



The Gospel according to Matthew

DID YOU KNOW?

1. Jesus comes from a royal lineage and is called « Son of David », not on the side of his biological mother – Mary – whose lineage is not detailed, but on the side of Joseph, his adoptive father (Mt. 1:1-16)
2. Jewish tradition in the time of Joseph and Mary recognized a practice called « betrothal » which is very different from that known in our modern societies. This engagement was more constraining than the betrothal of our time. It could only be broken by divorce. And if a betrothed woman became pregnant, she was considered an adulteress.
3. Of the four gospels, only Matthew reports the visit of the Magi, or wise men. This episode shows that people in other parts of the world, not just Israel, were eagerly awaiting the Messiah. The visit of the wise men is proof that Jesus came for all, not just for the Jews. The last words of this Gospel clearly articulate this mission. (Mt. 28:19-20)
4. Matthew wrote primarily for Jewish readers. From the first chapter he declares that Jesus is the Messiah, supporting this claim with constant reference to the Old Testament. He does not often explain Jewish expressions and customs, assuming that the readers know them. And where the other gospel writers use « Kingdom of God », he uses « Kingdom of Heaven », out of respect for the Jews who never dared to write the word “God”.
5. Matthew records Jesus’ words on five major occasions. First, there is the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 to 7. Next, chapter 10, which records Jesus’ instructions to his disciples about their mission; then chapter 13, a series of parables about the Kingdom; chapter 18, Christ’s words about the Church as a community; and finally, chapters 23 – 25, which reveal Jesus’ teachings about religious hypocrisy and his prophecies about the future.
6. Chapters 5 to 7 are among the most commented chapters in the Bible. They contain the longest speech of Jesus and offer a new worldview. Many well-known parts are probably recognizable, including the Lord’s Prayer (Mt. 6:9 – 13) and the Golden Rule. (Mt. 7:12)
7. One of Jesus’ disciples, Matthew, the author of the Gospel of Matthew, was a tax collector, a class of people despised by the patriotic Israelites (Mt. 9:9; 10:3). Many Jews considered tax collectors to be traitors in the service of the Roman Empire, which they hated.
8. Jesus usually spoke to the crowds who followed him in parables because they were not given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 13:10 – 11)
9. Some of Jesus’ disciples have the same name:
 - a. Simon called Peter and Simon the Canaanite or Zealot (Mt. 10:2 – 4)

- b. James, son of Zebedee and James son of Alphaeus. (Mt. 10: 2 – 4)
10. Some of Jesus' disciples were brothers:
 - a. Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, his brother. (Mt. 10:2)
 - b. James, son of Zebedee, and John, his brother. (Mt. 10:2)
11. None of the four brothers of Jesus was his disciple. They were James, Joseph, Simon and Jude. (Mt. 12:46 – 50; Mt. 13:55)
12. Jesus had brothers and sisters. (Mt. 13:55 – 56)
13. Jesus began his ministry in a synagogue in his hometown. The event almost caused an uprising. The people of his homeland could not conceive that someone who had been raised in their midst by a carpenter could teach like a rabbi and perform miracles. That is why Jesus did not perform many miracles in Nazareth, because of the people's contempt and disbelief in his ministry and message. (Mt. 13:53 – 58)
14. Only two of the four authors of the gospels were disciples of Jesus. They are Matthew and John (Mt. 10:2 – 3)
15. Four of Jesus' disciples have the same names as two of his brothers. They are the two Simon and the two James. (Mt. 10:2 – 4; 13:55)
16. At least five characters are named « Simon » in the book of Matthew:
 - a. Simon, called Peter, disciple of Jesus (Mt. 10:2),
 - b. Simon, the Canaanite, disciple of Jesus (Mt. 10:4),
 - c. Simon, one of Jesus' brothers (Mt. 13:55),
 - d. Simon, the leper (Mt. 8:1 – 4; 26:6),
 - e. Simon of Cyrene who carried his cross. (Mt. 27:32)
17. Two of Jesus' brothers who became his disciples after his resurrection are among the authors of the Bible. They are James and Jude (ref. Book of James and Book of Jude; Mt. 13:55).
18. Just as Luke the physician focuses on healing cases, Matthew, a former tax collector, focuses on money stories. The story in chapter 18, as well as those in chapters 20 and 25, appear only in Matthew's Gospel.
19. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes was performed by Jesus twice in a row:
 - a. The first time he fed about five thousand men, not including women and children, using five loaves and two fish (Mt. 14:17 – 21)
 - b. The second time he fed four thousand men, without women and children, using seven loaves and some small fish (Mt. 15:32 – 38)
20. In the days of Jesus, the activities in the temple, the so-called center of God's worship, had taken on a mercantile aspect. Merchants there sold animals for sacrifice to pilgrims and strangers at very high prices. This system was designed for profit and not for true worship. That is why Jesus aggressively drove out the sellers (Mt. 21:12).

21. Matthew 24 records one of Jesus' longest statements about the future. Jesus describes the clear signs that will precede his return. But almost half of this chapter warns us that no one can accurately predict the time of his coming.

22. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple in Jerusalem was torn in two. This veil covered the Most Holy Place, where only the high priest was allowed to enter once a year, on a particular day, to stand in the presence of God. The author of Hebrews sees the miraculous tearing of the veil as a symbol of the free and direct access to God made possible by the death of Jesus (He. 10:19 – 20).

23. Jesus was taken up to heaven from Galilee where he was growing up and doing much of his earthly ministry. (Mt. 3:13; 4:12, 23; 28:16 – 20)