

KINGDOM *of* HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW



Rosebank
UNION CHURCH

Matthew Series outline

	Date	Passage	Subject
1	26 Feb	1v1-17	Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham
2	5 Mar	1v18-25	The birth of Jesus
3	12 Mar	2v1-23	Responses to Jesus's birth
4	19 Mar	3v1-12	The ministry of John the Baptist
5	26 Mar	3v13-17, 4:1-11	Jesus's baptism & temptations
	(Series break - 2 weeks)		
6	16 Apr	4v12-22	The beginning of Jesus' ministry
7	23 Apr	4v23-5v12	The beatitudes
8	30 Apr	5v13-16	On being salt & light
9	7 May	5v17-20	Fulfilling righteousness
10	14 May	5v21-26	Anger
11	21 May	5v27-32	Lust
12	28 May	5v33-48	Relationships with others
13	4 Jun	6v1-18	Alms, prayer & fasting
14	11 Jun	6v5-15	The Lords' prayer
15	18 Jun	6v19-34	Material possessions
16	25 Jun	7v1-12	Relationships with others (pt 2)
	(Series break - 3 weeks)		
17	23 Jul	7v13-29	True and false worship
18	30 Jul	8v1-17	Healing stories: pt 1
19	6 Aug	8v18-22	The cost of discipleship
20	13 Aug	8v23-9v17	Healing stories: pt 2
21	20 Aug	9v14-17	New & Old religion
22	27 Aug	9v18-38	Healing stories: pt 3
23	3 Sep	9v35-38	Sending out labourers
24	10 Sep	10v1-15	The twelve
25	17 Sep	10v16-23	Jesus teaches on persecution (pt 1)
26	24 Sep	10v24-11:1	Jesus teaches on persecution (part 2)
27	1 Oct	11v2-24	Jesus & John the Baptist
28	8 Oct	11v25-30	True rest
29	15 Oct	12v1-21	Two Sabbath encounters
30	22 Oct	12v22-37	The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
31	29 Oct	12v38-50	Conflict with the pharisees
32	5 Nov	13v1-23	The parable of the sower
33	12 Nov	13v24-43	The parable of the weeds
34	19 Nov	13v44-52	Parables of kingdom value

Background to Matthew

Matthew in church history

- Matthew has received a lot of attention through the centuries, beginning with the early church, who was influenced more by this first gospel than the others.
- This prominence is mainly due to Matthew's unique structure, where the book is divided into five 'chapters', each with a narrative & discourse couplet - **the 'words' and 'works' of Jesus**.
- Matthew is shaped this way likely to draw attention to the teachings of Jesus (see below), which has given it prominence in teaching ministries (compare to Mark's Gospel, with an emphasis on the narrative of Jesus)¹.
- The unique connection to the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), which surely resonates with its placement as the first book of the New Testament, has also given it great prominence in the church over the years.

Is Matthew history or theology?

- There are two views, at opposite ends of the spectrum, regarding Gospel traditions:
 - i. A liberal view: the gospels are essentially imaginative documents produced to meet the churches needs. This view would say the gospels were 'produced' post-AD 70, and thus do not reflect the historical Jesus.
 - 'dehistoricizing'
 - ii. A conservative view: Evangelicals have rightly responded in defence of the historical reliability of the gospels, **but their stress on historicity may neglect the theological import of the Gospels**. A false dichotomy of history vs theology is shown (at the extreme end of the spectrum) in seeing the gospels as history, and the epistles as theology. They would thus see no theological motivations in the Gospels. However, the Gospels are clearly not comprehensive biographies or exhaustive histories of Jesus (John 21:25²)
 - 'detheologizing'
- How do we reconcile the history vs theology question? The following quotes from Turner are important:
 - 'The Gospels narrate what really happened but do so in part for theological reasons'
 - John 20:30-31 *"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written **so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ**, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"*
 - 'The Gospels are theological interpretations of selected traditions that the authors accepted as reliable accounts of historical events that occurred during the life and ministry of Jesus'
 - Luke 1:1-4 *"Inasmuch as **many have undertaken** to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught"*

¹ Which has led some to say that Matthew abbreviates Mark's account of Jesus' deeds and expands Mark's account of Jesus' words.

² *"Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written"*

- Scholarly consensus today holds that Mark's Gospel was a source for Matthew³ & Luke⁴ (along with a hypothetical source Q⁵)⁶
- 'Their (the Gospel authors) purpose was not to satisfy intellectual curiosity by compiling historical data but to disciple their respective communities by bringing selected episodes from the life of Jesus to bear on the communities' needs'
- The Gospels are therefore **theologically interpreted history**, written for the edification of Christian communities.

The literary structure of Matthew

- Students of Matthew have long noted the unique juxtapositioning of **narrative** and **discourse** sections in the Gospel.
- These junctions are clearly marked by the phrase "*When Jesus had finished...*":
 - 7:28 (The end of the sermon on the mount)
 - 11:1 (The end of the missionary discourse)
 - 13:53 (The end of the discourse on parables of the kingdom)
- Some have said that this corresponds to the five books of Moses in the Pentateuch, and while this is interesting there are no clear links between the structure of Jesus' five discourse and the first five books of the Bible⁷.

³ It is commonly noted that approximately 90% of Mark is also found in Matthew

⁴ Mark was of course not an eyewitness, but patristic tradition places Peter's recollections and authority behind Mark's account (Eusebius - mid 4th cent CE)

⁵ Supposedly a collection of the sayings of Jesus (not documented)

⁶ A later development is the four-source theory with additional Matthean and Lukan hypothetical sources

⁷ Admittedly a huge focus in Matthew, related to Jesus' teachings, is his 'fulfillment' motif of the Hebrew Bible, and how Jesus' teachings interpreted the law of Moses. The name 'Moses' will come up a lot in our discussions, and there are many allusions to Moses in Jesus, but ultimately it's hard to see how Matthew's Gospel explicitly follows Moses' first five books.

- A condensed outline of Matthew, based on this approach to Matthew's literary structure is as follows⁸:
 - I. Prologue/Introduction: The origin of Jesus the Messiah (1:1-2:23)**
 - II. Early days of kingdom word & works (3:1-7:29)**
 - i. Narrative 1: John the Baptist, Jesus & the kingdom of God (3:1-4:25)
 - ii. Discourse 1: Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)
 - III. Galilean ministry continues (8:1-11:1)**
 - i. Narrative 2: Three cycles of miracles and discipleship (8:1-10:4)
 - ii. Discourse 2: Missionary discourse (10:5-11:1)
 - IV. Growing opposition to the kingdom of heaven (11:2-13:52)**
 - i. Narrative 3: Three cycles of unbelief and belief (11:2-12:50)
 - ii. Discourse 3: Parables of the kingdom of heaven (13:1-52)
 - V. Opposition to the kingdom continues (13:52-19:2)**
 - i. Narrative 4: Various responses to the Son of God (13:53-17:27)
 - ii. Discourse 4: Values and relationships in the kingdom community (18:1-19:2)
 - VI. Opposition comes to a head in Judea (19:3-26:2)**
 - i. Narrative 5: Ministry in Judea (19:3-23:39)
 - ii. Discourse 5: The Olivet discourse (24:1-26:2)
 - VII. Epilogue/conclusion: Passion, resurrection, and commission (26:3-28:20)⁹**

Authorship & Date

- The Gospel of Matthew is technically anonymous, as are the other Gospels (John does hint at its own authorship).
- A plausible argument holds that the Gospel titles are very early, perhaps even original with the Gospel, which favours traditional views of Gospel authorship¹⁰. The unanimous attribution of the Gospels to their traditional authors by 150CE supports the theory that their titles were original.
- Internal evidence supports Matthean authorship, as the author was clearly a Jew who understood Hebrew and Judaism. This may not prove Matthean authorship, but allows for it.
- 'Matthew the tax collector' is mentioned five times in the NT (Matt 9:9, 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13)¹¹
- In terms of date, Matthew was well known by the early second century. Accordingly, the Gospel must have been written by the turn of the first century CE at the latest.
- Current scholarly consensus, based on Markan-priority view of Gospel relationships, places Matthew's origin in the 80's or 90's CE.

⁸ Turner pg 10

⁹ Mark's passion narrative is approx 20% of his Gospel, Matthew is approx 10%.

¹⁰ Supported by manuscript evidence, as well as early historical sources (such as Eusebius)

¹¹ The calling of Matthew in Mark 2:13-17 & Luke 5:27-32 has 'Levi' as the name of this disciple. There are various explanations for this, including a) the fact that some Jews had two names, b) Jesus gave Simon the name Peter, and c) the resonance between 'Maththaion' (Grk 'Matthew') and 'mathetes' (Grk 'disciple'), with discipleship a key theme in Matthew.

Recipients and Occasion

- Turner has an important comment on the importance of this subject as it relates to Matthew:
 - 'Matthew's characteristic fulfillment formula quotations from the Hebrew Bible and his presentation of a Jesus who came not to destroy but to fulfil the law and the prophets are but two of the reasons every student of Matthew must come to some conclusion about the relationship of this Gospel's recipients to Judaism'
- The fact that Matthew is writing to a Christian Jewish audience is (largely) not disputed, what is in question is their connection to the synagogue.
- Some say that Matthew's audience contains many Gentiles who have already separated from the synagogue, others say that his audience is largely Jewish and still connected with the synagogue in some way.
- Others take a middle ground saying that Matthew must be viewed against the background of an embattled minority in the process of leaving the synagogue.
- **The richness of the relationship between the story of Jesus and the account of the Hebrew Bible must lead one to believe that Matthews community is still somewhat engaged with the synagogue.**
- An extreme view, **to be opposed**, would say that Matthew's Gospel promotes Christianity as a new religion for Gentiles, in opposition to Judaism.
- We will see this more clearly as we progress through the Gospel, but suffice to say, for now, that the 'fulfillment' formula never completely jettisons the Mosaic instructions, whilst at the same time, they do certainly highlight Jesus authority over them and thus emphasise his discretion to re-interpret (see Matthew 5:17-48 for an overview of this tension).
- Matthew certainly portrays Gentiles in a positive light, and the Gospel of course climaxes with the call to take Jesus' message to 'all nations'. Thus while Matthew focuses on a Jewish Christian audience, **the emphasis to his community is on the ever-expanding horizons of the message of Jesus, ultimately to 'all nations'.**

Theological emphases in Matthew

Matthew and the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

- In addition to many informal allusions to the Old Testament (which are difficult to count) there are about 50 formal quotations.
- This extensive reference to the Hebrew Bible¹² is now one of the major reasons Matthew is noted as having a Jewish orientation.
- Matthew clearly viewed both the historical patterns and the prophetic oracles of the Hebrew Bible as filled with ultimate significance through the ministry and teaching of Jesus:
 - Matthew 5:17 *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them”*

Fulfillment

- Besides referring to the Hebrew Bible a lot, Matthew distinctively uses a ‘fulfillment formula’ which utilise the verb πληρωω - ‘pleroo’, ten times. For example:
 - *“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet...”* (Matt 1:22)
- The importance of these fulfillment formulae relates to the **theological implications** of the life of Jesus, our view of the **congruity of the whole Bible**, and also to our view of **scripture as being divinely inspired and authoritative**.
- The following tables summarises the Biblical texts quoted by Matthew:

Matthew	Bible reference	Subject
1:23	Isa 7:14	A virgin will conceive and bear a son called Immanuel
2:15	Hos 11:1	God called his Son from Egypt
2:18	Jer 31:15	In Ramah, Rachel unconsolably mourned her murdered children
2:23	Jud 13:5, 7?, Isa 11:1? (Unclear)	The Messiah will be called a Nazarene
4:15-16	Isa 9:1-2	Dark Galilee of the Gentiles sees the light
8:17	Isa 53:4	The servant bears the nation's diseases
12:18-21	Isa 42:1-4	Gentiles will hope in the Spirit-empowered servant
13:35	Ps 78:2	The psalmist speaks parabolically of deep things
21:5	Isa 62:11, Zech 9:9	Zion's king appears meekly, riding a donkey's colt
27:9-10	Jer 32:6-9, Zech 11:12-13	Thirty pieces of silver are used to buy the potter's field

¹² Scholars today prefer “Hebrew Bible’ to ‘Old Testament’, as ‘old’ is often connoted with ‘antiquated, obsolete, outmoded’ etc.

- **It is important to note that Matthew's use of 'fulfillment' goes beyond just the idea of events predicted by prophets occurring ie 'fulfilled'.** In this limited view of 'fulfillment', prophecy is merely prediction.
- As Turner says:
 - 'Fulfillment in Matthew has as much to do with **historical patterns as with prophetic predictions**. Prophetic prediction contains the prophet's revelational foresight of a future event (2:4-6), but Matthew's fulfillment quotations more often contain **Christian hindsight in which a historical event from the Hebrew Bible serves as a pattern for a NT event that it anticipated**. Historical events, whether past, present or future, are viewed as the providential outworking of God's plan. Also, Biblical prophecy is primarily not prediction but covenantal admonition, which utilises the rehearsal of past events as well as the prediction of future events to motivate present covenant loyalty'
- For example, in Matthew 23:29-36 the legal experts and pharisees are seen as fulfilling the measure of sin of their ancestors (23:32).
- The meaning of this is that **Jesus' enemies are the culmination of previous enmity against God's messengers the prophets**. Just as the prophets anticipate the Messiah, the prophet's enemies anticipate the Messiah's enemies.
- Biblical redemptive history therefore provides a pattern that leads up to climactic fulfillment in the NT, **but the fulfillment is the climax of a historical pattern, not a predictive oracle**.
- Another important example is in 5:17, where Jesus' fulfillment of 'the law and prophets' should be viewed as fulfillment of the Bible as a whole, clearly not just the predictive portions!
- We will see the significance of each fulfillment formula as we move through the book, but for now we can summarise the various uses of 'fulfillment' in three categories:
 - i. **Ethical** (where Jesus fulfils the ideals of the scriptures eg 3:15, 5:17)
 - ii. **Historical** (where events in Jesus' ministry fulfill historic patterns eg 1:22, 2:15, 17, 23, 13:14, 35, 23:32, 27:9)
 - iii. **Prophetic** (where events fulfill specific predictions 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 21:4, 26:54, 56)
- **The most prevalent is the historical aspect (ii)**, where events in biblical history anticipate events in Jesus' ministry in that Jesus fulfils them with new significance.

Christology

- Matthew's Christology is seen in the various titles of Jesus that he emphasises throughout his Gospel.
 - a) **'Messiah/Christ':**
 - Jesus is called 'the Messiah' in the very first verse of Matthew, at the end of the genealogy, and at the beginning of the description of his birth (v1, 16-17, 18). This cluster of references to Jesus as Messiah strongly links Jesus to Israel's history and hopes.
 - Another cluster of usages of the title 'messiah' occur in the passion week story.
 - This title is certainly the key to Jesus' identity in Matthew!
 - The key to Matthew's distinct view of Jesus as Messiah is the linkage of 'Messiah' to 'Son of God' in two key passages (16:16, 26:63-64)

b) 'Son of David'

- This title occurs more frequently in Matthew than in the other Gospels.
- Matthew identifies Jesus as the son of David immediately after identifying him as the Messiah in 1:1, and then quickly establishes Jesus' Davidic lineage.
- Subsequent use of the title occurs on the lips of those who call on Jesus to heal them (9:27, 15:22, 20:30-31)
- These texts indicate that Jesus uses his royal authority to help, not to oppress, the needy.
- Jesus as Messiah, son of David, is also the cause of the final conflict with the religious leaders in the passion week.

c) 'Son of Abraham'

- This title also appears immediately in Matthew's Gospel, but here does not stress messianic connections, instead it stresses Jesus's Jewish roots.
- This is done to highlight historical fulfillment as the one who culminates God's plans that originated in Abraham (Gen 12).

d) 'Immanuel'

- The significance of Jesus as 'God with us' is developed through the quotation of Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23, in reference to Jesus' virginal conception.
- It is little recognised that this theme also closes Matthew's gospel with Jesus' promise to be with his disciples until the end of the age (Matt 28:20), forming an 'inclusio'¹³. This stresses the importance of the presence of God in the person of Jesus.

e) 'King'

- The arrival of the wise man in Matt 2 in search of a newborn king sets in motion the story of God's true ruler in Jesus versus the evil pretender, Herod.
- The triumphal entry focuses on Jesus as King, Jesus' prediction of a future judgment portrays him as a King who separates the blessed from the cursed (25:34, 40-41), and at his trial before Pilate Jesus acknowledges the claim against him as being a King (27:11).
- In the passion narrative the soldiers mock Jesus as king, and Pilate (evidently sarcastically) places the title of 'King' in three languages on Jesus' cross.

f) 'Son of God'

- Some scholars argue that 'Son of God' is the permanent title of Jesus in Matthew.
- This theme of Jesus as God's Son is developed throughout the Gospel in historical fulfillment patterns like Jesus' virgin birth and his sojourn into Egypt (Matt 2:15 & Hos 11:1).
- At Jesus' baptism he is confirmed as God's beloved Son (Matt 3:17). Satan challenges this endorsement in the temptations of Jesus, two of which specifically tempt him to manifest his status as Son of God.
- Jesus' divine sonship is also demonstrated through his authority over evil spirits and the weather (8:29, 14:33 *'truly you are the son of God'*).
- Peter famously acknowledges Jesus as Messiah AND son of God in 16:16, although he has much to learn about divine sonship as submission to the Father (16:22-23)

¹³ An 'inclusio' is a literary device that sees two similar statements as being 'bookends' that highlight and intentional structure.

g) **'Lord'**

- In the Greco-Roman times of Jesus, 'lord' had a range of usage from a term of polite greeting (like 'sir') to a term for the Roman emperor, who was thought to be divine.
- The term occurs about 6000 times in LXX¹⁴ as a translation of the Hebrew *Yahweh*, the sacred name of God. Matthew is not at all hesitant to apply the term to Jesus!
- At times Jesus calls himself 'lord', referring to his authority in various usages.
- We must thus discern the usage as it relates to each passage, from respectful references to Jesus to overtones of Jesus' divinity.

h) **'Teacher'**

- It is significant that Jesus's disciples never call him teacher - it is only used as a title by those who do not follow Jesus!
- On three occasions Jesus calls himself teacher, which means there's nothing inherently sinister in the title, but for Matthew Jesus is clearly so much more than a teacher, and those who only use that title for him are guilty of 'damning him with faint praise' (Turner)

i) **'Son of Man'**

- **The Gospels as a whole use this term more than any other to refer to Jesus.**
- Matthew uses 'Son of man' 30 times, but with three primary nuances:
 - i. Passages that stress Jesus's **suffering and humility**. The biblical background for this use of the term seems to be the many passages that employ the term 'son of man' to describe humanity in general and a prophet in particular (like Ezekiel)
 - ii. Passages that stress Jesus's **power and authority**.
 - iii. Passages that focus on Jesus as the **glorious coming King**. The background for the second and third usages of the term is no doubt Daniel 7:13, to which Jesus alludes in Matt 26:64. There are also overtones of Dan 7:13-14 in the language of the Great Commission. This duality of present and future nuances of Jesus' authority is crucial for understanding Matthew's 'kingdom of heaven' theme.

¹⁴ The first translation of the OT, in Greek.

Kingdom of Heaven

- According to Turner: 'The kingdom of God/heaven is undoubtedly at the centre of the message of Matthew'¹⁵
- It is however a complex issue, where we have to get our heads around three matters related to the expression 'kingdom of heaven'

a) 'The kingdom' in Matthew

- 'The expression "kingdom of heaven" is literally "the kingdom of the heavens" (η βασιλεια των ουρανων). **It occurs 32 times in Matthew and nowhere else in the NT.**
- Matthew also uses the more common expression "kingdom of God" (η βασιλεια του θεου) four of five times, and we have to try understand why he uses this expression instead of his more favoured 'kingdom of heaven' in these places.
- The word 'kingdom' (βασιλεια - 'basileia') occurs 19 times in Matthew. Twice it refers to human kingdoms, twice to Satan's kingdom. The remaining 15 times refer to the kingdom of God.
- Similarly, the word 'king' (βασιλευς - 'basileus') is used to refer to both human kings as well Jesus & the Father (8 references for the former, 14 for the latter)
- Matthew's use of the kingdom occurs in several important connections to his gospel:
 - i. The kingdom is at the heart of John's, Jesus' and the Church's **proclamations** (3:2, 4:17, 10:7, 13:19, 24:14)
 - ii. Jesus **miracles demonstrate the authority** of the kingdom (4:23-25, 8:9-13, 9:6-8, 12:28, 20:30-34)
 - iii. His **teaching on the ethical life** of disciples prominently features the kingdom (5:3, 10, 19, 20, 6:10, 33, 7:21)
 - iv. His **parables picture the work of the kingdom in redemptive history** (13:11, 19, 24, 31, 33, 38, 43-45, 47, 52, 18:23, 22:2, 25:1)
 - v. As King, he **judges** the world (25:34, 40)

¹⁵ Turner pg 37

b) The kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God

- Sometimes scholars might say there is a distinction between these two terms, particularly classic dispensationalism, which says the two kingdoms only merge on Christ's return (the one kingdom - 'heaven' is external profession, and the other kingdom - 'God' is the realm of genuine spirituality).
- However, this is untenable for at least three reasons:
 - i. Matt 19:23-24 uses both phrases in a synonymous fashion:
 - *"And Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the **kingdom of heaven**. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the **kingdom of God**'"*
 - ii. A comparison of parallel synoptic texts indicates Matthew uses 'kingdom of heaven' when Mark and/or Luke use 'kingdom of God' (eg compare Matt 13:31 with Mark 4:30, Matt 19:14 with Mark 10:14 & Luke 18:16)
 - iii. Matthew's terminology is due to the association of heaven as God's realm with God himself (compare Daniel 2:18-19, 28, 37, 44, 4:34-35, 37, 5:23, 12:17). Such an association is called metonymy¹⁶, and is likely due to reverence for the name of God in the Jewish Christian community that Matthew is writing to.

Matthew frequently refers to the "Father in heaven" (15 times), and the phrase "from heaven" or "in heaven" seems to mean "from God" or "in God" (9 times).
- Thus the expression "kingdom of heaven" is part of a general pattern centering on Matthew's conception of the earth as humanity's abode and the heavens as the abode of God and God's angels.
- However, eschatological hope in Matthew includes heaven's rule coming to earth.
- Lastly, it is likely that Matthew avoids mentioning 'God' out of respect for his Jewish Christian audience, who have a reverence for the divine name of God.

c) The presence and/or future of the kingdom

- The question of the **presence and future of the kingdom** is closely linked to the question of the **nature** of the kingdom.
- The idea of a 'kingdom' includes at least four aspects:
 - i. A ruler (a king)
 - ii. Those who are ruled (subjects)
 - iii. The exercise of that rule
 - iv. A realm in which that rule occurs (the place or domain of the reign)
- Those who emphasise the present aspect of the kingdom of God stress the dynamic 'rule' aspect of the kingdom (point iii above), whereas those who emphasise the future aspect of the kingdom tend to stress the concrete 'realm' aspect (point iv above).
- Recently, in our Daniel series, we came across the various millennial views. At the one end of the spectrum is the premillennial view, which emphasises a future kingdom of God on earth, in the millennium. At the other end is the amillennial view, which emphasises the current rule of God on earth through the Church.
- **No matter your millennial view, it's important for everyone to realise that the kingdom, as displayed in Matthew, has both present AND future aspects to it.**

¹⁶ Like using the word 'suit' to refer to a businessman. Here God's abode is used to refer to God himself.

- On the kingdom **present**:
 - John, Jesus and the disciples announce the dawning of the kingdom (3:2, 4:17, 10:7).
 - Those who repent at this message of God's rule already possess the kingdom (5:3, 10).
 - The royal power of God is clearly at work in Jesus' miracles (12:28).
 - The church is endowed with this dynamic power for ministry through its confession of Jesus as son of God (16:18-19, 28:18-20)
- On the kingdom **future**:
 - The full manifestation of Gods rule on earth is anticipated in Matt 6:10:
 - *"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"*
 - Those who have already experienced the kingdoms power (5:3, 10) will someday receive it in full measure (5:3-9)¹⁷
 - At the return go Jesus the Son of Man, the entire world will come under God's rule (7:21-23, 25:31, 34), which points to a definite concrete, and future, realm.
- Generally speaking, 'the kingdom of heaven' **refers to the nearness or even presence of the rule of God in the person, works, and teaching of Jesus** (3:2, 4:17, 10:7, 11:12), **but there are times when it implies** (5:19, 7:21, 13:24, 47, 25:1) or clearly **describes** (8:11 cf 6:10, 13:38-43, 25:34, 26:29) **the future reign of Jesus on earth**.
- One of the ways biblical scholars talk about this tension is to say that God's reign has been **inaugurated** at Jesus' first coming and will be **consummated** when he returns.
- ***We must be careful to hold on tightly to the future hope of the return of Jesus to consummate the kingdom of God on earth, while at the same time realising that His current position as ascended king at the right hand of God, dispensing the Spirit, means his disciples can live under his reign, albeit it a world not yet fully under his dominion.***

Conflict over authority

- The key motif in Matthew that moves the plot forward, and displays the struggles involved in the advance of the kingdom is **conflict**.
- From the very beginning, with Herod the Great's murder of infant children in an attempt to eradicate a potential new Jewish King, to the very end, where the religious leaders conspire with Roman soldiers to kill Jesus, conflict drives the story of Jesus' life and ministry.
- We will comment on the significant points of increasing conflict as we progress in Matthew, but here are a few 'highlights':
 - The sermon on the mount: Jesus' teaching on righteousness clashes with religious leaders, a tension not lost on the listeners:
 - Matthew 7:28-29 *"And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes"*
 - The conflict intensifies with conflict over the authority to forgive sins (9:1-8) and Jesus' association with sinners (9:9-13). Ultimately the pharisees will accuse Jesus of collaborating with the devil (9:34, 12:22-32)
 - Jesus warns his followers of opposition in His ministry discourse (10:16-42).
 - Jesus's parables of the kingdom in chapter 13 illustrate conflict to the Gospel message.
 - When Jesus enters Jerusalem the conflict enters its most intense phase, ultimately leading to his death.

¹⁷ See the section on the Beatitudes **on page 9**

- Ultimately, the conflict is due to Jesus's claim that his mission was not to destroy the law and the prophets but 'fulfill' them. His interpretations of the Hebrew Bible conflicted with the religious leaders, who were committed to the oral traditions and interpretations handed down by Jewish teachers. **And so it came down to this: Who was the authoritative interpreter of Moses, Jesus or the religious leaders?**¹⁸

The Church and Gentile world mission

- Although Matthew's Gospel is clearly the most 'Jewish' of all the Gospels, its scope, following the scope of the covenant with Abraham, is toward 'all nations'.
- This global mandate is introduced from the very beginning of Matthew, where it is clear that the community of the Messiah is formed from unexpected sources.
- The mention of Tamar, Ruth, and Bathsheba (1:3, 5, 6), who are all Gentiles with overtones of scandal in their background, prepares the reader for Jesus' association with the sinners of his own day.
- The inexplicable arrival of the mysterious wise men from the east who wish to worship Jesus shows from chapter 2 the power of the message of the kingdom to summon followers in surprising ways.
- The faith of the Roman officer (8:10-12), the Canaanite woman (15:28) encourage the readers of this gospel to believe the message of the kingdom is able to engender faith from unlikely sources.
- Of course Jesus final commission of his disciples makes clear the universal scope of his intended rule.

¹⁸ We will explore this in detail in the sermon on the mount [pg 17](#)

Commentary

I. Prologue/Introduction: the origin of Jesus the Messiah (1:1-2:23)

- Matthew's infancy narrative begins with a title in 1:1, which refers primarily to 1:2-25, but also introduces us to primary themes found throughout the Gospel, and is thus a helpful title for the whole Gospel:
 - *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham"* (Matthew 1:1)
- Following this title are:
 - The genealogy (1:2-17)
 - The account of Jesus' birth (1:18-25)
 - The visit of the magi (2:1-12)
 - The sojourn in Egypt (2:13-15)
 - The massacre of the little children (2:16-18)
 - The return to Nazareth (2:19-23)
- Structurally, Matthew 1&2 play an important role in Matthew's Gospel as they describe:
 - **Who** Jesus is (the 'Christ, Son of David, the son of Abraham' **1:1-17**)
 - **How** he came to us (through the virginal conception by the Holy Spirit **1:18-25**)
 - **Where** he came from (Jesus was born in David's city, Bethlehem **2:1-12**) and **where** he was going (ultimately back to Nazareth via Egypt **2:13-23**)
- The theological emphases in chapter 1 clearly outlines Jesus' ultimate **purpose & destiny**, but the geographical connections in chapter 2 are not to be downplayed.
- The biblical citations in chapter 2 all contain geographical themes: Bethlehem, Egypt, Ramah and Nazareth. These are important **patterns of historical fulfillment**¹⁹, which adds to the important **prophetic fulfillment** detail of Matt 1:23/Isa 7:14.
- Structurally, the three dream accounts (1:20-21, 2:13, 2:19-20) also intersperse chapters 1&2, ensuring they remain as unit

A. Title and Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah (1:1-17)

- Each of the four gospel writers have a unique way of starting their account. Mark has readers at the beginning of Jesus' ministry by 1:9, whereas as Matthew and Luke include an infancy narrative (but the material seldom overlaps). John's prologue about the 'word made flesh' is unique and sets the tone for his Gospel. All four Gospels, however, stress the importance of John the Baptist and his ministry before launching into the story of Jesus.
- Matthew's Gospel starts with a title and a genealogy, clearly connecting Jesus to the archetypal patriarch, Abraham, and Israel's great king, David.
- Both Abraham and David received covenantal promises from God that Matthew views as culminating in Jesus, who will reign over Israel and extend God's blessings to all the nations (Gen 12:1-3, 2 Sam 7:8-16). It seems clear then that **Matthew views the entire history of Israel as being fulfilled in through Jesus.**

¹⁹ One of the three types of 'fulfillment' as used by Matthew (more on page 8)

- **V1 Title**
 - *'Genealogy'?*
 - This was the subject of my Christmas 2022 sermon, which could have functioned as an introduction to this series!
 - The word for 'genealogy' is γενεσις - 'genesis', as in the first book of our Bible. 'Genesis' means 'origin' or 'beginning', and thus Matthew opens with the account of the 'the book of the beginning of Jesus Christ'
 - This could refer, in the narrowest sense, to just the genealogy in v2-17, but the reference to 'genesis' in v18 ('birth' = 'genesis') should at least extend the 'origin story' to v25.
 - **Some would see this title (as I do) as extending over the entire Gospel itself**, thus mirroring the opening book of the Old Testament with the New²⁰. The use of the word for 'book' (βιβλος - 'biblos') naturally refers to a whole book, not just a portion of it. In addition, genealogies are usually introduced with the formula 'these are the generations'. On top of that, the themes introduced in 1:1, of Jesus fulfilling the promises to David & Abraham, will be developed throughout Matthew, which make it a viable title for the whole book.
 - The significance of this is that the story of Jesus, which Matthew is about to narrate, is **the story of a new beginning for all humanity**.
- *'Christ'*
 - 'Jesus' is clearly a personal name, but 'Christ' should be viewed as a title referring to his status as the long-awaited Messiah (The Greek for 'Christ' is equivalent to the Hebrew for 'Messiah').
 - In the Old Testament, the 'Messiah' originally referred to anyone anointed for an office of service to God (ie Priests, Kings & occasionally prophets). However, after the period of Moses, priests were no longer 'anointed' for office, and thus 'Messiah' came to refer to God's anointed Kings. The rise and fall of Israel's kings led to the term developing to represent the arrival of an idealised ruler, whose coming would result in Israel's freedom and lead to the realisation of another Davidic era. This intensified in the intertestamental era with Israel under the Gentile rule of the Greeks and Romans.
 - **Therefore, the simple title 'Christ' at the start of Matthew's account immediately connect the person of Jesus with all the anticipation of the Messiah.**
 - This is only intensified by joining 'the Son of David, the son of Abraham' to 'Christ'! 'Son of David' is frequently a messianic title in Matthew's gospel, and Abraham is clearly the prototypical Israelite whose eminent status in God's kingdom is unquestionable.
 - The trajectory of Matthew's Gospel towards the Gentile nations is also in view right in this opening verse, as Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of God's promise to bless 'all nations' through Abraham.

²⁰ The first book of the Bible was already known as 'Genesis' by first century

- V2-17: **Genealogy**

- After mentioning the Messiah, David & Abraham in his opening line, Matthew continues chiastically²¹ in his genealogy to mention Abraham (1:2), David (1:6), and the Messiah (1:16). This is the first clue that **Matthew's genealogy is intentionally structured**.
- The structure is made clear in v17, emphasising the grouping of generations into fourteen: From Abraham to David, David to the exile in Babylon, and from the exile to the arrival of the Messiah.
- Thus the three sections pivot on King David and the exile, with the exile being the lowest point in Israel's history and the Davidic era the highest point²². **It is likely then that Matthew sees the entrance of Jesus as one who will restore Israel from an exile even worse than the Babylonian.**
- Matthew has evidently chosen the number '14' to structure his genealogy as David is the 14th name in the genealogy and 14 is the numerical value of 'David' in Hebrew. Consonantly, דוד (dwd) is 4(d) + 6(v) + 4(d) = 14. This gematria (assigning numerical values to consonants) **stresses the centrality of David in Jesus' background**.
- Although Matthew is clearly structured around 3 groups of 14 generations, it is only the second set (v12-16) that actually includes 14 generations. The first & third sets include 13 generations.
- Three sets of fourteen can still be constructed by seeing the first set as running from Abraham to David (1:2-6a), the second from Solomon to Jeconiah (1:6b-11) and the third from Shealtiel to Jesus including Mary (1:12-16). The ancient literary convention of inclusive first & third sets, and exclusive second sets, would perhaps be a better way of seeing the 3 x 14 structure in Matthew's genealogy.

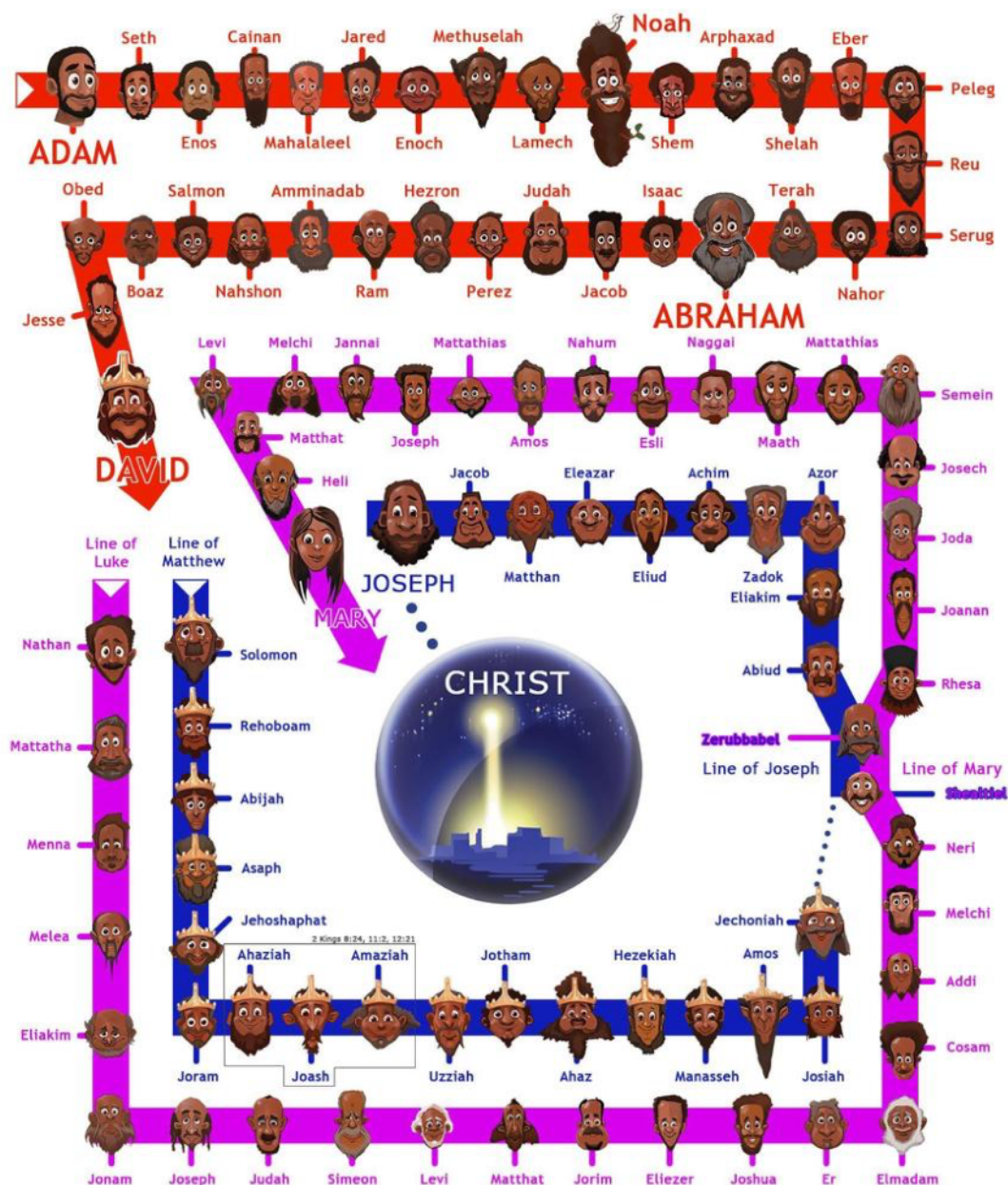
²¹ 'chiasmus' is a literary device, used prolifically in the whole Bible. It comes from the greek letter 'chi' which is χ. The shape of the letter 'chi' is the reason for the name. In its simplest forms (there are many ridiculously and beautifully complex ones in scripture!) a statement is simply inverted, usually in order to draw attention to the middle part. Eg: 'When the going gets tough the tough get going'.

²² A leaning 'N'

	Matt 1:1-6a	Matt 1:6b-11	Matt 1:12-16
1	Abraham-Isaac	David-Solomon (Bathsheba)	Jeconiah-Shealtiel
2	Isaac-Jacob	Solomon-Rehoboam	Shealtiel-Zerubbabel
3	Jacob-Judah	Rehoboam-Abiiah	Zerubbabel-Abiud
4	Judah-Perez (Tamar)	Abijah-Asaph (v.l.)	Abiud-Eliakim
5	Perez-Hezron	Asa-Jehoshaphat	Eliakim-Azor
6	Hezron-Ram	Jehoshaphat-Jehoram	Azor-Zadok
7	Ram-Amminadab	Jehoram-Uzziah	Zadok-Akim
8	Amminadab-Nahshon	Uzziah-Jotham	Akim-Eliud
9	Nahshon-Salmon	Jotham-Ahaz	Eliud-Eleazar
10	Salmon-Boaz (Rahab)	Abaz-Hezekiah	Eleazar-Matthan
11	Boaz-Obed (Ruth)	Hezekiah-Manasseh	Matthan-Jacob
12	Obed-Jesse	Manasseh-Amon	Jacob-Joseph
13	Jesse-David	Amon-Josiah	Joseph (Mary)-Jesus
14		Josiah-Jeconiah	Jeconiah-Shealtiel

- One of the issues in Matthew's genealogy is that there are clear omissions in some of the generations mentioned. Matthew omits three names found in 1 Chron 3:10-14 between Solomon & Josiah, among others.
- This can be explained by understanding that 'father of' is also used as 'ancestor of', and Matthew clearly inserts David as the fourteenth generation for theological purposes.
- Similarly, Matthew's genealogy varies greatly from Luke's (Luke 3:23-38). As we have seen, Matthew's is intentionally structured to make a theological point, whereas Luke's is more exhaustive in its historical account (indeed also going back from Abraham to Adam!). Therefore Luke includes 60 more names than Matthew, 14 more for the generations of Abraham-Jesus.
- **This indicates that there is a clear theological agenda to Matthew (and Luke's) genealogy.** Matthew clearly uses his genealogy for christological purposes, to demonstrate the Davidic and Abrahamic ancestry of Jesus, while showing him to be the fulfillment of God's promises²³.

²³ Luke places his genealogy between the baptism and temptation account, later in his Gospel. Both these narratives stress the divine sonship of Jesus (3:22, 4:3&9), which would indicate Luke's theological emphasis in his genealogy. The genealogy, tracing back to Adam and God himself therefore highlights Jesus as Son of God. While Adam was God's first 'son', he failed under the testing of Satan. The 'second Adam', Jesus triumphed over Satan's testing, and is therefore the representative person for all human beginnings.



- Another unique feature in Matthew's genealogy is the presence of women, who are seldom included in Jewish genealogies, which are usually patrilineal.
- In addition, the women mentioned (except Mary) were all Gentiles (Tamar & Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth was a Moabite, and Bathsheba was evidently a Hittite like her husband Uriah), thus introducing Matthew's theme of Gentile mission and inclusion.
- It has been (wrongly) emphasised in the past the fact that all these women were guilty of scandalous sexual union, and thus their appearance in the genealogy represents God's saving grace. However, whilst this would be true of Rahab²⁴ & Tamar, the account of Bathsheba's adultery (2 Sam 11) appears to characterise her as the passive victim of David's aggression, and Ruth's nocturnal contact with Boaz has no indication of sexual union, but rather marriage proposal through the kinsmen-redeemer concept as encouraged in the Torah. Of course Mary's virtuous character is stressed in Matthew's account too, which makes her inclusion for this reason non-sensical.

²⁴ Incidentally, this is the only place in the Bible where we deduce that Rahab was an ancestral mother to Boaz!

- Ultimately, it is best to combine some of these threads and to conclude that the presence of these women in Matthew's highlights the fact that **God's grace in Jesus the Messiah reaches beyond Israel to Gentiles, beyond men to women, beyond the self-righteous to sinners. In saving his people from their sins, Jesus is not bound by race gender or scandal**²⁵
- One last feature worthy to be noted is the break in the use of 'was the father of' (39 times) to 'was born' when referring to Jesus:
 - "...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ" (v16)
- **This passive verb (compared to the 39 active verbs) implies the divine activity made clear in v18-25 (the birth narrative).** Thus it is already stated that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus - he did not 'beget' Jesus. Jesus was born from Mary in the supernatural manner about to be explained.

B. Birth of Jesus the messiah (1:18-25)

- Matthew opened his Gospel announcing that he is giving a record of the birth of the Messiah (1:1), and he has shown (through the genealogy) that the Messiah is firmly rooted in the context of redemptive history. Now Matthew goes on to record the specifics of his birth.
- **In some ways then, verses 18-25 expand on what was hinted in v16: the virginal birth of Jesus, son of Joseph & Mary.**
- The structure of this unit is deliberate in placing the citation of Isaiah 7:14 at the centre, in order to explain the prophetic significance of this unique situation. Matthew will employ this structure again in chapter 2.
- This is important as it already introduces the theme of fulfillment discussed on page 8, a crucial theme in Matthew as he skilfully weaves the story of Jesus into the Old Testament messianic expectations.
- v18
 - Note the first mention of the Holy Spirit in Matthew's Gospel, as the agent of conception. The role of the Holy Spirit will expand throughout Matthew's Gospel, culminating in the missionary instruction for disciples to baptise in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - It is also important to realise the betrothal/wedding process in Jesus' time. Engagement frequently occurred when girls were 12 years old, and when the groom had completed his obligations to the bride's father according to the marriage contract, the bride came under her husband's authority. However, she would not necessarily move to her husband's house at this time. It was common for a year or so to pass between the engagement and the marriage proper, when cohabitation began. In verse 18, it seems Joseph & Mary are near the end of their engagement phase, where Mary has already come under Joseph's authority, but they have not yet 'come together' ie not yet living together as husband and wife. Thus Joseph is rightly considering divorcing her, but still before they were living together.

²⁵ Turner, D pg 28

- V19
 - It is necessary to assume that Joseph is planning to divorce Mary since he does not know the cause of the pregnancy. As the readers we know the pregnancy is by the Holy Spirit, but Joseph has yet to discover this.
 - Joseph's plan to divorce Mary characterises him as a 'just' and compassionate man who does not wish to publicly disgrace Mary.
 - The emphasis on Joseph's 'righteousness' (a 'just man' ESV) is not that of forensic righteousness, but more in a practical sense of abiding by the Torah law. However, he clearly does not wish to use the law in all its vigor (by calling for a public trial as outlined in Deut 22:23-27), and thus by planning a quiet divorce we see 'something of a model of one who's high standards are balanced with compassion'²⁶
- V20
 - Joseph's plans are dramatically changed with the appearance of an angel in a dream, who reveals the nature of Mary's miraculous conception²⁷.
 - The mention of Joseph as 'son of David' confirms Jesus' Davidic ancestry, which was clear in the genealogy. Incidentally, it is the only place in Matthew that 'son of David' does not refer to Jesus.
- V21
 - The action of Joseph naming Mary's son is important, as by doing it he accepts legal paternity.
 - The name Jesus (Ἰησοῦς - Iesous) is a Greek form of the biblical name 'Joshua' (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ - yehôšûa), which was a common name among Jews and understood to mean 'Yahweh saves' (יְהוָה - yhwh + יַשַׁע - yâša'). **Thus the name Jesus fits his predicted mission.**
 - Salvation in Matthew can refer to deliverance from physical danger, illness and death, but here the idea of rescue from sin is clearly in view: "...for he will save his people from their sins"
 - The angel alludes to Psalm 130:8: "*And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities*", again clearly linking Israel's expectation to fulfillment in Jesus²⁸.

²⁶ Turner pg 65

²⁷ Revelation through dreams will be repeated in Matthew 2:12, 13, 19, 22, 27:19

²⁸ It is perhaps significant that the allusion to Ps 130:8 substitutes 'his people' for 'Israel', referring to the biblical-remnant concept of a genuine Israel within national Israel. Jesus will further highlight this distinction as people are forced to decide on Him as Messiah.

- V22-23
 - **This is the first ‘fulfillment’ occurrence in Matthew.** Clearly, all the events that have transpired concerning Mary’s miraculous conception fulfill what was spoken **by** the Lord **through** the prophets. Passages such as this are foundational for the doctrine of biblical authority²⁹.
 - Isaiah 7:14 is cited as the text fulfilled by Mary’s virginal conception of Jesus. Exactly how’s this was ‘fulfilled’ is the subject of some debate. We won’t go into detail here, but the following points should provide some guidelines:
 - i. **It is important as Biblical scholars to first read Isaiah 7:14 in its own context**, where the birth of a son to a ‘virgin’³⁰ seemed to function as a sign of deliverance to King Ahaz (and Israel), that was fulfilled in the near-future as seen in Isaiah 8.
 - ii. However, Matthew, reading back from the story of Jesus, sees the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 in Jesus, born of an actual virgin, and who was ultimately ‘Immanuel’ - ‘God with us’
 - iii. This means we as the interpreters should view Isaiah 7:14 as ‘typology’, where a historical situation ‘foreshadowed’ a much greater future event. We came across this theological feature many times in Daniel, mostly relating to Antiochus Epiphanes as a ‘type’ of the antichrist to come³¹.
 - iv. Thus it is unlikely that Isaiah 7:14 was purely predictive of Jesus alone, although there is some merit to that view (particularly the name ‘Immanuel’ and its application to Ahaz’s day).
 - v. This would then be a ‘fulfillment’ more of the ‘**historical**’ kind than the ‘**prophetic**’ kind, as discussed on page 8.
 - vi. Either way, a straight reading of Matthew himself tells us that the birth of Jesus to the virgin Mary is the arrival of Immanuel, God Himself with us. This is not just to help us, but to rescue us from sin, which the platform of Isaiah 7:14 provides.
- V24-25
 - In Matt 1-2, three times Joseph models quiet obedience. He gets up and does exactly what he is told without hesitation or question.
 - Matthew also underlines Jesus’s miraculous birth by adding that Joseph had no sexual relations with Mary.

²⁹ Also 2:15, 15:4, 7, 22:43 cf 2 Pet 1:19-21, 2 Tim 3:16

³⁰ In Hebrew the word for ‘virgin’ could equally mean ‘young women who is old enough to be married’, which could of course have virginal connotations. However the Greek counterpart (in Matthew as well as LXX) clearly has a ‘virgin’ in view.

³¹ From the Daniel training manual, a definition of typology: ‘A prophecy that is historically fulfilled but intentionally typical of similar events and personages at the end of the age’

C. Visit of the Magi (2:1-12)

- The **worship of the Magi** in the first part of chapter 2 **contrasts with the treachery of Herod** in the second part.
- This first section is structured chiastically, placing the focus on the citation of Micah 5:2:
 - a) Magi arrive from the east (2:1)
 - b) Magi have seen a special star and seek to worship Jesus (2:2)
 - c) Herod is terrified of the one born king of the Jews (2:3)
 - d) Heard questions the religious leaders (2:4)
 - d) Religious leaders answer Herod (2:5-6, cf Mic 5:2)
 - c) Herod plots against the one born king of the Jews (2:7-8)
 - b) Magi see the star again and are enabled to worship Jesus
 - a) Magi depart to their own country (2:12)
- The events of Matthew 2 introduce two themes that are stressed in Matthew as the story develops:
 - i. The worship of the magi implies that God's redemptive purposes extend beyond the nation of Israel
 - ii. The treachery of Herod and the indifference of the religious leaders show that many within Israel will not believe in Jesus (and introduces the subject of conflict)
- V1
 - The magi arrive some time 'after' the birth of Jesus. Comparing 2:1, 7 & 16 indicates the magi arrive about 2 years after the birth of Jesus.
 - Matthew (similarly Luke) stress Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, which was familiarly known as 'David's city' (Luke 2:4 makes this connection clear), thus keeping the connection between Jesus and David close. Note John's reference to this connection:
 - *"Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"* (John 7:42)
 - Matthew's reference to Herod as 'King' is interesting, as Herod's 'kingship' is merely a political office. This is in contrast to Jesus's kingship, which like David's was legitimate and given by God.
 - Many have tried to identify the magi, with the most prominent views linking them to the 'Chaldeans' of Babylon (Dan 1:4, 2:2, 4:7, 5:7). Maybe Daniel's influence eventually did rub off on these guys!
- V2
 - We can't be sure of the exact sign seen by the magi, or how it led them to seek the new king of Israel (perhaps they were aware of the prophecy of Balaam in Num 24:17), but in either case Matthew viewed its occurrence as a miracle.
 - The magi come to 'worship' the one 'born king of the Jews'. Again this contrasts with Herod, who was route to the 'throne' was political intrigue, whereas Jesus's was through miraculous birth, and again contrasts Herod's response (infanticide) with the magi (worship).
- V3-4
 - Herod's response again exposes his anti-kingship, where a genuine king of Israel would have rejoiced at an announcement of the birth of the Messiah.
 - The reference to 'all Jerusalem' equally fearing this announcement likely refers to the Jerusalem establishment that controlled politics, economics and religion, all in Herod's network. We will later see this same 'establishment' unite to oppose Jesus.
 - Specifically, Herod summons the 'chief priests and scribes', introducing those who will feature throughout Matthew's Gospel as opposing Jesus (16:21, 20:18, 21:15, 26:57). Herod will soon die, but the religious leaders remain opposed to Jesus.

- V5-6
 - The Sadducean high priests and the Pharasaic legal experts do not always agree on matters of doctrine, but here they univocally answer Herod's question citing Micah 5:2, which indicates the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem.
 - **Here we have the 'fulfillment' motif taking the form of the direct 'prophetic' kind** (even though the word 'fulfilled' does not appear)
 - There are a few issues surrounding Matthew's citation of Micah (and 2 Samuel) that are worth noting:
 - i. Matthew describes Bethlehem as a place who is 'by no means least amount the rulers of Judah', whereas the OT texts describe Bethlehem as a place which is 'too little to be among the clans of Judah'. This is not a contradiction, but an insight into Matthew's retrospective theological emphasis. 'Micah foresees that the Messiah will rise from a geographically insignificant town. As Matthew looks back to Micah's prophecy, he notes in hindsight that the birth of Jesus has transformed the significance of Bethlehem. From Micah's view, Bethlehem has prospective significance. From Matthew's retrospective view, Bethlehem is not at all insignificant. In the flow of redemptive history, Bethlehem's theological significance has finally overcome it's geographical insignificance³²'
 - ii. The biblical quotation is actually a combination of Mic 5:2 and 2 Sam 5:2. This is likely due to 2 Samuel's Davidic emphasis. In 2 Sam 5 Saul had died and David had been appointed King, and the words in 2 Sam 5:2 are from the representatives of Israel who were recounting God's promises to David. This fits the idea of Jesus succession from David perfectly!
- V7-11
 - It is ironic that the birth of Jesus produces only anxious fear in the leaders of Israel (2:3) whereas it is the occasion of overwhelming joy in the mysterious gentile magi!
 - After again worshipping Jesus, the magi give Jesus gifts appropriate for a king (there are many OT references for these as tributes to kings in the OT!)
- V12
 - Once again a divine message (this time in a dream) to human participants change the trajectory of the story. Up till now the magi would not have been aware of Herod's schemes, but are now sufficiently up to speed.
 - The story of the magi launches an important theme of Matthew: '...in the final analysis the worship of the magi is nothing less than a miracle of divine grace', which extends outward from Israel, but still through God's divine initiative.

³² Turner pg 84

D. Escape to Egypt (2:13-15)

- Though we will look at the rest of chapter 2 in 3 sections coinciding with the OT citations, the rest of chapter 2 does belong together as a whole.
- The 3 dream units concerning Joseph interlock with the two units of Herod's treachery:
 - Dream: Joseph should marry Mary and name the child Jesus (1:18-25)
 - Treachery: Herod enlists magi to find Jesus (2:1-12)
 - Dream: Joseph should take Jesus and Mary to Egypt (2:13-15)
 - Treachery: Herod murders the baby boys of Bethlehem (2:16-18)
 - Dream: Joseph should return to Israel (2:19-23)
- Thus Joseph's role in protecting Jesus is contrasted with Herod's role in trying to murder Jesus! Through it all, divine intervention through angelic visitation ensures the safety of the born king of the Jews.
- V13-15
 - Joseph again responds to the angel with prompt, unquestioning obedience.
 - Egypt was a natural place to flee to because Herod had no jurisdiction there and many Jews lived there. Perhaps Matthew wants his readers to remember Jacob's families sojourn to Egypt to avoid famine.
 - The sovereignty of God achieves the immediate safety of the infant Jesus, but at the same time is another example of 'historical fulfillment'.
 - In this instance, Hosea 11:1 is filled with new significance. The reference in Hosea 11 is of course to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, but with the theological identification of Israel as God's firstborn 'son'. **Matthew clearly uses the Hosea citation in order to emphasise the divine 'sonship' of Jesus.** He will emphasise this later, at Jesus's baptism, and he has already hinted at it in his genealogy.
 - In Hos 11:1 the exodus provides a historical pattern of God's loving preservation of his son Israel from Pharaoh's wrath, which is now 'fulfilled' in God's preservation of his ultimate son from Herod's wrath.
 - Hosea 11:1 is therefore 'not a prediction of Jesus but is part of an emotional appeal for Israel to turn from its apostasy to its loving God. For Matthew, this return would be accomplished through faith in Jesus the Messiah, whose life typologically repeats crucial events of biblical redemptive history...Matthew looks at biblical history with the conviction that it is organically related to Jesus the Messiah as the seed is to the harvest³³'
 - **The importance of understanding 'historical fulfillment' is that it most clearly shows how Jesus really does fit biblical-historical patterns and prophetic predictions with their ultimate significance.** If Matthew's view on Hos 11:1 was purely predictive, then we would not see the important theme of the fulfillment of Jesus of the OT, rather we would purely be amazed at the prophetic fulfillment of OT prophecies. We have these in the account already (ie the Micah 5:2 'fulfillment'!), so we can still be amazed at OT prophetic fulfillment, but add to that the incredible value of Jesus fulfilling the entire redemptive story of the OT!

³³ Turner pg 91

E. Massacre at Bethlehem (2:16-18)

- In these verses Matthew returns to the story of Herod and the magi, which was suspended briefly from 2:1-12 by v13-15.
- The story of Herod's infanticide contrasts with God's divine protection of his Son, which introduces the difficult idea of the problem of evil within God's divine providence.
- **This unit introduces our third 'fulfillment' formula.**
- V16
 - Although there is no record of these events outside Matthew's Gospel, this atrocity fits well into what is known from extra biblical sources about the ruthless nature of Herod's rule.
- V17-18
 - Interestingly, Matthew introduces the third fulfillment formula a little differently: "then was fulfilled" as opposed to "this was to fulfill", perhaps to lessen the implication that God's purpose was fulfilled by the atrocity.
 - Also interesting is that Matthew names the prophet ie Jeremiah, who gets mentioned by name in the NT only by Matthew!
 - Jer 31:15 occurs in an oracle of joy and hope to those who are about to be exiled to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. This exile would be limited in duration due to God's covenant love for them, and after the 70 years of exile they would be restored to the land. V15 itself is the only 'gloomy verse' in Jer 31, which is to show the mourning due to the loss of lives in the war.
 - Jer 31:15 is not a prediction but a present lament in the context of hope for future blessing. 'In Jeremiah's view of the future, 'Rachel's' mourning for her children would be consoled by Israel's return to the land and the making of a new covenant. The similar mourning of the mothers of Bethlehem also occurs in the context of hope, but the hope here is now about to be actualised through the Messiah. Thus the mourning mothers of Bethlehem were anticipated by the mothers who lost children at the time of the exile³⁴'

F. Return to Nazareth (2:19-23)

- V19-23
 - The plural 'those who sought the child's life are dead' in v20 is curious since it is one Herod who died. This may be a reference to Moses in Midian in Ex 4:19:
 - *"And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead""*
 - Galilee becomes very important in Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as the one who fulfils Isa 9:1-2 (Cf Matt 4:12-16):
 - *"But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.
The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone"*
- **V23 introduces the fourth 'fulfillment formula'.** The difficulty here is that we don't know what OT text Jesus was fulfilling in being a Nazarene!

³⁴ Turner pg 95

- There are a few solutions to this problem:
 - i. Paronomasia (wordplay): here the sound of the word 'nazarene' is compared to Isa 11:1 referring to the 'branch' ('neser') of Jesse's roots. This fits the Davidic emphasis as well as the fact that Matthew has already quoted Isaiah 7:14 and 1:23
 - ii. In this view proponents note the obscurity and humility of the Messiah in Matthew and connect this with the general tenor of the bible that the Messiah will be despised and rejected (Ps 22:6-8, Isa 11:1, Dan 9:26 etc). Matthew does specifically mention the transformation of Bethlehem due to the birth of the Messiah there, and he does stress Jesus humility and rejection. In addition, elsewhere in the NT Nazareth is specifically mentioned as a despised place (John 1:46-47 "can anything good come out of Nazareth"). It thus could be that Matthew is doing something similar with Bethlehem, where geographical insignificance is replaced by theological significance. A strength of this view is that the introductory formula cites the prophets in general, and does not use the more specific direct quote (λεγοντος - 'legontes') that he normally uses when referring to a direct quote. All of these factors make this second view more likely.
- **It seems clear then that the infancy narrative is less about Jesus's infancy, and more about the theological emphasis of his ancestry, miraculous conception, early worship and opposition, and residence in Nazareth. All this is interwoven with the biblical-historical patterning and prophetic prediction.**

II. Early days of kingdom word and deed (3:1-7:29)

- If Matthew 1-2 describes Jesus' origin, Matt 3:1-4:25 firmly grounds the ministry of Jesus in the work of Jesus's forerunner, John the Baptist, predicted in Isa 40:3.
- His early ministry of word and deed meets with much success in Galilee (4:12-25), leading to his first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)
- The Sermon on the Mount presents the ethics of the kingdom which has been inaugurated by the words and deeds of Jesus.
- The sermon is book-ended with references to obedience to, and thus fulfillment of, the law and the prophets (5:17 - 7:12).
- The mention of the crowds amazed response to Jesus teaching leads naturally into the next narrative block, where the authoritative deeds are emphasised.
- Structurally, we can clearly see the continuity between the words of Jesus that conclude the first narrative-discourse block, and the deeds of Jesus that begin the second narrative-discourse block.

A. Narrative 1: John & Jesus and the Kingdom of God (3:1-4:25)

- The story of Jesus' preparation in Matt 3:1-4:16 focuses on John the Baptist's ministry, predicted in Isa 40:3. In the recounting of John's ministry Matthew for the first time overlaps with all the other Gospel writers. Thus the ministry of John is significant!
- This is made clear in 11:2-14 which stresses the importance of John's ministry.
- Although John is the apex of the old order of praise, those who participate in the new order of fulfillment in the kingdom of heaven are greater than he (11:11-13)
- John's baptism of Jesus is the occasion for the Spirit's coming and the father's approval of his beloved son.
- This sonship is immediately tested by Satan, in which Jesus emerges victorious.
- After the testing, the imprisonment of John leads to the beginning of Jesus's ministry in Galilee.

1. Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12)

- After describing John's way of life and his ministry, attention is focused on the confrontation with the religious establishment, which is stark ('you offspring of vipers')! John's negativity towards the religious leaders constructs with his respect for Jesus in the next section.
- V1
 - Matthew says nothing about the years between Jesus's coming to live in Nazareth as a small child, and his appearance before John as an adult (Luke gives some information in Luke 2). Clearly, Matthew's theological purposes are not furthered by any biographical details of this period in Jesus's life.
 - Similarly, the arrival of John the Baptist is without any details of his birth, as with Luke. John simply arrives 'preaching' and baptising.
 - John's ministry was in 'the wilderness of Judea', a desert-like place just West of the Dead Sea. The theme of the desert being a place of refuge or testing, and its strong connection with the Exodus time (especially the giving of the law) is an important connection being made here.

- V2
 - John's message has two aspects to it:
 - An ethical imperative to 'repent', which is based on
 - An eschatological reality that 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand'
 - This is the first occurrence of a message that is repeated throughout Matthew's Gospel (4:17, 23, 9:35, 10:7, 13:19, 16:19, 21:43, 24:14)
 - 'Repentance' is more than just an emotion (sorrow for sin), or a changing of the mind, or an initial conversion moment. It is more even than the sum of these. It is the turning of the whole person from sin to God in obedience to the message of the kingdom. This involves recognition of need, sorrow for sin, a decision to turn from sin and obey God, and a subsequent obedient lifestyle. **Thus John is not calling his Jewish audience to regular turning from specific sins but to a radical conversion from an old to a new way of life**, a repentance of the sort that they as Jews might associate with gentiles converting to Judaism.
 - This strong demand is based on the reality of God's rule coming 'near'.
 - The 'kingdom of heaven' motif is uniquely Matthew, and likely he uses it to avoid the name 'God', which was held in awe by pious Jews.
 - The perfect tense verb 'is at hand' (ἤγγικεν - 'engiken') express the urgency of the demand for repentance. This is used elsewhere in Matt 4:17, 10:7, 21:1, 34, 26:45-46 to stress the immanence of God's reign on earth in Jesus. As a reason for repentance, one could say that God's moral rule is present.
 - Although there is for sure a historical progression in the physical manifestation of this reign, as a moral motivation it has already arrived! Thus the stress here as a motivation for immediate moral change does not contradict its use elsewhere as the future earthly realm or domain of Jesus (7:21-23, 25:31, 34, 26:29)
- v3
 - Having summarised John's message, Matthew now turns to his characteristic motif of biblical support, by referencing John the Baptist as 'fulfilling' Isaiah 40:3.
 - In its immediate context, Isaiah 40:3 comforts the exiles in Babylon with the hope of return to the land. In the larger context of Isa 40-66 however, the prophecy describes the eschatological restoration of Israel with the worldwide consequences experienced by all humankind:
 - *"And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken"* (Isa 40:5)
 - The overall perspective of Isa 40-66 includes a spirit-endowed Messiah (Isa 42:1-4/ Matt 12:18-21) and the suffering servant (Isa 52:15/Matt 28:19, Isa 53:4/Matt 8:17, Isa 53:7/Matt 26:63, 27:14), envisioning a new heavens and new earth (Isa 65:17, 66:22/ Matt 19:28).
 - **Thus this reference views the ministry of John as heralding the beginning of this great eschatological vision!**
 - From a Christian perspective, the fulfillment that began with John and Jesus continues today through the preaching of the gospel and awaits consummation at Jesus's second advent.
- V4
 - After summarising John's message as that promised in Isaiah, Matthew describes his austere clothing and diet. It is interesting to note that Bedouin still wear camels hair garments and eat locusts today!
 - As strange as it sounds to us today, eating locusts was permitted in scripture (Lev 11:20-23), which helps us avoid just seeing this description of John as one of a bit of a mad man!
 - An important aspect of this mention of John though is still his unconcern with the niceties of wardrobe and food, which is consistent with the message of his preaching where calls Israel away from a preoccupation with such things and toward the kingdom.

- V5-6
 - The weaving together of repentance, confession and baptism indicates that John baptises only those who have repented, an act which is accompanied by confession. Thus baptism not effect repentance, repentance precedes baptism!
 - John's baptism must be seen against the background of frequent allusions to biblical ritual cleansing & Jewish proselyte baptisms.
 - The OT frequently alludes to water cleaning as a picture of forgiveness and spiritual purity, as well as eschatological blessings (Ps 51:6-9, Isa 4:4, 44:3, Jer 4:11-14, Eek 36:24-27, Zech 13:1).
 - A difference between John's baptism and Jewish proselyte baptisms is that John clearly insists on repentance and baptism for Jews, not gentile proselytes. Descent from Abraham was no guarantee of God's favour (3:9).
 - 'Thus John's baptism was a creative reapplication of biblical and cultural motifs in keeping with his prophetic insight into God's will³⁵'
- V7
 - In contrast to the popular reception of John by the public, is the response from the religious establishment.
 - Usually, the Pharisees and Sadducees would be opposed to each other, but here are united in their common opposition to John, foreshadowing their opposite to Jesus.
 - Since they are introduced to us here, a couple notes about these two groups would be in order.
 - **Pharisees**
 - According to Josephus, there were more than 6000 Pharisees at the time of Jesus.
 - They likely arose as the Hasidim during the revolt against the Seleucid kings in the second century BC.
 - The name 'Pharisee' is probably derived from a Hebrew word meaning 'separatists' ('persusim').
 - They were known for their strict obedience to the law, which for them included the written Bible and their oral traditions, something opposed by Jesus.
 - **Sadducees**
 - They were much smaller in number, and a lot less is known about them
 - Their name likely identifies them as sympathisers with the Zadokites, descendants of Zadok, high priest during the days of the monarchy of David.
 - They were evidently well-to-do priests who had no use for the oral law of the Pharisees.
 - They were more pro-Roman than the Pharisees
 - Their denial of the resurrection and the afterlife was well known (Matt 22:23-33). This was perhaps due to their preoccupation with the literal interpretation with the Torah (first five books of the Hebrew Bible), and neglect of the rest of the bible.
 - The Pharisees lived on after the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD70, but it seems the Sadducees as a religious entity did not last.
 - We can't be sure exactly why these religious leaders came to John's Baptism. They perhaps came to investigate this 'furor in the desert'. Some translations indicate that they came to be baptised by John (ESV, NASB and others), but either way John does not view their motivation as genuine.
 - John's description of them as 'the offspring of vipers' is something Jesus will twice repeat, and indicts their evil character.
 - The 'wrath to come' is a vivid picture of the eschatological reality of judgment, where genuine fruit is harvested, whilst non-productive trees are incinerated (3:10)

³⁵ Turner pg 110

- V8-9
 - Producing fruit as a metaphor for a repentant lifestyle occurs many times in Matthew's gospel (7:16-20, 12:33, 13:8, 23, 26, 21:19, 33-44) and is common throughout the Bible.
 - John now and Jesus later both affirm that the lifestyle of a convert must fit their profession of repentance.
 - Such a change in lifestyle will not occur if confidence is just placed on descent from Abraham
- V10
 - This 'fruitless repentance' ultimately leads to eternal judgment represented by the image of the burning of unfruitful trees. Punishment of unbelievers is often associated with 'fire' (5:22, 13:42, 50, 18:8-9, 25:41)
 - **'Even now', coupled with the present tense verb that the 'axe is laid' depict the chopping down of the trees as a present process.** As the kingdom message is preached, those who reject it are already marked out for judgment, even though the full force has not yet been felt. Immediacy and certainty are implied here, this is not just a future reality!
- V11-12
 - John now contrast his ministry with the one who is coming after him. Usually, the one who comes 'after' would be the 'lesser' disciple who follows the teacher, but in this instance Jesus is the greater one, an incongruity that John clearly articulates.
 - A lot has been written on John's message of 'water for repentance', and whether the water thus ensures repentance in some way, as though baptism accomplishes repentance.
 - Matthew has earlier established the need for repentance prior to baptism (v7-9), so this is more likely.
 - Perhaps, as John Calvin has commented, the connection between repentance and baptism is threefold in that baptism **assumes** repentance, **expresses** repentance, and through God's grace the act **issues in ongoing** repentance.
 - John's baptism uses water, but Jesus's baptism will include the Holy Spirit and fire.
 - This is likely not referring to two 'baptisms' (ie the receiving of the spirit in salvation and fire in judgment), it is more likely that the Holy Spirit and fire is a hendiadys³⁶ where two words communicate a single meaning. Here the meaning is a 'purifying baptism'
 - This is supported by the grammar, where one verb is used with the compound object of 'Holy Spirit and fire'. Numerous OT texts also associate the eschatological outpouring of the spirit with both cleaning/water as well as refining fire.
 - Lastly, this is also expressed in v12 which depicts a judgment which results in purifying, whereby the wheat is separated from the chaff.
 - It is also interesting to note that in Mark's account the issue of 'fire' is omitted.
 - It is quite suggestive that the wheat is 'his' (ie belongs to Jesus), but the chaff is not..
 - It is important to take a step back and notice the emphasis of John's ministry, and it's connection to the 'greater one' who will 'follow' him. The call for repentance, issued with warnings of immediate judgment, followed by punishment in 'unquenchable fire' is not something we stress too often anymore. **The axe is already at the root of the tree, judgment is already in process.**

³⁶ eg the room is 'nice and warm'

2. The Baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)

- The placement of the story of the baptism of Jesus, and its significance, is intentional in Matthew in order to provide the basis for the transition of John to Jesus, as well as introduce Jesus's unique identity as the Servant-Son of God.
- John, as the forerunner, now passes from centre stage so that the spotlight may shine on Jesus. Jesus will proclaim the same message as John (3:2, 4:17) and will eventually suffer a similar fate to John (17:12), but John's significance in the story of redemption pales in significance to Jesus.
- Whilst all synoptic Gospel accounts mention John's ministry and Jesus's baptism, Matthew alone presents the dialogue between Jesus and John where John expresses hesitancy to baptise Jesus. This is to emphasise Matthew's distinctive theme of 'fulfillment', explained below.
- In addition, there are some strong biblical recapitulations in this story, with the strongest being **Jesus's identification with Israel as he sojourns in Egypt and passes through the waters before being tested in the wilderness.**
- V13-14
 - John's hesitance to baptise Jesus is in contrast, strangely, to his hesitance to baptise the religious leaders. For the religious leaders it is because they have not repented, for Jesus it is because he has no need of repentance!
 - 'John had difficulty baptising the Pharisees and Sadducees because they were not worth of his baptism. Now he has trouble baptising Jesus because his baptism is not worthy of Jesus' (Carson)
 - It is unclear how John came to his conviction about Jesus, and his subsequent submission to him. It is likely that he would have learned of the remarkable circumstances of his own birth from his mother, Elizabeth, and this his role as the forerunner of Jesus.
- V15
 - There is much debate as to how Jesus's baptism 'fulfils all righteousness'.
 - The theme of 'fulfillment' is of course key in Matthew, and we should thus use it here as it has been developed up till now.
 - Therefore, it is best to see Jesus's baptism as fulfilling righteousness in the sense that his baptism publicly 'unveils' him as Israel's messiah, thus 'fulfilling' biblical patterns of messianic expectation.
 - In a way then, Jesus baptism is the inauguration of his ministry to Israel, which would explain the immediate confirmation of his divine sonship by the father after his baptism, expressed in the voice out of heaven.
 - Jesus's baptism also reinforces the theme of his humility, introduced through the birth narrative. This is something that will be amplified in the course of his ministry, and is immediately tested by Satan in the wilderness, where offers he Jesus worldly splendour, tempting him to renounce the pattern of lowliness begun in the baptism.
- v16-17
 - Matthew skips over details of the baptism in order to emphasise the immediate confirmation by the father in the heavenly vision, the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove, and the voice of approval from heaven.
 - Together, these images introduce two inter-related features of Jesus's ministry:
 - He is empowered by the Spirit
 - He is approved by the Father.
 - This has been seen by Christians through the ages as anticipating the doctrine of the trinity (cf Matt 28:19).

- The voice of God breaking through the heavens is significant when considering the 'silence' of God in the intertestamental period, and the cessation of the office of prophet. **God has now broken his silence and is speaking directly to his people again in His beloved Son Jesus.**
- The voice of approval alludes to Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1:
 - *"Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations"*
- These two references together blend the suffering servant motif of Isaiah with the sonship motif of Psalm 2. The servant motif interprets the baptism, and the sonship motif sets the scene for the temptation of Jesus to come.
- Once again, the idea that Jesus's baptism is the public 'ordination' of Jesus as Israel's messiah is reinforced through these OT references.
- This is further reinforced by noticing that Matthew records the divine voice referring to Jesus in the third person ('this' is my son) vs Luke's second person usage ('you' are my son).

3. The testing of the Son of God (4:1-11)

- The temptation account is the final preparatory episode before the beginning of Jesus's public ministry.
- In this account Jesus will authenticate His Father's divine endorsement of His Sonship, through victory over Satan's test.
- The temptation account varies from both Mark and Luke in some of the details, not noticeably in the arrangement of the second and third tests. Luke has the temple test third whereas Matthew has it second. This is likely due to Luke's emphasis on the orientation of Jesus towards Jerusalem in his account.
- The temptation narrative has many teaching aspects, but its purpose is mainly to **highlight key aspects of the value system that will undergird Jesus's ministry.**
- V1
 - The purpose for the setting of the desert is to recapitulate Israel's history. **Jesus as God's obedient Son recapitulate's the history of God's disobedient son, Israel.**
 - This is clear from parallel features of the accounts, as well as the frequent references to Deut 6-8.
 - Matthew makes it clear that it is the Spirit who leads Jesus into the desert for testing. It is important to note that it is not the Spirit who tests Jesus (the devil is the agent of testing), but it is God's intention that His Son undergo the time of testing.
 - God's purposes are to authenticate the Servant-sonship of Jesus through Jesus's refusal to achieve Messianic status through selfish means. Satan's purposes are the opposite.
- V2
 - Jesus's testing occurs during a fast of forty days and forty nights, which echoes Israel's forty years of wilderness and wandering.
 - In addition, Moses fasted 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai before receiving the law (Ex 24:18).
 - In the Bible the number forty is also frequently connected with times of hardship or punishment (eg G3n 3:4, Jon 3:4, Acts 1:3, Ezek 4:6)

- V3-4: **The first test**
 - Matthew describes the devil as 'the tempter', who is here tempting Jesus to use his status as son to fulfill selfish needs.
 - There is some debate as to the translation of 'If you are the Son of God' vs 'Since you are the Son of God'. Grammatically, it could be either.
 - In the second approach ('since'), Satan does not doubt Jesus's sonship but instead assumes it, in order to tempt Jesus to use his status as son in a selfish manner. Jesus is not tempted to doubt his sonship, but to exercise it in a manner contrary to the office. **The issue here is the type of Son Jesus will be.** This seems to be the best translation, based on the context which has developed the theme of Servant-sonship.
 - This conclusion is also seen in Jesus's response, where he cites the second half of Deut 8:3.
 - This citation is important as it highlights the abiding authority of the OT scriptures, according to Jesus ("it is written"³⁷).
 - In context, this passage rehearses God's care for Israel during its wilderness wanderings. God permits Israel's hunger at first, in order for her to learn of the primacy of God's word in order to survive:
 - *"And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD"* (Deut 8:3)
 - This statement is similar to the statement of purpose in Matt 4:1.
- V5-7: **The second test**
 - The phrase 'the devil took him' most likely describes a visionary experience, rather than a physical transportation.
 - Satan now 'ups the ante' by citing biblical support for his second test, in response to Jesus's use of the scriptures in the first test.
 - Satan quotes Ps 91:11-12, which speaks of the security of those who depend on the Lord.
 - His temptation possibly also includes a stunt that would appeal to the masses.
 - Jesus responds by quoting Deut 6:16, which refers to Israel's doubting God's provision of water in Ex 17:7. Note that this does not contradict the Psalm Satan quotes, but Satan has misapplied it. **The issue is of trust vs test. Satan's proposed leap from the temple does not amount to trusting but testing God,** something the Son will not do. This again recapitulates Israel's history who did resort to testing God.
- V8-10: **The third test**
 - This temptation is unlike the first two temptations in two ways. First, it does not align the test with Jesus's status as Son. Second, in it Satan blatantly asks Jesus to break the first commandment, instead of appealing to this hunger (test 1) or Scripture (test 2).
 - Jesus's response is also different to the first two: it is an authoritative command "get away Satan"
 - Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:13, which is significant in that Deuteronomy 6 proclaims the exclusivity of Israel's God, and Israel's responsibility to love God exclusively.
 - By not worshipping Satan, Jesus avoids repeating the sin of Israel when it worshiped the golden calf.
 - If Jesus is to rule the world, it will be by the path of obedience to God the father. Later in Matthew it becomes clear that this path goes through the cross, a fact that is difficult for Peter to grasp, in an account that echoes the temptation of Satan (Matt 16:21-26).

³⁷ "it is written" appears 9 times in Matthew, 6 times by Jesus.

- V11
 - The devil leaves Jesus, but Luke highlights the fact that encounters with Satan are not over (Luke 4:13)
 - It is ironic that angels tend to Jesus after the temptations, when Satan had tempted Jesus to jump off the temple with the promise of angelic protection. Jesus does in fact receive angelic ministry, but only after he obeys the father.

4. Withdrawal to Galilee (4:12-17)

- V12-16
 - After successfully resisting Satan's tests, Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-2, quoted in this passage.
 - This is yet another 'fulfillment' formula, the fifth one.
 - Originally, Isaiah 7-9 promised deliverance from the threat of Assyria. Matthew has already connected the birth of Jesus to the sign promised to Ahaz (Matt 1:23, Isa 7:14). Here he connects the political darkness facing Israel in the days of Isaiah to the spiritual problem that caused it: Israel's defection from the Mosaic covenant.
 - **For Matthew then, Israel's dark political prospects were symptomatic of her need for the redemption from sin available through Jesus the Messiah.**
 - In addition, the mention in Isa 9:1-2 of the scorned Galilee and its association with despised Gentiles reinforces Matthew's themes of gentile mission, and the entrance of the most unlikely sinners into the kingdom through repentance³⁸.
 - While Jesus will not minister directly to Gentiles during these early days, **the beginnings of His ministry in a territory largely populated by Gentiles foreshadow the expansion of the mission to the nations** at the end of Jesus's ministry.
- V17
 - The linkage between the messages of Jesus and John lays the foundation for the similar fates of the two.

5. Calling the four fishermen (4:18-22)

- This paragraph contains two similar stories about Jesus's calling two fishermen.
- In both cases, it is Jesus who sees the prospective disciples and takes the initiative in calling them to follow him. This is an important factor in distinguishing Jesus as a prophetic figure after the model of Elijah, and not the later rabbinic model, in which prospective disciples took the initiative in following a Rabbi.
- Matthew's purpose in narrating these accounts must surely be beyond just providing a narrative of the past. The obedience of the first disciples challenges all disciples to similar immediate, sacrificial obedience.
- We see this in the contrast between the obedience Jesus's first disciples with the later would-be disciples who will not make the necessary sacrifice (8:18-22, 19:16-26)

³⁸ The region of Galilee was looked down upon by the Jerusalem establishment, mainly because of the mixed population of Jews and Gentiles.

- V18-20
 - Peter is the first to respond to Jesus's call, which sets Peter up for prominence in Matthew's Gospel.
 - Jesus's call is a clear, simple, unexplained demand, not a polite invitation, with massive implications for these first disciples who would leave behind their career and family to follow Jesus.
 - The reference to 'fishers of men' clearly correlates Jesus's call to their personal situation, but likely also refers to the eschatological judgment theme later expressed in Matt 13:47-50 (and thereby rescuing people from judgment!)
 - The emphasis on the immediacy of the new disciples response is instructive. Following Jesus is a common theme in Matthew, always with the sharp & immediate call.
- V21-22
 - The call of James & John follows the same pattern as the call of Peter and Andrew.
 - These brothers are sometimes mentioned by name in the narrative that follows, sometimes as 'the sons of Zebedee'.
 - Like Peter & Andrew they immediately cease their commercial activities & family to follow Jesus. Their sacrifice thus entails both loss of finances and family, a tension that will exist throughout Matthew's Gospel.

6. Summary of Jesus's early ministry (4:23-25)

- The final section of Matt 4 encapsulates the ministry of Jesus. It may function either as a summary of Jesus's early ministry in Galilee, or an introduction to the Sermon on the Mount (or both).
- It is interesting and important to note that Matt 4:23 is repeated almost verbatim in 9:35.
- Both 4:23 and 9:35 are located just before major discourses by Jesus, and **they thus serve to summarise his deeds as context for his words.**
- More than this, these repetitions function as an 'inclusio' (bookends):
 - A. Summary of Jesus's teaching, preaching, and healing (4:23)
 - B. Jesus's authoritative **words** (5:3-7:27, see 7:29)
 - B. Jesus authoritative **deeds** (8:1-9:34, see 8:9, 9:6)
 - A. Summary of Jesus's teaching, preaching, and healing (9:35)
- V23
 - Jesus's ministry is presented in a threefold fashion: synagogue teaching, public preaching of the kingdom, and powerful healings.
 - Synagogues developed after the exile to Babylon. They were gatherings for prayer and the study of scripture. They also apparently functioned as community courts, especially with the rise of the rabbinic movement after the destruction of the temple in AD70.
 - The central aspect of Jesus's teaching on the kingdom has already been mentioned, but important here is to note that the healings are evidence of the kingdom's nearness. The healing thus demonstrate the reality of God's rule on earth, which will be fully established upon Jesus's return.
 - It is also clear from this passage that Jesus's ministry is holistic. He deals with physical and spiritual needs, the former sometimes preceding the latter. Although he demands repentance, he does not make repentance a necessary prerequisite for healing. He has compassion on the the needy crowds and acts to help them, in many cases before they hear him preach.
 - Surely this is also a model by Jesus to his disciples, who are not only to preach the kingdom (4:17/10:6-7) but also to do works of compassion that demonstrate its power and grace (4:24/10:1).

- It is also clearly the ministry of Jesus to defeat the devil. After overcoming the testing of the desert we immediately see him at the outset of his ministry as defeating the devil's possession of people.
- **This aspect of his ministry will escalate throughout Matthew's Gospel, showing how the kingdom of heaven is already encroaching on Satan's territory.**
- V24-25
 - These verses describe the far-reaching results of Jesus's kingdom ministry of word and deed, and thus provides the context for the Sermon on the Mount.
 - Matthew's first use of the term 'crowds' is noteworthy. The crowds are, as it were, 'in the middle' between the disciples and the defiant religious leaders, attracted to the sensation of Jesus's ministry. At times they are favourable to Jesus (and vice versa), but as time wears on, and under the influence of the religious leaders, the crowd ultimately assents to Jesus's death.

B. Discourse 1: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)

Historicity

- The Sermon on the Mount does not appear in Mark, and appears only partially in Luke 6:17-49. There are various views to explain this variation:
 - i. Some believe Matthew created the sermon from traditions, documentary sources, and his own ingenuity, so that the sermon should not actually be attributed to the historical Jesus. This sermon then comes from Matthew, and not Jesus. This approach takes the Gospels as unhistorical fabrications, concocted purely for theological reasons.
 - ii. A second view holds that Matthew created the structure of the sermon, and filled it with a collation of genuine teachings of Jesus. In this view Matthew collated the various teachings of Jesus that were originally uttered at different times and locations and placed them here in his account. Many evangelicals hold this view. However, Matthew clearly brackets the sermon with indicators time and place (5:1-2, 7:28-8:1), which these must be ignore or viewed as fictional.
 - iii. A third view is that Matthew accurately records the 'gist' (or '*ipsissima vox*' - 'the very voice' of Jesus) of a historical sermon that Jesus actually uttered. This view would acknowledge that we don't have a 'recording' of Jesus's sermon, but we do have a reliable summary of it. Matthew did not add to the sermon, but summarises and gives the sense of the sermon, such that the final form of it is attributed to him.
 - iv. Some go further and say that Matthew gives an exact word-for-word transcript of Jesus's sermon ('*ipsissima verba*' - 'the very words of Jesus'), 'verbatim'.
- The third view is preferable as it correlates best with the genre of Gospels, which is 'theologically interpreted history' (page 4). This fits with Matthew's intentional editing of the transmitted account. It also seems from Matthew's own narrative that he was not yet a disciple of Jesus at this point, which makes the 'transcript' view unlikely.
- **In summary, the sermon is a reliable summary of what Jesus said, an account that bears the marks of an editor.**

Literary structure

- There are a few viable approaches to structuring the sermon on the mount, including chiasm, a series of triads, and an approach that views the Lord's prayer (6:9-13) as the centre of the sermon, with the preceding material expounding the first three 'your' petitions and the material following the prayer expounding the three 'our' petitions. None of these are convincing.
- The analysis shown below is based on the clear 'inclusio' formed by the references to the righteousness of the law and the prophets in Matt 5:17 and 7:12. This is a likely 'centre' of the sermon, in line with Matthew's emphasis on 'fulfillment'³⁹:

Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount

- ***Introductory narrative framework (5:1–2): Jesus is prompted to teach by the crowds, and his disciples gather around him to hear his teaching.***
 - *Introduction to the sermon (5:3–16):* The Beatitudes (5:3–12) describe the divinely approved lifestyle of those who have repented at the arrival of the rule of God in Jesus's words and works. Those who live by Jesus's ethical teaching manifest the values of the rule of God to the world as salt and light (5:13–16).
 - *Body (5:17–7:12):* Jesus announces (5:17–20) and then explains (5:21–48) his relationship to the law with six contrasts. Then he turns to hypocritical versus genuine religious practice (6:1–18), materialism and anxiety (6:19–34), spiritual discernment (7:1–6), and prayer (7:7–11). A summary reference to the law (7:12) completes the theme of obeying the law and the prophets that began in 5:17.
 - *Conclusion to the sermon (7:13–27):* By three stark contrasts (two ways, two fruits, two foundations) Jesus challenges his listeners to make a correct response to his teaching. They are to take the narrow way (7:13–14), to avoid the bad fruit of the false prophets (7:15–23), and to build their lives on the words they have heard (7:24–27).
- ***Concluding narrative framework (7:28–29): The crowds are amazed at Jesus's uniquely authoritative teaching.***

³⁹ Turner pg 143

Interpretive approaches:

- One of the biggest interactive debates has been whether the sermon is law or gospel. Lutherans in the past have viewed the sermon as law, but think that its high legal standards will show people their sinfulness and draw them to the cross for forgiveness. They thus have no bearing on morality today. This view would have to assume Matthew had a short view of the time between Jesus's first and second advents.
- Other interpreters take the sermon as an ethic for today, but differ on whether the sermon illustrates personal ethics, or a public-policy agenda to be implemented through political processes.
- The best is to see the sermon as personal ethics for the followers of Jesus today. The personal ethic espoused does not however lead to individual and privatistic lives - we are to be salt and light. This view would see the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus authoritative teaching about the way believers should live today.
- Those who repented when they heard the gospel preached by John and Jesus needed to know how to live under God's saving rule: 'the kingdom of heaven'.
- As Jews, they especially need to know how Jesus's teachings related to Moses and the Hebrew Bible, a big theme running through the sermon.
- **Fulfilling biblical values is the framework of the sermon (5:17, 7:12, and Jesus's disciples are those who long for the time when these values will be fully realised on earth (6:10).**

1. God's approval: The beatitudes (5:1-16)

Structure

- The beatitudes themselves have been variously structured, with a few seeing three sets of three. However the first eight exhibit such a tightly knit parallel structure that it seems better to understand them as two sets of four, with an expanded conclusion:
- The strength of this structure is seen in the first set emphasising the disciple's vertical relationship with God, and the second the disciples horizontal relationship with people (much like the Lord's prayer).
- The first and eighth beatitude (5:3 & 5:10) bracket the present partial experience of the kingdom for a disciple ('theirs us the kingdom'). The remaining pairs 5:4-9 symmetrically stress the future full experience of the kingdom ('they will be..')

The Structure of Matthew's Beatitudes

- 5:3** Poor in spirit are blessed because *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*
(The present tense ἔστιν [*estin*] in the promise, identical to 5:10)
- 5:4** Mourners are blessed because *they will be comforted*
(A future passive' promise [παράκληθήσονται, *paraklēthēsontai*] as in 5:9)
- 5:5** Meek are blessed because *they will inherit the earth*
(A future transitive verb [κληρονομήσουσιν, *klēronomēsousin*] with direct object as in 5:8)
- 5:6** Hungry are blessed because *they will be filled*
(A future passive promise [χορτασθήσονται, *chortasthēsontai*] as in 5:7)
- 5:7** Merciful are blessed because *they will be mercied*
(A future passive promise [ἐλεηθήσονται, *eleēthēsontai*] as in 5:6)
- 5:8** Pure are blessed because *they will see God*
(A future transitive verb [ὄψονται, *opsontai*] with direct object as in 5:5)
- 5:9** Peacemakers are blessed because *they will be called sons of God*
(A future passive promise [κληθήσονται, *klēthēsontai*] as in 5:4)
- 5:10** Persecuted are blessed because *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*
(The present tense ἔστιν in the promise, identical to 5:3)
- Expansion:**
- 5:11–12** Persecuted are blessed with the prophets because of Jesus
(Shift to second person, triple description of persecution, double command to rejoice, continuity with the prophets)

Meaning

- A beatitude consists of a pronouncement concerning who are blessed, followed by a promise as to why they are blessed⁴⁰.
- To be blessed it to be the happy recipient of divine favour or approval. This does not correlate with subjective feelings of 'happiness' necessarily (although the word for 'blessed', which is 'μακάριος' - 'makarios', does certainly have this connotation⁴¹. **The opposite of 'blessed' is not 'unhappy' but 'cursed'.**
- There are two contrasting views of the meaning of the Beatitudes. One side views them as indicative pronouncements of gracious kingdom blessings. The other sees them as ethical exhortations about entrance requirements.
- If this latter view is correct, human effort must produce the characteristics mentioned here so that the might earn God's approval. If the former view is correct, one can only thankfully acknowledge these characteristics as evidence of God's gracious working in one's life and cultivate them as one lives as a disciple of Christ. This must surely be the correct view!

⁴⁰ 'beatitude' comes from the latin 'beatus' which means 'blessed'

⁴¹ In greek literature of the time it certainly meant 'happy'. It is thus used here to describe a 'happiness that results from being good with God'. See 'Happiness' by Randy Alcorn.

- These beatitudes reveal key character traits that God approves and wills in His people. **Those who repent receive these character traits in principle but must cultivate them in the process of discipleship.**
- The qualities God approves are explained in the two sets of four, relating to God and man.
- When it comes to relationship with God, God approves those who relate to him by admitting their spiritual need, and who mourn over sin and oppression, and humbly seek spiritual fullness (5:3-6)
- When it comes to others, God approves of those who relate to others mercifully and purely as peacemakers, even when they may be persecuted for the righteous behaviour (5:7-12).
- These beatitudes also confront some of our misconceptions about what evidences God's approval. For example some might say that popularity with one's peers indicates God's approval, but 5:10-12 indicates the opposite: those who are persecuted by peers have God's approval.
- **Ultimately, the entire list of beatitudes contradicts what many would think constitutes 'blessed'!**

2. Jesus and the Bible (5:17-48)

Structure

- This section includes a general introduction (v17-20) followed by two sets of three specific contrasts between traditional understandings of the Bible and Jesus's ultimate authoritative understanding.
- The basic, and important point of the introduction is to prevent the disciples from thinking that Jesus has come to destroy, or terminate, the place of the law.
- Rather he has come to fulfill it, since the entire law must be eternally valid.
- **This then introduces the subject of obedience to the law, *but now through the sense of Jesus as it's ultimate interpreter*.** Obedience to the law, as taught (and lived!) By Jesus will result in a righteousness greater than the Pharisees (5:20).
- The disciples must of course also go on to teach Jesus's interpretations of the law.
- The two sets of contrasts that follow all give examples of Jesus's fulfillment and reorientation of the law:
 - The first set deals with with anger, adultery & divorce.
 - The second set deals with teaching on vows, retaliation, and the attitude towards enemies
- The last verse of the section may be viewed as a generalising summary of Jesus's fundamental teaching on the fulfillment of the law: disciples are to emulate the character of God.

Jesus and the law: Continuity and Discontinuity

- What does it mean when Jesus says he has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill (πληρῶσαι - 'plerosai') in 5:17?
- Shades of meaning include:
 - i. Carrying out the law (think 'carry on with')
 - ii. Showing forth the law's true meaning
 - iii. Completing the law (think 'bringing it to its goal and therefore end')
- If Jesus only came to **carry out** the law (i), it would certainly emphasise the **continuity** between Jesus and Moses. In a sense Jesus would say 'ditto' to all the commands of Moses. However, **this overemphasises continuity** with Moses & the OT, and the following sets of six examples would make no sense.
- On the other hand, if Jesus **completes** the law (iii), this would be more like 'abolish', and would emphasise **discontinuity**. However, **this overemphasises the discontinuity** between Jesus & the OT, which he himself said he did not come to do, a sense which is clearly seen in his teachings which do continue OT law traditions. Jesus's teachings are clearly not contradictory to the OT law, although it must transcend it.
- This leaves option (ii) as the most likely. Jesus has come to show forth the true, transcendent meaning of the law by reaffirming it, extending it, and applying it in deeper ways, without merely repeating it.
- ***There is a legitimate discontinuity between Jesus and the OT. There is also a legitimate continuity. To overstate either is a grave mistake!***

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- At this point in Matthew we have had a LOT of interaction with Matthew's use of 'fulfill', which should dictate how we understand it in this critically important sense. What we have learned so far is that **fulfillment is not often simply a termination** (In that Jesus doesn't abruptly bring an OT idea to an end), **neither is it a simple continuity** (think of OT patterns that have achieved deeper significance in Jesus).
- The life and teaching of Jesus fulfill the law just as NT events fulfill biblical predictions and patterns.
- Matthew shows us, throughout his Gospel, that Jesus is the fulfilment of the ultimate goal of the law and prophets, the one to whom they point.
- **His kingdom mission of word and deed fulfils the ethical standards and ultimate promises of these laws and the urgings of the prophets.**
- ***Therefore, he becomes the sole authoritative teacher of the law, and his interpretations take on the character of new law for his disciples.*** The importance of this statement cannot be overstated! Christians today are to see Jesus's teachings on the law as authoritative, and thus live by them and teach them.
- Jesus teachings are **not brand new** in the sense that they have no root in the OT (hence there is some continuity), but at the same time **are new** in the sense that they transcend the traditional understandings of the law, as promoted by the religious leaders (hence there appears at least to be discontinuity).

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- In addition to the larger context of 'fulfillment', Jesus, through Matthew, very helpfully (!) gives us the six examples of how he 'fulfills' the law specifically so that we understand this. So we must pay close attention to these examples.
- In these six examples, Jesus **does not bluntly contradict Moses**, but **neither does he confirm the traditional understandings** of Moses!

- It is clear from these examples that they are not simply ‘contradictions’. If Jesus were strictly contradicting the law of Moses, he would have to say that if Moses said don’t murder, I say murder!
- But at the same time he is not just saying ‘ditto’ to Moses.
- In each of the six examples Jesus uncovers much deeper layers to the law, which expose root causes of behaviour⁴².
- This is where we get the commonly preached idea that ‘Jesus did not just come to perform behaviour modification’. Ultimately, yes, behaviour does change, and it changes along the lines of what the law projected, but Jesus goes to the source of the behaviours.

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- Ultimately, it is crucially important for Christians today to:
 - i. **See Jesus as the one who perfectly embodied the law.** Thus, when we are seeking to obey the law, we are simply seeking to become more like our new master.
 - ii. **See Jesus as the ultimate interpreter of the law**, and follow his interpretations and applications. It is not Moses, much less the religious leaders, who authoritatively teach Jesus’s disciples. We certainly can NOT miss the fact that Jesus assumes an authority in his teaching that transcends the divine revelation given to Moses. Jesus does not deny God spoke through Moses, but he authoritatively interprets and applies it. We must also teach Jesus’s interpretations of the law.
 - iii. **Not jettison the source of these teachings**, the rich idea of holiness as developed in the OT. This is made clear in the last verse, which quotes Lev 19:2 (cf 1 Pet 1:15), expressing the ultimate goal of the law.

The disciples and the law: law & grace

- Having settled our understanding of Jesus’s fulfillment of the law, and especially seeing it’s current application (ie it has not been ‘abolished’, and is effective until ‘heaven and earth pass away’!), one must now ask how this fits the theme of grace, as developed especially by the apostle Paul in his letters (Rom 6:14, 7:1-6, 10:4). These verses seem contradictory to the idea that we would still follow the law as taught by Jesus.
- However, Paul did also speak possibly about the law in ways similar to Jesus teaching, where he affirmed the holiness, justness, goodness and spirituality of the law (Rom 7:12, 14). Paul did not jettison the law completely, but he did warn against ‘the unlawful use of the law’ (1 Tim 1:8)!
- He taught that the law’s righteous standards could be fulfilled by Christians who relied on the Spirit (Rom 8:4), and he spoke of love as fulfilling the ‘weightier matters of the law’ (Rom 13:8-10). However, since we do not naturally love, we need the guidance and guardrails of the law!
- **Ultimately, Paul’s apparent ‘opposition’ to the law was not directed against the law per se, but against teachers who wanted to bring Gentile converts under the law.**
- Many of these ‘grace vs law’ texts in Paul are in the direct context of Paul insisting (emphatically and doggedly!) that Gentile converts to Christianity did NOT need to become Jewish converts in order to follow Jesus!
- This position led to no little tension between Paul and Christian Jews, particularly those who insisted on Mosaic obligations to following Jesus.

⁴² This is why some say the words ‘hypertheses’ or ‘epitheses’ are better than ‘antitheses’

3. Religious duties (6:1-18)

Structure

- This section presents Jesus teaching on three religious duties that would be basic for a Christian Jewish community: alms (v2-4), prayer (v5-15) and fasting (v16-18).
- Jesus first gives a general principle that informs these duties (v1), and then teaches on them.
- These teachings follow the same concept as the previous section, in that Jesus as the authoritative teacher explains the 'greater righteousness' (5:20).
- From a literary standpoint, they also follow the structure before, in that three examples are given after an introduction (previously was two sets of three).
- The examples also utilise contrast (not contradiction!) to show the difference between the greater righteousness required of Jesus's disciples and the practice of the religious leaders.

Summary

- The general principle in 6:1 **connects the disciple's righteousness with intention**.
- The disciples must above all **avoid doing religious acts in order to impress people**. If they do, there will be no heavenly reward for such acts, and they therefore have no spiritual value whatsoever. As Craig Keener says 'Disciples must impress God alone'.
- This obviously cuts against the popular grain of culture that stresses exhibitionism. Disciples must learn to be content with being noticed by the Father, and approved by him, alone.

4. Kingdom values: God or money? (6:19-34)

Structure

- This section is closely tied with the human-needs portion of the Lord's prayer (6:11-13), which has just been taught by Jesus, most specifically the daily provision part.
- The passage enters on three kinds of statements by Jesus:
 - i. Prohibitions of materialistic activities and anxious thoughts (6:19, 25, 31, 34a)
 - ii. Exhortations motivating kingdom priorities in activities and attitudes (6:20, 33)
 - iii. Motivations (illustrations, rhetorical questions etc) that move disciples toward obedience (6:21-24, 26-30, 32, 34b)
- As you can see, these three types of statements are tightly wound throughout this section in a repetitive manner, which build momentum as we learn how to think and act regarding material wealth.
- In addition, there are several bipolar structures/statements in this section including:
 - Earth and heaven
 - Temporary goods and enduring rewards
 - Good and bad eyes
 - Light and darkness
 - What Gentiles seek and what disciples seek
- Together, the effect of these opposite structures is to paint a clear picture of just how antithetical life is when following Jesus, as opposed to the worldly ways.
- Some attempt to separate the teaching on materialism in v19-24 and the teaching on anxiety in v25-34 into two separate units, but the two are clearly related. **It is a teaching on covetous anxiety.**

Summary

- In Matthew 6 Jesus address two matters, hypocrisy in religious activities and covetous anxiety.
- Both parts of the chapter call upon disciples to put God first. **If disciples seek the kingdom first their needs will be met, and they will even receive that for which they did not ask. But ironically, if they seek first to meet their own needs, they will never have enough!**

5. Dealing with people (7:1-6)

Structure

- The connection between this section and the previous is harder to discern, but it can simply be connecting the flow of the Sermon from:
 - Instruction on the law (5:17-48)
 - 'Religious' duties (6:1-18)
 - Life in the wider world (6:19-12), which includes money & relationships.

Summary

- Jesus has two warnings when it comes to people:
 - i. Warning against judgmentalism (v1-5)
 - ii. Warning against gullibility (7:6)
- The warning against judgmentalism has particularly important application today. Certainly Matthew 7:1 is one of the most misquoted verses in the NT today, often used to support the cause of ethical relativism.
- Clearly, the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount would not deny the existence of moral absolutes!
- Neither would he deny that we can discern these absolutes and comment on them:
 - *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?...Thus you will recognize them by their fruits"* (Matt 7:15-20)
- Jesus himself strongly confronted and 'judged' the religious establishment (3:7).
- Therefore, Jesus does not forbid here what he commands elsewhere, neither does he forbid something that he himself enacts!
- Depending on the context, the words 'judge' and 'judgment' mean either:
 - Analysis and evaluation
 - Condemnation and punishment
- The world only sees the second usage, which we would be wise to be careful with!
- The unique Matthew verse about gullibility at the end of this section (v6) actually stresses the importance of Jesus's disciples to not be oblivious to evil people.
- What is forbidden here, is a 'rigid, censorious judgmentalism that scrutinises others without even a glance at oneself'⁴³
- Jesus ensures we understand this through the absurd hyperbole of the 'speck and log'. **These two questions express the perverse tendency of humans to critique in others what they excuse in themselves**⁴⁴.

⁴³ Turner pg 205

⁴⁴ Turner pg 206

- **Jesus teaches that honest introspection is absolutely necessary for clear discernment and just moral judgments.** In addition, Christian interpersonal judgments must be constructive, not retributive.

6. Prayer encouraged (7:7-11)

Structure

- Once again, the subject seems to change abruptly, with little clear connection to the preceding section.
- Perhaps, when Jesus returns to the subject of prayer, he is simply intending to encourage the disciples about the fathers care for them despite the difficulties of discipleship, and perhaps also pointing to the source of help in achieving these difficult standards?
- Perhaps also this section is a sort of postscript to the model prayer in 6:9-13. **In the Lord's prayer we are taught how to pray, in this part of the sermon we are motivated to pray.**

Summary

- Each of the three commands of v7 are followed by appropriate promises - an encouraging motivation for prayer! The nature of the verbs stress the divine activity in answering prayer.
- **These three commands, with promises, cumulatively have the effect of highlighting habitual prayer.**

7. Summary of Biblical Ethics (7:12)

Structure

- This is often missed, but 7:12 should be understood as a conclusion to everything said in the sermon so far!
- We see this in the 'therefore' ('so'), but more so in the 'inclusio' that this forms with 5:17, where Jesus refers to 'the Law and Prophets'.
- Structurally, this means the main body of the sermon is now complete. The following section will complete the sermon with a solemn warning from Jesus to obey his teaching.

Summary

- The essence of the law and the prophets, according to Jesus, is that one should treat other humans just as one would like to be treated by them. Jesus says that here, but repeats it later in 19:19, 22:34-40 ('The great commandment'), where he links this 'essence' to Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18.
- This 'golden rule' summarises all of Jesus's teaching on the 'greater righteousness', where a more profound ethical standard is hard to conceive of!
- The summation of the law as loving one's neighbour, or doing for others what we would want them to do for ourselves, is not a higher law that replaces the Torah, but the true goal of the law.
- The Apostle Paul will say similar words (also Rom 13:8-9):
 - *"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"" (Gal 5:14)*

- 'The general statement of 7:12 condenses the thirty-nine books of the Hebrew Bible into fifteen Greek words'⁴⁵

8. Warning: True and false religion contrasted (7:13-27)

- The end of Jesus's sermon presents an ethical dualism that vividly, and repeatedly, constructs true discipleship with false religion.
- The table below summarises Jesus's approach⁴⁶:

Ethical Dualism in Matt. 7:15–23		
Matthew 7	Discipleship	Lawlessness
Two gates/ways (7:13–14)	Narrow gate	Wide gate
	Difficult way	Broad way
	Life	Destruction
	Few	Many
Two trees/fruits (7:15–23)	True prophets (implied)	False prophets
	Sheep	Wolves
	Good trees	Bad trees (thorns, thistles)
	Good fruit (grapes, figs)	Bad fruit
	Life (implied)	Judgment (fire)
	Doing the Father's will	Saying "Lord, Lord . . ."
Two builders/foundations (7:24–27)	Wise person	Foolish person
	Hears/obeys Jesus	Hears/does not obey Jesus
	House built on rock	House built on sand
	House stands during flood	House falls during flood

⁴⁵ Turner quoting Ricoeur, pg 212

⁴⁶ Turner pg 214

- As a whole, this passage constitutes a stern warning that presents two contesting responses to Jesus's teaching in this sermon, through the form of three metaphors:
 - i. Two gates/paths (v13-14)
 - ii. Two trees/fruits (v15-23)
 - iii. Two houses/foundations (v24-27)