

[Introduction to the Book of Matthew](#)¹

Authorship

External evidence favors Matthew as the book's author. External sources include Pseudo Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Papias, Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, Dionysius, Theophilus, Cerinthus, Valentinus, and Tatian. Other sources confirming the authenticity of Matthew include the Didache, Ignatius, and Barnabas' Epistle. The virtual unanimous voice of the early church is that Matthew is the book's author. One wonders how such powerful tradition and external testimony could have emerged if Matthew had not written the book. Interestingly, the earliest copies of the book contain the superscription "according to Matthew." Only Matthean authorship explains the church's early acceptance of the book.

Internal evidence also demonstrates Matthean authorship. Although Matthew does not identify himself as the book's author, such an omission is not surprising. As a tax gatherer (10:3) he no doubt felt shame regarding his former profession and therefore omitted his name from the book. Interestingly, the book also omits other stories that Jesus told about tax gatherers (Luke 18:9-14; 19:1-10). Matthew's reluctance to identify himself as the book's author no more disqualifies him from being its writer than John's continual reference to himself as the disciple whom Christ loved (John 19:26) disqualifies him from being the author of the fourth Gospel. If a forger had written the book he probably would have used a prominent name rather than create an anonymous work.

Despite Matthew's desire for anonymity, several internal clues still point to him as the book's author. For example, while the other Gospel writers refer to a party thrown for the Lord in

¹ Material for this section was compiled from various sources, including Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 54-59, 67-74; Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), 13-25, 323-32; Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 307-10; Louis Barbieri, "Matthew," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1983), 13-17; Harold Hoehner, "Criticism of the New Testament," (unpublished class notes in NT 200/305 New Testament Introduction and the Gospels, Dallas Theological Seminary, Summer 2001), 1-8.

Matthew's house (Mark 2:14-15; Luke 5:29), Matthew refers to this same event as taking place in "the house" rather than "his house" (9:10). Moreover, while the other writers refer to this occasion as a great banquet (Luke 5:29), Matthew refers to it simply as a dinner (9:9-10). Also, unlike the other Gospel writers' list of the various disciples, the phrase "tax collector" is only associated with Matthew in Matthew's list of the disciples (10:3). In addition, while Matthew's Gospel simply alludes to Matthew as a "tax gatherer" (10:3) or a publican (9:9), the other evangelists use his surname Levi when referring to him (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27, 29). Interestingly, Paul followed a similar practice by only referring to himself with his post conversion name when penning his letters.

Matthew the tax collector would be a logical candidate as the book's author since it contains more financial references than any of the other Gospels. Allusions to money and rare coins are replete throughout the book. Only Matthew speaks of a "talent" (18:24; 25:14-30). This monetary denomination was a sum of such magnitude that only a tax gatherer would have been familiar with it. In fact, Matthew uses three words for money that none of the other Gospel writers use (17:24, 27; 18:24). Other financial terms found throughout the Book of Matthew include debt, account-taking or reckoning, and money-changers (18:23, 24, 27; 25:19, 27). With the exception of debt, these terms are unique to Matthew. Matthew is also unique in comparison to the other Gospel writers through his employment of the terms gold (*chrusos*), silver (*arguros*), and brass (*chalkos*). Interestingly, only Matthew records Christ's payment of the two-drachma tax (17:24-27).

Other factors make Matthew an appropriate candidate for the book's writer. For example, his occupation as a publican (Matt 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27) would have meant that he was literate and adept at keeping records. Also, because Matthew was from Capernaum (Mark 2:1-14), he would have been a logical candidate to write the Gospel since it seems to place a special

emphasis upon this city (4:13; 9:1; 11:23). Furthermore, because Matthew was a Jew living inside the land, he would have been familiar with the Jewish geography, history, customs, ideas, classes, and terminology that are so prominently displayed throughout the book.

Matthew's *biography* demonstrates God's grace. As a tax gatherer (Matt 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27), he was considered both a thief (Luke 3:12-13; 19:2, 8) and a traitor by his peers. In biblical times, tax gatherers were placed in the same category as sinners, Gentiles, and harlots (Matt 5:46; 18:17; 21:31-32; Luke 7:34; 15:1; 18:13). Despite this vile background, Christ extended grace to him and even selected him to write the first book of the New Testament canon featuring Christ's royal identity.

While Levi was his surname (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27), Matthew was his apostolic name. His name means "gift of the Lord." He was the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14) and his hometown was Capernaum. The ministry of John the Baptist and Christ may have already impacted him since he immediately obeyed the Lord and followed him when called (9:9). Matthew walked with Christ for most of His ministry and was therefore an eyewitness to Christ's incarnation and earthly ministry. Matthew is listed as being in the inner circle as one of the original twelve disciples (Matt 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16). Luke also mentions him as waiting with the other disciples for the Holy Spirit after Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:13).

Some sources indicate that Matthew later became a member of an ascetic, Judiastic branch of Christianity. However, membership in such a group should not be construed as legalism on Matthew's part since legalism runs counter to the character of Matthew's Gospel and because the early church seemed to adhere to some aspects of the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:29). Matthew probably preached in Judea for 15 years before becoming a missionary to various foreign countries. While one source indicates that Matthew preached in Ethiopia and Persia, another source indicates that he

traveled to Parthia. Nothing definitive is known of Matthew's death although one source indicates that he died in Ethiopia of natural causes.

Original Language

Eusebius quotes Papias as indicating that Matthew originally recorded the "oracles" or *logia* in Hebrew.² Thus, many believe that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Aramaic and that this original copy was later translated into Greek. However, several reasons make it unlikely that Matthew is a Greek translation from the Aramaic. First, Matthew's Gospel contains no Aramaisms. Second, Matthew's clarification of Jewish customs (Matt 27:7-8, 15) would be an exercise in redundancy if Matthew's original readers were Palestinian, Aramaic. Third, if the book was translated from Aramaic to Greek, then one would not expect Aramaic words to be retained and given a translation as one often finds in Matthew's text (1:23; 27:33, 46).

Fourth, many scholars believe that Matthew's book does not read like a translation but rather an original. Fifth, early works quoting Matthew, such as those of Ignatius and the Shepherd of Hermas as well as the Didache, do so in Greek rather than Aramaic. Sixth, although Semitic traces are detectable in Matthew, this is not surprising given Matthew's Semitic background. Seventh, although there are thousands of Greek manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel dating back to the fourth and fifth century, there is not a single Aramaic copy of Matthew's Gospel. Furthermore, no church father ever refers to an Aramaic translation. Thus, Matthew probably wrote his entire book in Greek rather than Aramaic.

If this is true, then how is Papias' statement to be understood? Several options are possible. Perhaps Matthew wrote some of the sayings of Christ in Aramaic, which another used along with

² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:39:16. Interestingly, Eusebius also indicates that Irenaeus, Origen, and Pantaenus believed that Matthew originally wrote in Hebrew. For these citations, see Ed Glasscock, *Matthew*, Moody Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 13-17.

other documents to create Matthew's Gospel. However, this option should be dismissed since it also involves attributing Matthew's Gospel to someone other than Matthew. Perhaps Matthew wrote everything except Christ's discourses in Greek. Perhaps Papias just meant that although Matthew was written in Greek, it was composed according to a Hebrew literary style. Perhaps Matthew wrote two Gospels, one in Aramaic and the other in Greek. While the former was not inspired and preserved, the later was inspired and preserved. However, because there is no manuscript evidence of a former Aramaic Gospel, this theory rests upon speculation.

Perhaps Papias was in error regarding the language used or even confused Matthew's Gospel with the Book of Hebrews. Perhaps Eusebius misconstrued what Papias said. We really have no way of verifying Papias' words since we are only aware of them through the pen of Eusebius. In fact, nearly all of our knowledge of early fathers supposedly contending for Matthew's Hebrew origin is cited by Eusebius. Thus, there is no way to validate if Eusebius accurately recorded what they said. The credibility of Eusebius' writings have been attacked in other areas since he sometimes incorporates the apocryphal stories. In sum, it seems best to conclude that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Greek and to hold on to Papias' statement loosely until more information is forthcoming.

Sources and Synoptic Problem

The issue of whether Matthew used sources in compiling his material leads into the whole controversy regarding the "synoptic problem." This problem involves coming up with a suitable explanation in order to explain the similarities and differences between the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).³ The first explanation is the *interdependence theory*. Adherents of this

³ Similarities can be seen among the three gospels in terms of arrangement, content, sentence and word order, and word usage. Differences can also be seen among the three gospels in terms of arrangement of materials, content of individual passages, and material unique to each Gospel.

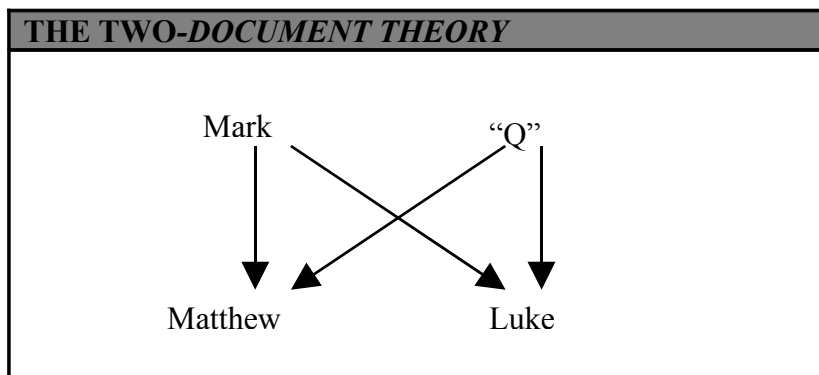
view maintain that the first Gospel writer relied upon oral tradition in composing his work. The second writer then depended upon the work of the first writer. The third writer then consulted the work of the first and second writers. However, there is no blatant evidence that one gospel writer depended upon the work of another Gospel writer. Furthermore, the theory fails to explain the omissions and differences between the Gospels.

The second explanation is the *fragment theory*. According to this view, each Gospel writer drew from various short written narratives. Some narratives contained Christ's parables. Others contained Christ's miracles. Still others contained information about Christ's passion. This view has in its favor the fact that Luke indicated that narratives were in existence for the Gospel writers to draw from (Luke 1:1-4). This view also explains the differences among the Gospels. However, the theory suffers because there is no evidence of the degree to which Luke and the other writers depended upon these outside sources. In fact, we do not know if Matthew or Mark consulted such sources. Also, it fails to explain the agreement among the Gospels. In addition, there is no external proof that these written narratives ever existed.

The third explanation is the *oral transmission theory*. According to this view, oral tradition was handed down from the apostles and became fixed through constant repetition. The Gospel writers then drew from this tradition when composing their books. This theory takes advantage of the importance of oral tradition to the early church. Because the Jews committed volumes of material to memory, it is likely that the early church followed this practice as well. Oral tradition was also significant in the early church since its immediate focus was evangelism rather than literary output. However, the theory suffers because it fails to explain why eyewitnesses would have depended upon tradition in composing their works. It also fails to explain why so many divergences exist among the Synoptic Gospels if tradition was as fixed as the theory's proponents argue.

The fourth explanation is the *urevangelium theory*. This theory states that oral tradition was encapsulated in an original Gospel. All three Gospel writers then drew from this first Gospel in composing their material. However, the theory suffers by failing to explain the differences and omissions among the synoptic writers. Also, there is no manuscript evidence of an original gospel. In fact, no biblical or patristic writer ever makes reference to such a gospel. Furthermore, why would eyewitnesses depend upon an outside source?

The fifth explanation is the *two-document theory*.

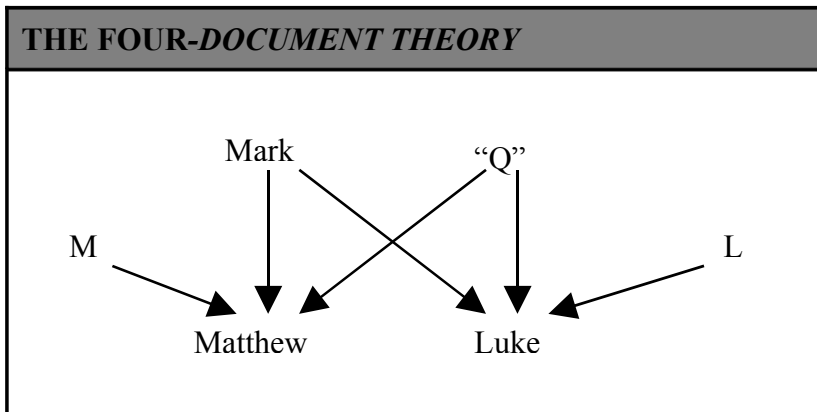


This theory assumes that Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark. This assumption is made on the basis of the fact that 606 of Mark's 661 verses are found in Matthew and 320 of Mark's 661 verses are found in Luke. On the one hand, 7% of Mark is unique. On the other hand, 93% of Mark's Gospel can be found in Matthew and Luke. Also, both Luke and Matthew seem to follow Mark's order. Whenever one of the writers departs from these orders, the other follows it. The presupposition of Marcan priority is also made on the basis of the fact that Matthew and Luke seem to smooth out some of Mark's primitive⁴ and harsh language (Mark 4:35-41; Matt 8:32-37) and Mark is a smaller Gospel that was later expanded by Matthew and Luke. "Q" is a document supposedly created in Antioch in A.D. 50–70. It is said to have consisted of 200–250 verses and accounts for the common material found in Matthew and Luke that is absent from Mark (Matt

⁴ Examples include the roughness of Mark's style and grammar as well as his preservation of some Aramaic words.

7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42; Matt 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35). The major weakness of two-document theory is that it does not account for the material unique to Matthew or Luke. For example, the Good Samaritan material is found in Luke (10:25-37) and yet omitted from Mark and Matthew.⁵

This weakness has given rise to the sixth explanation, which is the *four-document theory*.



This theory builds upon the two-document theory but also includes “M” and “L.” “M” was allegedly written in A.D. 60 from Jerusalem. Its 300 verses contain material found in Matthew that is not found in Mark or Luke. Such material includes various parables, material followed by an introductory formula, and anti pharisaical yet pro-Jewish mission material. “L” was allegedly written from Caesarea in A.D. 60. Its 580 verses contain material found in Luke that is not found in Matthew or Mark. Such material includes Christ’s detailed sayings, 14 parables, 30 narratives, and those aspects of Christ’s ministry emphasizing the need for humility, attacking self-righteousness, and comforting the common man. The main strengths of both the two document and four document theories is that they incorporate the understanding that the Gospel writers consulted sources (Luke 1:1-4) and they attempt to explain the source of all the material found in the synoptics.

However, despite the strengths of these theories, they are fraught with problems. First, they assume Marcan priority. Marcan priority is problematic since it may wreak havoc on the dating of

⁵ Other weaknesses associated with Marcan priority and the existence of “Q” are explored below in the weaknesses involving the four-document theory.

other New Testament books. Because Mark got his material from Peter in Rome, Mark's Gospel was probably written near Peter's death in A.D. 68. Thus, if Mark was written in A.D. 67, Matthew and Luke may have been written after A.D. 70.⁶ This late date for these books seems strange since both of them predict the coming A.D. 70 judgment without commenting upon its fulfillment in history (Matt 21:41; 22:7; 23:36; 24:2; Luke 21:20-24). Such an absence is particularly problematic for Matthew because of his interest in using fulfilled prophecy to validate Christ's messianic credentials. Also, if Luke was written after A.D. 70, Acts was written even later since it was the sequel to Luke. However, Acts was probably not written after A.D. 70 since it makes no mention of this event. It is more likely that Acts was written in A.D. 62–64 since the book cuts off abruptly with no mention of the outcome of Paul's impending trial before Caesar.

Marcan priority is also problematic since tradition favors Matthean priority. Tradition unanimously states that Matthew wrote first.⁷ Tradition should be accepted unless it is first proven to be unreliable. Another problem with Marcan priority is that it fails to explain why Matthew, who was an eyewitness to the events, would need to borrow from Mark who was not an eyewitness. For example, when describing a banquet in his own home (Matt 9:9-13), why would Matthew use Mark as a source (Mark 2:13-17) instead of recounting this event from his own perspective as an eyewitness? Furthermore, Marcan priority makes Mark the most authoritative Gospel. However, Mark should not be considered the most authoritative Gospel since he was not an apostle and Matthew was an apostle. This hierarchy should be reversed. Finally, the Jewish content of Matthew argues for its priority since the early church at its inception was primarily Jewish. It stands to reason

⁶ Some tradition indicates that Mark wrote during Peter's life (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:15:2; 6:14:6; 6:25:5). Because of the widespread presupposition that this literary production transpired late in Peter's life, an A.D. 67 date for Mark seems appropriate. However, it should be noted that other tradition (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1-2) indicates that Mark wrote after Peter's death (A.D. 68). If this latter tradition is true, then the case becomes overwhelming for assigning a post A.D. 70 date for Matthew, Luke, and Acts.

⁷ Second century figures Irenaeus and Clement held to Matthean priority. See also Eusebius' citation from Origen conveying adherence to Matthean priority. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:25:4.

that the most Jewish Gospel would be the first to be written in the church age since the church was primarily Jewish at its earliest stages.

Second, there is no manuscript evidence confirming the existence of “Q,” “M,” or “L.” Patristic and biblical writers fail to mention any of these documents. If these documents were so instrumental in producing the Gospels, it seems strange that the early church would not have preserved them. Rather than being the product of early Christianity, they instead seem to be the product of nineteenth century scholarship.

Third, it is unlikely that Matthew and Luke used Mark. For example, the two and four document theories fail to explain the agreements of Matthew and Luke contrary to Mark. This phenomenon occurs over 200 times.⁸ Interestingly, Mark sometimes includes material (Mark 14:72) that is not incorporated by either Matthew or Luke. Also, Luke fails to incorporate material from the middle section of Mark (6:45-8:26). In addition, “Luke followed Mark’s order when Matthew did not and Matthew follows Mark’s order when Luke did not.”⁹

The seventh explanation for resolving the synoptic problem is the *composite* or *eclectic theory*. This view is the most attractive one and is built upon several factors. First, this view not only takes into consideration the fact that Matthew was an eyewitness but also acknowledges that Mark and Luke were one person removed from the eyewitnesses. By way of analogy, although only Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses to Christ’s transfiguration (Matt 17:1-2), they communicated this event to others subsequent to Christ’s resurrection (Matt 17:9). Similarly, Mark as a Jerusalem resident not only had access to the eyewitness testimony of the Jerusalem apostles, but he also had access to the testimony of Peter (1 Pet 5:13). Mark also could have heard Christ’s direct teaching, heard the various sermons of the apostles, and received information from Luke

⁸ This cannot be material from Q. It can only be said to come from Q when the material appears in Matthew and Luke but not Mark.

⁹ Harold Hoehner, “Criticism of the New Testament,” 6.

(Phlm 24). In the same way, Luke had access to eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2) such as Mary. Luke also had ample opportunity to interact with other apostles since he journeyed to Jerusalem with Paul (Acts 21:17). Luke also had access to the Apostle Paul. Because he had contact with the other apostles and received direct revelation from God, Paul's testimony would have proven to be valuable.

Second, this view also takes into consideration the prevalence of oral tradition (John 21:25). Because Acts 20:35 contains a statement by Christ not found in the gospels and because the book of 1 Corinthians (7:10; 11:25) records statements by Christ before most of the gospels had been written, oral tradition was obviously prevalent and exerted influence over the Gospel writers. Third, this view acknowledges that the Gospel writers could have consulted written sources (Luke 1:1-4). Fourth, this view acknowledges that the Gospel writers could have consulted one another's work. Fifth, this view explains the differences among the synoptics in terms of each writer selectively including and excluding material that fit with his purpose in writing. Sixth, this view acknowledges the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit who could have revealed new truth to the writers just as He revealed new truth to Paul (John 14:26; 16:12-13; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21).

Date

Matthew obviously had to have been written prior to A.D. 110 since Ignatius makes reference to the book. Liberals typically date the book after A.D. 70 since they believe there is no way that Matthew could have known of the events of A.D. 70 ahead of time (Matt 21:41; 22:7; 24:2). However, this position emanates from an anti-supernatural bias rather than sound scholarship. Others date the book late on the basis that the book incorporates a baptismal formula that began later in church history (28:19). However, this statement could have just as easily proceeded from the lips of Christ.

Still others suggest a late date on the basis of the continuation of the name of the potter's field (27:7-8) and the continuation of the story that the disciples stole the body (28:13, 15) even "to this day." Late date proponents argue that this phrase suggests a lengthy period in between the transpiring of the recorded events and the writing of the book. However, not too long of an intervening time period is needed in order to accomplish these events. Interestingly, these events actually end up arguing for a pre A.D. 70 date since they presuppose no major upheaval for national Israel. Other factors arguing for a pre A.D. 70 date include references to the city of Jerusalem as if it were still standing (4:5; 27:53) as well as a lack of mention of the fulfillment of Christ's prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction. Matthew certainly would have mentioned this event if his book were written after the fact because of his interest in using fulfilled prophecy in order to establish Christ's messianic credentials. If the book was written to Jewish believers living inside the land of Israel, it obviously must have been written prior to A.D. 70.

Irenaeus pushes the date even earlier when he says that the book was written during Nero's reign while Peter and Paul were in Rome.¹⁰ Since these apostles were martyred in A.D. 67–68, the book obviously had to have been written prior to this time. Whether one dates the book closer to A.D. 70 or earlier depends upon whether he adheres to Marcan or Matthean priority. Since Mark was probably written around A.D. 65, adherence to Marcan priority causes Matthew's Gospel to be dated even later. However, as previously explained, Marcan priority is problematic. It counters tradition, forces an eyewitness to depend upon a secondary source when recounting events, places Mark's non-apostolic Gospel into the most authoritative position, ignores the logical reality of the most Jewish gospel being written at a time when the church was heavily Jewish, and forces Matthew, Luke and Acts to be given a post A.D. 70 date. Because of the preference for Matthean priority, a date of A.D. 45–50 for the composition of Matthew's Gospel seems appropriate.

¹⁰ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5:7:2.

Place of Writing

Numerous suggestions have been made for the place of writing of Matthew's Gospel. Among them are Alexandria, Edessa, Syria, and Caesarea. However, Judea and Syrian Antioch are the primary places where it is believed that Matthew's Gospel originated from. The Judean place of writing is adhered to because that is the general place where Matthew lived and worked in the years following the birth of the church. However, it seems preferable to argue that Matthew wrote his Gospel from Syrian Antioch. Interestingly, Ignatius was the first known church father to quote from Matthew's Gospel. Ignatius was the Bishop of Antioch. Also, if Matthew's stylistically Hebraic Gospel was originally composed in Greek, then Antioch would serve as a logical place of origin for the book since the city was primarily comprised of Greek speaking Jews. Antioch would also be an appropriate place to write the book from since the city served as the base of operations for the church's early Gentile missionary outreach (Acts 11:19-30). Matthew's emphasis upon Gentile inclusion and Israel being presently set aside would serve as a helpful explanation for the church during this critical transitional time period.

Recipients

Although no specific target audience is mentioned, various clues make it apparent that Matthew had a believing Jewish audience in mind. The Jewish nature of the letter is apparent by noting several factors. First, the book contains a disproportionate number of Old Testament citations and allusions. Of the book's 129 Old Testament references, 53 are direct citations and 76 are allusions. On thirteen occasions, Christ's actions are said to be a fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Second, the book follows a five-fold division. The five major sermons of the book are delineated through the repetition of the concluding formula “when He had finished saying these things” (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). This fivefold structure would have immediately been recognizable to the Jewish mind since Jews had a tendency to categorize items, such as the Books of Psalms and the Pentateuch, according to a fivefold division. Third, although originally written in Greek, the book evidences a Hebraistic style, parallelism, and elaboration.

Fourth, *tote* (“then” or “at that time”) reflects a Jewish style. While this term is employed ninety times in Matthew, it is only used six times in Mark, fourteen times in Luke, and ten times in John. Fifth, the vocabulary of the book is distinctly Jewish. The following Jewish terms are found in the book: David,¹¹ Jerusalem as the Holy City (4:5; 27:53), city of the great king (5:35), lost sheep of the house of Israel (10:6; 15:24), kingdom of God, and kingdom of heaven.¹² Sixth, the subject matter of the topics covered is distinctly Jewish. Among the topics covered are the Law, ceremonial defilements, Sabbath, kingdom, Jerusalem, temple, Messiah, prophecy, prophets, David, Abram, Moses, scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees.

Seventh, Matthew’s genealogy reveals a Jewish audience since Matthew traces Christ back to David and Abraham rather than back to Adam (Luke 3). Eighth, Matthew places a special focus upon the Apostle Peter. Because Peter was the apostle to the circumcised (Gal 2:7-8), Matthew’s focus on Peter harmonizes with the Jewish emphasis of his book. Ninth, unlike the other Gospels that explain Jewish customs to Gentile audiences, Matthew leaves these same Jewish customs unexplained. This is true not only with regard to Jewish rulers (Matt 2:1, 22; 14:1; Luke 2:1-2;

¹¹ While the word David appears nine times in Matthew, the word only shows up three times in Mark, three times in Luke, and not once in John.

¹² Interestingly, “kingdom of heaven” appears thirty two times (3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11, 12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1, 14) and “kingdom of God” (6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31; 21:43) appears only five times. These terms are synonymous. However, the multiple references to the former and the scant references to the latter also reflect a common Jewish reluctance of mentioning God’s name directly.

3:1-2) but it is also true with regard to ceremonial cleansing (Matt 15:2; Mark 7:3-4). The customs that Matthew does explain are of Roman rather than Jewish origin (Matt 27:15). Although some of Matthew's writings seem to anticipate at least some kind of Gentile audience by giving the interpretation of some Jewish words (1:23; 27:33, 46), it does seem to be a general rule that Matthew provides fewer interpretations of Jewish customs than any other Gospel writer.

Tenth, various church fathers, such as Irenaeus, Origen, and Eusebius believed that Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience. Not only was Matthew written to a Jewish audience but to a believing audience as well. In other words, Matthew's audience primarily consisted of Jewish Christians. Both Eusebius¹³ and Origen¹⁴ indicated that Matthew was written to those within Judaism who came to believe.

Purposes and Message

Matthew wrote in order to accomplish three *purposes*. First, he wrote to convince his Jewish audience that the Christ in whom they had believed was indeed the long awaited Jewish messiah. Thus, Matthew shows that Christ was the rightful heir to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. Matthew appeals to a variety of devices to accomplish this purpose such as genealogies, fulfilled prophecy, messianic titles, kingdom teachings, and miracles. Because the Jewish understanding was that the kingdom would be immediately established upon the arrival of the king (Isa 9:6-7; Matt 20:20-21), the next logical question that a Jew would ask is, "if Christ is indeed the Jewish king then where is His kingdom?"

Thus, Matthew wrote for the second purpose of explaining why the kingdom had been postponed despite the fact that the king had already arrived. In order to accomplish this purpose, Matthew carefully traces the kingdom program. Here Matthew explains the kingdom's offer to the

¹³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:24:6.

¹⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:25:5.

nation (3:2; 4:17; 10:5-7; 15:24), its rejection by the nation (11–12; 21–23; 26–27), the present interim program for those who will inherit the kingdom (sons of the kingdom) due to Israel’s rejection of the kingdom (13, 16:18), and the nation’s eventual acceptance of the kingdom (23:38-39; 24:14, 31; 25:31). The notion of a past rejection and future acceptance of the kingdom by national Israel would lead to the question, “what is God doing in the present?”

Thus, Matthew wrote for the third purpose of explaining God’s interim program. Here, Matthew introduces the interim program that the sons of the kingdom will experience (Matt 13) as well as the advent of the church (Matt 16:18; 18:17; 28:18-20). The church age represents God’s present earthly program in between Israel’s past rejection and future acceptance of the king and His kingdom. Since Christ’s disciples would play foundational roles in the church (Eph 2:20), Matthew explains how Christ prepared them not only for His death but also for their new role in the church age.

Because at the time of writing, the Gentiles were beginning to become more prominent in the church, the Jewish believers needed an explanation for this Gentile inclusion. Thus, Matthew explains how God’s interim program would thrust the Gentiles into prominence (2:1-12; 8:11-12; 13:38; 15:22-28). In sum, Matthew selectively (John 20:30-31; 21:25) includes material from Christ’s life in order to accomplish these purposes. Therefore, the *message* of Matthew is the confirmation to Jewish Christians that Jesus is their predicted king who ushered in an interim program by building the sons of the kingdom into the church in between Israel’s past rejection and future acceptance of her king.

Sub purposes

In addition to this overarching purpose, Matthew wrote to accomplish three sub purposes. *First*, Matthew wanted to confirm the Jewish Christians in their faith. He wanted them to

understand that the Jesus in whom they had believed was indeed the Jewish king. This was true in spite of the fact that the kingdom had not immediately materialized according to their expectations and instead God's program had taken a new direction. *Second*, Matthew wrote to offer the believing Jews an explanation regarding Gentile inclusion in God's present program. This was an explanation that the believing Jews desperately needed since the church was on the verge of becoming predominately Gentile through the coming three missionary journeys launched from Syrian Antioch. Thus, Matthew wrote his Gospel from this very locale for the purpose of assisting the church through this delicate transition. *Third*, Matthew wanted to encourage the Jewish Christians. Thus, he explained that although Israel had rejected her king, God was going to use this negative act for the positive purpose of including the Gentiles. He was also going to restore the kingdom to Israel in the future.

Structure

Matthew's Gospel contains several structural markers. One way of structuring the book is by tracing the previously described kingdom program from its offering to the nation, its rejection by the nation, the interim program for the sons of the kingdom due to the kingdom's absence, the re-offer of the kingdom to the nation, and the nation's eventual acceptance of this offer. A related pattern is the transition from Christ's public teaching and miracles to the nation (1–12) to His private teaching and miracles for the benefit of the disciples (13–28). His public miracles and teachings displayed in the first half of the book are related to the offer of the kingdom to Israel. However, after it becomes apparent that Israel's religious leaders will reject Christ (12:24), He then transitions into a private ministry directed toward the disciples. In this phase, His miracles are used primarily as teaching devices for the benefit of His disciples. Furthermore, no longer is Christ teaching for the benefit of the nation but now He teaches in parabolic form in order to conceal truth

from the nation and instead to reveal truth to His disciples who will become the leaders in the soon to be birthed church. The offer of the kingdom that was so prevalent in the first part of the book (3:2; 4:17; 10:7) is omitted from this second section of the book.

Yet another clue involves the twofold repetition of the phrase “from that time on” (4:17; 16:21). These two phrases reveal the two great purposes for Christ coming to earth. The first great purpose involved His offering the kingdom to Israel (4:17). The second great purpose involved dying on the cross (16:21). These two purposes are related to each other in the sense that Israel’s rejection of the kingdom offer was made official with the nation’s decision to hand Christ over to the Romans for execution.

Another structural clue is the repetition of the concluding phrase “when He had finished saying these things” (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). This formula alerts the reader to the book’s five major discourses. Each discourse concludes with this phrase. Thus, the five major discourses include the Sermon on the Mount (5–7), the missionary discourse (10), the kingdom parables (13), the discourse on humility (18), and the Olivet Discourse (24–25).

A final structural clue involves geography. Christ’s life and ministry seems to transition through three geographic movements. The first section of His life ministry occurs in Bethlehem and Nazareth (1:1–4:11). The second major section of His life and ministry is in Galilee (4:12–16:12). The third major section of His ministry is in Judea (16:13–28:28).

Unique Characteristics

Matthew’s Gospel boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, in comparison to the other Gospels, Matthew has the longest discourse sections. Matthew contains more of Christ’s teaching than any other Gospel. Of Matthew’s 1071 verses, 60% of them contain Christ’s teaching. Second, Matthew makes extensive use of Old Testament prophecy. While the phrase “that the

Scriptures might be fulfilled” or a close variant of it is used nine times in Matthew (1:22; 2:15, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56), this same phrase is not employed a single time in the other Gospels. Third, the kingdom parables seem to be emphasized more in Matthew in comparison to any other Gospel.

Fourth, the five discourse sections are unique to Matthew. Fifth, Matthew is the only Gospel that mentions the church (16:18; 18:17). Sixth, Matthew does more to demonstrate Christ’s royal identity than any other Gospel writer. Matthew accomplishes this goal by genealogically connecting Christ to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants (1:1-17), referring to Christ as the messianic king (1:20; 2:6) and the Son of David (1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:45), associating Christ with the kingdom (2:11; 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:26-28; 13; 16:28; 17:1-2; 20:20-23; 25:31-46; 26:29; 28:18), and appealing to fulfilled prophecy (21:5; Zech 9:9).

Seventh, Matthew uses the verb *maqhteuw* (to disciple) more than any other New Testament writer. While this verb is used three times in Matthew (13:52; 27:57; 28:19), it is only used one time elsewhere (Acts 14:21). Matthew probably uses the verb more than any other Gospel writer because of His emphasis upon the training of the disciples to fulfill foundational roles in the soon to be birthed church in view of Israel’s rejection of the kingdom offer. Eighth, while Matthew’s discourse sections are comparatively longer than those of the other Gospels, His narrative sections seem to be smaller by way of comparison. Ninth, Matthew places a special emphasis upon eschatology (13; 24–25; 28:20). Tenth, Matthew seems more interested in precision and details in comparison to the other Gospel writers.

Eleventh, in addition to following a basic chronology of Christ’s life, Matthew also seems interested in grouping material on the basis of logic. For example, his genealogy is broken down into three categories. Christ’s miracles performed for the benefit of the nation are also categorized

together. The same can be said for the material involving Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer and Christ's training of the disciples. Twelfth, Matthew provides an important bridge in between the Old and New Testaments. Matthew shows that God has not forgotten His covenant program even after four hundred years of prophetic silence. His book not only shows the fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic expectation but it also provides a transition into the church age. This emphasis may explain why Matthew was placed first in the New Testament canon.

Outline

- I. Presentation of the King (1-10)
 - A. Birth (1-2)
 - 1. Genealogy (1:1-17)
 - a) Abraham to David (1:1-6a)
 - b) David to Babylonian deportation (1:6b-11)
 - c) Babylonian to Christ (1:12-16)
 - d) Summation (1:17)
 - 2. Virgin birth (1:18-25)
 - 3. Reception by the wise men (2:1-12)
 - 4. Opposition by Herod (2:13-23)
 - B. Forerunner (3:1-12)
 - C. Baptism (3:13-17)
 - D. Temptation (4:1-11)
 - E. Initial Ministry (4:12-25)
 - 1. Announcement of kingdom (4:12-17)
 - 2. Kingdom co-laborers (4:18-22)
 - 3. Kingdom message spread (4:23-25)
 - F. Sermon on the Mount (5-7)
 - 1. Setting (5:1-2)
 - 2. Beatitudes (5:3-12)
 - 3. Influence of the sons of the kingdom (5:13-16)
 - 4. Relationship of the kingdom to the Law (5:17-48)
 - a) Christ's ambition to return to the Law's original intent (5:17-20)
 - b) Six contrasts between pharisaical and Christ's interpretation of the Law (5:21-48)
 - i) Hatred (5:21-26)
 - ii) Lust (5:27-30)
 - iii) Divorce (5:31-32)
 - iv) Oaths (5:33-37)
 - v) Retaliation (5:38-42)
 - vi) Love toward enemies (5:43-48)
 - 5. Relationship of kingdom to public and private righteousness (6:1-18)

- a) General principle (6:1)
- b) Application to three areas
 - i) Giving (6:2-4)
 - ii) Prayer (6:5-15)
 - iii) Fasting (6:16-18)
- 6. Relationship of the kingdom to wealth (6:19-34)
- 7. Relationship of the kingdom to judging (7:1-6)
- 8. Kingdom righteousness can be received by prayer and exhibited in conduct (7:7-12)
- 9. Comparison of Christ's teaching on righteousness with that of the Pharisees (7:13-27)
 - a) Two ways: narrow versus wide gate (7:13-14)
 - b) Two trees: true versus false prophets (7:15-20)
 - c) Two claims: true versus false professors (7:21-23)
 - d) Two buildings: rock versus sandy foundation (7:24-27)
- 10. Conclusion: listeners amazed at Christ's authority (7:28-29)
- G. Authority (8-10)
 - 1. Authority over disease (8:1-17)
 - a) Leprosy (8:1-4)
 - b) Paralysis (8:5-13)
 - c) Fever and miscellaneous diseases (8:14-17)
 - 2. Authority over disciples (8:18-22)
 - 3. Authority over nature (8:23-27)
 - 4. Authority over demons (8:28-34)
 - 5. Authority to forgive sins (9:1-8)
 - 6. Authority to call men from their chosen vocations (9:9)
 - 7. Authority to forgive the worst sinners (9:10-13)
 - 8. Authority to usher in a new dispensation (9:14-17)
 - 9. Authority over hemorrhage and death (9:18-26)
 - 10. Authority over blindness and dumbness (9:27-34)
 - 11. Authority to delegate authority (9:35-10:42)
 - a) Christ's compassion (9:35-38)
 - b) The apostles (10:1-4)
 - c) Limitations of their work (10:5-6)
 - d) Description of their work (10:7-8)
 - e) Provisions for their work (10:9-15)
 - f) Dangers of their work (10:16-25)
 - g) Perspective of workers (10:26-39)
 - i) Godward perspective (10:26-33)
 - ii) Christward perspective (10:34-39)
 - h) Workers reward (10:40-42)
- II. Rejection of the King (11-12)
 - A. Unbelief of John the Baptist (11:1-15)
 - B. Unbelief of the cities (11:16-31)
 - C. Unbelief of the Pharisees (12:1-50)
 - 1. Pharisees reject Christ (12:1-24)
 - a) Provocation of the controversy (12:1-23)
 - i) Sabbath controversies (12:1-14)

- (a) Eating (12:1-9)
 - (b) Healing (12:10-14)
 - ii) Christ's identity (12:15-21)
 - iii) Healing of the demoniac (12:22-23)
 - b) Pharisees attribute Christ's power to Satan (12:24)
 - 2. Christ rejects 1st century Israel (12:25-50)
 - a) Refutation to charge of demon possession (12:25-37)
 - i) Satan's kingdom cannot be divided (12:25-26)
 - ii) By whom do your magicians cast out demons? (12:27)
 - iii) Christ's miracles evidence the kingdom (12:28)
 - iv) Binding of Satan necessary for Christ's kingdom work to go forward (12:29)
 - v) Pharisees placing themselves against Christ (12:30)
 - vi) Pharisees had committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (12:31-32)
 - vii) Pharisees' speech dictated by their nature (12:33-37)
 - b) That generation only to be given the sign of Jonah (12:38-40)
 - c) Ninevites and the Queen of the South to condemn present generation (12:41-42)
 - d) Present generation likened to a repossessed person (12:43-45)
 - e) Christ rejects physical ties and instead embraces spiritual ties (12:46-50)
- III. King's interim kingdom program (13-20: 28)
 - A. Kingdom parables (13:1-52)
 - 1. Parables given while out of the house (13:1-35)
 - a) Parable of the sower (13:1-9)
 - b) Explanation of the necessity of the parabolic presentation (13:10-17)
 - c) Interpretation of the parable of the sower (13:18-23)
 - d) Parable of the wheat and tares (13:24-30)
 - e) Parable of the mustard seed (13:31-32)
 - f) Parable of the leaven (13:33)
 - g) Christ's parabolic instruction as the fulfillment of prophecy (13:34-35)
 - 2. Parables given while inside the house (13:36-52)
 - a) Interpretation of the parable of the wheat and tares (13:36-43)
 - b) Parable of the earthen treasure (13:44)
 - c) Parable of the pearl of great price (13:45-46)
 - d) Parable of the dragnet of fish (13:47-50)
 - e) Parable of the householder (13:51-52)
 - B. Why the interim program was necessary (13:53-14:12)
 - 1. Christ rejected in his hometown (13:53-58)
 - 2. Beheading of John the Baptist (14:1-12)
 - C. Christ trains the disciples (14:13-20:28)
 - 1. Feeding of the 5000 (14:13-21)
 - 2. Calming of the storm (14:22-33)
 - 3. Healings at Gennesaret (14:34-36)
 - 4. Christ defends the disciples' violation of the Sabbath regulations (15:1-20)
 - 5. Christ heals the Canaanite woman (15:21-28)
 - 6. Feeding of the 4000 (15:29-39)
 - 7. Warnings against pharisaical doctrine (16:1-12)
 - 8. Revelation of the church (16:13-20)

9. First prediction of Christ's death (16:21-28)
 10. Transfiguration (17:1-13)
 11. Christ casts out the demon (17:14-21)
 12. Second prediction of Christ's death (17:22-23)
 13. Christ pays the two drachma tax (17:24-27)
 14. Sermon on humility (18:1-35)
 - a) Necessity of childlike humility (18:1-4)
 - b) Necessity of not stumbling a disciple (18:5-14)
 - c) Necessity of exercising church discipline (18:15-20)
 - d) Necessity of forgiveness (18:21-35)
 15. Teaching on marriage and divorce (19:1-12)
 16. Teaching on not thwarting the children's access to the kingdom (19:13-15)
 17. Teaching on wealth and entrance into the kingdom (19:16-30)
 18. Parable of the landowner and laborers (20:1-16)
 19. Third prediction of Christ's death (20:17-19)
 20. Request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee (20:20-28)
- IV. Formal presentation and rejection of the King (20:29-23:39)
- A. Transitional event: the blind could recognize Christ's identity while Israel could not (20:29-34)
 - B. Formal presentation of the King to Israel (21:1-22)
 1. Triumphal entry (21:1-11)
 2. Cleansing of the Temple (21:12-17)
 3. Cursing of the fig tree (21:18-22)
 - C. Questions and parables demonstrating Israel's rejection of Christ (21:23-22:46)
 1. Question regarding John's Authority (21:23-27)
 2. Parable of the two sons (21:28-32)
 3. Parable of the tenants (21:33-46)
 4. Parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14)
 5. Reciprocal questions (22:15-46)
 - a) Three questions from Israel's leaders trying to trap Christ (22:15-40)
 - i) Taxation (22:15-22)
 - ii) Resurrection (22:23-33)
 - iii) Greatest commandment (22:34-40)
 - b) Christ's question: whose son is David? (22:41-46)
 - D. Woes demonstrating Christ's rejection of the nation (23:1-39)
 1. Guilt of the Pharisees (23:1-12)
 2. Seven woes against the Pharisees (23:13-36)
 - a) Three woes involving doctrine (23:13-22)
 - b) Transitional woe involving doctrine and character (23:23-24)
 - c) Three woes involving character (23:25-36)
 3. Christ's lament over Jerusalem (23:37-39)
- V. Reoffer and eventual acceptance of the King (24-25)
- A. Christ's prophecy about the Temple (24:1-2)
 - B. Disciples' questions (24:3)
 - C. Events of the tribulation (24:4-31)
 1. First half (24:4-14)

2. Middle (24:15-20)
 3. Second half (24:21-22)
 4. Second Advent (24:23-31)
 - D. Attitude believers should have towards these events (24:32-25:46)
 1. Fig tree: watch for the signs (24:32-35)
 2. Days of Noah: do not be caught surprised (24:36-44)
 3. Slave: faithfully doing master's will (24:45-51)
 4. Ten virgins: preparedness (25:1-13)
 5. Talents: stewardship (25:14-30)
 6. Sheep and goats: doing good to Christ's brethren (25:31-46)
- VI. Passion of the King (26-28)
- A. Events leading to the crucifixion (26:1-27:32)
 1. Plot to crucify Christ (26:1-5)
 2. Mary anoints Christ (26:6-13)
 3. Judas agrees to betray Christ for 30 pieces of silver (26:14-16)
 4. Preparation of the upper room (26:17-19)
 5. Christ's predicts Judas' betrayal (26:20-25)
 6. Celebration of the Lord's table (26:26-29)
 7. Christ's predicts Peter's denial (26:30-35)
 8. Christ in Gethsemane (26:33-46)
 9. Christ's arrest (26:47-56)
 10. Christ's trial before Caiaphas (26:57-68)
 11. Peter betrays Christ (26:69-75)
 12. Judas' remorse (27:1-10)
 13. Christ before Pilate (27:11-26)
 14. Soldiers mock Christ (27:27-31)
 15. Simon of Cyrene carries Christ's cross (27:32)
 - B. Crucifixion (27:33-56)
 1. Events involving the crucifixion (27:33-44)
 2. Christ's death (27:45-56)
 - C. Burial (27:57-66)
 1. Body placed in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb (27:57-61)
 2. Grave sealed (27:62-66)
 - D. Resurrection (28:1-20)
 1. Christ appears to the women (28:1-10)
 2. Israel argues that the disciples stole the body (28:11-15)
 3. Christ appears to the eleven (28:16-17)
 4. The Great Commission (28:18-20)

Argument

In Matthew's first ten chapters, he incorporates selected historical events from the life of Christ that center around Christ's presentation of Himself as king to the nation of Israel. According to the Old Testament, the nation had the responsibility of enthroning the king of God's own

choosing (Deut 17:15). Thus, Matthew records material indicating that Christ was the long awaited Old Testament heir that the nation should enthrone. Therefore, Matthew's Jewish audience should have no doubt that Christ was the Messiah predicted in the pages of the Old Testament.

In order to establish that Christ is the messianic fulfillment of what was promised to Israel, Matthew begins with a genealogy that shows Christ to be the fulfillment of the Abrahamic (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 17:1-8) and Davidic (2 Sam 7:11-16) Covenants (1:1-17).¹⁵

Interestingly, the genealogy begins with Abraham and traces 14 generations forward to David (1:1-6a), and an additional 14 generations forward to the Babylonian Captivity (1:6b-11),¹⁶ and an additional 14 generations forward to Christ (1:12-16).¹⁷ While Luke's genealogy traces Christ back to Adam, Matthew's genealogy traces Christ back to Abraham (1:17).¹⁸ Matthew begins with Abraham rather than Adam because of his purpose in showing Christ to be the heir to the nation's throne. Because Christ has the legal right to the Davidic Throne, He is the long awaited messiah.

Interestingly, Matthew's genealogy also includes several Gentile women.¹⁹ Thus, God can use scandalous Gentile unions to further His kingdom program. This inclusion hints at a theme to be

¹⁵ Interestingly, Matthew mentions David's name before Abraham's (1:1). Matthew probably reverses the historical order because he is more interested in establishing Christ's rights as king. Christ's right to kingship has to do with his connection to the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:14-16).

¹⁶ Matthew traces the genealogy through the captivity in order to show the covenant's eternal nature. Not even captivity could jeopardize the covenant.

¹⁷ Two reasons make it apparent that gaps exist in these genealogies. First, the repetition of the number 14 has to do more with employment of a literary convention for easy memorization rather than a mathematical statement. Second, when one compares this genealogy with the genealogy found in 2 Kings, Matthew leaves out many names. For example, Matthew 1:8 connects Joram and Uzziah. However, 2 Kings indicates that Jehoram (8:16), Ahaziah (8:25), and Joash (14:1) are found in the genealogy between these two names (8:16; 14:21). Similarly, Matthew 1:11 connects Josiah and Jeconiah. However, 2 Kings indicates that Jehoiakim (23:34) is found in the genealogy between these two names (21:24; 24:6).

¹⁸ The differences between the Matthean and Lukan genealogies are summarized on the following chart.

Matthew 1:1-17	Luke 3:23-28
Starts with Abraham	Starts with Adam
Descending from Abraham	Ascending from Christ to Adam
Christ	Father to son
Son to father	Women mentioned
No women mentioned	Traced through ruling Solomon and the kings of Judah
Traced through non ruling Nathan	Christ's legal line
Christ's blood line	Traced through Joseph's line
Traced through the virgin Mary's line	Christ is Joseph's legal son
Christ is Mary's physical son	Christ is Mary's physical son

Most of these differences were taken from Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 75.

¹⁹ These Gentile women include Tamar the Canaanite, Rahab the Canaanite, Ruth the Moabite, and Bathsheba the Hittite.

more fully developed later on in Matthew's Gospel that God's interim program subsequent to the nation's rejection of the kingdom encompasses the Gentiles.

Matthew includes the story of Christ's virgin birth to further prove Christ's identity as Messiah (1:18-25). Christ's virgin birth demonstrates His messianic identity in several ways. First, because He was supernaturally conceived, He did not inherit a sin nature (Ps 51:5). Second, His supernatural conception shows that He was an uncreated being. Third, His virgin birth exempts Him from the curse of Jehoiachin (Jer 22:24-30; 36:30). God prevented the descendants of Jehoiachin from being king by placing a curse upon them. In effect, this curse upon the royal line prevented Israel from having a king. However, this problem was resolved through the virgin birth because it allowed Christ to gain physical rights to the throne through Mary's lineage and legal rights to the throne as Joseph's legal but not actual firstborn son. Had Christ been the actual descendant of Joseph, He would have been prevented by the curse from occupying the throne since Joseph was a descendant of Jehoiachin (1:12). Fourth, Christ's virgin birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Isa

7:14).²⁰ Thus, Matthew includes the story of Christ's virgin birth to uniquely identify Christ thus showing Him to be the fulfillment of the messianic expectation.

Matthew also includes the sojourn of the Magi from Babylon to Bethlehem since this event provides even more information regarding Christ's messianic identity (2:1-12). The Magi were able to associate the star with the coming of Christ as well as to ascertain the time of Christ's coming because of their familiarity with various Old Testament prophecies (Num 24:17; Dan 9:24-27).²¹ Thus, the sojourn of the Magi also shows how Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Such prophetic fulfillment adds credence to Christ's messianic identity. In fact, Christ's birthplace was also a specific fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Micah 5:2). Moreover, the

²⁰ Three issues are at stake in determining that Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in the virgin birth of Christ. The *first* is whether the Hebrew word *almah* means virgin. Some say that Isaiah could have easily used the word *betulah* or *na'a'rah* if he had intended to say virgin. However, these words are not technical words for virgin. *Na'a'rah* can refer to a virgin (1 Kings 1:2) or a non-virgin (Ruth 2:6). While *betulah* can mean virgin (Gen 24:16; Judges 21:12), it does not always have this meaning. This is evidenced by the fact that these verses (Gen 24:16; Judges 21:12) have to incorporate the additional phrase "had never known a man" or "had not known a man" to clarify the word's meaning. Sometimes *betulah* can mean a widow (Joel 1:8). Thus, there is no technical word for virgin in Hebrew. However, *almah* can have the meaning virgin in all of its various uses (Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8; Ps 68:25; Cant 1:3; 6:8; Prov 30:18-19; Isa 7:14). The LXX translators used the Greek word *parthenos*, which always means virgin, when translating Isaiah 7:14. Matthew 1:23 also uses *parthenos* when translating the verse. All things considered, *almah* means virgin in Isaiah 7:14. The *second* issue is how a distant prophecy regarding the virgin birth would be relevant to Ahaz. However, when Rezin and Pekah threatened Ahaz, they introduced two threats. First, they threatened the perpetuity of the Davidic Covenant. Second, they threatened Ahaz personally. Thus, the Lord gives two prophecies dealing with each of these threats. The promise involving the threat to the Davidic Covenant is mentioned in Isaiah 7:13-14 where God promises that any plan to destroy the Davidic covenant will be futile until the birth of the virgin born son. This part of the promise was fulfilled in the virgin birth of Christ. The reference to the house of David in verse 13 as well as the switch from the singular to the plural "you" in verses 13 and 14 make it clear that this part of the prophecy is not directed at Ahaz personally but rather to all the house of Israel. The promise involving the threat to Ahaz is mentioned in Isaiah 7:15-17 where God promises that Rezin and Pekah will be destroyed before Isaiah's son Shear Jashub is old enough to make moral distinctions. God's instruction to have Shear Jashub accompany Isaiah when he confronts Ahaz as well as the switch from the plural you (Isa 7:13-14) to the singular "you" (Isa 7:15-17) makes it clear that this part of the prophecy is not directed to all the house of Israel but rather to Ahaz personally. Thus, having a futuristic prophecy fulfilled in the life of Christ in no way damages relevance to Ahaz since this passage contains two prophecies. One prophecy deals with the distant future and the other deals with Ahaz's immediate situation. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998), 32-37. The *third* issue is whether Immanuel (7:14) refers to Christ. This name means "God with us." This term could easily refer to Christ since Matthew routinely portrays Christ as dwelling among His people (18:20; 28:20). J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Kregel: Grand Rapids, 1997), 183-84.

²¹ The Magi probably associated the star with the messiah because of the prophecies of Balaam (Num 24:17), who was a resident of Babylon (Num 22:5; Deut 23:4). The Magi also knew the time of the messiah's birth because of Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan 9:24-27). Daniel gave this prophecy while in Babylon. The Magi were probably aware of Daniel's prophecies because Nebuchadnezzar had placed Daniel in charge of the religious leadership in Babylon (Dan 2:48).

Magi's reference to Christ as the "King of the Jews" also serves Matthew's purpose in identifying Christ as the Messiah.

The opposition of Herod to Christ's birth (2:13-23) also reveals Christ's messianic identity. The proto evangelium promised perpetual conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). The fact that Herod goes to such lengths to prevent the birth of Christ shows that this ancient conflict was intensifying. The intensity of the conflict shows that the ultimate seed of the woman was present in the person of Christ (Rev 12:4). Thus, the very presence of the conflict establishes Christ's messianic credentials. Moreover, Herod was persecuting Christ in order to protect his own throne. Such protection was needed because the ultimate king was present. Thus, Matthew uses Herod's ambition to protect his own throne from the ultimate king to reveal the royal identity of the Christ child.

Matthew also uses the royal family's return from Egypt (Hos 11:1) and Herod's slaughter of the Bethlehem infants (Jer 31:15) to show how Christ's life fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.²² A casual reading of Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15 demonstrates that these verses are not direct messianic prophecies. Then in what sense were they fulfilled in Christ's life? One of the ways that Matthew identifies Christ as Messiah to his Jewish audience is to show how Christ's life is a successful recapitulation of Israel's past failures. In other words, because Christ succeeded in every area where Israel failed, the identity of Christ should have been clear to the nation. Thus, when

22

Israel's History
Christ's Life
Point of Comparison/Contrast
Israel called from Egypt as a child (Hos 11:1) Christ called from Egypt as a child (Matt 2:15) Israel disobeyed and Christ obeyed (Hos 11:2-5) Israel was "baptized" as a nation in the Red Sea (Exod 14; 1 Cor 10:1-2) Christ was baptized by John the Baptist (Matt 3) Israel disobeyed within three days (Exod 15:22-26) and Christ obeyed (Matt 3:17) Israel tempted in the wilderness for forty years (Exod-Num) Christ tempted in the wilderness for forty days (Matt 4) Israel failed her temptation and Christ succeeded Israel went to Mt. Sinai to receive the Law (Exod 19ff) Christ "went up on a mountainside" and explained the Law (Matt 5-7) Israel quickly broke the Law (Exod 32) and Christ fulfilled the Law (Matt 5:17) Israel was called to worship God (Exod 4:22-23) Christ was called to worship God (Matt 26:30) Israel worshipped Baals (Hos 11:1-2) and Christ reserved worship for Yahweh (Matt 4:10) Chart adapted from Charles Dyer, "Biblical Meaning of 'Fulfillment,'" in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 55.

Matthew indicates that Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15 were fulfilled in the life of Christ, he is actually saying that Christ succeeded in every area where Israel failed. It is in this sense that these prophecies are said to be fulfilled.

Finally, Matthew shows how the royal family's trip to Nazareth was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.²³ The fact that Christ's life was constantly fulfilling Old Testament prophecy shows that He is the realization of the Jewish messianic expectation. An important point in Matthew 2 is the Gentile receptivity to spiritual truth (Magi)²⁴ and the Jewish opposition to spiritual truth (Herod). This theme of Gentile receptivity and Jewish opposition hints at Israel's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer as well as Gentile inclusion in God's purposes during the kingdom's absence.

Matthew includes the ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12) since he was the first to offer the kingdom to Israel (3:2).²⁵ Thus, starting with John the Baptist, Matthew begins to trace the offer,

²³ Interestingly, the quotation found in verse 23 is not found anywhere in the Old Testament. Some note the similarity between Nazareth and the messianic title *netzer* (branch or shoot) found in Isaiah 11:1. Proponents of this position maintain that Matthew is not only drawing a phonetic connection between these two words but he is also noting the connection between the obscurity of Nazareth and the lowliness inherent in the title *netzer*. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 185. However, the word "prophets" in verse 23 is plural. Thus, Christ is drawing from a well-known Old Testament principle rather than from a single prophetic passage. This verse is simply summing up what the prophets had said rather than directly quoting any one of them. In this case, the prophets said, "that he should be called a Nazarene." In the first century, Nazarenes were despised people (John 1:45-46). Thus, Matthew is saying that the prophets predicted that the messiah would be a despised and rejected individual. This message is replete throughout the prophets. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology*, 151-52.

²⁴ It is striking that those demonstrating spiritual sensitivity came from Babylon, which was known as the center of anti-God philosophy (Gen 11:1-9). Judaism saw Babylon as a place of evil since that is the place where the Jewish captivity took place. Matthew's point is that even the Babylonians were more spiritually sensitive than God's chosen people.

²⁵ Because no explanatory statements are given to define the kingdom, the kingdom spoken of here must be the same one spelled out in the pages of the Old Testament. Many believe that the phrase "the kingdom of God is at hand" indicates that the kingdom was inaugurated in the ministries of John, Christ, and the disciples (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). According to this view, the announcement that "the kingdom is at hand" indicated that the kingdom was here rather than near. However, this approach alters the Old Testament meaning of the kingdom, which also contains a terrestrial element. It also ignores the Old Testament expectation that the kingdom could only arrive after the nation honored its responsibilities under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. It seems better to argue that John was announcing that the kingdom was in a condition of nearness contingent upon Israel's enthronement of her king (Deut 17:15). These verses (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7) make use of the third person singular perfect active indicative form (*hggiken*) of the verb *eggizw*. Interestingly, James 5:8-9 also uses *hggiken* to convey the notion that the Second Coming is near rather than here.

rejection, and postponement of the kingdom motif. This theme is developed all the way through his book. The only way for his audience to understand why the kingdom has been postponed and why God is pursuing a Gentile oriented interim program in the present is to first help them understand the initial offering of the kingdom to the nation. While the Abrahamic covenant unconditionally promised the nation land, seed, and blessing, these blessings could not come to the nation until she repented. A generation could not enjoy these blessings until they obeyed. Thus, these blessings are unconditional promises with a conditional blessing. The responsibilities of the nation in order to enjoy these blessings are spelled out in the Mosaic Covenant. The nation's primary responsibility was to enthrone the king of God's own choosing (Deut 17:15). This is what John was calling the nation to do. Had the nation done this, the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant and the kingdom would have materialized (Deut 28:1-14). Like all the prophets that preceded him, John also announced imminent judgment if the nation refused to honor the terms of the Mosaic Covenant (Deut 28:15-68).

John's ministry also identifies Christ as the messiah since his activities on Christ's behalf were predicted in the pages of the Old Testament (Isa 40:3).²⁶ John further identifies Christ as messiah to the nation when he describes Him as the one who will bring forth the nation's eschatological baptism in the Spirit and cleansing (Joel 2:28-29; Mal 3:2-5).²⁷ These events will occur when He separates believing from unbelieving Jews at the end of the Tribulation just prior to

²⁶ "Isaiah 40:3 refers to how 'highway construction workers' who were called on to clear the way in the desert for the return of the Lord as His people, the exiles, returned to Judah from the Babylonian Captivity in 537 B.C. In similar fashion, John the Baptist was in the desert preparing the way for the Lord and His kingdom by calling on people to return to Him." Barbieri, "Matthew," 25. This analogy is tightened upon understanding that both sections of Scripture are speaking of a spiritual as well as a physical preparation.

²⁷ Since two nouns joined by a preposition depict these events, they should be construed as transpiring at the same time. The baptism by fire spoken of here is referred to as a cleansing work in Malachi 3:2-5. Christ's baptizing ministry as described here is unrelated to His baptizing ministry as depicted in 1 Corinthians 12:13. While the former concerns Israel in the future, the latter concerns the church in the present. John knew nothing of the church since it had not yet been disclosed. Similarly, Christ's baptizing work as described here is unrelated to the events of Acts 2 since the nation did not repent at that time but rather was condemned. Also, no baptism of fire occurred at that time. Rather, something that appeared to be (*hosei*) tongues of fire rested upon those at Pentecost (Acts 2:3). Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 186.

the inauguration of the millennial kingdom (13:30; 25:31-46).²⁸ While a remnant was identifying with John's message, the religious leaders were rejecting it. This phenomenon hints at the nation's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer and God's decision to raise up a new body in the interim phase during the kingdom's absence.

Matthew includes the events surrounding Christ's baptism since it provides even more confirmation to the nation of Christ's messianic identity (3:13-17). During these events, both John and the Father (Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1) had the opportunity of revealing Christ's true identity. The Spirit also revealed Christ's royal identity by coming upon Him in the same way that Old Testament kings were anointed. Christ's identification with the believing remnant through His baptism²⁹ again hints at the elevation of this remnant during the interim phase after the nation has rejected the kingdom offer.

Matthew includes Christ's temptation since this event reveals His divine nature thus giving the nation further proof as to Christ's true identity (4:1-11). During the temptation, Christ was tempted to the maximum in the areas of lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and lust of the eye (1 John 2:17).³⁰ Yet, Christ successfully endured the temptation (Heb 4:15). Because no mere mortal could pass the same test (Gen 3:6), Christ obviously possessed a divine nature.³¹ Interestingly, Christ responds to each temptation with a quotation from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16, 13). Deuteronomy was

²⁸ Thus, the phrase baptism in "the Holy Spirit and fire" (3:11) is explained in the following verse (3:12).

²⁹ Christ's reference to His baptism as fulfilling all righteousness (3:15) probably refers to the fact that His baptism identified Him with the remnant that was following John. This event is referred to as fulfilling all righteousness since John is later said to have come "in the way of righteousness" (21:32). Elliot Johnson, class notes of Andy Woods in BE2021A Seminar in the Gospels and Acts, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2005.

³⁰ Interestingly, Luke reverses the order of the last two temptations (Luke 4:1-13). While Luke seems to rework the material to harmonize with Eve's temptations (Gen 3:6), Matthew records the chronological order of the temptations. The repetition of the word "then" in verses 1, 4, and 10 (*tote*) and the inclusion of the word "again" in verse 8 (*palin*) demonstrates that Matthew records the proper chronology. Luke does not use any of these words and instead simply uses the word "and" (*kai*). Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 186.

³¹ Because Christ's human nature was linked to His divine nature, there is no way that He could have sinned even though He was tempted to sin. Thus, the theological position of the impeccability of Christ (it was impossible to sin) is superior to the theological view of Christ's peccability (it was possible for Christ to sin).

the Law given to the second generation that was about to enter the land after the failure of the previous generation. Thus, the citations from Deuteronomy fit Matthew's method of identifying Christ by noting that He successfully recapitulated Israel's past failures. Christ quoted Deuteronomy to indicate that like the second generation He too would succeed where past Israel had failed.

Matthew's recording of the inauguration of Christ's ministry in Capernaum (4:12-25) gives him the opportunity of giving even more information revealing Christ's messianic identity. The imprisonment of John (4:12) shows the nation's mounting resistance to Christ and prepares the reader for Israel's rejection of the offer of the kingdom, which Matthew will later deal with (12:24). Christ's awaiting the imprisonment of John before starting his own ministry again reveals His royal identity. According to royal protocol, a king cannot initiate his sphere of influence until his forerunner is taken out of the way.

Christ's withdrawal to and ministry in a largely Gentile territory (4:13-16) was also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Isa 9:1-2). Matthew again uses this prophecy in a recapitulation sense. Just as Israel failed to reach the Gentiles, Christ will succeed in reaching the Gentiles. Christ will also do so when He raises up a Gentile remnant during the interim phase after Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer. Because Christ succeeds in every area where Israel failed, He is the unique messianic heir. Christ's offer of the kingdom (4:17, 23) is identical to John's offer of the kingdom (3:2). Matthew is interested in tracing the offer of the kingdom motif because the only way for his Jewish audience to understand why the kingdom has been postponed and why God is pursuing a Gentile oriented interim program in the present is to first understand the original offering of the kingdom to the nation. Christ's authority as king is also seen in His calling of the disciples to be co-proclaimers of the kingdom offer to the nation (4:18-22).³²

³² The calling of these disciples cannot be used as a justification text since they were already believers. (John 1:35-42). Thus, the calling recorded here is not to justification but rather to discipleship.

Matthew concludes this section by noting Christ's threefold ministry of teaching, proclaiming, and healing (4:23-25). Matthew mentions this threefold impact not only because it helps further clarify Christ's identity but also because it prepares the reader for what follows. "Proclaiming" relates to the previously discussed offer of the kingdom motif (4:17, 23). "Teaching" identifies Christ as the unique messiah since He did not teach as a mere mortal but rather as one having authority (7:28-29). Christ's teaching ministry will be emphasized in the following chapters (5-7). "Healing" also identifies Christ by showing His authority over the physical realm. Christ's healing ministry will be featured in chapters 8-9. As Christ exercised this three-fold ministry a remnant of believers was beginning to form. This remnant is significant because they will be used of God during the interim period after the kingdom offer has been rejected by the nation.

The first of Christ's five discourses featured in Matthew's Gospel, called the Sermon on the Mount, is recorded in Matthew 5-7. Matthew records this sermon because it contributes to his argument in two ways. First, it proves Christ's messianic identity by not only showing that He had the right to interpret the Mosaic Law but also by displaying the authority of His teaching. Second, it contributes to the offer of the kingdom motif by showing the moral and spiritual quality of the kingdom that was being offered to the nation (3:2; 4:17, 23). Citizens of Christ's kingdom would manifest high moral caliber.³³ Because Israel was far more interested in a physical and political kingdom that would overthrow Rome than they were in a spiritual and moral kingdom (John 6:15, 26), Christ's emphasis upon the moral characteristics of His kingdom sets the stage for Israel's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer.³⁴ Because Christ's kingdom emphasized inner

³³ Because this sermon was preached to those who already were justified, the sermon has more to do with sanctification than justification. However, some who heard it may have been unbelievers. For them the sermon would have an evangelistic purpose by pointing out God's perfect standards (5:20, 48) and their imperfect state by comparison. The Mosaic Law and the regular sacrifices no doubt had the same impact upon any unbelievers within Old Testament Israel. For those who recognized their imperfections, all they had to do was ask for imputed righteousness and God would give it to them (7:7-11).

³⁴ Although this sermon pertains primarily to the moral and spiritual qualities of the kingdom that was being offered before Israel, it is still applicable to church age believers since they become sons or inheritors of the kingdom

righteousness and because Pharisaical interpretation of the Mosaic Law emphasized man-made tradition and outer righteousness, Christ was destined for an imminent “showdown” with the Pharisees.

Christ begins the Sermon of the Mount (5:1-2) by first enumerating the various beatitudes (5:3-12), which represent the moral and spiritual qualities of His kingdom’s citizens.³⁵ Second, Christ explains the positive spiritual influence that those who will inherit the kingdom will have on fallen culture (5:13-16). Third, Christ explains the relationship of the kingdom to the Mosaic Law (5:17-48). He begins by noting His intention of not abolishing the Law but rather fulfilling its minutest details (5:17-20). Such fulfillment refers to Christ’s ability to fulfill the demands of the Law perfectly in His own character and conduct. This claim gives the nation even further clarification of Christ’s messianic identity. Christ then develops six contrasts showing that inward righteousness rather than mere external conformity to Pharisaical interpretation and tradition is what satisfies the righteous demands of the Law (5:21-48).³⁶ Christ develops these contrasts in the

(13:38) in the present age even in the kingdom’s absence. Some have noted that all of the great principles articulated in the Sermon on the Mount are repackaged throughout the epistolary material where they are made directly applicable to church age believers.

³⁵ Christ’s articulation of the nine beatitudes follows a threefold pattern. First, Christ pronounces a blessing upon those possessing the virtue. Second, Christ describes the desired virtue. Third, Christ promises a blessing in the kingdom to those who possess the virtue. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 189-90.

³⁶ These six contrasts are delineated through the repetition of the phrase “you have heard it said but I say unto you” (5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44). Because the Law regulated inward motivations of the heart (Exod 20:17; Deut 6:6), Christ was simply getting back to its original intention in the Sermon on the Mount. He was juxtaposing the Law’s original intent with Pharisaical interpretation.

areas of hatred (5:21-26), lust (5:27-30), divorce (5:31-32),³⁷ oath taking (5:33-37),³⁸ retaliation (5:38-42),³⁹ and loving one's enemies (5:43-48).

Fourth, Christ contrasts the outer righteousness exhibited by the Pharisees with the private righteousness that the citizens of His kingdom are to manifest (6:1-18). After stating the general principle (6:1), Christ traces this contrast in the areas of giving (6:2-4), prayer (6:5-15),⁴⁰ and fasting (6:16-18). Fifth, Christ contrasts the financial perspective of the citizens of His kingdom with that of the Pharisees. While the Pharisees loved money and saw it as a sign of divine favor, citizens of Christ's kingdom are to place the kingdom's agenda first in their lives. When they do so God promises to meet their financial needs making anxiety over money unnecessary for citizens of Christ's kingdom (6:19-34).⁴¹

Sixth, Christ commented that while the Pharisees judged one another for violations of man-made interpretations of the Law, they failed to recognize the Law's main message that only internal

³⁷ Christ's words on divorce have to do with Pharisaical interpretations regarding Deuteronomy 24:1, which allowed a man to divorce his wife because of her commission of the "indecent thing." The Hillel school interpreted the "indecent thing" quite liberally even allowing a man to divorce his wife if she burned his food. The Shammai School interpreted "indecent thing" more strictly as pertaining to adultery. Christ's point was that if a man divorced His wife for an inappropriate reason, his actions forced her to remarry. This remarriage makes her along with the man that she married adulterers. Appropriate reasons for the initial divorce include death (Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:39), abandonment (1 Cor 7:15, 39), and adultery (Matt 5:32; 19:9).

³⁸ These verses are not a prohibition against all oath taking. Rather the point is that the believer's character should be so trustworthy that such oath taking is unnecessary.

³⁹ Because an assault involves slapping someone on the left cheek, slapping them on the right cheek involves merely an insult. Thus, these verses are not saying that a believer cannot exercise self-defense when physically attacked. Rather, the context has to do with not retaliating when personally insulted. Three illustrations follow showing the believer how to follow this principle.

⁴⁰ In Matthew 6:9-15, Christ taught that those who would inherit the kingdom to pray a twofold prayer. First, he taught them to pray for the kingdom's manifestation on earth. This is what is meant by the terms "Hallowed be Thy Name" (Ezek 36:23), "thy kingdom come," and "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Second, He taught them to pray for certain provisions they would need in the kingdom's absence. These include daily bread, forgiveness for sins hindering practical righteousness, and divine assistance in the midst of temptation. While not altering the believer's positional status, forgiveness allows the believer to experience all that God has for him in his practical walk with God. This prayer is a concession that the kingdom had not yet been inaugurated in the ministry of Christ. Why pray for the kingdom's arrival if it was already present?

⁴¹ The exhortation regarding not laying up treasure (6:19-20) does not mean that Christians should not have bank accounts. Rather, it is a question of emphasis. In other words, instead of emphasizing money, they should emphasize kingdom priorities. For similar examples exhorting emphasis rather than exclusion, see 1 Peter 3:3-4 and Romans 14:17. Stanley Toussaint, class notes of Andy Woods in BE2050A Seminar in Pauline Literature, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2004.

righteousness satisfies its demands (7:1-6). Seventh, Christ explains that the way to receive kingdom righteousness is not by laboring under the Pharisaical system of self-righteousness but rather by asking God for imputed righteousness (7:7-11). Eighth, members of Christ's kingdom also exhibit a high moral caliber by treating others as they themselves would want to be treated (7:12).⁴²

Ninth, Christ concludes the sermon by comparing His teaching on righteousness with that of the Pharisees (7:13-27). He does this by developing four sets of contrasts. Christ uses the contrasts of two roads (7:13-14), two trees (7:15-20),⁴³ two claims (7:21-23),⁴⁴ and two foundations (7:24-27) to show that His teaching on righteousness leads to kingdom blessing while the Pharisees' teaching on external and self-righteousness leads to destruction. The authority with which He taught amazed the masses. Instead of citing rabbinical authorities as was the didactic practice of the Pharisees, He said, "I say unto you" (7:28-29). His rejection of Pharisaical interpretation allowed Him to teach with authority thus revealing His true messianic identity to the nation. His rejection of Pharisaical interpretation also allowed Him to articulate how the moral character of the kingdom that He was offering to the nation differed from the kind of righteousness espoused by the Pharisees.

Matthew 4:23 pointed out Christ's threefold ministry of proclaiming the kingdom, teaching, and healing. Matthew emphasizes these three ministries since they all have the effect of revealing to the nation Christ's messianic identity. Matthew emphasized Christ's ministry of proclaiming the kingdom back in chapter four (4:17). Matthew emphasized Christ's ministry of teaching by recording the Sermon on the Mount (5-7). In the following three chapters, Matthew emphasizes

⁴² The same expression "Law and the Prophets" is found in 5:17 and 7:12. This expression functions as an *inclusio*. Thus, everything in between these verses is an exposition of Old Testament revelation. In verse 12, Christ seems to be saying that treating others as you would want to be treated fulfills the Old Testament's requirements for daily conduct.

⁴³ It is too broad an application to use this verse to argue that all true Christians must manifest fruit. The immediate context deals only with the Pharisees.

⁴⁴ These verses indicate that a personal relationship with Christ rather than mere external righteousness is what is necessary to manifest true kingdom righteousness.

Christ's ministry of healing.⁴⁵ In this section, he shows that Christ has authority over every realm (8–10). Thus, the nation should embrace Him as their long awaited king.

Matthew seems to have eleven realms in mind.⁴⁶ First, Matthew shows that Christ has authority over disease (8:1-17). Here, Christ heals leprosy (8:1-4),⁴⁷ paralysis (8:5-13), fever, and other miscellaneous diseases (8:14-17).⁴⁸ Mathew includes the story of the healing of the centurion's servant to again show that it was the uncircumcised, occupying Gentile who demonstrated spiritual sensitivity while the nation was not similarly sensitive. This contrast hints at Israel's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer and the elevation of the Gentiles during the coming interim period.

Second, Matthew shows that Christ has the authority to call men to be His disciples (8:18-22). Here, Matthew uniquely identifies Christ as the messiah through His use of the designation "Son of Man" (Dan 7). Third, Matthew shows that Christ has authority over nature (8:23-27). Fourth, he shows that Christ has authority over the demonic realm (8:28-34). Fifth, he shows that Christ has authority to forgive sins (9:1-8). The claim to forgive sins is significant since

⁴⁵ Christ's healing ministry is comprehensive. He heals publicly and privately. He heals by touch and by spoken word over great geographical distances. His miracles are tokens of the kingdom in the sense that they show how all human needs will be met in the kingdom age.

⁴⁶ Some see these items arranged according to a pattern of three miracles followed by material involving discipleship. Thus, chapters 8–9 might be arranged as follows: three miracles involving healing (8:1-17), discipleship material (8:18-22), three miracles involving power (8:23–9:8), discipleship material (9:9-17), three miracles involving restoration (9:18-34), discipleship material (9:35–10:42). Mark Bailey and Thomas L. Constable, *New Testament Explorer* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1999), 15.

⁴⁷ Christ's command not to reveal His identity (9:30; 16:20; 17:9) probably had to do with Christ's desire to prevent Israel from acting on their misunderstanding of the kingdom (John 6:15), which they saw in purely physical and non spiritual terms.

⁴⁸ Some see in these three miracles the entire outline of Matthew's Gospel. First, Christ ministered to the Jews and was rejected (8:1-4). This represents the offer of the kingdom that was rejected by the nation. Second, Christ ministered to a Gentile because of his great faith (8:5-13). This represents the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's interim program subsequent to the nation's rejection of the kingdom offer. Third, Christ ministered to Peter's mother in law (8:14-17). This represents the re-offer and acceptance of the kingdom offer by the nation during the Tribulation and millennium. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 125.

the Jews understood that only God has this power. Sixth, Matthew shows that Christ has the authority to call men from their professions in order to be His disciples (9:9).

Seventh, Matthew shows that Christ has the authority to forgive the vilest sinners (9:10-13). Eighth, Matthew shows that Christ has the authority to usher in a superior dispensation (9:14-17). In essence, Christ told John's disciples to leave John and cling to Christ. John represented a previous dispensation but now Christ was going to usher in something superior (Acts 19:1-7). Ninth, Matthew shows that Christ has authority over hemorrhage and death (9:18-26). Tenth, Matthew shows that Christ has authority over both blindness and dumbness (9:27-34). In order to further identify Christ as the messiah to the nation, Matthew is careful to record the blind men's reference to Him as the Son of David.

Eleventh, Christ has the authority to delegate His authority to others (9:35–10:42). Christ's ambition to delegate authority to His disciples took root when Christ saw the great need within Israel as He was going about and pursuing His threefold ministry. There simply were not enough laborers to meet this vast need. Thus, He told his disciples to pray to the Lord to raise up more workers (9:35-38). The disciples then became the answer to their own prayer request. Christ delegated authority to them and they became "apostles" instead of merely "disciples" (10:1-4).

At this point Matthew records Christ's second major discourse. This discourse involves Christ's instructions to the disciples regarding their new ministerial task. They were to carry on Christ's ministry of healing and preaching the kingdom. However, they were to confine their work to Israel and not minister to the Gentiles (10:5-8). This limitation was put into effect because the kingdom was still being offered to the nation at this time (15:24).

Thus far Matthew has traced the offer of the kingdom in the preaching of John (3:2), Christ (4:17, 23; 9:35) and now the disciples (10:7). Matthew includes all this information because of his

interest in tracing the offer, rejection, and postponement of the kingdom. As previously explained, the only way for Matthew's audience to understand why the kingdom has been postponed and why God is pursuing a Gentile oriented interim program in the present is to first help them understand how the kingdom was originally offered to the nation. Matthew concludes the mission discourse by recording more of Christ's instructions to the disciples. Here, Christ explains to the disciples that they will be provided for by those impacted by their kingdom message (10:9-15). Christ also instructs the disciples regarding the dangers of their work (10:16-25),⁴⁹ the proper perspective they are to have as they go about their work (10:26-39),⁵⁰ and the reward they will receive because of their work (10:40-42).

In an attempt to convince his Jewish audience of the true identity of Jesus, Matthew has presented incontrovertible evidence that Jesus is the long awaited messiah in his book's first ten chapters. Not only do the early events in Christ's life point to His identity (1-4:11), but so does the performance of his threefold ministry of preaching the kingdom (4:12-25), teaching (5-7), and healing (8-10). In order to lay the proper foundation for explaining the postponement of the kingdom in the present, Matthew has also carefully traced how the kingdom was first offered to Israel through the preaching of John (3:2), Jesus (4:17), and the disciples (10:7). Therefore, Matthew's Jewish audience should have no doubt that Christ was the long awaited Jewish Messiah who offered the kingdom to the nation. Although the kingdom had been rejected by Israel and postponed at the time of writing, these events should not cause His Jewish readers to second-guess Christ's true identity.

⁴⁹ Here, Christ explains to the disciples that they would receive the same mixed response that Christ Himself received when He preached the kingdom message. Also, 10:22-23 seems to be speaking eschatologically. Such futurism is evident from the similarities to Matthew 24:9-13, the inclusion of the word "end," and the inclusion of the word "whenever." Thus, this verse is not saying that Christ had to return within the life spans of the disciples. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 192-93.

⁵⁰ 10:32-33 is speaking of a reward rather than justification.

Matthew begins the next major phase of his argument in chapters 11–12 by tracing Israel’s rejection of the kingdom offer. Because Israel was interested in the kingdom only in physical and political terms and not in the moral terms that Jesus expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, the nation was on the verge of rejecting the kingdom offer. A final split between Christ and the Pharisees was also imminent on account of His rejection of adherence to tradition and self-righteousness in order to enter the kingdom. The rejection of the offer will not become official until the nation rejects Christ at the triumphal entry (Matt 21) and hands Christ over to the Romans for crucifixion. However, by the end of Matthew 12, it becomes obvious that the nation has already made a permanent decision to reject the kingdom offer. Matthew includes this information as an explanation to His Jewish audience of how the kingdom could be absent although Christ was the Jewish king.

The nation’s unbelief is foreshadowed by the unbelief exhibited by John the Baptist (11:1-15). If Christ’s own forerunner was unsure of Christ’s presentation of the kingdom, then what hope could there be for the nation’s apostate religious leaders? While John had no doubts about Christ’s messiahship (Matt 3:16; Luke 1:41; John 1:29, 31), his real question was where was the kingdom if he as the king’s forerunner was in prison? John had the common Jewish understanding that the advent of the king would be concurrent with the manifestation of the kingdom. Christ comforts John by appealing to His miracles as evidence of His kingdom authority (Isa 35:5-6; 61:1), pointing to John as the greatest prophet,⁵¹ pointing to John as a potential fulfillment of

⁵¹ John was considered an Old Testament prophet. However, in what sense was he the greatest Old Testament prophet? John had the privilege of seeing Christ who was the object of his prophecies. The previous prophets did not have the privilege of physically seeing Christ although they did prophesy about Him. Also, Matthew 11:12 speaks of the kingdom being resisted and suffering violence. Some believe that the kingdom had to be present in order for it to be resisted so strenuously. However, in the parallel passage (Luke 16:16) the emphasis is on the proclamation of the kingdom. Thus, what is actually being rejected is the proclamation of the kingdom or the message of the kingdom rather than any present manifestation of the kingdom. This interpretation finds support in the verses following Matthew 11:12 where Christ equates the hardness of His generation to His message to children not pleased with the asceticism of John or the ministry of Christ (Matt 11:16-19). Stanley D. Toussaint, “Israel and the Church of a Traditional Dispensationalist,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 233.

Malachi 4:5-6⁵² and 3:1, and calling upon John to continue trust Him even though he did not fully understand Christ's kingdom agenda. Matthew includes John's doubts because they were the same concerns that his original readers had. In fact, John's concern is one of the major questions that Matthew is seeking to answer in His book.

Matthew continues the theme of Israel's rejection of the offer of the kingdom by noting the rejection of Christ in the various cities (11:16-30). He compares Israel's unbelief to that of children who are never pleased with anything (11:16-17). They were not pleased with John's asceticism nor were they pleased with Christ's ministry methods (11:18-19). Furthermore, while the Gentile cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom would have repented had they seen Christ's miracles, the Jewish cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum did not repent. If the Jewish cities that saw Christ's miracles did not repent, then what hope was there for the rest of the nation that was not an eyewitness to Christ's miracles? Matthew again includes this information to juxtapose Gentile receptivity to spiritual truth to that of Israel's hardness. This theme of Gentile receptivity and Jewish opposition hints at Israel's imminent rejection of the kingdom offer as well as Gentile inclusion in God's purposes during the kingdom's absence (11:20-24). This theme is expanded as Christ speaks of a remnant that would receive the truths of the kingdom in the place of wayward Israel (11:25-27). It is this remnant that Christ invites to Himself to receive rest from the Pharisaical system of self-righteousness (11:28-30).

The permanent break between Christ and the Pharisees occurs in Matthew 12. The conflict is provoked through Christ's unwillingness to adhere to Pharisaical Sabbath regulations (12:1-14). When the Pharisees complain about the disciples eating on the Sabbath, Christ refutes them by noting that while the disciples may have violated Pharisaical rules, they did not violate the original

⁵² Malachi 4:5-6 predicts that the nation must repent before Elijah could come. Had the nation repented, John would have been the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Because the nation did not repent, Malachi's prophecy will not be fulfilled until the future Tribulation (Rev 11:6) when the nation will turn back to the Lord.

intent of the Sabbath. After all, David and the Levitical priests had engaged in similar activity on the Sabbath without being reprimanded by God. Moreover, God's primary interest is compassion rather than human regulations (Hos 6:6). Also, Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath had the authority to ascertain the commandment's original meaning. This latter point significantly assists Matthew's argument by showing that Christ is the true Jewish messiah (12:1-9).

After healing a man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees again complain. This time Christ refutes them by explaining the Sabbath's original intent was to help man (12:10-14). This chain of events allows Matthew the opportunity of showing how Christ was the fulfillment of the servant's ministry to the Gentiles (Isa 42:1-3). Once again, "fulfillment" should be understood in a recapitulation sense. While Israel failed in her mission to reach the Gentiles, Christ will succeed where Israel failed by raising up a Gentile remnant after the rejection and postponement of the kingdom (12:15-21). However, when Christ heals the demoniac (12:22), the nation's unbelief reaches a climax (12:23-24). The people express doubt that Christ is the Son of David⁵³ and the Pharisees, unable to dismiss the miracle, attribute it to the work of Satan.

Now that the Pharisees have rejected the king and the kingdom offer (12:1-24), Christ offers a permanent indictment upon first century Israel (12:25-50). Christ begins by refuting the charge that He healed the demoniac by satanic power (12:25-37). Christ's main points in this refutation include the following: the impossibility of Satan's kingdom being divided against itself (12:25-26), the insinuation that Israel's magicians also cast out demons by Satan's power (12:27), Christ's miracles evidence the power of the kingdom of God rather than Satan (12:28-29),⁵⁴ the Pharisees' action placed them at odds with God's purposes (12:30), the Pharisees' charge caused them to

⁵³ The Greek of verse 23 conveys the idea that the people were expecting a negative answer to their question. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 162.

⁵⁴ Many argue that 12:28 teaches the presence of the kingdom. However, it seems better to see this verse as conveying a token of the kingdom. Because Israel had not yet met its obligation of enthroning her king (Deut 17:15), the kingdom could not have come (Deut 28:1-14). However, Christ's miracles demonstrated what the kingdom would have been like if Israel had met its obligations under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant.

blaspheme the Holy Spirit (12:31-32),⁵⁵ and the Pharisees' charge emanated from their corrupt nature (12:33-37).

Christ then permanently condemned that generation of Jews who had rejected Him (12:38-50). He said that He would no longer perform any miracles on their behalf. In other words, the miracles that He had been performing to authenticate the kingdom offer would no longer be necessary since the kingdom offer would no longer be made to first century Israel. The only sign they would be given was the sign of His resurrection. While Christ's crucifixion officially ratified the Jewish nation's rejection of Christ, the resurrection would prove their decision wrong by authenticating Christ's messianic claims. Christ analogizes this sign to the sign of Jonah (12:38-40).⁵⁶ Matthew is interested in the analogy to Jonah since he was a prophet who led a successful revival in a Gentile land (12:41). This analogy fits Matthew's theme of highlighting Gentile sensitivity against the backdrop of Jewish hardness in order to help His audience comprehend Gentile preeminence in God's interim program. Matthew also includes the allusion of the Gentile queen of the South seeking Solomon's wisdom as a contribution to this same theme (12:42).

While Israel had experienced a moral reformation through the kingdom preaching of John (3:2), Christ (4:17), and the disciples (10:7), the nation was now actually in a worse position since she had not enthroned her king. The fact that Israel had received light and rejected it placed her in a precarious position since greater light brings greater accountability (11:20-24). In the coming A.D. 70 judgment, the nation would be judged for rejecting her king (12:43-45). The Abrahamic

⁵⁵ The notion of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit involves a specific historical context. Christ was in Israel, offering the kingdom, performing miracles to authenticate the kingdom offer, and contending with the defiant Pharisees. Because of this specific historical context, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not reproducible today.

⁵⁶ How could Christ have been buried three days and three nights if he was buried on Friday and rose on Sunday? It is important not to read a 21st century method of reckoning time back into the Bible. Rather, it is important to ask how the culture of the day reckoned time? To the Jew, part of a day counted as a whole day (*Shabbath* 9:3; *Esth* 4:16; 9:1; *Matt* 16:21; 17:23). Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 195-96.

covenant would not save that generation since Christ was not interested in those who had a mere physical relationship to the Abrahamic Covenant (3:7ff). Rather, Christ desired for the nation to repent by meeting her obligations under the Mosaic Covenant (12:46-50).

Thus far Matthew has demonstrated Christ's messianic identity (1-10). He has also traced how the kingdom was offered to (3:2; 4:17; 10:7) and rejected by Israel resulting in that generation's condemnation (11-12). Now Matthew is ready to move to the next stage of His argument where he will disclose the interim program that God will pursue in the kingdom's absence (13-20:28). This interim program includes the revelation of the kingdom mysteries (13), the revelation of the church (16:18; 18:17), and the preparation of the disciples not only to play foundational roles in the church (Eph 2:20) but also for Christ's impending death (16:21). Thus, this section involves a transition from public to private teaching, from public to private miracles, and from a formal offer of the kingdom to Israel to a focus upon the believing remnant. Matthew includes this information regarding the interim phase because it will help his Jewish audience to grasp why the kingdom is absent even though Jesus was the Jewish king and why Gentiles have been grafted in to God's present purposes.

The first aspect of the interim phase is the kingdom mysteries (13:1-52).⁵⁷ These kingdom mysteries represent the course of events to be experienced by the kingdom heirs or the "sons of the kingdom" (13:38) in between Israel's rejection of the kingdom and when Israel will receive the re-offer of the kingdom in the future.⁵⁸ Thus, the kingdom mysteries cover the time period in between Israel's formal rejection of the kingdom and the Second Advent (13:40-42, 49-50). The kingdom

⁵⁷ This discourse on the kingdom mysteries is the third major discourse in Matthew.

⁵⁸ Many dispensationalists refer to this time period as a "mystery form of the kingdom." By this term they mean the unseen spiritual presence of God in the sons of the kingdom upon the earth. Elliot Johnson, class notes of Andy Woods in BE2021A Seminar in the Gospels and Acts, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2005.

mysteries represent fresh, new truths concerning the kingdom that were undisclosed in the Old Testament.⁵⁹

Christ chose to reveal the kingdom mysteries in parabolic form. Jesus did not give the Sermon on the Mount (5–7) or the missions discourse (10) in parabolic form. Why did Christ reveal the kingdom mysteries in parabolic form? There are two reasons Christ chose to reveal these truths in the form of parables. First, Christ’s parabolic teaching was a fulfillment of prophecy (13:34-35; Ps 78:2). Second, Christ desired to conceal truth from the nation since they had already rejected the offer of the kingdom. Such concealment was actually merciful since more truth would have brought them into even greater condemnation (11:20-24). On the other hand, Christ wanted to reveal truth to the select remnant to prepare them for their leadership roles in the soon to be birthed church (13:10-17).

When the eight parables of Matthew 13 are understood together, the disciples will have a complete picture of the “mystery age.”⁶⁰ First, the parable of the sower teaches that the gospel will be preached throughout the course of the mystery age with varying responses based upon how the heart has been prepared. Those who respond to the truth they have been given will be given additional revelation. The fact that the kingdom mysteries were being given to the disciples is an illustration of the Parable of the Sower. Because they were receptive to Christ’s initial truth, the truths of the mystery kingdom were now being disclosed to them (13:1-9, 18-23).

Second, the parable of the wheat and the tares teaches that it will be difficult to distinguish between the saved and unsaved within professing Christendom throughout the mystery age. The separation between the saved and the unsaved will not be made until the Second Advent (13:24-30,

⁵⁹ Advocates of inaugurated eschatology use the content of Matthew 13 to teach that the kingdom spoken of in the Old Testament has already begun. However, this understanding fails to consider the definition of the word “mystery” (13:11, 17), which means a previously unknown truth now disclosed. Thus, what is revealed in Matthew 13 is unrelated to the Old Testament but rather refers to something entirely new.

⁶⁰ The term “mystery age” does not refer to an obscure age but rather to an age unknown in the Old Testament that is now revealed.

36-43). Third, the parable of the mustard seed teaches that Christendom will experience great numerical and geographic expansion from a small beginning (13:31-32).⁶¹ Fourth, the parable of the leaven teaches that Christendom will experience increasing internal corruption throughout the mystery age (13:33).⁶²

Fifth, the parable of the earthen treasure teaches that Christ came to purchase Israel. However, Israel will remain in unbelief throughout the course of the mystery age and will not be converted until the age's conclusion. (13:44).⁶³ Sixth, the parable of the pearl of great price refers to Christ's death that redeems members of the church throughout mystery age (13:45-46).⁶⁴ Seventh, the parable of the dragnet teaches the coexistence of the righteous and the wicked throughout the mystery age only to be separated by Christ at the age's conclusion (13:47-50). Eighth, the parable of the householder teaches that these kingdom mysteries must be considered alongside Old Testament kingdom truth if one is to understand the totality of God's kingdom agenda (13:51-52). In sum, Matthew records these kingdom mysteries because they will help his Jewish audience understand the nature of God's interim work featuring Gentile preeminence until the kingdom is established through Israel.

⁶¹ Some believe that Christ's statement that the mustard seed is the smallest seed is a scientifically inaccurate statement. However, the context indicates that Christ was simply saying that the mustard seed is the smallest of the garden seeds rather than the smallest of all seeds. Interestingly, according to Mishnah *Tehoroth* 8:8 and *Niddah* 5:2 the mustard seed was commonly used by Jews to illustrate something small. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 196.

⁶² Matthew uses leaven to describe false doctrine (16:6, 12). Leaven is also used to represent sin elsewhere in Scripture (Exod 12; Lev 2:11; 6:17; 10:12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5:9). This interpretation is also consistent with what the Bible predicts regarding the course of the mystery age (1 Tim 4; 2 Tim 3; Jude; 2 Pet 3; Rev 6–19). The sinister effect of the leaven is also evident from the word "hide." In a previous parable, the tares are hidden amongst the wheat. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 182.

⁶³ The man is Christ. The treasure is Israel. The treasure's hidden state shows Israel's apostasy. The uncovering of the treasure refers to the offer of the kingdom. The hiding of the treasure refers to Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer. The purchase of the field refers to Christ dying for Israel's sins. The implicit coming again of the man to obtain the treasure refers to Israel's conversion at the conclusion of the mystery age. *Ibid.*, 183-84.

⁶⁴ The man in the parable is Christ rather than a believer. If it is concluded that he is a believer, then this parable teaches a works oriented salvation.

Matthew closes this unit by including two events illustrating why this interim age is necessary. Both events represent an increasing hardness of Israel against Christ. The first event involves the rejection of Christ by his own hometown (13:53-58). If those who knew Christ the best rejected him, then what hope could there be for the rest of the nation? The second event involves the beheading of John the Baptist (14:1-12). If the nation's leadership killed the king's forerunner, then they will certainly do the same thing to the king Himself. Because Israel's hardness rendered the nation unusable by God, an interim phase was necessary where God would pursue a new program involving the Gentiles.

Matthew now develops the next part of the interim program involving the training of the disciples. In this section, he records how Christ began to prepare the disciples not only for their foundational roles in the coming church but also for His imminent death (14:13-20:28). Unlike His public teaching and miracles revolving around the offer of the kingdom to Israel that was developed in the first half of the book, His miracles and teaching in this section are private. They are now primarily for the benefit of training the disciples. Matthew records this training process to show his audience that Christ's death and the church's ministry in the mystery age is not something accidental or serendipitous. Rather, the messiah Himself prepared His disciples for this time period. Thus, Matthew's Jewish Christian audience can take comfort in the fact that the ministry they are currently seeing is their own messiah's handiwork even though it does not presently involve the establishment of the kingdom through Israel.

This section begins with His withdrawal (14:13) from ministering to the nation following the beheading of John the Baptist so that He can focus His attention on training the disciples. Because Christ had the disciples bring the bread to Him, the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand taught them the valuable lesson that God could supply all their needs and the needs of

those they ministered to when they committed their resources to Him (14:13-21). Because Christ sent the disciples out on the boat while He went elsewhere to pray, the miracle of the calming of the storm was designed to teach the disciples certain truths. It taught the disciples that Christ could be trusted to help them in their time of need, that they should trust Him in the midst of adversity, and it also gave them further confirmation of Christ's true identity (14:22-33). Christ healed many at Gennesaret (14:34-36) so the disciples could learn by observation since they would be performing a similar healing ministry as recorded in the Book of Acts.

Christ's defense of the disciples for their violations of the Pharisees' Sabbath regulations also taught them many important truths (15:1-20). Because of Christ's specific answer to Peter's question (15:15-16), it appears that Christ allowed this entire chain of events to take place for the disciple's benefit. First, it probably encouraged them to have the Lord so vigorously defend them so soon after John the Baptist's beheading. Second, it taught them that they were not bound by pharisaical regulations but rather the original intent of the commandments (Isa 29:13). Third, it taught them that the Pharisees were beyond repentance (15:14). Such hardness probably had to do with their rejection of the kingdom offer and their sin of the blasphemy against the Spirit (12:31-32). Fourth, it taught them the important anthropological truth that evil emanates from the human heart rather than a lack of adherence to man made rules. Matthew includes this material to help His Jewish readers understand why the early church had moved away from Pharisaical interpretations.

The healing of the Canaanite woman (15:21-28) helped expand the disciples' missionary vision. Such an expansion was needed since their previous ministry experience consisted of offering the kingdom exclusively to the nation (10:5-6; 15:24). Christ's interaction with the disciples' remark (15:24) again shows that this event was orchestrated primarily for their benefit. Because Tyre and

Sidon were located in the north of Israel and were areas controlled by Gentile powers in Old testament times, Christ may have used this miracle to show that ministry in the mystery age would extend beyond Israel's borders (Acts 1:8). God's desire to focus upon the Gentiles in this interim phase is also made clear in how Christ responded to the woman's petition. She received no response from Him when she appealed to Him on the basis of His messianic title. However, he granted her petition when she appealed to him as a believing Gentile outside of Judaism's blessings.⁶⁵ Thus, once again Matthew emphasizes Gentile receptivity against the backdrop of Israel's hardness. Matthew includes this information to show his Jewish audience why Gentiles who approach God by faith are being blessed in the mystery age.

Because Christ deliberately involved the disciples (15:32-36) in the feeding of the four thousand (15:29-39), this miracle was again designed primarily for their benefit. Not only did it reinforce the same lesson that they had learned from the feeding of the five thousand (14:13-21), but it also played a role in further expanding their missionary vision. This miracle took place in Gentile territory (Mark 7:31). This seems clear since the crowd glorified the "God of Israel" (15:31) and because the Gentile word for basket (*Spuris*) is used (16:10, Mark 8:8, 20) rather than the Jewish word (*kofinos*) for basket (15:37). Thus, because this crowd was Gentile rather than Jewish, the disciples were not expecting this multitude to be fed.⁶⁶ The disciples were locked into this way of thinking because their previous ministry consisted of offering the kingdom exclusively to the nation (10:5-6; 15:24). However, by mandating their involvement in the miracle, Christ was breaking them out of their old way of thinking. He was showing them that ministry in the mystery

⁶⁵ The word for dogs in 15:26-27 is *kunariois*, which means puppies rather than unclean scavengers. In essence, the woman is asking Christ to give to her the blessings that Israel rejected. This question encapsulates a dominant theme of Matthew's Gospel. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 197.

⁶⁶ Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 197.

age would be aimed primarily toward Gentiles. Thus, Matthew includes this information to show his Jewish readers how the church became predominantly Gentile focused.

The demand of the Jewish religious leaders for a sign gave Christ the opportunity to teach other important truths to the disciples (16:1-12). First, it allowed him to reinforce the notion that first century Israel had been set aside. While craving another sign, the nation rejected the signs that they had already been given. Therefore, no further sign would be given to them because the offer of the kingdom had been withdrawn. The only other sign that the nation was yet to receive was the sign of Jonah or Christ's resurrection. However, this sign was a sign of condemnation since it verified Christ's messianic claims thus demonstrating the nation's errant decision in rejecting their king. Second, it taught them to reject Pharisaical false doctrine. Third, it taught them to continue to trust God for their provision since He had been so faithful in meeting their past needs. Matthew includes this story since it again explains the absence of the Jewish kingdom despite the advent of the king due to Israel's hardness.

Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi gives Christ an opportunity to disclose a new, major development in the interim program, which is the revelation of the church (16:13-20). The church is a new work of God in the mystery age⁶⁷ consisting of all those trusting in the very messiah that Israel had rejected. The church is built upon the veracity of Peter's confession that Jesus is the

⁶⁷ The future tense ("I will build") of *oikodomeo* demonstrates that the church did not exist in the Old Testament era.

messiah.⁶⁸ Because of his confession, Christ gave Peter a place of leadership within the new church.⁶⁹ Thus, Matthew has advanced his argument by giving more information on the interim program. Not only will this interim phase consist of the kingdom mysteries (Matt 13), but it will also consist of God's work through His church. Matthew records the revelation of the church to show His Jewish audience that God is presently at work through this new institution. Thus, Gentile involvement in this new work, Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer, and the current postponement of the kingdom do not detract from the validity of Christ's messianic identity. They are all part of the divine design.

Not only was Christ interested in preparing His disciples for the change in ministry focus during the mystery age but also he was interested in preparing them for His death that had to first precede this interim phase (16:21-28). In fact, the phrase "from that time on" is only used in one other place in Matthew's gospel (4:17). These two uses (4:17; 16:21) when taken together show the

⁶⁸ There are three main interpretations of the identity of the foundation of the church in verse 18. *First*, the Roman Catholic position argues that the church's foundation is Peter and therefore Peter is the first pope. This view has in its favor the fact that only one word for "rock" supposedly existed in Aramaic. Thus, *petros* (Peter) and *petra* are equivalent. However, as explained earlier, it is doubtful that Matthew's Gospel was originally written in Aramaic. The Catholic position is also weakened when it is understood that the Greek text uses two words for rock. *Petros*, a masculine noun, refers to a small rock. *Petra*, a feminine noun, refers to a large rock. Thus, in the Greek text, Christ is referring to another rock besides Peter. Moreover, if it had been Christ's intention to convey the idea that Peter is the foundation of the church, the ambiguity could have easily been cleared up if Christ had said "upon you." Furthermore, the demonstrative "this" cannot be referring to Peter since it is feminine. Also, why would Christ use "this" if He were speaking directly to Peter? *Second*, others contend that the foundation of the church is Christ. He is referred to as a large rock elsewhere in Scripture (Rom 9:33; 1 Cor 10:4; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4-8). However, the insertion of the phrase "upon me" would have removed the ambiguity. Also, the feminine demonstrative "this" could not refer to Christ. In addition, why would Christ use "this" if He were speaking of Himself? The third and best view is to see the veracity of Peter's confession as the foundation of the church. This view best accommodates the third person feminine demonstrative "this." Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 201-02; Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 197-98.

⁶⁹ Christ gave to Peter the power of binding and loosing (16:19). Contrary to Jerome's Latin Vulgate that translates these verbs as simple futures, the periphrastic future perfect nature of the verbs should cause them to be translated "shall have been bound" and "shall have been loosed." In other words, Peter's authority only comes from announcing what heaven has already determined. The "keys of the kingdom" probably refer to the ability to open citizenship to the kingdom to others. Peter did just this in the book of Acts. He was the first to open up kingdom citizenship to the Jews (Acts 2) and Gentiles (Acts 10). Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 206-07; Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 198.

two reasons why Christ came into the world. He came to offer the kingdom to Israel and to die. Thus, Christ's death was just as much a predetermined event as was His offer of the kingdom.

Because Peter followed typical Jewish thinking in not perceiving that the cross must first precede the crown, he was rebuked by Christ and even told that his ideas were Satanic. Christ then explained that the mark of a true disciple is acknowledging the reality of the cross before the crown. Matthew includes this exchange since the Jews that he was writing to may have been entrenched in the old way of thinking. They may have thought that the mark of the true messiah is the establishment of the kingdom through Israel rather than His rejection by the nation and death. Thus, Matthew seeks to break them out of their myopia by explaining to them that Christ's rejection by the nation and subsequent death were all part of the predetermined plan of God.

Christ's announcement of His death no doubt caused the disciples to fear that the kingdom would not come (16:22). Thus, in order to reassure them of the certainty of the coming kingdom (16:27-28),⁷⁰ Christ gave them a foretaste of it through His transfiguration (17:1-13). The appearance of Moses and Elijah demonstrates that just as Moses' death and Elijah being taken to heaven in a whirlwind did not stop their appearance on Mount Transfiguration, then neither would Christ's death stop the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom. In the process of the transfiguration, the Father identified Christ as the Son of God and Christ identified John as the one who would have been the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6 had the nation accepted the offer of the kingdom. Matthew includes this information to show his audience that the identity of Christ and John had not changed even though Israel had rejected her king. Therefore, the believing Jews who Matthew addressed could be reassured that Christ was the true messiah even though Israel had rejected Him. The

⁷⁰ Christ's promise that His disciples would not see death until He came in His kingdom (16:27-28) is not a prediction that Christ would return within the life spans of the apostles. Rather, it is a prediction that the disciples would experience a foretaste of the kingdom through Christ's transfiguration.

transfiguration also encouraged his Jewish audience by alerting them to the fact that God had every intention of restoring the kingdom to Israel after the elapsing of the mystery age.

Christ's rebuke of His disciples due to their inability to cast out demons taught them the necessity of depending upon God's power when dealing with the fallen angelic realm (17:14-21). Because the disciples would have to later contend with demons as recorded in the Books of Acts (5:1-11; 8:9-24; 16:16-18; 19:18-19), Christ's rebuke was an important lesson for them in preparation for their ministry in the mystery age. The disciples' sorrow over Christ's second prediction of death (17:22-23) shows that they really had not understood the Lord's previous discipleship message (16:21-28). Thus, they were in need of further teaching. Christ's payment of the two drachma tax even though He was not required to do so⁷¹ gave Him the opportunity of teaching the disciples the lesson of doing what was not required so as to avoid giving an unnecessary offense (17:24-28). This lesson would no doubt be of great help to the disciples as they pursued their mystery age ministry.

In Christ's fourth major discourse (18:1-35), He taught His disciples even more truths that they would need during their ministry in the mystery age. Because each of the major sections of this discourse involve attitudes and behavior that characterize a humble disciple, the major theme of the discourse is humility. The lessons Christ conveyed to them include the necessity of childlike humility for entrance into and reward in the kingdom (18:1-4), the importance of not stumbling another disciple (18:5-14),⁷² the importance of exercising church discipline (18:15-20),⁷³ and the necessity for the disciples to forgive others as the Lord had forgiven them (18:21-35).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Christ was exempted from the temple tax since the temple belonged to him (Exod 30:13; Mal 3:1).

⁷² The preceding context (18:3-4) shows that the disciples are in view rather than children.

⁷³ Matthew 18:17 is the second reference to the soon to be birthed church in Matthew's Gospel. For information regarding the meaning of binding and loosing, see discussion under 16:19.

⁷⁴ For information regarding the meaning of being forgiven if one forgives, see discussion under 6:12, 14-15.

The Pharisees' questioning of Christ concerning divorce and remarriage gave Christ an opportunity to teach His disciples to follow God's revelation in creation rather than Pharisaical interpretation when attempting to resolve such matters (19:1-12).⁷⁵ Other circumstances also allowed Christ to teach the disciples the important lessons of the necessity of child like faith in order to enter the kingdom,⁷⁶ not hindering the entry of others into the kingdom (19:13-15),⁷⁷ and the importance of removing personal idolatry hindering a person's entrance into the kingdom (19:16-30).⁷⁸ Just as Christ's transfiguration encouraged His disciples by reminding them that the kingdom would ultimately be restored to Israel, Christ's promise to His disciples that they would co-rule with Him in the millennium reinforced this same hope (19:28). Not only did Christ's promise encourage the disciples, but Matthew's recording of it also provided the same source of encouragement to his Jewish Christian readers.

In the parable of the landowner (20:1-16), Christ taught His disciples that He has the right to dispense His grace as He sees fit. Thus, those called late will be rewarded equally along with those called early. This was an important lesson for the disciples to learn since they were going to be ministering in the church age when believing Jews (those called early) and believing Gentiles (those called late) would be on equal spiritual footing with one another in a new ecclesiastical, spiritual organism (Eph 2-3). His third prediction of His death also prepared them for this important event, which had to precede the mystery age (20:17-19).

⁷⁵ Christ's view on divorce and remarriage was already discussed under Matthew 5:31-32.

⁷⁶ In Matthew's Gospel, children are frequently used in order to distinguish genuine faith from the nation's blindness (11:25; 18:24; 19:13-15; 21:15-16).

⁷⁷ The Pharisees through their man-made traditions were hindering the access of others into the kingdom (23:13).

⁷⁸ Because of the disciples' questions and involvement (19:10, 13, 25), it seems evident that Christ allowed these events for the purpose of teaching the disciples important lessons that would prepare them to fulfill their ministries in the mystery age.

The request of the mother of Zebedee's sons gave Christ the opportunity of using His own life as an example to teach the disciples that greatness is not defined by one's status but rather by one's service to others (20:20-28). Such humility is a characteristic that Christ expected His disciples to emulate throughout the mystery age (John 13; Phil 2). Interestingly, this event occurred late in Christ's ministry. Thus, after spending all this time with Christ, the nature of the question involving literal thrones indicated that the disciples still expected an earthly kingdom. Christ only challenges their assumption of what constitutes greatness rather than their assumption of an earthly kingdom. This lack of correction from Christ would give hope to Matthew's readers that an earthly kingdom through Israel would one day come. In sum, Matthew includes all of this information on Christ's training of the disciples for His death and their ministry in the mystery age (13:1–20:28) to show them that this age was not accidental but rather was prepared for by the Jewish messiah Himself. Thus, Matthew's Jewish audience need not reject this new ministry phase even though it does not directly involve the establishment of the kingdom through Israel.

The next major section involves Christ's presentation to and formal rejection by Israel (20:29–23:39). Matthew records this material to show that the irrevocable rejection of the kingdom offer that had already begun in the hearts of the Jewish leadership (Matt 12) has now been officially ratified. The nation rejects Christ despite His formal presentation to them in the triumphal entry. Matthew includes this information since it will help His Jewish readers understand why the kingdom is not present even though Christ is the Jewish king. Before Matthew records Christ's rejection of first century Israel (Matt 23), he first records selected events involving Israel's rejection of Christ (20:29–22:46). This section begins with the transitional event of Christ's healing of the blind men in Jericho (20:29-34). The crowd referred to Christ as "Jesus" while the blind men referred to Him as the "Son of David." Because the blind men used Christ's proper messianic title,

Matthew includes this story to ironically show that while the blind men could correctly discern the identity of Christ, God's own elect nation Israel did not have the same discernment.⁷⁹

Israel's impending rejection of her king is brought out clearly in Matthew's portrayal of the triumphal entry (21:1-22). Despite the fact that this event fulfilled specific Old Testament prophecies (Dan 9:25-26; Zech 9:9),⁸⁰ the people were only interested in a physical kingdom rather than a kingdom that also encompassed the moral and spiritual characteristics outlined in the Sermon on the Mount (5-7). Thus, they acknowledged Christ as merely a prophet (21:1-11). The cleansing of the temple also establishes the guilt of the nation since Israel's leadership had degraded God's house into merely a venue for merchandising. Although the children could recognize Christ as the messiah, Israel's religious leadership could not (21:12-17). Christ's cursing of the fig tree also shows Israel's guilt. While the nation had physical life, it showed no visible sign of repentance (3:7ff). Here, Matthew stresses Christ's teaching on faith to juxtapose genuine faith against Israel's lack of faith (21:18-22).

Matthew further emphasizes Israel's rejection of her king through a collection of questions and parables (21:23-22:46). Christ's question of the religious leaders regarding John's authority exposed their culpability in rejecting John. If the nation rejected the king's forerunner, the rejection of the king Himself was imminent (21:23-27). In Christ's parable of the two sons, the son who disobeyed after saying that he would obey represents the disobedience of the nation in contrast to the obedience of the righteous remnant (21:28-32). The parable of the tenants demonstrates the historical guilt of the nation in rejecting the prophets as well as their present guilt in rejecting their

⁷⁹ While the other Gospel writers focus on only one blind man (Mark 10:56-52; Luke 18:25-43), Matthew focuses upon two. This is not a contradiction since the other writers never say that there was only one blind man. The emphasis upon two men fits the Jewish nature of Matthew's book since the Old Testament teaches that a matter must be established by at least two witnesses (Deut 17:6). This rule would certainly apply to something as significant as establishing Christ's messianic identity. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 236.

⁸⁰ Interestingly, Matthew substitutes Isaiah 62:11 for "rejoice greatly, o daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph o daughter of Zion!" because the nation had to have Christ pointed out to them since they did not recognize Him. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 238.

king. Such disobedience made the penalty of the covenant curses in the form of the coming A.D. 70 judgment inevitable (21:33-46).⁸¹ In the parable of the wedding feast, Christ analogizes the non-attending invited guests to the nation. Such disobedience would invite the covenant curses of A.D. 70. Their sin is again juxtaposed against the backdrop of the believing remnant (22:1-14).

The hardness of the nation is again seen in three hostile questions from its religious leaders designed to trap Christ (22:15-40). The question involving taxation was designed either to get Christ to commit treason against Rome or to disenfranchise Him from the Jewish commoners (22:15-22). The question involving resurrection was designed to trap Him in an unsolvable theological dilemma (22:23-33). The question involving the most important commandment was designed to entangle Him in the complex array of Pharisaical traditions (22:34-40). Christ's reciprocal question to them also demonstrated the guilt of the nation by showing their inconsistency in rejecting His messianic authority (22:41-46). Christ's astute answers demonstrated to Israel's religious leaders His messianic identity (22:46). Thus, the nation was without excuse in rejecting Him.

Now that the nation had officially rejected their king (20:29–22:46), Christ issues His formal rejection of first century Israel's religious leaders (23:1-39). His rejection of them is based upon their guilt (23:1-12). He condemns them through eight woes (23:13-36) encompassing not only their errant doctrine (23:13-22) but also their deficient character (23:23-36). Because the Pharisees emphasized outer righteousness they rejected Christ's kingdom, which emphasized inner

⁸¹ Debate persists concerning from whom the kingdom is taken from and to whom it is given. While replacement theologians argue that verse 43 teaches that the kingdom will be taken away from Israel as a whole, this theology is not supported by the passage. The context indicates that Christ was only speaking to first century Israel (21:45). Furthermore, the nation who is to receive the kingdom cannot be the church since the church is not a nation (Rom 10:19). Many use 1 Peter 2:9 to support the idea that the church is a nation. However, this argument assumes that 1 Peter was written to the church at large rather than just the believing Jews in the Diaspora (see my 1 Peter argument). It seems best to conclude that the nation spoken of in 21:43 is a future generation of Jews. This view fits well with the remaining context of the book, which speaks of a future for national Israel (24:31). Furthermore, the word nation (*egnos*) that is used in this verse is used of Israel elsewhere in Scripture (John 11:51; Acts 24:17). Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1959), 295-97.

righteousness (5–7).⁸² Christ concludes His denunciation with a lament over Jerusalem because of the inevitability of the coming A.D. 70 judgment (23:37-39).⁸³ Matthew records all this information regarding the nation’s rejection of Christ (20:29–23:39) since it will help His Jewish readers understand why the kingdom is not present even though Christ is the Jewish king.

In order to explain to His Jewish Christian audience how Christ can be the Jewish king and yet at the same time the Jewish kingdom is absent and the Gentiles are prominent in the mystery age, Matthew has developed a well-organized argument. First, he has established Christ’s messianic identity and traced Christ’s offer of the kingdom to Israel (1–10). Second, he has shown the nation’s rejection of this offer (11–12; 20:29–23:39). Third, he has explained God’s inclusion of the Gentiles in the mystery age during the kingdom’s absence and postponement (13:1–20:28). Now Matthew is ready to develop the final part of his argument. Although the kingdom has been postponed in the present, it will be re-offered to and accepted by the nation in the future. Although he has alluded to this restoration earlier (17:1-13; 19:28; 20:20-28), Matthew most clearly develops the idea of the kingdom’s restoration to Israel in his fifth and final discourse section known as the Olivet Discourse (24–25). Matthew’s Jewish audience would have been familiar with Old Testament Scripture predicting Israel’s conversion as a result of the Great Tribulation (Jer 30:7; Dan 9:24-27). The Olivet Discourse is simply an amplification of these prophecies (24:15). Matthew includes this final phase of his argument in order to give his Jewish readers hope that present Gentile prominence in the mystery age does not mean that God has forsaken His covenant promises to His chosen nation.

Matthew’s emphasis upon Israel’s restoration in the Olivet Discourse grows out of the final verses of the previous chapter (23:37-39). There, Christ expressed His desire to gather

⁸² These woes are the inverse of the Sermon on the Mount (5–7).

⁸³ While Christ previously referred to the temple as “my house” (21:13), he now refers to it as “your house” (23:38) thus emphasizing His complete rejection of first century Israel.

(episunagw) Israel. However, she had rejected the kingdom offer. Christ promises that the time would come when the nation would acknowledge Him as the messiah by chanting a messianic Psalm (Ps 118:26; Matt 21:9) thus allowing Christ to return and re-gather (episunagw) His nation (24:31). Thus, the Olivet Discourse furnishes the circumstances through which Israel's restoration and final regathering will be achieved.

Christ's prediction of the temple's destruction resulting from the covenant curses to be poured out in A.D. 70 (24:1-2) provoked the disciples' eschatological curiosity. Mistaking the temple's destruction with the events of the end, the disciples wanted to know when these things would be and about the end of the age (24:3).⁸⁴ Christ answers the second question in this discourse.⁸⁵ He proceeds to outline the events of the first half (24:4-14),⁸⁶ middle (24:15-20),⁸⁷ and second half of the Tribulation (24:21-22). This period ends with the Second Advent (24:23-30) to be followed by the nation's regathering (24:31) and subsequent restoration of the Davidic Throne (25:31). Because the gospel of the kingdom (24:14) will be re-offered to the nation during the Tribulation, she will accept it resulting in her restoration.

Christ's discussion of Israel's restoration during the Tribulation leads Him to conclude the Olivet Discourse by using six illustrations (and/or parables) for the purpose of emphasizing the various attitudes that Israel should have in light of these approaching events (24:32–25:46). First,

⁸⁴ Some see three questions here but really there are two. The first question relates to the events of A.D. 70. The second question is a single interrogatory since "coming" and "end" are joined by a single article and conjunction.

⁸⁵ While Matthew and Mark's Gospels focus on the disciples' second question, Luke's Gospel focuses on the first part of the question. Matthew includes the phrase "end of the age" while Luke does not.

⁸⁶ Many view the birth pangs mentioned in these verses as occurring throughout the present age. However, because they align chronologically with the seal judgments of the future Tribulation, it is best to see them as occurring only in the future Tribulation period.

Prediction Birth pangs (Matt 24) Seal judgments (Rev 6) False Christ 24:56:2 War 24:66:3-4 Famine 24:76:5-6 Death 24:6-76:7-8 Martyrs 24:9-136:9-11 Earthquakes 24:76:12-17 Evangelism 24:147:1-9

⁸⁷ The references to Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks (24:15), the Sabbath (24:20), and the elect (24:22) make it clear that this time period concerns Israel and not the church.

Christ uses the illustration of the fig tree to emphasize watchfulness for His return (24:32-35).⁸⁸

Second, Christ uses the illustration of the days of Noah to admonish them to avoid being caught by

surprise by His return (24:36-44).⁸⁹ Third, Christ uses the parable of the slave to emphasize the

importance of doing the master's will in His absence (24:45-51). Fourth, Christ uses the parable of

the ten virgins to emphasize preparedness for His return (25:1-13).⁹⁰ Fifth, Christ uses the parable of

the talents to emphasize wise stewardship in His absence (25:14-30). Sixth, Christ uses the parable

of the sheep and the goats to emphasize the need of doing good to Christ's brethren in His absence

(25:31-46).⁹¹

⁸⁸ The fig tree illustration has nothing to do with the birth of the state of Israel in 1948. The context of the illustration has to do with the events of the Tribulation. Thus, the generation that sees the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Tribulation will also see the Second Advent at the end of the Tribulation.

⁸⁹ Many see the rapture in verses 40-41. They use three arguments to support their position. First, they note the difference between verse 39 and verses 40-41 regarding the verb "to take." While *airw* is used in verse 39, it is *paralambanw* in verses 40-41. Rapture proponents argue that this change is made in verses 40-41 in order to harmonize the verb with the use of the same verb in the rapture passage in John 14:3. However, the change could be simply stylistic in order to give greater expression to the ideas presented. Furthermore, *paralambanw* is also used in the negative sense in Matthew's Gospel (4:5, 8) and elsewhere (John 19:16). Second, they note that because what is described in verses 40-41 represents normal life activity these verses cannot be referring to the Second Advent at the end of the Tribulation. Because normal life would not be taking place at the end of the Tribulation, it must be speaking of the rapture before the Tribulation. However, it is possible that verses 40-41 are a figure of speech depicting being caught up in the system of the antichrist during the Tribulation and are therefore not speaking of ordinary life. Third, they argue that the phrase "no one knows the day or the hour" (24:36) cannot be speaking of an event at the end of the Tribulation since people would know the time of that event. It will take place exactly seven years after the antichrist enters into the peace treaty with Israel (Dan 9:27). However, the phrase in verse 36 could be given from the perspective of an unbeliever. Elsewhere, unbelievers are said to be similarly unaware of the exact timing of Christ's return even after most of the events of the Tribulation have transpired (Rev 16:15). It seems better to understand those taken in verses 40-41 as those taken into judgment after the Second Advent. Those left behind will enter the kingdom. First, the immediate context involves being taken into judgment (24:39). Second, the parallel passage in Luke 17:37 indicates that those taken are not taken to heaven but rather are taken to where the vultures are gathered. Elsewhere this phrase is used of judgment at Christ's Second Advent (Rev 19:17-18). Third, separation between unbelievers unto judgment and believers unto bliss by Christ at His Second Advent is taught in other places in Matthew (13:40-41; 25:31-46). Fourth, the rapture is truth for the church age and the immediate context here involves Israel (24:15, 20, 22).

⁹⁰ The Jewish ritual of the wedding ceremony gives the proper background for understanding the parable. First, the parents arranged the marriage. Second, the betrothal period took place to test whether the marital parties would maintain their virginity. Third, the groom and his friends would travel to the bride's home. Fourth, the marriage ceremony would transpire at the bride's home. Fifth, the bridesmaids would travel to the bridegroom's home to await the return of the couple. Thus, the bridesmaids prepared in advance by bringing sufficient oil for their lamps to await this event. Sixth, the marriage festival would last seven days. Seventh, the marriage would be consummated.

⁹¹ At first glance this parable seems to be describing works salvation. However, it is better to see it as evidencing one's faith (Eph 2:8-10) by helping the Lord's brethren during the Tribulation. It is likely that these brethren are either those converted during the Tribulation or the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev 7, 14). Both groups will be hounded by the antichrist during this terrible time period (Rev 13:16-17) and in need of help from God's people in order

The passion narrative (26–28) does not necessarily introduce any new elements to Matthew’s argument. Rather, it allows Matthew to develop previously disclosed themes. Such themes include Christ’s messianic identity, the nation’s rejection of the kingdom offer, the advent of God’s interim program due to the kingdom’s postponement, and the kingdom’s eventual restoration to Israel. The Jewish plot to kill Christ reinforces Israel’s rejection of the kingdom offer. It also demonstrates Christ’s messianic identity since He was able to predict His death at the very moment the Jews were plotting to kill Him (26:1-5).

Mary’s anointing of Christ also identifies Him as the messiah. However, it also reinforces the theme involving God’s interim program since a remnant was able to discern the identity of Christ while the rest of the nation could not. God will use this remnant to launch a new phase of ministry in the mystery age (26:6-13). Judas betrayal of Christ (26:14-16) also demonstrates Christ’s messianic identity. This event not only showed His ability to accurately predict events to be fulfilled in the near future (26:20-25, 47-50)⁹² but also it was also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (27:1-10).⁹³ The preparation of the upper room also establishes Christ’s identity by showing His sovereignty as well as His ability to accurately make short-term predictions

to survive. Furthermore, this event should not be confused with the Great White Throne Judgment.

Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt 25:31-46) Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15)
No resurrection
Resurrection
Believers and unbelievers present
Only unbelievers present
All surviving nations present
Only the resurrected unbelievers present
After tribulation (imprisonment, hunger, thirst)
After millennium
Destination is kingdom or Hades
Destination is Lake of Fire
J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Findley, OH: Dunham Publishing Company, 1958), 425-26.

⁹² Christ’s ability to accurately forecast the outcome of short term events guarantees that the other long term prophecies that He has made (Matt 24) will come to pass with the same degree of accuracy.

⁹³ Why does Matthew quote a prophecy from Zechariah and attribute it to Jeremiah (27:9-10)? Actually Matthew quotes from both Zechariah 11:12-13 (thirty pieces of silver) and Jeremiah 18:1-4; 32:6-9 (purchase of the field). Matthew is more focused on the purchase of the field than he is the thirty pieces of silver. Also, Jeremiah is a major prophet. Thus, he only mentions Jeremiah’s name. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 209-10. A similar phenomenon occurs in the citation of Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 in Mark 1:2-3. Here, “fulfillment” should be understood as the recapitulation of an event in the life of Christ. In Zechariah 11, Israel rejected God’s shepherd and instead opted to value him as a mere slave. Here, this same pattern repeats itself in the way the nation treated Christ. Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Matthew,” online: www.soniclight.com, accessed 13 March 2006, 367.

(26:17-19). The celebration of the Lord's table gives Christ another opportunity to make a prediction that will be fulfilled in the future kingdom. This prediction guarantees to the disciples as well as Matthew's Jewish audience that God will one day restore the kingdom to Israel despite messiah's imminent death (26:26-29).

Like Christ's predictions regarding Judas' betrayal, Christ's messianic identity is also seen in His ability to predict with mathematical precision Peter's threefold denial (26:30-35, 69-75). Christ's experiences in Gethsemane again contribute to His messianic identity by showing Him to be the unique sin bearer (26:36-46). Peter's attempt to thwart Christ's arrest also identifies Christ as the messiah. Because His death was already predicted in the pages of the Old Testament, Christ explained to Peter that there is nothing that he can do to halt Christ's death (26:47-56). Because Christ's religious trials (26:57-68)⁹⁴ were not conducted according to the regulations specified in the biblical and extra biblical material,⁹⁵ they reiterate the theme of the nation's corruption and rejection of the offer of the kingdom. However, the trial before Caiaphas contributes to the theme of Christ's messianic identity by giving Him the opportunity of identifying Himself as the Son of Man in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies (Dan 7:13).

94

Number Jewish or Roman Civil or religious Judge Location Decision Scripture
First Jewish Religious Annas Caiaphas' house Permission given to kill Christ John 18:12-14, 19-23
Second Jewish Religious Caiaphas Caiaphas' house Death sentence imposed due to charge of blasphemy Matt 26:57-58; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:24
Third Jewish Religious Sanhedrin Sanhedrin Death sentence made legal Matt 27:1-2; Mark 15:1a; Luke 22:66-71
Fourth Roman Civil Pilate Fortress of Antonia Not guilty Matt 27:11-14; Mark 15:1b-5; Luke 23:1-6; John 18:28-38a
Fifth Roman Civil Herod Herod's palace Not guilty Luke 23:7-12
Sixth Roman Civil Pilate Fortress of Antonia Not guilty, Christ turned over to the Jews Matt 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:38b-19:16
Adapted from Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 1715. For a helpful map showing the various locations of the trials, see *Nelson's Complete Book of Charts and Maps*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 324.

⁹⁵ The religious trials were a mockery of justice. They violated the rules that the Jews followed for conducting a trial. Contrary to established rules, these trials occurred in private homes (*Sanhedrin* 11a; *Middoth* 5.4), at night (Tosephta, *Sanhedrin* 7.1; *Middoth* 5.4), and on the eve of a Sabbath and festival day, which was Passover (*Sanhedrin* 4.1; Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.163). Also, the sentence was pronounced on the same day as the trial (*Sanhedrin* 4.1; 5.5) and they failed to provide the necessary safeguards to be taken for the possibility of an acquittal in capital cases (*Sanhedrin* 4.1). Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 209. Also, the witnesses at the trials were false witnesses and Christ was unfairly sentenced to death against the weight of the evidence.

Christ's trial before Pilate (27:11-26) also contributed to the theme of Christ's identity by giving Him the opportunity of identifying Himself as the king of the Jews. His silence before Pilate in fulfillment of the Old Testament (Isa 53:7) also showed Him to be the messiah. The nation's guilt in unjustly rejecting the offer of the kingdom is also seen in the way that Pilate washed his hands from the obvious sin of the Jewish leaders. Even Pilate's wife was convicted of Christ's innocence in a dream. Once again, Matthew shows the spiritual sensitivity of the Gentiles against the backdrop of the insensitivity of God's elect nation. Thus, God must raise up a new Gentile remnant in the interim phase since the nation has rejected the offer of the kingdom. The guilt of the nation as a whole in rejecting the kingdom offer is also seen not only in the way they demanded that Barabbas be released instead of Christ but also in the way the people publicly assumed culpability for Christ's death.

With the nation in a state of blindness and the Roman soldiers mistreating Christ (27:27-31), Simon of Cyrene was forced into service to help carry Christ's cross (27:32). Thus, someone from outside of Israel's borders assisted Christ's cause. Similarly, in the mystery age, God would soon turn to those outside of Israel's border for the purpose of assisting Christ's cause in the wake of the nation's rejection of her king. The events of the crucifixion (27:33-44) also reiterate many familiar themes such as the identification of Christ through the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Ps 69:21; 22:7, 18; Isa 53:9)⁹⁶ and also through the very sign that hung from the cross identifying Him as the king of the Jews. The participation of the Jewish leadership in mocking and falsely accusing Christ also exemplifies the guilt of the nation in rejecting their king.

⁹⁶ Although Matthew does not quote these prophecies nor use his customary formula in showing their fulfillment, such an effort would have been an exercise in redundancy given the fact that his Jewish audience was already familiar with them.

Christ's death (27:45-56) identified Him as the messiah in three ways. First, His death fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (Ps 22:1; 69:21).⁹⁷ Second, His death was accompanied by numerous supernatural manifestations such as the darkening of the sky, an earthquake, the tearing of the temple veil, and the opening of the graves. The tearing of the veil would signify to a Jewish reader that Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament system. The token resuscitations⁹⁸ are especially significant in identifying Christ. They affirm His authority over death, show that His death is the basis of the saints' future resurrection, and show that Christ's death is beneficial for those who died before the cross as well as after. Third, the Roman centurion identified Him as the Son of God. Ironically, a Gentile exercised spiritual sensitivity while God's elect nation remained in blindness. Thus, as a result of Israel's rejection of the offer of the kingdom, it was necessary for God to pursue a new direction of ministry in the mystery age involving primarily the Gentiles.

Christ's burial (27:57-61) also identified Christ as the messiah since it too fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Isa 53:9). The sealing of the tomb (27:62-66) contributes to the theme of the nation's rejection of their king since the religious leaders did everything within their power to prevent even the pretense of the sign of Jonah (12:38-40; 16:4) from being fulfilled. However, their efforts were to no avail since Christ did resurrect from the dead (28:1-10).⁹⁹ Christ's resurrection

⁹⁷ Christ's seven final statements from the cross can be summarized as follows.

Statement	Scripture	Old Testament source	Time	Meaning
Father forgive them for they know not what they do	Luke 23:34	Isaiah 53:12	First three hours	Prayer for enemies
Today you shall be with me in paradise	Luke 23:43	Isaiah 53:10-11	First three hours	Promise to a believing sinner
Woman, behold your son... Behold your mother	John 19:27	Exodus 20:12; Mark 7:10-13	First three hours	Provision for followers
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?	Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34	Psalms 22:1	Second three hours (12-3 PM)	Mental anguish
I Thirst	John 19:28	Psalms 69:21	Second three hours (12-3 PM)	Physical anguish
It is finished	John 19:30	Psalms 22:31	Second three hours (12-3 PM)	Past satisfaction
Father, into your hand I commend my spirit	Luke 23:46	Psalms 31:5	Second three hours (12-3 PM)	Future satisfaction

Adapted from a handout passed out by Roy B. Zuck in a Sunday school class at Redeemer Bible Church in Dallas, Texas. An unknown seminary student originally created this chart.

⁹⁸ Because these saints were raised in their natural bodies and presumably died again, "resuscitation" is a preferred description rather than "resurrection." The latter term always involves placement in an immortal body.

⁹⁹ Christ's resurrection is validated by His numerous post resurrection appearances.

Number	Those Christ appeared to	Place	Time	Scripture
1	Mary Magdalene	Jerusalem	Sunday	John 20:14-18
2	Women	Jerusalem	Sunday	Matt 28:8-10
3	Peter	Jerusalem	Sunday	Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:54
4	Two disciples on the Emmaus road	Emmaus	Sunday	Luke 24:13-35
5	Ten apostles	Jerusalem	Sunday	Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24
6	Eleven			

condemned the Jewish nation since it validated His messianic claims thereby demonstrating Israel's errant decision in rejecting their king. The nation's unwillingness to even accept the sign of His resurrection is seen in the way the leaders bribed the guards in a futile attempt to explain away the sign of Jonah (28:11-15). Thus, Israel's rejection of the kingdom offer even continued into Christ's post resurrection life and ministry. Therefore, God turned to the believing remnant that would be the foundation for the new direction of ministry in the interim phase. The remnant's purpose would be the fulfillment of the Great Commission (28:16-20).¹⁰⁰

The global nature of these instructions had shifted radically from what Christ said earlier regarding limiting ministry only to Israel (10:5-6; 15:24). However, because the nation had rejected the offer of the kingdom, God would now accomplish His work of global evangelism and discipleship through this remnant that would soon become part of the newly created church. Although the church would primarily consist of Gentiles and not involve the establishment of the kingdom to Israel, Matthew's Jewish Christian audience can take comfort in the fact that this new phase of ministry was still part of the divine plan. Thus, Matthew has explained to the Jewish Christians at Syrian Antioch that Christ is indeed the Jewish messiah even though Israel rejected the offer of the kingdom resulting in the kingdom's postponement. Although He is pursuing an interim phase of ministry today primarily involving the Gentiles, God will still fulfill the Jewish expectation by restoring the kingdom to Israel in the future.

apostlesJerusalemA week laterJohn 20:24-297Seven apostles by the Sea of GalileeGalilee?John 21:1-238Five hundred brethren??1 Cor 15:69James (brother of Jesus)??1 Cor 15:710Eleven disciplesGalilee?Matt 28:16-2011Eleven apostles on the day of the ascensionJerusalem40 days laterLuke 24:44-53; Acts 1:3-12Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 92; Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*, 1672.

¹⁰⁰ The main imperatival verb is "make disciples." The attendant participles explain how this is to be accomplished. They include "baptizing" and "teaching." Baptizing involves evangelism and water baptism. This baptism is broader than the baptism of John. John's baptism was only to Israel, focused upon the coming messiah, and was incomplete (Acts 19:1-7). The baptism spoken of here is universal, focused upon what the messiah has already accomplished, and is complete. "Teaching" seems limited to what He had told them to teach rather than teaching everything that had transpired in His earthly ministry. The presence of "whatsoever" as well as the fact that Christ did not instruct through commandments throughout Matthew's Gospel seems to favor this limited interpretation. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 319.

Bibliography¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Carson is an example of an expositional commentary. Walvoord is an example of a theological commentary. Plummer, Toussaint, and Glasscock are examples of exegetical commentaries. Wiersbe is an example of a devotional commentary.