

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 8, Matthew's Kingdom and Distinctives

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All right, let's go ahead and get going. Let's begin with prayer and then we'll finish looking at Matthew, focusing on, we've looked at, in a little bit of detail, a handful of passages, mainly chapters 2, 3, and 4, portraying Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's story. We're in the midst of looking a little bit at chapters 5 through 7, the first main block of Jesus' teaching, the well-known Sermon on the Mount, and then we'll move through that quickly and I want to then summarize what is distinctive about Matthew.

What are some of the themes or ideas that Matthew emphasizes that either the other Gospels don't or at least not to the same degree as Matthew does? How does, what is distinct about Matthew's portrayal of Jesus? How does Matthew present Jesus in his Gospels? What does he emphasize about him? And then perhaps move into Mark as well, although you'll notice in your class notes that I have a number of excursuses. There's an excursus that is kind of a rabbit trail. We'll talk about it in Matthew.

I want to talk a little bit about the theme of the Kingdom of God, which was the predominant focus of Jesus' teaching. In all the Gospels, when Jesus begins to preach, they say he came teaching and preaching the Kingdom of God. What does that mean? What was Jesus offering when he came preaching the Kingdom of God? How would the readers and first listeners have understood that? In an excursus, kind of in a digression, we'll talk a little bit about the Kingdom of God.

Where does that come from? Jesus didn't just make that up and grab it out of thin air. It actually has a long history behind it going back to the Old Testament. So, we'll look at that just very briefly and then hopefully be able to move into Mark as well.

All right, let's open with prayer, and then we'll turn back to the Gospel of Matthew. Father, I pray that you will guide our discussion and our thinking about the Gospel of Matthew and the other New Testament books that we consider. Lord, I pray that you'll help us to understand them more clearly in their original context and therefore be able to understand how they continue to speak to us today as your word to your people today. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

We looked at the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, in which we said one of the distinctive features of Matthew is that Matthew divides his Gospel or structures his Gospel around five main discourses or teaching blocks of Jesus.

We'll return to that in a moment. One of the first teaching blocks and the most well-known perhaps is the Sermon on the Mount, what we label the Sermon on the Mount. We've talked a little bit about what Jesus was doing in that.

One of the common views of the Sermon on the Mount is, and that brings us to the last issue I want to talk about in relationship to the Sermon, that is, are we to understand the Sermon in terms of law versus grace? That is, often as Christians we draw a sharp distinction between law and demand, that is obedience, something that we do as opposed to God's grace. That is something that God provides or gives us. So, is the Sermon on the Mount all about law and totally devoid of God's grace? Again, when you read through the Sermon you find this list of things that Jesus begins to tell us.

You've heard that it was said, do not murder but I say to you if anyone hates his enemy, you're guilty as if you've committed murder and it goes on and gives you commands that resemble in some respects what one finds in the Old Testament. So, some have responded, well the Sermon on the Mount is really about law and has very little of the gospel of God's love and His grace, and therefore people have struggled as to what do we do with the Sermon on the Mount that sounds a lot like it's a demand in law, a little bit like the law of Israel. And one response is, well the Sermon on the Mount is mainly meant to show us that we fall short.

So, the law is meant as a measuring stick to show us that we can't measure up and therefore it drives us to God's grace. So, the main function of the Sermon on the Mount is a pointer to point us to God's grace and to trust in Christ and in God's grace and not in our own ability because the law shows us that we can't measure up and we can't keep it. And so, the law is mainly not there to show us what God, to instruct Christians on how to live, but it's meant to show our failings and our sinfulness and therefore point us to Jesus Christ and to throw ourselves at God's mercy and His grace.

However, I'm convinced that that's an incorrect way of reading the Sermon on the Mount. Yes, in a sense, in a sense all of scripture does at times demonstrate that we fall short and on our own and with our own resources and our own efforts we can't hope to measure up and we need to rely on God's grace and His enablement to live the kind of life that He desires. God, as one well-known theologian in the past, God gives what He demands.

But when you read the Sermon on the Mount, the first thing to recognize is, we talked a little bit about this with the context of the sermon, is remember the Sermon on the Mount comes within the context of Jesus' teaching on the kingdom. That is, the kingdom of God, which we'll look at later, but the kingdom or reign or rule of God is already a present reality that men and women can enter and participate in and experience in responding to Jesus Christ so that the Sermon on the Mount, first

of all, presupposes that God's kingdom and His rule have arrived. So, this is, these instructions are to be understood in the context of, these are instructions for those who have experienced God's reign and God's rule by responding to Jesus Christ.

That is, they have experienced the transforming power of God's kingdom and His reign in their lives. The other thing though is, when before Jesus ever begins to command, if we want to use that word and demand a certain lifestyle of God's people, if you remember the Sermon on the Mount begins with a series of what we have called Beatitudes in chapter 5. So, Jesus, before He ever launches into, here's what I require of my people, He begins by saying, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they will be filled. And there are several more of those.

But what I want to focus on is it's very interesting that Jesus would begin this way. Before He ever gets to the commands, why would He begin by saying, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Why does Jesus begin this way? It's important to understand when Matthew, in recording Jesus' words, says, blessed are the poor in spirit, the idea of poor in spirit is that one stands spiritually impoverished before God. That is, it's a picture of someone who is morally, ethically, and spiritually bankrupt before God.

They have absolutely nothing to offer Him. They stand in the same way that one who is physically poor has absolutely no resources at the physical level. Someone who is spiritually poor recognizes the bankruptcy of their own resources before God.

And then it's interesting, the next one is, blessed are those who mourn. Now, it's important to understand this in light of the Old Testament context. If you can think back to some of the Old Testament texts, maybe some that you looked at in Old Testament class, what was usually the context for mourning in the Old Testament? Especially a lot of the prophets often called on God's people to mourn.

Why? In other words, is this just a general sadness because I'm being persecuted or just because my life is, you know, I look around and life is terrible or I've lost loved ones and so life just doesn't seem fair, so I mourn and I cry because I'm sad. Is that it? In the Old Testament, what was often the context of mourning? Right, the realization of separation from God. You're exactly right.

And what usually caused that? What? Say that again? Oh yeah, the sinfulness of Israel. So mourning, you're exactly right. Mourning was the response to sinfulness and the consequent separation from God's presence.

So, when the prophets call on Israel to mourn, it's a response of mourning and repentance because of sin. So, the mourning here is not just general sadness. The call to mourn here is a call to repentance because of sinfulness.

And then interestingly the next one, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. So, you put these all together, the Sermon on the Mount assumes someone who recognizes their moral bankruptcy before God, that they have no resources, spiritual resources whatsoever. They mourn for sin and they recognize their sinfulness and they respond in repentance and mourning.

But then they hunger and thirst after righteousness and God will fill them. And then comes the Sermon on the Mount. So, the Sermon on the Mount is far from a demand or a law that is imposed on God's people it's simply meant to show that they fall short, although it can do that.

It's more than just an ethic for the betterment of society. Instead, it is the ethic that Christ demands of those who have experienced the transforming power of God's kingdom. For those who have entered into God's reign in their lives, the Sermon on the Mount demonstrates what is expected of them.

Yet at the same time, it's a reminder that those who have entered God's reign are those who recognize that they are spiritually bankrupt, that they have no resources on their own, they mourn because they fall short in sin, yet they hunger and thirst for the righteousness that Jesus articulates in the Sermon on the Mount. And when they do so, God fills them. So the Sermon on the Mount, again, is far from just a demand that we're expected to live up to and to show that we fall short, but instead, it is a demand, but a demand that God provides.

God provides the ability to live up to that demand. The kind of lifestyle that is expected of those who would belong to and who would enter God's kingdom. And we'll talk more about what we mean by God's kingdom next.

So, when you read the Sermon on the Mount, it's not some ideal ethic that no one can live up to. It's not just meant to show us that we fall short, but instead, it is God's blueprint for how his people should live who belong to his kingdom. But it assumes those who recognize their own inability, and instead, they hunger and thirst after righteousness that only God can ultimately provide.

All right. Actually, I want to skip down to the next section, which is the Great Commission. We've talked a little bit about that at the very end of Matthew.

And as I've already said, with the Great Commission, basically the Great Commission fits the rest of Matthew like this. If everything Matthew has said so far about Jesus, that if Jesus is indeed the Son of David, and he is indeed the Son of God, the Messiah and the Messiah, and if what Matthew has said about the Gentiles is true as well, if Jesus has come as the Messiah not just for Jews, but for Gentiles, then the Great Commission follows. It follows that Jesus then would say, therefore, go make disciples of all nations, not just Israel, but all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do not the law of Moses, but all that I have commanded you.

So now if everything Matthew says about Jesus is correct, then it's incumbent upon Jesus' followers to engage in this worldwide mission that makes disciples of all nations, that fulfills what Jesus himself began on earth, that is, to present himself as the Messianic King in fulfillment of the Old Testament, but not only for Jews, but for Gentiles as well. And we saw that's why Jesus, at the very beginning of the Gospel, that's why Jesus was called not only the Son of David but also the Son of Abraham, the one through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed. Now the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled in the Great Commission, where Jesus' followers are told to make disciples of all nations, to take this blessing to Abraham from Genesis 12 that would reach all nations.

Now that is fulfilled through Jesus and his followers in this so-called Great Commission. So, given what we've seen so far, and again, we've looked at some of the main emphases of Matthew, we've looked at a couple of passages in detail, what seems to be the purpose of Matthew? I mean, why did Matthew sit down and write this book in the first place? First of all, it's important to understand that Matthew is, the Gospel of Matthew, although there's some, there's dispute, because the difficulty is Matthew never comes out and tells us why he's writing. He doesn't identify his readers.

So, there's a little bit of speculation. We have to kind of play the role of a detective in reading Matthew and what we can know about the first century. We try to put together a plausible picture of why Matthew wrote this.

Most likely, Matthew is written to Jewish Christians. That is, people who have come out of Judaism, their Jewish heritage, and now have responded to the person of Jesus Christ. Yet, when Matthew was written, at this time, there may not have been this strong split between non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews, those who have responded in faith to Jesus the Messiah as the Son of David, and those who have not.

Groups such as the Pharisees and the Essenes, a lot of those groups that we looked at. So there probably was not yet a strong division between non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews at this point. And so, it may have been that a lot of Christian Jews in

the first century still would have worshipped in the Jewish synagogue alongside their Jewish friends and families, while they may very well also have worshipped with the church, this new thing that we call Christianity.

But at this point, Christianity may not have been so sharply distinguished yet from Judaism. So, think of this. If you have, the readers of Matthew may have been Jewish Christians who still had some contact with the synagogue, with non-Christian Jews.

Yet, there was a question over, there was a question over identity. Remember we said one of the questions being asked in the first century or so was, what does it mean to be God's people? Who are the true people of God? And, think about it this way. Some of the non-Christian Jews may have called into question whether these Jews who have now responded to Jesus Christ and now they're worshipping in the church as well, may have wondered and tried to dispute whether they were really truly God's people.

Furthermore, the problem was, that the church was probably becoming more and more Gentile. So, that may have added more fuel to the fire. So, the non-Christian Jews are saying, you Jews who believe in Jesus Messiah and worship with the church, you are not truly God's people.

Because look, you're also becoming more and more Gentile. And so, where does Matthew fit in? Matthew, I think one of the main reasons Matthew was written is, first of all, to encourage Christians, Jewish Christians to maintain their faith in Jesus Christ. But also, it's to explain why the church is becoming more and more Gentile.

And that's where all these stories come in. Remember the wise men? Why does Matthew have these foreign astrologers, these Gentiles, come worship Jesus? Why does Matthew have Jesus saying, make disciples of all nations? Because he's reminding these, Matthew is reminding these Jewish Christians, who in a sense are in dispute with other Jews, and they are perhaps being criticized because of their faith in Jesus Christ, and because they belong to this church as becoming more Gentile. Now Matthew writes to say, well look, didn't Jesus himself prepare for the inclusion of Gentiles? So, the fact that the church is more and more Gentile should not shock you.

It doesn't mean that you're illegitimate and you're not truly God's people. You are. Jesus himself indicated and made way for the inclusion of Gentiles.

So, in a sense, this emphasis on Gentiles in Matthew is perhaps kind of Matthew's apology and apologetic to show that Jesus himself taught that the church would become Gentile. So, the Jewish Christians can maintain faith in Jesus Christ. It's meant to encourage discipleship and obedience to Christ, but it's in response to, again, probably Jewish Christians being criticized perhaps, or their identity called into

question by Jews who, again, are wondering about these Christian Jews and why they've turned to Jesus Christ, and why is the church becoming so Gentile? Well, Matthew answers that, because that's what Jesus anticipated, because Jesus taught that the church would become, and his group of followers would include Gentiles.

So, therefore, Matthew writes to explain why the church is becoming Gentile, and to encourage them, to spur them on to discipleship and obedience in following Jesus Christ, even despite the conflict with other non-Christian Jews. Now, why, or what does, in light of that, what does Matthew, what are some of the other important themes in Matthew, what does Matthew emphasize that either the other Gospels don't, or at least not to the same extent as the other Gospels do? Now, this isn't everything that Matthew emphasizes. There are some things Matthew says and emphasizes that the other Gospels do, and that's just as important, but I want to focus mainly on what are the key ideas that Matthew seems to emphasize that you don't find emphasized, or at least as much, in the other Gospels.

So, first of all, Matthew's Jesus. One of the most characteristic features of Matthew's portrait of Jesus, as we have already seen, is Matthew portrays Jesus as the Christ or the Messiah. That is, Jesus is clearly portrayed as the Messiah, in the line of David, in fulfillment of the promises that God made to David, going all the way back to 2 Samuel 7 in the Old Testament.

So, starting with 2 Samuel 7, there's this expectation that continues all the way into the Prophets, that God would keep His promise to David, and one of David's offspring would sit on the throne and rule over Israel, but over the entire earth. Matthew now makes clear that Jesus is the promised Son of David. Again, that's why the Gospel begins Jesus Christ, Son of David, Messiah, Son of David, Son of Abraham.

So, Jesus is the Christ, that is, by Christ, we mean this isn't, at least in Matthew, this is not Jesus' second name. His first name is Jesus, His last name is Christ. At least in Matthew, for the most part, Christ is a title that indicates He's the Messiah, He's the Son of David.

Second, Jesus is portrayed as the Son of God, in a number of unique places. This probably also, the title Son of God probably also indicates Jesus is Messiah, but it also indicates His unique relationship with the Father. Jesus is the true Son of God.

He stands in a unique relationship with the Father, but probably also indicates that He is the Messiah. In key places throughout Matthew, Jesus is labeled throughout Matthew as, or addressed as Son of God. Jesus fulfills the Old Testament.

I shouldn't just say the law, but the entire Old Testament, but specifically the law. Remember, Matthew chapter 5, 17, when Jesus says, I've come not to abolish the

law, but to fulfill it. Matthew does not mean primarily that Jesus came to obey it perfectly, though He did that.

What Matthew means is Jesus came to, as the fulfillment, that is, the law, what the law was really moving to and pointing to and anticipating, now is finally reached with the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' own person and teaching are the true goal of the Old Testament law and the entire Old Testament. So why is it that Matthew remember we saw in chapter 2, that Jesus is portrayed as the new Moses?

He's portrayed as Israel. He's portrayed as the light to the world, to the nations from Isaiah. What's Matthew doing? He's showing all these strands from the Old Testament find their climax in the person of Jesus Christ.

And in that sense, he fulfills it. So, Matthew wants to make clear, and that's one of the reasons why Matthew is such a suitable first book of the New Testament because it has the clearest connections with the Old Testament. Because Matthew wants to make clear that, again, the Old Testament is an incomplete story.

And now the gospel of Matthew finishes the story by showing that Jesus is the last chapter and the climax and conclusion and fulfillment of the story and all the stories begun in the Old Testament. So that's why Jesus is the son of David. He's the son of Abraham.

He's one greater than Moses. He's the new Israel. Where Israel failed, Jesus now succeeds.

He's greater than Jonah. He's greater than Solomon. Over and over, Matthew wants you to get the point that Jesus is the climax and surpasses all the stories of the Old Testament.

They all find their conclusion and climax in the person of Christ. So, Jesus fulfills the Old Testament law, but also the entire Old Testament. We already saw Jesus is portrayed as the new Moses.

Some scholars think, you know, why is it that Jesus always goes up to a mountain to teach? In the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5, Jesus goes up on a mountain. Luke doesn't say he went up on a mountain. It doesn't mean he didn't, but Matthew makes it clear.

The Great Commission, at the very end of the chapter, where does Jesus tell his disciples to meet him? On a mountain, which may reflect and recall Moses going up Mount Sinai to receive God's revelation, his law, which he would give to the people. So, Jesus, Matthew, wants to portray Jesus as one like Moses, but greater than

Moses. We saw in chapter 2 the parallels with Jesus escaping a king, killing all the baby boys.

So, Matthew clearly wants to present Jesus as a new Moses. Matthew seems to want to present Jesus as a wise teacher as well. Remember we said that Matthew is divided up into five main blocks of discourse.

Matthew seems to want to portray Jesus as a teacher. And so, it's no wonder you get to the end of the gospel and Jesus again says, baptizing them and teaching them to do all that I have commanded you. And what the things he's commanded them would be these five blocks of teaching throughout the book of Matthew.

I think that's the last one. So those are five. Again, there are other things that Matthew says about Jesus, but these seem to be kind of distinct emphases in Matthew's portrait of Jesus.

And we'll see, by comparison, we'll see how the other gospel writers portray Jesus. Another important theme is we've already talked a little bit about the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Again, Jesus is portrayed in Matthew as the one who is the climax and fulfillment of all the Old Testament, not just direct prophecies.

Most of us probably when we read the New Testament, we think that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament when the Old Testament prophesies about him. But that's not the case. Even in parts of the Old Testament that do not prophesy, Jesus still fulfills them.

Because again, Matthew, in light of the coming of Jesus's death and resurrection, Matthew goes back and reads the Old Testament and sees how all these strands and bits and pieces and parts and persons of the Old Testament ultimately find their repetition and climax in the person of Jesus Christ. Again, so how can Matthew say Jesus fulfills the law? The law wasn't prophecy. It didn't predict the coming of Christ.

But at the same time, the true lifestyle and ideal that the Old Testament law was anticipating and trying to get reaches its climax in Jesus' teaching and his life. In that sense, Jesus can be seen to fulfill the Old Testament. What we mean by fulfilling is simply Jesus is the goal to which the Old Testament pointed.

In that case, then he fulfills it. So, Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. A kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven is another dominant theme in the book of Matthew.

I'm kind of beyond this now. We'll talk a little bit about the kingdom of God in just a moment. But Jesus, especially in Matthew, Jesus comes at the very beginning preaching the kingdom of God.

And we're going to talk about what did that mean? Why did Jesus come preaching the kingdom of God and offering the kingdom of God? What did he mean by that? What would his listeners been expecting? Finally, the theme of discipleship. One of the key features of Matthew is that Jesus prepares and Jesus anticipates and makes preparation for a group of followers who would perpetuate his mission. And that's very clear in the very end, the Great Commission, when he tells his disciples to go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them.

So, Matthew portrays Jesus as making preparation and provision for a group of followers who would respond in obedience to Jesus and perpetuate his mission. Now it's very important to realize too that what is going on here is Jesus, with this theme of discipleship and Jesus making a provision for a group of followers who would follow him in obedience, which is kind of at the essence of discipleship, is Jesus is redefining what it means to be the people of God. Again, you think about up until the arrival of Jesus and his teaching and his death and resurrection, how would most people in the first century and before that, given what we've looked at in some of the historical stuff we dealt with earlier this semester, what would most people, how would they answer the question, what does it mean to belong to God's people? How would they have probably answered that? And even if they would have been asked, what does it mean to be a follower, what does it mean to belong to Christ? How would most people, especially the Jewish followers, how would they have answered that question? Especially given some of the surveys that we've looked at, the history, politics, and culture leading up to the Old Testament.

Yeah, basically to live as a Jew and of Moses. The law of Moses, as we're going to see later on in some of Paul's writings, the law of Moses often functioned as an identity marker, a boundary that marked you off from other nations, Gentiles, and distinguished you as God's people. So, in the first century, if you were asked, what does it mean to be the people of God? Who were the true people of God? And even who would be, who were the followers of Jesus? Most of them would have answered, that it's those who keep the law of Moses and are ethnically identified with the Jewish nation.

Now Jesus comes along, and understand this, this is part of the reason why Matthew presents Jesus as the true Israel. Now Jesus comes along and redefines that. Since Jesus is the true Israel, he's the one, again, we look back at Jesus' baptism and his temptation, Jesus was actually rehearsing Israel's history.

As the true Israel, now how do we answer that question? Belonging to the people of God and to Jesus means simply responding to Jesus. That means that it's no longer restricted to Jews. Belonging to God's people is no longer answered by obeying the law or identifying with the Jews.

Now it's determined and defined solely in relationship to Jesus Christ. So again, in kind of Old Testament Judaism, who are the true people of God? What does it mean to be God's people? What it means to follow the Messiah is obedience to the law, and belonging ethnically and physically to the Jewish nation. Now Jesus as the true Israel, who has fulfilled Israel's destiny and the entire Old Testament, now he redefines that.

Now we have to ask the question, what does it mean to belong to God's people? Who are the true followers of the Messiah? It's no longer those who obey the law or who are Jews. Now it's anyone who responds to the true Israelite, the true Israel, Jesus Christ. Anyone who responds to Jesus now belongs to the true people of God and is the true Israel.

Therefore, if that's the case, then Gentiles can become God's people as well, both Jew and Gentile. So that's why Matthew has this Gentile emphasis to show that if the deciding factor now is Jesus Christ, then Gentiles can become God's people on an equal level with Jews because now it's no longer centered around the law and the other Jewish identity markers. It's now centered around faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Gentiles are included as well. So, by raising this question of disciples, Jesus makes provision for a group of followers who will respond in obedience to him and carry on the mission that Jesus began of making disciples of all nations. But at the same time, he's redefined what a disciple or follower of Christ is and what it means to belong to God's people.

It's no longer centered around the law and Jewish privileges and identity. It's centered around the person of Christ. And that's going to become important for understanding a number of other documents in the New Testament as well.

All right. Any questions so far? That brings us to the end of Matthew. Again, I want to talk.

The first excursus in your notes is the kingdom of God, which is a very important concept to understand. In fact, I usually tell my class, if you forget everything else I say, which of course you won't, but if you do, you need to grasp what Jesus meant when he offered the kingdom of God, because that'll help you make sense of a lot of the rest of the New Testament. But any questions related to Matthew as far as the dominant themes of the portrayal of Christ, how he portrays Christ, the relationship of Christ to the Old Testament, the focus on Jesus, the kingdom of God, which we'll talk about in a moment, and then Jesus and discipleship.

Those are some of the dominant themes. Any questions regarding Matthew so far? So, you're confident that on, say, a test or something like that, you could answer any question I gave you about Matthew. I think you probably could.

All right. So, let's talk a little bit about the kingdom of God. What did Jesus mean when he came offering the kingdom of God? When he said, repent, because the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven is near, it's at hand.

What was Jesus offering? And what would his first readers, Matthew's first readers, and Jesus' listeners, do when they first heard Jesus preach, what would they have understood? Why was Jesus offering a kingdom? Why didn't he come offering salvation from sins, which he did? I mean, he does tell them to repent, but why did Jesus not come preaching, repent from your sins, and believe that I'm going to die on the cross for all your sins and you'll be saved and have eternal life? Why did he offer the kingdom of God? What was he offering? Well, to understand that, you need to go back a little bit, in fact, a long way, in fact, all the way back to the very first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis. That's a starting point for understanding the kingdom of God.

And the first thing to say before we look at that, is by kingdom, when I talk about the kingdom of God, or not me, but when Jesus offers the kingdom of God, by kingdom, Jesus primarily means the dynamic reign or rule of God. It's a reference to God's powerful reign. It's not a reference to a time period or a location like the United Kingdom, a geopolitical area.

By kingdom, what Jesus is offering when he says the kingdom of God, he means God's reign and rule, God's powerful reigning and ruling. It's a dynamic concept, not a reference to a certain time period or a location. So that's the first starting point, that we understand kingdom means God's active reign and rule in the lives of people.

Now, the Old Testament background. Again, it's important to go all the way back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2. And then I'm going to move through this really quickly. This is not an Old Testament survey course, and I realize that.

But it's important to understand that virtually everything Jesus did, especially in Matthew, has its roots in the Old Testament. And that's especially true of the kingdom of God. So back to the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis chapters 1 and 2, God creates humanity. One of the important things it says about the reason God did so, is why God created Adam and Eve. Well, we get an indication when Genesis 1 says, God says, let us create man and woman in our own image, and let them rule over creation. God's intention for humanity is that they will rule, they will represent God's rule.

I take it that image, maybe you talked about this in the Old Testament, image primarily means that humanity was to reflect God's rule and reign over the earth. So it's interesting when the image is mentioned in Genesis 1 and 2, it's in the context of

humanity subduing the earth and ruling over it. So, God created humanity in His image so that they would be God's representatives of God's rule.

God is the king of the earth, but humanity as God's image is to reflect that rule, to represent God's rule, and to spread His rule and glory over the entire earth. However, as the story goes, Adam and Eve fail to do so, and they sin, and are exiled from the Garden of Eden, and then the rest of the Bible, in a sense, is a story of how will God restore His original intention for humanity to rule over all creation, to be God's representatives, to spread His glory and reign over the entire earth. Well, the next, if I can skip down in your notes, to King David.

We've already talked about the covenant God made with David, that God would have someone who would sit on David's throne forever, that David's throne would be an eternal one and perpetual. The reason for this covenant with David, I'm convinced, is this is the way that God is going to establish and restore His intention for humanity to rule over the earth. He will do so through a Davidic king.

So, again, the promise made to David of a king is not just something that, oh, Israel needs a king, so God will make a promise that there will always be a king in the line of David. This is part of God's plan for humanity, that humanity would rule over all the earth. But they did not do that, they sinned.

So now the way that God will restore His intention for humanity to reign, to spread God's glory and reign over all the earth, is by choosing a king from David's line, a Messiah, who will rule and who will reign eventually over the entire earth. So, the Davidic king, the Messiah, is the means by which God will fulfill His intention from Genesis 1 and 2 that humanity would reign over all the earth. Now, as you realize, the problem was that Israel, because of their sins, Israel and the king still never accomplished that purpose.

They fell into sin and idolatry and they were exiled. So, we've talked a little bit about that. Israel is in exile in Babylon and Assyria because of their sin.

And one of the questions, one of the problems is that now there's no longer a son on David's throne. One of the things that the Israelites worried about or wondered about, what about God's promises of a Davidic king. Because it's through the king that God was going to rule over all the earth and that He would restore His intention for humanity to rule over all the earth. So, what about God's promises of a king in the line of David? Because now they're in exile, they're in a foreign country, there's no king on the throne.

So that's where the prophets come in. The Old Testament prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah anticipate a time when God will restore the Israelites back to their land with a king in the line of David ruling over them. So again, this is all part of God's

intention from Genesis 1 and 2, that humanity was to rule and represent God's rule over all creation.

Now God's going to do that through a king in the line of David. So, the prophets end by anticipating a time when God will restore His people and there will be a king ruling over them who will eventually rule over the entire earth in fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2. Now, fast forward to Matthew, what then does Jesus mean when He comes offering the kingdom of God? Here is the long-awaited Messiah in the line of David that will not only rule over Israel but will bring humanity to its destiny of ruling over all the world. And so, when Jesus comes offering the kingdom of God, I'm convinced that's what they're expecting, is here's the fulfillment of that promise.

Here's the Davidic king who will reign over us rule over the entire earth and lead humanity to its intended goal and destiny. Now there's kind of an extra ingredient with that. The problem is what most likely, again thinking back, and this will help us answer a couple of other questions we're going to look at, is when you think back to our discussion of the political and historical background, what else would people be thinking in the first century when they heard that when Jesus comes and says, repent because the kingdom of God is at hand? And when they hear that here's this person who is called the Christ, the son of David, what are people going to generally be thinking? Yeah, that's right.

Yeah, here's the person that's going to liberate us from Rome. Again, a lot of the Jews would have considered themselves still in exile because of sin, and now they look around and Caesar sitting on the throne instead of a king and David's line. Here's Caesar on the throne.

Rome basically is the superpower of the day, ruling over everything. And so now here comes this person saying the kingdom of God is at hand, and furthermore, he's labeled the son of David. What are they going to think? Here's the person who will finally deliver us from the clutches of the Roman Empire.

Here's the one who will rule over his enemies with an iron scepter, who will set up his kingdom and bring us to our intended destiny of spreading God's rule and glory throughout all creation. And so, you can start to see why, at least initially, Jesus was able to so quickly gather a large following at times, because here it is. We've labored under Roman rule.

And not only that, if you remember, there was only a short period of time during the, we talked a little bit about the roots of the holiday Hanukkah and the very brief period of liberation from foreign influence. Before and after that, the Jews find themselves under foreign bondage. And now here comes one who promises the long-expected Davidic rule that will free the people from their enemies.

So again, you can see why so many people would often flock to Jesus, because here's that person that's going to do that. The problem is that, on the one hand, while Jesus clearly offered that kingdom, it becomes likewise clear in Matthew and the other Gospels that he did not offer it in a way that they were expecting. In fact, this line here represents what most Jews, Jewish Christians, would have thought, a lot of them, what most Jews would have thought, steeped in the Old Testament, what they would have thought in the That is, they were living in this age, this present age, which basically was a time dominated by evil and sin and foreign influence and foreign oppression.

So they saw themselves living in this age, and this arrow represents the coming of God's kingdom, which would inaugurate the age to come. An age where God rules, again, is basically the fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2, and the promise of a coming Davidic king in 2 Samuel and into the prophets. So, God would visit the earth, and he would, through his Messiah, set up his kingdom and rule forever.

Again, Isaiah chapter 9, the famous text we quote at Christmas, is this son would be in David's line, and he would rule forever, there would be no end to his reign. That would come here, and then this age would be brought to an end, a decisive end, and God's kingdom would usher in a new age of peace and blessing. The age of God's kingdom, where God would rule, and he would rule over the earth, and his people would fulfill their destiny of representing God's reign over the entire earth.

So, this is what they were thinking. So, when Jesus comes, offering the kingdom, this is what they're thinking. Here it is.

Here's the age to come. I don't know if they use that language always necessarily, but here's the age to come. Here's the long-awaited kingdom where God will destroy our enemies and inaugurate and usher in this age of peace and blessing, and God's rule, and a new creation.

So, this is what they're thinking this is going to happen. However, Jesus is doing something a little bit different. Jesus, yes, Jesus offers the kingdom, but interestingly, it's going to come in two installments.

It's not going to all come at once. It's going to come in two installments. Whoops, sorry about that.

It's going to look like this. This represents Jesus. This bottom line represents this age, and this top line represents the age to come, the kingdom of God.

Now when Jesus comes, this cross represents his death, but it also represents his life, his death, and his resurrection. With Jesus coming, his life and death and

resurrection, Jesus offers the kingdom, but you'll notice that it doesn't completely destroy this age. This age continues on.

It doesn't completely eradicate it and bring it to an end. Yes, it's already here. The kingdom has already arrived.

The age to come has already arrived. When Jesus says, repent, the kingdom is here. It's already arrived, yet it comes in a way that doesn't wipe out this present age, dominated by sin and evil, and dominated by Rome.

Instead, that awaits a second coming of Christ, a time when Christ will return where he will bring God's kingdom. He'll consummate it and bring it in its perfection and its fullness. He will wipe out evil in this age, and he will establish his eternal kingdom that will last forever.

Does everyone see that? So, what scholars often say, the kingdom is here already, in part, even though it is not yet here in its fullness. So, the concept of already or not yet, some call it inaugurated eschatology. That is, the end-time kingdom that the Jews thought would come in one event, Jesus has now divided into two events.

It comes partially at his first coming. That's why Jesus can say, the kingdom is already here. Men and women can enter God's kingdom right now.

Men and women can experience God's reign and rule through the Davidic king, Jesus, right now. Yet, it has not arrived in a way that completely wipes out evil, and completely wipes out God's enemies and Israel's enemies. It doesn't come in a way that completely brings a brand new creation at the end of this present age.

It comes in part, in anticipation of the day when it will come in its fullness. That is very important for understanding Matthew because when you read through Matthew, you find both perspectives. Sometimes, you'll read about the kingdom of God, and it's clear that it's present, it's already here.

But other times in Matthew, Jesus talks about the kingdom of God as something still future. How can it be both? This seems to explain it. This end-time kingdom has already reached into the present.

We can already experience God's future kingdom right now, through the person of Christ. But, we don't yet experience in its perfection and fullness and completeness. That still awaits the future.

So, it's already here, in part, but it has not yet come to its fullness. So, that already, but not yet. Sometimes, people joke that if I ask you a question, and you say already, but not yet, you'll be right about 80% of the time.

That might be a stretch, but in that phrase, that's not unique to me. That's just a common term used to describe Matthew's view of the kingdom. Any questions about that? In fact, this idea of already, but not yet.

The fact that the kingdom has already arrived, in part, we can experience it now. But, it's not yet. It hasn't yet come in its completeness and fullness and perfection.

That is important for understanding the rest of the New Testament, all the way through to the book of Revelation. If you grasp this and understand this, you'll be able to make sense of a lot of other places in the New Testament, that at first appear rather perplexing. Any questions? I want to make sure you get this.

This is important. This idea of the kingdom, the reign of God, in fulfillment of the promises of David. Again, which the Jews thought would come in one decisive act.

Jesus now divides it into two acts. The arrival of the kingdom at His first coming, which it came, but only partially. It was already here, but it had not yet come in its completeness.

Obviously, we live in this period. Again, this chart isn't meant to tell us where I can say where it is, where we live along that line. It's just meant to show that God's people lived between the time of the present evil age is still here, yet God's kingdom is also present.

Because that's what Jesus was doing. I came to offer the long-anticipated kingdom promised through David. It's already here.

Men and women can enter it and experience it now in advance of its full manifestation, its consummation, that will come in the future. Therefore, the kingdom is already, but it's not yet. It hasn't arrived.

Another way to look at it, this arrow could be expanded. In other words, again, what you saw is coming in one glorious event. Now it gets divided into two separate events.