links Jesus's story to a pattern of God using surprising people and means to fulfill his promises.

Reflection Questions

1. What major features of Matthew's genealogy do you notice? How do these features introduce key themes in Matthew's Gospel?
2. What are some of the ways the biblical authors use numbers to create emphasis or draw connections to other parts of the Bible?
3. What are some of the ways we can think about the meaning of the missing brother in the third part of Jesus's genealogy in Matthew?
4. What are some shared characteristics among the five women in Jesus's genealogy? What is the significance of their inclusion in this account?



WATCH

SESSION 6: The Birth of Jesus

Jesus is born in miraculous circumstances fraught with potential scandal. Learn how God fulfills the expectations of his promises in unexpected ways.

Meditate on Scripture

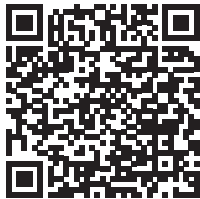
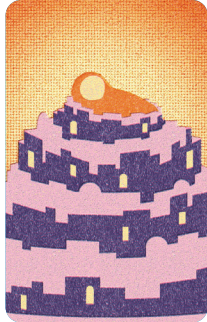
Matthew 1:18-25

Key Takeaways

- Matthew highlights Joseph's righteousness, establishing an important pattern of characters who answer the call to do right by God.
- The Spirit miraculously brings about Jesus's conception within Mary's womb, echoing the biblical pattern of the Spirit of God bringing new life in unexpected places.
- Jesus's name means "Yahweh will rescue," and his name connects to the hope for a messiah who will restore Israel's kingdom and to Greek and Roman ideas about the good news of a king who is savior of the world.

Reflection Questions

1. Can you think of other examples in Matthew of characters being highlighted for their righteousness and obedience, as Joseph is here at the beginning?
2. How does Mary becoming pregnant by the power of the Spirit connect to the accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 or to the birth of Isaac?
3. Take some time to reflect on the meaning of Jesus's name—"Yahweh will rescue." What are some specific ways that the Hebrew Bible looks forward to God's future deliverance? How does it also capture the deep hopes of the surrounding cultures?



WATCH

SESSION 7: Jesus, Isaiah, and Immanuel

Isn't his name Jesus? Who's Immanuel? Examine the rich tapestry of Hebrew Bible references Matthew calls upon to unpack the birth of Jesus.

Meditate on Scripture

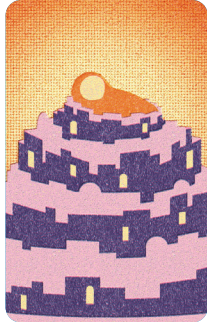
Matthew 1:18-25

Key Takeaways

- Matthew does not view the prophets as offering predictions of specific future events that come to pass through Jesus, but instead sees Jesus's life as bringing the prophetic promises and hopes to their fullness.
- Matthew cites the Old Greek version of Isaiah 7:14, tapping into an already existing tradition of interpreting the young woman Isaiah mentions as representing virgin Zion.
- Matthew quotes a specific verse in Isaiah, but he draws on how that verse fits within the entire book of Isaiah and how Isaiah fits within the Hebrew Bible as a whole.

Reflection Questions

1. How would you describe what Matthew means when he says that Hebrew Bible prophecy is fulfilled by events or characteristics of Jesus's life?
2. Does Isaiah 7:14 promise that the Messiah will be born of a virgin? What does Matthew mean by citing this verse?
3. Matthew cites a single verse to call to mind themes woven throughout the entire surrounding text. What can we learn about reading and interpreting the Bible from this?



WATCH

SESSION 8: Magi and Herod

Matthew introduces readers to King Herod, a ruler who epitomizes the key conflict in his story. Learn how new hope in Jesus disrupts the status quo.

Meditate on Scripture

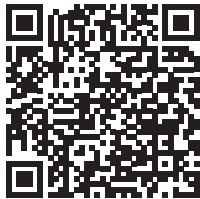
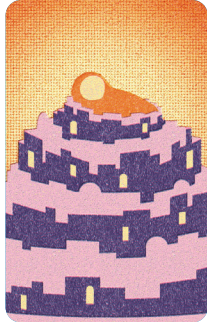
Matthew 2:1-12

Key Takeaways

- Herod I was widely known for his extravagance, paranoia, and cruelty. Matthew immediately links this villainous figure to the power structures of Jerusalem in Jesus's day.
- The magi represent the fulfillment of the prophetic promise that the nations would recognize the coming of God's rescue for the world.
- Matthew adopts imagery from Isaiah 60 to present Jesus as the new Jerusalem.

Reflection Questions

1. How is Herod like the pharaoh of Exodus and other snake-like figures of the Hebrew Bible?
2. How do the magi in Matthew's account link to prophetic themes in the Hebrew Bible?
3. What is the significance of Matthew presenting Jesus as the new Jerusalem?



WATCH

SESSION 9: Out of Egypt

Matthew continues to tell Jesus's story in echoes of the Hebrew Bible. Discover how Matthew presents Jesus as a new Moses.

Meditate on Scripture

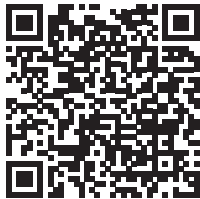
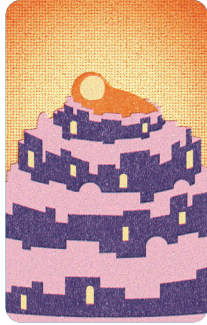
Matthew 2:13-23

Key Takeaways

- Matthew casts the story of Jesus's birth as a retelling of the birth of Moses and the exodus.
- Just as Moses was adopted into the house of Pharaoh, so Jesus was adopted into the house of David.
- God's pattern of choosing Abraham, Israel, and David challenges our cultural practices of privileging only ourselves and those like us. God chooses one to bring blessing to the many.

Reflection Questions

1. What parallels does Matthew draw between Jesus's story and the stories of Moses and the exodus?
2. What significance can we draw from the way Matthew highlights Jesus's adoption into the line of David through Joseph?
3. Contemplate the pattern of God choosing one out of many (e.g., Abraham, Israel, David, etc.). What does God's choice of the one mean for the many?



WATCH

SESSION 10: The Nazarene

Matthew continues to tie events in Jesus's life to Hebrew Bible prophecy. Examine these quotations to see how multilayered each reference is.

Meditate on Scripture

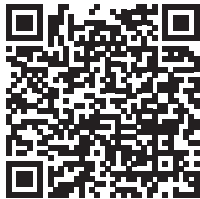
Matthew 2:13-23

Key Takeaways

- Quoting Hosea, who himself frames Israel's situation in the language and imagery of the exodus, Matthew continues the tradition of interpreting current events through the lens of Israel's Scriptures.
- The deeper layers of meaning Matthew constructs through these references enrich the more direct parts of his message. The text offers much from a simple reading, and it holds riches for a lifetime of deep meditation.
- The term Nazoraios ("Nazarene," Matt. 2:23) may connect Jesus to the promise of a "branch/shoot" from the line of David (Isa. 11:1), or it may link him to the Nazirite vow (Num. 6:1-21), a most holy commitment. The ambiguity may invite us to make both comparisons.

Reflection Questions

1. How do Matthew's quotations contribute to his message? Do you need to get all of the references to understand what he is trying to communicate?
2. How can Matthew's way of reading the Hebrew Bible help us learn to interpret our world through the lens of God's story of redemption?
3. When we encounter obscure or uncertain references in the Bible, like Matthew's use of the term Nazoraios (Matt. 2:23), how can we respond?



WATCH

SESSION 11: John the Baptist

Jesus's ministry is heralded by a prophet right out of Israel's past. Contemplate the meaning of fire and water imagery in John the Baptist's call to repentance.

Meditate on Scripture

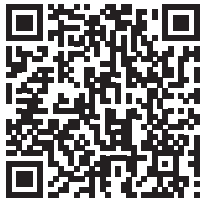
Matthew 3:1-17

Key Takeaways

- Matthew portrays John as the messenger anticipated by Isaiah who will announce the coming of Yahweh to restore his captive people (Isa. 40:3-5).
- John's speech is full of quotes and phrases from the Prophets, recalling repeated themes of God's judgment and God's promise of rescue and restoration.
- Water and fire are complex symbols representing both judgment and hope, death and purification.

Reflection Questions

1. How does Matthew characterize John's ministry, and where does Matthew draw his imagery from?
2. Compare John's speech to the message of Israel's prophets. What old themes does he draw on?
3. Reflect on the symbols of water and fire in John's words in Matthew 3:7-12. In what ways are fire and water similar, and in what ways are they different? What do they represent in John's teaching?



WATCH

SESSION 12: The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew's introduction crescendos in Jesus's baptism. Explore how God's words affirm Jesus as the beloved Son and ultimate fulfillment of promises.

Meditate on Scripture

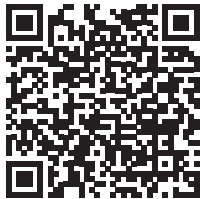
Matthew 3:1-17

Key Takeaways

- Through Hebrew Bible references, Matthew places Jesus in the position of both Yahweh and Yahweh's servant.
- The voice of the Father affirms Jesus's identity as David's son, the messianic king; Abraham's son, the seed of promise; and Yahweh's suffering servant as described by the prophet Isaiah.
- Jesus fills-full righteousness by going beyond what is strictly required and standing in the gap for vulnerable humanity. He does this by walking through the waters of death with us.

Reflection Questions

1. What meaning can we draw from the way Matthew places Jesus in the position of both Yahweh and Yahweh's servant?
2. How does Jesus fulfill the roles of the messianic king, Abraham's heir, and Yahweh's suffering servant, which are evoked by the speech from heaven at his baptism?
3. How does baptism echo the theme of the flood waters and death? How does Jesus's baptism point forward to the way he lays down his life for us?



WATCH

SESSION 13: Jesus Tested in the Wilderness

Jesus's ministry begins when he is led into the wilderness. Dive into the biblical pattern of the test to learn how Jesus triumphs where others faltered.

Meditate on Scripture

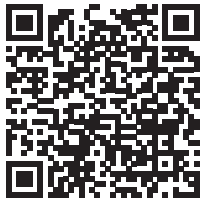
Matthew 4:1-11

Key Takeaways

- The Spirit leading Jesus into the wilderness signals an apocalyptic vision journey, just like many other prophets before Jesus.
- Jesus's forty days in the wilderness mirror Israel's forty years in the wilderness.
- The slanderer's opening assault, "If you are the Son of God" (Matt. 4:3, 6), calls into question the identity that was affirmed in the previous story.
- The test about food is a choice, not about what is or isn't good, but about how and when you obtain the good—whether you will trust what God says in spite of appearances.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the purpose of the Spirit leading Jesus on an apocalyptic vision journey before he begins his public ministry?
2. What are some ways that Jesus's wilderness testing mirrors stories from the Hebrew Bible?
3. What is at stake in the slanderer's question, "If you are the Son of God ..."?
4. What is Jesus demonstrating for us when he responds to the slanderer, "Not by bread alone does humanity live, but by every word that comes out from God's mouth"?



WATCH

SESSION 14: Jesus Passes the Test

Explore the slanderer's final two temptations and witness Jesus's powerful responses and divine triumph.

Meditate on Scripture

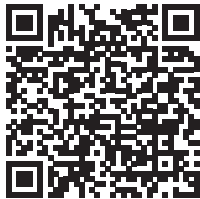
Matthew 4:1-11

Key Takeaways

- In the second test, the slanderer tempts Jesus to exert control and make the Father do what he said he would.
- Jesus's third test is not about whether he will assume cosmic rule over the nations but about how he will come into that power.
- Jesus's three wilderness tests correspond to his three prayers in the garden of Gethsemane. The garden is where he completes the test that started in the desert.
- Jesus, the Son of God, is a new Adam and Eve, a new David, and a new Israel—he succeeds where they failed.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think the slanderer challenges Jesus to cast himself down from the highest point of the temple?
2. What does Jesus's rejection of the slanderer's path to absolute cosmic authority show us about the posture a follower of Jesus should take when it comes to power?
3. Consider the way Matthew connects the three wilderness tests to Jesus's three prayers in the garden of Gethsemane. What insights can we draw from meditating on these two sections side by side?
4. How does Matthew show us Jesus triumphing over the tests his ancestors failed?



WATCH

SESSION 15: Jesus's Kingdom Mission

Jesus continues John's message, "The Kingdom of the skies is at hand." Explore how this central theme shapes Jesus's mission as he launches his ministry.

Meditate on Scripture

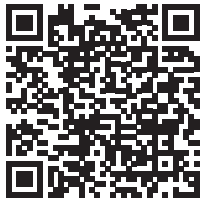
Matthew 4:12-17

Key Takeaways

- The two-sentence summary of Matthew 4:17, "Change course! The Kingdom of the skies has come near," encapsulates the core of what Jesus preached throughout his ministry.
- Matthew adapts quotes from the Psalms and the Prophets by using key words from other texts to highlight a network of connected passages.
- The most unexpected aspects of Jesus's message about the Kingdom are not its ideals but the people to whom and through whom that Kingdom will come, and what it will look like when it arrives.

Reflection Questions

1. How would you unpack the two-sentence summary of Jesus's message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matt. 4:17, NIV)?
2. Why does Matthew sometimes adapt the wording of his quotations from the Scriptures?
3. Why is Jesus's message about the Kingdom so surprising and, to some in his day, even offensive?



WATCH

SESSION 16: Reflecting on Matthew 1-4

What are your key takeaways from this class? Listen in as the students discuss what they learned.

Key Takeaways

- Matthew's use of Hebrew Bible quotes invites us to meditate on—that is, to read and re-read—the unified story of the Bible through the revealing lens of Jesus coming to this world.
- The Bible continually offers ways to see the familiar in new, unfolding layers of depth and meaning.
- This text is not just about words, it's about people. It was created in community and was intended to be studied in community and to lead us to a person.

Reflection Questions

1. Take some time to reflect on the insights you learned in this class. What was most surprising or most challenging to you?
2. How does Matthew invite us to reencounter the Hebrew Bible in light of the life of Jesus?
3. How has this study of the beginning chapters of Matthew helped you see familiar stories in a new light?
4. How does the context and transmission of Matthew's Gospel help to shape our understanding of the Bible as communal literature?