

Theology of the Gospel of Matthew

As we commented on “Theology of the book of Genesis,” in that respective commentary, it is also possible to know the “theology” of the gospel of Matthew. We begin by asking what 1:1 teaches. Then we add 1:2, modifying any understanding we may have gained from 1:1. If we do that consistently and logically and contextually, then by the time we reach 28:20, we will have an understanding of the whole book. Furthermore, if we add the “Theology of the Gospel of Mark” to this chapter, and then “Theology of the Gospel of Luke,” and so forth, we will have a good understanding of the theology of the entire New Testament. Additionally, if we were to do the same thing for each book of the Old Testament, we would have a comprehensive “theology of the Old Testament” and, combined with that of the New Testament, we would consummate our study with a comprehensive “Theology of the Whole Bible.” That is our goal.

We recognize that Matthew did not write his account of the life of Christ in order to be presented as a theological essay. Nor did he write in the Greek terms of the thematic study which we will present. However, whatever Matthew wrote about the Holy Spirit can certainly be compiled together into one study under the rubric of “Pneumatology.” The same can be done for each of the sections under their respective titles which we have designated below. We will use the same theological terms for Matthew’s theology which we used for the “Theology of Genesis.”

Theology:

An argument could be made that God is the overall theme of the book of Matthew. Indeed “God” is found 51 times in the book in addition to other designations. Yet He is not specially mentioned until 1:23 as Matthew writes that Jesus’ nature is summarized in the name “Emmanuel,” which means “God with us.”

God has a relationship with the people of Israel, the children of Abraham (3:9), but John threatens Israel that that relationship is on the verge of ending. In contrast, the voice of God speaks His approval of His Son in 3:17.

Jesus identifies God as “Father” of His followers for the first time in 5:16, 45, 48; see also 6:1, 4, 6, 8-9, 14-15, 18, 26, 32; 7:11, 21; 10:20, 29, 32-33; 11:25-27; 12:50; 13:43; 15:13; 16:17, 27; 18:10, 14, 19, 35; 20:23; 23:9; 24:36; 25:34; 26:29, 39, 42, 53; 28:19. God was identified as “Father” of the nation of Israel and the kings, in the OT, but not of individual Israelites. This will be a new concept in the ministry of Jesus, illustrated by the number of times God is identified as “Father” in the gospel. In 5:48, Jesus states that the “heavenly Father” is the standard of holiness to which we ought to pattern our behavior.

Out of the 102 times “Father / father” is used in the NT, it appears that 57 of those are referring to earthly fathers. The other 45 times refer to God, the Father of Jesus Christ. Humans are to glorify the Father (5:16) and the Father will reveal His glory one day (16:27). He is good (5:45; 7:11), holy (5:48; 6:9), omniscient (6:8; 24:36). He gives rewards (6:1, 4, 6, 18). We are to pray to Him (6:6; 18:19) and He forgives (6:14-15; 18:35). He cares for His creation (6:26; 10:29) as well as humans (6:32; 18:10, 14; 26:53). Man is to obey the Father (7:21; 12:50). Man is to confess Him (10:32) or He will deny man (10:33). The Father reveals Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ (11:25-27; 16:17). He has a kingdom (13:43; 25:34; 26:29); see further under “Community.” He is sovereign (20:23; 26:39, 42). There is only one Father, the One in heaven (23:9). Mankind is to be baptized in the name of the Father (28:19).

The Father is referred to as the “God of Israel” once, in 15:31. The wrath of God is pictured in several passages: 3:7-12; 15:13; 18:35; 21:41; 22:7; 23:31-33. God is powerful enough to bring about the resurrection of the dead (22:29). God is the “God of the living” (22:32).

God sits on a throne in heaven (5:34; 23:22) and Jesus sits on His throne (19:28; 25:31). This picture shows their sovereignty and their authority (see also 28:18). It also shows their equality. There are many pictures of Jehovah God from the OT which Jesus takes over (or

Matthew applies to Him) in the Gospel. For example, in the OT, Jehovah is the bridegroom for Israel (Isa. 54:5-6; 62:5; Jer. 3:14; Hosea 2:16-20). In Matthew 9:15, Jesus is the bridegroom. In the OT, Jehovah God is the “healer” (Exo. 15:26); in Matthew 9:12-13, Jesus is the Great Physician. “Shepherd” is one of the oldest designations for Jehovah God (Gen. 48:15; 49:24). For Jesus to identify Himself as Israel’s Shepherd (9:36; as He does extensively in John 10) shows that He set Himself equal with Jehovah God.

Pneumatology:

The first mention of the Holy Spirit is in 1:18, 20 at the birth announcement of Jesus the Messiah. Mary was with child “by the Holy Spirit.” While we would like to know *exactly* what role the Spirit served in this pregnancy, no biblical writer gives the details. The Holy Spirit, John says, will baptize followers of Christ (3:11) and He descends on Jesus after He comes up from the waters of baptism (3:16). There, He is identified as the “Spirit of God.” He will be thus designated again in 12:28.

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, to be tempted by the Devil (4:1). Matthew writes in 12:18 that Isaiah (42:1) prophesied the Spirit would empower the Messiah. Jesus cast out demons by the Spirit of God according to 12:28. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (12:31-32).

The Spirit of God led King David to write his psalms (22:43). That same Spirit would guide the apostles in their preaching and teaching (10:20). Those who desire to be disciples of Christ will be baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit (28:19-20).

Anthropology:

In this section, we will specifically deal with the ethics which God expects of man. The first ethical description in Matthew is found in the description of Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, as being “righteous” (1:19). This indicates that someone is in a right relationship with God; for Joseph, it would mean that he followed the OT Law of Moses as closely as he possibly could. The plan of God to bring about righteousness finds its consummation in the ministry and sacrifice of Jesus Christ (3:15).

The sermon on the mount sets out major themes in interpersonal behavior which Jesus will further discuss later in His ministry. Here, we simply present those themes and specific passages where Jesus discusses them.

Humility is discussed at: 5:3; 18:4; 19:30; 20:16. Humility is at the heart of the controversy over where James and John might sit in the kingdom of the Messiah: 18:1-5; 20:20-28; 26:23-35. Among the many ways Jesus illustrated humility, as the king, He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey rather than a stallion (21:5). In His lengthy rebuke of the Jewish leaders (chapter 23), Jesus begins by criticizing the leaders’ pride (23:1-12). As He did in discussing prayer in 6:5-8, in 23:14, Jesus criticized praying to be seen by men.

Spiritual sensitivity is discussed at: 5:4, 6. This sensitivity comes in different ways: 23:23-24. Gentleness is discussed at: 5:5, 5:38-42. Mercy is discussed at: 5:7. Spiritual purity is discussed at: 5:8. Peacemaking is discussed at: 5:9, 21-26. In this latter passage, “peacemaking” is associated with controlling one’s anger. “Revenge” is the opposite of peacemaking and it is discussed at 5:38-42.

Jesus’ followers will be persecuted: 5:10-12; 10:17-18, 23, 34-36. A righteous influence is discussed at: 5:13-16; 13:33. Sexual ethics are discussed in 5:27-30; marriage and divorce at 5:31-32 and 19:1-9. See also the account of John’s imprisonment for preaching against the marriage and divorce of King Herod (14:4). Prostitutes could repent of their behavior and enter the kingdom of heaven (21:31-32).

Honesty, integrity, and the making of vows is discussed at 5:33-37; 23:16-22. Related to this, Jesus frequently denounces the hypocrisy of His audience, specifically the religious leaders: 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 15:7; 22:18; 23:13-15, 23, 25-26, 27-28, 29; 24:51. Attitudes and behavior toward one’s enemies is found at 5:43-48.

Acts of righteousness should be done privately, with the purpose to serve others and to glorify God (6:1). Jesus specifically mentions three acts: giving to help others (6:2-4), prayer (6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18). Jesus discusses the new covenant and its relationship to fasting in 9:14-17. Forgiveness is an important topic to Jesus: 6:14-15; 18:21-35. Improper judging is a topic in 7:1-5. The golden rule, of course, is the heart of the Christian's relationship with others: 7:12.

Jesus alludes to some type of "reward" which will be awaiting His disciples for their faithfulness (6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18; see also 10:41-42; 20:8). The idea is further considered below under "Eschatology."

An "ethics of material possessions" is found in the ministry of Jesus. A part of living a righteous life is to keep one's priorities in order, which Jesus teaches in 6:19-23. One's relationship with material possessions or money is a topic of discussion in 6:24. Because man lives in a physical world, it is easy for him to focus on this material world and worry when he doesn't have the material possessions he feels he needs. Jesus deals with this in 6:25-34. Obedience, not material wealth, will be key to man's response to Jesus Christ: 7:23-27. It is important to God that those who are poor, materially, have the gospel preached to them (11:5). The role of material possessions in our lives is the theme of the conversation between Jesus and the rich ruler in 19:16-22. The Pharisees ask Jesus the question about paying taxes to Caesar or not, to which Jesus responded with an answer reflecting the proper priorities in life: 22:15-22. The disciples criticized the woman who anointed Jesus for His burial (26:6-13) because the myrrh could have been sold and given to the poor.

While Jesus does not forbid His followers from becoming wealthy (10:10), He frequently warns that material wealth should not be the focus of His followers' lives. When He sends out the twelve, He challenges them to live simply (10:9-10). Wealth can choke the word of God from one's heart so that he becomes unfruitful (13:22).

Mankind is also warned about the use of their words in 12:31-32, 34-37.

Soteriology:

Jesus came to save His people from their sins (1:21). The verb "to save" is found 16 times in the Gospel; three times it clearly refers to physical healing (9:21-22). The other times it seems to refer either to escape from physical harm (8:25; 14:30; 16:25; 27:40, 42, 49) or freedom from sin: 10:22; 18:11; 19:25; 24:13, 22.

Because man is in sin, he needs to change his heart about sinning so that his sinful behavior will stop. This is repentance: 3:2, 8, 11; 4:17; 11:20-21; 12:41. Sin originates in the heart: 15:19-20. There is an illustration of the meaning of repentance found in the parable of 21:28-32. In that passage, Jesus says that "remorse" precedes a change of behavior.

John's preaching had as its substance "repentance" (3:2, 8, 10-11). God expected Israel to stop living unrighteous lives and begin living righteous lives. In that context, "righteousness" would have been defined by the Law of Moses. "Repentance" is distinguished from "bearing fruit" in 3:8. The former takes place in the mind; the latter, in the outward behavior. Consequently, God expected Israel to change its behavior. In fact, Jesus expects the righteousness of His followers to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes (5:20).

Baptism serves a role in the response to the gospel preached by John (3:6-7) and it will continue a role in the ministry of Jesus Christ (3:11). Jesus subsequently begins His ministry with baptism (3:13-17). Baptism will not be mentioned again after this context until Jesus commands His followers to baptize in 28:19. It is clear from this latter text that baptism is a required part of becoming a disciple of Christ.

One of the fundamental responses God requires from man is "fear." Jesus warns His followers not to fear humanity (10:26-31) but rather, fear Him (10:28). Another response required by Jesus is confession of Him before men (10:32-33). Still another response Jesus expects from mankind is to hear what He says (7:24, 26; 11:15; 13:9). Man must also understand what hears (13:13-15; 19, 23, 51; 15:10, 17; 16:9, 11-12; 17:13; 24:15).

In one of the most famous texts from the New Testament, Jesus points out that man's greatest allegiance and deepest commitments need to be toward Jehovah God. Man must love Him supremely, with all of His being (22:34-38), if he wants to be saved.

Satanology:

The first mention of "Satan" in the New Testament, in Matthew, is at 4:1. In this text, he is referred to as the "devil" (4:1, 5, 8, 11), the "tempter" (4:1, 3; the same description is used of others in 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35), and "Satan" (4:10; 12:26; and used of Peter in 16:23). It is clear in the temptations that Satan is trying to put doubt in the Lord's mind that He is not the "Son of God" as the Father had just announced from heaven (3:17). Yet, in each temptation, Satan failed. He will try throughout the life of Christ and, thankfully, he will fail each time. Judas will confess Jesus' righteous nature (27:4), as will Governor Pilate (27:24).

The devil sows bad seed among the good seed (13:39). Hell (see "Eschatology" below) is prepared for the devil and his angels (25:41). False teachers and false prophets are a major component of Jesus' warning in His ministry: 7:13-23; 16:5-12; 23:1-3.

Demons are found first in Matthew at 4:24. They are mentioned also at 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22. It is clear these demons are "spirits," from the unseen world. They are referred to also as "unclean" spirits. Jesus could cast out demons simply by the power of His Word (8:8, 16), without any rituals or incantations (see also 7:22; 10:8; 11:18). In the extensive exorcism in 8:28-34, we learn that there was coming a time of torment for the demons, which they hoped to avoid (8:29). We learn that they knew of Jesus' divine nature also. We learn that they *can* inhabit also the body of pigs from that account, but we should not necessarily draw the conclusion that they *must* inhabit the body of a sentient being. That is not a necessary conclusion.

The Pharisees, inexplicably, accuse Jesus of exorcising demons through power of Satan (9:34), which He will refute strongly in 12:25-29. Some of the Jews were beginning to refer to Jesus as "Beelzebul," the ruler of the demons (10:25; 12:24). In the context of chapter 12, Jesus argues that since He is able to cast out demons, two conclusions result: 1) The kingdom of God is near to being established; 2) Jesus is stronger than Satan. He will also exorcise a demon in 17:14-21.

Hamartiology:

The first time "sin" is mentioned in Matthew is in 1:21 related to the announcement of Jesus' birth: "He will save His people from their sins." This word for sins (which gives us the word "hamartiology") is used at 1:21; 3:6; 9:2, 5-6; 12:31; 26:28. Clearly, the Jews were lost in their sins and needed salvation from those sins. It is also evident that a primary, if not the primary, reason Jesus was born has to do with saving from sins (18:11). Sin is behavior which God has not authorized: 7:23; 13:41; 23:28; 24:12. The Greek word "evil" is found 26 times in the Gospel of Matthew.

John informs his audience that the wrath of God is coming (3:7). That is the motivation to change one's mind in order to change one's behavior. The doctrine of an eternal punishment ("hell") is also being revealed in the teachings of John (3:10, 12) and of Jesus (see "Eschatology" below). Jesus' preaching largely echoed John's message (4:17).

In His temptations, Jesus makes a definitive statement that man cannot succeed spiritually unless he lives by every word from the mouth of God (4:4), quoting God Himself in Deuteronomy 8:3 Jesus will focus on that word throughout His life as He directs men and women back to the written word of God: 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31.

Christology:

"Jesus" (used 152 times in Matthew) is the first personal name recorded by Matthew in his gospel, which is appropriate since the book is about Jesus. His human name is given by the angel in 1:21 as "Jesus." This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Joshua, which is related to the word for "salvation" or the verb "to save." Hence, He is named Jesus "for He will

save His people from their sins" (1:21). Jesus is identified as the "carpenter's Son" in 13:55, with His half-siblings listed.

Subsequently, Matthew identifies Him as "the Messiah," the Greek translation being "Christ." He is so identified 16 times. This will be a major theme throughout the book, to illustrate what it means to be the "son of Abraham, the son of David." After 1:1, the next time "Messiah" ("Christ") will be used is in verses 16-18 where the direction of history is presented as leading up to the "Messiah." His birth was of special significance.

"Son of David," is used 10 times throughout Matthew (9:27; once of His father, Joseph, in 1:20; 12:23; 15:22 [where it is found in the mouth of a Gentile]; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42), the last being in the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees about its significance. The crowds at His entry into Jerusalem in 21:1-11 hailed Him as the "Son of David" (ver. 9).

The first chapter, first verse, is the only time "son of Abraham" is used in Matthew. However, the first expression in the book, "the book of the generation," ties Matthew closely to the book of Genesis where Abraham's life is recounted. After a series of questions the religious leaders ask Jesus, He silences them in 22:41-46 when He asks them who "the Son of David," based on Psalm 110:1. How could He be David's "Lord" if He is also His Son? Jesus' life answered the question, which the leaders refused to accept. In this text, we see that "Christ" is a synonym for "Son of David," which is equivalent to "Lord." Also, in 16:13-16, we see that "Son of Man" is equivalent to "Christ," which is equivalent to "Son of God."

The first fifteen verses will set Jesus the Messiah in the context of human history (generally) and Jewish history (specifically), most of which is detailed in our Old Testaments. Matthew is firmly placing Jesus in the lineage of "Father" Abraham.

Jesus implies He is a prophet in 13:57 and this fact is acknowledged by certain individuals: 16:14; 21:11, 46. This is significant, understanding that the Jews recognized that the act of prophesying had come to an end during the days of Nehemiah and Malachi. For both John and Jesus to be accepted as prophets implied the Jews recognized that God was again speaking from heaven, after He had been silent for nearly 400 years.

A prominent theme which will run throughout the gospel of Matthew has its hint in the designation "son of David" as David was "the king" (1:6). David will be mentioned 17 times in Matthew and Jesus will find Himself closely linked to David. He will be identified as "king" (used 22 times) and He will be associated with the establishment of a "kingdom" (56 times). The wise men identify Him as "king of the Jews" in 2:2 (see also the accusation at His trial: 27:29, 37, 42). They believed He deserved to be worshipped. In their case, the worship consisted of giving (2:11). In that very text, Jesus is identified as: King of the Jews (ver. 2), Messiah (ver. 4), Ruler (ver. 6), and Shepherd (ver. 6). Three of the four (not "Messiah") were designations of Jehovah God in the OT. His "triumphant entry" into Jerusalem in 21:1-11 pictures Him as the King. When He was asked at His trial if He was king (27:11), He responded affirmatively.

Jesus is identified and acknowledged by the Father as the Son of God in 3:17, an affirmation which will be questioned by the Tempter in 4:3, 6. Demons will confess His Sonship in 8:29 while the high priest will question it (26:63). Peter verbalizes his confidence in the Sonship of Jesus in 16:16. Subsequently, the Jews at the foot of the cross will doubt His Sonship in 27:40-43. Yet, as if in confirmation of Matthew's gospel, a centurion (Gentile) will confess the Sonship of Jesus in 27:54.

Jesus' ministry is summarized in 4:23 with the use of three participles: teaching, proclaiming, and healing. It is through His healing that He shows the Father is behind His work and His words, which gives the Jews reason to believe what He is preaching. Jesus taught publicly and privately (4:24-25). Jesus cites Isaiah 35:5-6 in 11:4-6 in reference to His miracles as confirmation that He is the Christ, the Messiah.

Matthew's gospel shows the divine nature of Jesus, the Son of God (1:21-23; 3:17). Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke with an exalted authority, not as humans teach (7:28-29). Jesus, while not claiming the right to act as a priest (since He was from the tribe of Judah rather than that of Levi), declared a leper clean (8:3), by healing Him. In that way, Jesus identified Himself with the "Healer of Israel" (Exo. 15:26), implicitly making Himself equal

with God. This point is made throughout the gospel; He forgives sin (9:2, 6), which only God can do.

Among the designations of Jesus found in Matthew are “Teacher” (8:19; 9:11; 22:16, 24, 36) and “Son of Man” (8:20; 9:6) which ties Jesus into the prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14. This latter designation for Jesus is used 31 times in the gospel of Matthew. In fact, we should probably read the Gospel of Matthew in light of Daniel’s vision of 7:13-14. Daniel sees that the Messiah will establish a kingdom during the days of the Roman Empire (2:44-45; 7:13-14). One “like” a “Son of Man” would go to the “Ancient of Days” and receive authority and a universal (not just Jewish) kingdom. Consequently, there are three words or phrases from Daniel 7:13-14 that should be highlighted as one reads Matthew: “Son of Man,” “authority,” and “Kingdom.”

Jesus spoke with authority (7:29) and forgave sins with authority (9:5-6). His authority came from God the Father (21:23-27), and after the resurrection, He was given all authority (28:18). Jesus identifies Himself as “Son of Man” very frequently and it is notable that the “Son of Man” casts out demons by the Spirit of God, which showed that the “kingdom of God” was near (12:28). Additionally, a Gentile woman acknowledges that Jesus is the “Son of David” (15:22), which is a foretaste of the universal nature of His kingdom. Also, the blind men acknowledge He is “Son of David,” as He heals them, fulfilling the picture of the Messiah from Isaiah 35:5-6 (20:29-34). For more on the “Kingdom” and its universal nature, see below under “Community.”

Another way in which Jesus identified Himself with Jehovah of the OT is when He identifies Himself as the “bridegroom” (9:15). It was God who was the “bridegroom” of Israel during the OT. See comments at 9:14-17. Equating Jesus with God continues in 9:36-37 when He identified Himself as the “Shepherd” of Israel.

Jesus has a special, unique relationship with the Father such that only the Son truly knows the Father and only the Father intimately knows the Son (11:27). For this reason, only the Son can reveal the Father. Jesus sets Himself equal to Jehovah God in 12:6 when He states that He is greater than the temple and that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” (12:8). He shows Himself the Lord of the temple when He drives out the money changers and specifically refers to the temple as “His house” (21:13).

Jesus was often moved with emotions relative to the plight of human beings. For example, He felt compassion on others: 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34. As He was able to predict the future, notably His own death by crucifixion, burial, and resurrection (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19) as well as the destruction of Jerusalem (chapter 23), but including other events such as the fish with the money in its mouth (17:24-27), He showed Himself to be divine. Among the things Jesus prophesied were the end of the world (5:18; 24:35) and the destruction of Jerusalem (24:2, 15-34). He also predicted the disciples would be scattered (26:31, 56) and that before the rooster would crow, Peter would deny Jesus three times (26:34, 69-75). The woman with the alabaster vial prepared Jesus’ body for burial (26:6-13). It is ironic that the prediction of His resurrection motivated the Jewish leaders to get permission from Governor Pilate to seal the tomb (27:62-66). That request gives stronger affirmation to the resurrection. The angel at the empty tomb will refer to Jesus’ predictions (28:6).

Jesus (and Matthew) will teach that He is the offering for sin on behalf of others (1:21; 8:17; 12:18-21; 20:28). This idea fulfills one of the pictures of the Suffering Servant from Isaiah 43:3-4; 52:13-53:12. Jesus’ commitment to live the truth and teach the truth was recognized toward the end of His life in 22:16. He would be crucified for testifying to the truth; He was the Son of God (26:63-66). Pilate’s wife testified that He was righteous (27:19) and Pilate would testify that Jesus was innocent (27:24).

Angelology:

The first mention of an angel in the book of Matthew is at the birth of Jesus, in 1:20, 24. In this case, the angel was a messenger of God who appeared to Joseph in a dream, announcing the pregnancy of his fiancé, Mary. Angels were further messengers to Joseph in 2:13 and 2:19.

Angels are found in a promise from God, which Satan quotes at 4:6, which is found in Psalm 91:11-12. However, Jesus shows that a “universal” application of the promise from Psalm 91 can be limited by other passages, such as Deuteronomy 6:16. Angels were sent to minister directly to Jesus following His temptations (4:11).

The Greek word for “angel” is used for human messengers once, at 11:10. Angels will be involved, in some way, in the harvest of the final judgment: 13:39, 41, 49; 16:27; 25:31.

Little children have some type of “angel” or messenger who is present before the face of the Heavenly Father, according to 18:10. The Sadducees denied the existence of angels but Jesus corrects their mistaken view: 22:23-33. In that text, Jesus suggests that the nature of humans after death will be similar to the nature of angels (22:30).

Angels will provide for God’s followers (24:31), but they are not omniscient (24:36). The devil has his “angels” (25:41); see above under “Satanology.” Angels were prepared to serve Christ in 26:53. An angel of the Lord was present at the empty tomb and is the first to declare the resurrection of Christ (28:5-6).

Worship:

The wise men desire to worship the “King of the Jews,” which they do when He is an infant (2:2, 8, 11). The next act of worship mentioned in Matthew is the preaching of John the baptizer (3:1). Clearly, God intends for His message to be proclaimed publicly with an assembled audience.

Prayer on behalf of someone else is mentioned for the first time at 5:44. Jesus teaches His disciples should pray for their enemies. Jesus gives an extended discussion of prayer in the sermon on the mount (6:5-15). Persistence in prayer is discussed in 7:7-11. Jesus prays in 14:23. The other references to Jesus praying, the most dense concentration of the word, are found in the Garden of Gethsemane: 26:36, 39, 41-42, 44. Praying should be done believing in its power, in order for it to be answered (21:22).

The apostles worship Jesus in 14:33 after He walks on the water. Every use of the Greek word “to worship” does not carry the spiritual connotation since the word can simply mean to “bow down.” But, it is found in these contexts, which will determine (but not always) whether the individuals are worshipping Jesus or simply bowing down: 2:2, 8, 11; 4:9-10; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 18:26; 20:20; 28:9, 17.

There are two passages which portray giving thanks: 15:36; 26:27. The Lord’s Supper is instituted during the Passover Feast, recorded in 26:26-29. After this act of worship, Jesus and the apostles engaged in another act of worship, singing (26:30), before they dismissed from that place. If the earthly Jesus deserved to be worshipped, how much more does the resurrected Jesus deserve to be worshipped (28:9, 17)!

We have, then, five behaviors of worship mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew: prayer, giving, the Lord’s Supper, preaching, and singing.

Community:

The first evidence of a “community” of the Messiah is found in the angel’s message to Joseph relative to the name of Jesus: “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (1:21). At this point in Matthew’s gospel, one might expect “His people” to refer to the Jewish people whom Matthew has recorded in the first 17 verses. However, Matthew will show throughout His gospel that Jesus intended to broaden that community beyond just the Jews. Already in His genealogy in chapter 1, we see women who were non-Jews: Tamar, the Canaanite; Rahab, the Canaanite; Bathsheba, the Hittite; and Ruth, the Moabite (see the commentary for discussion). A further illustration of the universal nature of the Messiah’s new community is the desire of the wise men in chapter 2 to worship the “king of the Jews.”

Women will serve in the ministry of Jesus, appearing at various times in His life. Most significantly, perhaps, is their presence at the crucifixion (27:55-56, 61) and the empty tomb (28:1-7). They were, in fact, the first evangelists of the resurrected Savior! Jesus heals the

woman's daughter from the area of Tyre and Sidon in 15:21-28 and marvels at her faith, as He did the centurion in chapter 8. The healing of the woman's daughter is significant both for the fact that she was female as well as the fact that she was not a Jew.

As a part of his ministry, John informs Israel that God can create children out of stones (3:9) and he informs them that the "axe" of God's wrath is already at the root of the unfruitful tree (3:10). This suggests God's judgment against Israel, which is a part of the "new community" teaching which Matthew is presenting. The prophecy from Isaiah 9:1-2, fulfilled in Matthew 4:15-16, designates the area around the Sea of Galilee as "Galilee of the Gentiles," a foreshadowing of Jesus' universal mission. When Jesus heals the centurion's servant (8:5-13), Jesus explicitly commends the Gentile's faith and predicts that Gentiles will sit with the patriarchs in the "kingdom of heaven" (8:11) while the "sons of the kingdom," which would have to refer to the Jews, would be excluded from that very kingdom (8:12). This would not be a "full scale" rejection; it would only apply to those Jews who refused to "repent and believe the gospel" (cf. 4:17).

The curse of the barren fig tree (21:18-22) represents God's curse on Israel for being fruitless. The parable of the landowner in 21:33-44 pictures Israel taking care of God's vineyard, but eventually that vineyard is taken from them and given to the Gentiles. The Jewish leaders recognized that Jesus spoke the parable against them (21:45-46). The next parable, that of the wedding feast (22:1-14) also pictures the rejection of Israel and the invitation to the wedding feast opened to the Gentiles. In His last public sermons, Jesus will predict the destruction of the nation of Israel and her temple in which she put so much confidence (23:34-36), for which Jesus wept because Israel could have repented but chose not to repent (23:37-39). The extensive discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem in 24:1-34 reveals the wrath of God on the temple, Jerusalem, and Israel for their rejection of the Messiah. At the trial of Jesus, when Pilate testified that Jesus was innocent, the Jewish people accepted the guilt of His death upon themselves and their children (27:25). In contrast to the treatment of Jesus by the Jewish leaders, a pagan centurion will confess at His crucifixion (27:54) that He was the Son of God.

Not only did Jesus spend time preaching and teaching, but He also sent out His disciples to preach, originally to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:7; 15:24). As a part of that process, he also gave them miraculous powers over sicknesses and demons (10:1, 8).

Jesus begins gathering His community with the call of two sets of brothers early in His ministry: Peter and Andrew and James and John (4:18-22) and Matthew (9:9). Interpersonal relationships are important for Christ's community, as well as with those outside the community.

Matthew uses the phrase "kingdom of heaven" thirty-two times (none of the other gospel writers use this expression)¹, to refer to the Messiah's community. Its first use is in 3:2. In 8:11, as we have indicated above, Jesus clearly shows that Gentiles will be included in that kingdom, based on their response to the gospel while Jews might find themselves excluded. This broader view of the people of God fulfills the view of Isaiah the prophet from 42:1-3. The kingdom would be established during the lifetime of Jesus' audience: 16:28.

The broader community of humanity will likely turn against Jesus' followers. This warning is reiterated frequently through the ministry of Jesus: 10:21-23. The spiritual community must take precedence over one's familial community (10:37-38). Jesus even puts His own family in their place, stating that His family really composes those who do the will of the Heavenly Father (12:46-50). Due to the nature of this kingdom, it compels man to give up everything necessary to enter that kingdom (13:44-46).

Jesus introduces a new word into His religious vocabulary, "church," at 16:18; 18:17. While He usually identifies His new community as a "kingdom" (in its relationship to Him as King), He now begins considering the community as an "assembly" or "church" (in its relationship to other members of the community). In the text of 18:15-18, Jesus explains to His

¹ The synonymous phrase, "kingdom of God" is used four times by Matthew (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43), 14 times by Mark, 32 times by Luke, and twice by John (3:3, 5).

community how they are to handle someone who has sinned, in order to preserve the relationship.

As a part of the community of mankind, Jesus teaches that man needs to love His fellowman sacrificially, “as himself” (22:39-40). The Pharisees were hindering the development of the kingdom (11:12; 23:13). In contrast, the Pharisees were very aggressive in making disciples of themselves (23:15). Before He ascends into heaven, Jesus anticipates His followers, His disciples, working together for His glory (28:19-20).

Eschatology:

Jesus raised a few individuals from the dead (9:23-26; 11:5). He gave His apostles power to raise the dead (10:8). In His discussion with the Sadducees, Jesus defends the doctrine of a resurrection and life after death (22:23-33).

The first mention of hell in Scriptures, from the mouth of Jesus, is in the sermon on the mount at 5:22. There, it is defined as being “fiery.” See also 5:29-30. Jesus describes this place of punishment in horrifying terms: “outer darkness” (8:12; 22:13; 25:30) and a place where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (8:12; 13:42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

In a number of passages, Jesus warns about the consequences of a disobedient lifestyle, in view of the fact that a “day of judgment” is coming (10:15), a phrase He will use three more times in Matthew: 11:22, 24; 12:36. One day, those who refuse to fear God will experience a destruction (of happiness) in hell (10:28). The phrase “the judgment” is found four times: 5:25; 12:41-42. The parable of the weeds (13:36-43) pictures a coming judgment when the righteous will be separated from the wicked. The wicked will be thrown into a “furnace of fire” (13:40, 42, 50). The parable of the dragnet also pictures a coming judgment with its consequent separation of the righteous from the wicked (13:47-50). In 16:27, Jesus quotes Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12 to the effect that mankind will, one day, be judged according to their works. Other passages highlight the coming judgment: 12:36; 16:27; 18:25-26, 28-30, 34.

The phrase “end of the age” is found five times: 13:39-40, 49; 24:3; 28:20. In 18:8-9, Jesus uses parallel expressions for hell: “eternal fire” (ver. 8) and “fiery hell” (ver. 9). In one of the last uses of “hell” in Matthew’s gospel (23:15), Jesus uses the expression “son of hell,” indicating some people had developed qualities or characteristics that made them proper or suitable for hell. The final use, in the same chapter (23:33), shows that “hell” is a sentence, issued by a judge. In 25:46, Jesus uses the same word “eternal” to describe the duration of punishment, as well as the duration of life. One will last as long as the other.

There will come a day when the Father will hand out rewards based on man’s response to God. This promise begins in 5:12, 46 but is found a dozen times in Matthew. Further passages are: 6:1, 2, 4-6, 16, 18; 10:41-42. There will be rewards for those who give up earthly possessions for the sake of their relationship with Christ (19:27-30), but the rewards are based on God’s mercy, not one’s merits (20:1-16). The fact that punishment might be “more tolerable” for some than for others (11:22, 24) suggests there will be some degree of punishment. It is in this passage that “hades” (11:23; the dwelling place of the dead) is used for the first time in Matthew. It is used only one other time in Matthew, at 16:18, where Jesus predicts that His time spent in Hades would not stop Him from establishing His kingdom. “Hades” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Sheol,” which is the dwelling place of spirits which have left their physical bodies. Jesus spent time in Hades (Acts 2:27, 31) between His death and His resurrection.

Jesus gave His apostles the power to raise the dead (10:8), which He had done (9:23-26). This indicates some large-scale resurrection is likely coming. The idea that the dead could be raised was not uncommon (14:2). The phrase “eternal life” is used three times in Matthew: 19:16, 29; 25:46. While many scholars see most of chapter 24 as a reference to the second coming of Christ (while a few see it as referring entirely to the destruction of Jerusalem; see the commentary for our position), it seems clear at 24:35 that Jesus shifts His focus to the

final destruction of the world. From that point through chapter 25, Jesus pictures the second coming and the final judgment of all mankind.

Early in Jesus' ministry (5:18), He states that heaven and earth will, one day, pass away. Clearly He refers to a final destruction of this physical world. It is by a fire that is "unquenchable" (3:12). It is pictured as a "furnace of fire" in 13:42. No one knows when the final destruction will occur: 24:36, 42, 44, 50; 25:13. In a series of parables and short paragraphs, Jesus teaches that the final judgment will be unexpected (24:36-41). Therefore mankind must be always ready (24:42-44). While we are waiting for His return, we must be good stewards of His gifts (24:45-51). Moving into chapter 25, Jesus emphasizes again the need to be prepared (25:1-13) and to use our resources wisely for His glory (25:14-30). The command to "be faithful" includes serving our fellow man, in anticipation of the final judgment which will occur when everyone is presented before the King (25:31-46).

Jesus' presence will be with His disciples until the "end of the age" (28:20).

Old Testament:

We add a category here to illustrate the plethora of prophecies from the Old Testament which are fulfilled in the life of Christ as well as to illustrate Jesus' attitude toward the Old Testament Law. Matthew begins at the birth of Jesus (1:22) pointing out that Jesus' nature reflects the fusion of the divine in the human, that is, His virgin birth. Jesus' birth fulfills the prediction of a prophecy by Isaiah the prophet (7:14). His name, which specifically reflects His nature, is "Emmanuel," which means "God with us" (1:23). The concept that God is with mankind through and in His Son will also be reflected throughout Matthew, culminating in Jesus' own promise of His presence at 28:20.

The early and latter chapters of Matthew are particularly saturated with OT prophecies and references to their fulfillment. In chapter 2:6, there is Micah 5:2 and at 2:15, there is Hosea 11:1; Jeremiah 31:15 is fulfilled in 2:17-18; a challenging quotation is found at 2:23 (see comments on the text). The fulfillment of OT prophecies continues in the ministry of John the baptizer (3:3). Matthew sees the light Who is Jesus shining in Galilee to be a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-2. Jesus also fulfills Isaiah 53:4, according to Matthew 8:17; therefore, by extension He is the "Servant of the Lord" who fulfills all of Isaiah 53. For passages from Isaiah used by Matthew, see "References to the Old Testament" at 8:14-17.

It is clear in the life of Jesus, beginning with the temptations, that Jesus relied heavily for spiritual strength and direction on the written word of God: 4:4, 7, 10. While Jesus held a very high regard for the Old Testament, He also taught that He would bring the OT to its consummation: 5:17-19. Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 twice, at 9:13 and 12:7. Jesus assumes the veracity of the account of Jonah and the big fish, using it as a prediction of His own death, burial, and resurrection (12:38-41). Jesus has set His own teaching above that of the Law of Moses. He will also set the teaching of the apostles on the same level as His own: 10:19-20.

Micah 7:6 is quoted in 10:35-36 while Isaiah 61:1 is quoted in 11:5. Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1 and applies it to John the baptist (11:10, 14). Jesus alluded to the story of David eating the bread (12:3-4), recorded in 1 Samuel 21. Jesus' ministry fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 42:1-3, according to 12:18-21. Another passage from Isaiah which Jesus quotes and applies to His audience is Isaiah 6:9-10 (13:14-15).

The psalmist (78:2) is referred to as a prophet in Matthew 13:35 and his prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus teaching in parables. Jesus quotes Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 as well as Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 20:9 in Matthew 15:4. In that same context, Jesus states that Isaiah's prophecy from 29:13 is fulfilled in His audience. Genesis 1:27; 5:2; 2:24 will be quoted in Matthew 19:4-5 while Deuteronomy 24:1-4 will be alluded to in 19:7.

More citations and quotations of the Old Testament appear in the last week of Jesus on earth. His entry into Jerusalem fulfilled Zechariah 9:9 (21:5). The crowds sang Psalm 118 at His entry into Jerusalem (21:9), acknowledging Him as the "Son of David" in fulfillment of 118:26. In throwing over the table of the money-changers (21:13), Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11, setting His actions in a theological context, protecting the holiness of God's

dwelling place. Jesus cites Psalm 8:2 at 21:16 in answering the Pharisees about the children praising Him as the Son of David. Continuing the references to Psalm 118, Jesus states that 118:22-23 is fulfilled in the attitude of the Jews toward Him (21:42-43).

The conversation between Moses and God through the burning bush, in Exodus 3:6, is the cornerstone of Jesus' proof that life exists after death (22:23-33). In the same context, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 (22:37) and then Leviticus 19:18 (22:39); then finally, Psalm 110:1 (22:43-44). He clearly has a grasp of the whole of Old Testament teaching, theology, and doctrine. In predicting Jerusalem's response to Jesus, following the destruction of their temple, He quoted Psalm 118:26, repeating the thoughts of the people of Jerusalem from 21:9 and the children from 21:15 (23:39).

Jesus predicts the scattering of His disciples based on the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7 (26:31), which was fulfilled at 26:56. Jesus was concerned that the Scriptures should be fulfilled (26:54, 56). Among the last words of Jesus are a reference to Him fulfilling both Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14 (26:64). Even in His burial, the life of Jesus was fulfilling prophecy (27:9-10, fulfilling Jeremiah 18:1-6; 19:1, 11 and Zechariah 11:12-13). Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 as He felt forsaken by His heavenly Father (27:46).