



BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTER

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Gospel of Matthew

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Overview

1. Distinctives

- a. Matthew's gospel is an important **link** between the Old and New Testaments.

There are **129 citations**...

(e.g., Mt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9, 35)

...from **25 Old Testament books**.

(e.g., Psalms [29×], Deuteronomy [27×], Isaiah [26×], Jeremiah [13×], Leviticus [12×], Genesis [10×], Zechariah [10×], and Daniel [9×])¹

- b. The main theme is Jesus' **teaching on the kingdom**.

Matthew stresses **Jesus as King** and "**the Kingdom of heaven**." This would resonate with the Jews who were very familiar with **Daniel's prophecy** about a **final king** who would usher in an eternal kingdom for the "God of heaven":

Daniel 2:44: "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a **kingdom that will never be destroyed**, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it **will itself endure forever**."

- c. Matthew's main argument:

If Jesus was the Messiah, why didn't he establish the **promised kingdom**?

Answer: he **offered the kingdom**, but they **rejected it** and crucified the king.

There's now a spiritual kingdom. And the physical kingdom will come when Jesus returns.²

¹ Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 47.

² Not all Christians believe Jesus' will reign on a literal kingdom in Jerusalem for 1,000 years. Amillennialism and postmillennialism reject this. Premillennialism believes this.

d. **Key words and phrases** reveal its **Jewishness**:

end of the age (5×), *Father* (of God) (44×), **kingdom** (23×), **kingdom of heaven** (32×), *righteous* (17×), *righteousness* (7×), **Son of David** (10×), *that it might be fulfilled* (15×), **which was spoken** (in the Old Testament) (20×), and *worship* (14×)³

e. Christ is shown to have **more authority** than all the following: The Law (5:21-22, 27-28), the Sabbath (12:8), the prophets (12:41), the temple (12:6), and the Davidic king (12:42). This would be very profound for **Jewish people**.

f. Matthew is the only gospel to mention the '**church**' by name (Mt. 16:18; 18:17).

g. Matthew **organizes** his Gospel around **five** teachings (discourses) of Christ:

- The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7)
- Jesus sending out the 70 (chap. 10)
- The Kingdom parables (chap. 13)
- Church discipline and forgiveness (Chap. 18)
- The Olivet Discourse / his future return (Chap. 24)

At the end of each discourse, we have this type of saying: “And it came about **when Jesus finished these words...**” (Matt. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

h. **13** of the 45 parables in Matthew are unique to Matthew. And most occur in chapter 13.

i. Matthew alone records the “**Trinitarian**” **baptismal formula** (28:18-20).

2. Author

a. Matthew was one of the Twelve apostles:

Matt. 9:9 – Jesus told “**man named Matthew** sitting at **the tax collector’s booth**” to “follow me.”⁴

Matthew 10:3 – Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and **Matthew the tax collector**; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus...

³ Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 46.

⁴ Mark 2:14-17 and Luke 5:27-32 call Matthew by the name Levi in their accounts. So he had two names.

- b. **The Early church fathers** said Matthew wrote it.

These include Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen).⁵ Examples:

- Papias (AD 70-163): “Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language...”⁶
 - Origen (AD 184-253): “...I have learned by tradition that the **Gospel according to Matthew**, who was at one time a **publican [tax collector]** and afterwards an **Apostle of Jesus Christ, was written first**; and that he composed it in the **Hebrew tongue** and published it for the **converts from Judaism.**”⁷
- c. **Greek manuscripts** say Matthew wrote it. Aleph, B, D say “Gospel according to Matthew.”

3. Date

- a. Matthew was written between **AD 50 to AD 70**,⁸ as early as **sixteen years** after Jesus’ resurrection (AD 33/34).

Supporting evidence: We know it was written before AD 70 because the **Jewish temple was destroyed** in AD 70. But Matthew describes it as **still standing** when he wrote the gospel (Matt. 24:15).

- b. People debate **whether Matthew or Mark wrote first**. There’s also speculation about fragments called ‘**Q**’ and ‘**L**’. But the very early church said Matthew wrote first (above). People believed Matthew was first for 1,800 years! It was only in the last 200 years that people began to question this (most scholars today say Mark wrote first.)

⁵ Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 45.

⁶ Papias, “Fragments of Papias,” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 155. The phrase “Hebrew language” could mean “Hebrew style” and be referring simply to Matthew’s Jewish emphasis. See Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 252.

⁷ Origen, *Origen’s Commentary on Matthew*, ed. Allan Menzies, trans. John Patrick, vol. 9, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1897), 412.

⁸ Geisler puts it between AD 50 and 55 (Geisler, *A popular Survey*, 45). John A. T. Robinson (a liberal scholar) puts it between AD 40 and AD 60, as early as six years from Jesus. See Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology, Volume One: Introduction, Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2002), 474.

Key Passages

1. Matthew's unique genealogy (Mt. 1:1-17)

- a. Only Matthew and Luke have genealogies of Christ. **Matthew goes forward** from Abraham; **Luke goes back** to Adam. This emphasizes the **Jewishness** of the gospel message.

Matthew's Genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17):

Abraham (father of Jews) → David → Solomon → Jacob → Joseph → Jesus

Luke's Genealogy (Luke 3:23-38):

Jesus → Joseph → Eli → Nathan → David → Abraham → **Adam (father of all)**

- b. The **four women** in Matthew's genealogy reveal **God's grace**.

"...all were in some sense outsiders (**sinners, outcasts, foreigners**) whom God used to carry forward his saving purpose. They foreshadow the **poor and lowly**, the **outcasts**, and ultimately the **Gentiles**, who will respond to God's salvation."⁹

- Tamar: **Pretended** to be a **prostitute** to have a child (Mt 1:3; Gen. 38:15-16)
- Rahab: **Canaanite woman** who was an **actual prostitute** (Mt. 1:5; Josh. 2:1)
- Ruth: A **foreigner** (a Moabite woman) (Mt. 1:5; Ruth 1:4)
- Bathsheba: Married to a **foreigner** (a Hittite) and **committed adultery** with David (Mt. 1:6; 2 Sam. 11:2-5)

2. Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7)

Here's a sample of what Jesus talked about in this great sermon.

Anger:

Matthew 5:21, 22 – “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, **‘You shall not murder...** But I tell you that **anyone who is angry** with a brother or sister, will be **subject to judgment...**”

⁹ Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 224.

Lust:

Matthew 5:27, 28 – “You have heard that it was said, ‘You **shall not commit adultery.**’ But I tell you that **anyone who looks at a woman lustfully** has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Divorce:

Matthew 5:27, 28 – “It has been said, ‘**Anyone who divorces his wife** must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and **anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**”

Loving Enemies:

Matthew 5:43–44 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, **love your enemies...**”

Pride:

Matthew 6:5 – “And when you pray, **do not be like the hypocrites**, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others...”

Worrying:

Matthew 6:25–26 “Therefore I tell you, **do not worry about your life**, what you will eat or drink... Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them...”

Four main views of the Sermon on the Mount:

- a. Jesus was **trying to convict all people of sin** by using the Law.
 - Jesus’ point is that nobody can really keep the law.
 - He was showing our need for a savior.
- b. Jesus was describing the **millennial kingdom**.
 - God gave the Israelite nation rules for living under the Old Covenant. Jesus was giving us rules for living under the New Covenant.
 - It’s not ‘how to get to heaven’ but is meant to be a description of life in the Kingdom, after the resurrection, when we have sinless bodies.
- c. Jesus was giving **God’s standard** for **all times**.

- These are ethical teachings and it is for all times.
 - It is not just for the New Testament or even Old Testament, but for all.
- d. Jesus was giving rules for **the church age**.
- Jesus is describing how people in the church should behave today between his first and second coming.

3. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12)

Matthew 12:32 – “Jesus said, ‘Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who **speaks against the Holy Spirit** will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.’”

- a. Jesus’ credentials were his miracles. The **Old Testament prophesied** that when Messiah comes, the **blind** would see, **deaf** would hear, **lame** would run, **mute** would speak (Isa. 35:5-6). You would think they would recognize Jesus was Messiah because he was doing these miracles. But the Pharisees **attributed Jesus’ miracles to Satan** (Mt. 12:24).
- b. *Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit*: If a person rejects God’s proof for Jesus (his miracles) then **there is no other evidence** that will convince them. **This person cannot be saved.**

4. Jesus speaks in Parables (Mt. 13)

Continuing with Matthew’s argument... **the leaders rejected Jesus**. So, what happens if the nation rejects Messiah? **Does that mean there’s no kingdom?** Will the kingdom be **taken away forever?**

Matthew’s point seems to be that the **kingdom starts small** but will **certainly come**. Jesus teaches this through several **Kingdom parables**.

- a. Parable of the Sower (13:1-9; 18-23)
- The **majority would reject** Jesus’ teaching (only 25% have good soil).
 - We **shouldn’t be surprised** the kingdom is rejected.
- b. Parable of the Tares (13:24-40; 36-43)
- The **harvest does not come immediately** but there will be a delay.

- Believers and unbelievers **will exist side by side** for a while.
- c. Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31, 32)
 - The kingdom starts like a **tiny seed**. But it grows into a **large tree**.
- d. Parable of the Leaven (13:33)
 - The kingdom starts small like a **pinch of leaven** but fills the **entire dough**.
- e. Parable of the Hidden Treasure (13:44, 45)
 - The kingdom is something **small** and **hidden**.

5. Peter's confession (Mt. 16:13-19)

Peter's confession that Jesus is Messiah (Christ) is a key point in Matthew's gospel:

Matthew 16:13–19

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, **“Who do people say the Son of Man is?”**

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say **John the Baptist**; others say **Elijah**; and still others, **Jeremiah** or **one of the prophets**.”

¹⁵ **“But what about you?”** he asked. **“Who do you say I am?”**

¹⁶ **Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”**

¹⁷ Jesus replied, **“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that **you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”****

Three views on “on this rock”:

- a. The **rock** refers to **Peter** (Peter means ‘rock’):
 - Some protestants reject this view because the Roman Catholic Church uses it to argue Peter was the first pope. But it does not have to mean he was a ‘pope.’ Peter really was **instrumental** in bringing gospel to **Jews** (Acts 2); then **half-Jews** (Acts 8); then **Gentiles** (Acts 10).
- b. The **rock** to **Peter's confession**.
 - Jesus would build his church on **the confession that Peter gave** about Jesus being the Messiah.

- c. The **rock** refers to **Jesus**.
- Think of **Jesus pointing at himself** and saying, “upon this rock (me) I will build my church.”

6. The Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24-25)

Back to Matthew’s argument again... **Matthew is answering the big question:** If Jesus was the Messiah, **why didn’t he setup a kingdom?** He *did* present the kingdom. But the people rejected his kingdom offer. Because of this, he was **doing Plan B**. But it would not be Plan B forever. It will come! That’s the point of the ‘Olivet Discourse.’

- a. The disciples essentially asked him, **when will your kingdom come?**

Matthew 24:3 – “As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘**when will this happen** [destruction of the temple], and what will be the **sign of your coming** and of the end of the age?’

Here are the signs Jesus gave of his second coming:

- Deception (v. 4)
- False messiahs (v. 5)
- **Great wars (nation vs. nation)** (v. 6,7)
- **Natural disasters** like famines, diseases, pestilences, earthquakes (v.7)
- Tribulation, **persecution** and **martyrdom** for believers (v. 9-10)
- **False prophets & apostasy** (v. 11)
- **Lack of morality & love** (v. 12)
- Global preaching of the Gospel (v. 14)

- b. Practical take-aways

- **Be wise and discerning.** Mt. 24:4 – “**Take heed** that no one **deceives** you.”
- **Be faithful.** Mt. 24:45-47 – “Who then is a **faithful** and wise **servant**, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing... he will make him ruler over all his goods.”
- **Be prepared.** Jesus goes next into **Parable of Ten Virgins**; only those virgins who were **prepared got to enter in!** “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, **I do not know you.**’ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” (Matt. 25:11-13)

Questions & Answers

Does Matthew use the word ‘fulfill’ differently?

Yes! Matthew uses the word “fulfill” in at least three ways. The first is **(1) literal fulfillment**. This is what we typically think of today. For example, Jesus was born in Bethlehem and this fulfills prophecy (Matt. 2:5-6; Micah 5:2). The second way is **(2) typological fulfillment**. This is when an Old Testament person or event is a model which finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ. The last way is **(3) analogical fulfillment**. This is where something in Christ’s life parallels something in the Old Testament. An example of this is when the mothers were weeping because Herod killed their children (Matt. 2:16-18) and this parallels Israel weeping for the dead during the Babylonian Exile (Jer. 31:15).¹⁰

Does the date of Matthew matter?

Liberal scholars try to push the date of all New Testament books back as far as possible in an attempt to prove they are filled with inaccuracies, myths and legends. However, **many scholars give very early dates** for all New Testament books, including the Gospels. It comes down to whether one holds a high or low view of Scripture. Conservative Christians should argue for **a high view of Scripture**.

Is it important that Matthew was the author?

Liberal critical scholars will also **try to deny the authenticity** of New Testament books. If they can show that books were not written by Paul or John, for example, then that substantially weakens the authority of those writings. If it could be proven that John did not write his gospel, but followers in the 2nd c. AD wrote the gospel and attributed it to John, then it calls into question how accurate the account was. Moreover, it could be argued that the followers embellished the miracles and even filled it with their own beliefs as they developed over time. However, **there is good scholarly support** showing the **authenticity of the New Testament writings**.¹¹ Like the previous point, people tend to be swayed to different scholarly conclusions based on whether one holds a high or low view of Scripture. Conservative Christians should argue for **a high view of Scripture**.

¹⁰ Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 246.

¹¹ A fantastic example is Eta Linnemann who studied under Rudolf Bultmann. She later recanted of her higher-critical publications and went head-to-head with critical scholars. See Eta Linnemann, trans. Robert Yarbrough, *Biblical Criticism on Trial: How Scientific Is Scientific Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001).

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