

HANDBOOK ON

the Gospels

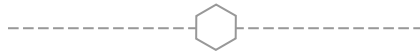


Benjamin L. Gladd

MATTHEW • MARK • LUKE • JOHN

H A N D B O O K O N

the Gospels



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CHAPTER ONE

The Gospel of Matthew

Introduction

Authorship and Date

While contemporary scholars often deny that Matthew wrote the First Gospel, a great deal of evidence exists for attributing the authorship of the First Gospel to him. One line of argumentation is the title itself. The extant manuscripts of all four Gospels include the titles. For example, the title of the First Gospel reads, “According to Matthew” (*kata Maththaion*), and the title of the Second Gospel reads, “According to Mark” (*kata Markon*). Luke’s and John’s Gospels follow suit. Many commentators supposed that the early church tagged the four Gospels after their publication to differentiate them from one another. But recently, a handful of scholars have argued that these titles are original. If the titles were present upon publication, then they go a long way in determining authorship. Matthew, also known as Levi (Mark 2:14 // Luke 5:27–28), was a Jewish tax collector and one of the Twelve (Matt. 9:9; 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). This explains why within the First Gospel an emphasis on taxation is discernable (see 9:9; 10:3; 17:24–27). The early church, too, assumes that Matthew wrote this Gospel (e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.2, 3.1.1; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.10, 3.24.5, 3.39.16).

The dating of the First Gospel turns on its relationship to Mark’s and Luke’s Gospels and on the predictive nature of the Olivet Discourse (24:1–25:46). Since it appears that Matthew depends on Mark, a Gospel likely published in the early to mid-60s, and many of the events outlined in the Olivet

Discourse were initially fulfilled in AD 70, Matthew's Gospel was likely published in the mid to late 60s.

Purpose

Matthew, possibly writing from Antioch of Syria, writes to a largely Jewish audience and to some gentile Christians. Jesus of Nazareth, the First Gospel argues, is the centerpiece of the history of redemption. All of Israel's institutions, events, and individuals as chronicled throughout the Old Testament anticipate Jesus as the long-awaited Davidic King and true Israel. Jesus is also "Immanuel"—God has drawn near to humanity (Matt. 1:23). Mark highlights the *preparation* and mysterious *arrival* of the kingdom, Luke underscores its *scope*, and Matthew puts his finger on the *growth* of the kingdom.

Outline

Matthew, Mark, and Luke generally trace Jesus's ministry along geographic lines, moving from Jesus's baptism in Judea to his public ministry in Galilee and then to Jerusalem. Matthew, though, intersperses five blocks of teaching that outline a particular dimension of the eternal kingdom (5:1–7:29; 10:1–11:1; 13:1–53; 18:1–19:1; 23:1–26:1). Jesus's teaching also explains and reinforces his actions.

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The Genealogy (1:1–17)

Two of the four Gospels include a genealogy. Luke squeezes his between John’s imprisonment and the wilderness temptation (Luke 3:21–37), but the First Gospel is the only one that leads with it (1:1–17). Matthew not only opens his Gospel with a genealogy; he introduces the genealogy (and the prologue) with a critical phrase: “*the genealogy [biblos geneseōs] of Jesus Christ.*” The wording alludes to two salient texts from the Genesis narrative: “*this is the account [hē biblos geneseōs] of the heavens and the earth*” (2:4) and “*this is the written account [hē biblos geneseōs] of Adam’s family line*” (5:1). The connection is intentional, setting the whole of Jesus’s ministry on a redemptive-historical trajectory. Jesus, the last Adam, has come to reverse the effects of the first Adam’s transgression and establish the new age—the age of righteousness and obedience. The first creation was marked with a

genealogy, and now the new creation will follow suit. By opening the genealogy with an allusion to Genesis 2:4 and 5:1, Matthew indicates that *all* of the First Gospel, at some level, should be read as an account of Jesus bringing life to a fallen world.

Matthew explicitly describes Jesus as “the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham” (1:1). By ordering David’s name before Abraham’s even though Abraham came first, the evangelist draws attention to Jesus’s royal pedigree. Above all, the genealogy impresses upon Matthew’s readers that Jesus is the long-awaited Son of David. He’s cut from the same royal cloth. The structure of the genealogy, too, reflects an emphasis on Jesus’s messiahship. Matthew’s arrangement contains three chronological sections: premonarchical period (1:2–6a), monarchical period until the exile (1:6b–11), and the deportation until the long-awaited Messiah (1:12–16).

In addition to the genealogy’s Davidic focus, one can discern God’s sovereign hand in the unfolding of Israel’s history. As we read about the people of God in the OT, we may wonder why biblical authors included so many odd stories with seemingly incidental details. But if we take a step back, as Matthew does, and look at the history of redemption from God’s perspective, we discover that there are no random events. God plans all of it, from beginning to end, so that a redeemer would arrive and bring his glory to the ends of the earth.

Why does Matthew include the patriarch Abraham in a genealogy so focused on David? Matthew does so for at least three cardinal reasons: God assured Abraham that he would be the father of a “great nation,” the nation would occupy the promised land (Gen. 12:1–9; 15:4–20, etc.), and Israel would bless the nations (Gen. 12:3). Jesus is not simply a descendant of Abraham—he is *the* descendant, and as such he fulfills God’s promises to Israel’s patriarchs. Jesus is true Israel who, on account of his obedience, inherits the true land of promise (i.e., the new creation) and “blesses” the gentiles. All three dimensions of the Abrahamic covenant—innumerable descendants, desirable land, and worldwide blessing—are truly and initially fulfilled in Jesus. Of course, there’s a sense in which the Abrahamic covenant was partially fulfilled in the OT, but such fulfillment often fell short of God’s extensive promises. Jesus fulfills the Abrahamic covenant in a more complete and qualitative manner. The commands that God holds Abraham, the patriarchs, and Israel to obey (e.g., Gen. 12:1–3; 17:1–9) are fully met in the person of Jesus.

The connection to Abraham’s role as the “father of many nations” (Gen. 17:5) may explain why Matthew includes four women in his genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. At least three of them are gentile, and we are unsure of Bathsheba’s ancestry (2 Sam. 11:3). In listing these women, Matthew

anticipates the conversion of the nations through Jesus’s ministry. The time has arrived for God to turn his attention to the gentiles and bring them into the fold of Israel en masse. Scandal colors the stories of all four women as well, paving the way for the social scandal of the virgin birth (1:19).

At the end of the genealogy, Matthew informs the reader that there are “fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah” (1:17). The number fourteen is an issue; the first and second groups contain fourteen names, but the third lists only thirteen. Scholars try to explain this oddity by repeating names (i.e., Jeconiah), but it’s unclear if Matthew intends the reader to do so. At the very least, Matthew encourages his audience to ponder the symbolic value of fourteen. Scholars have agonized over this issue for decades. One attractive and popular solution is the Jewish technique of counting called *gematria*. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet corresponds to a numerical value. The name “David” in Hebrew is composed of three consonants totaling fourteen: D (4), W (6), D (4). Notice also that there are *three* letters, resembling *three* units of fourteen generations. While such a practice may seem odd to us, *gematria* was practiced somewhat regularly in Judaism (e.g., Sib. Or. 1:137–46) and in the early church (e.g., Barn. 9:7).

The Birth of Jesus (1:18–25)

After establishing Jesus as king and true Israel in the genealogy (1:1–17), Matthew moves on to the birth narrative (1:18–2:25). We learn that Mary becomes pregnant through the miraculous work of the Spirit (1:18), but when Joseph learns of the pregnancy, he naturally assumes it is the result of infidelity. Not wanting to make a public spectacle of the matter, he thinks it best to “divorce her quietly” (1:19; cf. Deut. 22:20–24; 24:1).

The “angel of the Lord” then intervenes and reveals to Joseph the true nature of Mary’s pregnancy. This is the first of four appearances of the “angel of the Lord” in the First Gospel (1:20; 2:13, 19; 28:2). Often in the OT and especially within apocalyptic literature, angels feature prominently, divulging various revelations in dreams or visions (e.g., Gen. 31:11; Dan. 7:16; 8:15–19; Zech. 4:1). Before Jesus is born, an angel tells Joseph to name the child “Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (1:21). This verse is particularly revealing in that the angel unveils the ultimate reason why Jesus, the end-time king and true Israel, has come—to save people from sin.

Jesus’s name (in Hebrew, literally “Joshua”) means “the Lord saves,” a title embodying God’s delivering character and plan of redemption. One of the most concrete examples of God saving his people is his deliverance of the

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Israelites from Egyptian bondage. For example, Exodus 14:30 states, “That day the LORD *saved* [*yosha*] Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore” (cf. Exod. 18:8; Ps. 106:21; Hosea 13:4). Again, Deuteronomy 33:29 reads,

Blessed are you, Israel!
Who is like you,
a people *saved* [*nosha*] by the LORD?
He is your shield and helper
and your glorious sword.
Your enemies will cower before you,
and you will tread on their heights.

But God not only saved his people in the first exodus; he promises to save them once more and with great finality in the second exodus (Isa. 25:9; 43:12; 45:17; Ezek. 37:23; Hosea 1:7; Zech. 9:9). There is a coming consummate salvation. Jesus’s Hebrew name, “Joshua,” also alludes to Moses’s successor, the one who led Israel into the promised land (Josh. 1:1–5:12) and vanquished the majority of the Canaanites (Josh. 5:13–12:24). Joshua’s entrance into the promised land and his victory over the Canaanites there prophetically foreshadows Jesus’s entrance into the new promised land and victory over the spiritual Canaanites. In bearing the name “Jesus”/“Joshua,” Jesus of Nazareth will exterminate Israel’s longtime foe and bring about an unparalleled act of redemption: the salvation of individuals from the bondage of sin. As a result of the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity’s greatest problem is estrangement from God. Sin drove a wedge between God and those made in his image. So God sent his Son to come into the world to solve humanity’s sin problem by bearing the Father’s wrath and reconciling us with him.

After the angel instructs Joseph to name his son Jesus, the narrator comments, “All this took place *to fulfill* what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’)” (1:23; cf. Isa. 7:14). Here we stumble upon the first of ten “fulfillment formula” quotations, where Matthew explicitly connects the person of Jesus to large swaths of the Old Testament (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9). The word for “fulfill” (*plēroō*) occurs sixteen times in Matthew, and nearly all occurrences are tied to the OT. In contrast, Mark uses the term only twice and Luke nine times. The point is that Matthew keeps his audience focused on Israel’s Scriptures and how Jesus, at every point in his ministry, fulfills every word.

In the immediate context of Isaiah 7, the prophet predicts that a “young woman” (or “virgin”) will give birth to a child named “Immanuel” (7:13–14). The birth of Isaiah’s son shortly but incompletely fulfills this prediction (Isa. 8:3–4; cf. 8:8, 10, 18). Yet, a few chapters later, Isaiah 9:1–7 prophesies that the Davidic heir will also be called “Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Matthew reads Isaiah 7 and 9 together, asserting that Jesus fulfills the prophecies of Isaiah from long ago. Jesus is both Immanuel (1:23) and the long-awaited Davidic heir (1:1, 17). Some doubt the miracle of the virgin birth, but Matthew and the other NT writers firmly rest many doctrines on its historicity. Without the virgin birth, we lose the incarnation, substitutionary atonement, and believers’ justification, to name a few.

The scandal that befell Joseph because of his soon-to-be bride’s pregnancy (1:18–19) was providential in the eyes of Matthew, for he points out that “all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said” (1:22). Matthew also translates the second title, “Immanuel,” for his audience. It means “God with us” (1:23). Richard Hays observes that the phrase “God with us” is a structural marker, occurring at the beginning, middle, and end of the First Gospel (1:23; 18:20; 28:20),¹ and that “these [three] references frame and support everything in between.”²

One could also argue that the expression “God with us” captures not only a great deal of the First Gospel but the entire trajectory of redemption. God designed the entire cosmos to be his sanctuary. God promises Adam and Eve that if they completely obey his commands, heaven will descend and he will dwell fully with them and their descendants. They disobey. So God promises Israel, a corporate Adam, that if they completely obey his laws, he will dwell with them intimately (Exod. 4:22; 19:6). They disobey too. So now God has taken it upon himself to bring his presence to humanity in the person of Jesus.

The presence of God in Jesus suggests that the physical temple in Jerusalem is now defunct. How can there be two rival temples? One, a person, and the other, a human-made composition of earthly materials. From the beginning, God has intended to dwell with people, not in buildings. In the words of Stephen, “the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands” (Acts 7:48; cf. 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6). Matthew’s quotation of Isaiah 7:14 in 1:22–23 is highly significant to the First Gospel and Jesus’s ministry at large. God’s glory has descended in the person of Jesus, and if God’s glory

1. Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 38.

2. Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 38.

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has now taken up residence in Jesus, then the physical temple has come to an end. As the narrative moves forward, we should expect to see this theme snowball, culminating in Jesus’s death and resurrection. Spoiler alert: Matthew doesn’t disappoint.

We should also consider Matthew’s pairing of two names—Jesus and Immanuel. In the first instance the angel explains the significance, and in the second instance the narrator unpacks the meaning of the name:

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name *Jesus*, because he will *save his people from their sins*. (1:21)

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him *Immanuel* (*which means “God with us”*). (1:23)

The name “Jesus” means, as we mentioned above, the “*Lord saves*,” whereas the name “Immanuel” means “*God with us*.” By bringing the two names together, Matthew wants his readers to understand each title in light of the other. *Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel should be primarily understood as the Lord incarnate who has come to save humanity and dwell with them*. God’s presence on earth is a presence for deliverance. Every time we come across the name “Jesus” in the First Gospel, we must not lose sight of Matthew’s rich and comforting presentation.

Chapter 1 closes with Joseph heeding the angelic command in 1:20 by following through with their marriage. Since Joseph was “faithful to the law” (1:19), he did not “consummate their marriage until she had given birth” (1:25). Once the baby is born, Joseph names him Jesus. Chapter 1 begins with the genealogy of Jesus and ends with his birth. The reader has much to digest from chapter 1: Jesus is *the* descendant of Abraham and David who will rule over Israel and the nations, dwell with humanity, and, most importantly, save people from sin.

Flight to Egypt (2:1–18)

Chapter 2 fleshes out Jesus’s role as king and true Israel on many levels. Once Jesus, the “sign child” (1:22–23, quoting Isa. 7:14), is born, magi come to Jerusalem to worship him (2:2). Identifying the magi has preoccupied a host of commentators. While magi are found in a wide variety of literature,³ we need only to draw our attention to the use of “magi” (*magoi*) in the LXX.

3. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1977), 167–77.

This term, found only in one of the Greek translations of the book of Daniel (Theo.), refers to Babylonian wise men who were responsible for interpreting dreams and visions and failed to recount to Nebuchadnezzar his dream and its interpretation (Dan. 1:20; 2:2, 10, 27; 4:7; 5:7, 11, 15). In Daniel 2, 4, and 5, Daniel succeeds where these “wise men” fail. The tables are turned here in Matthew’s narrative—they outwit Herod. They succeed where he fails. Further, the magi pay homage to Jesus, whose wisdom far outstrips the prophet Daniel and confounds the “wise men” of Jerusalem.

The magi recognize the significance of the child, for they ask, “Where is the one who has been born *king of the Jews?*” (2:2). Such an admission stands in stark contrast to Herod, who is labeled “king” in 2:1 and 2:3. Moreover, the magi claim that they saw “his star when it rose” (2:2). Numbers 24:17, most likely a messianic prophecy, reads, “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. *A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.*” In the book of Revelation, Jesus calls even himself “the bright Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16). The point is that there is a biblical tradition associating the coming Messiah with a “star.” Further, this same title, “king of the Jews” (2:2), is found at the end of Matthew’s narrative when Pilate labels Jesus the “king of the Jews” (27:11, 29, 37). Matthew’s references to Jesus’s royalty at the moments of his greatest humility—his birth and death—indicate that this king was born to die.

From the beginning, enemies surround Jesus. Herod the Great, the Roman-appointed ruler of Israel at this time,⁴ discovers that a rival king (Jesus) has been born, and his fear of competition leads to genocide. Herod the Great was no stranger to murder, as he killed two wives and three sons. He was a ruler willing to hold on to the throne at any cost. Matthew goes on to mention yet another party: “When King Herod heard this he was *disturbed* [*etarachthē*], and all Jerusalem with him” (2:3). Herod is not the only offended party—all Jerusalem was likewise “disturbed.” The word “disturbed” here is often found in the LXX in the context of military operations when an inferior army stands in terror in the presence of a superior one (e.g., Deut. 2:25; 1 Chron. 29:11; Isa. 19:3; Jdt. 7:4; 14:19 LXX). Such a usage makes good sense here, as Herod and Israel stand in defiance to King Jesus and tremble in fear of an unparalleled ruler. Even before Jesus begins his public ministry, Matthew highlights the hostility between Jesus and Israel—a hostility that will culminate in the nation killing its long-awaited Messiah.

Herod orders the experts in the Law, the OT scholars of the day, to inform him where the Messiah was to be born (2:4). The Jewish leaders put their

4. Herod died in 4 BC, explaining why many scholars peg Jesus’s birth at around 5 BC.

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finger on Micah 5:2-4, a passage that predicts the birth of the Messiah in the inauspicious town of Bethlehem. Why Bethlehem? It was the hometown of King David (1 Sam. 16:1; 17:12), so it is hardly surprising that the Messiah, the true descendant of David (1:1), would also be from there. Herod summons the magi to lead him to Jesus, but, despite his best-laid plans, the magi take “another route” home because they were “warned in a dream not to go back to Herod” (2:12).

When the magi finally locate Jesus, they offer “gold, frankincense and myrrh” (2:11). The book of Micah may still be uppermost in Matthew’s mind here, since Micah 4:13 predicts the “wealth” of the “many nations” coming to Zion as a result of God’s victory over Israel’s enemies at the very end of history (cf. Josh. 6:24; Isa. 60:5-7; Hag. 2:6-7). When the magi bow down and worship Jesus, they symbolize the nations paying obeisance to God’s Anointed One. We cannot miss the irony here: Israel is marshaled against the Messiah, whereas the nations willfully submit to him.

In the first exodus, Pharaoh fails to murder all the male Israelite newborns, and Moses survives; in the second exodus, Herod fails to kill Jesus, a greater Moses. Chapter 2 is rife with the typological parallels between Moses and Jesus:

Jesus	Moses
Lives in Egypt (2:13)	Lives in Egypt (Exod. 1:1)
Archenemy is Herod (2:3)	Archenemy is Pharaoh (Exod. 1:8)
Herod perceives Jesus to be a threat (2:3)	Pharaoh perceives the Israelites to be a threat (Exod. 1:9-10)
Herod attempts to kill Jewish boys two years old and younger in Bethlehem (2:16)	Pharaoh attempts to kill all male Hebrew babies in Egypt (Exod. 1:16)
Herod attempts to manipulate the magi (2:8)	Pharaoh attempts to manipulate the Hebrew midwives (Exod. 1:15-16)
Herod is “outwitted” by the magi (2:16)	Pharaoh is outwitted by the Hebrew midwives (Exod. 1:19)
God protects Jesus (2:13)	God protects the male Israelite babies (Exod. 1:20)

Jesus’s ministry never strays from this Mosaic trajectory: Jesus will, in the shadow of Moses, lead his people out of bondage (sin), ensure their arrival to a new mountain sanctuary (Jesus), and mediate a new covenant (Sermon on the Mount).

An angel warns Joseph in a dream that Herod is on the prowl, looking to devour Jesus. So Joseph and Mary escape to Egypt for refuge (2:13). The movement to Egypt prompts Matthew to explain its redemptive-historical

significance: “So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘*Out of Egypt I called my son*’” (2:15). Matthew claims that Hosea 11:1 was “fulfilled” in Jesus’s journey to Egypt, even as a baby.

Matthew quotes the OT over fifty times in his Gospel, and his quotation of Hosea 11:1 is one of his most perplexing citations. According to Hosea 11:1, Yahweh recalls his *past* dealings with Israel in the exodus using the metaphor of sonship. But Matthew reads this passage as a *prophecy* concerning Jesus’s flight to Egypt. More than a handful of scholars argue that Matthew contravenes the meaning of Hosea 11:1 in asserting that Jesus “fulfilled” it. How could Matthew view Hosea 11:1 as a prophecy of an individual since the immediate context of Hosea 11 refers to the first exodus of Israel as a nation?

We could examine a host of cogent and viable options that uphold the integrity of Matthew’s use of the OT here, but we will focus on two.⁵ (1) Hosea 11:1–4 certainly underscores God’s past faithfulness in delivering his people from Egypt despite Israel’s faithlessness. Verse 2 states, “The more they [the Israelites] were called, the more they went away from me [Yahweh].” But the prophet Hosea is not only concerned about God’s past dealings with Israel; he looks toward the future, when God will reaffirm his covenantal commitment to them. Hosea’s expectation is based upon the Pentateuch’s expectation of a second exodus, for the Pentateuch itself contains this reality. Deuteronomy 28:68 states, for example, “*The Lord will send you back in ships to Egypt* on a journey I said you should never make again.” Then, a few chapters later, we read, “Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your *God will gather you and bring you back*. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors” (Deut. 30:4–5).

Not only does Hosea anticipate a second exodus; he hints at how the second exodus will come about. At the beginning of the book, Hosea predicts that Israel will “appoint one leader” who will play a critical, representative role leading the people out of “the land” once more (Hosea 1:11). The prophet anticipates God sending Israel into exile once more to “Egypt” (or Assyria) on account of her idolatry. Then God will redeem the nation from exile and bring it to the promised land (see 7:11, 16; 8:13; 9:3; 11:5). The second exodus is typologically patterned after the first exodus.

(2) The OT displays a strong bond between the one and the many. We label this phenomenon “corporate solidarity.” The behavior of a single

5. My line of argumentation is indebted to G. K. Beale, “The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: One More Time,” *JETS* 55 (2012): 697–715.

individual affects the entire community. Kings represent nations, fathers represent families, and so on (see, e.g., 2 Sam. 21:1; 1 Chron. 21:1–17). The book of Hosea exemplifies this movement between the one and the many. The most memorable portions of Hosea heavily lean on corporate solidarity. God commands Hosea to “marry a promiscuous woman,” symbolizing Yahweh’s relationship with his idolatrous people (Hosea 1:2). Hosea’s wife, a single person, represents an entire nation. The same can be said for Hosea’s children, “Jezreel,” “Lo-Ruhamah,” and “Lo-Ammi” (Hosea 1:3–9). By the time Hosea’s readers come to 11:1, they are quite aware of Hosea’s penchant for corporate solidarity and sensitive to the prophet’s expectations for a second exodus. Yes, Hosea 11:1 squarely recalls the first exodus, but behind this retrospection lies the assumption that God will appoint a representative head who will play a critical role in leading his people out of bondage once more.

Matthew’s use of Hosea 11:1, then, comports with Hosea’s use of the Pentateuch: God’s past actions anticipate future actions. It is possible, even likely, that Matthew (and the other NT writers) read and reread the OT prophets, discovering how to interpret the OT. The OT prophets interpret earlier parts of Scripture (e.g., the Pentateuch) and apply them to their own historical circumstances and even integrate them into their prophetic oracles. Further, Jesus himself probably instructed Matthew and the other disciples how to interpret the OT during the course of his ministry. Even in Matthew’s genealogy, we can discern a great deal of how he reads the OT. Matthew is not simply rattling off a list of names in the genealogy; he perceives a strong typological connection between the lives of named Israelites and the life of Jesus. God’s past dealings with Israel anticipate his future dealings with Jesus. So the First Evangelist’s use of Hosea 11:1 falls very much in line with what we discover in Hosea and Matthew itself. Using a blend of typology and verbal prophecy, Matthew paints Jesus as God’s true “son,” who repeats Israel’s career. But instead of disobedience and rebellion, faithfulness and submission mark Jesus’s relationship with his Father.

Home in Nazareth (2:19–23)

Matthew devotes the last portion of chapter 2 to Jesus’s family migrating to Nazareth. While intending to return home to Judea, Joseph learns that Archelaus, a son of Herod, is now ruling over the territory. Archelaus was known for his abusive tactics (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 17.339–55), so an angel commands Joseph to head north to the “district of Galilee,” where he will safely provide for his family (2:22). They end up in a rural, agricultural town in

Lower Galilee with a small population around five hundred⁶ called Nazareth, thus fulfilling the OT promise “that he would be called a Nazarene” (2:23). Perhaps the OT passage in mind is Isaiah 11:1: “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots *a Branch* [Heb. *netser*] will bear fruit.” According to Isaiah 11, the Messiah will be a descendant of Jesse and David who will rule with justice and restore the people of God (11:3–4, 10–11). As many scholars point out, the word for “Branch” (*netser*) is close to the name “Nazareth” (Gk. *Nazōraios*).

In chapters 1–2, Matthew attaches the word “fulfill” (*plēroō*) to four events in the birth narrative, and each of these OT prophecies is, at some level, fulfilled in an unexpected manner.

OT Prophecy “Fulfilled”	Unexpected Turn of Events
Isaiah 7:14	Scandal of Mary’s pregnancy (1:18–21)
Hosea 11:1	Mary and Joseph’s flight to Egypt (2:13–15)
Jeremiah 31:15	Slaughter of Jewish boys two years old and younger (2:17)
Isaiah 11:1	Home in Nazareth (2:21–23)

These fulfillments remind the reader that the early years of Jesus, as dramatic and perilous as they may be, are still in keeping with OT expectations. If the beginning of Jesus’s Scripture-fulfilling life is fraught with difficulty, how much more will his public ministry be?

John the Baptist (3:1–17)

BAPTISM OF A REMNANT OF ISRAELITES (3:1–12)

Chapter 3 opens with a loose transitional phrase, “in those days” (3:1), and Matthew’s audience encounters John the Baptist preaching the nearness of the “kingdom of heaven” (3:2). Because the kingdom is “near” and the second exodus is at hand (3:2; cf. Isa. 40:3), Israel must respond accordingly and repent of her sins (// Mark 1:3–8 // Luke 3:2–17). If the Israelites are unwilling to respond favorably to John’s message, they will be on the receiving end of divine wrath (→Mark 1:3). John’s baptism of “repentance” (3:11) challenges the nation’s institutions; a purifying river baptism in the Jordan and Israel’s temple-based sacrificial system in Jerusalem are mutually exclusive.

John’s odd appearance and peculiar diet call to mind the great prophet Elijah, symbolizing Israel’s rebellious condition (2 Kings 1:8). Verses 5–6 indicate

6. Richard A. Freund and Daniel M. Gurtner, “Nazareth,” in *T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), 2:539.

that a considerable crowd responded favorably to John’s message: “All Judea and the whole region of the Jordan . . . were baptized.” The positive response of the crowd stands in chisel-sharp relief to the Jewish leaders’ rejection of John. One unique feature of the First Gospel is the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. All four Gospels highlight this acrimonious theme in their narratives, but Matthew’s presentation of this conflict is exceptional. At every turning point, the Jewish authorities display a great deal of hostility toward Jesus (e.g., 7:15–23; 12:22–45; 23:1–39; 24:4–5, 10–12, 23–24). Since Israel’s leaders stand against Jesus, it’s unsurprising that they are allied against John the Baptist.

When John lays eyes on the approaching leaders, he announces, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from *the coming wrath*?” (3:7; cf. 12:34; Rom. 1:18). After announcing their doom, John goes right to the nub of the issue: “Do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham” (3:9). The Pharisees and Sadducees are resting in their identity as physical children of Abraham; but they are not his spiritual descendants. Ultimately, only two lines exist in the story of redemption: godly and ungodly. The godly line lays claim to the promises of God by faith, whereas the ungodly remain hostile to God and his people (see Gen. 3:15). So John the Baptist claims that “out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham” (3:9). The restored covenant community—the true Israel and genuine children of Abraham—will now find their ultimate identity around King Jesus, *the* son of Abraham.

John continues his tirade against the hostile Jewish leaders in 3:11–12, where he predicts that one who comes after him will be “more powerful.” In contrast to John’s baptism of water, the coming one will “baptize . . . with the Holy Spirit and fire.” The arrival of God’s Spirit is highly eschatological, as the OT prophets expected the Spirit to descend upon God’s people at the very end of history (e.g., Joel 2:28–32). According to Matthew and Luke, the end-time arrival of the Spirit is associated with “fire” and inextricably tethered to the ministry of the coming one (3:11 // Luke 3:16). That is, when the figure following John’s baptism arrives, it will be a day of judgment for those who reject John’s message (3:12; cf. Isa. 4:4; 5:24; 29:6; 30:24; Amos 7:4; Mal. 4:1).

BAPTISM OF JESUS AS TRUE ISRAEL (3:13–17)

Whereas Israel’s authorities shun John’s baptism, Jesus welcomes it (3:13–17 // Mark 1:9–11 // Luke 3:21–22 // John 1:31–34). Jesus’s baptism may strike the reader as odd: if Jesus was born without sin (1:18), then why would he need to identify with John’s summons to “repent” of sin (3:2)? John picks up on this

problem when he attempts to “deter” Jesus from being baptized: “I [John] need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” (3:14). Jesus’s response to this theological dilemma is clear: “It is proper for us to do this [baptism] to *fulfill all righteousness*” (3:15). Matthew is the only evangelist to isolate this problem explicitly and record the exchange between John and Jesus. Recall Matthew’s emphasis on “fulfillment” in his Gospel and how he is at pains to demonstrate that Jesus’s ministry falls in line with OT expectations. So, when Jesus says that his baptism is necessary “to fulfill all righteousness,” the OT must be in view here. The tricky term “righteousness” refers to actions that fall in line with God’s holy and just character (cf. Gen. 15:6; 18:19; Exod. 34:7; Lev. 19:15; Ps. 10:7 LXX [11:7 ET]). Therefore, Jesus’s baptism functions on two levels: he fulfills OT expectations *and* he sets right what Israel got wrong.

In the previous passage, Jesus, even as a baby, identifies with corporate Israel in his flight to Egypt (2:13–15). As *the* descendant of Abraham and the true Israel (1:1), Jesus retraces the nation’s steps. Where they went, he goes. By being baptized in the Jordan, Jesus here formally identifies with Israel. He, like Israel passing through the Red Sea at the exodus, passes through the chaotic waters and emerges victorious. But, unlike Israel, he remains faithful to the covenant, preserving God’s law and eradicating the enemy from the promised land (4:1–11). There’s a bit of tension here that will ultimately be resolved at the cross. Righteous Jesus identifies with unrighteous Israelites so that he might “save” them (1:21). At the cross, the Righteous One will become unrighteous, so that the unrighteous might be declared righteous (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

When Jesus emerges from the water, the Spirit “descends like a dove.” The presence of a dove at Jesus’s baptism also symbolizes the end-time Spirit, who ushers in a new stage of God’s plan of redemption, the dawn of the new creation (e.g., Gen. 8:8–12; Isa. 32:15–16; Ezek. 36:26–30). As the heavens open, the Father declares, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (3:17). Matthew names all three persons of the Trinity, recalling the end of Matthew’s narrative, when the disciples are commissioned to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28:19). All three work together at the beginning of the narrative and at the end in ushering in the new creation, much like all three participate in the first creation (Gen. 1:2, 26; John 1:1–3; Col. 1:15–16).

Why does the Father announce that Jesus is his “Son” at the baptism? Was Jesus not God’s Son before this event? Though a few argue that Jesus *became* God’s Son at the baptism, Matthew is presenting Jesus’s sonship along redemptive-historical lines. Throughout Matthew’s narrative, Jesus is viewed as Yahweh incarnate and his preexistence is implied (e.g., 8:27; 14:27–28; 17:2;

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The Wilderness Temptation and the Beginning of Jesus's Public Ministry (4:1-25)

22:44). So Matthew must be primarily (but not exclusively) thinking in terms of Jesus as true Israel and the royal son of David *in his humanity*. This would explain why the Father's brief announcement, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased," alludes to 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7, two passages that predict the arrival of Israel's Messiah. The point of Jesus's baptism is, then, that God declares his Son to be the long-awaited Messiah, who has come to right humanity's wrongs.

■ Stage 1: Jesus in Galilee (4:1-18:35)

The Wilderness Temptation and the Beginning of Jesus's Public Ministry (4:1-25)

Success in the Judean Wilderness (4:1-11)

Now that Jesus is anointed by the Spirit and equipped to rule, he will head to battle. All three Synoptics include the wilderness temptation (Matt. 4:1-11 // Mark 1:12-13 // Luke 4:1-13), but only Matthew and Luke disclose what transpired. Mark puts his finger on Jesus's identity as the last Adam and true Israel, and Matthew and Luke tease out this twofold emphasis throughout their narratives. Matthew has already stated that Jesus is the "son of Abraham" (1:1) and true Israel, God's "son" (2:15, quoting Hosea 11:1). In 2:15 baby Jesus retraces Israel's steps in fleeing to Egypt, where he symbolically experiences a small-scale Egyptian exile on behalf of Israel. Righteousness must prevail. At his baptism, Jesus once again identifies with Israel in that he, like the nation, passes through the waters of chaos (3:13-17). He identifies with Israel's forty-year wilderness wanderings in his forty-day wilderness temptation (4:1-11; →Luke 4:1-13). Jesus begins to eradicate the devil from the cosmos in stark contrast to the failure of the second generation of Israelites to purge the pagan nations from Canaan (Josh. 23:12-16). Putting all four events together, we perceive a nice chronological progression that roughly falls in line with Israel's history:

Jesus	Nation of Israel
Flees to Egypt with Joseph and Mary as God's "son" (2:15, quoting Hosea 11:1)	Migrates to Egypt as God's "firstborn son" (Exod. 4:22)
Baptized in the Jordan (3:13-17)	Crosses the Red Sea (or "Sea of Reeds"; Exod. 14:19-31)
Tempted for forty days in the wilderness (4:1-11)	Wanders in the wilderness for forty years (Num. 32:13)
Succeeds in the wilderness and begins to expel Satan from the cosmos (4:11)	Fails in the wilderness and fails to expel the inhabitants of Canaan (Joshua)

We must also keep in mind that the nation of Israel is understood to be a corporate Adam throughout the Pentateuch. Just as God created Adam and Eve and installed them in Eden, so too he creates Israel and installs them in the promised land. At Sinai, God offers Israel eternal life in the new creation if they succeed (Lev. 18:5; Deut. 4:1; Ezek. 18:9; 20:11; Matt. 19:17; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12). But like Adam and Eve, Israel breaks God's law and forfeits the promise of life. They, like all of humanity, are affected by Adam and Eve's fall. The Israelites cannot obey the law perfectly. But, embedded within Israel's law and persisting throughout the Pentateuch, hope remains for a future individual to fill Adam's and Israel's shoes and obey where they fail (e.g., Gen. 3:15). Matthew carefully crafts his narrative to present Jesus as the fulfillment of these OT expectations. As the true and faithful Israel, he establishes the end-time kingdom and spearheads the new creation. The wilderness climax of the comparison indicates that Jesus, through his successful resistance of the devil's temptations, has begun to expunge Satan's presence from the cosmos.

Announcing the Kingdom in Galilee (4:12-17)

John the Baptist's arrest in Judea forms the catalyst for Jesus's return to Galilee (4:12). Though growing up in Nazareth for nearly thirty years (Luke 3:23), Jesus tactically decides to make Capernaum the base of his operations (4:13). Matthew once again invokes the OT to explain why Jesus moves to Capernaum; it is "to fulfill" Isaiah 9:1-2:

Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—
the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned. (Matt. 4:15-16)

Isaiah 9 predicts that God will redeem some Northern Israelites who live in "Galilee of the Gentiles" (9:1). This geographic section of Israel was the first to succumb to the Assyrian invasion in 733 BC,⁷ but Isaiah anticipates a future restoration of the Northern tribes. Their reestablishment will take place through the promised Messiah, who will "reign on David's throne and over his kingdom" (Isa. 9:7).

7. John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 239.

Matthew's use of Isaiah 9:1–2 as Jesus transitions to Capernaum makes good sense for four reasons: (1) Jesus, as true Israel, has gone into Egypt, passed through the chaotic waters, and successfully defeated the devil, so he can now spark the return of the Israelites from spiritual captivity; (2) Jesus provokes the restoration of *all* the tribes of Israel; (3) he fulfills Isaiah's prophecy that the Messiah "will reign on David's throne" (see 4:17); (4) by including the phrase "Galilee of the *Gentiles*," Matthew lays the foundation for the inclusion of the gentiles in Jesus's Galilean ministry.

Calling the First Disciples and Healing the Sick (4:18–25)

Having proclaimed the saving message of the kingdom, Jesus calls his first four disciples (// Mark 1:16–20 // Luke 5:2–11). Like Mark's narrative, Matthew's describes the calling of Peter (Simon) and Andrew and then the calling of James and John. Three of these disciples—Peter, James, and John—will constitute Jesus's inner circle; though this group is not as prominent as they are in Mark, they are the only disciples who will witness the transfiguration (17:1; cf. 26:37).

All four disciples are fishermen by trade, but Jesus demands that they now "follow" him (4:19, 21). They are confronted with a difficult decision: Will they continue in the safety of their profession, or will they step out in faith and follow Jesus? Both groups respond positively and follow Jesus. James and John even "left the boat and their father," cutting ties with their profession and family (4:22; cf. 8:21–22; 10:35–37; 19:29). Matthew's audience must likewise make the same decision. Is Jesus worth following even if it entails financial and familial hardships? The answer, as Matthew makes clear, is yes.

Chapter 4 climaxes with Jesus healing a throng of people with an extensive list of maladies from all over. These micro-level healings illustrate Jesus's macro-level ministry of "saving" humanity from their plight (1:21). The fall plunged the created order into chaos and rebellion. Here, though, Jesus turns the tide on account of his success in the wilderness temptation. With Satan's grip on creation now broken, Jesus has the power and authority to reverse the curses.

Matthew goes to great lengths to highlight the universal scope of Jesus's restoration. Matthew's extensive list of the crowd's ailments in 4:23–24 outstrips Mark's and Luke's accounts (// Mark 3:7–10 // Luke 6:17–18):

"every disease"

"sickness"

“all who were ill with various diseases”
“those suffering severe pain”
“the demon-possessed”
“those having seizures”
“the paralyzed”

In listing these various conditions, Matthew wants his readers to grasp the totality of the salvation Jesus offers. The new creation has arrived in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. There is no malady that is beyond his reach. Further, Matthew divulges where the crowd is from: “Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan” (4:25). With the exception of Samaria, as many commentators point out (see 10:5), much of Palestine is in mind here. Thus, Jesus has come to save *all* the tribes of Israel. In 4:1–11 he rids the territory of the devil, and here in 4:23–25 he begins to populate it with God-fearing followers (4:25). God’s glory is filling the promised land.

The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)

The Nine Blessings or “Beatitudes” (5:1–12)

With the “whole of Israel”⁸ being represented in the massive crowds in 4:25, the stage is now set for the famous “Sermon on the Mount” (cf. Luke 6:20–49). Verse 1 states that “when he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.” But then the narrative zooms in on the disciples: “His *disciples* came to him and he began to teach *them*” (5:1–2). Is Jesus ignoring the crowds at the base of the mountain? The end of the discourse divulges the answer: “When Jesus had finished saying these things [the Sermon on the Mount], *the crowds* were amazed at his teaching” (7:28). Matthew wants his audience to pick up on Jesus’s two-tiered audience—the disciples gather at the top of the mountain, whereas the crowds gather at its base. Such a presentation is significant because it informs us of Jesus’s identity. Not coincidentally, according to Exodus 19, the nation of Israel gathers at the base of Sinai as their leader meets with God (Exod. 19:2–24). Farther up the mountain, only Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel gathered (Exod. 24:1), leaving the highest point of Sinai for Moses (Exod. 24:2). Could it be that Matthew’s presentation of the disciples and the crowds follows this pattern? Given the overwhelming connections between Matthew’s Gospel (especially the Sermon on the Mount) and the book of Exodus, I think it is likely.

8. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33A (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 81.

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

If the crowds in 4:25 and 7:28 correspond to the nation of Israel and the disciples correspond to the leaders of Israel, then Matthew presents Jesus as Yahweh incarnate *and* a new Moses:

Book of Exodus	Matthew 4:25-7:28
Nation of Israel (base of Sinai)	Crowds (base of mountain)
Leaders of Israel (farther up Sinai)	Disciples (top of mountain)
Moses (top of Sinai)	Jesus as new Moses (top of mountain)
Yahweh (top of Sinai)	Jesus as Yahweh incarnate (top of mountain)

In Matthew’s version of the Sermon on the Mount, an account that is modeled after Sinai, God the Father is not mentioned. God himself speaks only two times in all of Matthew: at Jesus’s baptism and at the transfiguration (3:17; 17:5). So the two separate parties that are present at Sinai (Yahweh and Moses) are now joined together in one person. This observation frames the Sermon on the Mount in that we must generally understand the discourse as, first, originating from Jesus as Yahweh incarnate and a new Moses. Thus, the discourse is deemed to be a *divine* mandate. There is no intermediary figure. Second, Matthew frames the sermon in this manner so that his readers see that the law is given to true Israel, the restored people of God.

Matthew’s placement of several key events on mountains uniquely sets his Gospel apart from the other three Gospels (4:8; 5:1; 8:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1, 9; 24:3; 26:30; 28:16). Often in the Old Testament, God’s presence is associated with mountains. The garden of Eden is the first mountain where God dwells and manifests his glorious presence to Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:8-14; Ezek. 28:13-14). Israel’s encounter with God at Sinai is the standard by which all subsequent encounters with God are measured.⁹ Sinai itself is also portrayed as a grand temple (Exod. 3:5; 19-24). At the very end of history, Isaiah predicts that Israel and the nations will trek to the “mountain of the LORD’s temple” in the “last days” (Isa. 2:2; cf. Mic. 4:7). Mountains, therefore, are a rich symbol of God’s covenantal presence.

Jesus’s communion with the disciples on the mountain here in Matthew 5-7 should be understood against this rich OT backdrop. In Exodus 33:18 Moses pleads with the Lord to “show” his “glory” atop Sinai. But the Lord does not permit it; instead, he only reveals “his back” to Moses because “no one may see [God] and live” (Exod. 33:20, 23). Fundamentally, a holy God cannot dwell among sinners. Matthew understands, though, that Jesus as Yahweh incarnate

9. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

is the embodiment of God’s glory. John’s Gospel states it like this: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. *We have seen his glory*, the glory of the One and Only” (John 1:14). At the Sermon on the Mount, then, the disciples are experiencing the glory of God. Moses longed for this day!

In Exodus 19–23 Moses instructs the Israelites how they are to remain ritually clean in the midst of a pagan environment. If the nation responds to the covenant with perfect obedience, God promises to vanquish their enemies and give them life—an existence that is fit for the new heavens and earth (Deut. 6:2; 30:15). But, like Adam and Eve, the Israelites fail to obey, succumbing to pride and idolatry. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus rehearses the well-known story but with a twist: instead of failure, Israel is marked by obedience to the covenant. Participants of the true Israel will obey these commands, because their representative, Jesus, obeyed in the wilderness.

The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29) is the first of five teaching blocks in Matthew’s narrative, perhaps modeled after the five books of the Pentateuch (10:1–11:1; 13:1–53; 18:1–19:1; 23:1–26:1), with each discourse ending with the same wording:¹⁰

Discourse 1	“When Jesus had finished saying these things” (7:28)
Discourse 2	“After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples” (11:1)
Discourse 3	“When Jesus had finished these parables” (13:53)
Discourse 4	“When Jesus had finished saying these things” (19:1)
Discourse 5	“When Jesus had finished saying all these things” (26:1)

The first section of the sermon contains nine “beatitudes” (5:3–11), and the entire discourse of 5:2–7:29 is likely tied to these beatitudes. The sermon broadly falls into a threefold outline: nine blessings (5:3–12), the body of the sermon (5:13–7:12), and three curses (7:13–17). We can then break down the body into three dominant themes: Jesus and the law (5:17–48), participation in the new temple (6:1–18), and the social implications of living in the overlap of the ages (6:19–7:12).¹¹

Each beatitude begins with the word “blessed” (*makarios*), a term that is found a total of thirteen times in the First Gospel. In the LXX, the word *makarios* is found in key passages such as Psalm 1:1 (“*Blessed [makarios] is the one*”), often in the context of divine favor or blessing (see, e.g., Ps. 32:1–2; 33:9 [ET 33:8]; 39:5 [ET 39:4]). When we consider its meaning here in Matthew

10. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 37.

11. This outline is generally indebted to Dale C. Allison Jr., “The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 423–45.

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The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)

5:3–11, we must not lose sight of the immediate context. In 4:17 Jesus is proclaiming the arrival of the “kingdom of heaven,” and in 4:23–25 he heals a large crowd, an event that demonstrates the in-breaking of the new creation. So when Jesus declares that this crowd and the disciples are “blessed,” he most likely refers to *eschatological* favor (cf. Dan. 12:12 LXX). God has poured out his “blessing” upon the hearers because of the arrival of the new age *through* the ministry of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount, then, is a summons to live wisely in the overlap of the ages.

The first eight beatitudes state the reality of end-time blessing followed by the basis for that blessing. For example, “Blessed are those who mourn, *for [hoti]* they will be comforted” (5:4). The subject of each blessing—the “poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” the “meek,” “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” the “merciful,” the “pure in heart,” the “peacemakers,” and “those who are persecuted because of righteousness”—resonates with OT examples of God dispensing favor upon his people (e.g., Ps. 24:4; 37:11; Isa. 57:15; 61:2).

The first and eighth beatitudes are accompanied by the *present* eschatological benefit of participating in the “kingdom of heaven,” whereas the second through seventh beatitudes are cast as *future* promises:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** (5:3)

Blessed are those who mourn, for they *will be comforted.* (5:4)

Blessed are the meek, for they *will inherit* the earth. (5:5)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they *will be filled.* (5:6)

Blessed are the merciful, for they *will be shown mercy.* (5:7)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they *will see* God. (5:8)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they *will be called* children of God. (5:9)

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** (5:10)

In framing these beatitudes with the present reality of the end-time kingdom (5:3, 10), Jesus assures the audience of their participation in it. The remaining beatitudes give the audience further insight into what their future

holds in the end-time kingdom. The kingdom is not marked by physical power and prominence but by inward holiness and adherence to God's will. In this vein, the ninth and final beatitude sets the stage for what will become of all those who follow Jesus: "Blessed are you *when* people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me . . . for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (5:11-12). What does life look like for those belong to the kingdom? Kingdom citizens are confident of God's eschatological approval while they endure the world's disapproval.

Jesus and the Law (5:13-48)

After exhorting his audience to be "salt" and "light" to the world around them (5:13-16), Jesus explains the relationship between his teaching and the Mosaic law: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but *to fulfill them*" (5:17). A great deal of debate surrounds the precise meaning of this passage, and we cannot enter into it here. Suffice it to say that the "law" that Jesus prescribes in the Sermon on the Mount is not *antithetical* to the law that Moses issued; rather, it *fulfills* Moses's instruction. Jesus even says that he did not "come to abolish" the Mosaic commandments but to "fulfill them" (5:17). Jesus is essentially claiming that the Sermon on the Mount fulfills OT patterns and expectations. The Mosaic covenant anticipated Jesus's person, actions, and teaching.

With the arrival of the new age, God calls members of true Israel to live in light of their identity. But he doesn't leave them to do so under their own power. He fills them with his Spirit so that they may fulfill the eternal new covenant. These new-covenant ethics are not antithetical to the Mosaic administration; they largely stand in continuity with it (Deut. 6:4; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27). While the Mosaic covenant certainly had an internal dimension (see Exod. 20:17; Ps. 119), *the old covenant was largely temporal and external in nature, and it physically separated Israel from her neighbors*. These end-time kingdom ethics do not assume Israel's status as a theocratic nation living in the "old age." Instead, they are intended for a community of saints, a people who have been reconstituted around King Jesus in the eschatological "new age."

The remaining section of chapter 5 relates to this internal dimension of the new covenant in contrast to the external dimension of the old. Most of these verses include four elements: (1) the phrase "you have heard that it was said"; (2) a reference to Israel under the old covenant, "the people long ago"; (3) Jesus's contrasting message introduced by "but I tell you"; and (4) the new ethic for true Israel under the new covenant ("you [all]").

The Gospel of Matthew

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

Matthew 5:21-22: “ <i>You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you . . .</i> ”	Exodus 20:13 // Deuteronomy 5:17
Matthew 5:27-28: “ <i>You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you . . .</i> ”	Exodus 20:14 // Deuteronomy 5:18
Matthew 5:31-32: “ <i>It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you . . .</i> ”	Deuteronomy 24:1-4
Matthew 5:33-34: “ <i>Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ But I tell you . . .</i> ”	Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21
Matthew 5:38-39: “ <i>You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you . . .</i> ”	Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21
Matthew 5:43-44: “ <i>You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you . . .</i> ”	Leviticus 19:18

All these examples set the standard for how the people of God relate to one another within the covenant community in the new age. Radical devotion characterizes the people of the new age. If believers walk according to Jesus’s ethics, then the world will observe their “good deeds” and, in turn, “praise” their “Father in heaven” (5:16). This is precisely God’s intention, as he outlined in Exodus 19:6: “You [Israel] will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” True followers of Jesus will indeed bless creation, multiply in it, and mediate God’s presence (see Gen. 1:28).

Participation in the New Temple (6:1-18)

One tangible expression of life in the kingdom is, as we have already seen, a concern for one’s neighbor (5:21-47). But the Sermon on the Mount never loses sight of the ultimate aim—pleasing God and not currying favor from individuals. What is also striking about the Sermon on the Mount is the personal devotion that believers enjoy with God as the end-time temple. While the OT certainly indicates that a remnant of Israelites were devoted to the Lord on an individual and personal level (e.g., Ps. 119), the intimacy that we discover here in the Sermon on the Mount is nearly without precedent. For example, the phrase “your Father” (with singular and plural words for “your”) occurs fifteen times in the sermon! The rich themes of almsgiving, prayer, forgiveness, and fasting that are taken up here are bound up with the believers’ identity as the eschatological dwelling place of God.