

Survey of the New Testament 02 Matthew Thru Acts

by Neil Fraser

The New Testament Survey explores the main themes and teachings of the New Testament, focusing on the historical, teaching, and prophetic portions.

Duration: 42:43

Scripture: Titus 2:11-13

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Gospel Portrayals"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the four Gospels and their portrayal of Jesus Christ. He explains that Matthew presents Jesus as the king, emphasizing his sovereignty and the principles and powers of his kingdom. Mark portrays Jesus as the servant, highlighting his service and patience. Luke presents Jesus as the perfect man, emphasizing his virtues and sympathy towards others. Finally, John presents Jesus as superior, emphasizing his power as God and the eternal Word made flesh. The preacher also shares two stories to illustrate the themes of service and sympathy in the Gospels.

Transcript

Now we're going to proceed at once into the heart of our subject, the survey of the New Testament. Now we began and introduced this on Sunday morning. For those who might not have been here, let's turn to our theme portion in Titus chapter 2. Titus chapter 2, verses 11 to 13.

This will be our major portion throughout this week. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Now we stated that to us this portion epitomizes in a wonderful way the entire scope of the New Testament.

In Matthew, Mark and Luke and John and Acts, which are the historical portions of the New Testament, we have the grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ appearing unto all men with his message. And then from Romans right through to Jude, we have the teaching portion, the didactical portion of the New Testament. In that portion, the Lord teaches us to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

And then when you come to the last division of the New Testament, the prophetic portion, in Revelation, we are taught to look for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, so that the entire New Testament is divided into three, historical, didactical, the teaching portion, and prophetic. We introduced that on Sunday morning. Now this morning we want to go at once into the historical portions of the New Testament.

We want to speak on Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the Acts, and just to take a glimpse at each of those books and discover what is the particular object of the Spirit of God in giving them to us. So we'll say at once that Matthew is going to present Jesus Christ as the king, as the king of Israel. Matthew gives us Christ in his position as a king.

Mark, the second gospel, gives us Christ as the servant. He presents Christ in his passions as a servant. Luke presents Christ as a man, the perfect man, in his perfection as a man.

John presents Christ as God, as God in his power as God, so that we have four things in these four gospels. We have the position of the king. We have the passions of the servant.

We have the perfection of the man. We have the power of the God, the eternal Word made flesh and dwelling amongst us. Or to put it another way, in Matthew you have sovereignty, the sovereignty of the king.

In Mark you have service, the service of Jesus. In Luke you have sympathy, the sympathy of the man. In John you have superiority.

It's only in John that you read verily, verily, I say unto you. Or to put it in another way, in Matthew you have the visit of the king. In Mark you have the vigor of the servant.

In Luke you have the virtues of the man. In John you have the voice of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you.

We want then to speak about each of those books. The first is Matthew. Now Matthew presents, as we have said, Jesus Christ our Lord as the king of Israel.

In chapters one to four he gives us the presentation, the presentation of the king. He presents him in four ways. In chapters one and two and three and four.

We have the witness of history in Matthew chapter one. You remember the long chapter about the genealogy of Jesus Christ going back to Abraham the first Jew. The witness of history that Jesus is the Christ.

The unbroken line of the genealogy from the time of Jesus our Lord right back to Abraham. The witness of history. When you come to Matthew chapter two, you have the witness of humanity.

And humanity at its best. For the wise men come from the east and say, where is he that is born king of the Jews? I say humanity at its best because those wise men are not only the sages of the day, but they are the scholars of the day. And they are the saints of the day.

They represent humanity at its best in their scholarly and spiritual search for the king. Where is he that is born king of the Jews? In Matthew chapter two it is the witness of humanity. In Matthew chapter three it is the witness of heaven.

For God says this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. In Matthew chapter four this is a witness of hell. For the devil himself tacitly acknowledges the claims of Jesus Christ when he offers him all the kingdoms of the world for a moment of his worship.

You wouldn't find the devil giving that kind of an offer to a man. It's because the devil himself had just heard the father say, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And because of that he offers him the kingdoms of the world for a moment of his worship.

It is the witness of hell as to the claims of Jesus Christ to the Messiah. So that in chapters one to four you have the presentation of the king. Now from Matthew five to seven you have the principles of the king or of the kingdom, the sermon on the mount.

You're remembered of course. Now there are some people who say, and I think erroneously, that the math, the sermon on the mount is not for us. It is law they say and not grace.

It is Jewish and not Christian. But the claims of the sermon on the mount of course are beyond us. They might have been all right for the Jews 1900 years ago when Jesus was present.

And they might be all right for the Jews in the day to come when their Messiah returns. But for us in this present age they're beyond us. They're really not for us.

I think that's a great mistake. For this reason, that when the Lord sent out his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, to make disciples of all nations, he said that not only that they should preach, but he said teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. If you claim a commission to preach the gospel in all the world, the terms of that commission include teaching that world to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded.

One of the finest little books I hope you'll pick up sometime on the sermon on the mount is that little work by Mr. C. F. Hogg and Mr. J. B. Watson called the sermon on the mount. Two of our great and best beloved teachers of a past generation. Some of you will remember them of course.

And they say, and rightly so, that there's not a principle in the sermon on the mount which is not included in the teaching in the epistle. And there's no people will ever be better equipped spiritually to carry out the commands of the sermon on the mount than is the church. There's no people higher, more highly endowed with spiritual ability, having the indwelling spirit of God in their hearts, having the word of God in their hands, having the throne of grace above them than the church has got.

And therefore equipped to carry out the principles of the sermon on the mount. I remember Mr. H. Mr. Harold P. Barker telling us many years ago of an old brother who came up to him when he was still a young man and says, well my dear young brother and have you sought to carry out the commands of Christ as contained in the gospel of Matthew? And how many commands are there? And he was stopped. But he made up his mind he would find out.

And so he read the gospel of Matthew and discovered that there were no less than 80 distinct commands of Christ, which Christ said himself, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I've commanded you. Now in the sermon on the mount we have three things. We have the character of the children of the kingdom, of what they are.

We have their conduct of what they do. And we have their compensation of what they get. Read the sermon on the mount, read it very very carefully.

For those three things, their character of what they are, their conduct of what they do, their compensation of what they get in carrying out the principles of the kingdom. Now from Matthew chapter 8 to Matthew chapter 12 you have the powers of the kingdom. You have the power of the Messiah as it extends in the realms of disease, and demons, and danger, and even death itself.

In other words, you have the miracles of Christ extended to those people with diseases, to those people with demons, to those people in danger as those on the stormy lake, or in destitution as those thousands who needed to be fed with bread, and in the realm of death. Now when you come to Matthew chapter 13 you have that very very famous parables of the kingdom. You remember those parables of the kingdom? The parable of the sower, the parable of the tares sown amongst the wheat, the parable of the leaven, the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of the treasure hid in the field, the parable of the pearl taken out of the sea, the parable of the dragnet.

Those are seven parables. Now may I challenge my brothers with this this morning. I heard a man say many years ago, if you do not know the teaching of the seven feasts of Jehovah, Leviticus 23, and the seven parables of Matthew 13, and the seven letters to the churches, their spiritual and technical importance, you have not progressed as you ought to have in your knowledge of the word of God.

My, there's a challenging statement for you. If you don't know the feast of Jehovah, if you don't know the seven parables of the kingdom, or the seven letters of the churches, you have not progressed as you should have in the things of God. Isn't that so? Now from chapters 14 to 23, you have the continuation of the powers of Jesus Christ, which continued in the realm of disease, and demons, and death.

With this difference, that after the parables of the kingdom, you have the second portion of the gospel of Matthew. You see, when you read Matthew, the very first verse of the gospel of Matthew, you discover there are two divisions of men. For the inspired apostle wrote this, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

You might have supposed that the order was wrong, that since David lived long after Abraham, that the order ought to be Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David, but you would be wrong. For the first half of Matthew is the offer of the son of David to Israel as their Messiah. And when they reject the offer, in the second half of Matthew, you have the offering of the son of Abraham.

You see, the son of Abraham was Isaac, and he was offered on the top of Mount Moriah. But more than that, the son of Abraham is Jesus Christ our Lord, who was offered on Mount Moriah. The difference between the two sons of Abraham is this, that Isaac was spared, but God spared not his own son.

But they were offered upon the same mountain. Now, when you come to Matthew 16, there's the division of Matthew. When you come to Matthew 16, Jesus our Lord announces his church, and at once announces that upon which the church is built, his death.

From that time, we read, Jesus began to show to his disciples how that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, die, and be raised again the third day. You see, from that point looms up the offering of the son of Abraham. You see, the offer of the son of David to be their king.

And when that is rejected, the offering of the son of Abraham on the altar of Calvary. Now, these powers and offer continue through and including chapter 23. In chapters 24 and 25, you have the famous Olivet Discourse, the prophecies of the king.

The prophecies of the king. In those two chapters, we have prophecy of the coming Christ, first of all to Israel, and then to Christendom, that which professes his name through and false, and then to the world at large. The prophecies of the kingdom, the Olivet Discourse, 24 and 25.

In chapters 26 and 27, you have the passion of the king, the death of the Messiah, 26 and 27. And 28 is the proclamation of the king. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

That is a glimpse of the gospel of Matthew, the presentation of the king, the principles of the king, the powers of the king, the parables of the king, the powers continued, the prophecies of the king, the passion of the king, the proclamation of the king. Many years ago, I was in Washington, D.C. I was to have a Bible reading in a very lovely home, a men's Bible class, as I recall. Now, before I spoke, they asked a young Jew, a very handsome fellow, to give his testimony and tell us how God had saved him.

So he said, I was traveling in Europe and came to Switzerland. In my hotel I met a carpenter, a man who was distributing Bibles. Then he got to talking.

He asked me, have you read the Bible? And I kind of drew myself up a bit in pride and said, I read the Bible? He said, I'm a Jew. Well, he says, that may be all right. You're a college man, I take it? He says, yes, I am.

Do you mean to tell me that you, a college man, have never read the Bible? That's a matter of education, man. So I challenge you to read the Bible. He says, I accept.

So he got himself a Bible. He began in Genesis, and he read right through to Revelation. And he got to the end, he says, you know, I really like that.

I'll read it again. And it was his second reading of the Old Testament, with the knowledge of the New Testament now in his mind, particularly Matthew. It was that second reading of the Old Testament, and with Matthew in mind, that suddenly he said, Jesus is the Messiah.

Couldn't be anybody else. He fits the picture. Because, you see, Matthew is ever saying, it's his key phrase, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets.

He said, Jesus is the Christ. He's the Messiah, you see. So that's the object of Matthew.

The best book you can put in the hands of a Jew is the Gospel of Matthew. For Matthew's ever turning you to the Old Testament in corroboration of the claims of Jesus to Messiah. That's Matthew.

Now, secondly, is Mark. Now, you'll notice that Mark introduces Christ at once as a full-grown man. You wouldn't find a visit of the wise men to a young child in Matthew.

Oh no, that's out of place in Mark. You couldn't find a visit of the shepherds to a baby in a manger. That's Luke.

Matthew is the servant gospel. Nobody is really interested in the birth or boyhood of a servant. The great thing about the servant is, what can he do? And Matthew, by the Holy Ghost, introduces us at once to

Jesus our Lord, full-grown and active.

The key word of Mark's gospel is the word sometimes translated forthwith, sometimes immediately, sometimes anon, sometimes straightway. These are all translations of the same word in the Greek language. And it occurs about 40 times in the gospel of Mark, and as a matter of fact, 10 times in chapter 1. In other words, Mark introduces you at once to the activity of the servant.

It's the vigor of the servant in contrast to the visit of the king. Read that first chapter of Mark, will you, sometime today, and see the tremendous activity of that servant. From the time that he's announced by John, and then when he's attacked by Satan, when he's acknowledged by the Father, this is my beloved son, when he's associated with sinners in the River Jordan in baptism, when he's active from early morning, says Mark, to late at night, the devotion of the servant, the diligence of the servant, the dependence of the servant, he goes out a great while before day to pray.

Matthew introduces you at once to the perfect servant, to the activity, to the vigor of God's servant. Mark is a fitting man to write, because he was himself an imperfect servant. He did not pursue his service right through.

He started out to serve the Lord, and when the going got rough, he left the apostles and went back home to Jerusalem. It must have been a great pain to his mother Mary. Authorized version says he left them and went back.

But the Darby says he abandoned them and went back to Jerusalem. He was an imperfect servant, and we would have cast him out. Even the apostle Paul was inclined to disqualify him for further service.

Paul and Barnabas disagreed and separated over John Mark, the imperfect servant. But John Mark returned, and he served long enough for Paul to acknowledge, even Paul to acknowledge in grace and in gratitude. Bring John Mark, for he's profitable to me, for the ministry.

Now John Mark is the only one who records something in his gospel, but the others do not. He tells the story of a young man who started out to follow Jesus, and the enemies laid hold on him, and he struggled with them, and he got away from them, leaving his coat in their hands. And there Mark stops.

He was eloquent of himself. He had started out to follow Jesus, and the enemies laid hold of him, and Mark left him and left a coat of his testimony in their hands. But Mark returned to retrieve that coat, and retrieve his testimony, and to finish his course with joy.

And so God says, that's the man I want to use to write about the perfect servant, who never turned back in the face of opposition, but who pursued it right to the end, blessed be his name. And the last thing that Mark records in his gospel, Jesus Christ is still working. He's sitting.

Oh, at last the servant can sit. The last thing Mark says, he sat in the right hand of God, and they went forth, the Lord working with them. He was still working from heaven.

The servant was still working. That's the gospel of Mark. He presents the service, the vigor of the servant.

There was a girl one time in Minneapolis who had set her heart on service in the mission field. But either an accident or a bad disease laid hold on her, and she found out she was going to be confined to her bed for the rest of her life. And when that knowledge came to her, she was crushed, and felt that was an end to

her service.

But it wasn't. While she lay in bed one morning, and happened to pick up the newspaper, she began to notice for the first time in the newspaper the accounts of tragedies of one kind and another, resulting in death, or perhaps in severe injury. This prominent person had been killed.

This other person had died of a wasting disease. And she began to say to herself, I'm going to communicate with those bereaved people. And thus began a ministry for her, in which every day she sent out three to four short letters of sympathy with the bereaved family.

A kindly note sometimes enclosing an appropriate tract or poem. And she began to get letters back from prominent people after a while. She got a letter from Paderewski, who I remember thanking her for her sympathy towards his wife, who had died.

She discovered that there was a service for her that she had never dreamed about, even though she was confined to bed. And let me encourage you, sisters, to do a service like that. You might feel there's not so much you can do anymore.

Here's a service, open for you in your newspaper, and which you may intern. I started to do that. We did, my wife and I, years ago in Alexandria, Minnesota.

We sort of fell down after a while, but we too began to get letters back in appreciation for what we had done. So, we are to be servants, vigorous, for God right to the end of life's journey. Now, when you come to the gospel of Luke, you have the gospel of the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now, Luke is a physician. He's called the beloved physician. He must have been a good doctor, for you never call a doctor good who buries all his patients.

He must have been a good man. And he writes sympathetically of Jesus. And did you notice, he goes into far more circumstantial detail about the virgin birth of Jesus than do the others.

He has no difficulty, because he's a physician, in believing about the virgin birth. Now, Luke is an artist. Luke can give you the most beautiful character sketches of people in the New Testament.

They say his Greek is of a very high order. He's an educated man. But his pen sketches are beautiful.

And have you ever noticed the unartful, the unartful account of Luke in recording the virgin birth? For instance, it's Luke who tells you this, that when Mary was carrying that baby, it wasn't something to be hidden. It wasn't something that she was ashamed of. It was something that sent her to her cousin Elizabeth to joyfully proclaim it.

To the very house of the Jewish priest, whose business it was to deal with illegitimacy. If Mary's baby had been illegitimately born, would she have hastened to the Jewish priest's home? It was his business to deal with illegitimacy, and see the person was put away. But Luke unartfully declares that Mary hastens to her cousin's home, and bursts into song.

I don't know if you ever noticed or not, but in Mary's burst of song, spoken so spontaneously, she quotes from Genesis, Exodus, 1st Samuel, Job, Psalm, and goes right through to Habakkuk, and carefully selects all her scriptures. She'll take a verse out of Hannah's song over the birth of her baby, and put it into her song in the birth of Jesus. So Luke just tells us offhand that Mary hastens to that home of her cousin, and

to that custodian of Jewish law, to proclaim the fact.

Luke tells us that Elizabeth called Mary the mother of her Lord. It's Luke who says that Simeon took that baby up in his arms in the temple. According to Jewish law, an illegitimate baby should never enter the temple.

But Luke says Simeon took the baby up in his arms and blessed him in the temple, and tells us that old Anna, who departed not from the temple day and night, spoke of him, to all that looked for redemption in Israel. You see, this is some of the unartfulness of Luke, the beloved physician, in telling us about the virgin birth. And have you ever noticed that in Luke chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, take a note of that if you will, in Luke chapter 3, 1 and 2, there are seven great persons passed over in two verses.

Great persons of earth, beginning with Caesar, and get all the way down to the Jewish high priests. They're only mentioned for historical purposes in two verses. Whereas Luke the doctor will take 138 verses, is it, in two chapters, Luke 1 and 2, to tell us about seven other people whom the world had forgotten, if they'd ever known.

Old Elizabeth and Zechariah, old Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary, and Jesus our Lord. Humble, obscure, unknown. But Luke will lift him up and give us ten pictures of those obscure people, and pass over the great people of earth, whom the world has forgotten.

But isn't it true, beloved, that that which is highly esteemed of man may be abomination in the sight of God? Isn't it so? I suppose a hundred thousand people pass every day along that street, that road going to Dearborn in Michigan. And who among those hundred thousand look over that little wee cemetery by the side of the road where the great Henry Ford lies buried? No. He is passed away, but the tens of thousands passing there will remember Jesus Christ our Lord, and Mary, and Joseph, and Elizabeth.

That is Luke. He'll tell us things the other gospels don't tell us, in his parables. The good Samaritans, the lost sheep, silver and stone, the rich man and Lazarus, and the like.

When you come to John, John is different from all the others. John will not speak about wise men coming to a young child. He will not speak of shepherds coming to a baby in a manger.

Oh no, that's irrelevant to John. He'll not even present a man in manhood thrust forward into his service. No.

He'll begin before there was a world at all, and he'll present one who was the eternal Word. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. That's John.

Almost at once he'll take the rejection of Jesus Christ for granted. He'll tell you he came unto his own, and his own received him not. He dismisses all the earlier things in the life of Christ.

His object is to present the eternal Word, my friends. See, John the Baptist was the voice, Christ was the Word. The voice would soon be stilled in death, and the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness.

But the Word would go on after the voice was stilled. Jesus Christ was the eternal Word. He was the expression of the thoughts of God, made flesh, the eternal Word.

Now, because John is out to give us superiority, he gives you what the other Gospels do not give, the I am's of the Lord Jesus. I am the light of the world. He's a light to those in burdens.

I am the bread of life. He's the bread to those in the place of destitution. I am the way to those in the place of distance.

I am the truth to those in the place of deception. I am the life to those in the place of death. I'm the door to those in the place of danger, by me if any man enter he shall be saved.

I am the resurrection to those in despair, over the bereaved in death. John will present the I am. Moses was presented with the I am, but God just left it blank.

Moses stood with unshod feet before a lowly bush in which there dwelt God, the I am. When Jesus Christ walked the earth in the lowly bush of his humanity, in him there dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead, and he filled in all the blanks. I am the light to those in the place of darkness.

I am the bread to those in the place of destitution. I am the way to those in the place of distance. I'm the truth to those in the place of deception.

I'm the life to those in the place of death. I'm the door to those in the place of danger. I am the resurrection to those in the place of despair.

I am. It's only in John you'll read such things as, Dost thou believe on the name of the Son of God? Who is the Lord that I might believe on him? Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." And he said, Lord, I believe and I worship him. You wouldn't find that any other time.

It's only in John that a man says, my Lord and my God. It's in John you'll read that the Dukkot stones bestowed him, and he said, for what good work do you stone me? And they said, because you being a man make yourself God. John is out to present God to us.

That's the Gospel of John. The Acts of the Apostles is Luke's second book. You only have to read the opening verses of the Gospel of Luke, and the opening verses of the Acts of the Apostles, to see that the author is the same.

In the Gospel he calls him Most Excellent Theophilus. Theophilus is a name very easy to interpret. Theophilus, God, philo, love.

Theophilus, God is love, or loves of God. He's given the title Most Excellent in the first book of Luke. The title is left out in the second book of Luke.

He just calls him Theophilus. Maybe he had got better acquainted with him by that time. Or perhaps Theophilus told him to drop it, or perhaps Theophilus himself had been dropped by the world.

Anyway, he addresses both books. In the first, the Gospel, all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Not to teach and do, but to do, first of all, and teach.

And in the second book, all that Jesus continued to do and teach from heaven through the apostles. The scope of the Acts of the Apostles is given at once as you open the book. Ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in Judea, and in Samaria, and in the uttermost part of the earth.

To Peter is given Jerusalem and Judea. To Samaria is given Philip. To the uttermost part is given Paul.

And the program is pursued all the way through. Ham and Shem and Japheth, in that order, is pursued in Acts. Acts 8, 9, and 10 in particular.

And that's the order of the birth of the sons of Noah. Ham, Shem, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. When you come to Acts of the Apostles, you have the Gospel coming to a son of Shem in chapter 8, a son of Shem in chapter 9, a son of Japheth in chapter 10.

The whole thing is pursued. These then are the historical books. I hope that hasn't been too heavy a diet for you, for Monday morning.

It'll get worse as time goes on. I'll try to lead you tomorrow morning in the will of the Lord. We shall begin the educational portion of the New Testament.

We'll begin in Romans, see as far as we can go, and go right through on Wednesday and Thursday, and the Lord willing, on Friday, to take you to the last of those looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Shall we pray? Gracious God, our Father, we pray thee to whet our appetite for the distinctive teaching of thy precious Word. Help us to rightly divide the word of truth.

Give us a desire, give us an appetite for thy Word. Lead us into those special truths we have mentioned this morning, the feasts of Jehovah, the parables of the kingdom, the letters of the churches. We might see the beauty, the scope, the depth of thy Holy Word.

Dismiss us with thy blessing, in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost. Amen.

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