

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Lecture 6, Matthew 3-4

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Matthew. This is session 6 on Matthew 3-4.

We've been talking about John the Baptist's lifestyle, the model that he is for us, and also John the Baptist's message.

But now John meets Jesus, the coming one, whose way he proclaimed. We look at the baptism of God's son in Matthew chapter three, verses 13 through 17. This is something that actually scholars would consider normally meets the criterion of embarrassment because it's not something that somebody would want to emphasize that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

But it's heard over in a participle, which was rhetorical practice to hurry over something that one didn't want to emphasize. But look at John's reticence. John says I'm not worthy to baptize you.

I should be baptized by you. Now, of course, that's because he's just been proclaiming that the coming one is going to baptize in the Holy Spirit and in fire. So he wants the baptism in the Holy Spirit from Jesus.

He's like, I'm not worthy. My water baptism is nothing compared to your baptism in the Holy Spirit. We see in this passage God's approval of Jesus.

The heaven's part, you have language like that in Old Testament theophanies, Old Testament revelations, Ezekiel 1, when God reveals himself to Ezekiel by the river Kibar, or Isaiah 64. Also, the spirit comes on Jesus like a dove in this passage. And I'll talk more about that in a few moments.

But let me talk first about the heavenly voice, what later rabbis called a bat qol. It's like a voice from heaven. You have that sometimes in the Old Testament, a divine voice from heaven.

You have it, for example, in Genesis 22, when the angel of the Lord speaks from heaven and says, don't slay Isaac, and so on. You have this heavenly voice as the third divine attestation in this passage. Scripture is a divine attestation.

Isaiah 40 and verse 3, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. Also, prophecy, because John the Baptist is a prophet speaking the word of

the Lord. And then you have the heavenly voice as a third attestation of Jesus in this passage.

Now, what is the background for the dove? Some people looking for background note that in Jewish literature, Israel was sometimes compared to a dove, but that's not very helpful here because obviously, Israel doesn't descend on Jesus. Some texts in rabbinic literature speak of the Holy Spirit in terms of a dove. That would work wonderfully here, but that's very rare.

So, 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. And that could be something where the Spirit is the bringer of the new age, the new era, and so comes in the form of a dove. On the other hand, if something's going to be flying, you have to have something here and a dove works better than a flying ant or a bat or something like that.

So, in any case, sometimes a bat call or a heavenly voice, the rabbis said it would echo scripture. And in this case, it may echo a couple of scriptures. It may echo Psalm 2 and verse 7, where God says, regarding the promised Davidic line, he says, this is my son.

And many scholars see that there. Also, many scholars see an echo of Genesis 22, where God calls Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son. And in Mark, that may be the background, the wording between the Greek translation of Genesis and what we have in Mark is very similar.

However, in Matthew, it may not be an allusion to Genesis 22, because Matthew later on paraphrases Isaiah 42:1, which speaks of my servant, my beloved on whom I put my spirit. Matthew paraphrases that in Matthew 12:18 in a way that's very similar to what the heavenly voice is here. So, it may be here a combination of Psalm 2, the proclamation of the coming King and Isaiah's servant who would suffer.

In either case, what we have probably both in Matthew and in Mark is an allusion, maybe a subtle allusion, maybe only the core of Matthew's audience catches it, but an allusion to a twofold role of Jesus, the expected messianic role of a King, but also the role of a suffering servant. Jesus is the Spirit-anointed kingdom bringer. You have these texts closer together in Mark, which is shorter, but you also have them here in Matthew's gospel, these texts about the Spirit are very close together.

John the Baptist proclaims that Jesus is the baptizer in the spirit in Matthew 3:11. Well, in 3:16, the Spirit comes on Jesus at his baptism. So, Jesus then will become the model for what the Spirit-baptized life looks like. Well, does the Spirit-baptized life

look like simply a model of success and joy, and everything goes well? That would be so wonderful.

But immediately after this, the next time we hear about the Spirit, the Spirit is in Matthew 4:1, where the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to face hardship. And that is a model for us as well. But if we follow the ways of the Spirit, sometimes the Spirit will lead us into trouble that we're not necessarily happy about, but God works through those situations.

Turning to Matthew chapter 4, Jesus passes the test. In 3:17, the last verse of Matthew chapter 3, God publicly declares Jesus as his son. So now the devil responds to that as Jesus is in the wilderness.

The devil challenges, well, since you're God's son, prove it, demonstrate it. You can remember what the serpent does in Genesis chapter 3. Has God really said? And also in chapter 27, verses 40 to 43, you have people saying things like this to Jesus. Well, if you're really the son of God, do this.

Actually, in Matthew chapter 27, they echo a Jewish apocryphal work by the name of the wisdom of Solomon in Wisdom of Solomon 2:18, where the wicked say to God's child, the righteous person, if you're really God's child, then God would do this for you and God would deliver you. But it's the wicked who say that. And it's the wicked who say that in chapter 27.

It's the epitome of wickedness who says it's here as the devil challenges Jesus as God's son. The devil seeks to redefine Jesus' call as God's son. Well, the Father declares that Jesus is God's son.

That's a powerful rule. The devil appeals to other models of power to try to define what that sonship means. Magicians might turn one substance into another.

They were thought to be able to transmute things. And so, to turn stones into bread was something that a magician or sorcerer might be thought to do. Jesus elsewhere multiplies food, but he will not submit to manipulation because he trusts his heavenly father.

He says, your father knows what you have need of before you ask. Also, there were deluded visionaries who thought that they could make the walls of Jerusalem fall down or make the river Jordan part. And they promised to do these things and failed.

Well, the devil wants Jesus to leap from the highest point of the temple and demonstrate his power. Jesus refuses to do that. And Jesus, the climax of this in Matthew's gospel, Jesus refuses the role of a political revolutionary or an earthly political kind of ruler.

The devil wants him to be like these people who are trying to lead revolts against Rome and trying to be alternative emperors or whatever. And he wants Jesus to bow down and worship him. He says, you bow down and worship me.

I'll give you all the kingdoms of the earth. And Jesus says, get behind me, Satan. What's interesting is that this language recurs later on in Matthew's gospel in another very similar setting.

Because in this other passage, Peter says, you're the Messiah. You're not going to suffer. Peter, in the same way as Satan here, speaks of a kingdom without the cross, speaks of glory without suffering.

And Jesus says to him, get behind me, Satan, because Peter speaks of Satan's mouthpiece there. Again, the same way the people mocking Jesus in Matthew 27, if you're really the son of God, come down from the cross, are echoing Satan as well. Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness are like Israel which was tested 40 years in the wilderness.

You can remember the parallels with Israel we talked about back in chapter two. Also, you can notice the word led. Matthew and Luke have that.

Mark is actually more dramatic in the sense that, in Mark, it says he cast, the spirit cast Jesus out into the wilderness. The same word is used for casting out demons. It's a very strong term.

The spirit kind of drove him out. But here it's the word led. It's the same terminology that's often used for God leading Israel in the wilderness.

And then Jesus quotes three texts from Deuteronomy. The fasting for 40 days evokes Moses in Exodus 24 and so on. It also evokes Elijah who fasted for 40 days, but Elijah was following the model of Moses as well.

First Kings 19. Jesus here offers a model for us. It's a model of sacrifice, going into the wilderness, just like John.

He also is a model of refusing to abuse power for personal ends. We also see something else here. Jesus fits what we see about other people in the Bible.

He fits the pattern, just like his cross before his exaltation fits the pattern. Most of God's servants in the Bible were tested before and often during their ministry. Think of Abraham and Sarah, and how long they had to wait for a child.

Think of Joseph. He has this dream about his brothers bowing down to him. He ends up being sold as a slave.

After being a slave, he ends up in prison. And then finally in one day, he's exalted as a vizier over Egypt and eventually his brothers come and bow down to him. Before he could fulfill his calling of being a deliverer for his family, but also for Egypt and many of the surrounding peoples, before he could do that, he went through testing.

The same with Moses, 40 years in the backside of the desert. The same with David. He's anointed as king in chapter 16 of 1 Samuel, but he's persecuted by Saul before he finally becomes the king.

When I went through the deepest test in my Christian life up to that point, I mean, there was nothing worse than before I was a Christian, not being a believer. I mean, once I was a believer, nothing compared with that. I had eternal life, but the worst test that I went through looked like my ministry had been destroyed, looked like everything had been taken from me because of false accusations, because of the treatment of someone else.

And God told me I needed to forgive the person. I was just in the midst of this. I was so numb from pain and I couldn't understand it, but I felt that God pointed me to these people in the Bible.

He said, Elijah was a person of like passions as you. When he knelt on the juniper tree and said, God, just let me die and they're better than my ancestors. David was a man just like you.

When Saul was persecuting him and David almost snapped and he almost was ready to go in and kill Nabal. And Jeremiah was like you. When he said, cursed be the day that I was born.

And I felt like what God said to me was, my child, you're a man of God, not because of what you're made out of, because you're made out of dust and ashes like everybody else I created. You're a man of God because I called you and my grace is sufficient for you. And for the next two years, as that testing continued, I learned just how weak I was, but God kept me during those two years.

And at the end of those two years, I understood that I'm a man of God, not because I'm made out of something any different than anybody else. You're a man or a woman of God, not because you're made out of something super spectacular. We don't have to pretend to be what we're not.

We are men and women of God because of God's grace, because God calls us, because God uses us, because God cares for us. And in the end, God gets the credit

because of what he has done in our lives to make us people that he can use. So, we see Jesus modeling this too.

Jesus became one of us and he went through testing like we also go through testing. We also see scripture's power. Jesus simply cites God's commands and obeys God's word without question.

The Bible settles it. That's it. The devil also quotes scripture.

In Matthew chapter four, he quotes scripture to Jesus, but he quotes it out of context. Jesus applies by analogy that actually fits the contextual point of the passages that he cites. It shouldn't surprise us that the devil quotes scripture out of context because he still does it today in many people's lives.

But Jesus gives three quotations from Deuteronomy. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, if they give us any idea of what were the most popular parts of scripture in Jesus' day, the Dead Sea Scrolls quote Deuteronomy most often, Isaiah second, and Psalms third. But Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy.

He quotes commands that God gave to Israel in the wilderness, which Israel failed to obey at times during their testing. But Jesus passed the test. The first text that Jesus quotes when the devil wants him to turn stones into bread is from Deuteronomy chapter eight and verse three.

And the context of that is God's faithful provision for his son, Israel, in chapter eight and verse five, where it says, Israel is like my son and I fed them during their testing in the wilderness. Deuteronomy eight and verse two. So, Jesus knows the context.

He's God's son being tested in the wilderness. The Bible tells him how God's son ideally should live. He trusts his father's provision for him.

It's not by bread alone that a person lives, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. Well, the devil quotes Psalm 91 to him, verses 11 and 12, but the devil quotes it selectively. The context in verses three through 10 is not talking about creating a danger for yourself, like jumping from the pinnacle of a temple.

They're talking about protection from external dangers. It's not saying, okay, you do this and God will protect you, but rather it's saying, that when you're in a situation, you can trust God's protection. The rabbis, when they would get into scripture debates, and Jesus does this with some of his contemporary teachers, but the rabbis, when somebody would quote a text, they'd often quote a counter text saying, no, you can't be interpreting that right because this text says this.

And Jesus counters what the devil suggests. He says you shall not put God to the test. Deuteronomy 6.16. Now notice where he's quoting from.

He's just quoted from Deuteronomy 8. Now he's quoting from Deuteronomy 6, not very far away. He's continuing in the context of what God expects for his child, the way Israel was to be, and certainly the way Jesus, as God's ultimate son, is to be. Putting God to the test in context refers to Israel's complaint in the wilderness that God was not supplying sufficiently.

Jesus will not do that. He depends on his heavenly father. Matthew 4.9-10. Well, there were many messianic claimants seeking political kingdoms.

Many expected that God's kingdom would come through military victory over Rome. You have that in the Qumran war scroll. Some sought to perform signs to confirm their mission and failed, as I mentioned earlier.

But Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6.13, just a few verses away from the verse that he just quoted. So, from the same context, the context here demands loving the one true God and hence rejecting all other deities. Well, if the devil is saying, bow down and worship me, he's setting himself up as another deity.

Jesus refuses to do it. Quote scripture from the very context that he's been using. We also see in this passage the triumph to those who persevere.

It doesn't always come for us in this life, but it always does come. God is always faithful. And in this period of testing, we come to verse 11, the end of the testing, and Jesus says, triumph.

Be gone, Satan, he says, and Satan leaves. Remember that Jesus refused to seek angels in chapter 4, verses 6 and 7. He refused to depend on angels to catch him up if he jumped. But now angels come and minister to him.

It's the same thing you see at Gethsemane, where he said, no, the father would have given me 12 legions of angels if I asked him to defend me. But I'm submitting to the father's will. And now angels do come and minister to Jesus.

Sometimes we make prayer all about everything we want from God. And God does love us. God does reach out to us in our need.

But prayer is not just about getting what we want from God. Prayer is about submitting our lives to God and seeing what God wants from us and what God wants to do. This world that God cares about, that's why Jesus said, seek first the kingdom.

And that's why when he gives us a model prayer, first it's our father, hallowed be your name. And then he comes to others, including the prayer, lead us not into testing, as Jesus here has not succumbed to testing. Jesus then has to move to the big city.

Now it's not a big city by urban standards, but it was a big city compared to Nazareth. Capernaum had maybe a couple thousand people. It says that Jesus withdrew to Galilee, possibly near Perea where John was arrested.

Nobody would have invented Nazareth. Really nobody would have invented Capernaum either. It wasn't something that anybody outside of Galilee talked about, especially when Jesus says, woe to you Bethsaida, woe to you Chorazin, woe to you Capernaum.

You know, outside of Galilee, nobody had heard of Chorazin. So, these kinds of things clearly go back to the earliest Galilean memories about Jesus. These are very clear, even somebody who is questioning other things should accept these kinds of things.

Now this precedes his public ministry and maybe it's a mission strategy. Nazareth wouldn't accept his message, but Capernaum was in a strategic location. It had a few more people.

It had maybe a thousand, maybe 2,000, often said to be around 2,000. It wasn't as big as Tiberias or Sepphoris. Those were the two major cities of Galilee, but those were also very Hellenized.

Jesus was coming with a much more traditional Jewish message about the kingdom. Paul would later on go to Hellenized areas, but Jesus was mainly staying in the Aramaic-speaking areas of Galilee and so on. The roads around the lake of Galilee, Capernaum were a great place because it was a place where a lot of things intersected.

So, he had access to a lot of Galilee from there. He could walk from there to Perea. He could walk from there to Herod Phillips territory.

Also, Jesus' ministry there, even though he later on says, woe to you Capernaum, because if the miracles happening in you would happen in Sodom, they would have repented with dust and ashes. But Capernaum, even though it didn't all repent, much of Capernaum did turn to faith in Jesus. And we know that later on because the archeology shows us that there was a very strong Jewish Christian community there at a later time.

Also, the rabbis knew of a follower of Jesus there whom they called Yaakov of Capernaum, Jacob of Capernaum, who was known for praying for the sick and they

got healed because he was a follower of Jesus, Yeshua HaNetzi. Matthew's opponents and the opponents of Jesus' followers criticized his Galilean origins. And they often criticized Galileans as not being faithful to the Torah, but that was just regional prejudice.

It's like some people in some parts of the U.S. look down in some other parts of the U.S. and different countries, some parts look down in some other parts. Well, Galilee was considered Judea's frontier. It wasn't considered sophisticated.

The Pharisees of Jerusalem, the rabbis of Jamnia, they could look down in Galilee. Galilee ignored rabbinic leadership even in the second century, but the Galileans actually kept the Torah. They kept the law.

Excavations show us that most of the people in Galilee were very serious about keeping the law. Josephus talks about them walking the three days to get to the festivals in Jerusalem. Entire towns would walk there together.

Jesus settling in Galilee also foreshadows the Gentile mission. That's why Matthew here quotes Isaiah chapter nine about Galilee of the Gentiles. Now, Walter Grundman, said, no, Galilee means Galilee was Gentile, and therefore Jesus who grew up in Galilee was also a Gentile.

Well, Walter Grundman had a reason for saying that. Walter Grundman was a Nazi theologian, who worked for the Nazis, and they wanted to de-Judaize Jesus. They wanted Jesus not to be Jewish.

But we know from archaeology that there were Judean settlements all over Galilee in this period. People had migrated from Judea. They settled in Galilee.

So, this is representing Gentiles symbolically because there were some Gentile communities in Galilee too, but not the places where Jesus was going. Those were Jewish. Matthew chapter four in verse 17 speaks of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus' teaching is summarized this way in terms of the coming of the kingdom. It was central in Jesus' teaching in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew speaks of it as the kingdom of heaven.

Mark, often with the same sayings, will speak of it as the kingdom of God. What does a kingdom usually mean? Depends kind of on what language you're using, and what the semantic range of the term is. In English, sometimes we think of a people or a place.

But in Greek and in Hebrew, the words that are translated into English as kingdom refer to reign or rule or authority in particular. Jewish people believed, obviously,

that God reigns in the present. They said that when they recite the Shema, they're taking on them the yoke of the kingdom.

They're recognizing that God is the king of the universe. The Shema here is where the Lord is our God. The Lord is one, recognizing that God alone is God.

But they longed for the day when God would reign unchallenged. And sometimes when they spoke of the kingdom, it's that about which they were speaking. Hence, they had a prayer called the Kaddish.

In its earliest version, the Kaddish, part of it went like this. Exalted in hallowed be your great and glorious name. May your kingdom come speedily and soon.

Well, that sounds kind of like the Lord's prayer, right? Jesus adapts that in the Lord's prayer. Now, Jesus, if he's not adapting that, he's adapting, there were a number of Jewish prayers that had similar kinds of language. But Jesus says here, just like John the Baptist said, the kingdom of heaven, proclaim that it's near.

Now, there's a debate among scholars. Does it mean the kingdom has drawn near so that it's almost here or that the kingdom has arrived? To some extent, this is a semantic issue because either way, it's intrusive imminence. It places its demands on our lives.

The kingdom is coming. It's almost here. We need to get ready for it.

And in the person of Jesus, it's what Origen in the early church called the Atabasilea, the kingdom in himself. Here was the king, and in him, the kingdom was surely present. Well, this kingdom, this demand of God, this reign of God, this rule of God is exemplified in the following context.

In chapter 4 verses 18 through 22, Jesus calls disciples to follow him. And in chapter 4 verses 23 through 25, Jesus demonstrates his reign. He demonstrates his authority over sickness.

And then in chapters 5 through 7, we have the ethical implications of Jesus' kingdom. If the kingdom is at hand, well, how must we live in light of that coming kingdom? If we must repent in light of the coming kingdom, what does a repentant lifestyle look like? What is the true fruit of repentance that's demanded of us? That would be Matthew chapters 5 through 7. Now, lest you think I've just skipped ahead to chapter 8. No, I'm just telling you what's coming. But the kingdom in Jesus' ministry is already not yet.

Because for followers of Jesus, we recognize, as Jesus' contemporaries in Judea and Galilee recognized, we recognize that the king is yet to come. But we also recognize

something else. As followers of Jesus, we recognize 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. So, we often speak of the kingdom being in two stages or two phases. The already not yet of the kingdom, the Messiah comes twice.

They were expecting the coming of the king and the coming of the kingdom, they were expecting the raising of the dead. Well, the first to rise from the dead has already been raised. Jesus is raised.

So, God's kingdom is already at work in our midst. And you have this thinking throughout the New Testament. I don't know how we could possibly miss it.

Galatians chapter 1 and verse 4, Jesus has delivered us from this present evil age. Romans chapter 12 and verse 2, don't conform to this present age but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Some translations don't make it clear that this is talking about the age, but it is in Greek.

Also in Hebrews chapter 6, it says that we've tasted of the powers of the age to come. Ephesians chapter 1, 2 Corinthians chapters 1 and 5, speak of the spirit as in Greek, the arhabon. That was a Greek term used in business documents for a down payment.

It's actually a loan word from Hebrew as well in Semitic languages. Arhabon, it's a term for the down payment, the first installment. So, we've already received the beginning of the initiation, the inauguration of our future inheritance.

Oh, it's going to be glorious. But we have the first installment of that because we've been given the spirit. The spirit in our hearts means we have a foretaste of the coming world.

That's why Paul says in 1st Corinthians chapter 2 verses 9 and 10, the eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, neither has it entered the human heart, the things that God has prepared for those who love him. But God has revealed them to us by his spirit. These are things we can't put into words.

I mean, the Bible describes them with often symbolic language, parabolic apocalyptic type language, maybe poetic language. But in the spirit, we actually have a foretaste of that future inheritance. We're enjoying a foretaste of what it's going to be like to be in God's presence forever and ever.

So, we should enjoy our experience of the spirit. Romans 8 has a similar kind of analogy. Romans 8 verse 23 actually speaks of the Spirit.

We have the first fruits of our experience. The climax of the kingdom, if you look through Mark's gospel, John and Jesus proclaim the kingdom, and then it climaxes, the kingdom language and the king language climaxes in chapter 15, Jesus on the cross. Mark wants to emphasize that the kingdom comes through the cross and focuses on that point.

Matthew, of course, has that point. But in Matthew, the climax comes at the very end, chapter 28, when all authority in heaven and on earth is given to Jesus. Jesus is king in the kingdom of heaven.

Now, Jesus demonstrates his authority by calling disciples to follow him and submit to his authority, calling fishers of people. In terms of people who might be skeptical of some things in the gospels, well, we can tell them, look, most sages considered it humiliating to seek disciples. You wouldn't go out and try to get disciples to follow you.

You waited for disciples to honor you by seeking you out. And so, most sages wouldn't, that wouldn't be the kind of story you'd make up about a sage. Also, we know from other sources in the shared material of Matthew and Luke, that Jesus called his own disciples in Matthew 8:19 to 22, and Luke 9:57 to 62.

Also, we know Jesus had disciples, the 12 are well attested. And we could talk about that at a later point in the course. But normally teachers had disciples to propagate their work.

And so, that Jesus would have disciples is just, you would expect that. Also, some scholars have pointed out that the structure of Matthew 4:19, where he calls disciples to follow him is recognizably Semitic. But perhaps the most obvious thing here is there's no reason to invent fishermen.

I mean, fishermen were not peasants. That may be why they and the tax collector are named and the occupations of the others aren't named. Maybe they were not as prestigious, so to speak.

But fishermen were not that prestigious. I mean, if you wanted to make up some followers for Jesus, you'd make up scribes, you'd make up Pharisees, you might even make up a Sadducee or two. But Jesus calls fishers of people, fishers of fish to become fishers of people, often drawing on our backgrounds.

Fishermen. Galileans depended much on fish and grains. Sellers dried fish, sellers dried or salted fish to preserve it.

And Galilean fishermen were usually better off than peasants. Often when God calls people, he does not always, but he often makes use of our past experiences. Moses and David had been shepherds.

Well, he makes them shepherds for Israel. These people had been fishers of fish. He makes them fishers of people.

He often can take skills that we've already been given in other ways and use them for his kingdom as well as giving us other kinds of gifts. Even when I was an atheist, I loved studying ancient Greek things and Roman things. I was reading Roman historians, Greek classics, Greek philosophers, and so forth.

And when I became a Christian, I was like, oh no, I'm just going to read the Bible now. But what I found was, eventually I found that, oh, some of this really helped me get some background for my work as a scholar, not as much as the Jewish sources, which I didn't have any training in, but it gave me a lot of background. In fact, there was one point, I was a very new Christian and I was supposed to be, it was in second year Latin, and I was supposed to be translating Caesar's Gallic War.

Caesar was a Roman ruler, not very long, he got killed very quickly, but he wanted to be a ruler of Rome. And he wrote a book as a Roman general called the Gallic War. I was supposed to be translating that.

And on my way home, I was thinking, you know, I don't want to do my Latin. I don't want to translate Caesar. I just want to read the Bible now because I've forsaken everything to follow Jesus.

I flipped the Bible open and stuck my finger down. This is not a good interpretive method, but I did it on this occasion. I stuck my finger down, hoping it would say, forsake all and follow me.

Instead, it was Luke chapter 20. It said, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. Well, that's not the universal meaning of that text.

I can't go around telling everybody, you need to translate Caesar, but God used it in my case. And I did my homework. But anyway, God will often take the things of our backgrounds.

We should devote everything to him, but sometimes he'll use those gifts that he's given us, often in ways that we won't expect. We may have to give them up to follow him, but sometimes he'll use them anyway. And then some of the things we have to keep, we give them up and we don't get them back.

That's all right. He knows what's best. He's trustworthy.

Jesus calls them to follow. Again, only the most radical ancient teachers summoned disciples to follow them and especially to leave their resources behind to follow. Abandoning family businesses would normally be offensive and not just to your family, it would be offensive to society in general.

But here we have accounts of radical discipleship. Jesus was called, his calling before the Father, Matthew chapter three, verses 16 and 17. Jesus is God's son.

His mission is laid out as the mission of the servant as well as the king. And now Jesus calls disciples to follow him. And they are called in this case, and in many cases, perhaps usually, to downward mobility.

Artisans, fishers, tax-gatherers, weren't the elite, but they were much better off than peasants normally, than the farmers in the Galilean countryside. So, family businesses also, like fishing cooperatives, and Mark, mentions that one of the families had hired servants. Also, these two families seemed to have been working together with fishing.

So, this wasn't just subsistence fishermen casting their nets to try to get some fish to eat. These were people who were selling the fish. And normally around the Lake of Galilee, you could make a fairly good living doing that if you could afford nets and afford to repair your nets, clean your nets.

But they were willing to abandon their livelihood. Although this may not be every season of the year, because there were certain seasons when you couldn't really travel around Galilee much during the rainy season. But during the other seasons of the year, they were following Jesus.

So, they had to abandon their livelihood most of the year. And Jesus is worth that. Just like he tells us in chapter 13, verses 44 to 46, the incomparable value of the kingdom is worth everything else.

Jesus is worth whatever we have to do to follow him because we will live forever with him. Now they don't become completely homeless when they follow Jesus. Matthew chapter four tells us that Jesus settled in Capernaum.

So, Jesus had a place to stay, even though he says he has nowhere to lay his head. That's hyperbole. It's a rhetorical overstatement.

But it still sends the message that we have to be willing to sacrifice. Seasonal travel. December through March was the rainy season in this region.

For 30 to 50 days it was raining. You couldn't really travel too much. Farmers were freer outside the planting and the harvest season.

But the disciples wouldn't necessarily be traveling all the time. Nor was it a complete repudiation of their family. Most things within Judea, sorry, most things within Galilee were within a day or two's walking distance.

So, or if they take a boat, you know, they're not necessarily gone from their families all the time. But, you know, sometimes that can be a sacrifice for ministry too, but it's not completely required. Later on, Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 talks about how Peter takes his wife with him and the other disciples take their wives with them.

Paul and Barnabas, say, well, we don't have wives, but the other disciples, they do this. So often they were able to travel with them. Maybe the kids were grown up, whatever the circumstances.

But they're leaving behind their family businesses, but we shouldn't take it the wrong way. Because Jesus also says in Matthew chapter 15, that you're to honor your father and mother. He also says in chapter 19, verse 9, you're to be faithful to your marriage, not to leave your marriage.

So, he's not talking about repudiating the family, but he is talking about first things first. Jesus matters more than anything else. The rabbis, later on, the two schools of rabbis in Jesus' generation, Pharisees in Jesus' generation, I should say, were the schools of Shammai and Talal.

And they debated with one another as to how long a husband was allowed to be away from his wife. And if he was away any longer, they said, she's allowed to get a divorce. She goes to the rabbis and they can, I'm not suggesting that, but just saying that the Pharisees of Jesus' day said that the husband was only allowed to be away so long.

And they debated whether it was one week or two weeks because they took very seriously marital responsibility. But they did say that for the sake of the Torah, it might have to be longer. There was this one rabbi, Rabbi Akiba, that they talked about later on.

And this, I believe, is not a true story, but it illustrates that they did make exceptions for the study of the Torah by going to study with a teacher. That he was away for seven long years from his wife. And then he's coming home after seven years and he gets to the door of the house and he overhears his wife talking with the neighbor.

And the neighbor is saying, Rachel, how can you still love this man after he's been away from you for seven years? She said it's for the sake of the Torah. If he were away from me for seven more years, I would still love him. Whereupon, without going into the house, of course, Akiba turned around and went away and studied for seven more years and came back with thousands of disciples following him.

And now again, not a true story, but illustrates the point that they took family very seriously, but they took the study of the Torah very seriously as well. Jesus comes before everything, but that's not saying don't take care of your family. Jesus wants us to do that too.

He wants us to love our family too. But sometimes when they're in conflict, we have to make a choice and Jesus always comes first. Jesus demonstrates God's reign with power.

Chapter four, verses 23 through 25. You have a summary before Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Matthew five through seven of Jesus' public ministry. We have a similar summary of Jesus' public ministry just before the next discourse section, the next speech that Jesus gives, and the next sermon in Matthew chapter 10.

Here in Matthew, just before Matthew five through seven, it talks about Jesus' healing and teaching. You have the same thing in the end of Matthew nine before you get to Matthew 10. So, it says that he was healing so many people that they brought every sick person in the Roman province of Syria to him.

Now, does this literally mean every single sick person? Probably this is what we call hyperbole. Jewish teachers and Matthew as well often would use hyperbole, which was a rhetorical overstatement. It was a figure of speech to make a point.

So, it doesn't literally mean every single person who was sick in Galilee. I mean, otherwise, there wouldn't have been anybody to get healed in the first few chapters of the book of Acts. But in any case, they were bringing a lot of sick people to Jesus.

And he was healing the sick. He was ministering in the synagogues where people were very open to having popular teachers come and expound, especially good speakers, because in Galilean synagogues, they didn't have a priest for every synagogue. Most of the Pharisees were in Jerusalem.

They didn't have enough Pharisees to go around in all the synagogues and teach or scribes, especially not very knowledgeable scribes. So, Jesus is teaching in the synagogues and healing the sick. Would Jesus have drawn crowds? Well, anybody with a reputation for healing would have drawn large crowds.

Think about how there were some hot springs in Hamat Tiberias and elsewhere in the ancient world. And Hamat Tiberias though is in Galilee. Masses flocked to these places because the hot springs were thought to have the purity of properties to make them healthier.

So, it's not surprising. Jesus gets a reputation as a healer. Lots of people are going to come and follow him.

And they come from great distances. Some of them come from far away and elsewhere in the province of Syria outside of Galilee. Well, that helps prefigure the Gentile mission that we've talked about.

It also talks about sacrificial faith. I remember one of my students when I was teaching in Kenya was telling me about his sister, how his sister just pulled herself along the ground. Her legs didn't work.

They were completely inoperative. So, she was just pulling herself on the ground. And her mother wanted to be healed so much.

And she heard that somebody was going to be praying for sick people in a church, but it was far away across this river. And she was going to have to carry the child by herself because the father was like, no, we've prayed. I'm just heartbroken.

I can't do this again. And I understand that kind of feeling. It had happened before there'd been no healing.

They'd prayed and there'd been no healing. And sometimes that happens. Again, the healings are signs of the promised future.

It doesn't mean that everybody always gets healed in this age. And there may be some people who theologically think everybody should get healed in this age. But if you ask them, has everybody you prayed for gotten healed? Chances are they'll tell you not everybody that I prayed for gets healed.

But in any case, whatever the explanations we want to give, it's something that we often have to struggle with in this world, the sorrow and the pain. But in this case, the mother put the child in her back and she carried her. She had to cross the river.

It was a very, very difficult, arduous journey. And this time the child was healed. And the person, the seminary student who was telling me this knows about this because this was his little sister.

She was healed. Wasn't healed instantly, but within a week or two, she was fine. She could walk.

And now she's a grownup. She's gotten married. Never relapsed with that again.

So sometimes sacrificial acts of faith, again, it's not a guarantee God is worthy of our faith no matter what he does. But these people express their faith in sacrificial ways because they believe Jesus was the one who had the power to heal them. But this passage also gives us a warning about popularity, because this passage is part of a larger context of Matthew's gospel.

If we just stop with this passage, we might think the moral of the story is you serve God, you pass tests, and God will anoint you, and everybody will get healed. And the crowds will follow you and love you. But keep in mind that in Matthew chapter 27, the crowds cry out, crucify him, crucify him.

Popularity is unreliable. Popularity comes and goes. When we have it, use it for Jesus.

And when we don't have it, it's all right. We live for God's honor and not for our own. Now, probably in chapter 27, the crowds that cry out, crucify him, crucify him, are not the same crowds that are following him and hailing him when he comes into Jerusalem.

You know, there were a lot of Galilean pilgrims hailing Jesus. They knew who Jesus was. The crowds cry and crucify him.

We're listening to what they were being told by their leaders in Jerusalem. But despite that historical distinction, there's still the narrative continuity in the crowds that suggests to us you won't always have popularity. It came and went with David.

It comes and goes with us. Use it while you have it. And remember, it's Jesus whom we've come to honor.

And Matthew emphasizes that over and over. We're disciples and the servant is not greater than the master. So, let's honor him.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Matthew. This is session 6 on Matthew 3-4.