

THY KINGDOM COME

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SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO T3: THY KINGDOM COME BIBLE STUDY

Words carry a great deal of meaning. It is not a ring that begins a marital relationship—it is words. It is not a gun or a missile that usually starts a war—it is words. Words have the power to build and to destroy, to heal and to wound. Words carry meaning far beyond letters and punctuation.

The Bible is filled with words, yes, but the Bible is also the Living Word (Hebrews 4:12-13). Jesus Christ is the Word (John 1:1-4), as we are reminded by St. John. For most of us, though, the Sacred Scriptures are more “words about God” than “the Word of God.”

If you experienced *T3: The Teen Timeline*, you hopefully came to a new understanding of the “big picture” of the Bible and your place within the story. Again, it’s vital to remember that the Bible doesn’t just speak to you; it speaks *about* you.

In this new *T3* Study, *Thy Kingdom Come*, we are going to take a much deeper, much more intimate look at the “star” of the Story, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Through the gospels, the Holy Spirit teaches us many things, but possibly nothing more important than the following simple truth:

There is no more important relationship you will ever (or could ever) have than your relationship with the Holy Trinity, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you agree with the above statement? If not, why don’t you? If so, does your life reflect your agreement with it?

Your entire identity as a Catholic—indeed, as a human being—is a direct reflection of the intimacy (or lack of intimacy) in your relationship with Jesus. How well do you know Jesus? What parts of your life do you let Him into and what parts do you try to keep Him out of? What areas do you try to keep as your own, in darkness, preventing the light of God to penetrate? The answers to these questions will direct your life here on earth and your eternal life.

The whole point of *Thy Kingdom Come*—and, of the Gospel as a whole—is to introduce you to the very heart of God, in Christ Jesus. The gospels are intended to teach you not only “what Jesus did and said” but who Jesus *is*—and who He calls you to become.

Through the course of this Bible Study series, you will no doubt learn a lot of facts about Jesus and the purpose of the Incarnation. You will hear a great deal about different places and characters and events. At the same time, you will hear about a God who is so in love with you that He stops at nothing to get you to heaven. This really is the entire point of the Bible and of the Church: your salvation—to get you home to heaven.

Whether or not you know a lot about Jesus, you’re about to encounter Him and hear a ton of information about Him.

Some of you know Jesus as a teacher; others think of Him as a healer. Some going through *Thy Kingdom Come* might think of Him more as a narrative character. While all of these views are true, we must never forget that Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Lord.

What did Jesus do for Jesus after his encounter with the Lord?

As you begin *Thy Kingdom Come*, and take a step into greater understanding of Christ and intimacy with Him, pause and reflect on these words from Pope John Paul II:

It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society.

NOTES

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Seek Jesus—today and throughout this study—and watch what happens.

I pray that this study blesses you, and that you will allow the power of the Gospel to radically change and transform your life, as it did (and continues to) mine.

—Mark Hart

SESSION 1

Before you can take a road trip, there are several things you should do, i.e., put gas in the car, stock up on food and drinks, change the oil, get hold of a map, visit the restroom (that one last time) and, if necessary, find a safer driver than you.

Similarly, before you can really take a trip through the Bible, especially a gospel, you need to prepare yourself. You need to be alert, open (mentally and spiritually), and ready. You need to know your way around "the car," and you need a map to get you where you are going.

In this first session, try to picture yourself starting from scratch. Whether you know a ton about the gospels or very little, imagine yourself as a blank piece of paper that God desires to fill with knowledge. Then, each week, as you move deeper into the living Word of God and deeper into the heart your Savior, Jesus Christ, imagine yourself coming back again and again as a blank sheet, wanting to be filled.

THE CHAPTERS COVERED IN THIS LESSON

OPENING QUESTION

VERSE TO REMEMBER

BREAKING IT DOWN

1. What does the word "gospel" mean?

2. What was Matthew's "other name"?

3. What was Matthew's profession prior to following Jesus?

4. What did Matthew do for Jesus after his encounter with the Lord?

5. To whom was Matthew writing his gospel?

6. What does Matthew assume about his readers?

7. What are the three titles given to Jesus in Matthew 1:1?

8. What is the term for “reading out” of the gospels their intended meaning(s)?

9. Why do the gospels “disagree” on details at times?

10. What “themes” does Matthew focus on in his gospel?

NOTES

1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT JEWISH CULTURE

As we mention in the *Interesting Facts about the Holy Land* section, knowledge about the geography and culture of the Bible makes all the stories, characters, and history come to life for you, the modern reader.

Below are some random facts that you might find interesting:

- Imagine a world without cars. In biblical times, traveling by foot meant you traveled no more than fifteen miles a day, while a donkey caravan moved about twenty miles a day. A camel, however, could go more than fifty or sixty miles a day.
- There are more than 300 references to trees in the Bible. Trees were essential for shelter, building, tools, and fuel.
- Clothing was made principally of sheep's wool or cheap linen. Other fabrics, such as fine linen and silk, were also used, but they were far too expensive for the average working class Jewish family.
- As a sign of mourning, men often shaved off their beards.
- Women's perfume was made of frankincense, aloe, spikenard, and/or myrrh.
- A new "day" began at dusk. So sunrise didn't mark the new beginning of a new day, rather sunset the night before did.
- Music played an important role in the life and worship of the Jews and early Christians. Instruments discussed in Scripture include the flute, harp, lyre, shofar, trumpet, cymbals, bells, and gongs.
- Beds were little more than mats, and they were often quite coarse. Blankets or coverings were often made of goat hair, and pillows were made from goatskin and stuffed with feathers or wool.
- The Romans revolutionized travel by creating pavements and stone roadways in place of the commonly-used dirt paths.
- The "Day of Atonement" (*Yom Kippur*) was a day of mourning that is still observed by Jews. Its beginnings can be traced back to the book of Leviticus.
- There was an amazing engineering achievement created by a group called the Jebusites. They lived long before Jesus (even before King David), but they built an underground tunnel system that brought fresh water into Jerusalem from a spring below. After tapping that stream, people within the city needed only to lower their buckets for fresh water and not leave the city.
- When people put on their sandals, they always put on the right before the left. They took their sandals off in that order, too.

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THE FAMILY TREE OF JESUS

It's important to know where you come from. It's even more important to know where you are going. The first eighteen verses of Matthew's gospel is what's called a **genealogy**, a study of "descent" tracing generation by generation up the family tree (from the roots).

Since Matthew is writing to Jews, he traces the bloodline of Jesus Christ all the way back to Abraham, the great patriarch and forefather of faith.

You might wonder what this has to do with you today or what purpose it could possibly serve to know the family tree of Jesus. You might even think, like most do, that it's really only important to know the New Testament. Nothing could be further from the truth. The better you understand the Old Testament and its characters, the more the New Testament comes to life. In turn, the more you read the New Testament, the more you'll discover the Old Testament, literally and figuratively, within its pages.

Don't just begin your experience of the gospel of Matthew with the eighteenth verse of chapter one. Take some time and read more about those in Jesus' family tree, the people listed below. I've even included book/chapter/verse for many of them, so you can see where their personal stories "began" in the Scriptures. It might surprise you to see and learn how much you have in common with Jesus. He wasn't born into a "perfect" family tree. Many of the ancestors in Jesus' line lived far less than saintly lives; that reality is truth and should give us great hope.

You know how the story "ends," with Jesus' ascension and the birth of the Church. Now, go back and see how it all began.

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham..." (Matthew 1:1)

MATTHEW 1:1-18

- Abraham (Abram) – Gen. 17:5
- Isaac – Gen. 17:19
- Jacob - Gen. 25:26
- Judah and his brothers - Gen. 29:35
- Perez (by Tamar) - Gen. 38:29
- Hezron - Gen. 46:9
- Ram – 1 Chron. 2:9
- Amminadab – 1 Chron. 2:10
- Nahshon - 1 Chron. 2:10-11
- Salmon – Ruth 4:20-21
- Boaz (by Rahab) – Ruth 2:1
- Obed (by Ruth) – Ruth 4:17
- Jesse – 1 Sam. 16:1
- David the king – 1 Sam. 16:13
- Solomon (by the wife of Uriah – Bathsheba) – 2 Sam. 12:24
- Rehoboam – 1 Kgs. 11:43
- Abijah – 1 Chron. 3:10
- Asa – 1 Kgs. 15:8
- Jehoshaphat – 1 Kgs. 15:24
- Joram – 2 Kgs. 3:1
- Uzziah – 2 Kgs. 15:13
- Jotham – 2 Kgs. 15:17
- Ahaz – 2 Kgs. 15:38
- Hezekiah – 2 Kgs. 16:20
- Manasseh – 2 Kgs. 21:1
- Amos – 2 Chron. 32:20
- Josiah – 2 Kgs. 21:24
- Jechoniah (deportation to Babylon) – 1 Chron. 3:16, Esth. 2:6
- She-alti-el – 1 Chron. 3:17
- Zerubbabel – Ezra 3:2
- Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob – Matt. 1:13-16
- Joseph the husband of Mary – Matt. 1:16
- Jesus was born, who is called Christ – Matt. 1:21

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 1:18)

HISTORY OF THE NATIVITY "SET"

You may have a Nativity set beneath your Christmas tree or on a table inside your house. You almost certainly have one on display somewhere around your local Church. Many people don't realize that St. Francis of Assisi is credited with being the first person to "create a nativity scene", using live people and animals to bring the birth of Jesus "to life" in 1223. The coolest part of St. Francis' "living Nativity" was not the idea to do it.

Don't get me wrong, that was a creative thought, but it wasn't the most impressive insight.

What was most impressive is the fact that St. Francis used living people rather than paintings or statues in his "nativity scene." While statues, figurines and pictures are useful and effective, using humans and animals added a different, important dimension to the purpose of the nativity scene (or *crèche*, as it is known to many).

Statues, paintings and other works of art in Churches help us visualize and focus our minds in prayer. They're especially useful to those of us who have a difficult time concentrating. It's not like we worship the wood or paint, obviously; these forms and elements are just used as a tool to help us enter more deeply into prayer.¹

As you look at the Nativity scene, whether in your home or in your parish, spend time contemplating each of the "characters" or "figures" that you see within it.

Focus on what each must have been thinking about or wondering about Jesus. Putting yourself in their shoes (well, sandals) is the first step into a deeper, richer prayer life.

- Consider what the **Blessed Virgin Mary** must have been thinking.
- Reflect on how humbled and filled with awe St. **Joseph** must have felt.
- Ponder how important this moment was in history, that God would send a host of **angels** to proclaim the event (like a proud Father would).
- Stop to reflect on what a bold statement it made inviting the **shepherds**, who were often thought of as the least popular and least desirable people in the community.

Contemplate how far the **wise men** had traveled and what a significant statement they made not only with their gifts, but in their worship of the Christ.

Do you allow yourself to be a living, interactive participant in Jesus' story? Do you see yourself as part of the unfolding drama of salvation history? If not than you're probably not looking closely enough at the gospels. Don't stop with the Nativity, get back to **Matthew 1-2**, and encounter the source of St. Francis' inspiration.

NOTES

¹ Mark Hart, *Ask the Bible Geek 2: More Answers to Questions from Catholic Teens* (Cincinnati: Servant Books, 2007), p. 55

TEMPTATIONS VS. TRIALS

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Begin with the Lord's Prayer (Our Father).

What does the phrase "lead us not into temptation" mean to you?

Do you believe that God leads you into and through trials?

Do you believe that God leads you into temptations or are those from the devil?

Do you think God allows you into situations that are "just too much" for you?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

What is this saying to us?

Read the following three passages, one at a time.

Jesus in the desert – Lk 4:1-13

Jesus in the garden – Mt 26:36-46

Jesus on the Cross – Lk 23:33-39

Identify the likenesses and differences between temptation and trial.

Discuss and define each and where each one comes from.

Now, spend some time praying through the following verses.

Take time to journal about them. Underline verses that strike you. Write out questions you have as you go along.

What does the Bible say about temptation?

James 1:12-16, Mk 7:15, 21-23, 1 Tim 6:9-10, 2 Cor 2:11

What does the Bible say about trial?

James 1:2-4, Sirach 2:1, Jn 16:33

What does the devil try to accomplish with temptation?

Mt 13:19, 1 Cor 7:5, 1 John 5:19, 2 Thes 3:3

What does God accomplish through trials?

Rom 8:18, Heb 12:7, Ps 141:5

What we can accomplish through our responses?

Sirach 33:1, Sirach 51:12, 1 Pet 1:6-7

List some temptations and trials in your life:

Let the Spirit open your eyes to God's truth and His call in your life.

What is God showing you about these "trials"?

What comes from God?

What comes from your sin?

Look up one of the following verses and meditate on it each day for the following week:

Prov 1:10-11,15

Titus 2:11-12

Micah 6:8

Ps 32:8

Luke 22:28

Psalm 141:2-4

Rev. 3:8-11

Commit this to memory:

Hebrews 2:18=

Closing Prayer – Pray the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) again, slowly.

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THE BEATITUDES OVERVIEW

The Sermon on the Mount is the "most famous sermon ever preached" according to most people. What's interesting, though, is that many people think that the Sermon on the Mount only includes the Beatitudes or that the Beatitudes are all about "being a nice person." If you read through **Matthew 5-7**, however, you'll soon see that the Sermon is far more than the Beatitudes and that it is not about "being nice."

That being said, the **Beatitudes** are challenging, beautiful and life-changing, if you let them really penetrate your heart. They call all of us men and women alike, to become more Godly, every day.

The Beatitudes might be the best known and least obeyed of anything Jesus ever said.

PRAY THEM AGAIN:

"Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you."

- Matthew 5:1-12

NOTES

Repeat of your sins. Pay attention to the words "I really believe this" or "I really live this truth."

Underline or highlight or circle words below that really "stand out" to you within the prayer. Referring back to these words during your prayer will help you become righteous.

Spend time journaling, writing about the questions or thoughts that come to you as you pray through each phrase one at a time.

Take time to identify areas of your life in which you need to do it out the prayer and the areas in which you might struggle the most.

Work through the prayer in your own time. Go back through what you've journalled here. Once you've filled in this area, don't let that stop you. This is a useful journaling exercise you can do anytime, any day.

Journal when you feel "stressed" or "uncomfortable" to pray. You'll often be amazed at what comes out when you pray.

Let the Holy Spirit lead you in your prayer. There is no one better to lead you than the Holy Spirit.

Take time to pray the Our Father in your own time or journal about these and pray for your friends. But simply the Beatitudes should be your prayers toward life, your family and friends and anyone else God puts before you each day. It's simple really, it's just not easy.