

OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28¹

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:

Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,
and inwardly digest them,
that we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

SELECTED QUOTES FROM MATTHEW²

“An account* of the genealogy* of Jesus the Messiah,* the son of David, the son of Abraham.” (1:1)

“Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” (13:52)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (28:19-20)

*Footnotes

1.1 Or *A book*

1.1 Or *birth*

1.1 Or *Jesus Christ*

28.20 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts)
add *Amen*

OUTLINE FOR INTRODUCTION

- 1) Basic Information
 - a) Gospel as genre – Mark and Mathews contributions
 - b) New Testament Chronology
 - c) Matthew Authorship, Date, Location, Unity, Sources
- 2) Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology
- 3) Matthew's Unique Contributions
 - a) Nativity/Proto-Incarnation
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 - a) Jesus' Identity
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- 5) Relevance today

¹ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

² All Bible quotations and footnotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

REFLECTION

What is my goal in studying Matthew?

CLOSING PRAYER

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

The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun

SLOW RELIGION: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW



*The Inspiration of St. Matthew,
Caravaggio, 1602*

Slow Religion, The Gospel According to Matthew is a lay person-led adult education weekly series for Christians and seekers. Slow Religion uses a literary and historical approach to the ancient texts to identify and apply insights from the Gospel to today's world.

Matthew's gospel is worth studying because the author attempts to uphold Jesus' Jewish past, with Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection, in the context of the 1st Century CE Jesus movement and early church, and in a hostile Hellenistic and Jewish world.

21st Century readers recognize Matthew as the source of many of the best-known stories and sayings of Jesus as well as a social philosophy that many non-Christians believe in. Famous for its Sermon on the Mount, The Beatitudes, and other teachings, Matthew is often called the most Jewish of the Gospels, while also contributing with the Gospel of John to antisemitism.

The class is created and led by Joe Jennings and advisors include: the Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Belvedere, CA; the Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer, Episcopal Church of our Saviour, Mill Valley, CA; Eugene E. Lemcio, PhD, Emeritus Professor of New Testament, Seattle Pacific University; the Rev. Heather Wenrick, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Seattle; and the Father Vincent Pizzuto, PhD., vicar at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Inverness CA and Full Professor at the (Jesuit) University of San Francisco, New Testament and Christian Mysticism, in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

Prior Slow Religion Classes include the Gospel of According to Mark (2021-22), the Foundations of Christian Faith (2020-21), the Holy Spirit (2020), the Gospel According to John (2019-20), and Paul's Letter to the Romans (2017-8).

For more information or to join the Slow Religion mailing list or bibliography go to: www.slowreligion.com

BACKGROUND NOTES

Basic Information

Gospel as Genre

The English word “Gospel” (from Anglo-Saxon Godspell) or “good news” is translated from the Greek euangelion³. Originally in Christian usage it meant the good news of God's saving act in Jesus Christ, focused on the cross and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-11). The term was used in the opening verse of the Gospel of Mark. It signified that the prefacing of the account of Jesus' death and resurrection with a string of passages covering his earlier ministry was a way of proclaiming the good news. The NT contains four Gospels-Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

If Mark wrote his account to put a human/historical face on Jesus; strengthen his community's faith under persecution; modify or correct some of his contemporaries views of Jesus; and shape the reader's view of discipleship.

Then Matthew's contribution to the genre include the Nativity story, Ethical Teachings; Christology; Theology; Ecclesiology; Eschatology (To be defined below); and the Resurrection stories.

New Testament Chronology⁴

30 CE+/-	Death of Jesus
40-65 CE	Paul's conversion and ministry
51-52 CE	I Thessalonians
54-55 CE	Galatians
55 CE	Philemon
56 CE	Philippians
56-7 CE	I Corinthians, II Corinthians
57-8 CE	Romans
62 CE	Death of James, brother of Jesus, leader of the early church
64 CE	Emperor Nero's persecution of the Christians in Rome
65-68 CE	Death of Peter and Paul in Rome
67-73 CE	Jewish Revolt Against Romans
70 CE	Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans
60-75 CE	Mark
80-90 CE	Matthew
85 CE +/-	Luke
85 CE +/-	Acts of the Apostles
80-110 CE	John

³ <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/Gospel/>

⁴ Brown, Raymond E., An Introduction to the New Testament, 1996

Matthew Authorship, Date, Location, Unity, Sources⁵

Date	80-90 +/- 10 years
Author by Tradition	Matthew a tax collector among the Twelve, wrote either the Gospel or collected the Lord's sayings in Aramaic. Eusebius, <i>Hist Eccl</i> 3:39 attributes to Papias, a second century CE bishop of Hierapolis in Asian Minor, the earliest testimony to Matthew's authorship. "Now Matthew made an ordered arrangement of the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each one translated it as he was able." The "Gospel according to Matthew" appeared not long after the gospel was written in the 2 nd century CE. ⁶
Author Detectible From Contents	A Greek-speaker, who knew Aramaic or Hebrew or both and was not an eye witness of Jesus' ministry. Read OT in Greek. Probably a Jewish Christian.
Locale Involved	Unknown. Possibly Antioch in modern Syria
Unity and Integrity	No major reason to think more than one author or of any sizable additions to what he wrote.
Sources	Matthew reproduces 80% of Mark. Matthew is 50% longer than Mark. Q Source of sayings (also in Luke but not found in Mark) Unique Matthean sources (content not found in Mark, Luke or John)

Divisions⁷

1:1-2:23	Introduction: Origin and Infancy of Jesus the Messiah The who and how of Jesus' identity (1:1-25) The where and whence of Jesus' birth and destiny (2:1-23)
3:1-7:29	Part One: Proclamation of the Kingdom Narrative: Ministry of JohnBap, baptism of Jesus, the temptations, beginning of the Galilean ministry (3:1-4:25) Discourse: Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)
8:1-10:42	Part Two: The Ministry and Mission in Galilee Narrative mixed with short dialogue: None miracles consisting of healings, calming a storm, exorcism (8:1-9:38) Discourse: Mission Sermon (10:1-42)
11:1-13:52	Part Three: Questioning of and Opposition to Jesus Narrative setting for teaching and dialogue: Jesus and JohnBap, woes on disbelievers, thanksgiving for revelation, Sabbath controversies and Jesus' power, Jesus' family (11:1-12:50) Discourse: Sermon in Parables (13:1-52)
13:53-18:35	Part Four: Christology and Ecclesiology Narrative mixed with much dialogue: Rejection at Nazareth, feeding the 5,000, walking on water, controversies with the Pharisees, healings, feeding the 4,000, Peter's confession, first passion prediction, transfiguration, second passion prediction (13:53-17:27) Discourse: Eschatological Sermon (18:1-35)

⁵ Brown, Raymond E., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1996

⁶ Baryon, John, and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 2001

⁷ Brown, Raymond E., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1996

- 19:1-25:46 **Part Five: Journey to and Ministry in Jerusalem**
 Narrative mixed with much dialogue: teaching, judgement parables, third passion prediction, entry to Jerusalem, cleansing the Temple, clashes with authorities (19:1-23:39)
 Discourse: Eschatological sermon (24:1-25:46)
- 26:1-28:20 **Climax: Passion, Death, and Resurrection**
 Conspiracy against Jesus, Last Supper (26:1-29)
 Arrest, Jewish and Roman Trials, crucifixion, death (26:30-27:56)
 Burial, guard at tomb, opening the tomb, bribing the guard, resurrection appearances (27:57-28:20)

Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology⁸

Apocalyptic⁹ affording a revelation or prophecy; predicting or presaging imminent disaster and total or universal destruction. Greek *apokalýptikos*, equivalent to *apokalýpt(ein)* to uncover, disclose (see apocalypse) + -ikos-ic

Eschatology¹⁰, the doctrine of the last things/end times. It was originally referred to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim beliefs about the end of history, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, the messianic era, and the problem of theodicy (the vindication of God’s justice).

The Book of Daniel’s¹¹ apocalyptic hope anticipated the "kingdom of the Son of Man". Daniel offers an expression of hope in a messiah, a Son of Man, that unites the fulfillment of the history of Israel with the end of world history. In many ways, the Book of Daniel, is a prototype for Jesus.

Matthew’s Unique Contributions

Teaching (5 Discourses)

A close study of Matthew’s five discourses provides grounds for concluding that they are not transcripts of actual sermons. The discourses are anthologies of the remembered sayings of Jesus organized around central themes of his ministry. When the content of Matthew is paralleled in the other gospels, the contents are often scattered. Maybe paralleling the Pentateuch, the first five books of the OT.

Each of the five discourses is paralleled with a shorter version in another synoptic gospel:¹²

5 Matthean Discourses	Matthew	Mark and Luke
Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)	Matt 5-7 (107 verses)	Luke 6:20-49 (30 verses)
Mission Sermon (10:1-42)	Matt 10 (38 verses)	Mark 6:7-13 (7 verses), Luke 9:1-6, 10:1-12 (18 verses)
Sermon in Parables (13:1-52)	Matt 13 (50 verses)	Mark 4:3-34 (32 verses)
Eschatological Sermon (18:1-35)	Matt 18 (33 verses)	Mark 9:35-48 (14 verses)
Eschatological sermon (24:1-25:46)	Matt 24-25 (94 verses)	Mark 13:5-37 (33 verses)

The longer Matthean discourses are thus the work of a responsible anthologizer who had a wide range of traditional sayings of Jesus at his disposal. He shaped these into powerful teaching discourses to serve his church as they explored and communicated key aspects of Jesus teaching.

⁸ The category of “apocalyptic literature” was invented by the German New Testament scholar Friedrich Lücke in 1832 in the context of an introduction to the Book of Revelation. Lücke identified a small number of Jewish apocalyptic writings (Daniel, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and the Sibylline Oracles) and also discussed some Christian apocalypses such as the Ascension of Isaiah. Source: <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195170498.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195170498-e-3>

⁹ Source: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/apocalyptic>

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/eschatology>

¹¹ Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/eschatology>

¹² France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament) – July 27, 2007

In Jesus Matthew finds the embodiment of thought and deed – discourse and narrative¹³:

Jesus words	Jesus deeds
Be meek (5:5)	As he is (11:29; 21:5)
Be merciful (5:7)	As he is merciful (9:27; 15:22; 20:30)
Congratulates those oppressed for God's cause (5:10)	Jesus suffers and dies innocently (27:23)
Demands faithfulness to the Mosaic law (5:17-20)	Faithfully keeps the law during his ministry (8:4; 12:1-8, 9-14; 15:1-20)
Recommends self-denial in the face of evil (5:39)	Does not resist the evil done to him (26:67; 27:30)
Calls for private prayer (6:6)	Prays alone (14:23)
Rejects the service of mammon (6:19)	Lives without concern for money (8:20)
Commands followers to carry crosses (16:24)	Carries his own cross until Simon helped (27:32)

Nativity/Proto-Incarnation

In some ways, the Nativity story is Matthew's answer to Nathaniel's question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

1:18-2:23 are 5 scriptural proofs that Jesus of Nazareth is the messiah. These 31 lines are one of Matt's most distinctive contributions to the Christian story. The narrative is largely unparalleled in the other gospels. They are in fact a grounding of Jesus in OT prophecies and the story of Moses.

Matt agrees with Luke on the basic elements: a betrothed couple called Joseph and Mary, Joseph of the line of David, conception through the Holy Spirit, without human intercourse, angelic revelation of the name of Jesus, birth in Bethlehem during the reign of Herod the Great, and upbringing in Nazareth.

There is nothing in Matt's presentation or in the nature of the events he outlines, to suggest that he is doing more than recording and reflecting on traditions which he had received apparently from some source associated with Joseph. Matthew is using an ancient Greco-Roman trope, the birth story, to answer questions about Jesus.

Quoting Isaiah, the angel tells Joseph that God through the Holy Spirit is at work in Mary to create a son. It is interesting to note that no one in the first century CE interpreted Isaiah this way – this is a Matthew innovation. It looks like Matt knew the story and found the verse to support it, not the other way around.¹⁴

Ekklesia/Ecclesia/ Assembly/School/Church¹⁵

The OT Septuagint (the Greek language version of the Jewish Scriptures) gives two senses of the meaning: 1) an "assembly duly summoned"; and 2) the "Jewish congregation". In both secular and biblical use ekklesia distinguishes between the assembling of men and the men thus assembled. So it is likely that the word assembly had a concrete and abstract meaning.

The NT authors follow the same arrangement but go on to make the distinction between the Church, 1) as the whole body of believers; and 2) as the individual congregation, e.g. the house church. This raises the question as to which meaning came first and to what degree did the two meanings co-exist in the early Jesus movement.

¹³ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, 2001

¹⁴ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament) – July 27, 2007

¹⁵ Kittel, Gerhard Editor, Geoffrey W. Bromley, Translator, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume III, 1965

If you translate *Ekklesia* as school, then Matthew's Jesus may have been defining a set of teachings and chartering a set of followers as instructors to learn those teachings and spread them to the world.

The word *ekklesia*/assembly does not appear in Mark, Luke, John, 2 Timothy, Titus. 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John or Jude.

The three occurrences in Matthew of *ekklesia*/church:

16:18 "And I tell you, you are Peter (Gk *Petros*), and on this rock (Gk *petra*) I will build my *church*, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

18:17 "If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the *church*, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the *church*, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector."

The *ekklesia*/church Matthew 16:18 and 18:17 do not appear to be consonant with one another. The first implies a worldwide church and the second a specific congregation or synagogue.

Proto-Trinitarian/Jesus' identity and relationship to God

Matthew places the Son together with the Father and the Holy Spirit at the Incarnation (1:18-23), the Baptism (3:13-17) and the post-resurrection commission^{16 17} (28:19). It is not clear that Matthew has any further insight into the relationships than the Father-Son relationship he writes about most often. The Spirit though is prominent in Matthew (1:20; 3:11; 3:16; 5:3; 12:18; 12:28; 12:31; 12:32; 12:43; 28:19)

Titles and Names (frequency in Matthew)

Son of Man (29)
David, Son of David (16)
Messiah (17)
Son of God (7)

Moses (7)
Abraham (6)
King of the Jews (4)
Jesus of Nazareth, of Galilee (3)

Theological Emphasis

Theology: There is no systematically developed body of thought in Matthew. He is concerned less with correctness of belief than with obedience. His God was the Jewish God, YWHW, of the OT. His theology was a Jewish theology, transmitted to him by his upbringing and the early church. The divine revelation of Jesus changes Judaism for Matthew.

Christology: The divine revelation of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, comes in the middle of the gospel. (16:16) The Son of God and Son of Man motifs are prominent throughout; and, the Emmanuel motif appears at the beginning and the end. Jesus is implicitly compared with Moses and David. The theme of Jesus as divine wisdom also appears (11:19, 27). The Son is placed together with the Father and the Holy Spirit at the end of the Gospel.

Eschatology: The appearance of Jesus as marking a decisive change of times is already anticipated in the infancy narrative, where his birth is signified by a star. A theme that is echoed in the earthquake at Jesus death and his resurrection. The imminence of the change and the instructions on delay and staying awake temper the eschatological message of Matthew.

The Moses/Jesus Theme¹⁸: Matthew asserts that the histories of Moses, the first deliverer, and Jesus, the messianic deliverer, are in the mysterious providence of a consistent God.

¹⁶ Matthew may have been influenced by the 1st Century CE Jesus movement's baptism ritual language. In the Didache: "Now about baptism: this is how to baptize... baptize in running water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

¹⁷ Paul may have also influenced Matthew's formulation. "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ[c] and in the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)

¹⁸ Allison, Dale C. Jr., *The New Moses, A Matthean Typology*, 1993

The Moses typology in Matthew 1-2: Language from Exodus (Matt 2:19, Exodus 4:19-20); and Deliverance from Egypt (Matt 2:15; Hos 11:1).

The purpose is to tell the reader that there is parallelism between what unfolds in Matthew 2 and what unfolded long ago in Egypt. It compels the reader to set the story of Jesus and the story of the exodus, which is the story of Moses, side by side and ask: how exactly are they similar.

Moses was the paradigmatic prophet-leader, the Messiah's model, the worker of miracles, the giver of the Torah (Laws), the mediator for Israel, and the suffering servant. Jesus was similarly a suffering servant, the mediator of Israel, the giver of Torah, a worker of miracles, the Mosaic Messiah, and the eschatological prophet-king. For Jesus, Moses is his typological herald and foreshadow.

Exousia/Authority: Jesus' authority (*exousia*) is a central theme of both Mark and Matthew, and a core supporting point of Matthew's Christology, the theological interpretation of the person and work of Christ¹⁹ (8:27; 9:6; 10:1; 21:27; 28:18). For Judaism, Moses was the personification of authority and its living definition. In the OT, "Moses says" is interchangeable with "scripture says" and with "God says".

The theme of Jesus' authority appears often with Moses typology. In 17:1-8 the voice from heaven enjoins obedience to Jesus, the prophet like Moses "listen to him" (Exodus 24 and 34). The correlation between Jesus authority and his Mosaic character was a product of design. Matthew has draped the Messiah in the familiar mantle of Moses, by which dress he made Jesus the full hearer of God's authority.

If it was true that Jesus was, for Matthew, the interpretive key to unlocking the religious meaning of the Jewish Bible, it is also true that the Jewish Bible was for him the interpretive key to unlocking the religious meaning of Jesus. Thus Matthew's Gospel contains a defining dialectic: the past informs the present, and the present informs the past. The lines between Moses and Jesus are bidirectional: informed understanding of Jesus requires true understanding of Moses, and true understanding of Moses requires informed understanding of Jesus.

Jesus may have transcended the lawgiver, but in Matthew Moses' laws and Moses are still an imperative. Thus Jesus story, the Gospel, is inexorably tied to Moses, and the OT. This may be Matthew's most conservative insight – even as the movement was widening among Gentiles and moving away from the synagogue, Matthew wrote a Gospel forever tying the story of Jesus to Moses and the OT.

Judaism

Matthew positions Jesus within Jewish prophecies and traditions:

- "you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (1:21)
- "This was to fulfill..." (2:15; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14; 13:35)
- "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." (5:17)
- "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." (5:18)
- "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (7:12)
- "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (22:36-40)
- "Take, eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the[e] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (26:26-28)

¹⁹ Merriam Webster

It is not clear whether Matthews's community was still within Judaism or had recently declared their independence from it or been driven out. But Matthew's gospel is clearly grounded within Judaism and attempts to place Jesus in that context.

Relation to Anti-Semitism²⁰

The parables of the vineyard (21:33-45) and the wedding feast (22:1-14), the invectives toward the Pharisees (23:3-36), and the self-curse of "all the people" that Jesus' "blood be on us and on our children" (27:25) suggest a strained if not broken relationship between Matthew's community and the Jewish authorities and synagogue.

The self-curse of "all the people" that Jesus' "blood be on us and on our children" (27:25) is the infamous "blood cry", was used by Christians throughout the centuries to claim that all Jews in all times and places were collectively responsible for the death of Jesus. It may also reflect that after the destruction of the Temple and the rise of the Pharisees and later the Rabbinic movement, the tensions between Jews and Jewish-Christians is what is driving Matthew's narrative.

Mission

Who is the Jesus movement to evangelize? Jews and/or Gentiles?

"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not take a road leading to gentiles, and do not enter a Samaritan town, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (10:5-6)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."[d] (28:19-20)

Discipleship

Our English word "disciple" is derived from the Latin "discipulus". Like the original Greek "mathētēs", it conveys the sense of "pupil, student, learner". Proclaim the good news, the kingdom of heaven is near. (10:7)²¹

- Given authority and power from Jesus to cure the sick; raise the dead; cleanse those with a skin disease; cast out demons. (10:8)
- Assume poverty, accept no payment for your work (10:15)
- You will be persecuted, and the Spirit of God will speak through you. You may be killed for your faith.(10:16-23)
- Demands perfection or completeness, and absolute loyalty to the mission, Jesus and God. (10:35-39)

²⁰ Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Second Edition, 2017

²¹ Source: Gene Lemcio