

PREFACE

When you think of royalty, what typically comes to mind? It may be images of tiaras, scepters, knights, and palaces. Yet, beyond that, royalty embodies power, authority, influence, and grandeur. Usually kings are seen as elite and removed from the people—they are anything but ordinary.

When the Israelites were in a period of waiting for the promised Messiah—the King to come and deliver them—they had 400 years to imagine what that King would be like.¹ But when Jesus finally arrived, He wasn't what anyone expected.

Instead of elite, Jesus was ordinary.

Instead of removed, Jesus was accessible.

Instead of coming in power, Jesus came to serve and be a sacrifice.

Instead of proud, Jesus was humble.

Instead of indifference, Jesus had compassion for those around Him.

No one saw this Messiah coming—Jesus was the Unexpected King.

We, too, can have expectations and preconceived notions of who Jesus is or who we want Him to be. Sometimes Jesus meets and even exceeds those expectations and sometimes He is still unexpected. As we look closer at some narratives of Jesus' life from the Gospel of Matthew, we will see the unexpected King who came, loved, healed, called, taught, died, forgave, rose, and who will one day come again.

¹ "The interlude in our English Bible is scarcely noticeable. A simple turn of the page and you leave behind the Old Testament and enter the New Testament. ... [Yet,] the world in which Jesus travels bears little resemblance to the one left behind in Malachi. ... Most noticeable, perhaps, is the lack of prophets. Whereas Malachi has followed a succession of prophets going back hundreds of years, not a single divine spokesperson appeared before the nation during the years between the Old and New Testaments. ... For more than 400 years, the heavens seemed closed to the nation of Israel. They heard nothing from God." *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1525

BACKGROUND

Author: Matthew (also known as Levi)

“Matthew, also called Levi, was one of the 12 disciples and the author of the first Gospel. When Jesus called him, Matthew was sitting in the tax collector’s booth collecting taxes for Rome. Other Jews probably considered him a traitor, since collecting taxes meant cooperation with the Roman occupiers of Palestine. Because tax collectors were free to take as much personal profit from people as they liked, they were widely regarded as the worst of sinners, often categorized along with prostitutes (**Matthew 21:32**). In his Gospel account, Matthew presents Jesus as the Davidic King who has come to fulfill the Old Testament, especially its promises of everlasting salvation. (**Matthew 9:9**)”¹

Date Written: AD 60-65

Audience: The Jewish people

Focus: Matthew focuses on Old Testament fulfillment and on providing evidence that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

“The people of Israel were waiting for the Messiah, their king. Matthew begins his book by showing how Jesus Christ was a descendant of David. But Matthew goes on to show that God did not send Jesus to be an earthly king but a heavenly King.”² He is the Unexpected King.

¹ Packer, J. I., et al. *Global Study Bible: English Standard Version*. Crossway, 2018. Bible Gateway Plus

² *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1531

HOW TO USE THE STUDY GUIDE

Recap: Each week there will be a question that allows you to process how you were able to implement the “Spiritual Practice” and “On Mission” sections from the previous week. This can help your group hold each other accountable to what you are learning and how you are integrating it into your life.

Big Idea: This section reveals the main theme of the lesson and gives some framework for what we will be studying that week.

Context: This section gives the biblical context for the passage that is being studied.

Reading: Take some time to slowly read through the passage being studied, asking Holy Spirit to reveal His truth to you.

Questions: This section is composed of observation, interpretation, and application questions for you and your group to interact with on your own and with each other.

Spiritual Practice: Each lesson will have a spiritual practice that provides an opportunity to spend time with Jesus and engage in worship. In addition to doing this practice on your own, please allow enough time for your group to engage with this practice together as well.

On Mission: Each week there will be a prompt for how to be on mission, a witness to the people around us and around the world who don't yet know Jesus. These prompts are tools to help you think through what this could look like, not a checklist to be completed. The hope is that you will prayerfully consider engaging with the Lord regarding how He is calling you to demonstrate and declare His goodness in your spheres of influence.