

FOREWORD BY J. LIGON DUNCAN III

*A BIBLICAL-  
THEOLOGICAL  
INTRODUCTION*  
*to the*  
*NEW TESTAMENT*

THE GOSPEL REALIZED

EDITED BY MICHAEL J. KRUGER

CONTRIBUTIONS BY

WILLIAM B. BARCLEY, ROBERT J. CARA,

BENJAMIN GLADD, CHARLES E. HILL,

REGGIE M. KIDD, SIMON J. KISTEMAKER,

MICHAEL J. KRUGER, BRUCE A. LOWE,

GUY PRENTISS WATERS

“Seminary-level New Testament introductions are plentiful. But this one provides what others do not: a consistent hermeneutical orientation as articulated by a top-tier roster of nine different scholars associated with Reformed Theological Seminary throughout its history. In addition to chapters covering all the New Testament books, valuable appendices treat canon, text, the synoptic problem, and more. Addressing both spiritual and academic issues with a view to pastoral equipping and biblical exposition, this wide-ranging compendium will benefit readers in both classroom and personal settings.”

**Robert W. Yarbrough**, Professor of New Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary

“With the right mix of academic integrity and purposeful accessibility, this New Testament introduction will serve time-crunched pastors, ministry-minded students, and church members looking to better understand their Bibles. What makes this new volume unique is the emphasis on examining the theological themes in each book of the New Testament, rather than focusing on arcane debates prompted by liberal scholarship. The result is an insightful and impressive resource, one I will use in my own studies and often recommend to others.”

**Kevin DeYoung**, Senior Pastor, University Reformed Church, East Lansing, Michigan

“While introductions to the New Testament abound, this volume is a rare gem. It admirably combines depth of scholarship and theological exegesis within a biblical-theological framework—all couched in highly readable prose, offered for the sake of the church. It will no doubt instruct *and* edify. Well done.”

**Constantine R. Campbell**, Associate Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“This biblical-theological introduction walks readers through key biblical themes and issues concerning the backdrop to the 27 books of the New Testament. It is judicious, informative, and also quite accessible, making it profitable for students and pastors alike.”

**Darrell L. Bock**, Executive Director of Cultural Engagement, Hendricks Center, and Senior Research Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

“Aimed at pastors and interested Christian readers, this biblical-theological introduction to the New Testament is a welcome addition to the introductory literature on the New Testament. The volume, a collaborative effort by nine different authors, is written within a framework of biblical theology and based on a commitment to biblical inerrancy and Reformed theology. Highly recommended!”

**Andreas J. Köstenberger**, Senior Research Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Students and pastors, not to mention laypeople, usually find introductions to the New Testament writings to be rather dry and sterile. But this introduction by RTS authors has a different quality since it focuses on the theology and content of the New Testament. Those who study the New Testament want to gain a better understanding of its message, and thus this volume will prove to be an immense help for pastors, students, laypeople, and even scholars.”

**Thomas R. Schreiner**, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Associate Dean of the School of Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Solid authors construct a biblical theology by providing thematic summaries of each book of the New Testament. While I would not agree with every point made by the authors, many readers will find this an extremely helpful and useful introduction to the teaching of the New Testament.”

**Peter J. Gentry**, Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Director, the Hexapla Institute

*A Biblical-Theological Introduction  
to the New Testament*



# A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament

*The Gospel Realized*

Edited by Michael J. Kruger

FOREWORD BY J. LIGON DUNCAN III

 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*

Copyright © 2016 by Michael J. Kruger

Published by Crossway  
1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law. Crossway® is a registered trademark in the United States of America.

Cover design: Studio Gearbox

First printing 2016

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For other Scripture versions cited, see appendix E.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the authors.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4335-3676-2

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-3679-3

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-3677-9

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-3678-6

---

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A biblical-theological introduction to the New Testament: the gospel realized /  
edited by Michael J. Kruger; foreword by J. Ligon Duncan III.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-3676-2 (hc)

1. Bible. New Testament—Introductions. I. Kruger, Michael J., editor.

BS2330.3.B525

2016

225.06'1—dc23

2015032925

---

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

SH 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16  
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Contents

Foreword.....	9		
<i>J. Ligon Duncan III</i>			
Acknowledgments .....	13		
Abbreviations .....	15		
Introduction.....	21		
<i>Michael J. Kruger</i>			
1 Matthew.....	29	11 Colossians .....	301
<i>Reggie M. Kidd</i>		<i>Benjamin Gladd</i>	
2 Mark.....	61	12 1 Thessalonians .....	321
<i>Benjamin Gladd</i>		<i>Robert J. Cara</i>	
3 Luke.....	93	13 2 Thessalonians .....	337
<i>Robert J. Cara</i>		<i>Robert J. Cara</i>	
4 John.....	115	14 Introduction to the	
<i>Michael J. Kruger</i>		Pastoral Epistles.....	
5 Acts .....	137	<i>William B. Barclay</i>	
<i>Robert J. Cara</i>		15 1 Timothy.....	357
6 Romans.....	169	<i>William B. Barclay</i>	
<i>Guy Prentiss Waters</i>		16 2 Timothy.....	377
7 1–2 Corinthians .....	195	<i>William B. Barclay</i>	
<i>Guy Prentiss Waters</i>		17 Titus.....	393
8 Galatians.....	249	<i>William B. Barclay</i>	
<i>Guy Prentiss Waters</i>		18 Philemon.....	401
9 Ephesians .....	267	<i>Benjamin Gladd</i>	
<i>Guy Prentiss Waters</i>		19 Hebrews .....	411
10 Philippians.....	285	<i>Simon J. Kistemaker</i>	
<i>Bruce A. Lowe</i>			

20	James.....	437	23	1–3 John.....	483
	<i>Bruce A. Lowe</i>			<i>Charles E. Hill</i>	
21	1 Peter.....	453	24	Jude.....	509
	<i>William B. Barclay</i>			<i>Simon J. Kistemaker</i>	
22	2 Peter.....	471	25	Revelation.....	517
	<i>Simon J. Kistemaker</i>			<i>Charles E. Hill</i>	
Appendix A: The New Testament Canon.....		555			
<i>Michael J. Kruger</i>					
Appendix B: The New Testament Text: An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism.....		567			
<i>Charles E. Hill</i>					
Appendix C: The Synoptic Problem.....		581			
<i>Guy Prentiss Waters</i>					
Appendix D: The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: Trusting the New Testament’s Hermeneutics.....		593			
<i>Robert J. Cara</i>					
Appendix E: Scripture Versions Cited.....		603			
Contributors.....		605			
General Index.....		607			
Scripture Index.....		623			

# Foreword

As we approach the five hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation of the Christian church, Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) is entering its fiftieth year. The seminary has existed for only a small fraction of the time of this important quarter of Christian history, but RTS has had and continues to have a significant role in this era in which Reformed theology has enjoyed a widely recognized renewal and influence in the global Christian world.

RTS came into being in a time when the mainline denominations and seminaries were administratively in the hands of theological moderates, neoorthodox, and liberals, but the growth curve was already with the evangelicals, both inside and outside the mainline. While denominational apparatchiks were trying to maintain a status quo that was already on the wane, growing numbers of Christians were becoming frustrated with theological educators who were indifferent to or hostile toward historic Christian confessional orthodoxy and unconcerned for the gospel work of the church. RTS was created to provide a robust, reverent, and rigorous theological education for pastors and church leaders, particularly in Presbyterian and Reformed churches yet also more broadly in the larger evangelical family, coming from the standpoint of a commitment to biblical inerrancy, Reformed theology, and the Great Commission.

Because RTS was confessionally defined but not denominationally controlled, the seminary could exercise influence in numerous denominational settings and in a variety of church traditions. Also, since the founders of RTS were connected to a global evangelical network, the seminary was able to have a worldwide reach from the beginning. Over the years, RTS has served over eleven thousand students from some fifty denominations: Presbyterian, Reformed, Baptist, Anglican, Congregational, and more. A seminary that began with fourteen students from one denomination in 1966 now has about two thousand students annually in eight cities in the United States, in its global distance education, and in a doctoral program in São Paulo, Brazil, with students from every continent representing dozens of denominations, and it is the largest Reformed evangelical seminary in the world.

During that time, the academic reputation and contributions of Reformed Theological Seminary faculty have grown. In biblical studies, the RTS faculty has established a pattern of widely appreciated excellence in the fields of the Old and New

Testaments. To give only a few examples, consider former RTS Old Testament professor O. Palmer Robertson, who played a significant role in the contemporary resurgence of covenant theology through his book *The Christ of the Covenants*. Former RTS-Jackson and current RTS-Charlotte Old Testament professor John Currid has produced a complete commentary on the Pentateuch and has done important work in archaeology and ancient Near Eastern studies. Longtime RTS-Orlando Old Testament professor Richard Pratt not only is a prolific author regarded for his excellent Old Testament scholarship, single-handedly producing topical articles for an entire study Bible, but also is known for his work on apologetics and prayer. Miles Van Pelt of RTS-Jackson may be the best biblical languages professor I have ever known, with an infectious passion for canonical, Christ-centered biblical theology. Former RTS-Jackson and current RTS-Orlando New Testament professor Simon Kistemaker served as the longtime secretary of the Evangelical Theology Society and completed the multivolume New Testament commentary begun by William Hendriksen. RTS-Orlando professor Charles Hill is not only an acclaimed New Testament specialist but also one of the world's top scholars in the eschatology of early Christianity. In addition, RTS-Charlotte president and professor of New Testament Michael Kruger is a recognized scholar of early Christianity and has made major contributions to recent discussions of the canon of Scripture. Indeed, Kruger and Hill, along with RTS-Orlando professor John Frame, were cited by D. A. Carson in a recent plenary address at the Evangelical Theology Society as having made outstanding contributions in the field of the doctrine of Scripture. RTS-Jackson New Testament scholar Guy Waters has published prolifically on various topics including ecclesiology and has helped reshape the current debates on the theology of Paul.

In an effort to pass along this world-class, faithful, consecrated scholarship to the next generation, the Old and New Testament professors at RTS—both past and present—have put together two new volumes: *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised* (edited by Miles V. Van Pelt), and *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized* (edited by Michael J. Kruger). There are several unique features and aspirations of these volumes. First, they are aimed at pastors and interested Christian readers, rather than fellow scholars. We at RTS value and produce resources intended for a scholarly audience, but the aim of these volumes is churchly edification, hence they are designed for accessibility. Second, they are written by scholars of biblical studies who are unafraid of and indeed very much appreciative of dogmatics. In many seminaries, even evangelical seminaries, there exists an unhealthy relationship between biblical theology and systematic theology, but at RTS we value both and want our students to understand their necessary and complementary value. To understand the Bible, and the Christian faith, one needs both the insights of a redemptive-historical approach and those of topical-doctrinal study. Third, these volumes unashamedly come from the standpoint of biblical inerrancy and Reformed theology. A high view of Scripture and a warm embrace of confessional Reformed theology are hallmarks

of RTS, and these ideals shine through these books. Fourth, these introductions are designed to be pastoral and helpful. Preachers, ministry leaders, Bible teachers, students, and others engaged in Christian discipleship are in view. We want to edify you and help you edify others.

May these volumes bless the church of Jesus Christ for generations to come as it seeks to know his Word better and to proclaim it to the nations.

J. Ligon Duncan III  
Chancellor and CEO

John E. Richards Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology  
Reformed Theological Seminary



# Acknowledgments

A project such as this one is certainly not an individual affair. As the editor, I am grateful for the help I have received from a number of sources. Certainly the contributors themselves deserve a word of thanks. It has been a privilege to work with such a fine collection of scholars, all exceptional professors and experts in their respective fields. Since they are routinely swamped with other teaching and writing responsibilities, I am grateful they have carved out the time to contribute to this volume. I am confident that their work here will leave a legacy of truth for future generations of pastors, Bible teachers, and seminary students.

Let me also express my appreciation for Justin Taylor and the team at Crossway. They are, as always, a delight to work with, and their keen interest in this project was a great encouragement. Guy Waters deserves a special word of thanks for his willingness to provide input and feedback at a number of critical junctures. His generous spirit and sharp intellect were a great help to me. My teaching assistants Aaron Gray and Aaron Ingle were indispensable as they spent many hours editing and proofing the manuscript of this volume. And, of course, Reformed Theological Seminary itself deserves a word of thanks as this volume is being published in honor of its fiftieth anniversary. It is a privilege to serve at an institution so committed to the authority of Scripture and the supremacy of Christ in all things. May those traits remain true for another fifty years and beyond.

Most of all, I want to thank my wife, Melissa, and my three children, Emma, John, and Kate. As with each of my prior books, they have sacrificed much as I have labored on this project, but they have always done so with joy and thankfulness. My prayer is that this volume would be a blessing to each of them as they study the Scriptures in the years to come.

Michael J. Kruger



# Abbreviations

- 1 *Apol.* *First Apology* (Justin Martyr)
- 1 Clem. 1 Clement
- 1 QS Serek Hayahad or Rule of the Community
- 1–2 Macc. 1–2 Maccabees
- 2 Bar. 2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)
- 3–4 Macc. 3–4 Maccabees
- AB Anchor Bible
- ABD *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
- Ab.* *De Abrahamo* (*On the Life of Abraham*, Philo)
- ABRL Anchor Bible Reference Library
- ACCS Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
- ACNT Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
- AGJU Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
- AJT* *American Journal of Theology*
- An.* *De anima* (*The Soul*, Tertullian)
- ANF *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–1887. 10 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994
- Ant.* *Jewish Antiquities* (Josephus)
- ANTC Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
- Antichr.* *De antichristo* (*On Christ and the Antichrist*, Hippolytus)
- Ant. rom.* *Antiquitates romanae* (*Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus)
- Att.* *Epistulae ad Atticum* (*Letters to Atticus*, Cicero)
- AYB Anchor Yale Bible
- Barn. Epistle of Barnabas

- BBR *Bulletin for Biblical Research*
- BDAG Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
- BECNT Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
- BETL Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
- Bib* *Biblica*
- BJRL *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
- BNTC Black's New Testament Commentaries
- BR* *Biblical Research*
- BST Bible Speaks Today
- BTNT Biblical Theology of the New Testament
- BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
- Cass.* *Cassiodorus*
- CBET Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
- CBQMS Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
- Cher.* *De cherubim (On the Cherubim, Philo)*
- Comm. Apoc.* *Commentary on the Apocalypse (Victorinus)*
- Comm. Jo.* *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis (Commentary on the Gospel of John, Origen)*
- ConcC Concordia Commentary
- Conf.* *Confessions (Augustine)*
- CTR* *Criswell Theological Review*
- Cult. fem.* *De cultu feminarum (The Apparel of Women, Tertullian)*
- CurBS* *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
- Dial.* *Dialogue with Trypho (Justin Martyr)*
- DJG* *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992
- DJG<sup>2</sup>* *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013
- DPL* *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Edited by G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993
- ECC Eerdmans Critical Commentary
- EDNT *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. ET. 3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990–1993
- EGGNT Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament

- EKKNT Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament  
*Ep.* *Epistulae morales* (Moral Epistles, Seneca)  
*Eph.* *To the Ephesians* (Ignatius)
- EPSC EP Study Commentary  
*EvQ* *Evangelical Quarterly*
- ExAud* *Ex Auditu*  
 FB Focus on the Bible  
*fr.* *fragmentum, fragmenta*  
*Fug.* *De fuga in persecutione* (Flight in Persecution, Tertullian)
- GCS Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte  
*Haer.* *Refutatio omnium haeresium* (Refutation of All Heresies, Hippolytus)  
 (Hippolytus)  
*Haer.* *Adversus haereses* (Against Heresies, Irenaeus)  
 (Irenaeus)
- Hist. eccl.* *Historia ecclesiastica* (Ecclesiastical History, various authors)
- HNTC Harper's New Testament Commentaries
- Hom. Gen.* *Homilies on Genesis* (Origen)  
*Hom. Jos.* *Homilies on Joshua* (Origen)  
*Hom. Num.* *Homilies on Numbers* (Origen)
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- ICC International Critical Commentary  
*Inv.* *De inventione rhetorica* (Cicero)
- IVPNTC IVP New Testament Commentary  
*JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*  
*JETS* *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*  
*JSJ* *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods*  
*JSNT* *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
- JSNTSup Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series  
*JTS* *Journal of Theological Studies*  
 Jub. Jubilees  
*J.W.* *Jewish War* (Josephus)
- LCL Loeb Classical Library  
 LEC Library of Early Christianity  
*Leg.* *De legibus* (On the Laws, Cicero)

- LSJ Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
- LTPM Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs
- LXX Septuagint
- Marc.* *Against Marcion* (Tertullian)
- MNTC Moffatt New Testament Commentary
- Mos.* *De vita Mosis (On the Life of Moses, Philo)*
- MSS manuscripts
- NAC New American Commentary
- NCB New Century Bible
- NCBC New Cambridge Bible Commentaries
- Neot* *Neotestamentica*
- NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament
- NIDNTT *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Edited by Colin Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975–1985
- NIDNTTE *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by Moisés Silva. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014
- NIGTC New International Greek Testament Commentary
- NIVAC New International Version Application Commentary
- NovT* *Novum Testamentum*
- NovTSup Supplements to Novum Testamentum
- NPNF<sup>1</sup> *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 14 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994
- NPNF<sup>2</sup> *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2*. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 14 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994
- NSBT New Studies in Biblical Theology
- NTC New Testament Commentary
- NTL New Testament Library
- NTOA *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus*
- NTS* *New Testament Studies*
- NTT New Testament Theology (series from Cambridge University Press)
- NTTS New Testament Tools and Studies
- NTTSD New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents
- Od.* *Odyssey* (Homer)

- Opif.* *De opificio mundi* (*On the Creation of the World*, Philo)
- OTL Old Testament Library
- Phil.* *To the Philippians* (Polycarp)
- Phld.* *To the Philadelphians* (Ignatius)
- PNTC Pillar New Testament Commentary
- Praescr.* *De praescriptione haereticorum* (*Prescription against Heretics*, Tertullian)
- Princ.* *First Principles* (Origen)
- Pss. Sol. Psalms of Solomon
- RBL* *Review of Biblical Literature*
- Rhet. Her.* *Rhetorica ad Herennium*
- Rom.* *To the Romans* (Ignatius)
- SBLECL Society of Biblical Literature Early Christianity and Its Literature
- SBLMS Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
- SBLStBL Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature
- SBLSymS Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
- Scorp.* *Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting* (Tertullian)
- SD Studies and Documents
- Smyrn.* *To the Smyrnaeans* (Ignatius)
- SNTSMS Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
- SOTBT Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology
- SP Sacra Pagina
- SUNT Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
- SWBA Social World of Biblical Antiquity
- T. 12 Patr. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
- T. Ash. Testament of Asher
- T. Benj. Testament of Benjamin
- T. Dan Testament of Dan
- T. Gad Testament of Gad
- T. Isaac Testament of Isaac
- T. Iss. Testament of Issachar
- T. Jac. Testament of Jacob
- T. Job Testament of Job
- T. Jos. Testament of Joseph
- T. Jud. Testament of Judah

T. Levi	Testament of Levi
T. Mos.	Testament of Moses
T. Naph.	Testament of Naphtali
T. Reu.	Testament of Reuben
T. Sim.	Testament of Simeon
T. Zeb.	Testament of Zebulun
TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TPINTC	TPI New Testament Commentaries
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

# Introduction

*Michael J. Kruger*

As professors at Reformed Theological Seminary (both past and present), all the contributors to this volume have devoted the bulk of their scholarly efforts, over the course of many years, to the study of the twenty-seven books that form this corpus we call the New Testament. This study has been motivated not simply by a desire to advance our personal knowledge of God’s Word (though that is important in its own right), but it has been motivated primarily by the commitment to pass along the fruits of that study to the next generation of pastors, leaders, missionaries, and Christian thinkers. The future of the church depends on her knowledge of, and commitment to, the teachings of God’s Word.

This “passing along” of what we have learned takes place primarily in the classroom setting. Our New Testament classes are designed to introduce students to these books from a variety of angles—historical, exegetical, theological—and to help students teach, preach, and apply these books to their respective audiences.

But the classroom setting has its limitations. Not all have the opportunity to be in a seminary class. And not all are in a position to study the material at the depth seminary requires. The present volume, therefore, is simply an attempt to take the core material from these courses and put it into a different medium—the medium of a book. Our goal is to produce a New Testament introduction that captures the foundational material in our classes and presents it in a way that could be readily accessible to ministry leaders, preachers, Bible study teachers, and, of course, seminary students.

Needless to say, there have been many New Testament introductions prior to this one—from Theodor Zahn’s massive two-volume *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Leipzig, 1897) to D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo’s very popular *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).<sup>1</sup> So the reader may wonder whether we really need another one. What is distinctive about

---

<sup>1</sup>For an overview of the history of research on the New Testament, including the many introductions, see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992–2013).

this particular volume? In many ways, of course, this new volume is not distinctive. Like many of the volumes that have come before, it is designed to accomplish the same basic task: namely, to introduce the reader to the major historical, exegetical, and theological issues within each of the twenty-seven books.

In other ways, however, this volume is distinctive. Here are some noteworthy features that set this introduction apart from some others that have gone before:

*It is accessible.* Generally speaking, New Testament introductions have tended to focus primarily on historical-critical issues related to the background of each of the twenty-seven books. While many introductions spend considerable time engaging in highly technical discussions about dating, authorship, and textual history, they often devote comparably little space to the theological, doctrinal, and practical aspects of these books.

Now, it should be noted that these background issues are very important in their own right; and the authors of this volume have dealt with many of them in other places (e.g., see Charles Hill's highly technical monograph on the origins of the Johannine corpus).<sup>2</sup> However, for the average Bible study leader or local pastor, such discussions are not always their primary need as they prepare their lessons or sermons. Sure, they need to be introduced to the major background issues, but not in such a way that they get mired in overly technical discussions. For these reasons, the present volume has attempted to make the discussion of background issues more streamlined and more accessible.

By way of example, some of the more technical discussions that normally appear at the beginning of New Testament introductions—discussions related to the New Testament text, the New Testament canon, and the synoptic problem—now appear at the end of this one. Thus, these important appendixes are available if and when they are needed, but they are not, if you will, the lead story. And they are targeted not to the scholar but to the average pastor or student.

*It is theological.* In addition to spending less time on historical background issues, this volume is consciously committed to spending (comparably) more time on theological and doctrinal issues. Because this volume is designed primarily to help pastors and Bible study leaders prepare their sermons or lessons, a higher priority is placed on exploring the *message* of each New Testament book. It is this priority that has led to the title *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament*.

Of course, the term *biblical theology* conjures up a variety of thoughts in people's minds.<sup>3</sup> Historically, some advocates of biblical theology viewed the New Testament as filled with diverse and contradictory theologies that merely reflect the different factions in the early church.<sup>4</sup> According to such an approach, there is no such thing as New

<sup>2</sup>Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup>For an overview of the state of the discipline of biblical theology, see Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); and D. A. Carson, "Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective," *BBR* 5 (1995): 17–41.

<sup>4</sup>J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 2006); Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of a New Testament Theology," *NTS* 19 (1973): 235–45.

Testament theology, but only, say, the theology of Paul or John or the Synoptics—and these different theologies are often at odds with one another. Such a view of biblical theology is not the one advocated in this volume. The contributors acknowledge that each biblical author makes his own distinctive contribution, but, at the same time, they acknowledge that these different contributions are consistent with one another and can still be viewed as a unified whole. Because God is the ultimate author of the New Testament writings, the distinctive theologies of individual books and the overall theology of the New Testament are fully harmonious.<sup>5</sup>

Others view biblical theology as a corrective to (and replacement of) systematic theology. Traditional dogmatics, some would argue, is an illegitimate enterprise that forces Scripture into artificial and man-made categories. Biblical theology, on the other hand, is presented as something that preserves, with greater integrity, the message of the Bible. Such an approach is, again, not shared by the contributors to this volume. We recognize that systematic theology can be misused; some have developed systematic systems that are, in fact, contrary to Scripture. But such misuse does not make the enterprise itself illegitimate. There are many positive examples of systematic theologies that faithfully reflect the teaching of Scripture rather than overriding it. In addition, the contributors to this volume have a deep appreciation for the value and insights of biblical theology. The message of each book can (and should) be studied within the context of the author’s own historical situation. But biblical theology and systematic theology should not be pitted against each other. Both play a critical role and should not be viewed as mutually exclusive.<sup>6</sup> As Geerhardus Vos observed, “Biblical Theology . . . differs from Systematic Theology, not in being more Biblical, or adhering more closely to the truths of Scripture, but in that its principle of organizing the Biblical material is historical rather than logical.”<sup>7</sup>

As an example of how this volume seeks to develop the rich theology of the New Testament authors, see the excellent chapter on Ephesians by Guy Waters. Noting how Ephesians is centrally focused on the gospel message, Waters first explores the gospel “indicatives” by highlighting how Paul uncovers the redemptive work of each member of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then he explores the gospel “imperatives,” namely, Paul’s argument that, in light of the grace of Christ, we are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1). Such a life worthy of our calling includes a commitment to serving the church, putting off the old self and putting on the new self, and submitting to the various authorities in our lives. Thus, when the chapter is finished, the reader leaves with more than just an understanding of the controversy over whether Paul wrote Ephesians (though one does leave with an

<sup>5</sup>Some authors express their commitment to the overall unity and coherence of the New Testament by arranging their New Testament theologies *thematically* rather than according to each individual book. E.g., Thomas Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>6</sup>The harmony between the two can be demonstrated by the fact that Geerhardus Vos, who is mainly celebrated for his work in biblical theology (*Biblical Theology* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975]) also wrote a systematic theology (*Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Theology Proper* [Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014]). See also the balanced and helpful discussion by Robert J. Cara, “Redemptive-Historical Themes in the Westminster Larger Catechism,” in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century: Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. J. Ligon Duncan, vol. 3 (Fearn: Mentor, 2009), 55–76.

<sup>7</sup>Vos, *Biblical Theology*, v.

understanding of that). The reader leaves also with a deep, thorough, and full-orbed grasp of the gospel of Jesus Christ and its implications for everyday life.

*It is redemptive-historical.* This volume is committed not only to exploring the theological message of individual New Testament books, but also to placing the message of each book within God’s unfolding redemptive plan. The goal is more than extracting timeless truths from these books. We also want to discover how these books functioned within the timeline of the larger canonical story—how an author’s message contributes to our overall understanding of the work of Christ.

While many scholars would still describe this approach as an aspect of biblical theology,<sup>8</sup> it might be simpler to say, for the sake of terminological clarity, that we are interested in looking at each of the New Testament books through the lens of *redemptive history*.<sup>9</sup> We want to show how each book contributes to the fulfillment of God’s salvific plan. In particular, such an approach would focus on how Old Testament history, types, and shadows all find their fulfillment in the person and work of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

To be sure, some contributors in this volume focus on these redemptive-historical themes more than others. Some are content to observe the theological themes of their particular book in traditional systematic categories, while others are more interested in how that book fits into the timeline of the larger biblical story. An excellent example of the latter is the chapter by Benjamin Gladd on the Gospel of Mark. Gladd explores how the redemptive activity of Jesus is really a fulfillment of a “second exodus” motif from the book of Isaiah. He demonstrates how the author Mark constructs portions of his narrative around the exodus theme to highlight Jesus as the great deliverer who brings final redemption to his people Israel. By doing so, Gladd helps the reader see how Jesus completes the story of the Old Testament narrative and how Mark’s Gospel makes a key contribution to our understanding of God’s plan of salvation.

Another example of a helpful focus on redemptive-historical themes is the chapter on Matthew by Reggie Kidd. Since Matthew is a Gospel steeped in the Old Testament, a Gospel likely written for a Jewish-Christian audience, Kidd helps the reader see how Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament types and the superior (and final) stage of God’s redemptive activity. In particular, Kidd highlights how Jesus is presented as the new Moses (since Matthew’s Gospel is presented in five sections), as greater than the temple, as greater than Jonah, and as greater than Solomon.

<sup>8</sup> Vos uses the phrase *biblical theology* in this fashion, but he admits it is “really unsatisfactory because of its liability to misconstruction” (*ibid.*).

<sup>9</sup> The terms *biblical-theological* and *redemptive-historical* are seen by many as virtually synonymous: e.g., Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1975), 16; and R. B. Gaffin, “Biblical Theology and the Westminster Standards,” in *The Practical Calvinist: An Introduction to the Presbyterian and Reformed Heritage*, ed. Peter A. Lillback (Fearn: Mentor, 2002), 425–42, esp. 425. For additional use of the phrase *redemptive-historical*, see Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 39, 45.

<sup>10</sup> For a helpful example of such an approach, see G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

*It is Reformed.* For any New Testament introduction—particularly one that focuses largely on the theology and message of each book—it is important that the authors be theologically and doctrinally sound. While a number of available introductions are written by highly capable authors (academically speaking), many of these lack the doctrinal integrity one might need to prepare sermons or Bible studies. Such introductions often have a low view of the authority of Scripture and are quite content to affirm many higher-critical views, such as the belief that many of the New Testament books are forgeries and not written by the individuals to whom they are ascribed.

In contrast, the contributors to this volume, all current or past professors of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, have a high view of the authority of Scripture and are all committed to the foundational doctrines born out of the Reformation. These truths are embodied in the Westminster Confession of Faith and in the five *solas* of the Reformation:

- *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone): the Bible alone is the highest authority.
- *Sola fide* (faith alone): faith is the sole instrument of our justification.
- *Sola gratia* (grace alone): we are saved by the grace of God alone, not by works.
- *Solus Christus* (Christ alone): Christ is the only Mediator between God and man.
- *Soli Deo gloria* (to the glory of God alone): all of life is lived for the glory of God alone.

The commitment of each of the contributors to the authority of Scripture means (among other things) that they affirm and uphold the traditional authorship of these books. By way of example, see Simon J. Kistemaker’s excellent chapter on 2 Peter—a book that critical scholars roundly regard as forged by a later author pretending to be Peter. Dr. Kistemaker rejects this approach and offers a robust defense of the apostle Peter as the author. The authorial claim of the letter, he points out, goes well beyond the opening line. The author actually presents himself as Peter by recalling his presence at the transfiguration of Jesus (2 Pet. 1:16–18). To suggest that the author is *not* Peter would mean the text is making a false claim—and that would be inconsistent with a high view of Scripture.

For another example of how the contributors come from a consistently Reformed perspective, see Robert Cara’s excellent chapter on 1 Thessalonians. There he covers three critical theological issues: the lordship of Christ, eschatology, and election/calling. Each of these issues is controversial in its own right and has occasioned much discussion and disagreement. But with both charity and clarity, Cara sorts through the complex issues and points the reader back to a view that is consistent not only with the text but also with the historical Reformed perspective on each of these important issues.

It is important to note, however, that these theological commitments do not come at the expense of academic competence. Some assume that any given scholar must choose between the two. However, the goal of this volume is to join together high-quality scholarship with a deep commitment to the authority of Scripture and the

distinctives of Reformed theology. The modern academy will insist that these two characteristics cannot be combined. We would disagree.

*It is multiauthored.* Most New Testament introductions are written by a single author. And even if some introductions have multiple authors, rarely are their contributions identified by author.<sup>11</sup> This volume is distinctive because of the quantity of individual authors (nine) and because the reader is told which authors composed which portions.

Of course, books with multiple contributors have a number of potential (and real) weaknesses. There is the danger of disparate writing styles, inconsistency of approach, and differing academic and theological interests. We have tried to minimize some of these dangers by having every chapter follow the same fivefold structure: Introduction, Background Issues, Structure and Outline, Message and Theology, and Select Bibliography. But even within this structure, we have tried to allow each other some freedom in terms of how we approach each book. For instance, under the Message and Theology section some authors have preferred to describe the message under major theological headings, whereas others have described the message of the book chapter by chapter—almost like a commentary. So even a formal structure cannot make all chapters look exactly the same. As a result, and despite our best efforts, this volume still runs the danger of feeling like a collection of chapters lacking the consistency of a single-authored volume. With this many different writers, a level of diversity and multiplicity is simply inevitable.

But it is our hope that the weaknesses of a multiauthored volume are outweighed by its strengths. A multiauthored volume allows the reader to be exposed to a variety of different perspectives and backgrounds—something that single-authored volumes are unable to achieve. The reader is not bound to just a single voice, but is able to hear a range of voices. And certain readers will resonate with some voices more than others. In addition, a multiplicity of contributors allows for each one to home in on his particular area of expertise. Such specificity gives the reader an opportunity to hear from a scholar whose research specializes in the very area about which he is writing.

Two good examples of how such a volume allows for scholarly specialization are Charles Hill's chapters on the Johannine letters and the book of Revelation. In addition to Hill's extensive research into the Johannine corpus (see again *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*), he also has done intensive primary research into early Christian eschatological views in his book *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001). This latter volume helps Hill sift through the various views on Revelation from the perspective of the history of the church.

In addition, it should be noted that the multiauthored nature of the volume is driven

<sup>11</sup>Examples of well-known introductions with multiple authors are D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005); Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, eds., *Introducing the New Testament and Its Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); and Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009).

by the occasion for which it was written. As Ligon Duncan notes in the foreword, the volume is being written in commemoration of Reformed Theological Seminary's fiftieth anniversary in 2016. For this reason, nearly all New Testament professors throughout the seminary's history were included. As a result, this volume not only provides a glimpse into the thinking of individual scholars; it provides a glimpse into the ministry of Reformed Theological Seminary as a whole and its commitment to the authority of the Bible, Reformed theology, and a love for the church.

*It is pastoral.* As noted above, the very real purpose of this volume is to help Bible study leaders, pastors, and Christian leaders to teach and apply the Word of God to their respective audiences. This is, of course, the reason for the emphasis on the message of these books (and not just technical background issues). Moreover, this volume has sought to take the message of these books and apply it to the issues before the church in a practical and pastoral manner.

By way of example, William Barclay's chapter on 1 Peter takes the discussion of life as a foreigner and alien and, with a pastoral touch, encourages readers to keep their eyes fixed on the New Jerusalem and our eternal inheritance. Bruce Lowe, in his chapter on James, does an excellent job taking James's discussion of faith and works and applying it to the practical day-to-day struggle that Christians face over sanctification. And in my own chapter on the Gospel of John, I lay out practical ways that John's message can be applied to an audience in a sermon or Bible study series.

This pastoral dimension to this New Testament introduction is driven by two factors. First, almost all of the contributors are also ordained ministers, and many of them have years of pastoral experience. Consequently, there is a natural inclination within these scholars to teach the biblical text in a manner that is practical and pastoral. Second, all of the contributors are committed to the idea that the primary purpose of biblical scholarship is to teach and bless the *church*. This does not mean, of course, that one is forbidden from doing scholarship geared toward one's academic peers. Indeed, many of the contributors have written impressive scholarly works interacting with the broader academic guild. But those same scholars recognize that this is not the only purpose of their scholarship. Ultimately, God's Word has been given for the edification and development of God's people. A scholar can make a meaningful contribution to his field and, at the same time, apply his scholarly efforts to the local church setting. This volume (we hope) is a demonstration that the two are not mutually exclusive. In this sense, its contributors really are pastor-scholars.

With these distinctives in mind, we can now turn our attention to the individual books of the New Testament. Our hope, in the words of the apostle Paul, is that "the Word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored" (2 Thess. 3:1) as a result of the content of this volume. *Soli Deo gloria.*



# Matthew

*Reggie M. Kidd*

## INTRODUCTION

Of the four canonical Gospels, Matthew's is the only one to use the term *church* (ἐκκλησία, 16:18; 18:17). For this and other reasons, Matthew's account has always commended itself as being especially useful to the "church" that Jesus founds in this Gospel. One reason is that as a master artisan—or in his own terms, a steward of old and new (13:52)—Matthew structures his Gospel in a way that ties the Old and New Testaments together as Israel's story and the continuation of Israel's story in the newly emergent church. To that end, Matthew provides richly suggestive patterns for teaching (see below, for his five teaching blocks: the Sermon on the Mount [chaps. 5–7], the mission to Israel [chap. 10], parables of the kingdom [chap. 13], life in the church [chap. 18], and preparation for judgment [chaps. 23–25]).

Another reason that Matthew's Gospel has proved so serviceable for the church's teaching and preaching is its finely balanced sense of Jesus's mission—its sense that God has come among us, first to forgive and heal, and then to remake and refashion. Immanuel has come to take our sin to the cross and then to work in us so that, at the core of our being, we reflect the character of our heavenly Father in what we do. Accordingly, beginning as early as Irenaeus in the second century, Christians have associated Matthew's Gospel with the figure of the "man" in Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4.<sup>1</sup> This profound intuition takes its point of departure from the fact that Matthew begins with Jesus's human genealogy. Matthew's first words in Greek—literally, "A book of genesis"—indicate that he would have us understand that the human race's new genesis takes place now in Jesus. And in the end, there is nothing that makes human beings more radiantly alive than reflecting the character of the God whose image they bear.

<sup>1</sup>Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.11.8.

## BACKGROUND ISSUES

### Authorship

The “Gospel according to Matthew” never circulated without that title, and has long been believed to have been written by the apostle Matthew. According to Eusebius (fourth century), Papias (second century) received from John the elder (first century) the understanding that Mark wrote his Gospel as “Peter’s interpreter” (ἑρμηνευτὴς Πέτρου) and that Mark did so “not in ordered form”; then Matthew “gathered together the *logia* [a term which can refer both to words and to deeds] in an ordered arrangement in the Hebrew dialect” (Ἑβραϊδί διαλέκτῳ τὰ λόγια συνετάξατο).<sup>2</sup> Early church writers and modern scholars thought that by “Hebrew *dialect*” Papias meant the Hebrew or Aramaic language. But Matthew’s Greek is some of the smoothest in the New Testament; more likely, Papias meant that Matthew’s “ordered arrangement” was according to Hebrew sense of style.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for instance, his arrangement (see below) of the deeds and words of Jesus into five blocks that recall the structure of the Torah.

Additionally, Origen (third century) understood Matthew to be “once a tax collector, but later an apostle of Jesus Christ; he published it for those who came to faith from Judaism.”<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to know by what authority Origen identifies Matthew as the tax collector—whether he has an external authority, or whether he infers it by observing (as many have since) that Matthew’s Gospel alone calls him “the tax collector” when listing him as one of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:3).<sup>5</sup> Regardless, early church tradition assigned Matthew the symbol of three purses.

C. F. D. Moule’s suggestion that Matthew 13:52 is autobiographical is attractive: “Therefore every scribe who has been trained [μαθητεύεσθαι here is cognate both with the word “disciple” (μαθητής) and with Matthew’s name (Μαθθαῖος)] for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” It is impossible to prove, despite E. J. Goodspeed’s proposal, that Matthew is pointing to the sort of note taking or secretarial skills that his craft would have required, now brought into the service of Jesus. Nonetheless, it is just as plausible as (and I suggest more so than) modern theories that bypass historical Matthew—for example, “Matthew” as a written project by a collaborative group (similar to the writings of the Essene community)<sup>6</sup> or a work produced by “a second-generation (Hellenized) Jew.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, if the intention in these theoretical instances was to appropriate the name of one of the Twelve as the author to lend legitimacy to the teaching, one might have expected the use of the name of a more illustrious apostle.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.14–17 (my trans.).

<sup>3</sup>Or, per Craig Evans, “a Hebrew (or Jewish) way of presenting material or making an argument” (*Matthew* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 2). See G. Scott Gleaves, *Did Jesus Speak Greek? The Emerging Evidence of Greek Dominance in First-Century Palestine* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), for a persuasive argument that Matthew’s Gospel is likely an originally Greek composition, and not a translation from the Aramaic.

<sup>4</sup>According to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.3–6 (my trans.).

<sup>5</sup>Compare Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27, which name “Levi” as the tax collector whom Jesus calls; the parallel story in Matthew calls him “Matthew” (Matt. 9:9–13). All three Synoptics and Acts (see Acts 1:13) list Matthew among the apostles; the Gospel according to Matthew, alone, calls him “the tax collector.”

<sup>6</sup>Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew, and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1954).

<sup>7</sup>Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 6.

<sup>8</sup>Evans, *Matthew*, 4.

## Audience

Because of this Gospel's familiarity with the Jewish world of its day, the scholarly consensus is that Matthew is written to a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian community, one that is grappling with Israel's mission to the nations through Jesus the Messiah. This could be one of any number of churches, from Alexandria, to Jerusalem, to Antioch, Sidon, Tyre, or beyond. Matthew's Gospel itself does not yield many clues, except perhaps that when Matthew notes the spread of Jesus's fame early in his ministry, the Gospel writer notes his fame extending beyond Mark's Galilee (Mark 1:39) or even Luke's Judea (Luke 4:44) to include, of all places, Syria (Matt. 4:23–24). It was there, according to the book of Acts (see esp. Acts 11:19–30; 13–14), that the early church first learned how to bridge the gulf between its Jewish roots and the Gentile mission, and where "the church" was gaining an independent identity as being made up of "Christians." It was there that Matthew's Gospel is first cited, and heavily so, by a postbiblical church leader, to wit, Ignatius (second century), Bishop of Syrian Antioch (e.g., using Matt. 3:15, "to fulfill all righteousness," when describing Jesus's baptism).<sup>9</sup>

## Date

Most modern scholars are quite certain that Matthew was written after AD 70, that is, after the Jewish war that led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. Matthew 22:7 presumably forecasts Jerusalem's destruction after the fact: "The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city." And there is the fact that of all four Gospels, Matthew alone uses the word *church* to refer to Jesus's followers. That fact in combination with the indication of the destruction of Jerusalem is thought to be decisive in a post-AD 70 dating of Matthew. Only then, so it is assumed, does "the church" come into self-consciousness for Jewish Christians as an entity distinct from synagogue and temple.

To the contrary, contends J. A. T. Robinson, Matthew's (and the other Gospels' as well) references to the destruction of Jerusalem are restrained enough to make us wonder if they are not read better as coming before the events. Matthew 22:7, says Robinson, could presuppose, but does not require, a post-AD 70 dating, especially when compared with references, say, in the Sibylline Oracles that clearly are after AD 70.<sup>10</sup> And the prophecies in Matthew's Olivet Discourse (chap. 24) are decidedly forward looking; especially telling is the inclusion of an "immediately" between the destruction (24:29) and "the end [consummation] of the age" (24:3) to follow. And, as Robinson contends, from "references to conditions in Jerusalem 'to this day' (27:8; cf. 28:15), one would have expected him of all people to draw attention to the present devastation of the site."<sup>11</sup>

These considerations, along with other indications that temple practice continues in Matthew's day (e.g., leaving your gift at the altar, paying the temple tax, swearing

<sup>9</sup>Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 1.1.

<sup>10</sup>John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), esp. 19–26.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 23. See also the very fine defense of the authenticity of Jesus's prophecies against the temple in Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 250–53.

by the gift on the altar—Matt. 5:23–24; 17:24–27; 23:16–22), suggest that Irenaeus got it right: Matthew wrote “at the time when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel and founding the church in Rome.”<sup>12</sup>

It is indeed true that one of the most distinctive things about Matthew’s Gospel is that his is the only one to use the word *church*. For that reason, many scholars wrongly assume that this Gospel has read back into Jesus’s ministry a teaching that could not possibly have come from him but must have been attributed to him after his death and (supposed) resurrection.<sup>13</sup> To the contrary, if the New Testament’s unanimous sense of Jesus’s mission is correct (death and resurrection, followed by ascension and the proclamation of the gospel), it is altogether reasonable to see him anticipating a communal embodiment of his work in the wake of his death, resurrection, and ascension. Moreover, Jesus’s preparing of his followers for the rise of the “church” reckons most satisfactorily with the profound Jewishness of his sense of the corporate nature of God’s self-expression in human history. God images his life into the world through the dyad of male and female, through the family of Abraham, through the “peculiar possession” of the children of Israel, through the nation that comes together under David and Solomon, and through the “remnant” through whom he works even in exile. That Matthew has Jesus talking about the “church” is no argument for a late date.

### Purpose

Regardless of the precise location of the audience and date of composition, the purpose of Matthew’s Gospel seems to be at least threefold:

1. to demonstrate that the Hebrew Scriptures have all along been pointing to Jesus as Messiah and inaugurator of God’s kingdom “now and not yet”;
2. to show that Jesus has brought forgiveness and personal renewal, enabling a true understanding and keeping of the Torah’s intent; and
3. to explain how Jesus, who is “with you to the end of the age,” is forming a community—that is, the “church”—of Jewish and Gentile followers to model the presence of God’s kingdom in the present age and to take God’s mission to the nations.

It is in this instruction, showing Jewish and non-Jewish believers how to live together, through lives transformed from the inside out, that the Gospel of Matthew provides deep, rich preaching material for the pastor who desires to help a congregation develop an authentic and loving witness to a skeptical world.

### Historicity

To most scholars, that the Gospel of Matthew relies heavily on Mark is beyond debate: at least 90 percent of Mark shows up here, but in Matthew the stories are compressed

<sup>12</sup>Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1 (my trans.).

<sup>13</sup>See the defense of the authenticity of Matthew’s ἐκκλησία sayings (16:18; 18:17) in K. L. Schmidt, “ἐκκλησία,” *TDNT*, 3:518–26.

and cleaner. Consistently, Matthew displays a clearer, more concise and correct use of Greek than does Mark. Events are usually recounted in Mark's sequence—but not always. Where Matthew departs from Mark in chronology, Luke tends to agree with Mark. In fact, it is generally agreed by conservative and liberal scholars alike that Mark and Luke are more governed by chronology, while Matthew is more interested in thematic development. Regardless, it is easier for most who look into the matter to assume that if there is a literary relationship, it is more likely that Matthew is using Mark as part of his framework than that Mark works off of Matthew. This is especially so since otherwise Mark “drops” 50 percent of the material in Matthew overall and yet expands, without literary elegance, Matthew's tightly crafted stories and sayings. Worth a mention is that, in modern scholarship, there has always been a minority report arguing that if there is a literary relationship, Matthew came first, and Mark adapted his material. However, we note, with Leon Morris, “It is not easy to understand why Mark in abbreviating Matthew should so consistently come up with narratives that are longer as well as more lifelike.”<sup>14</sup>

Scholars have offered various scenarios to account for the differences between Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Many speculate as to the existence of a separate additional writing, the “Q” document (“Q” is short for the German *Quelle*, or “source”), as the underlying source for teaching material shared by Matthew and Luke (e.g., Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and Luke's Sermon on the Plain). Along with a hypothesized “M” document to account for material unique to Matthew (e.g., the sheep and the goats) and a hypothesized “L” document to account for material unique to Luke (e.g., the good Samaritan), Mark and “Q” form the elements of the “four document” theory by which majority scholarship proposes to account for the three Synoptic Gospels. I must take issue with how easily modern scholarship insists that the relationships among the Gospels have to be accounted for by appeal to mere documents (whether actual, like Mark's, or hypothesized, like “M” and “L” and “Q”). There is every reason to think that each of the four Gospels is directly (for Matthew, see 13:52; for Mark, see 14:51–52; and for John, see 19:35; 21:24–25) or indirectly (for Luke, see 1:1–4) a product of eyewitness accounts—and, moreover, eyewitnesses who participated in a complex relational network of shared experiences and varying perspectives.

Some of the differences between the Gospels concern sequence (the order of the temptations of Christ) or timing (did Jesus cleanse the temple at the beginning of his ministry, at the end, or both?). For this particular overview of Matthew, what matters is to recognize that Matthew has, for his own reasons, arranged his material thematically. As John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy point out, “The evangelists felt free to rearrange the order of events to suit the points they were making.”<sup>15</sup> And, just to clarify, it is only under the most questionable of assumptions that thematic arrangement and historicity are deemed to be incompatible.

<sup>14</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 16.

<sup>15</sup>John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 148.

## STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE

Matthew is “the architect among the Evangelists,” says Herman Ridderbos.<sup>16</sup> With consummate artistry, Matthew alternates the words and deeds of Jesus. In fact, he frames the whole of his portrait of Christ around five series of narratives, each culminating in one of five respective great discourses. He ends each narrative-plus-discourse section with the identical formula, nicely preserved in the ASV: “And it came to pass when Jesus finished . . .” (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

- I. Genealogy, Birth, and Infancy Narratives (1:1–2:23)
- II. Series 1: From Coronation to Keynote (3:1–7:29)
  - A. Narrative (3:1–4:25)
  - B. Discourse: Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:27)
  - C. Bridge: “When Jesus had finished these words” (7:28–29)
- III. Series 2: Call to Discipleship and Mission (8:1–11:1)
  - A. Narrative (8:1–10:4)
  - B. Discourse: Mission of the Disciples (10:5–42)
  - C. Bridge: “When Jesus had finished commanding” (11:1)
- IV. Series 3: The Wisdom of the Kingdom of Heaven (11:2–13:53)
  - A. Narrative (11:2–12:50)
  - B. Discourse: Parables of the Kingdom (13:1–52)
  - C. Bridge: “When Jesus had finished these parables” (13:53)
- V. Series 4: The Shape of the Church (13:54–19:2)
  - A. Narrative (13:54–17:27)
  - B. Discourse: Living in the Kingdom/Church (18:1–35)
  - C. Bridge: “When Jesus had finished these words” (19:1–2)
- VI. Series 5: Preparation for Judgment (19:3–26:1)
  - A. Narrative (19:3–22:46)
  - B. Discourse: Woes and the Peril and Judgment to Come (23:1–25:46)
  - C. Bridge: “When Jesus had finished all these words” (26:1)
- VII. Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Commissioning (26:2–28:20)

The birth and death-resurrection narratives, along with the five series between them, form a chiasm.

- a Genealogy, birth, and infancy narratives (1:1–2:23)
- b Series 1: From coronation to keynote (3:1–7:29)
- c Series 2: Call to discipleship and mission (8:1–11:1)
- d Series 3: The wisdom of the kingdom of heaven (11:2–13:53)
- c' Series 4: The shape of the church (13:54–19:2)
- b' Series 5: Preparation for judgment (19:3–26:1)
- a' Crucifixion, resurrection, and commissioning (26:2–28:20)

The first portion of Matthew (chaps. 1–7: lineage, birth, and infancy narratives, plus series 1) consists of a movement from the genealogy of Jesus through his birth

<sup>16</sup>Herman Ridderbos, *Matthew's Witness to Jesus Christ: The King and the Kingdom*, World Christian Books (New York: Association Press, 1958), 19. Ridderbos follows a widely accepted and, to my mind, eminently satisfying schema, notwithstanding the objections of Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, rev. ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 106.

and rescue from Herod, followed by his baptism by John the Baptist and the beginnings of his public ministry (chaps. 1–4). The climax of the opening section is the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5–7), the keynote to Jesus’s teaching ministry.

Matthew begins the second portion (8:1–11:1, series 2) by clustering in chapters 8–9 several power (and healing) miracle stories that are otherwise scattered throughout Mark. Here is featured the call of Matthew the tax collector (Matt. 9:9–13, which is thought by many to be Matthew’s authorial signature). The twelve disciples are named in a single paragraph before Jesus commissions them all for the mission to Israel (chap. 10), the climax of the second section.

In the third section (11:2–13:53, series 3), Matthew provides narrative illustrations of the peculiar nature and timing of the kingdom of heaven—from John the Baptist’s question about Jesus’s identity (11:2–19), to the disciples’ plucking of grain on the Sabbath (12:1–8), to Jesus’s conflict with Beelzebul (12:22–32). Then he draws together parables—with a focus on the parable of the sower (13:1–9, 36–43)—in which Jesus teaches that the kingdom is “already and not yet,” and also hidden and revealed.

The fourth section (13:54–19:2, series 4) marks Jesus’s preparation for the cross and for the creation of the church. Appropriately, the narrative portion begins with the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (13:54–58) and the death of John the Baptist at the hand of Herod the tetrarch (14:1–12). The section takes in the full sweep of Jesus’s intention:

1. to provide heavenly food for Israel (14:13–21), the feeding of the five thousand in Israel;
2. to reshape God’s people by making faith the boundary marker between “clean” and “unclean” (15:1–28); and
3. to provide bread for the nations as well as for Israel (15:32–39), the feeding of the four thousand, following Jesus’s ministry in the Decapolis and before his return to Israel.

Peter’s confession at Philippi (deep in Gentile Lebanon) becomes the occasion for Jesus to explain the ironic way in which he will save his people and build his church. The section culminates with what Frederick Dale Bruner aptly calls “The Sermon on the Congregation.”<sup>17</sup> Here is Jesus’s teaching on the shape of the church, the community his cross will create, marked as it will be by humility, mutual care, and forgiveness (Matthew 18).

The fifth section (19:3–28:20, series 5 and the Passion and Resurrection Narratives) begins with Jesus moving closer to Jerusalem and into deeper and deeper conflict with “the chief priests and the Pharisees” (e.g., 21:45). The narrative of his Triumphal Entry (21:1–17) as well as the accounts of his actions (like the cursing of the fig tree, 21:18–22) and teachings around the temple precincts (like the parable of the wicked tenants [21:33–45] and of the wedding banquet [22:1–14]) make it clear that the prophecy must come true:

<sup>17</sup>Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), Kindle ed., ad loc.

The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone. (21:42)

The section climaxes with a long discourse that mirrors in many ways the Sermon on the Mount: the blessings of the kingdom (5:1–12) give way to the “woes” of the counter-kingdom (23:1–36). The city on a hill that makes God’s light visible (5:14–16) gives way to a city doomed for having extinguished God’s light (chap. 24). The choice to build on rock or sand (7:24–27) will prove to have been made by those who have unknowingly served or not served the King by caring for “the least of these my brothers” (25:31–46). There follow Jesus’s trial, death, resurrection, and mission to the nations. Particular Matthean features include Judas’s hanging himself, the rising of “many . . . of the saints who had fallen asleep” at Jesus’s death (27:52), the conspiracy to cover up Jesus’s resurrection, and the giving of the Great Commission.

## MESSAGE AND THEOLOGY

### Theological Themes

#### *Immanuel, “God with Us”*

In Matthew’s account of Jesus’s “genesis,” we meet the line of Abraham, in whom, God promised, all the families of the earth would find themselves blessed. God directs his re-creative purposes for the human race through this family—and then through the kingdom that God establishes through one of Abraham’s progeny, David. Abraham’s and David’s stories were not told in a vacuum, nor were they intended to serve ethnic and national pride. They were told for “all the families of the earth” (Gen. 12:3; cf. Ps. 22:27, one of the most Davidic psalms). It is in this human line—even through, *precisely* through, the torturous path of exile (Matt. 1:11–12)—that Jesus, human himself and humanity’s singular hope, appears.

After Matthew anchors Jesus’s life in the stuff of our humanity, Matthew turns to Jesus’s divinity. The Christ’s name is Jesus, which means “Yah saves.” And while the name Jesus served (and still does) as a normal human name, Matthew insists that for this child it means more. First, Jesus’s origin (his “genesis”) is not merely human, but divine as well: “she [Mary] was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit” (1:18). Second, the reason he bears the name “Yah saves” is that his mission is to “save his people from their sins” (1:21), a task only God himself can perform. Third, his name is also “Immanuel (which means, God with us)” (1:23). Nor is the title “God with us” to be taken merely metaphorically, for Matthew’s Jesus maintains

1. that when his followers gather, “there am I among them” (18:20);
2. that when his followers baptize, they do so in his name as well as the Father’s and the Holy Spirit’s; and
3. that wherever they may go to make disciples, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:20).

Some things are hard to put on *one* side of the divine-human ledger. Though Matthew is profoundly interested in Jesus’s authority (7:29; 8:9; 9:6; 10:1; 21:23;

28:18), he also embraces the complementary truth: Jesus's true humanity, pointedly expressed in the "ignorance" passages: (1) the Father decides who will be on the right and on the left of the Son of Man (20:23); (2) Jesus does not know the timing of the world's end (24:36); and (3) he dies with the question "why" on his lips (27:46).

Then there is Jesus's sonship: To the extent that he is the focus of the statement "Out of Egypt I called my son" (2:15), Jesus is the personification of Israel, humanity in right relation to divinity. To the extent that he lives the wilderness-obedience that counters Israel's wilderness rebellion, he shows what it is for "man" (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) to live by more than mere bread. And, of course, the genealogy goes to some lengths to show human descent. Then again, the final puzzle Jesus poses to his interlocutors hinges upon the (scripturally derived!) conundrum of the Messiah being both David's Son and David's Lord (22:41–46)—that is to say, Jesus understands himself to be God's divine Son.

In his view of Christ as God-man, Matthew joins the other New Testament voices that stand out as christological theologians:

- John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1); and note John's seven "I am" statements;
- Hebrews: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3); and
- Paul: "Though he was in the form of God . . ." (Phil. 2:6).

It is not difficult to understand why the church's consensus came to be that Jesus is fully divine and fully human—or as Christian artist Shai Linne expresses it, "Jesus both God and man, two hundred percent."

What marks Matthew's christology as special is the way he organically unfolds Jesus Christ's humanity and divinity for a Jewish Christian readership. He does so in terms of Israel's story. That is to say, Jesus is the new Torah; "greater than the temple" (12:6); "greater than Jonah" (12:41); "greater than Solomon" (12:42); the one in whom God's kingdom has come and is coming; Israel's one teacher; and, finally, "God with us," who is fully known, ironically, in "the least of these" (25:45).

### *Jesus as the New Torah*

Matthew renders the life and ministry of Jesus in five discrete sections of material, recalling the five books of Moses, the Torah or Pentateuch. Thematically, Matthew's Gospel follows the arc of Torah. No less than the book of Genesis, Matthew's account is one of "beginnings." Matthew's narrative of Jesus's birth and early ministry echoes Exodus's story of deliverance (see below). Leviticus is dominated by the theme of "holiness," both by way of sanctifying sacrifices (e.g., Lev. 16:30) and by way of instruction (e.g., Lev. 19:2, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy"). Just so, in Matthew's account Jesus offers his own "blood of the covenant . . . for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28) and teaches his followers to be "perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). If the book of Numbers is the story

of God's people becoming a community on the journey to the Promised Land, Matthew undertakes instructions on how to be the "church" while "going and making disciples." And just as the book of Deuteronomy places a life and death choice before God's people at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, so Jesus pronounces beatitudes (Matthew 5) and woes (Matthew 23),<sup>18</sup> and says, in effect, "Build wisely" (Matt. 7:24); in other words, "Choose life" (Deut. 30:19).

Indeed, Matthew implies that Jesus corrects wrong ideas about what the Torah was supposed to do and be. Jews contemporary to Jesus thought of the Torah as "the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>19</sup> Thus, as Simon the Just maintained, "Upon three things the world rests: upon the Torah, upon the temple service, and upon the doing of acts of kindness."<sup>20</sup>

Extraordinarily—and imperiously if he is not indeed divine—Jesus claims that what people sought in Torah they will instead find in him. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28–30). Thus, with the nine beatitudes, Jesus stands as covenant Lord, pronouncing promissory blessings as though standing on Deuteronomy's Mount Gerizim. With the seven woes, Jesus pronounces warning woes as though standing on Deuteronomy's Mount Ebal.

What the Torah was, Jesus is. Yet there are two big differences: First, to worship the Torah is idolatry at worst, or bibliolatry at best; to worship Jesus is not idolatrous, for he is "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). Second, Jesus can "save his people from their sins" (1:21); the Torah cannot. The Torah can provide what Paul will call a provisional "pass[ing] over" (Rom. 3:25) of sins through promissory "blood of the covenant" (Ex. 24:8); now Jesus provides "my blood of the covenant" (Matt. 26:28). The God-breathed book Torah can anticipate forgiveness; the God-man Jesus can provide forgiveness.

Matthew wants readers to know that the Torah is being fulfilled in Jesus. Holy Scripture was always about something and Someone beyond itself. Again and again, Matthew quotes scriptural formulas to let his readers know that Jesus is updating Israel's story.

- *Matthew 1:23*. Jesus's birth fulfills the promise that God would be Immanuel, "God with us" (cf. Isa. 7:14).
- *Matthew 2:15*. Jesus is the obedient and faithful Son Israel was supposed to have been (Hos. 11:1). Thus, his life, especially the early events, are a telling of Israel's exodus story: miraculous birth, rescue from the plot of an evil king, sojourn to and calling out from Egypt, passing through baptismal waters and reception of the Holy Spirit, temptation for forty days (instead of forty years) in the wilderness, obedience when Israel has not obeyed (thus the quotes from Deuteronomy when Jesus confronts the Devil), and the beginning of the con-

<sup>18</sup>N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 386–87.

<sup>19</sup>Sifra, Kedoshim on Lev. 20:26.

<sup>20</sup>Pirke Aboth 1:2.

quest of God's enemies (exorcisms, healings, confrontation with maleficent and confused spiritual authorities).

- *Matthew 8:16–17*. Jesus's healings fulfill the suffering servant prophecy (Isa. 53:5).
- *Matthew 12:6*. Jesus is greater than the temple, the place where God lived (even if, for the time being, Jesus accepts the provisional arrangement—17:24–27).
- *Matthew 12:41*. Jesus is greater than Jonah (the one who was “dead” three days and nights and who went on a reluctant mission to pagans).
- *Matthew 12:42*. Jesus is greater than Solomon (the first son of David's line to inherit the throne).
- *Matthew 12:15–21*. Jesus's silence fulfills the prophecy concerning the servant who will not break a bruised reed (Isa. 42:1–4).
- *Matthew 13:10–17*. Jesus's parables fulfill Isaiah's commission to confound as well as instruct (Isa. 6:9–10 LXX).
- *Matthew 21:10–17*. Jesus cleanses the temple as part of the restoration of the Psalm 8 vision of the restoration of humankind's role to bear God's glory and lead God's creation in praise (Ps. 8:3 LXX).

By quoting Jesus as claiming to be greater than the temple (Matt. 12:6), greater than Jonah (12:41), and greater than Solomon (12:42), Matthew forces the question, is this not *the* Priest, Prophet, and King toward whom everything in Israel's history has been oriented?

### “Greater Than the Temple”

Under Moses's administration, God established his presence among his people. He did so by rescuing them not just from their enemies, the Egyptians, but also from the angel of death that they, no less than the Egyptians, deserved. God established his presence by “cutting a covenant” with them, whereby he became their God, and they his people. The Ten Commandments formed the germ of a covenant document binding the Lord and his covenant people together. The Torah—the five books of Moses—served as the amplification and explication of that covenant relationship.

God established his presence among his people by providing sacrifices of atonement and fellowship, by giving oracles that revealed his character and described what it meant to bear his likeness, and by constituting them as his “peculiar people”—that is, as a showcase for what a redeemed community was to look like. The symbolic place of covenant life under Moses was the tabernacle; under Solomon, the tabernacle yielded to the temple. Matthew describes the yielding of both Torah and temple to Immanuel.

The reason that Jesus is “greater than the temple” (Matt. 12:6) is that he transforms two things: first, the sacrificial system, and second, the place of meeting.

Alone among the Gospels, Matthew cites Isaiah 53:4, “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases” (Matt. 8:17). Also alone among the Gospels, at the institution of the Last Supper, Matthew's Jesus uses Moses's language of the “blood of the covenant” (Matt. 26:28; cf. Ex. 24:8), with two startling additions: (1) the pronoun

“my” to qualify the blood; and (2) the explanatory “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” The verb “poured out” is also a uniquely Matthean appeal to Isaiah 53—in this case, an echo of Isaiah’s anticipation of the hope that the suffering servant will have “poured out his self to death” (Isa. 53:12). Almost as if to provide a bookend to the explanation that Jesus’s name indicates “he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21), Matthew says that upon Jesus’s death, “behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom” (27:51). The death of the Sin-Bearer marks the end of the separation between a holy God and his people. The temporary halt to sacrifices that Jesus forced when he cleansed the temple turns out to be a promise of their permanent end by means of his atoning sacrifice. As he says, “the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (20:28).

With the fulfillment of the temple’s housing of sacrifice comes the fulfillment of the temple’s role as place of meeting. What the sacrifices once provided in merely anticipatory fashion—mediation for sinners—Jesus now provides finally and fully. What the temple once was—a place of meeting for God’s people—Jesus now is in himself as he gathers his own into his church.

When Jesus cleanses the temple, he objects that the building has been hijacked from its original intent: to be a “house of prayer” (Matt. 21:13). That is to say, the temple is the place for God and humans to meet together, the place of concourse between the Redeemer Lord and his redeemed people. During the consecration of Solomon’s temple, the *shekinah* presence of God was so intense it was unbearable (2 Chronicles 6). Now the *shekinah* presence is Jesus himself: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:20). The temple, in turn, was the centerpiece of a city in which God intended to showcase his character, his holiness, and his love for the human race:

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised  
in the city of our God!  
His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,  
is the joy of all the earth,  
Mount Zion, in the far north,  
the city of the great King. (Ps. 48:1–2)

Now, that city is Christ’s followers: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt. 5:14). Immanuel, “God with us,” once lived among us in flesh and blood. Now in the great period between his earthly ministry and the restoration of all things, Immanuel lives among us in the church.

### “*Greater Than Jonah*”

In Jesus Christ, Israel’s prophetic mission to the nations comes to life—literally—following the Son of Man’s three days and nights “in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40).

Of the four canonical Gospel writers, it is Luke who is known for his attention to the Gentile mission. Luke frames the larger corpus of Luke-Acts by beginning

with the promise of John the Baptist's birth in the Jewish temple and by ending with Paul's ministering from a Roman prison. Within that larger framework itself, Luke brackets his Gospel, at one end, with Isaianic allusions to the Gentile mission in Simeon's canticle ("a light for revelation to the Gentiles," Luke 2:32; see Isa. 42:6) and the prologue to John the Baptist's ministry ("and all flesh shall see the salvation of God," Luke 3:6; see Isa. 40:5) and, at the other end, with the resurrected Jesus sending the disciples to Jerusalem to await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that in his name they could proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins "to all nations" (Luke 24:47). Luke alone names Roman officials other than Pilate (e.g., Luke 2:1–2; 3:1), and Luke's Jesus provokes his fellow Galileans by reminding them of the Lord's interest in Gentiles during the ministries of the two great prophets Elijah and Elisha (Luke 4:25–27).

Conversely, Matthew strikes many as the most Jewish of the Gospels. In chapter 10, for instance, Jesus sends the disciples not "among the Gentiles" but rather to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5–6), and in chapter 15, he maintains (if ironically) that he was sent "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24).

Even so, Matthew's understanding of the Gentile mission is especially noteworthy. Matthew includes pagan women in Jesus's genealogy. He recounts the homage that the pagan magi pay Israel's newborn King (Matthew 2). He notes how the Galilee of Jesus's ministry is "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matt. 4:15; from Isa. 9:1). He maintains that Jesus's healings bear the mark of Isaiah's servant, who "will proclaim justice to the Gentiles" and in whose "name the Gentiles will hope" (Matt. 12:15–21, esp. 18, 21; from Isa. 42:1–4). Matthew attributes to the pagan Syrophenician woman the faith to ask mercy from Jesus as "Son of David" (15:22), while the disciples show themselves abjectly obtuse about what Jesus has brought them into pagan territory to learn. Matthew foresees the "end of the age" culminating in the angels bringing cleansing fire to the whole world (13:38–39) and the Son of Man gathering "all the nations" to separate sheep from goats (25:31–46). Most strikingly, Matthew closes his Gospel with Jesus's commission to make disciples of all the (pagan) nations, baptizing them and teaching them all that he had commanded.

Matthew shares the "greater than Jonah" saying with Luke (Matt. 12:41 // Luke 11:32), as well as Jesus's protest that the only sign that will be given is "the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matt. 12:39). Perhaps it seems like a small thing; nonetheless, only Matthew makes of the saying a duplet, specifying that Jonah was a "prophet" who "was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish." Just so, Jesus maintains, "will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (12:39–40). God had called Jonah to die to lovelessness for pagans. When Jonah refused that death, God gave him another—a symbolic death in the belly of the great fish. Even following his symbolic resurrection, Jonah prophesied only reluctantly. Jesus takes Jonah's place (and, I expect, would call all his fellow Israelites to do so as well) in life and in death, so that Israel's mission to tell the nations of God's mercy can be lived out in and through him (and them also).

### “Greater Than Solomon”

Jesus is Israel’s true King. Clearly and specifically, Matthew’s Jesus is Israel’s *royal* Son. Calling Joseph David’s son (1:20), Matthew’s genealogy stresses Jesus’s belonging to the Davidic line (1:6). It is Israel’s new King the magi seek, and indeed Micah says that it is from Bethlehem, city of David, that Israel’s ruler is to be born (Mic. 5:2). Jesus’s Davidic identity is stated in several distinctly Matthean passages (9:27; 12:3, 23; 15:22; 20:30–31). Most pointedly, on Palm Sunday his being hailed as Son of David is occasioned by a most literal of fulfillments of Zechariah 9:9: Jesus rides *both* colt and donkey (Matt. 21:2, 7). But he is also more than Israel’s ultimate human king. He shuts down the inquisition of 22:15–38 by asking how, in Psalm 110, David’s “Lord” could also be his Son. Here stands God himself, come to shepherd his flock, as the prophet Ezekiel promised he would (see Ezek. 34:11–16). Precisely here lies the christological mystery that theologians and hymn writers have been exploring for two thousand years.

Thus have ye heard that Christ is both David’s Son, and David’s Lord:  
 David’s Lord always, David’s Son in time:  
 David’s Lord, born of the substance of His Father,  
 David’s Son, born of the Virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Ghost.  
 Let us hold fast both. . . .  
 He was made that which He made,  
 that what He made might not perish.  
 Very Man, Very God;  
 God and man whole Christ.  
 This is the Catholic faith.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, at his rising from the grave as David’s Son and Lord, Jesus receives “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). He is thus “Christus Victor,” the world’s rightful, divine-human sovereign, and he has sent his followers to the ends of the earth to proclaim his lordship and to enlist in his service.

### *The Mystery of Kingdom Come and Coming*

King Jesus proclaims and embodies a kingdom that is both “already” and “not yet”—a kingdom that is both “come” and “coming.” Albert Schweitzer believed that the kingdom was entirely futuristic. He imagined Jesus dying as a failed prophet who sought to force its coming.<sup>22</sup> C. H. Dodd believed that the kingdom was entirely present.<sup>23</sup> He envisioned Jesus living, ministering, and teaching in such a way as to make the kingdom totally present in the ethic of forgiveness lived out by his followers. Each was right, and each was wrong.

Matthew’s shorthand would be to say that Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection have effected in the present the kingdom of the Son of Man (Matt. 13:41), and that in the

<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *Sermons* 42 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:401).

<sup>22</sup> See especially, Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911).

<sup>23</sup> See especially, C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961).

future the Son of Man will effect a consummation that will culminate in the kingdom of the Father (Matt. 13:43). Oscar Cullmann offers a compelling analogy for the dual nature of Jesus's perspective on the kingdom: what Christ has already effected is like the Allies' establishment of a beachhead in Normandy during World War II. D-Day meant that V-Day was assured, even though there was still much fighting left to do.<sup>24</sup> Through the Son, God's rule has been inaugurated even in the midst of "this age," and it will see consummation in "the age to come" (12:32). During the present kingdom of the Son of Man, Jesus's followers experience the simultaneous realities of suffering and victory, and they reject the dead-end alternatives of resignation and triumphalism.

Perhaps nowhere else does the fine nuance of Jesus's sense of the kingdom as "come and coming" take center stage than in his so-called kingdom parables of Matthew 13 (with some parallels in Mark and Luke). What George Eldon Ladd says of the parables in general is especially true of Matthew's kingdom parables:

Our central thesis is that the Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among human beings, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver people from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history, and consummation at the end of history. It is precisely this background which provides the setting for the parables of the Kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

What we see in the parable of the sower is that the kingdom works quietly and secretly; because it does not force itself upon people, it must be received willingly (Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23).<sup>26</sup> The parable of the weeds puts us on notice that even though evil has not yet been apocalyptically expunged from society, God's kingdom has nonetheless irrevocably taken root (13:24–28, 36–42). The parables of the mustard seed and of leaven communicate to us that though the kingdom is present in the world in what seems to be a tiny and significant form, one day the kingdom will be a large and dominant presence (13:31–33).<sup>27</sup> The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price challenge us not to fail to see the worth of this kingdom, though it shows up in a remarkably unexpected way—whether it seems to just come up out of the ground or it somehow calls to you like a Stradivarius mistakenly hung on the wall of a pawn shop (13:44–46). And the parable of the net (13:47–50) informs us that one important aspect of the kingdom of God in its "already and not yet" form is that, despite our best and most faithful efforts, "even the community created by the working of the Kingdom in the world is not to be a pure community until the eschatological separation."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, rev. ed., trans. Floyd B. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964).

<sup>25</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 89–90; and for the following paragraph, see Ladd's cogent section, "The Mystery of the Kingdom," 89–102.

<sup>26</sup>With parallels at Mark 4:1–9, 13–20 and Luke 8:4–8, 11–15.

<sup>27</sup>The parable of the mustard seed is paralleled at Mark 4:30–32 and Luke 13:18–19; the parable of the leaven, at Luke 13:20–21.

<sup>28</sup>Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 99.

### “You Have One Teacher”

Matthew portrays Jesus as the “one teacher” (Matt. 23:8) to whom his disciples should look. In Mark, with significantly less teaching material than in Matthew, Jesus calls us to a focused, relatively unembellished lifestyle: taking up our cross (Mark 8:34). In John, Jesus calls us to a similarly focused kind of community: loving one another as we have been loved. In Matthew, Jesus calls us to a fuller identity as community, putting feet on Mark’s demands for discipleship and John’s call for self-sacrificial love for one another.

The dimensions of the full-orbed discipleship that Jesus teaches in Matthew can fall under several headings: (1) Inwardness, (2) Forgiveness, (3) Rigor and elasticity in discernment, and (4) Faith and works.

**Inwardness.** In the first place, Jesus the teacher, while in no way backing off the normativity of God’s commands, manifests the law written in hearts.<sup>29</sup> In the beatitudes, notes Thomas W. Ogletree, “Matthew is expressing in the language of law and commandment what might more appropriately be stated in the language of virtues.”<sup>30</sup> Matthew’s Jesus is concerned, first, with who we are and, second, with what we do. For “the good person out of his good treasure brings forth good” (Matt. 12:35). There is no need to be squeamish about affirming that Jesus’s redemptive purpose for us is to make us good. He came that our lives might bear the impress of his humility, his mourning, his meekness, his hunger and thirst for righteousness, his mercifulness, his purity of heart, and his peaceableness (5:3–9)—and to the end that our lives might be the apologetic for his rule and reign (5:14–16).

**Forgiveness.** In the second place, the linchpin for the life that Jesus teaches is forgiveness. That is why Jesus anchors his extended teaching on the shape of the church (Matt. 13:54–20:34) with the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:21–35). Though the parable puts the matter in negative terms (“So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart,” 18:35), its thrust is to teach something positive: the logic of redemption. Put simply, forgiven people forgive. More expansively, loved people love.

Matthew’s approach to ethics is not often likened to Paul’s. But inasmuch as both Matthew and Paul promote ethical discernment based on the logic of redemption, their thinking is strikingly similar. Clearly, they learned it from their common Savior. Paul tells the eschatologically over-realized antinomians in Corinth that the only thing that counts is “keeping the commandments” (1 Cor. 7:19).<sup>31</sup> But instead of illustrating his point with a list of casuistries or behavioral applications, Paul appeals to their sense of what it is to be redeemed: “You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men” (1 Cor. 7:23). Out of this new self-understanding,

<sup>29</sup>See Matthew 5–7 as illustrative of “the law fulfilled, not abolished” and “a righteousness that exceeds . . .”; see, in particular, 5:17, 20 with a view to 15:1–28.

<sup>30</sup>Thomas W. Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 111.

<sup>31</sup>Hardly something he would have said to the eschatologically under-realized legalists in Galatia, by the way! Paul wants the Galatians to understand that the only thing that counts is “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6).

they are to discern how to live as Christ's own, whether free or not, circumcised or not, married or not.

Likewise, Matthew calls for an "exceeding rightliness" (if I may adjust the language slightly to make a point), but it is not a "rightliness" of merit. Instead it is a hunger and thirst for being "rightly" synced with the mercy that has come from heaven. It is "rightly" taking the measure of forgiveness that is on offer in the blood of the new covenant. It is "rightly" reckoning the cost of one's own unpayable debt that has been written off, and "rightly" writing off the always lesser debts owed by others.

**Rigor and elasticity in discernment.** For the very reason that he addresses people who know that Christ's own "blood of the covenant" (Matt. 26:28) has secured their forgiveness, Matthew can portray a Jesus intent not just upon taking the commandments into the deeper places of their lives, but also upon shepherding people in the hard places of life—places that require less mechanical application of truths and more Spirit-led discernment of wisdom. "Learn from me" (11:29), says Jesus, who was anointed with the Spirit of God in his baptism (3:16; and see 12:18–20; from Isa. 42:1–4) and who accordingly promises us, "The Spirit of your Father [will be] speaking through you" (Matt. 10:20; compare 11:25).

Thus, throughout Matthew, Jesus shows how redeemed people, by the Spirit of God, learn to relate to God's commandments. For instance, demonstrates Frederick Dale Bruner, Matthew 18's instructions on love in the community should be seen as an extended treatment of the sixth commandment ("Do not murder"). Matthew 19:1–15's instructions on divorce should be seen as an extended treatment of the seventh commandment ("Do not commit adultery"). And Matthew 19:16–30's account of the rich young man should be seen as an extended treatment of the eighth and tenth commandments ("Do not steal" and "Do not covet").<sup>32</sup>

Jesus warns us not to present our offering when our brother has something against us, but first to seek reconciliation. Matthew would have us understand that this is what people who have been reconciled to God do. Jesus prescribes what to do when relationships break down. While, in the end, Matthew's Jesus calls upon individuals to forgive seventy times seven (18:22), he also exhorts the community not to just let the irresponsible run riot over everybody else (18:15–18). Everybody is given the procedure for handling broken relationships (chap. 18). And leaders are called upon to be stewards of a treasure (13:52) and to be gatekeepers for the integrity of the community. They are there to protect "the little ones" (e.g., 18:6). Even the proscription of divorce is spoken of in a more mitigating—less romantic and perfectionistic—fashion than in Mark or Luke. In Matthew, Jesus addresses the question, what about when *porneia* has violated the relationship?

There is an extraordinary social realism—or better, a combination of rigor and realism—that underlies Jesus's teaching in Matthew. The coming of a kingdom that is "now and not yet" calls for the utmost of wisdom—here exactitude, there elasticity. In

<sup>32</sup>Bruner, *Matthew 13–28*, ad loc.

the midst of a world that goes on as though nothing has happened, Christ's disciples live as "a city set on a hill" and "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). At the same time, they continue to show respect both to civil authorities ("render to Caesar," 22:21) and even to religious authorities who may not be completely worthy, who may in fact be anachronistic ("take that and give it [payment of the temple tax] to them for me and for yourself," 17:27).

They can do so because they know "the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne," is coming in due time (19:28). Meanwhile, as Bruner notes, Matthew 7 stands against a *censorious* Christianity ("Judge not, that you be not judged," 7:1), and Matthew 13 stands against a *coercive* Christianity ("Let both [weeds and wheat] grow together until the harvest," 13:30), on the one hand. On the other hand, Matthew 18 stands for a *conscientious* Christianity ("If your brother sins against you . . .," 18:15), ensuring that the church of Matthew 7's and 13's accommodation does not wink at sin. Matthew 7 and 13 keep the church from being *puritanical*, notes Bruner, while Matthew 18 keeps the church from being *epicurean*.<sup>33</sup>

And for Matthew, there is much at stake in our learning from Jesus both how to believe and how to live well.

**Faith and works.** As noted above, Matthew joins his voice to those of the other great New Testament voices that attest to the dual identity of Jesus as being both God and man. Another striking feature of Matthew's Gospel is the way he also joins other New Testament voices proclaiming the great "both-and" of faith and works.

Various New Testament writers use their own terms and nuance the relationship between faith and works uniquely. Paul writes of "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6) and an "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). He eschews works as contributing to salvation, but insists on "good works" as constitutive of the life to which we have been saved (Eph. 2:10). Accordingly, Paul proclaims a "grace" that brings the gift of righteousness and forgiveness (Rom. 5:15, 17; Eph. 1:7; Titus 3:7); and he proclaims a "grace" that teaches a new way of living (Titus 2:11–14)—consoling and transforming grace, if you will. Congruently (though not always appreciated as such), James writes of faith and works belonging together, like body and spirit (James 2:26). John says it is vital to "confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh" (2 John 7) and to keep the commandment(s) (2 John 5–6). The writer to the Hebrews calls for us to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," and for us to "stir up one another to love and good works" (Heb. 10:22, 24). In his first epistle, Peter promises us that we "are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). At the same time, Peter urges us to understand that when people see our "good deeds," they will "glorify God on the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12). Thus, Peter calls on us to sanctify Christ in our hearts and be ready to offer an *apologia*—a reason for belief—when people ask about the hope they see within us (1 Pet. 3:15).

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

In Matthew's Gospel, pointedly, it is this same Peter who confesses, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16), embodying the kind of faith that saves. This is a confession that can come only as blessing from above and that alone can serve as a foundation for the church which Christ himself will build (Matt. 16:18); and that would prompt Peter to write later of faith's preservative power (again, 1 Pet. 1:5). And, intriguingly, it is Peter who recalls the way the church's "good deeds" will vindicate God's character, as Jesus had taught, again in Matthew: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Perhaps nowhere else in the New Testament is there such an unabashed affirmation of the need for the both—and of faith and works as in Matthew's Gospel. Two Matthean parables sum the concern. In the parable of the two sons we learn that it is not as important that you say the right words ("I go, sir,' but [he] did not go"), as it is that you do the right thing regardless of whether you give the right words ("I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went," Matt. 21:28–32). And in the parable of the wedding banquet we see the King graciously instructing his servants virtually to drag everybody to the feast, "all whom they found, both bad and good" (22:10); but then we note he expects them to have clothes for the occasion: "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?" (22:12). God expects of us faith to accept the gracious invitation to the King's feast, and readiness to learn how to carry oneself at the King's feast—a "faith and works" combination seen in the examples below.

*Faith:* Matthew's Sermon on the Mount begins by telling us that the first thing we must do is acknowledge the poverty and emptiness of our spirit (the first beatitude, 5:3). We are to believe in one who came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (20:28). *And works:* The sermon's preamble concludes, "You are . . . a city on a hill" for the world to see who God is, and "the salt of the earth," that through our lives dissolution and decay might not have the last say in the human story (compare Matt. 5:3, the first beatitude, with 5:13–14).

*Faith:* The second and third beatitudes call upon us to mourn as we acknowledge the awfulness of the world and our lot in it, to do so meekly and thus without bitterness, and to submit to realities that are beyond our ability to control. All of this is the posture taken by those who believe that Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 5:4–5; 9:9–13). *And works:* The fourth beatitude changes direction quickly by urging us to "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (5:6). It promises satisfaction for those who lean into God's plan to restore all "rightness"—personally, socially, cosmically (see Isa. 42:1–4; Hos. 12:6; Amos 5:24; Mic. 6:8). Likewise, the seventh beatitude ("Blessed are the peacemakers," Matt. 5:9) calls for us to seek to restore broken relationships. We thereby show ourselves to be offspring of the God of peace, and people who both pray and actually live congruently with the prayer that God's will be done "on earth as it is in heaven" (compare 5:6, 9 with 6:10).

*Faith:* We acknowledge, as the rich young ruler should have, that our goods can

own us, instead of the reverse (19:16–22). We believe Jesus came to bring us in the “already” into the kingdom of heaven, which he compares to a “treasure hidden in a field” and a “pearl of great value” (13:44–46). We believe that the banquet of the kingdom of the Father is prefigured every time we partake of the bread and the “fruit of the vine” (26:26–29). *And works*: We learn the way of mercy: of unabashed care for the poor, of not just tithing our garden spices, but practicing justice, mercy, and faithfulness—“the weightier matters of the law” (compare 5:7, the fifth beatitude, with 23:23).

*Faith*: We confess, like the leper who cries, “Make me clean!” that we are unclean. We believe that Jesus’s “blood of the covenant” (Matt. 26:28) restores innocence to the fallen. *And works*: We pursue purity of heart (compare 8:2 with 5:8, the sixth beatitude).

*Faith*: We believe that Jesus is the very presence of God among us, that he offers us rest from all weariness of striving—of moralism, of works-righteousness, of self- or “my people” vindication (11:28). We believe that the One who has saved us from our sins is straightforwardly with us when we gather in worship and prayer (18:8–20). *And works*: We also believe that he is with us when we go and make disciples (28:18–20), and when we give food and drink to the hungry and thirsty, when we welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the imprisoned who are “the least of these”; especially, perhaps, when the least of these are those who are “persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” For when we have done so, Jesus, “God with us,” says, “You did it to me” (compare 25:31–46 with 5:10–11, the eighth and ninth beatitudes).

## Chronological Overview

### *Genealogy, Birth, and Infancy Narratives (Matthew 1–2)*

**Matthew 1.** One factor in the placement of Matthew at the head of the New Testament canon is the appearance of the Greek word γένεσις, “beginning” or “origin,” twice in the opening chapter. Matthew begins with “The book of the genealogy [γένεσις] of Jesus” (1:1) and follows the genealogy with an account of “the birth [γένεσις] of Jesus” (1:18). The origin of Jesus lies, first, in the paternal lineage of Joseph and, second, in the heavenly word that comes to Joseph about the child within Mary being “from the Holy Spirit” (1:18).

So, in a sense, Matthew is the New Testament’s book of Genesis, its book of beginnings. The church’s “beginnings” lie in God’s faithfulness to undo the curse of Genesis’s garden of Eden through the line of Abraham, as channeled through the line of David—with the following two provisos: First, just as the original call to Abraham came while he was a pagan in the land of the Chaldees, and just as that call had in view the eventual blessing of all the nations, so the line of the Messiah has included four women of pagan background or marriage: Tamar of Canaan, Rahab of Jericho, Ruth of Moab, and “the wife of Uriah” the Hittite (Matt. 1:3, 5, 6). Second, God’s undoing of the mess of the garden does not run in a straight line

from Abraham through David; it takes the detour of exile for sin, “the deportation to Babylon” (1:17). Thus, the explanation of the naming of Joseph’s adopted son as “Jesus” (from the Hebrew meaning “Yah saves”), “for he will save his people from their sins” (1:21).

**Matthew 2.** Pagan astronomers perceive what King Herod does not: Israel’s Messiah-King has been born, and he merits tribute from Gentile as well as Jew. Ever envious of rival claimants to his throne (sources tell us that Herod killed his own sons to protect his rule), Herod pretends he too wishes to honor the newborn King. The magi present gifts worthy of the child’s divinity (frankincense) and royalty (gold), and (whether they realize it or not) prophetic of his sacrificial death (myrrh).

God’s hand is evident in his use of dreams (1) to warn the magi not to return to Herod before returning home and (2) to send the holy family into Egypt. God’s hand is evident as well in the fact that all is prophesied: from Bethlehem as the birthplace of Israel’s Shepherd-King, to Egypt as the place from which God, as he did earlier with Israel, would call his Son, and even to the lamentation for the innocents.

*Series 1: From Coronation to Keynote (Matthew 3–7)*

**Matthew 3.** In the Judean desert, John the Baptist prepares a way for the coming of the kingdom of heaven. That preparation is one of repentance in anticipation of judgment. John calls a circumcised nation, who already consider themselves God’s people, to a humble confession of their sin and need for cleansing. Surprisingly, when the King comes, he comes to be baptized in the waters of repentance, not (yet!) to bring the baptism of judgment. As Herman Ridderbos says, “Jesus will not baptize by fire until he has himself first stood with all sinners in the waters of Jordan.”<sup>34</sup> In order “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15) and thus, maintains Ridderbos, enable the kingdom to come in blessing and not in curse, Jesus will take the sins of the people upon himself as the servant of the Lord (Isaiah 53). Once Jesus has identified himself with sinners at his baptism, the Holy Spirit falls upon him to anoint him as King and to empower him to conquer sin, death, evil, and the Devil. The Father pronounces Jesus’s royal sonship (see Ps. 2:7).

**Matthew 4.** Israel was called “out of Egypt” as God’s son (Hos. 11:1). In the wilderness, the people of Israel placed their bellies above God’s word, tested the Lord at the waters of Meribah, and worshiped a golden calf. Jesus, the greater Son called out of Egypt, goes into the wilderness under the Spirit’s guidance to reverse Israel’s failure.

The Devil tries to derail Jesus from his mission of obedient suffering-unto-glory. Jesus refuses to put his hunger ahead of his Father’s voice. Jesus will not test the Lord by throwing himself off the temple wall. For the very sake of “the kingdoms of the world” (Matt. 4:8) Jesus will not worship any but the Father. His obedience signals the Devil’s demise.

Jesus steps forward now to undertake his mission to save the world. Prophetically,

<sup>34</sup>Ridderbos, *Matthew’s Witness to Jesus Christ*, 26.

he centers his mission in “Galilee of the Gentiles” (4:15), where Israel abuts the nations. He gathers disciples and names them apostles, something like ambassadors in training. In Jesus’s preaching and healing, the great future of the fullness of the kingdom begins to break into the world.

**Matthew 5–7.** Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) provides the crispest of summaries of the promises and demands of the coming kingdom. Keynoting the sermon are the Beatitudes (5:1–11). Jesus’s statements about what makes for happiness should be taken, at one and the same time, as biddings to repentance, as sketches of Jesus’s own character, and as promises of his transforming work in his disciples. The King declares his people to be “salt of the earth” and a “city on a hill,” and announces that in him and his teaching “not an iota, not a dot” of the law will be lost; all of it will be fulfilled (5:13–18). Indeed, his people—the people of the kingdom—will be marked by a righteousness that exceeds the highest standards (5:19–20). By way of illustration, he points to a deeper reading of the requirements of the ethical commandments about anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and enemies (5:21–48).

Then in chapter 6, Jesus takes up practices more commonly thought of as “religious.” Almsgiving (“practicing . . . righteousness”) is about giving to the needy, not about building one’s spiritual portfolio (6:1–4). Prayer is neither about conjuring dead deities nor about building one’s reputation for piety; it is about recalling the Father’s character and name, and about succinctly stating one’s need for sustenance, forgiveness, and protection (6:5–13).

The sort of faith that prays for forgiveness will be quick to forgive (6:12, 14–15). The sort of faith that asks for daily provision (6:11) will be ready to practice self-denial—not publicly for show, but privately before the Father (presumably in quest of a closer relation with the Father or for the sake of supplication for others—6:16–18; compare Isa. 58:6–8). Faith that knows each day’s bread to come from God also understands that true treasures are heavenly (Matt. 6:11, 19–24). And the faith that calls upon heavenly protection (6:13) knows freedom from anxiety and freedom to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (6:25–34).

In the concluding section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commands generosity in judgment of others from those who know God’s generous forgiveness for themselves (7:1–5). He assures his followers that they need not—indeed, should not—force “what is holy” on those who would not know what to do with it (7:6). He promises his disciples that their Father will respond more generously to their prayers than they do to their own children’s requests (7:7–11). He sums up for them the Law and the Prophets: doing for others what you would have them do for you (7:12). And he cautions his followers against blithely assuming that everybody will want to follow the same path as they (7:13–14). Further, he cautions them against being overly impressed by prophets and exorcists who claim Jesus’s name and power but who will be shown in the end not to have been his at all (7:21–23). His followers’ task is quite simple: build your life wisely, on the “rock” of hearing

Jesus's words and doing them, instead of the "sand" of hearing his words and not doing them (7:24–27).

***Series 2: Call to Discipleship and Mission (Matt. 8:1–11:1)***

**Matthew 8–9.** Over the next two chapters and at a breakneck narrative pace, Matthew provides nine miracle narratives that illustrate Jesus's power over leprosy (8:1–4), sickness (8:14), the demonic (8:16, 28–34; 9:32–34), nature (8:23–28), paralysis (9:1–8), sin (9:5–8), feminine chronic "discharge of blood" (9:20–22), death (9:18–19, 23–26), and blindness (9:27–31).

Responses to Jesus vary widely: from the disciples' "little faith" (8:26) to the centurion's "great faith" (8:10 NASB); from a scribe's bloviating bluster and a would-be disciple's feeble deflection (8:19–22) to Matthew's ready acceptance of the call "Follow me" (9:9); from a city's polite request that Jesus leave town (8:34) to a crowd's fearing and glorifying God, "who had given such authority to men" (9:8).

Perhaps most intriguing is the range of responses from Jesus's enemies: scribes write him off as a blasphemer (9:3), while Pharisees smugly judge him for consorting with sinners (9:11). But the demons know exactly who he is and why he has come: "What have you to do with us, O Son of God?" And they know his coming means their doom. What confuses them is that they think he has come "before the time" (8:29).

Indeed, it is this question of timing that Jesus's coming makes most pressing. Matthew has told his readers that Immanuel is his name, God with us. We're seeing what the fact of God's being with us in human form brings. That nature's Master has come with power to still storms (8:23–28) means that finally there's hope that Genesis 3's surrender of nature to corruption can be reversed. The promised suffering servant has come to take his people's illnesses and bear their diseases (Matt. 8:17); that is why unclean lepers can be made clean again (8:1–4). One now walks on the earth with the divine prerogative to make the last day's putting away of sin a present reality (9:2–8). A merciful physician has come for the sick who know their own sacrifices can never heal (9:12–13).

**Matthew 10:1–11:1.** Jesus designates twelve disciples to send on a mission to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). Their ministry is precisely to mirror his: proclaim the nearness of the kingdom and manifest God's power over sickness, death, leprosy, and the demonic (10:7–8). At first, Jesus appears to be talking about a mission that is extremely limited both geographically and temporally (10:5, 23). However, verses 17 and 18 imply that he expects this mission to be a prelude to a wider and longer mission: "You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles."

Because "a disciple is not above his teacher" (10:24), the Twelve (and we who follow after them) can expect to experience what Jesus experienced: resistance both from authorities and from family, empowerment by the Spirit, and a cross-shaped life. Congruently, we should also expect to see God rewarding those who receive us the way they receive his Son (10:40–42).

**Series 3: The Wisdom of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 11:2–13:53)**

**Matthew 11:2–30.** John the Baptist is now in prison. He has enunciated fiery expectations for Jesus and is puzzled that Jesus's deeds are not bringing about the deliverance he envisioned. Jesus responds to emissaries from John by pointing to the ways his deeds fulfill Isaiah's prophecies about the day of salvation (Matt. 11:2–6).

But Jesus's path to kingship will take him through the valley of suffering. Before he brings the fire of judgment, he will endure the fire of suffering and sin bearing. John's confusion over the shape of Jesus's messianic ministry does not reverse the fact that John's message is the most important a prophet has ever borne: "Prepare your way" (11:7–11).

John's imprisonment at Herod's hands is the next example of satanic resistance to the coming of the kingdom (11:12). Moreover, the saving signs of Jesus's messianic identity meet an astonishing spiritual lethargy in the Galilee of Jesus's upbringing (11:20–24). Nonetheless, the kingdom is advancing, for "God with us" is among us. Thus, Jesus opens a window on his divine majesty by declaring his relationship with his heavenly Father (11:25–26) and by inviting the weary and heavy laden to come to him (11:28–29).

**Matthew 12.** Matthew continues to unfold Jesus's identity as Immanuel, "God with us" (1:23). Jesus's freedom with Sabbath laws shows him to be "greater than" the temple (12:6). His impending death and resurrection will show him to be "greater than" Jonah (Matt. 12:41). His wisdom shows him to be "greater than" Solomon (Matt. 12:42). The offices of priest, prophet, and king converge in him. Moreover, he is the servant whom Isaiah promised, anointed by the Spirit of God to bring healing to the broken, justice to the Gentiles, and deliverance to all from the dominion of Satan (12:15–21; see Isa. 42:1–4). His miracles are a sign that "the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). Failure to recognize the Spirit's work in him is the worst of blasphemies (12:31–32). And failure to recognize the way Jesus reconfigures family membership is to leave oneself in the loneliest of places (12:46–50).

**Matthew 13:1–53.** In seven parables, Jesus presents the wisdom of the kingdom: the parables of the sower (with explanation), the wheat and weeds (with explanation), the yeast, the mustard seed, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, and the net.

Two Old Testament passages provide the rationale for Jesus's teaching in parables: Isaiah 6's sobering message to the prophet that his words would only confirm many in their rebellion, and Psalm 78's saying about the way parables express hidden truths.

The parable of the sower is prominent, and it highlights the irresistibility of the kingdom, despite apparent failure. To be sure, of the four different kinds of soil, only one produces fruit. In the end, however, there will be a field full of plants that have produced a large amount of fruit (Matt. 13:8, 23).

That gives some perspective to the second-most-prominent parable, that of the wheat and the weeds. The master of the field is perfectly willing to allow weeds to get as much care as the wheat until the appointed time for making all things right.

When the time for final judgment comes, the angels, not the workers, will do the final sorting.

*Series 4: The Shape of the Church (Matt. 13:54–19:2)*

**Matthew 13:54–14:36.** There follow powerful signs of the hiddenness of the kingdom of heaven: Jesus experiences rejection in Nazareth, the town of his upbringing (Matt. 13:54–58); and Herod the tetrarch beheads John the Baptist, prompting Jesus to seek solitude in “a desolate place” (14:1–13a).

When the crowds pursue Jesus, reports Matthew, “he had compassion on them and healed their sick” (14:13b–14). In fact, what emerges in this and the following three chapters is a sustained unfolding of his divine mission of redemptive compassion. He feeds the five thousand (14:14–21), with a return of twelve baskets (and he will repeat the identical fourfold actions of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving the bread at the Lord’s Supper—26:26). While the disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee by boat during a storm, he walks to them on water, allows Peter to join him on the water, and rescues Peter when doubt overcomes him; the storm ceases at Jesus’s command, the first occasion on which his disciples confess, “Truly you are the Son of God” (14:22–33).

**Matthew 15.** Sick people flock to Jesus in Galilee, but religious leaders come from Jerusalem and question him on his laxity in traditional purity customs at meals. He counters with an accusation that they substitute self-serving traditions for God-given decrees (e.g., saying that giving to God trumps providing for aging parents). It is the wickedness of the heart that defiles a person, Jesus explains, not eating with unwashed hands (Matt. 15:1–9).

Immediately—as if to extend the point about things unwashed—Jesus takes the disciples to Tyre and Sidon (classical Philistia, northwest of Galilee), populated by people whom Jews would consider unclean. A Canaanite woman there hails him as “Son of David,” recognizes his power over the demonic, and begs the mercy of a healing for her daughter. In a tacit and ironic rebuke of his disciples, who would send her away, Jesus commends her great faith and heals her daughter (15:21–28).

Next Jesus teaches and heals on the east side of the Sea of Galilee (largely populated by Gentiles—see the parallel in Mark 7:31). Here he feeds the four thousand (anticipating again the Lord’s Supper, with his taking, giving thanks, and breaking and giving the loaves and fishes), with a return of seven baskets (some commentators suggest that the previous twelve baskets symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel, while these seven baskets symbolize the seven nations displaced during the conquest—see Deut. 7:1b; Acts 13:19). Then Jesus returns to Magadan in Galilee proper (Matt. 15:29–39).

**Matthew 16.** The doctrinally driven Pharisees and the liturgically minded Sadducees are united in this: nothing that Jesus has done or taught is impressive enough to establish his credibility (Matt. 16:1). Jesus responds that the only further credential

he is willing to provide will be his resurrection from the dead (16:4). Meanwhile, he warns his disciples against the toxic cynicism of his opponents' disbelief (16:5–12).

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus finally asks the disciples about their own faith (16:13–15). By God's grace, Peter gets the right answer about *who* Jesus is: "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16–17). While Peter gets the wrong answer about *what* the Messiah has come to do, Jesus will nonetheless make Peter's confession of his messianic identity the foundation of the church he has come to establish. At the same time, Jesus begins to reinform Peter and the disciples as to the cross-shaped ministry of their Messiah-King (16:21–23)—and the cruciform shape their own lives must assume (16:24–28).

**Matthew 17:1–21.** Six days later on the Mount of Transfiguration, three of the disciples taste the glory of "the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28) and see proof that there is one dispensation of grace uniting old covenant (Moses and Elijah) and new covenant; Jesus experiences a luminous transformation that anticipates the fruit of his suffering; and the Father reaffirms (recalling the baptism) the Son's identity and mission.

On the way down the mount, Jesus restates the hard truth that the path to glory will involve rejection and suffering, and he urges silence about the transfiguration until the resurrection makes the whole message comprehensible (17:9–13). At the foot of the mount, Jesus heals a demon-possessed boy—something the disciples could have done themselves had they but had sufficient faith (17:14–21).

**Matthew 17:22–19:2.** In his "Sermon on the Congregation," Jesus sketches his mandate for life in the church. He tells his disciples he does not want a boycott of the temple tax, indicating that the church is to show a measure of flexibility to outsiders. Turning to the inner life of the church, he calls for self-denial: refusal to exalt self (Matt. 18:1–5), refusal to be hurtful to little ones (18:5–6), and refusal of personal laxity toward sin (18:7–9). Then he calls for positive acts of love: seeking out brothers and sisters who wander off (18:10–14), holding one another to account for egregious sins (18:15–17), and, aptly enough for people who understand how lavishly their heavenly Father has forgiven them, readily forgiving one another when there is sorrow for sins (18:23–35).

At the heart of his teaching about the shape of church life, Jesus promises his own presence (reminiscent of the Old Testament's promise of the presence of the *shekinah* glory; recall, for example, the dedication of the temple in 2 Chronicles 6). However, now, remarkably, he promises to be present even in the smallest prayer-filled gatherings of believers (18:19–20).

***Series 5: Preparation for Judgment (Matt. 19:3–26:1)***

**Matthew 19:3–30.** Intriguingly, as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem and his final conflict with his enemies, his teaching turns from the Christian congregation to the Christian home, specifically to marriage and finances. In answer to a question about divorce, Jesus affirms the sanctity of monogamous marriage between "male and female"

(Matt. 19:1–8), and limits the permission of divorce to matters of sexual impropriety (19:9). In the same breath, he also ennobles a call to singleness (19:10–12). When his disciples try to prevent people from bringing little children to him, he insists that it is precisely to such little ones that the kingdom of heaven belongs (19:13–15).

A rich young man asks what he must do to possess eternal life. Jesus responds by pointing him to the commandments. The young man claims he has kept the commandments but senses that he still lacks something. Jesus tells him to sell all, give to the poor, and follow him. The young man leaves in sorrow. We may infer that he does not in fact love God or neighbor more than his “great [lit. “many”] possessions” (19:22).

**Matthew 20.** The two main stories of Matthew 20 address two principal temptations of Christian leaders: envy and pride. Vineyard day laborers who have worked through the day resent the fact that laborers who work a short day receive equal pay. The antidote to such envy is to acknowledge the master’s sovereign generosity (20:1–16). Appropriately bridging this story about envy and the next story about pride is Jesus’s third prediction of his death and resurrection (20:17–19).

No doubt recalling that Jesus has spoken of “twelve thrones” for his disciples (19:28), the mother of the Zebedee brothers asks for a promise of pride of place for her sons when the kingdom comes. First, Jesus counters with a humbling question to James and John: “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” (20:22). Second, Jesus reminds them that kingdom rewards are the Father’s to give, not his. Third, seeing the envy the Zebedees’ ambition has stirred among the other disciples, Jesus points to the servile, “table waiting” shape of his mission and tells his disciples that his pattern is to be theirs. He explains for the first time the *meaning* of his upcoming death: it is a “ransom for many” (20:28).

Jesus concludes his journey to Jerusalem by healing two blind men outside Jericho and allowing them (unlike a pair at the beginning of his journey—see 9:27–31) to follow him (20:29–34).

**Matthew 21:1–27.** Three events shed further light on Jesus’s person and work as King, Prophet, and Priest. First, he enters Jerusalem mounted on a foal-accompanied donkey, accepting acknowledgment as Israel’s prophesied servant-King (Matt. 21:1–9). Second, he prophetically proclaims and symbolically enacts the Father’s displeasure at the corruption of the temple (21:10–13). And third, he purifies the worship of the temple, healing the blind and the lame who are there, and defending the praise of children (21:14–16). His cursing of the fig tree is a rebuke of faithless Israel for not recognizing her King-Prophet-Priest (21:18–21). Jesus exposes the craven cynicism of the chief priests and elders who ask him about the authority behind his actions (21:23–27).

**Matthew 21:28–22:14.** In three parables, Jesus presses the question of faith. During John the Baptist’s ministry, the tax collectors and prostitutes believed John the Baptist. Jesus likens them to a son who first refuses but then obeys his father’s instructions.

Meanwhile the chief priests and elders rejected John's "way of righteousness." In the parable of the two sons, Jesus likens them to a son who claims he will do his father's will, but whose actions belie that commitment (Matt. 21:28–32). Faith is in the doing, more than in the saying.

The parable of the wicked tenants is virtually a recapitulation of the entire Bible's storyline. God carefully prepares his vineyard Israel. Majority Israel rejects one God-sent delegation after another, finally killing God's Son in a vain attempt to win autonomy from him. (Mercifully, the previous parable reminds us that there has always been a believing "minority report.") Ironically, God will nonetheless fulfill his intention of blessing the world through (to change the metaphor) the builders' rejection of the cornerstone (21:33–46; esp. 42).

The parable of the wedding feast looks ahead to the weighty twofold responsibility of the church: first, to invite everybody to the union of God with his people; second, to make sure that those who accept the invitation don proper wedding garments (presumably, by becoming disciples, being baptized, and learning to observe Christ's commands—see Matt. 28:16–20).

**Matthew 22:15–46.** Four questions (three posed by others, one posed by Jesus) frame four of the most critical matters for which his followers will have to contend.

First, when asked about paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus insists that because God is the preeminent authority in the universe, we owe him primary obedience; nonetheless, we have a secondary obligation to support and obey governing authorities (Matt. 22:15–22).

Second, when asked about resurrection, Jesus asserts that death is not the end for us, nor is it merely the portal to a permanent nonphysical consciousness. Our final state will indeed be resurrection, that is, renewed bodies, with a physicality that is unlike anything we have yet experienced and where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage (22:23–33).

Third, when asked about which is the great commandment, Jesus acknowledges that there is one great commandment under which all others can be subsumed, and it is twofold: love God and love neighbor (22:34–40—see Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5).

Fourth, Jesus asks how, in Psalm 110, David could have referred to One who was both his Lord and his Son. Israel, Jesus implies, should have been expecting a messianic Son of David that was more than merely human. As Bruner (*ad loc.*) summarizes: "More than David is here . . . David's son as man, David's Lord as God" (22:41–46).

**Matthew 23.** Matthew closes Jesus's teaching ministry with three chapters (Matthew 23–25) that mirror the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), beginning with seven woes—strikingly reminiscent of the Beatitudes—by which Jesus illustrates what he does not want from his followers.<sup>35</sup> He castigates those who do not mourn others' failings with respect to the law, but instead pour on more demands (23:4),

<sup>35</sup>For the pairing of the woes with the Beatitudes, see Reggie M. Kidd, "Tithing in the New Covenant? 'Yes' as Principle, 'No' as Casuistry," in *Perspectives on Tithing: Four Views*, ed. David Croteau (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 97–121.

and whose religion is about prestige instead of poverty of spirit (23:5–12). “Woe,” he pronounces, to those who do not tell God’s story in meekness, but instead make proselytes “twice as much a child of hell as [themselves]” (23:13–15). “Woe” to those whose über-scrupulous giving betrays a slothful disengagement from that justice, mercy, and faith which the tithe had been instituted to promote. “Woe” to teachers who should be models of purity of heart, but are corrupt to the core of their being. “Woe” to those whose pretense at being sons of peace belies their hostility to God’s true prophets—those who, when called to stand with prophets whose truth telling brings persecution, instead join the murderers.

**Matthew 24.** Matthew 6 dealt with the disciplines of religion: prayer, fasting, and trust. Matthew 24 deals with the housing of religion: for Jewish people, the temple. In 24:1–26, 29–35 (where the language of “coming” [ἔρχεσθαι] evokes the image of the Son of Man coming before the “Ancient of Days” in Daniel 7), Jesus explains the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The heavenly conferral of authority to Jesus by virtue of his baptism, death, and resurrection will have earthly consequences for the old administration: the destruction of the temple. The disciples will see this “coming” to his heavenly authority happening because it will take some development; the disciples will have opportunity to prepare (Matt. 24:15–26). In other verses, Jesus uses the language of “presence” (παρουσία, which the ESV unfortunately also translates “coming”—24:27, 36–41) to refer to his (and still to us) future return at the consummation of the ages. His παρουσία, he asserts, nobody will see in advance (24:27). The job is simple—be ready (24:36–51).

**Matthew 25.** Matthew 7 crowned the Sermon on the Mount with a challenge to faithfulness and fruitfulness, to living according to the so-called Golden Rule (7:12) rather than with a judgmental spirit (7:1–5), and—by hearing and doing “these words of mine” (7:24)—to building wisely rather than foolishly. Correspondingly, in Matthew 25 Jesus now provides one parable that underscores the need for faithfulness in awaiting the παρουσία (25:1–13, ten virgins) and another that underlines the need for fruitfulness during the wait (25:14–30, the talents). In his final teaching he reasserts the need to decide how to live—in service to him, or not (25:31–46, the sheep and the goats). Ironically, though, the reality is that all will find that the way they serve or do not serve the hungry, thirsty, estranged, naked, sick, and imprisoned “brother” (25:34–40, 41–46) will be the proof of whether they have served Jesus himself, and therefore of whether their lives have been built on rock or sand (recalling 7:24–27).

### *Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Commissioning Narratives (26:2–28:20)*

**Matthew 26:2–75.** While a woman anoints Jesus with costly ointment (Matt. 26:6–12), Judas agrees to betray him for thirty pieces of silver (26:14–16). Jesus converts the Passover observance into a thanksgiving meal that celebrates his self-outpouring “for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28) and that anticipates the eschatological day when he will “drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (26:29; see also 13:43). While

Jesus prays in Gethsemane, Peter and the brothers Zebedee sleep. Judas betrays with a kiss, and an unnamed disciple cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus responds, “All who take the sword will perish by the sword” (26:52). Though his disciples desert him, though Peter denies him, and though false witnesses accuse him of blasphemy, Jesus promises members of the Jewish high court that Scripture will be fulfilled: his death will result in his being enthroned as the Son of Man “seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (26:64).

**Matthew 27.** Jesus appears before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor (Matthew stresses Jesus’s absolute silence—recall Matt. 12:19), while Judas hangs himself in remorse for his betrayal. Despite a dream by Pilate’s wife, Pilate releases Barabbas instead of Jesus and protests his own innocence of Jesus’s blood (27:15–26). Following Jesus’s death on the cross (Matthew’s account of which is especially shaped by Psalm 22—see Matt. 27:37, 43), not only is the curtain of the temple torn (as with Mark and Luke) but “the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened” (Matt. 27:51–52). We are led to understand that death has met its match in Jesus’s death, and the cover-up by the chief priests and the Pharisees cannot disprove this new reality. Joseph of Arimathea (simply called “a rich man . . . who also was a disciple”) buries Jesus in his own tomb, with three of Jesus’s female disciples looking on—and with a guard unit from the temple there to make sure Jesus’s disciples commit no mischief with the body (27:57–61).

**Matthew 28.** The two Marys come to the tomb on Sunday before dawn. There they find an angel. He has moved the stone covering the tomb and is sitting on it. The guards lie on the ground “like dead men” (Matt. 28:4). The angel informs the women that Jesus has been raised from the dead and that he has gone before them to Galilee, where he wants his disciples to assemble. On their way to tell the disciples, the women are met by Jesus himself. Meanwhile, the temple leaders conspire with the revived guards to blame the missing body on the disciples, who allegedly have stolen it in the middle of the night while the guards have slept. Finally, Jesus meets with his eleven remaining disciples in Galilee. There he announces his lordship over heaven and earth and instructs his disciples to go “and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,” promising his own presence with them “to the end of the age” (28:19–20).

---

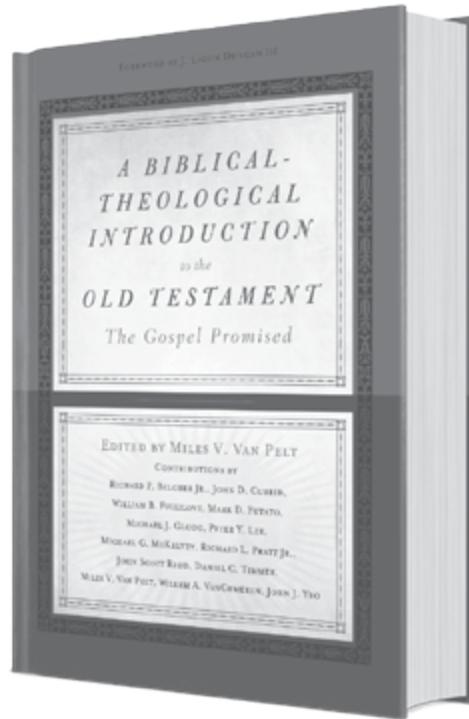
### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allison, Dale C. *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*. New York: Crossroad, 1999.
- . *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.

- Blomberg, Craig. *Interpreting the Parables*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.
- Brown, Jeanine K. "Matthew." In *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, edited by Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill, 950–1006. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012.
- Bruner, Frederick Dale. *Matthew: A Commentary*. Vol. 1, *The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007.
- . *Matthew: A Commentary*, vol. 2, *The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison. *Matthew 1–7*. Vol. 1. ICC. Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2004.
- . *Matthew 8–18*. Vol. 2. ICC. Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2004.
- . *Matthew 19–28*. Vol. 3. ICC. Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Evans, Craig. *Matthew*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Ferguson, Sinclair. *The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Life in a Fallen World*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1988.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007.
- . *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989.
- Gleaves, G. Scott. *Did Jesus Speak Greek? The Emerging Evidence of Greek Dominance in First-Century Palestine*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015.
- Greenman, Jeffrey P., Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, eds. *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries: From the Early Church to John Paul II*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. *Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Parables of Jesus*. 2nd ed. New York: Scribner's, 1972.
- Keener, Craig S. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.
- . *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009.
- . "Matthew." In *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. 2nd ed., 44–125. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014.
- Kidd, Reggie M. "Tithing in the New Covenant? 'Yes' as Principle, 'No' as Casuistry." In *Perspectives on Tithing: Four Views*, edited by David Croteau, 97–121. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011.
- Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel according to Matthew*. PNTC. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Murray, John. *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957.
- Newport, Kenneth G. C. *The Sources and Sitz im Leben of Matthew 23*. JSNTSup 117. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Oden, Thomas C. *The Good Works Reader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Matthew*. ZECNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Ridderbos, Herman. *The Coming of the Kingdom*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973.
- . *Matthew's Witness to Jesus Christ: The King and the Kingdom*. World Christian Books. New York: Association Press, 1958.
- Robinson, John A. T. *Redating the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.

- Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Translated by Robert R. Barr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Stanton, Graham N. *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.
- Talbert, Charles T. *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5–7*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

Teach the Old Testament from a  
Reformed, covenantal, and  
redemptive-historical perspective



With an emphasis on the Old Testament's theology, key themes, and overall message, this volume will equip you to study and teach each book in the Old Testament with clarity and insight.

CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

- Richard P. Belcher Jr.
- John D. Currid
- William B. Fullilove
- Mark D. Futato
- Michael J. Glodo
- Peter Y. Lee
- Michael G. McKelvey
- Richard L. Pratt Jr.
- John Scott Redd
- Daniel C. Timmer
- Willem A. VanGemerren
- Miles V. Van Pelt
- John J. Yeo

Available now

# *READ THE NEW TESTAMENT FROM A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE*

Featuring contributions from nine respected evangelical scholars, this volume introduces each New Testament book in the context of the whole canon of Scripture, helping anyone who teaches or studies the Bible to apply it to the church today.

---

“Addressing both spiritual and academic issues with a view to pastoral equipping and biblical exposition, this wide-ranging compendium will benefit readers in both classroom and personal settings.”

ROBERT W. YARBROUGH, Professor of New Testament, Covenant  
Theological Seminary

“This is an insightful and impressive resource, one I will use in my own studies and often recommend to others.”

KEVIN DEYOUNG, Senior Pastor, University Reformed Church,  
East Lansing, Michigan

“This volume admirably combines depth of scholarship and theological exegesis within a biblical-theological framework—all couched in highly readable prose, offered for the sake of the church. It will no doubt instruct and edify.”

CONSTANTINE R. CAMPBELL, Associate Professor of New Testament,  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“Aimed at pastors and interested Christian readers, this biblical-theological introduction to the New Testament is a welcome addition to the introductory literature on the New Testament.”

ANDREAS J. KÖSTENBERGER, Senior Research Professor of New Testament  
and Biblical Theology, Southeastern Baptist  
Theological Seminary

---

**MICHAEL J. KRUGER** (PhD, University of Edinburgh) is president and Samuel C. Patterson Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. He is the author of a number of books and articles, including *Canon Revisited*.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

