

Psalms 1-2, Matthew 1 – 6 (#1)

Psalm— The book of Psalms (150) is divided into five sections (books) with each ending in a doxology. The first section goes from Psalm 1:1 to 41:13. The book of Psalms gives the full expression of our praise, worship, joy, sadness, and trust. Psalms has been the hymnbook of Israel and then the Church for the last 3000 years.

Psalm 1— This Psalm sets the course for the lives of all people of all time. Either we choose lives that honor God and are saturated by His Word, thus leading to life and blessedness, or we choose lives of self-will and rebellion which ultimately leads to eternal destruction. As you begin this year in Next Level, which do you choose? *What are the “blessed” (happy) people like and not like, and what are the promises God gives to them?*

Psalm 2— This Psalm speaks of the sovereignty of God and His Christ over all people and all creation for all time. It is eternal suicide to reject the Lord as the King of our lives. *What are the various reactions you see in the world today to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?*

Matthew— The purpose of this book is to prove that Jesus is the King and long promised Messiah of Israel. Matthew quotes more than sixty Old Testament prophecies showing that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of David. Since Matthew (also called Levi) was a hated tax collector before following Christ, he shows that the Lord extends grace and mercy to any who repent of their sin, trusts Christ, and turn their lives over to Him.

Matthew 1— In today’s society, a list of one’s ancestors is both irrelevant and boring. To the Jewish audience it was absolutely necessary to prove the right of Jesus to the throne of David. Starting with verse 18, Matthew wastes no time in explaining the birth of Christ and the strategic choosing of Mary and Joseph to bring this about. *How does Joseph’s actions and reactions exemplify a godly character?*

Matthew 2— Wise men from the east came to Bethlehem to worship and present gifts to the newborn “King of the Jews.” Because of King Herod’s jealous rage, God warns both the wise men and Joseph through dreams to flee from Herod. After Herod’s death, Jesus and his family returned from Egypt to Israel and settled in Nazareth, the home of Joseph and Mary. *Four times in these two chapters the angel of the Lord gave instructions to Joseph through dreams. What are different ways that God guides and instructs us today?*

Matthew 3— John the Baptist was a forerunner of Jesus who was called to prepare the hearts of the people so that they would listen and obey Christ. Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River in order to “fulfill all righteousness.” *1. As you read this chapter, what stands out in your mind about the ministry and person of John the Baptist? 2. Explain how the teaching of the Trinity is clearly seen in this chapter?*

Matthew 4— Jesus is led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the Devil (v. 1-11). Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee preaching repentance and the gospel of the kingdom (v. 12-24). *In each of the three temptations, what was the means Jesus used to defeat Satan? How is this an example to us?*

Matthew 5— Chapters 5 to 7 is called the “Sermon on the Mount” because Jesus gave it on the side of a mountain (or hillside) near Capernaum. These chapters give the teaching of Jesus on the law and how it relates to real inner transformation of the heart rather than just outward conformity to the rules and regulations that the Pharisees taught. *1. Explain in a few words the meaning of the eight qualities (Beatitudes) of the blessed (v. 3-10). 2. How does Jesus take the teaching of the law about anger, lust, divorce, revenge, and love to a higher standard?*

Matthew 6— In this chapter Jesus shows the Pharisee’s self-righteousness in giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting. He teaches us a pattern for our prayers (The Lord’s Prayer) and includes powerful lessons on money and worry. *1. As you read Verses 25 to 34, give the reasons why we are not to worry. 2. What is the promise God gives us if we seek first His kingdom and righteousness in our lives?*

Psalms 3-4, Matthew 7 – 12 (#2)

Psalm 3— As David was surrounded by Absalom’s army, his trust and hope was in the Lord whose very presence was a shield around him. This psalm of lament and confidence “becomes a pattern for praise, peace, and prayer amidst pressure.” (MacArthur) *Share a time you felt betrayed and abandoned by someone. What brought you through?*

Psalm 4— In the dark experiences of life, we cry out to God and know He hears us when we call. Under dire pressure, David vacillates between feelings of terror and trust. Confidence in the Lord finally wins the day. *After crying out to God in his distress (v. 1-2), what reasons does David give why he has become joyful, peaceful, and secure?*

Matthew 7— In this final chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks about judging others (v 1-6), a persevering prayer life (v. 7-11), and finishes His teaching with vital comparisons between the narrow gate and the broad gate, good trees, bad trees, and obedience vs disobedience to His teaching (v.12-29).

1. Why do you think Jesus invites us to ask for things from our Heavenly Father? 2. In verses 21 to 27, what is the difference between those who profess they belong to Christ and those who really belong to Christ?

Matthew 8— Jesus shows His power and compassion through physical healing, casting out demons, and calming the storm. The faith of the Centurion (v. 5-13) is contrasted with the faith of the disciples (v. 23-27).

1. As you read the passage about the Roman Centurion, explain why Jesus was amazed at his faith including his understanding who Jesus was. 2. Why did Jesus seem to make discipleship too hard (v. 18-22)?

Matthew 9— The authority, power, and compassion of Jesus are seen in the healing of the paralyzed man (v. 1-7), the bleeding woman (v. 18-22), the raising of the girl to life (v. 23-26), and the healing of the blind and mute (v. 27-34). The scribes and the Pharisees attack Jesus because He forgives sins, associates with tax collectors and sinners like Matthew (v. 9-12), and His disciples do not fast like them.

1. After calling Matthew to be His disciple, Jesus went to his house to eat with the hated “tax collectors and sinners.” In what way can we follow Christ’s example where we live? 2. What prayer did Christ command us to pray? Why? See verses 35-38.

Matthew 10— Jesus sends out His twelve disciples with authority to cast out evil spirits and heal diseases, giving them detailed instructions for their ministry. He warns His followers of great persecution in their service for Him but encourages them with the promise of care, protection, and guidance. He clearly delineates the cost as well as the rewards of discipleship. *What kind of commitment does Jesus call for in verses 37 to 39?*

Matthew 11— Jesus eases John the Baptist’s doubts about His being the Messiah and commends John for his faithfulness in fulfilling his calling and ministry (v. 1-19). Our Lord condemns the cities of Galilee for their indifference and lack of faith in Him and His teaching, but commends the common people who gladly heard Him. Jesus promises rest to all who are burdened down with the cares of life and with legalistic rule-keeping religion if they come to Him and take up His yoke. *1. Jesus said, “But wisdom is justified (vindicated/proved right) by her actions (v. 16-19).” Explain what He meant. 2. What advantages do we have by taking the yoke of Christ? See verses 28-30.*

Chapter 12— Jesus has run-ins with the Pharisees when He was eating and healing on the Sabbath (v. 1-14). As He heals all the sick, Jesus rebuts the accusation by the Pharisees that His power comes from Satan and then warns them against the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and careless words (v. 15-37). Asking Him to show them a sign, our Lord declares to the Pharisees that the only sign He will give them is that of Jonah. Jesus illustrates to them that their teaching of self reformation will only result in Satan’s control over their lives (v. 38-45). Finally, Jesus declares that His real family members are those who do the will of His Father in heaven (v. 46-50). *What is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Who can commit the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?*