

Gospel of Matthew Introduction

1. A good rule for experienced athletes is that one never forget to practice the fundamentals.
 - a) A veteran basketball player will daily work on fundamentals like free throw shooting.
 - b) A veteran baseball player takes batting practice every day.
 - c) This rule also applies to musicians. Veteran musicians will still practice the basics on a regular basis.
 - d) Even in the business world, people will occasionally take continuing education courses and go over some of the fundamental rules of their profession.
 - e) These same rules must also apply to our faith as Christians.
 - i) The Gospel of Matthew is the first book of the New Testament.
 - ii) For veteran Christians, the stories and sayings of Jesus are common knowledge.
 - a) Teaching Matthew to Christian veterans is like going over the fundamentals.
 - b) Most adult Americans have some ideas of what Jesus taught and did. It is pretty close to impossible to live a life in this country and not be at least vaguely familiar with Jesus life and teachings.
 - c) If there are any newer Christians reading this study, I welcome you and hope you enjoy the studies. I promise to cover a lot of the fundamentals in these studies, not only to help the Christian novice, but also as a reminder to Christian veterans.
 - d) One can never over-learn the Bible and what it teaches.
2. With all of that said, welcome to my study of the Gospel of Matthew.
 - a) For those who have followed my studies for some time, you are aware that I like to teach the bible a book at time, with each lesson covering a chapter of that book.
 - b) My last two set of studies have been on Paul's 1st and 2nd Letters to Timothy and one of the Old Testament poetry books (Song of Songs). I just felt it was time for me to get back to the fundamentals. These lessons benefit me as well as the reader.
 - c) I can't give you a great reason why I picked Matthew over say, one of the other three Gospel accounts. I did take on the Gospel of John many years ago, so that narrowed my choices down to three. ☺
 - d) God just lead me to teach Matthew, so here I am.
3. The Gospel of Matthew, more than any other Gospel is a reminder of "a promise fulfilled".
 - a) It is the logical book to put first in the New Testament as it becomes the "conclusion" of the Old Testament.
 - i) This sort of brings up another topic. Why are the books of the New Testament in the order that they are in? I actually researched that topic at one time, and never got a great answer. They are not in chronological order. Some of the early complications of the New Testament vary in which book comes first.
 - a) Most of the early bibles puts Matthew first, as the emphasis is on the fulfillment of the promised Messiah of the Old Testament.
 - b) To those early compliers of the bible, it probably just seemed logical to put Matthew first. Who am I to argue? ☺
 - b) More than any other gospel account, the emphasis of Matthew is Jesus as the fulfillment of a "promised king" of the Old Testament.
 - i) The most common expression in the Gospel Matthew is "as it was written" or "as it was fulfilled". Matthew spends a lot of time quoting the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises in the Old Testament.

4. Matthew emphasizes Jesus as a promised king. This is important as much of the Old Testament teaches of a promised king (a.k.a. , “Messiah” in Hebrew). To help understand the Gospel of Matthew, it will probably be helpful go over a few key Old Testament passages that hint, or directly predict about a coming king/Messiah. Let’s start with the first hint of a promised Messiah in the Bible. After Adam & Eve ate some bad fruit, ☺ God decreed the punishments. Here is God’s statement of punishment to Satan for his involvement in the temptation:
 - a) “And I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman (Eve), and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15, NKJV)
 - i) I underlined the word “He”. Who is this “He” who will bruise Satan’s head?
 - a) That alone is the first clue of someone (a descendant of Adam) will take revenge on Satan for his involvement in tempting Adam and Eve.
 - ii) Let’s go back to the Genesis passage. Notice the “enmity”. It means to “make hostility”. God is declaring war between “the seed of the women” and the “seed of Satan”. This sounds confusing. Women, as a gender, don’t have “seeds” (i.e., sperm cells). What is God talking about when he is saying Eve’s “seed” and Satan’s “seed” will be enemies?
 - a) A clue is the last part of Genesis 3:15 where it says “He (Eve’s seed) shall bruise your head, And you (Satan) shall bruise His heel.
 - iii) To paraphrase, you Satan, will do some damage to his heel (whoever “he” is), but he is going to harm your head.
 - iv) All of this hints that from Eve’s “seed” is going to come a person to make up for the damage done by Satan by tempting Adam and Eve bringing sin into the world. In the Book of Romans, Paul picks up on this and contrasts how one man “Adam” brought sin in the world and another man (Jesus) was needed to take away sin.
 - (1) Adam caused many to be sinners because he disobeyed God, and Christ caused many to be made acceptable to God because he obeyed. (Romans 5:19, The Living Bible)
 - b) The reason I spent half a page on this is that I want you see that all through the bible, beginning with the earliest chapters of Genesis, God makes a promise of a coming redeemer to make up for Adam’s sins. Nowhere in the Old Testament is it bluntly stated something like “One day, a man will come to take away all of sins, roughly 400 years after the prophets stop”. You don’t get blunt references to Jesus, but you get strong clues and word-pictures all over the Old Testament. Jesus taught that the volume of the Bible speaks of him (See John 5:39). The Gospel of Matthew focuses on many of those key promises and teaches how Jesus is the fulfillment of those promises.
5. On the topic of a coming Messiah, there are two promises made by God to two people in the Old Testament. The first has to do with the promise to Abraham, and the second has to with the promise made to King David. Let’s look at Verse 1 of the Gospel of Matthew:
 - a) “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1, NIV)
 - b) Notice how Matthew does not open his Gospel account:
 - i) He does not say, “Here is God incarnate as man, and let me tell you about him.
 - ii) He does not say, “I spent three years of my life living with this guy, and let me tell you, he’s something special.” ☺
 - iii) Mathew opens up by being “very Jewish”. He gives the record of Jesus’ birth with an emphasis on the fact he is the Son (descendant) of David and the Son (descendant) of Abraham. You don’t get more Jewish than that. ☺

- c) Let's get back to the question. Why the emphasis on these two people in the Bible? What was the promises made to Abraham and David and what do they have to do with the opening verse of the Gospel of Matthew?
- i) Let's start with what God promised Abraham:
- a) The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you. (Genesis 13:14-17, NIV)
 - b) God was telling Abram (who God later renamed Abraham) in effect, look around at all the land of Israel (God was describing Israel in this passage). God was saying I unconditionally promise to give you to list land forever.
 - (1) It doesn't say "I'll give you this land if you are good". It doesn't say "You get this land only if you accept the Messiah". It says this land belongs to you forever, unconditionally, period.
 - (2) If we can't trust God's unconditional promises to the Nation of Israel, how can we trust his unconditional promises to us as believers in Jesus? (That's another topic I'll save for another day!)
 - c) The point here is simply that God called Abram (Abraham) to "be the first Jew". God picked Abraham to start a nation so that this nation can be a witness (ambassadors) for God to the surrounding world. Through this nation, a promised king will come. The promise of an individual king was not given until (roughly) a 1,000 years later when that promise was given to King David.
- ii) Here is the promise given to King David:
- a) "The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." (2nd Samuel 7:11b-13, NIV)
 - b) When I see the word "forever" in the Bible, I believe it means forever. ☺
 - c) This is a promise made to King David that his descendant will build a throne and it will last forever.
 - (1) The temporary fulfillment was his son Solomon built a temple. This does not fit the prophecy because 1) Solomon did not live forever and 2) That temple was eventually destroyed. Again, "forever" means just that, "forever".
 - d) Jesus said of the temple standing in his day "“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (John 2:19b, NIV)
 - e) The main point to see is that there is a promise made to King David that a there will be a future king (or, "Messiah") that will rule forever from King David's throne.
 - f) To this day, one of the key pillars of Judaism is to believe that one day God will deliver a promised Messiah to rule and reign from Israel. This is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and King David.
 - (1) What Judaism misunderstood is the full-purpose of Jesus. His second coming is to fulfill that promise to David. The first time he came was to pay the price for the sins and "make up" for what Adam and Eve did.

- (2) In fact, some religious Jews today argue that there will be “Two Messiah’s” will come one day. One will suffer on behalf of the nation of Israel and the other is to rule and reign from Jerusalem.
 - (a) This subgroup can’t accept the idea that the two “Messiah’s” are both one and the same.
 - (3) An old joke in Judaism is when the Messiah comes, they will ask, “So is this your first visit, or your second?”
- 6. OK John, I already believe Jesus is the Messiah, why should I study this if I know it to be true?
 - a) Boy, am I glad you asked that question! ☺
 - b) For those of you who already know all of this stuff I covered for the last two pages, it is basic review. It is review of the fundamentals of Christianity. The question is why should I spend time remembering this stuff? Can’t we move on to new things?
 - c) The reason we (yes we!) are to constantly remember the basics, is because:
 - i) The first reason is that we have a short memory and tend to forget easily. This is why I stated in my introduction that professional athletes, musicians, etc. never forget to practice the fundamentals. The old expression of “practice, practice, practice” applies to Christians as well.
 - ii) The other reason is that all people, including those who believe in Jesus, go through difficult periods in our lives. God never says, “OK, you believe in Jesus now. Everything is going to go wonderfully and you will never have another problem as long as you live!” I’m still looking for that verse in my bible. ☺ It’s not there.
 - iii) Therefore, we have to remember that just as the Jewish people lived for centuries on the promise of a future redemption, we too have to live on a set of promises. Our rewards for faithful service rarely come in this lifetime.
 - a) Stop and ponder how long is eternity. Stop and think as far in the future as you can possibly think. Now try to stretch that thought and think further. That is a long time. Our eternal destiny for that span of time is dependant upon our actions during this lifetime. You may not like that rule, but God is in charge, and He gets to make the rules! ☺
 - b) During those moments in our lives when things are falling apart and we are dealing with tragedies, we have to remember that a “promised Messiah” loves us, cares for us, has wonderful plans for us, died for us, and wants the best for our lives”.
 - (1) We study the fundamentals of a promised Messiah because that same Messiah makes it possible for us to live a greater life here on earth than we ever could without Him.
 - (2) We study the fundamentals like the Gospel of Matthew to remind ourselves that 1) Jesus dies for us to pay the price for our sins. 2) we study what Jesus expects of us in our lives to show our gratitude for that sin payment. To live the Christian life is not just to say “OK, Jesus, thanks for what you did. I’ll be going my way now”. It is about changing your lifestyle based on gratitude for eternal salvation. That is why one studies books like the Gospel of Matthew. That is why the whole bible should be read on a regular basis. It is our guide book for God’s expectations for us.
 - (3) Further, God does not work on our timetables, but on his. Getting our focus off of ourselves and unto God (by prayer, time in his word, etc.) is for us that reminder that we, like the Jews of the Old Testament are patiently trusting God’s timetable to work in our lives as opposed to trusting in ourselves.

7. I want bring up here a related topic. I want you to think about the Gospel of Matthew from Matthew's perspective. I'm going to go through a little history and some speculation, and then tie it back to how it applies to our lives.
- a) Matthew was one of the 12 apostles. In his book, he keeps himself in the background and says very little about himself.
 - b) The key point of this section is that Matthew was a tax collector. Let me try to explain how that was important to that culture and our culture.
 - i) Imagine an evil country attacking and conquering the United States. In order to prevent rebellion, this country has soldiers everywhere and takes away our guns.
 - ii) This country then taxes everybody in order to pay for the new government.
 - iii) Suppose the new president says, "I have an idea. I'll auction off each state (California, Nevada, etc.) to the highest bidder. The highest bid must pay me whatever they bid every year in taxes. Whatever the bidder can collect over and above the bid, he can keep for himself.
 - a) Now let's call each "bidder" a governor. That governor then has an auction for every county or every city. Each highest bidder then must pay the governor in taxes, whatever he bids and whatever they collect over and above that amount, the local tax collector can keep for themselves.
 - b) By the way, this enemy army is everywhere. Their job is to enforce this tax collection system and kill anybody trying to rebel against that.
 - c) Now imagine living as a slave to this county. You are told there is an income tax and a property tax. The local tax collector tells you how much to pay and the army enforces that rule. You have no say on how the money is spent and you can't vote for the tax collector or politician.
 - d) That is how the Roman tax collection system worked.
 - e) Given all of that, how would you think the Israelites thought of tax collectors? Now imagine a tax collector with a Jewish background. Wouldn't you think of that guy as a traitor, a thief and the "lowest of lows?" That is how collectors are viewed.
 - c) Of all the people in the world that Jesus picks to write the first-in-line Gospel that most people read when they pick up a bible, we read the account of a "lower-than-scum" tax collector! At least with an Internal Revenue Agent we know that we have some voting power to elect our officials to whom they are accountable. With these guys, they have the legal right to tax us what they want and we can't do anything about it. Imagine the IRS sending you a bill for whatever amount they choose and we can't argue with them.
 - d) Now imagine what Matthew's life must have been like.
 - i) Being Jewish, he probably grew up with some sort of Jewish education. Romans permitted the Jews to "home school" their children and freedom of religion.
 - ii) Matthew probably rejected Judaism. You can't be a "tax collecting traitor" and at the same time a good religious Jew. I am pretty positive Jewish tax collectors were ex-communicated from the synagogues.
 - iii) Matthew probably figured "I'm sick of this slavery lifestyle. I'll just "sell out" to the Romans and then I can make more money. Who cares about all this religious stuff anyway?
 - iv) Yet, despite of the money and power, Matthew saw something in Jesus that caused him to give all of that up. He saw the emptiness of that lifestyle. Despite his money and power, Matthew didn't have inner peace. The desire to be accepted by God and "do the right thing" is stronger than material prosperity. Like many a bible hero before him, Matthew gave up the riches of this world for the promise of better things in another lifetime.

- a) Maybe Matthew, in his knowledge a Messiah, believed that Jesus would set up the kingdom and overthrow the Romans. Maybe that's why he gave up his tax collector job. Maybe it wasn't until Matthew saw Jesus crucified and rise again that he understood the full purpose of Jesus coming.
 - b) The point is it changed Matthew's life.
 - c) When you read Chapter 1 of the Gospel of Matthew, you see Matthew's "Jewishness" come forth. The first verse is again "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:"
 - (1) That is not written by a person rejecting Judaism, that is written by a person who understands and accepts Judaism, and understands Jesus as the fulfillment of all that Judaism was teaching.
 - e) Which leads back to you and me.
 - i) Before we choose to follow Jesus, we too, choose "the world" first.
 - a) Adam and Eve ate the apple as Satan falsely promised "You will be like God" if they ate of that fruit.
 - b) Man's natural instinct is to want to do it ourselves as to give our selves the credit for what we accomplish. Saying "yes" to God is about saying "no" to our ego. It is not just a one-time thing, but a daily practice as we battle against our old instinctive nature.
 - ii) Like Matthew, we see the futility of "just making money". Our instincts tell us that disobeying one of the ten commandments (#8: Thou shall not steal!) is wrong. That internal desire to be accepted by God is stronger than the material benefits of the world. At some point in our life we realize it is wrong to go after material things and let God take over our lives.
 - iii) If you read all four gospels, you will notice that Matthew's name, when mentioned among the disciples is Levi. It is mentioned in Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27. Yet in Mark 3:18 and in Luke 6:15, when the disciples are listed, the name Matthew is used. Matthew means "Gift from God"
 - a) My "probable speculation" is that Jesus renamed Levi to Matthew. Just as Jesus called Simon "Peter" he probably started calling Levi "Matthew" and the name stuck.
 - b) Jesus took a lower-than-life tax collector and said in effect, "You are now one of mine. You have a new life. All of your sins of extortion are now forgiven. Here, let me give you a new name Matthew (meaning "gift from God") to go with your new lifestyle."
8. The Gospel of Matthew was written approximately 20-30 years after Jesus died and rose again. This is important to understand that Matthew had first-hand knowledge of Jesus' life.
- a) Modern scholars debate the date, but once you start studying the evidence, you can come to a pretty solid conclusion for this date.
 - i) About 70 AD, the main Jewish Temple, and was destroyed by the Roman army. Jews were scattered from Israel all over the world. The country of Israel ceased to exist until 1948. There is no mention of this major event in any of the gospel accounts and this helps to support the fact that the gospels were written prior to this date (except possibly John's Gospel, which may be a few years later.)
 - ii) There was a Jewish historian (not a Christian) named Josephus who lived and wrote in the 1st Century. He wrote about the rise of Christianity during that time period in that location. The facts collaborate the gospel accounts of that time.

- a) The point is if the Gospels were written “much later” as the critic’s claim, Matthew would not have some of the correct details that outside writers and archeologists have found to support what was written.
 - iii) Further, we have records of the 2nd and 3rd generation believers who quote Matthew’s gospel.
 - b) There is an interesting theory I want to share about Matthew’s writing.
 - i) I need to start by emphasizing this is a “theory that fits the facts”, and just that.
 - ii) Here goes: Since Matthew was a Roman tax collector, he had to do a lot of writing. His function was that of a bookkeeper as well as a tax collector. The Romans had a version of “short hand” that allowed them to write fast as one talks. Matthew may have had knowledge of this.
 - iii) The reason this is important is that Matthew records more lengthy speeches verbatim than any other Gospel. Matthew spends three chapters (5-7) recording one speech by Jesus. How was that one speech recorded verbatim? The answer may be “Roman shorthand”.
 - iv) The point of this is that Matthew’s occupation as a tax collector gave him the skills and supplies to be a writer. God used that talent to have him write a Gospel.
 - a) Most scholars place either Matthew or Mark’s gospel as the oldest. Some of the information is similar, and they may have collaborated on some of their sources. (Most scholars believe Mark’s main source was Peter, but I’ll save that discussion for another time.)
 - b) I suspect when all four writers got down to writing their Gospels they checked “their notes” and probably interviewed witnesses to events to get their factual information correct.
 - c) Matthew, along with John spent three years with Jesus. If you believe the person you are with is the Son of God, you might take some notes. ☺ That is probably what Matthew did.
 - c) The reason I’m getting into all of this is so that when you read the Gospel of Matthew, you understand you are reading first hand knowledge of someone who spent three years of their lives with Jesus. You are probably reading it from someone who was a good note taker and copied speeches verbatim.
9. Another thing to notice about Matthew’s gospel is his emphasis on “rejection” and “acceptance”
- a) More than any other Gospel, Matthew emphasizes Jesus being rejected by the Jews as their promised Messiah.
 - b) I believe Matthew was picked by God for this emphasis as Matthew himself understood rejection. Being a tax collector was not a popular thing to be. ☺
 - c) Matthew saw something in Jesus that said, “I’ll accept you. I am willing to forgive you of your previous lifestyle. Come to me”.
 - i) We are not sure what Jesus said to him other than “follow me”, but it must have been something. Whatever Jesus said or did, it caused Matthew to give up the power and riches of being a tax collector.
 - ii) Matthew walked away from that in order to follow Jesus.
 - iii) That similar type of calling is for all of us.
 - iv) The “villain” of the Gospels is a Jewish religious sect called the “Pharisee’s”.
 - a) We’ll talk a lot more about them during the lessons.
 - b) In fact, modern Orthodox Judaism is based on their teachings.
 - c) Their greatest fault was their piousness. They saw themselves during that time era as “better than others”. A nonreligious Jew felt too guilty to approach them or thought of them as “holier than thou”.

- d) The lesson for Christians to learn about them is not look down on non-believers as “we-are-better-than-you”, but to see them as somebody who needs Jesus as much (not more!) than we do.
 - (1) Just as Jesus was willing to go to preach to the sinner, so must we not just sit around in our churches, but we must also reach out to the lost. The appeal of Jesus to “Levi the tax collector (i.e., Matthew) should be in all of our hearts in our daily lives.
- 10. Another big-picture idea to see in Matthew is as he grew in his faith, he also saw his own sins in comparison to his new faith in Jesus.
 - a) Whenever the 12 disciples are listed in the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew always mentions that he was a tax collector.
 - b) When he lists the other disciples, he never mentions the other guy’s faults other than Judas betraying Jesus.
 - c) I believe Matthew’s emphasis on his being a tax collector was a form of “self-punishment”. To paraphrase, Matthew seems to be saying “I was really a bad guy until I started following Jesus”.
 - d) The point of mentioning this is that we tend to be tougher on forgiving our own faults than God is on forgiving us. We see our shortfalls and can’t believe God can ever forgive us. What is worse is thinking “we are so bad, God will forgive me, but he can never use me for anything great because I am, or was such a bad person.
 - e) Here’s the point: God took a traitor among his own people and made him famous for 2,000 years. God took a man who didn’t care for religion, who extorted his own people for his own gain and was an outcast among his own people. That person, not only was saved by Jesus, but went on to write the most read book in the bible.
 - i) If God can use an outcasted tax collector for his glory, he can use you.
 - ii) In that time era, Caesar’s name was known throughout the world, and Matthew’s name was only known to Christian believers. Today’ people name their children Matthew and their dog’s Caesar.
- 11. Let me give you a few more tidbits, and then I’ll wrap it up for this week. I always like to go easy on the introductory lesson as to not scare away new readers. ☺
 - a) Almost every commentator on Matthew I read or listen to, “outlines” the entire book. They divide up the 28 chapters of Matthew into different sections.
 - i) Matthew uses some good “division” words like “Now it came to pass” as if to start a new section.
 - ii) One thing I have learned after years of studying my bible is that people like to divide the books into sections and then, a few days later, I forget how they specifically divided that book into sections. ☺
 - iii) My point is I’m not going to divide it. Even if I did, you are going to forget it anyway. I would rather you remember the big-picture ideas of “rejection and acceptance” and Jesus being presented as the promised Messiah. That is the important overview things to remember about the Gospel of Matthew and not how the book is divided up.
 - iv) Remember that when Matthew wrote the book, he didn’t put in chapter numbers. Those were added centuries later. He wrote it as one continuous story. Since that is how Matthew wrote it, that is how I want to teach it.

- b) Another point to make is that we are going to run into some “bible difficulties” in Matthew. Some of the stories told in Matthew are also told in Luke and Mark. Some of the details and emphasis are different in each account. I’ll try to cover some of those difficulties as we go.
 - i) The point to remember is that this is the Word of God. Just because two passages sound difficult to reconcile, does not mean there is not a solution. One can drive themselves mad trying to reconcile every fine point.
 - ii) Try to visualize a court room. There are four witnesses all trying to describe a person. Each account is similar, but each account has a different emphasis. Some people remember different details about different points in Jesus life.
 - iii) It doesn’t mean any of them are wrong. Accept that the accounts can be reconciled and we’ll tackle some of them as we go.
 - iv) Each gospel writer is focusing on a different emphasis. It may or may not have been done this way intentionally. It just may have been the style of the writer.
 - a) Luke emphasizes Jesus humanity.
 - b) Mark emphasizes Jesus as a servant.
 - c) John emphasizes Jesus as a the Son of God incarnate.
 - d) Matthew emphasizes Jesus as the promised Messiah.
 - (1) Matthew spends more time quoting Old Testament prophecies about Jesus than any other Gospel.
 - (2) Because that is the emphasis of Matthew, that will also be the emphasis of this study as we go.

12. So let’s get back to my introductory comments: It’s all about the fundamentals:

- a) The primary emphasis of the Gospel of Matthew is on Jesus is the fulfillment of the promised king of Israel.
- b) Our “jobs” as Christians is not only to accept that fact, but if he is our king, we must be obedient to what the king commands us to do.
 - i) Much of those commandments and lifestyle practices are found in the pages of the Gospel of Matthew.
 - ii) I compare studying Matthew to the “practicing fundamentals” because that is just what it is. The reason one continues to read the Gospel accounts is the same reason a seasoned athlete or a seasoned musician never stops practicing the basics. Those fundamental skills can “slip” if they don’t keep practicing.
 - a) That same principal applies to our faith in Jesus. It is necessary for us to keep reading the gospels to remind ourselves of what is important and where we are to keep our focus. The gospels were never intended to be “read once and then move on to something else.” They are designed to be studied through one’s lifetime.
 - b) With that said, hopefully we all learn more than what we have previously gathered out of studying Matthew in the past. Further understanding of biblical principals, plus reminding ourselves of what we should already know is how we mature in our faith.
- c) Finally, we need to keep Matthew’s perspective in focus.
 - i) Matthew himself was a reject and an outcast. He choose, as a Roman taxpayer to ignore his own people for the sake of riches.
 - ii) Our “sinful nature” is when we willfully choose to reject God to fulfill our own desires. Yet, like Matthew, we saw the futility of that lifestyle and changed.
 - a) Jesus, called Matthew out of that lifestyle.
 - b) Matthew accepted that call and walked away from his previous lifestyle.

- iii) That same principal applies to all of us.
 - a) Jesus calls us to change, and we change.
 - b) It is not just a one time thing when you accept Christ, it is a continual process of maturity as we become more like the person God wants us to be.
 - c) Matthew changed from a tax collecting traitor to one of Jesus original followers, to a writer who changed the world.
 - d) Jesus is always looking for people willing to change their lifestyle to make an impact for God on this world. Studying Matthew is just one of millions of examples of how that can be accomplished.
 - e) With that, I hope you enjoy these studies, and next week we'll take on Chapter 1.

13. Let's pray:. Father, we thank you that the life of Jesus was written down for our learning. As we go through these studies, help us to glean what you want us to learn today and in the coming weeks. Further, help us to apply to our lives what you want us to learn from these studies. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.