

## Summary of Matthew 3-5

In Matthew 3, the focus shifts to John the Baptist, whose ministry serves as the divinely appointed forerunner preparing the way for the Messiah. John calls Israel to repentance, warning that religious heritage alone is insufficient apart from genuine fruit that reflects a changed heart. His message centers on the nearness of the kingdom of heaven and the coming judgment, pointing beyond himself to the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. When Jesus comes to be baptized, John initially resists, recognizing Jesus' sinlessness. Yet Jesus insists, explaining that His baptism is necessary to fulfill all righteousness. As Jesus emerges from the water, the heavens open, the Spirit of God descends like a dove, and the Father's voice affirms Jesus as His beloved Son—publicly identifying Jesus as the Messiah and inaugurating His earthly ministry.

In Matthew 4, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested. For forty days He fasts and then faces three distinct temptations from the devil, each aimed at diverting Him from faithful obedience to the Father. In every instance, Jesus responds not with personal authority or miracles, but with Scripture, demonstrating complete submission to God's Word. Where Israel failed in the wilderness, Jesus remains faithful, revealing Himself as the true and obedient Son. Following His victory over temptation, Jesus begins His public ministry, calling disciples and proclaiming a central message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." His teaching, healing, and authority signal that God's reign is breaking into the world through His person and work.

In Matthew 5, Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount, offering a radical vision of life in the kingdom of heaven. He opens with the Beatitudes, redefining blessing not in terms of power or prosperity but in humility, mercy, purity, and faithfulness. Jesus then makes clear that He has not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them. What follows is a series of teachings that raise the standard of righteousness far beyond external obedience. Jesus confronts heart-level sin, declaring that anger stands behind murder, lust behind adultery, and careless speech behind broken oaths. He challenges casual views of divorce, truthfulness, and retaliation, calling His followers to integrity, faithfulness, and love that reflect the character of God Himself. Rather than lowering the demands of the Law, Jesus intensifies them, revealing that life in God's kingdom requires transformed hearts, not merely rule-keeping—an impossible standard apart from grace, and a clear call to live fully under the reign of God.

## Reflection Questions

1. Jesus insisted on being baptized “to fulfill all righteousness.” What does this reveal about His humility and obedience, and how does it shape your understanding of following Him?
2. At Jesus’ baptism, the Father, Son, and Spirit are all present. How does this moment deepen your understanding of God’s identity and involvement in redemption?
3. Jesus responds to every temptation in the wilderness with Scripture. How can you get more scripture inside your head so that it will be there for when you need it?
4. In what ways do the temptations Jesus faced mirror the temptations believers commonly face today, and how does His faithfulness encourage you?
5. Jesus begins His ministry proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven is near. How does this message challenge common assumptions about power, success, and blessing?
6. The Beatitudes describe blessings that often run counter to worldly values. Which of these qualities do you find most challenging to live out, and why?
7. Jesus teaches that righteousness goes beyond external behavior to the condition of the heart. How does this reshape the way you evaluate your own spiritual maturity?
8. When Jesus raises the standard regarding anger, lust, truthfulness, and faithfulness, what does this reveal about God’s expectations for those who live under His reign?