



# Matthew

I Will Build My Church

BY JEFF REED

A 9-SESSION STUDY FOR DIALOGUE IN  
COMMUNITY AROUND THE SCRIPTURES



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# THE INTENTION OF MATTHEW 1

Having completed our study of the first Gospel written, Mark, we now turn our attention to Matthew's Gospel. There is strong evidence that Matthew built on Mark's Gospel, and thus built on his intent as well. Matthew is a considerably larger Gospel. It provides a strong set of proofs to the churches by connecting the story of the Old Testament with what happened over the last 30 or so years since Jesus' death. It shows it was consistent with God's unfolding plan, even though the Church itself was not previously revealed. Matthew essentially keeps the kerygmatic narrative framework used by Mark, but deepens the argument greatly with his five theological treatises that shape the backbone of his argument.

In this session we will focus on Matthew's intent in compiling his Gospel. His intent will build on Mark's intent, which is rooted in the overall intention of the Gospels we identified in book 1 of this series: *From Jesus to the Gospels*. Our particular focus will be an overview of the five narrative–discourses and how they fill out the intent of Matthew and shape his unique contribution to stabilizing the churches.



## Study the Scriptures

READ THE PASSAGE: MATTHEW

### Think Through the Questions:

1. What was stated in the prologue (chapters 1 and 2) about Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament story? What does this tell us, generally, about Matthew's intention in writing?
2. In light of what we know about the kerygma (the proclamation of the good news) from Peter's sermons in Acts and in statements in the Apostles' letters to the churches, in what sense is the framework of Matthew structured as a big kerygmatic document? In what sense is the storyline kerygmatic?
3. How do the five major narrative–discourses in Matthew (chapters 3–25) build on Mark's Gospel and strengthen the churches' commitment to remain with the gospel that the Apostles delivered to them? How does the extensive use of Old Testament Scriptures strengthen the argument?

4. How might Matthew be written with the intention of stabilizing Jewish churches in the gospel story, while at the same time be written to be circulated broadly among all the churches?

### **Summarize the Core Teaching of the Passage:**

Write a paragraph below that summarizes Matthew's intention in writing his Gospel and how he accomplished that intention in the way he shaped the story. Give attention to the kerygmatic shape of his Gospel and the contributions of the five narrative-discourses to his intent.

Record your summary here.



## **Consult the Scholars**

The following comments are designed to help you better understand the passage and to stimulate your thinking on the implications of the teaching.

### **Read and Reflect on this Brief Commentary on the Intention of Matthew.**

The first thing to notice is that Matthew uses the same kerygmatic narrative framework as Mark. Again, this is demonstrated in Burr ridge's work *What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography*. In it we see the book of Matthew taking the shape of a Greco-Roman biography, but also the shape of a kerygma story. Burr ridge's outline is as follows:

| Chapters    | Topic                                 |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1–2         | Prologue and Infancy                  |
| 3–4         | Preparation and beginnings            |
| 5–7         | Sermon on the Mount                   |
| 8–9         | Ministry                              |
| 10–11:1     | Mission of disciples                  |
| 11:2–16     | Ministry and conflict                 |
| 13:1–52     | Parables of the Kingdom               |
| 13:53–17:27 | Ministry and Peter’s confession       |
| 18          | Christian community                   |
| 19–23       | Journey to Jerusalem                  |
| 24–25       | Eschatology                           |
| 26–28       | Last Supper, Passion and Resurrection |

The prologue (1–2) and the Last Supper, Passion, and Resurrection (26–28) provide the “kerygmatic” framework of the Gospel genre, sort of the bookends. All this means that Matthew also (as did Mark) viewed his Gospel as an expansion of the formulaic-like kerygmatic statement delivered by the Apostles to the churches. And his Gospel was a tool to stabilize the churches in the gospel at a time of great transition. Peter and Paul had exited the scene, the churches were emerging completely from Judaism, and Israel was heading for judgment. So building on the intention statement for the Gospels and Mark in books one and two of this series, Matthew’s intention statement looks something like this:

To write a Gospel, building on Mark’s Gospel, intended to further stabilize Peter’s Jewish network of churches by building a powerful theological treatise, binding the kerygma story and the building of Christ’s Church to the Jewish Scriptures,

Maintaining Mark’s “kerygmatic” structure, as seen in Greco-Roman “bios” literary style, but organizing his argument around five discourses, preceded by a narrative that sets the stage for interpreting each discourse.

As mentioned above, Matthew “bookends” his narrative–discourses, which serve as the theological core of his Gospel, with the prologue (chapters 1–2) and the death, burial, and resurrection (chapters 26–28). We are going to focus on the narrative–discourses, but first a couple of comments are needed. In the prologue, Matthew quotes two Minor Prophets and two Major Prophets. In the final section, he quotes 4–5 times from the Old Testament—the Prophets and the Psalms—again stating things happened the way they did so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled. This again means that the gospel—the kerygmatic statements as demonstrated in Matthew’s kerygmatic narrative—is rooted in the metanarrative of the Old Testament.

“This happened in order to fulfill what has been said...”

- Birth narrative: 1:18, 22–23; 2:5–6, 15–17, 23
- Passion narrative: 21:4; 26:56; 27:9
- In between: 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14

Now let’s look at the five narrative–discourses. The summaries of these are adapted from two different authors: L. Michael White<sup>1</sup> and Raymond Brown.<sup>2</sup> In each of the discourses, the narrative raises many of the issues that the sermon or discourse then addresses. In this way, Matthew gives a greater apologetic for the good news, the kerygma story, delivered to the churches. Each narrative–discourse ends with the phrase “when Jesus had finished.”

**Discourse 1:** (3:1–7:29)

Narrative: John the Baptist and Jesus came proclaiming a message, “Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand”—the Sermon is the message. (3:1–4:25)

Sermon: Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:27)

Marker: <sup>28</sup>“Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, <sup>29</sup>for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.” 7:28–29

**Discourse 2:** Galilee (8:1–10:42)

Narrative: Narrative mixed with short dialogue: The sick need mercy and will repent; it is very difficult for those needing a physician—illustrating why He gives his mission instructions as He does (8:1–9:38).

Sermon: Mission Instructions (10:5–42)

Marker: “Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities.” 11:1

**Discourse 3:** Galilee (11:1–13:58)

Narrative: Narrative setting for teaching and dialogue: The narrative shows that the Kingdom will grow among the Gentiles, which will be the locus of his new family. Isaiah says that this Servant will proclaim the message to the Gentiles (11:1–12:50).

Sermon: Parables of the Kingdom (13:1–52)

Marker: “When Jesus had finished these parables, He left that place.” 13:53

**Discourse 4:** Beyond Galilee (13:53–18:35)

Narrative: Narrative mixed with much dialogue: Rejection and the cross are

experienced and predicted, leading to the discourse that repentance and forgiveness of everyone is the key foundation to the new community (13:53–17:27).

Sermon: Repentance and Forgiveness in the Church (18:1–35)

Marker: “When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.” 19:1

**Discourse 5:** Judea (19:1–25:46)

Narrative: Narrative mixed with much dialogue: The narrative shows the reasons for the judgment on the nation of Israel, lamenting over Jerusalem, and why he has turned to a global invitation of the Gentiles (19:1–23:39).

Sermon: Judgment on Jerusalem, Israel, and the Nations (24:1–25:46)

Marker: “When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” 26:1–2

Several things should be noted about these narrative–discourses. Matthew established a consistent pattern. First there is a narrative. Then there is a sermon. And finally a marker—a transition verse that includes the phrase “when Jesus had finished.”

In addition, you can see a progression of dialogue in the narrative:

- Narrative (1)
- Narrative mixed with short dialogue (2)
- Narrative setting for teaching and dialogue (3)
- Narrative mixed with much dialogue (4 & 5)

There is also a progression in the discourses:

Narrow path into the kingdom  
Spreading the message throughout Israel  
Future growth of the kingdom amongst the Gentiles  
Rejection and the cross predicted  
Coming judgment on Israel

This is his theological argument, across the narratives and five theological treatises.

What, then, was the main contribution of Matthew’s Gospel to the churches? In what way were they stabilized? They were given a huge body of truth validating the gospel they had received from the Apostles.

- Everything that happened is rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures and predicted by the prophets.



- The invitation into the kingdom is by faith, child-like faith.
- The kingdom was predicted to grow among the Gentiles.
- Jesus would be rejected and rise again.
- Israel would be judged.

In the next two sessions we will look in depth at two of these sermons—the two that are the most famous—the Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet discourse.


## Read and Reflect on Key Quotes.

The following quote is taken from Helmut Koester's *Introduction to the New Testament*.<sup>3</sup>

“The Gospel of Mark was designed to unify various churches and their traditions, a legacy Matthew further developed. Mark, in creating the genre of the Gospel, endeavored to unify conflicting traditions of a divided Syrian Christianity. Matthew’s design is even more ecumenical and fully exploits the potential ecclesiastical unification provided by the genre of the Gospel: Jesus’ life, teaching, ministry and suffering should become the canon of a universal church.

“Although Matthew used the framework of the Gospel of Mark, the composition and outline of his Gospel differ fundamentally. The passion narrative no longer dominates, and the ministry of Jesus is more than a prelude to the passion. As Matthew begins his Gospel with the narrative of Jesus’ birth, the stories of Jesus’ birth and death become the external framework for his ministry. The ministry is highlighted as a teaching ministry, which thus becomes the foundation of the church. There is less emphasis on Jesus’ miracle-working activity in favor of his teaching, which Matthew presents essentially, but not exclusively, in five major discourses.

“At the same time, Matthew maintains the biographical framework and even enlarges it, beginning with the genealogy of Jesus, which makes him a true son of Abraham (Jesus is truly from Israel), and with the birth narrative, which Matthew binds closely into the Scriptures of Israel. The hermeneutical principle that Matthew uses here is drawn from an apologetic scheme, which argues that the divinity of an event can be demonstrated by its agreement with ancient predictions divine oracles.... The scriptural texts quoted with this formula are not drawn from the Septuagint, but are the result of people who knew both Greek and Hebrew, the “School of St. Matthew.” Such scholarly endeavors may have played some role in the controversy with learned rabbis, but they are primarily addressed to the pagan world in order to show that Jesus’ birth, ministry and death belong to a comprehensive eschatological plan of God that is documented in Israel’s Scriptures and is now fulfilled and has become a message that concerns all nations. As the gospel is thus bound to the Scriptures....<sup>3</sup>



Record any insights from the brief commentary and quotes.



## Think Through the Issues

The Gospel of Matthew builds on and strengthens Mark's defense of all that has happened to the churches between Jesus' ministry and the writing of these Gospels. Matthew strengthens Mark's argument by rooting it far more deeply in the Old Testament, showing how all the things that transpired were actually prophesied in the Old Testament. The more we master his arguments—his sermons—the more rooted we will be in the amazing power of the gospel story, the good news, and the more we will be able to understand and communicate the gospel.

We will look more in depth at Matthew's sermons over the next few sessions. But for now, with just an overview "grasp" of Matthew's intention for writing his Gospel, what are your thoughts about how this Gospel is to be used by the churches? Explore how Matthew's Gospel might be misused by churches and believers today, if they do not understand Matthew's intention in writing. Reflect on the value of mastering this Gospel and explore how it can be powerfully used for and by churches today.

**ISSUE:** The value of Matthew's eyewitness-based account

### Think Through the Issue Before Discussion:

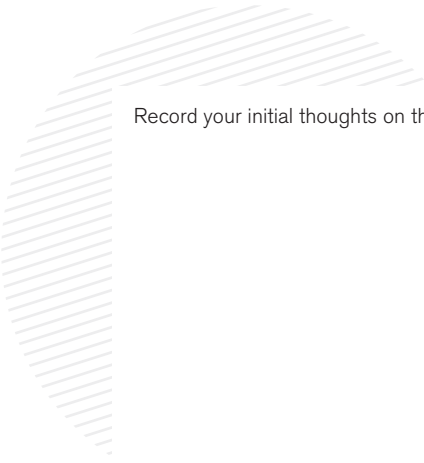
1. What is the value of Matthew's eyewitness-based account as the second authoritative account of the Jesus story? What was its value to the community of Jewish churches?

2. What is its on-going value to churches everywhere?
3. How do we use the Gospel of Matthew today, in ways other than how it was intended?  
How is it misused in the Church at large?
4. How can we take full advantage of its value to us as churches today? within our movement of churches? in our individual lives?



Record your initial thoughts on the issue before discussion.

**Discuss the Issue in Your Small Group.**



Record your initial thoughts on the issue after discussion.



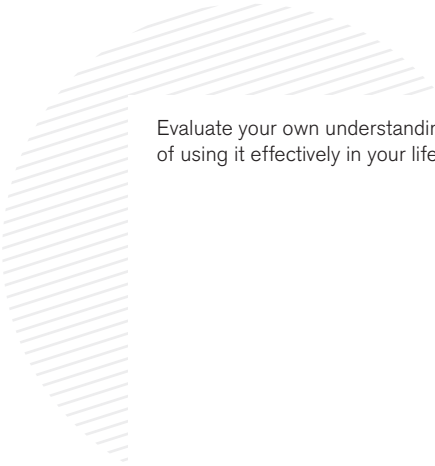
## Apply the Principles

It is now time to respond to what you have studied and discussed. Take your time on this section.

**Think Back Through the First Three Steps.**

**Design an Application for Your Life.**

Think through Matthew's intention in writing his Gospel, as studied in this session, and reflect on its value. How can it be used more fully in your life and ministry? What do you need to do to ensure you and your church are using it correctly?



Evaluate your own understanding and how you value Matthew. List how to get to the point of using it effectively in your life and ministry.