

# The Gospel of Matthew

2.

From Judea of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles (2:1-23).

Getting Ready: God's Son in the Wilderness (3:1—4:11)

**Sunday, December 4, 2005**

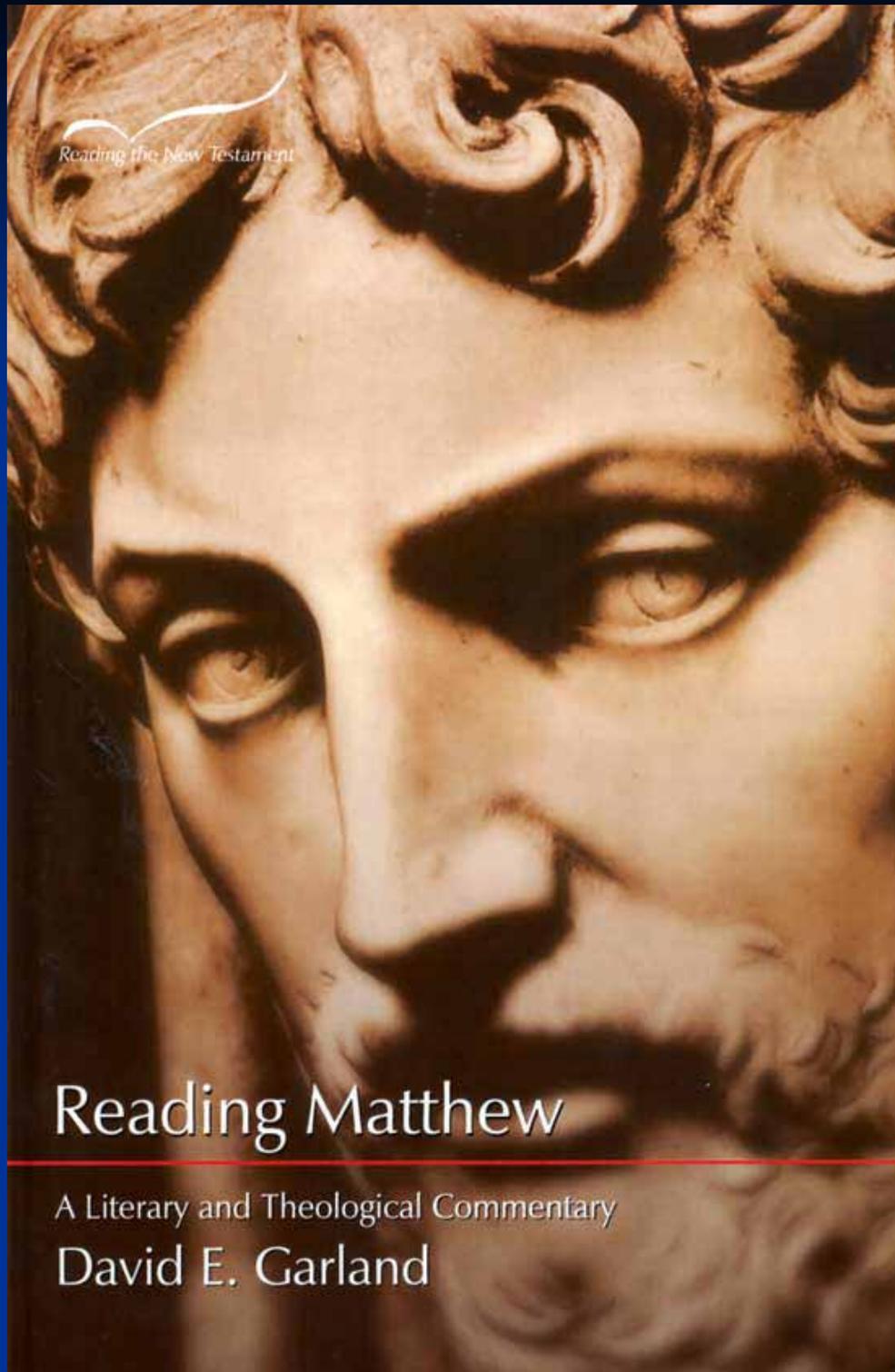
**10 to 11 am in the Parlor.**

*Everyone is welcome!*

*St. John in the Wilderness*

**We thank you, heavenly Father, for the witness of your apostle and evangelist Matthew to the Gospel of your Son our Savior; and we pray that, after his example, we may with ready wills and hearts obey the calling of our Lord to follow him; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.**

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 244



- **Reading Matthew. A Literary and Theological Commentary**, David E. Garland, Smyth & Helwys, 2001, ISBN 1-57312-274
- **Dr. Garland** is Professor of Christian Scriptures and Associate Dean for Academic Services at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University

INTERPRETING  
I · B · T  
BIBLICAL TEXTS

THE  
GOSPEL  
OF  
MATTHEW

Donald Senior

- **The Gospel of Matthew** (**Interpreting Biblical Texts Series**), Donald Senior, Abingdon Press, 1997, ISBN 0-687-00848-4
- **Dr. Senior** is Professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.

- **Introducing Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 1:1—4:16)**
  - The Birth of the Messiah: The Fulfillment of God's Promises (1:1-25)
  - From Judea of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles (2:1-23)
  - Getting Ready: God's Son in the Wilderness (3:1—4:11)
  - Dispelling the Darkness in Galilee (4:12-16)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 1. Teaching, Healing, and Calling the Lost Sheep (Matthew 4:17—10:42)**
  - Jesus' Debut: Authority and Compassion. Dawn in Galilee (4:17-25)
  - The Sermon on the Mount: Magisterial Teaching, A Charter for Discipleship (5:1—8:1)
    - Jesus ascends the mountain (5:1-2)
    - The Beatitudes (5:3-12)
    - The mission of disciples of Jesus to change the world (5:13-16)
    - The fulfillment of the law by Jesus: the greater righteousness demanded of his disciples (5:17-48)
      - Murder, Adultery, Divorce
      - Oaths, Retaliation, Love of Enemies
    - Directions on piety (6:1-18)
    - Directions on money (6:19-34)
    - Directions on social relationships (7:1-12)
    - Warnings (7:13-27)
    - Reaction of the crowds; descent from the mountain (7:28—8:1)
  - Restoring Life to Others: Jesus the Healer (8:2—9:35)
  - Great Harvest and Great Dangers: The Mission Discourse (9:36—10:42)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 2. Rejection and Confession (Matthew 11:2—16:20)**
  - Doubt, Indifference, and Dissent (11:2—12:45)
  - The Parable Discourse: the Mysteries of the Kingdom Revealed (12:46—13:54)
  - The Mission Resumes (13:54—16:12)
    - Rejection in Nazareth (13:54-58)
    - The Death of John (14:1-12)
    - Two Great Signs (14:13-36)
    - A Dispute with Israel; An Opening to the Gentiles (15:1-28)
    - Healing and Feeding the Multitudes; Demand for a Sign (15:29—16:12)
- **Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (Matthew 16:21-28:20)**
  - The Journey to Jerusalem (16:13—20:34)
    - Confession at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-28)
    - Transfiguration (17:1-21)
    - Living Together as the Family of God: Life Within the Community of the Kingdom (17:22—18:35)
    - Teachings on the Journey (19:1—20:16)
    - The Conclusion of the Journey (20:17-34)
  - In the Holy City: Conflict, Death, and Resurrection (21:1—28:15)
    - The Messiah in the Temple (21:1-17)
    - The Teacher and His Opponents (21:18—22:46)
    - False Teachers Lead Others to Ruin: Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-39)
    - The Coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment of the World (24:1—25:46)
    - The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. Finale (26:1—28:15)

# **From Judea of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles**

**Matthew 2:1-23**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Sections

- Two sections:
  - Herod and the Magi (2:1-18)
  - The Way to Nazareth (2:19-23)

**Matthew 2:1-23**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Herod and the Magi

- Wise men from the east (“magi”) search for the “king of the Jews,” guided by a star.
  - They are *gentiles* coming to pay homage to Jesus!
  - They represent the best of pagan religious perception, and they seek Jesus with the best methods of pagan science.

**Matthew 2:1-18**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Herod and the Magi

- Biblical themes resonating with the appearance of the Magi bearing gifts for a king:
  - The nations of the world would come to Israel to recognize God's reign. For example:
    - Ps 72:10-11: **May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts. May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.** (NRSV)
    - Isaiah 2:2-3 **In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."**
    - Also: Isaiah 43:5-10, Isaiah 60:3-6, Micah 4:1.

**Matthew 2:1-18**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Herod and the Magi

- Biblical themes resonating with the appearance of the Magi bearing gifts for a king:
  - Also recalls the story of Balaam, the pagan Midianite, in Numbers 22-24. Balaam (called a *magos* by Jewish writer Philo):
    - Acclaimed Israel's king and kingdom (Numbers 4:7)
    - Prophesied a star would come out of Jacob (Numbers 24:17: **"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near-- a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel ..."** (NRSV))

**Matthew 2:1-18**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Herod and the Magi

- Herod, the Roman appointed king of the Jews, *and all Jerusalem*, are troubled and vexed by the report of the birth of this new King of the Jews, in contrast to the enthusiasm of the gentile Magi.
  - Omens from the stars were taken very seriously.
  - Foreshadows the rejection of Jesus by official Judaism.

**Matthew 2:1-18**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Herod and the Magi

- Herod consults the chief priest and scribes where the Messiah will be born.
- They reply: **“In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet...”** (2:5 NRSV)
  - Their reference is actually a conflation of Micah 5:1 (5:2 in the RSV) and 2 Samuel 5:2.
  - It was unusual that Herod would consult the chief priest and scribes. He killed many members of the Sanhedrin when he came to power, and worked to keep their influence at a minimum.

**Matthew 2:1-18**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Herod and the Magi

- The Magi pay homage to the new king Jesus, and then are warned in a dream not to return to Herod.
- Joseph is also warned in a dream to flee to Egypt.
- Herod orders that all children 2 years old and younger in and around Bethlehem be killed (the Holy Innocents).

**Matthew 2:1-18**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Herod and the Magi

- This section, Matthew 2:1-18, is full of Old Testament imagery.
- It resonates with the story of Israel's salvation history:
  - Infant Moses miraculously saved from the Pharaoh's decree to kill all Hebrews male infants.
    - Moses saved God's people who were exiled in Egypt, and led them to freedom out of Egypt in the Exodus.
    - Jesus, exiled in Egypt to fulfill the prophecy "**out of Egypt I have called my son**" (Matthew 2:15), will save God's people and lead them in a "new Exodus."
      - Matthew 2:15 is a reference to Hosea 11:1 "**When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.**" (NRSV)

**Matthew 2:1-18**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Herod and the Magi

- This section Matthew 2:1-18 is full of Old Testament imagery.
- It resonates with the story of Israel's salvation history:
  - The sorrow from the slaughter of the Holy Innocents recalls the sorrow from the conquering and deportations of Israel by the Assyrian and Babylonian empires:

**“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”** (Matthew 2:18 NRSV)
  - Matthew 2:18 is taken from Jeremiah 31:15, where the LORD is acknowledging the pain of Israel after its exiles by the Assyrians and / or Babylonians (it is unclear which exile Jeremiah and Matthew are referring to)

**Matthew 2:1-18**

# From Judea to Galilee

## The Way to Nazareth

- Divine intervention continues to govern the story: in another dream, an angel tells Joseph Herod is dead, and they should return to Palestine.
  - Jesus-Moses parallel continues:
    - Matthew 2:20: [Angel to Joseph:] **“Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.”** (NRSV)
    - Exodus 4:19: **The LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt; for all those who were seeking your life are dead.”** (NRSV)

**Matthew 2:19-23**

# From Judea to Galilee

## The Way to Nazareth

- Peril continues: Archelaus, Herod's son, and a despot like father, is in power in Judea.
- In another dream, Joseph warned to go to Nazareth in Galilee.
  - Thus Matthew explains how Jesus' upbringing in Nazareth (a backwater town, in the boondocks, never mentioned in the Old Testament), was divinely guided.

**Matthew 2:19-23**

# From Judea to Galilee

## The Way to Nazareth

- Matthew 2:23: “He will be called a Nazorean.”
  - Does not reflect a specific Old Testament reference.
  - Might be a play on:
    - Word “sprig / branch” (*neser*), image applied to the Messiah, son of Jesse in Isaiah 11:1: **A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.** (NRSV)
    - Term “nazirite” = dedicated to God, as was Samson in Judges 13:5: **“... for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.”** (NRSV)

**Matthew 2:19-23**

# From Judea to Galilee

## Concluding Comment

- Unlike Luke's Nativity story, Matthew's is a sober one:
  - The infant Jesus' life is threatened by a tyrant.
  - He narrowly escapes a genocide of his people (the Holy Innocents)
    - There is no joyous singing of angels as in Luke, but rather the weeping of parents for their slaughtered children.
  - His family is exiled from their home and cannot return.
  - They come into Nazareth as displaced persons.

**Matthew 2:1-23**

# Getting Ready: God's Son in the Wilderness

**Matthew 3:1—4:11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## Sections

- Two sections:
  - At the Jordan: God's Son who Fulfills all Righteousness (3:1-17)
  - The Desert Test: God's Son who Vanquishes Satan (4:1-11)

**Matthew 3:1—4:11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- We now jump 30 years into the future, and meet the prophet **John the Baptist**, who reveals more about the identity of Jesus.
- Matthew gives us no background on John the Baptist. For Matthew, John the Baptist is the one spoken of in Isaiah 40:3:
  - Isaiah 40:3: **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God.** (Septuagint translation)
  - Matthew 11:10 [Jesus speaking of John the Baptist:] **This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'**

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- The appearance of John the Baptist evokes the image of the Old Testament prophet Elijah:
  - 2 Kings 1:8: **“A hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist.” ... “It is Elijah the Tishbite.”** (NRSV)
  - Later in Matthew, Jesus himself will seem to confirm this connection of Elijah and John the Baptist:
    - Matthew 17:12-13: **“... but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands.”** Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist. (NRSV)

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- John's message:
  - The final age of salvation is at hand.
  - Jesus, far greater than himself, will usher in the this new and final age.

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- Even more compelling than John's testimony about Jesus is the voice that speaks from heaven when Jesus is baptized:
  - Matthew 3:17: **And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."** (NRSV)
  - Evokes:
    - Psalm 2:7 (The Enthronement Psalm): **I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you."** (NRSV)
    - Isaiah 42:1: **Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.** (NRSV)

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- We learn here, as we also learned in Matthew's nativity story, that:
  - Jesus' origin is from God.
  - Jesus has a profound bond of kinship with God (“my Son, the Beloved”).

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- This section also introduces a theme in Matthew on the nature of true discipleship.
- Mere words and ritual actions – like those of the “Pharisees and Sadducees” are not signs of true discipleship.
- The sign of authentic discipleship is rather “**fruit worthy of repentance:**” good deeds, acts of obedience to God.
- As Jesus himself will declare at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: “**Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.**” (Matthew 7:21, NRSV)

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- John warns the Pharisees and Sadducees: **“You brood of vipers! ...Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’ ... (Matthew 3:7-9 NRSV)**
  - Refers to the concept of the “merit of the fathers:” Father Abraham will bring up and receive even the worse transgressor in Israel.
- Garland, p. 36: “For Matthew, the fruit that matters grows out of a fundamental disposition of the heart that is submissive to God’s reign, and it is expressed in spontaneous, characteristic acts of obedience. One’s character is not a matter of race, but of internal existence.”

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- In contrast, Jesus illustrates authentic righteousness by his acceptance of John's baptism:

Matthew 3:13-15: **Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness."**  
(NRSV)

- These are Jesus' first words in the Gospel of Matthew
- Righteousness here means: "the proper and faithful response human beings return to God" (Senior p. 94). It is doing that which is pleasing to God.

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## At the Jordan

- Matthew deals with the ticklish theological problems raised by Jesus' submission to "baptism" (How could Jesus be a sinner in need of repentance?) by noting:
  - John's "baptism" by water (as opposed to our baptism by the Spirit) was a *call to* repentance, not an *act of* repentance or forgiveness of sins.
    - Matthew does not say forgiveness of sins is part of John's baptism.
  - John protests in Matthew's account, and only relents and baptizes Jesus when Jesus commands him to do so.
  - Jesus submits to baptism to **"fulfill all righteousness."**
    - Garland, p. 37: "In his baptism, Jesus is shown to be one who binds himself to the destiny of Israel and who is intent on doing what God requires."

**Matthew 3:1-17**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## Sections

- Two sections:
  - At the Jordan: **God's Son who Fulfills all Righteousness** (3:1-17)
  - The Desert Test: **God's Son who Vanquishes Satan** (4:1-11)

**Matthew 3:1—4:11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## The Desert Test

- Jesus is now led into the desert wilderness by the Spirit.
- Matthew's is the only gospel that states the purpose of the 40 days he spends in the wilderness was to be tested by the devil.
- The desert wilderness was considered a place haunted by demons, a **“great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions.”** (Deuteronomy 8:15 NRSV)

**Matthew 4:1-11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## The Desert Test

- After a 40 day fast, Jesus is famished and weak, and the devil then tempts him three ways:
  - (A.) turn the stones into loaves of bread (4:3).
  - (B.) throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, and let your angels will save you (4:6).
  - (C.) worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of the earth and their splendor (4:9)

**Matthew 4:1-11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## The Desert Test

- Three explanations for the testing.
- 1. Allows Jesus to ponder his ministry as the Messiah.
  - (A.) Would he be a Messiah who brings only bread through magic?
  - (B.) Or a Messiah who compels by dramatic stunts?
  - (C.) Or a Messiah who seeks after worldly splendor by worldly means?

**Matthew 4:1-11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## The Desert Test

- Three explanations for the testing.
- 2. Provides a model for us on how to deal with temptation:
  - (A.) Don't be self-serving and seek instant gratification (expecting bread without planting, harvesting, winnowing, baking).
  - (B.) Don't put God to the test.
  - (C.) Don't take the easy path by seeking worldly glory, but take the narrow path to obedience to leads to the cross.

**Matthew 4:1-11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## The Desert Test

- Three explanations for the testing.
- 3. Shows that Jesus, the Son of God, remained faithful in the 40 days in the wilderness, *in contrast to* God's "covenantal" son, the nation of Israel, who failed to remain faithful during its 40 years in the wilderness:
  - (A.) hunger causes the Israelites to wish they had not left Egypt (Exodus 16)
  - (B.) They demand tests of God's faithfulness (Exodus 17)
  - (C.) They fall into idolatry by worshiping a golden calf (Exodus 32)

**Matthew 4:1-11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## The Desert Test

- Jesus rebuffs the devil's appeals by quoting God's word.
- The devil's mocking tone ("If you are the Son of God ...") will be echoed in the mockeries hurled at Jesus as he hangs on the cross.

**Matthew 4:1-11**

# God's Son in the Wilderness

## The Desert Test

- The climactic scene with the devil is on the top of a very high mountain.
  - In Luke, it is on the pinnacle of the Temple.
  - Mountains serve as places of revelation several times in Matthew:
    - The great discourse of Chapter 5-7 (the “Sermon on the Mount”) takes place on a mountain (Matthew 5:1).
    - Jesus heals on a mountain (Matthew 15:29-30).
    - The Transfiguration occurs on a mountain (Matthew 17:1-2)
    - The gospel ends on a mountaintop in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20)

**Matthew 4:1-11**

# Introducing Jesus the Messiah

## Concluding Comment

- **Matthew 1:1—4:11** is the prologue, the overture to the entire gospel,
  - drawing us into the mystery of the person of Jesus,
  - introducing us to many of the themes in the rest of the narrative.
- This overture ends in a “tableau of mythic proportions” (Senior, p. 95), upon a great mountain where can be seen all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. There Jesus proclaims the abiding commitment of his life **“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”** (Matthew 4:10 NRSV)
  - Echoing Deuteronomy 6:13: **The LORD your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear.** (NRSV)

**Matthew 1.1—4:11**

*Next Session:*

# Teaching, Healing, and Calling the Lost Sheep:

Jesus' Debut: Authority and Compassion.

Dawn in Galilee (4:17-25)

The Sermon on the Mount: Magisterial  
Teaching, A Charter for Discipleship (*part 1*:  
5:18-32)