

*At a Glance***AUTHOR:** Moses.**DATE:** During the 1400s BC, while the Israelites were traveling in the desert.**SETTING:** The events take place in Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt, parts of the region known today as the Middle East.**VERSES TO REMEMBER:** I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you (12:2–3).**THEME TO CONSIDER:** From the beginning, God has desired a relationship with his creation—you!UNCHANGING *truth***Everything changes—except God.**

How do you feel about changes? Are you the adventurous type who loves surprises? Or do you prefer things stay pretty much the same?

Certainly some changes, such as serious illness or a death of someone you love, are traumatic and life-altering. But most of the changes in your life happen so slowly, you hardly notice them.

The book of Genesis takes us on a journey through changes. God created a perfect world. Then sin entered and *everything* changed. A flood wiped out all life except those on the ark—more change. Broken family relationships led to murder and slavery. Mended relationships brought forgiveness and reconciliation. Through it all, God never changed, and he never will. God's faithfulness, his love and his forgiveness for his children are constants throughout this book. At the very heart of Genesis is God's unwavering desire for a loving relationship with his people, as seen in the promise given to Abraham. Ultimately, "all peoples on earth" would have an opportunity for an intimate relationship with God—through the coming of Jesus, our Savior.

Through it all, God never changed, and he never will.

Changes will come. But you can face them with confidence, knowing that one thing will never change: God's love for you.



- 1** God loves his people. You can trust him to keep all his promises (9:12–16).
- 2** Even when you've made huge mistakes, God can bring good into your life (16:1–2; 21:1–6).
- 3** You'll face many temptations to disobey God and "do what everyone else is doing." Pray that God will help you resist these temptations (39:6–10).

THE BEGINNING

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.

¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." ²¹So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^a and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over

to Believe



DARE

Look around at all the variety on earth. That took some serious creativity. In fact, God created creativity itself! And he used it to make his *good* creation—you. Next time you're feeling bad about yourself, remember: you are a work of art.

1:25

^a 26 Probable reading of the original Hebrew text (see Syriac); Masoretic Text *the earth*

⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^a and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^b ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

¹⁸The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam^c no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs^d and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^e he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

THE FALL

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

to Believe



DARE

It seems the world has forgotten what God created marriage to be. But God meant for it to be beautiful: a man and a woman committing to love each other for the rest of their lives. Don't fall for the world's revisions. Dare to believe in God's original plan.

2:24

^a 12 Or good; pearls

^b 13 Possibly southeast Mesopotamia

^c 20 Or the man

^d 21 Or took part of the man's side

^e 22 Or part

At a Glance

AUTHOR: Matthew, also called Levi.

DATE: Probably between AD 60 and 70.

SETTING: Matthew most likely wrote from Israel, though some believe he wrote from Syrian Antioch.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (16:16).

THEME TO CONSIDER: Matthew’s message is clear: Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Examine the evidence and accept Jesus as Lord of your life.



UNCHANGING *truth*

Matthew discovered something too good to be *untrue*.

Have you ever heard something and then gone out of your way to see if it’s true? The effort you put into your investigation is usually relative to the importance of that something to your life. (You wouldn’t put a lot of effort into finding out if Justin Beiber really got a new cat.)

But if the information were critical to your life in some way, you would keep on searching until you found the answers you needed.

Matthew discovered an important piece of life-saving information: Jesus is in fact the Savior God had promised long ago to send. This piece of information changed Matthew’s life. He willingly gave up his high-paying job as a Roman tax collector to become one of Jesus’ unpaid disciples. During Matthew’s three years with Jesus, he saw the miracles Jesus performed. He noticed how all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Savior were fulfilled in Jesus’ life. But the biggest piece of evidence, besides the miracles, was Jesus’ death and resurrection. Matthew was willing to stake his life on the truth of this information. So go ahead and evaluate the evidence. Then decide: Are you willing to stake your life on the truth?



- 1 Jesus used the Word of God to avoid giving in to temptation. God gives us the equipment—his Word—to resist temptation (4:1–11).
- 2 Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount to help people understand how to obey God. God wants you to follow his rules for living (5:1—7:29).
- 3 Jesus warned his listeners that obedience comes with a price. God requires your complete commitment to Jesus (10:37–39; 16:24–27).

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

1 This is the genealogy^a of Jesus the Messiah^b the son of David, the son of Abraham:

- ²Abraham was the father of Isaac,
 Isaac the father of Jacob,
 Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
³Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
 Perez the father of Hezron,
 Hezron the father of Ram,
⁴Ram the father of Amminadab,
 Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
 Nahshon the father of Salmon,
⁵Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
 Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
 Obed the father of Jesse,
⁶and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

- ⁷Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
 Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
 Abijah the father of Asa,
⁸Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
 Jehoshaphat the father of
 Jehoram,
 Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
⁹Uzziah the father of Jotham,
 Jotham the father of Ahaz,
 Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
¹⁰Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
 Manasseh the father of Amon,
 Amon the father of Josiah,
¹¹and Josiah the father of Jeconiah^c
 and his brothers at the time of
 the exile to Babylon.

- ¹²After the exile to Babylon:
 Jeconiah was the father of
 Shealtiel,
 Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
¹³Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
 Abihud the father of Eliakim,
 Eliakim the father of Azor,
¹⁴Azor the father of Zadok,
 Zadok the father of Akim,
 Akim the father of Elihud,
¹⁵Elihud the father of Eleazar,
 Eleazar the father of Matthan,
 Matthan the father of Jacob,
¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph,
 the husband of Mary, and Mary
 was the mother of Jesus who
 is called the Messiah.

¹⁷Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

genuine

Talk about unexpected! Look at some of the people who show up in Jesus' genealogy. Tamar—a widow who tricked her father-in-law into sleeping with her. Rahab—a foreign prostitute who helped the Israelites. Ruth—a penniless, immigrant widow who cared for her mother-in-law. Uriah's wife, Bathsheba—King David's partner in adultery. Why are these not-exactly-perfect women named here? Maybe in part to show that Jesus came to save sinners, but also because these were ordinary women whose lives made an extraordinary difference. They never knew that, in spite of their shortcomings, they were in the Messianic line. You may never see all the difference your life makes; it's probably more than you'll ever know.

LIFE

1:3,5–6

^a 1 Or is an account of the origin ^b 1 Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One; also in verse 18. ^c 11 That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12

JOSEPH ACCEPTS JESUS AS HIS SON

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^a: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^b did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^c because he will save his people from their sins.”

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”^d (which means “God with us”).

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

to Believe



DARE

In order for us to get with it, God needed to get with us . . . literally. So scratch that picture of a God far, far away. He’s already come as your Immanuel.

1:23

THE MAGI VISIT THE MESSIAH

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^e from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶“‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they

genuine



Do you tend to talk about your faith only with certain kinds of people—the ones you think are most likely to agree with you? Branch out! You’ll be surprised who comes to worship Jesus. The Magi were surprise guests at Jesus’ house. No one would have expected these foreign dignitaries to know who Jesus was—much less worship him. But God specializes in the unexpected. Celebrities and the homeless, little old ladies and tiny children, the cool and the hopelessly out-of-touch—Jesus reveals himself to people from *all* walks of life. The Magi remind us of that.

EVANGELISM

2:1–12

^a 18 Or *The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this*
^b 19 Or *was a righteous man and* ^c 21 *Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the Lord saves.*
^d 23 *Isaiah 7:14* ^e 1 *Traditionally wise men*
^f 6 *Micah 5:2,4*