

Matthew's Kingdom and Distinctives

New Testament Literature — Session 8

Author: Dr. Dave Mathewson

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Abstract

This lecture explores the Gospel of Matthew's distinct depiction of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah and the fulfillment of Israel's Old Testament narrative. Dr. Dave Mathewson examines the Sermon on the Mount as a transformative kingdom ethic provided through divine grace rather than a crushing legalistic demand. The discussion highlights Matthew's apologetic context addressing Jewish-Christian identity amid an increasingly Gentile church and the Great Commission's global scope. Finally, the lecture details the concept of inaugurated eschatology, explaining the 'already but not yet' nature of the Kingdom of God present in Jesus' ministry.

Outline

I. Introduction to Matthew's Kingdom and Distinctives

- A. Context of Lecture 8 within New Testament Literature
- B. Structure of Matthew: Five main teaching blocks/discourses
- C. Focus on Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and core distinctives of Matthew's Gospel

II. The Sermon on the Mount: Law versus Grace

- A. Misconceptions regarding the Sermon on the Mount
 - 1. Incorrect view: Mere legal demand devoid of grace or a measuring stick to prove human sinfulness
 - 2. Proper view: Instructions presupposing participation in the present reality of God's Kingdom
- B. The Beatitudes as the foundation of Kingdom ethics (Matthew 5)
 - 1. "Poor in spirit": Recognition of moral and spiritual bankruptcy before God
 - 2. "Those who mourn": Response of repentance regarding sin and separation from God
 - 3. "Hunger and thirst after righteousness": Inner desire satisfied by God's provision
- C. Nature of Kingdom Ethics
 - 1. A blueprint for believers empowered by the transforming reign of God
 - 2. God provides the ability to fulfill what He demands

III. The Great Commission and the Purpose of Matthew's Gospel

A. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20)

1. Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12) blessing all nations
2. Transition from Israel-exclusive focus to making disciples of all nations

B. Historical and Apologetic Context

1. Primary audience: First-century Jewish Christians in tension with non-Christian Jews
2. Explanation for the increasing Gentile composition of the church
3. Validation that Jesus prepared for and anticipated Gentile inclusion

IV. Key Distinctive Themes in Matthew's Gospel

A. Portrayal of Jesus Christ

1. Jesus as Messiah and promised Son of David (2 Samuel 7 fulfillment)
2. Jesus as the Son of God with a unique divine relationship
3. Jesus as the fulfillment and climax of the Old Testament Law and Scriptures
4. Jesus as the New Moses and Wise Teacher delivering God's revelation on a mountain

B. Fulfillment of the Old Testament

1. Climax of OT narratives, persons, and institutions (greater than Moses, Jonah, Solomon)
2. Jesus as the true Israel who succeeds where historical Israel failed

C. Redefinition of Discipleship and the People of God

1. Shift from ethnic identity and Mosaic Law adherence to personal faith in Jesus
2. Equal inclusion of Jews and Gentiles in the true Israel

V. Excursus: The Kingdom of God ("Already but Not Yet")

A. Definition of the Kingdom

1. Dynamic active reign and rule of God, not a physical/geopolitical location

B. Old Testament Background

1. Genesis 1–2: Creation ideal for humanity to reflect and represent God's rule
2. Fall of humanity and Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7) as the restoration plan
3. Prophetic expectation (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) of a Davidic ruler restoring creation

C. First-Century Jewish Expectations vs. Jesus' Two-Stage Realization

1. Jewish expectation: Single decisive act liberating Israel from Roman oppression
2. Two-stage realization of the Kingdom:
 - a. Inauguration ("Already"): Present spiritual reality breaking into the evil age through Jesus' first coming
 - b. Consummation ("Not Yet"): Future physical completion, judgment, and perfection at Christ's return