

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Session 6

Matthew 3-4

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Matthew, Session 6, Matthew 3-4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener **explains** Matthew chapters 3 and 4, focusing on **the baptism of Jesus**, its significance, and **the subsequent temptation in the wilderness**. He **analyzes** the symbolic meaning of the dove and heavenly voice, **comparing** biblical accounts with rabbinic interpretations. Furthermore, the lecture **examines** Jesus' temptation by Satan, highlighting Jesus' reliance on scripture and his ultimate triumph. Finally, Dr. Keener **discusses** Jesus' calling of his disciples and the implications of his ministry in Capernaum, placing these events within the broader context of Jesus' life and mission.

2. 25 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Matthews, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Matthew).



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3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Matthew 3-4:

Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Matthew 3-4

Overview:

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener focuses on Matthew chapters 3 and 4, covering John the Baptist's encounter with Jesus, Jesus' baptism, the temptation in the wilderness, and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. The lecture emphasizes key themes such as the nature of Jesus' identity, the role of the Holy Spirit, the importance of resisting temptation, and the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17):

- **John's Reluctance:** John the Baptist initially resists baptizing Jesus, recognizing Jesus' superiority. As Keener says, "John says I'm not worthy to baptize you. I should be baptized by you." This demonstrates John's understanding of Jesus as the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, a baptism far greater than John's water baptism.
- **God's Approval:** The baptism is marked by divine affirmation. Keener notes, "We see in this passage God's approval of Jesus." The heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends like a dove, and a voice from heaven declares, "This is my son."
- **Symbolism of the Dove:** While some Jewish texts compare Israel to a dove, Keener suggests that "the most obvious background to the largest number of Matthew's audience in antiquity probably would have simply been the dove that you have in Genesis chapter 8, after Noah's flood, where the dove in a sense is a symbol of restoration, a symbol of the new creation or the recreation." The Spirit, therefore, is portrayed as the bringer of a new era.
- **Twofold Role of Jesus:** The heavenly voice may echo both Psalm 2 (Messianic King) and Isaiah 42:1 (Suffering Servant). Keener notes, "What we have probably both in Matthew and in Mark is an allusion, maybe a subtle allusion...an allusion to a twofold role of Jesus, the expected messianic role of a King, but also the role of a suffering servant." This hints at Jesus' dual mission as a kingly Messiah and a suffering servant.

- **Jesus as Model for Spirit-Baptized Life:** Jesus receiving the Spirit at his baptism makes him a model of the Spirit-baptized life. However, Keener emphasizes that this model "does not look like simply a model of success and joy," as it is immediately followed by Jesus' experience in the wilderness.

1. **The Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11):**

- **Spirit-Led Testing:** Immediately following the baptism, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted, which Keener points out, is a "model for us as well" and shows that "sometimes the Spirit will lead us into trouble".
- **The Devil's Challenge:** The devil challenges Jesus' identity as the Son of God, echoing the serpent in Genesis 3: "The devil challenges, well, since you're God's son, prove it, demonstrate it." Keener connects this challenge to those who mocked Jesus on the cross, as well as a Jewish apocryphal work, where the wicked would challenge righteous people with the same "prove it" statement.
- **Redefining Sonship:** The devil seeks to redefine Jesus' sonship through alternative models of power, such as turning stones to bread, performing dramatic displays of power, and political conquest. Keener notes, "The devil seeks to redefine Jesus' call as God's son."
- **Jesus' Refusal of Power:** Jesus rejects these manipulative power plays, trusting in the Father. He "will not submit to manipulation because he trusts his heavenly father." Jesus will not abuse power for personal gain.
- **Scriptural Authority:** Jesus refutes the devil's temptations by quoting Scripture, specifically from Deuteronomy, demonstrating the power of God's Word. Keener notes, "Jesus simply cites God's commands and obeys God's word without question. The Bible settles it." The devil's quoting of scripture is noted as out of context and misapplied.
- **The Model of Israel:** The 40-day fast evokes the 40 years of Israel's wilderness testing, and it is noted that the language of the Spirit "led" Jesus is the same terminology "often used for God leading Israel in the wilderness."
- **Triumph Through Perseverance:** After resisting the devil, angels come and minister to Jesus, showing triumph comes to those who persevere. Keener states, "In this period of testing, we come to verse 11, the end of the testing, and Jesus says, triumph." He connects this with Gethsemane, where the Father did not send 12 legions of angels until *after* the trial.

1. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (Matthew 4:12-25):

- **Relocation to Capernaum:** Jesus moves to Capernaum, strategically located by the Sea of Galilee. Keener says, "Capernaum was a great place because it was a place where a lot of things intersected." It was a strategic location for outreach, and was more welcoming than Nazareth, which rejected his message.
- **Proclamation of the Kingdom:** Jesus proclaims the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." Keener says, "Jewish people believed that God reigns in the present...But they longed for the day when God would reign unchallenged." He clarifies that "kingdom" in Greek and Hebrew often refers to "reign" or "rule," rather than a place. The kingdom is both present (in Jesus' person) and future (yet to come in its fullness). Keener describes this as "intrusive imminence."
- **Call to Discipleship:** Jesus calls fishermen to be his disciples, highlighting that God often uses our past experiences and backgrounds. "He often can take skills that we've already been given in other ways and use them for his kingdom." The calling required abandoning their livelihoods which was "radical discipleship."
- **Demonstration of God's Reign:** Jesus demonstrates the Kingdom of God through healing and teaching, drawing crowds from distant regions. Keener notes that "Anybody with a reputation for healing would have drawn large crowds." However, this is not the final message of Matthew, as it is later on noted that "Popularity is unreliable. Popularity comes and goes."
- **The "Already Not Yet" of the Kingdom:** The Kingdom is both present in Jesus' ministry and yet to come in its fullness. Keener notes that "the king who is going to come has come. And therefore, the kingdom, which is yet to come has already invaded history and God's reign is already at work in this world in a special way." This concept is also called an *arhabon*, meaning "down payment" or "first installment" of future inheritance.

1. Personal Application:

- **Testing and God's Grace:** Keener shares a personal experience of being tested in his ministry, illustrating that being a "man or woman of God" is "not because you're made out of something super spectacular" but rather because of God's grace, calling, and care.
- **God Uses Our Past:** Keener also provides an anecdote of how his interest in the classics led to an understanding of scripture and culture, and he emphasizes how "God will often take the things of our backgrounds."

- **The Importance of Submission and Sacrifice:** Through the examples of Jesus and his disciples, Keener stresses the importance of sacrificing for Jesus, trusting that Jesus is "worth whatever we have to do to follow him."

Important Quotes:

- "John says I'm not worthy to baptize you. I should be baptized by you."
- "We see in this passage God's approval of Jesus."
- "What we have probably both in Matthew and in Mark is an allusion...an allusion to a twofold role of Jesus, the expected messianic role of a King, but also the role of a suffering servant."
- "The devil challenges, well, since you're God's son, prove it, demonstrate it."
- "The devil seeks to redefine Jesus' call as God's son."
- "Jesus simply cites God's commands and obeys God's word without question. The Bible settles it."
- "Capernaum was a great place because it was a place where a lot of things intersected."
- "Jewish people believed that God reigns in the present...But they longed for the day when God would reign unchallenged."
- "He often can take skills that we've already been given in other ways and use them for his kingdom."
- "Anybody with a reputation for healing would have drawn large crowds."
- "Popularity is unreliable. Popularity comes and goes."
- "the king who is going to come has come. And therefore, the kingdom, which is yet to come has already invaded history and God's reign is already at work in this world in a special way."
- "not because you're made out of something super spectacular"
- "God will often take the things of our backgrounds"
- "worth whatever we have to do to follow him."

Conclusion:

Dr. Keener's lecture provides a detailed and insightful examination of Matthew 3-4. The lecture highlights the importance of understanding Jesus' baptism as a pivotal moment of divine affirmation, the significance of resisting temptation through God's Word, and the beginning of the ministry of Jesus and his followers. The lecture further establishes the nature of the Kingdom of God as both present and future.

4. Matthew Study Guide: Session 6, Matthew 3-4

Matthew 3-4 Study Guide

Quiz

1. Why do scholars consider Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist to be a potential "criterion of embarrassment" for early Christians?
2. What three forms of divine attestation of Jesus' identity are present at his baptism?
3. What are the two Old Testament figures that Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness might be alluding to?
4. What three challenges does the devil present to Jesus in the wilderness, and what is the significance of each challenge?
5. What does Jesus quote to counter the devil's scripture quoting?
6. What is the significance of Jesus quoting Deuteronomy in his confrontation with Satan?
7. What does Dr. Keener suggest about the location of Capernaum for Jesus' ministry?
8. How does the concept of the "kingdom of heaven" differ from a typical understanding of a kingdom, and how do Jewish people of Jesus' time understand it?
9. What are the "already" and "not yet" aspects of the kingdom of heaven, and how do followers of Jesus experience it?
10. How does Jesus' calling of the fishermen as disciples contrast with the practices of most sages at that time?

Answer Key

1. Scholars consider it an embarrassment because early Christians would not have wanted to highlight Jesus being baptized by a figure considered lesser than himself. This is because John the Baptist was the one who was supposed to be baptized by Jesus, not the other way around.
2. The three divine attestations are the heavens parting, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the heavenly voice declaring Jesus to be God's beloved son.

3. The two Old Testament figures that Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness might allude to are Moses, who spent 40 years in the wilderness, and Elijah, who fasted for 40 days.
4. The devil challenges Jesus to turn stones into bread, leap from the temple, and worship him in exchange for earthly kingdoms, each attempt represents an attempt to manipulate Jesus to redefine what it means to be the Son of God, whether to redefine him as a magician, a deluded visionary, or a political revolutionary rather than the true Messiah.
5. Jesus counters by quoting three texts from Deuteronomy, applying scripture analogously, interpreting passages in light of their contexts.
6. Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy because these were the commandments given by God to his "son" Israel in the wilderness. Israel failed the test but Jesus, the true Son, does not. The devil quotes scripture out of context, whereas Jesus uses it correctly.
7. Capernaum was strategically located on the major roads around the Sea of Galilee, making it a central place to reach a lot of the surrounding areas and giving him access to various territories.
8. Unlike the traditional view of a kingdom as a place and a people, the "kingdom of heaven" in a Jewish context, and as Jesus presents it, primarily refers to God's reign, rule, and authority. Jewish people believed that God reigned in the present but also looked forward to a future time when God's reign was unchallenged.
9. The "already" aspect of the kingdom refers to the kingdom being present in Jesus and the Holy Spirit and impacting believers' lives in the present. The "not yet" aspect references the future culmination of the kingdom when Christ returns and all will be made new. Followers experience a foretaste of the coming world through the spirit but also recognize that the kingdom is not yet fully realized.
10. Unlike other teachers who waited for disciples to seek them out, Jesus took the initiative to call disciples to follow him, and specifically, he called fishermen, which was an unconventional choice that would not be viewed as prestigious.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel, considering both its historical context and its theological implications. How does this event set the stage for Jesus' subsequent ministry and identity?
2. Compare and contrast the temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness with the temptations experienced by Israel in the wilderness. In what ways does Jesus' victory over temptation serve as a model for his followers, and how does his use of Scripture contribute to that?
3. Discuss the concept of the "kingdom of heaven" as presented in Matthew chapters 3 and 4. How does it challenge the understanding of God's rule among Jewish people, and how does it redefine notions of power and authority?
4. Explore the theme of discipleship in Matthew chapter 4, focusing on Jesus' call to the fishermen and their subsequent responses. How does their willingness to leave their livelihoods exemplify the nature of following Jesus, and what does this say about the cost of discipleship?
5. Examine the interplay between the "already" and "not yet" aspects of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew's gospel, paying specific attention to its manifestation in Jesus' ministry and how it affects the daily lives of his followers. How is this tension vital to understanding the Christian worldview and the call to participate in God's kingdom now?

Glossary of Key Terms

Bat Qol: A divine voice from heaven, as referenced in Jewish literature, often used to confirm a person's identity or mission.

Criterion of Embarrassment: A historical method where a detail in a text that is embarrassing or problematic is more likely to be accurate, as it wouldn't have been included if fabricated.

Deuteronomy: The fifth book of the Old Testament, often quoted by Jesus in Matthew, particularly in the wilderness temptation.

Galilee: A northern region of ancient Palestine, known for its rural areas and the location of Jesus' ministry in Capernaum and other towns near the Sea of Galilee.

Hyperbole: A rhetorical device involving exaggerated language for emphasis or effect, often used by Jewish teachers of the time.

Kingdom of Heaven: The rule and reign of God, central to Jesus' teaching in Matthew, which emphasizes God's authority and the transformative impact of his presence on earth.

Messiah: The promised deliverer or savior of the Jewish people, often associated with a kingly role.

Parable: A short story used to teach a spiritual lesson or truth, a prominent feature of Jesus' teaching.

Pharisees: A Jewish religious group known for its strict adherence to the law, often in conflict with Jesus' teachings.

Shema: A central Jewish prayer expressing the oneness of God, affirming God as the King of the universe.

Theophany: A visible manifestation of God to humankind, often involving powerful natural phenomena, such as the heavens opening.

Wilderness: A place of testing, solitude, and spiritual struggle, as exemplified in the Old Testament and Jesus' 40 days of testing.

5. FAQs on Keener, Matthew, Session 6, Matthew 3-4, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Matthew 3-4

- **Why is Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist considered an "embarrassing" detail for early Christians?** The early church would not have wanted to emphasize the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, was baptized by John, who was regarded as lesser than Him, as John himself admits. It was not in keeping with their view of Jesus' power and holiness. This detail could imply that Jesus was somehow subordinate to John, which they did not believe, and so they glossed over it rhetorically.
- **What is the significance of the heavenly voice and the dove at Jesus' baptism?** The heavenly voice, often called a "bat qol" by later rabbis, is a divine attestation of Jesus as God's Son and demonstrates God's approval of him. The dove, potentially echoing the dove in Noah's flood story, symbolizes the Spirit ushering in a new creation and a new era. This also signals the anointing of Jesus and that he is God's chosen king and servant, not only a king but the suffering servant who would bring salvation.
- **How does the Holy Spirit play a role in both the baptism and the wilderness temptation of Jesus?** At Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descends upon him like a dove. Immediately following this, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. This demonstrates that the Spirit-filled life does not always mean joy and success, but also includes hardship and testing. The Spirit's leadership can lead believers into difficult situations where they learn to trust in God.
- **What are the core temptations that Jesus faces in the wilderness, and what do they represent?** The devil tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread, to jump from the temple, and to worship the devil in exchange for earthly power. These temptations represent different ways of misusing power and misinterpreting the concept of being God's son. They tempt Jesus to use his divine abilities for personal gain, for worldly recognition, and for earthly domination. They also challenge his commitment to doing the will of the Father.

- **How does Jesus respond to the devil's temptations, and what does this demonstrate for believers?** Jesus responds to each temptation by quoting scripture from the book of Deuteronomy, in its proper context. This demonstrates that God's Word is sufficient to resist temptation. He relies on his Father's provision, trust in the Father, and refuses to redefine his role as God's Son. This gives us a model to live a life of obedience to God's will and not to be tempted by selfish and worldly desires.
- **What does the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" mean in Matthew, and how does it relate to Jesus' ministry?** "Kingdom of heaven" (or "kingdom of God" in other gospels) refers to the reign and authority of God, not just a geographical location. It is both a present reality in the person of Jesus and a future reality to be fully realized. Jesus's ministry, including healing, teaching, and calling disciples, exemplifies this kingdom's authority and impact on earth. The kingdom was also seen as the time when God's reign would be fully revealed.
- **What is the significance of Jesus calling fishermen to be his disciples, and what does it suggest about how God works?** Jesus calls ordinary people, not prestigious figures, to be his followers. This underscores that God often uses people's backgrounds and skills for his purposes. For example, Jesus chose fishermen to become "fishers of people." God can use those past experiences and give them new and different purposes in serving the Kingdom. Also, he calls people from all walks of life.
- **What are some key themes illustrated in Jesus' ministry of healing and teaching, and what does it tell us about faith and popularity?** Jesus' healing ministry draws large crowds and shows his authority over sickness and the brokenness of the world. He heals many with sacrificial faith. However, Matthew points out the unreliability of popularity, as the crowds who praise Jesus can also later turn against him. True faith is demonstrated by a willingness to serve Jesus, whether popular or not, and to prioritize God's honor above one's own. God's power is shown through Jesus.