

The Gospel of Matthew

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Introduction

1. What comes to your mind when you hear “The Gospel of Matthew”?
2. Two immediate noteworthy points come to mind.
 - a. Jesus didn’t write a gospel.
 - b. There are four gospels.
3. So, before we jump into Matthew’s gospel, let’s think about these two points first, because they’ll help us as we approach Matthew.

Jesus did not himself write a gospel.

1. They are books about Him, not by Him.
2. They are someone’s interpretation of what happened and what He said.
3. Exercise: draw a picture of the room we are sitting in. What did you include and not include?
 - a. Think portrait vs picture
 - b. Also think about if I asked you to describe this morning’s church service
4. So, each gospel author wrote a theological biography of Jesus.
 - a. Specific purpose
 - b. Specific audience
 - c. Meant to be interpretive—rearrange, emphasize, exclude, etc.
5. Each gospel is understood at two levels: the story and the intended audience.
 - a. It like WWII movies in different generations (The Longest Day vs Saving Private Ryan).
 - b. What is the author telling us about Jesus by the way he is telling us about Jesus. Think Schindler’s List and The Sixth Sense.

There are four Gospels.

1. So, how do we understand the fact that we have four gospels.
2. It’s very evident that Matthew, Mark, & Luke are interdependent upon the same material for their documents. Scholars call this them the synoptic gospels (same view).
3. John seems to have very different purpose as his gospel is very different than the others.
4. So what is each gospel’s focus?
 - a. Matthew seems to write for a Jewish audience.
 - b. Mark is most likely from Peter’s perspective, and most likely for a Roman audience.
 - c. Luke seems to write for a Gentile audience.

Tips for Reading Matthew's Gospel

1. Watch for the unique structure. See the outline. Five distinct sections, each with a narrative and teaching section. So there ends up five primary discourses in the gospel.
2. Watch for references and quotes to the Old Testament. This is one of the reasons why scholars believe he wrote to a Jewish audience. Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and presented as the Messiah.
3. The primary theme is the Kingdom of Heaven, with Jesus as that King. Jesus uses the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" repeatedly.
4. Notice how the individual stories/accounts play off one another in the larger sections. What happens before and after each section is vital to understand what is happening in the present.

Matthew's Gospel | Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven

1:1-2:3 Introduction | The Birth of the King

Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus for important reasons. To claim that Jesus was the Messiah, it had to be shown that He was a direct descendant of David to fulfill the promise made in 2 Samuel 7:12-16. Matthew also traces the lineage back to Abraham to show the fulfillment of Genesis 12:1-3.

There are several important features of Matthew genealogy to take note of.

1. The use of the term "son of" does not strictly indicate father-son (see the first names in the list) and generally means descendant.
2. Five women are mentioned and each one has a sordid history (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, wife of Uriah, and Mary.) The inclusion of the women probably is meant to lessen the impact of Mary's situation.
3. Matthew presents three groups of 14 generations: Abraham to David; David to deportation to Babylon; Babylon to Jesus. The Old Testament includes several generations not listed in Matthew, so there seems to be a purpose of the arrangement other than providing an exhaustive list.
4. Some see David as the key. The gematria (practice of using the numerical value of the letters of a name to indicate significance: i.e. 666 in Revelation) of David is 14.
5. 1:16 specifically claims that while the genealogy is that of Joseph, Jesus was not biologically of the line. The "whom" in the verse is feminine in Greek, indicating it refers to Mary.

The remainder of the details of Jesus' birth center around five Old Testament texts that Matthew presents as fulfilled prophecy regarding Jesus. It provides the details of the nature of the Messiah.

3:1-7:29 First Section

3:1-4:25 1st Narrative | The Gospel of the Kingdom

The summary of John's preaching is in effect a perfect summary for the entire book of Matthew. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" is unique to Matthew but seems to be an interchangeable phrase with "Kingdom of God" from the other gospels. The five teaching sections in Matthew explain and expound on what life in the coming Kingdom will be like for followers of Jesus.

Later, the Spirit that just descended upon Jesus now leads him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. From a theological standpoint, the wilderness temptation draws attention to two significant events from Israel's past.

1. The forty days fast parallels the forty years of Moses' preparation in the wilderness. Jesus is far greater than Moses.
2. The temptations (along with the 40 days) parallel Israel's failure during the 40 years in the wilderness. In fact, all the quotations that Jesus uses against the devil come from Deuteronomy, which was God's words to Israel after they had failed for 40 years in the wilderness. Jesus is the perfect son that Israel never could be.

4:23-25 finishes the first narrative section of Matthew with a summary statement of the ministry of in Galilee. Jesus preached about the Kingdom, healed diseases, cast out demons, and his fame spread beyond Galilee.

5:1-7:29 1st Discourse | The Sermon on the Mount | Disciples of the Kingdom

1. The sermon is most likely a representative sample of the teaching that Jesus gave during the summarized ministry of 4:23-25.
2. Jesus most likely taught these themes on multiple occasions (which accounts for the alternate version of the sermon in Luke.)
3. The themes of the Beatitudes match the teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven.
4. 7:29 is a great summary of the impact the teaching had on the crowds. Simply put, Jesus' teaching differed from the other teachers because of the authority He commanded. Rather than quote what others taught about the meaning of the Law, Jesus used the "I say" phrase to indicate that He offered the proper interpretation of the Law.

8:1-11:1 Second Section

8:1-9:38 2nd Narrative | The Power of the Kingdom

Matthew now moves into the second section of his Gospel where Jesus begins to demonstrate the power of the Kingdom. These events still occur in Galilee, except for Jesus crossing over the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes, who were Gentiles. The structure of this second narrative reveals an emphasis on discipleship, which is followed by discourse given to the disciples as they set out on their own for the first time in ministry.

There is an interesting structure to this section as it presents three sets of three. Three examples of Jesus demonstrating power over creation followed by a brief teaching on discipleship and the purpose of the Kingdom.

First set

1. Cleansing a leper | 8:1-4
2. Healing the servant of the Roman centurion | 8:5-13
3. Healing of Peter's mother-in-law | 8:14-17
4. Teaching | The cost of following Jesus | 8:18-22

Second set

1. Calming a storm | 8:23-27
2. Casting out demons | 8:28-34
3. Healing a paralytic | 9:1-8
4. Teaching | The new way of following Jesus | 9:9-17

Third set

1. Resurrecting a dead girl | 9:18-26
2. Healing two blind men | 9:27-31
3. Casting out a demon | 9:32-34
4. Teaching | The need for following Jesus | 9:35-38

The Kingdom has power over creation and has a different kind of call to enter it. 9:35-38 serves as a summary to the section. Notice the similarity to the conclusion of the first section in 4:23-28.

10:1-11:1 2nd Discourse | Commissioning the Twelve | Mission of the Kingdom

Jesus sends out the twelve disciples and gave them power to do the exact same activities that He has just demonstrated. The idea is that the Kingdom is expanding through the disciples.¹

11:2-13:53 Third Section

11:2-12:50 3rd Narrative | Misunderstanding the Kingdom

Now that the mission of the Kingdom has been made know, Matthew moves into the third section and describes how the Kingdom is misunderstood—especially by those who should have known what to expect. There is an interesting chiastic structure in the narrative section.

¹ (House 133-134)

A | Those close to Jesus misunderstand: John 11:2-19

B | Those in the presence of Jesus misunderstand: unrepentant cities ignore signs 11:20-24

C | The nature of the Kingdom: easy yoke 11:25-30

D | Opposite example: Pharisees have a heavy yoke 12:1-14

C | The character of the Kingdom: Spirit is evident 12:15-21

D | Opposite example: Pharisees blaspheme the Spirit 12:22-37

B | Those in the presence of Jesus misunderstand: Pharisees demand signs 12:38-45

A | Those close to Jesus misunderstand: Jesus' family 12:46-50

The third narrative section ends in similar fashion as it began—with those closest to Jesus expressing doubt about his identity and mission. Everyone seems to misunderstand the nature of the Kingdom. The final verses (12:49-50) are a beautiful, sweeping statement of who can be in the Kingdom.

13:1-53 3rd Discourse | The Parables | Nature of the Kingdom

The key to understanding the parables, though, is how they express the nature of the Kingdom and how it is radically different than people's expectations.

13:54-19:2 Fourth Section

13:54-17:27 4th Narrative | Reactions to the Kingdom

Matthew now begins the fourth narrative section of his gospel and focuses on how different groups react and respond to the gospel of the Kingdom and the King Himself. The third section showed how people misunderstood what the Kingdom looked like. Now Matthew will show how people make their decisions about how they either support or oppose Jesus.

The fourth narrative section comprises two sections. The first section (13:53-16:20) wraps up the public phase of the ministry in Galilee. The second section (16:21-17:27) shows Jesus purposefully retreating with His disciples to spend time with them and teaching them privately about the Kingdom. The fourth discourse will focus on how disciples in the Kingdom manage their relationships.

18:1-19:2 4th Discourse | Relationships in the Kingdom

Having spent a considerable amount of time instructing the disciples in the nature and identity of the Kingdom, Jesus now teaches them on what life will look like in the new community of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus teaches on leadership, restoration, and forgiveness, which are all new ways of thinking about life in the kingdom.

19:3-26:5 Fifth Section

19:3-23:39 5th Narrative | Resistance to the Kingdom

Jesus' great ministry in Galilee has now concluded and this narrative section is divided into two distinct but equally important parts. The first part documents the journey to Jerusalem. As Jesus and the disciples' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, great crowds follow Him because of the miracles He had performed earlier. Matthew documents the various teachings that Jesus gave to the crowds along the journey. The audience varies from the disciples to the crowds to individuals. The common theme that runs through each, though, is the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus uses the phrase in every episode.

24:1-25:46 5th Discourse | The Olivette Discourse | Future of the Kingdom

The final narrative and teaching section in Matthew centers on how the Kingdom creates conflict in all areas of life. This conflict also leads to judgment. Chapters 21-22 are fulfillment with tremendous conflict. The Triumphal Entry and cleansing the temple create tension. The religious leaders question the authority of Jesus, which leads to the outright conflict with those leaders and Jesus.

1. Matthew 23 sees Jesus confronting the wicked shepherds of the people—the Pharisees.
2. Matthew 24 is a teaching that Jesus gives to his disciples regarding the coming judgement on Israel and the final consummation of the Kingdom.
3. Matthew 25 continues with parables that describe how people will or will not be ready for the coming of the Kingdom.

26:6-28:20 Conclusion | The Death & Resurrection of the King

Having finished the final discourse, Matthew moves the conclusion of his book—the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This should not come as any surprise to the read because Jesus has predicted in numerous times, and again in 26:2. The Passover would have increased both the temporary population and the atmosphere in Jerusalem. The last thing the Jewish leaders wanted was any kind of reason for Rome to clamp down on the security of the city.

Matthew details the accounts of the final Passover, arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Matthew finishes his account of the life of Jesus with what is commonly referred to as the Great Commission. Jesus indeed does meet up with the disciples in Galilee, which is expected since they probably returned to their previous lives. The final words in the gospel serve to propel the disciples into all the world to make disciples. Matthew does not include any information about the ascension that Luke records in Acts but leave the account with a final promise of Jesus: to be with the disciples always to the end of the age.