

Show slide #1

INTRODUCTION

For the past few weeks, we have been venturing into the book of Matthew in the New Testament. Matthew is an account of the life of Jesus Christ. We have seen that he has been showing that Jesus is the promised king and Messiah. In chapter one, the genealogy showed that Jesus was a descendant of King David and that made him eligible to be the promised Messiah or Savior of Israel. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and assured him that the Holy Spirit was the father of his engaged bride's baby. In chapter two, some Magi came from a distant country asking, "where has the king of the Jews been born?" They knew something that the Jews did not even know.

As we read through Matthew, we see some very obvious statements about who Jesus is, but when we look at today's passages in chapter three and four, we see that the events do reveal Jesus' identity, but it takes a deeper look to see it.

Perhaps you know the comedian Jeff Foxworthy who made jokes about himself, being called a "redneck." Jeff would help people clarify their identity and see if they were a redneck by telling jokes like, "You might be a redneck if..." and then complete the joke. So, he is making something that maybe is not so obvious, more obvious.

Now some people would think of "redneck" being a derogatory term; it refers to poor white Southern country folk and is similar to "hillbilly" or "cracker." The thing is, if you're a "redneck" you don't consider it an insult! And I think that all of us have a little 'redneck' in us. Let's think of that way and it not an insult to anyone.

1. You might be a redneck if you ever cut your grass and found a car.

2. You might be a redneck if you think the “stock market” has a fence around it.
3. You might be a redneck if your wife has ever said, “Come move this transmission so I can take a bath.”
4. You might be a redneck if you’ve ever made change in the offering plate.

These jokes are to help people understand, and maybe even discover, their identity – in a humorous way of course! And I find that this is what Matthew is doing in these opening chapters; he is helping people understand not their own identity, but that of Jesus. Sometimes things are not so obvious until you look a little longer.

The manager of the New York Yankees was at one point, a man named Yogi Berra, and he said was known to say really profound things, like,

Slide # 2

“You can observe a lot, just by looking!”

I find that to be a pretty good principle to use when studying the Bible; just look at it for a while.

OUR SITUATION

The historical events of Jesus’ life may not seem to point to his identity until we look a bit closer. But we should see the obvious and be convinced of Jesus’s identity as the King and Messiah and agree that that Kingdom of heaven is not just near, but **here**.

The scripture shows it, John the Baptist heralds it, God proves it, the Holy Spirit seals it, and Jesus lives it.

Slide # 3

Though understated by the bare historical events, we can clearly see that “You are certainly a king if...”

- “You are certainly a king if...” You have a herald announcing your coming.
- “You are certainly a king if...” You have a coronation ceremony attended by the most prominent.
- “You are certainly a king if...” You are tested to show your worthiness.
- “You are certainly a king if...” You call people to serve in your administration.
- “You are certainly a king if...” You show a way of living that suits your kingdom.

“YOU ARE CERTAINLY A KING IF...” YOU HAVE A HERALD ANNOUNCING YOUR COMING.

“You are certainly a king if...” You have a herald announcing your coming.

Let’s read the passage: Matthew 3:1-12

¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” ⁴Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

John the Baptist picked up where Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament left off. Malachi written about 430 B.C. says,

Malachi 3:1–2a (ESV)

¹“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. **And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple;** and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

John saw his mission as a fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3–5 (ESV)

³A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

I like to show how the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. It shows that God has a bigger plan that he is revealing over time. His time scale is so much longer than ours. He takes hundred of years to fulfill things when we would be happy if were just a few weeks.

John was the messenger that God was sending to be a “herald” of the coming King. A herald was one that travelled before a coming King to proclaim the Kings coming and get things ready.

He preached “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This is a warning; you are not ready for what is coming!

We need to do what the scripture says, “Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!” Repentance involves not only a change in direction or re-orientation, like following the GPS when you make a wrong turn to get back on the path, but also a more fundamental change in what you are trusting in. If you don’t believe your GPS knows the best route but instead trust yourself, you might find yourself in a traffic jam. Far more seriously,

repentance toward the coming Messiah meant a complete change in what they were trusting in. An honest Jew could recognize that they had failed miserably in living God's perfect law. Others, like the religious leaders, were trusting in their own righteousness, or their own fulfillment of the law of Moses to make them right before God.

John was calling them to give up the game; "surrender- you've lost." It is now time to do something different. Stop doing what has failed so many times. Give up your trust in yourself to be a good religious person and rather admit deep down you are a wretch; given a different set of circumstances, there is nothing that you would not do. Instead, he was calling them to repent of their trust in themselves and rather get ready for him who was coming. Something totally new and different. Jesus the son of God came to set things right.

They came confessing their sins and being baptized as a sign of their cleansing and getting ready.

We continue reading verse 7,

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

⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

John came down on the false motives of Pharisees and the Sadducees (these were two different sects of religious teachers.) They were not coming to repent and get ready, but see and be spectators of what was going on; probably so they could criticize and tell people not to believe it. Verse 11,

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

John gave a warning, and he gave a promise, “but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Baptism is a symbol of identification with Christ. When we go under the water in baptism, we are showing that we have been submerged in Christ; we are subsumed in him; we are “in Christ.” John is saying not only are joined to Christ, but we will be baptized, or subsumed, in the Holy Spirit. When we turn from ourselves in repentance and turn to Christ in faith, the Bible says that we have a new birth and given a new heart to love God. We are given the gift of the Holy Spirit and he dwells in us. No longer do we live by ourselves, but Christ lives through us.

John understood that he was a herald for the coming King. John’s job was to increase the expectation of the coming Messiah and King, and more importantly, to increase the reception of the King by people preparing their hearts. John speaks of his understanding of his role in

John 1:31–34 (ESV)

³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, **that he might be revealed to Israel.** ³²And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’

John was waiting too...

"YOU ARE CERTAINLY A KING IF..." YOU HAVE A CORONATION CEREMONY ATTENDED BY THE MOST PROMINENT.

"You are certainly a king if..." You have a coronation ceremony attended by the most prominent.

Matthew 3:13–17 (ESV)

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented 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 thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

It is perplexing to understand why Jesus would need to be baptized until we understand that he is required to fulfill the whole of God's law in our place – as our substitute. Jesus had to fulfill all righteousness for us. God had made a new requirement for Israel to be baptized with the baptism of John for repentance in preparation of the coming King.

We see this in Luke 7:28–30 (ESV). Jesus was speaking about John...

²⁸I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

²⁹(When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John,

³⁰but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

Jesus had to be baptized because his followers are supposed to be baptized. He had to identify fully with men so that, he could die for men on the cross.

Verse 16,

¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

This is where Matthew is a bit understated: Kings have coronations and though Matthew doesn't say it, he shows it. We can observe a lot just by looking... Jesus' baptism is a coronation ceremony and the most prominent have come: God the Father and the Holy Spirit are present for the baptism and coronation of God the Son.

John's waiting is also over. The Son of God is revealed to him.

John 1:33-34

³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

God is pleased with Jesus. **The question to us, is do we also delight in Jesus?** This is the mark of Christian; that we take delight in Jesus our savior!

"YOU ARE CERTAINLY A KING IF..." YOU ARE TESTED TO SHOW YOUR WORTHINESS.

"You are certainly a king if..." You are tested to show your worthiness.

Matthew 4:1-11 (ESV)

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the 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, " 'Man shall 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 set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said 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, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' " ⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall 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 glory. ⁹And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, " 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.' "

¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Jesus as a king was tested as to his worthiness and passed with flying colors! What this means in a king is that he proved that he was out of reach from corruption. Usually, we see in a person of power or fame that the longer they go along, the more corrupt they become. Rather than caring for the needs of the people, they care only about maintaining their own power. Like Herod, who killed his own family members because he suspected them of wanting to take over from him.

Jesus proved that only one thing mattered to him and that was following God's will. We know that God is good, and Jesus is likewise good. We can trust that even though he is all-powerful, and has all authority that he is always good and has the best interest of the world and each person in mind. Jesus passing the corruption test was also necessary for our salvation and proved that he is strong enough to our savior and also that he is good

enough to be our savior. If he fell for Satan's lies, he would be able to be a fit substitute for us and we would all be doomed.

"YOU ARE CERTAINLY A KING IF..." YOU CALL PEOPLE TO SERVE IN YOUR ADMINISTRATION.

"You are certainly a king if..." You call people to serve in your administration.

Matthew 4:17–22 (ESV)

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ¹⁸While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

We see that Jesus is calling people to learn from him and serve him and then to take the message of the kingdom to the world after he would be gone. These two sets of brothers knew something of Jesus before this event. We don't see that here, but in the other gospel accounts like (Mark or Luke or John's gospel).

They obeyed Jesus' call and surrendered everything to come and follow him!

It is not quite the same, but when Jeanine and I decided to serve full time with Cru many years ago, we decided that we were going to serve the Lord with our careers. All of us have a different path in life, but we all have to decide who we are living for; ourselves or the Lord? This seems to need to be decided every day too!

"You are certainly a king if..." You show a way of living that suits your kingdom.

After Jesus' temptation, it says in verse 13,

¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali.

This is territory of Gentiles. The Jews considered anyone that was not a Jew a "Gentile" and there was a general racism toward them. They considered them dogs. This area of Capernaum and Galilee, was "gentile" territory. It is interesting that Jesus started there. The point is clear in Matthew, that Jesus is creating a new culture – a culture where it does not matter if you are Jew or Gentile, Jesus is available to anyone that comes to him by faith. One of the last verses of Matthew is this, in chapter 28:18,

Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew is showing that Jesus opens the gospel to everyone; all are welcome through Christ!

Matthew 4:23-25 (ESV)

²³And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick,

those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them.²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

I think that the fame of Jesus was not only that he healed the sick, but that he accepted everyone. He ministered to the sick and poor and despised and Gentiles and Jews. Jesus lived what he wants his disciples to live: “love one another as I have loved you.”

CONCLUSION

We have come up to the end of the beginning of Matthew.

If we were not looking carefully, you may not recognize that all of the events of Jesus life point the fact that he is a King; the King of above all kings, in fact.

The Jews were waiting for their Messiah or King because of the many prophecies that told them he was coming. Yet at the same time they were looking for the wrong thing. Jesus would not meet their expectations because he would not come to defeat the enemies of Israel as a country, but instead he came to defeat each person’s biggest enemy; their owns sin that separated them from God. The Angel said to Joseph about Mary, “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Jesus has been shown, through the events of his life to be the promised, prophesied Messiah and King of Israel. God doesn’t want us to think of Jesus as “probably a king if,” but “certainly as King” because...

- He is in the genealogy of King David.
- Angels came and testified to various people about who Jesus would be.

- Magi came from a distant land asking, “where is the King of the Jews born?”
- Herod believed the scriptures and thought that he could out-manuever God and tried to kill the babies under the age of 2 in the region where Jesus was born.
- John was a herald as Kings have. He heralded Jesus.
- Jesus’ baptism was a coronation, where God declared him to be the Son of God and the Holy Spirit anointed him for ministry.
- Jesus proved that he was worthy to be king, and not subject to corruption as he overcame the temptations of Satan. He is a king that can be trusted.
- Jesus gathered followers, an inner circle of people loyal to him to learn to do his work along with him and spread the message around the world.
- Jesus showed a new way of life – a life that was for everyone that would come to him in faith. Not just for Jews, but everyone. Rich, poor, healthy, sick, Jew, Gentile.

Jeff Foxworthy liked to joke with people who they were based on silly stories. Matthew is also about revealing identity too. We need to be clear about the identity of Jesus, that he is the Messiah, come to save us for our sins and he is the King of the kingdom of heaven, now come to earth. We have a new Lord and everything we do is to serve him and know him.

John told people to repent, not just of their sins, but their entire orientation, because something new was coming. It was not more laws, but God himself come to live and die for his people.

Repentance involves rejection of a life of sin: because we know that does please God and just ends in emptiness. But more than that it means that we turn and put our trust, not in a religion or ourselves to live a life pleasing to God, but instead turn to a person, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is a person that we know and he loves us. He wants us to love and follow him.

Please pray with me.

Prayer -

Thank you father for working your plan through history and sending your son as a king, but first to die for us.

Through him we can have eternal life and live in your kingdom forever with you. We are eternally grateful.

Lord, we repent of our sins. Lord we get lazy, we get slothful, we get a sense of entitlement. Lord we easily fall into a guilt and trying once again to please you by our good works. How easily that mode overtakes us.

Lord remind us that we live by your love and grace and let that motivate you to serve you with all of our being in joy and gratefulness. Amen.