

# **GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

## **JESUS AS THE MERCY OF GOD**

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## I. PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

*“Every scribe who has been trained in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new & what is old” (Mt 13:52).*

Mt wrote those words – not in any other gospel - as close as we’ll ever get to knowing what Mt thought of himself. Like a painter who includes a small self-portrait in depicting a crowd scene. But who was Matthew?

### *Who was Matthew?*

The Gospel doesn’t tell us. Tradition identifies the author with Levi, the tax collector whom Jesus called from his workplace at the side of the lake of Galilee (Mk 2:14). In this Gospel, this person is called Matthew, which identifies him with the apostle in the list of Mk 3:18 (= Mt 9:9; 10:3). He is not ashamed of his name or profession, calling himself “Matthew, the tax collector” letting everyone know the Lord includes the most unlikely candidates in discipleship. Though it was common Hebrew practice to have two names.

*Modern views:* A Greek speaking, Jewish Christian, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of Christianity, who had a universal missionary outlook & had most probably had rabbinical training. (JD Kingsbury, *Matthew*, SPCK 1978, p.105).

Reasons for such a view:

He writes from a Jewish, not a Greek point of view - often quotes OT & is interested in Jewish concepts e.g. the Mosaic Law & “righteousness”. He knows Mk’s Gospel. 661 verses in Mk – Mt reproduces 606 of them! His portraits of Jesus & the disciples are more developed than those of Mk. He portrays the Jesus of the public ministry already as the Risen Lord worshipped by his community & the disciples mirror the members of his own Church.

Despite traditions that Jesus confined his ministry to the Jews (10:5; 15:24), his Gospel justifies the fact that many Gentiles were streaming into his Church. He writes that at Jesus’ birth, Gentiles, the Magi, were the only ones who paid him worship (2:1-12). Jesus’ final words were a command to make disciples of all nations (28:16-20).

He is like the spokesman of a school of theologians who had reflected on the Christ-event for many years (cf. Mt 13:52 again). Their hero, even the

founder of their community, could have been *Matthew*, whose name was in due course attached to the Gospel.

Is there any play on names?

- Apostle's name in Greek is *matthaios*.
- Mt 13:52 speaks of the scribe trained/discipled (*matheteutheis*) for the kingdom of heaven.
- Mt 28:19 has Jesus send his followers out to disciple/make disciples (*matheteuein*) of all nations.

***Where did he write?***

Very likely in Antioch - a lively & prosperous city with a sizable Jewish community. It soon became one of the first centres of Christianity (Acts 11:19-26).

***When did he write?***

Around 85 AD, 15 years or so after Mk. Christians no longer struggled with direct persecution by external forces but lived in tension with fellow Jews. The final break between Jew & Christian took place c.80. At this time, a curse against Christians called the *birkat hamminim*, was added to the *18 Benedictions* in the synagogue liturgy which made Christian attendance impossible. They were not welcome in the local synagogue.

***Why did he write?***

Several possible reasons. This new version of Mk may well have been produced:

- To help Christians expelled from the Synagogue appreciate their continuing identity as God's people & to encourage hospitality to new Gentile converts – to help them carry their burdens (11:28-30).
- To provide a handbook for Christian instruction to the catechist, thanks to its abundant store of the teaching of Jesus. Such a resource was needed by those who wanted to take seriously Christ's final command to teach all the nations all that he had commanded (28:20).
- To raise the quality of the Christian life of those in the second or third generation of Christianity whose faith was growing cold. They may have been like the church of Ephesus in the Book of Revelation (Rev 2:1-7).

### ***What did he write?***

Basically he expanded & rewrote Mk which he & his community found less suitable for the different conditions in which they found themselves. Among the many additions he made to Mk were many sayings of Jesus. A number also appear in Lk - leading many to believe these evangelists had access to a collection of sayings of Jesus (called Q - *Quelle*) – 200 verses in common. No one has ever seen “Q” but it’s an attractive hypothesis that works & if it’s true, it’s the Q material together with the earliest letters of Paul, that gives us our first glimpse of Christian belief.

## **II. OUTLINE OF MATTHEW’S STORY**

Biblical scholars have outlined Mt’s Gospel in various ways.

*Raymond Brown* in his *Introduction to the NT* (Doubleday: New York 1997, 172) gives the following outline:

### **1:1-2:23 Introduction: Origin & Infancy of Jesus the Messiah**

1. The who & how of Jesus’ identity (1:1-25);
2. The where & whence of Jesus’ birth & destiny (2:1-23).

### **3:1-7:29 Part I: Proclamation of the Kingdom**

1. Narrative: Ministry of John the Baptist, baptism of Jesus, the temptations, beginning of the Galilean ministry (3:1-4:25);
2. Discourse: Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)

### **8:1-10:42 Part II: Ministry & Mission in Galilee**

1. Narrative mixed with short dialogue: 9 miracles consisting of healings, calming a storm, exorcism (8:1-9:38);
2. Discourse: Mission Sermon (10:1-42)

### **11:1-13:52 Part III: Questioning of & Opposition to Jesus**

1. Narrative setting for teaching & dialogue: Jesus & John the Baptist, woes on disbelievers, thanksgiving for revelation, Sabbath controversies & Jesus’ power, Jesus’ family (11:1-12:50);
2. Discourse: Sermon in Parables (13:1-52)

### **13:53-18:35 Part IV: Christology & Ecclesiology**

1. Narrative mixed with much dialogue: Rejection at Nazareth, feeding the 5000 & walking on the water, controversies with the Pharisees, healings, feeding the 4000, Peter’s confession, 1st passion prediction, transfiguration, 2nd passion prediction (13:53-17:27);

2. Discourse: Sermon on the church (18:1-35)

**19:1-25:46 Part V: Journey to & Ministry in Jerusalem**

1. Narrative mixed with much dialogue: Teaching, judgement parables, 3rd passion prediction, entry to Jerusalem, cleansing the Temple, clashes with authorities (19:1-23:39);
2. Discourse: Eschatological Sermon (24:1-25:46)

**26:1-28:20 Climax: Passion, Death & Resurrection**

1. Conspiracy against Jesus, Last Supper (26:1-29);
2. Arrest, Jewish & Roman trials, crucifixion, death (26:30-27:56);
3. Burial, guard at tomb, opening of tomb, bribing of the guard, resurrection appearances (27:57-28:20).

The *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Geoffrey Chapman: 2<sup>nd</sup> Rev. Ed., London 1989 p.633) states that Mt keeps the general shape of Mk, but expands it at its beginning & end, inserting great blocks of teaching. His material can be divided into narrative & discourse. The outline is a *chiastic* structure i.e. the items that balance in the outline throw light on each other & the centre (the “parable chapter”) on the Kingdom of God is of special importance.

**1-4 Narrative: Birth and Beginnings**

**5-7 Sermon (on the Mount): Entering the Kingdom**

**8-9 Narrative: Authority & Invitation (10 miracles)**

**10 Sermon: Mission Discourse**

**11-12 Narrative: Rejection by This Generation**

**13 Sermon: Parables of the Kingdom**

**14-17 Narrative: Acknowledgement by Disciples**

**18 Sermon: Community Discourse**

**19-22 Narrative: Authority and Invitation**

**23-25 Sermon: Woes, Coming of the Kingdom**

**26-28 Narrative: Death and Rebirth**

An outline given in *Introduction to the Gospel according to Matthew* (Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, San Francisco, 2000 p.15) states that Mt’s Gospel is based around 5 discourses (or sermons) giving Jesus’ teaching about God & his heavenly kingdom. The discourses have a pattern of similar concluding phrases that reveal the structure of the Gospel (7:28 “& when Jesus finished these sayings...”; 11:1 “& when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples...”; cf. also 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Each discourse is preceded by a short collection of stories or narratives telling of the deeds & miracles of Jesus’ public life.

The narrative-discourse units make up five “books” which are framed by a prologue (chaps.1-2) & the concluding Passion Week narratives (chaps 26-28). Mt’s arrangement of narrative-discourse highlights the complementarity of Jesus’ works & words. Again it also suggests the Gospel was organised to make it easier to be memorised & as a help in the catechesis of early Christians.

**Prologue Narrative: The Ancestry & Infancy of Jesus (1:1-2:23)**

- A. Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17)
- B. Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (1:18-25)
- C. Visit of the Magi (2:1-12)
- D. Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt (2:13-15)
- E. Slaughter of the Holy Innocents (2:16-18)
- F. Return of the Holy Family to Nazareth (2:19-23)

**1. Book I: John the Baptist & Jesus’ Early Ministry (3:1-7:29)**

- A. *Narrative*: Ministry of John & Jesus (chaps.3-4)
- B. *Discourse*: Sermon on the Mount (chaps.5-7)

**2. Book II: Jesus’ Miracles & the Commission of the Twelve (8:1-10:42)**

- A. *Narrative*: Miracle stories of Jesus (chaps.8-9)
- B. *Discourse*: Missionary Sermon for the Apostles (chap.10)

**3. Book III: Growing Controversy & the New Kingdom (11:1-13:58)**

- A. *Narrative*: Jesus confronts an evil generation (chaps.11-12)
- B. *Discourse*: Parables of the Kingdom (chap.13)

**4. Book IV: Jesus Instructs Peter & the Twelve (14:1-18:35)**

- A. *Narrative*: Various travels & miracles of Jesus (chaps.14-17)
- B. *Discourse*: Sermon on Life in the Church (chap.18)

**5. Book V: Jesus travels to Judea & Enters Jerusalem (19:1-25:46)**

- A. *Narrative*: Events in Judea & Jesus’ Teaching in the Temple (chaps.19-23)
- B. *Discourse*: The Discourse on the Mount of Olives – Judgement on Jerusalem (chaps.24-25)

**6. Passion Week Narratives: The Suffering & Resurrection of Jesus (26:1-28:20)**

- A. Anointing at Bethany (26:1-16)
- B. The Last Supper (26:17-29)
- C. Betrayal & Trials of Jesus (26:30-27:26)
- D. Crucifixion & Burial of Jesus (27:27-66)

- E. Resurrection of Jesus (28:1-15)
- F. The Great Commission (28:16-20)

### **III. MATTHEW'S PICTURE OF JESUS**

When we turn to Mt from Mk's Gospel, we see several changes in the picture of Jesus (especially obvious when you can compare texts in Mk with parallels in Mt).

Mt presents a Jesus who is a figure of greater dignity & majesty than Mk's. The Jesus who is respected as the Risen Lord in Mt's church, is already present with his disciples in the public ministry.

Mt suppresses or modifies the material Mk gave to give impression of the *vulnerable* or weak Jesus. He assures the reader that Jesus is not just a figure of the past who will return *in judgement* sometime in the future, but who lives every day with his *Church* as its Teacher & Lord. He has a new name; he is Emmanuel. He is the Lord who is always present with his Church (1:23; 18:20; 28:20). He shares the burdens of those who are weary & heavy laden (11:28-30).

Mt uses various ways to give us a picture of Jesus even more exalted than we find in Mk. Here are some of them:

- **Son of David, Son of Abraham (1:1)**

From the very start of the Gospel Mt tells us that Jesus was the true "*Son of David, Son of Abraham*" (1:1), Messiah for both Jew & Gentile.

*Son of David* – in him the prophecy of Nathan is fulfilled & the expectations of the *Jewish* people are met (2 Sam 7:12).

*Son of Abraham* – in him all the nations of the earth, the *Gentiles*, would find a blessing (Gen 12:3)

Through three sets of 14 generations, beginning from Abraham, God's providence was preparing for his birth. Even foreigners like Rahab & Ruth played a part in God's divine plan (1:1-17).

Mt's church was predominantly Jewish in origin, but now Gentiles, foreigners, were flooding in. He began his Gospel with a formula that would speak to both. He is "*for all the nations*". This mission is anticipated in the story of the Magi (2:1-12) & he ends with the mission of the Jewish disciples to all the nations (28:16-20).

- **Son of God**

Mt makes far more than Mk of the title *Son of God* for Jesus. Just as in Mk, this sonship:

- Was announced from heaven at the Baptism & Transfiguration (3:17; 17:5)
- Acknowledged by unclean spirits (8:29)
- Confessed on Calvary not just by the centurion but also by “*those with him*” (27:54)

But Mt goes beyond Mk:

- In the Infancy Narrative, he makes it clear Jesus had no human father (1:20)
- It was as *Son of God* that he was tempted by Satan (4:4,6)
- Even during the ministry, the disciples as a group, after the walking on the water, confessed him as *Son of God* (14:33), anticipating the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi (16:16)
- At his trial, he was asked, “Are you the Christ, the *Son of God*?” (26:65) (Mk: “Son of the Blessed One” 14:61)
- As he was dying, his enemies taunted him as *Son of God*, reminding the Jewish reader of the persecuted righteous man in Wisdom (Wis 2:18) (27:43).

- **Teacher**

In Mk, Jesus was admired as a teacher with authority (1:22) but Mk gave us relatively little of what Jesus actually taught (Mk 4:13). Mt not only gives Jesus’ teaching in 5 solemn discourses, he:

1. Interprets the Law (5-7)
2. gives instruction for mission (10)
3. teaches in parables (13)
4. instructs the community (18)
5. prepares for the time between the resurrection & parousia when he returns as judge (24-25)

He also describes Jesus’ teaching in terms that put him on a par with God himself. He implies a parallel between Jesus’ teaching on the mountain in Galilee & the giving of the Law by God on Mount Sinai.

*Exodus 19*: God spoke to Moses on a mountain, so that Moses could announce his message to the people: “*God spoke these words to Moses...*” (Ex 20:1)

*Matthew 8*: Jesus spoke to his disciples on a mountain, so that they could announce his message to the people: “*You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, but I say to you...*” (Mt 5:21; 28:20).

- **Miracle Worker**

Mt also increases Mk’s stress on Jesus as a miracle worker by devoting chapters 8-9 to story after story of his miraculous activity.

The first 3 miracles of chap.8 show that Jesus is concerned for all people:

*First*: he heals a leper (a man & a Jew)

*Second*: he heals the slave of a centurion (a slave of a Gentile)

*Third*: he heals a woman (a woman & a Jew).

In this way Jesus’ healing is available “for Jew & Greek, slave & free, male & female” (Gal 3:28). Mt includes all the Markan miracle stories, though he describes them much less vividly.

- **King**

In Mk, this title is only used during the Passion story (15:26). Mt adds significantly to the list:

- Negatively, he is mocked as king as he suffers & dies (27:29,37,42)
- Positively, the Gentile Magi honour him as king at his birth (2:2,11)
- He is greeted as the humble king foretold by Zechariah (9:9) when he enters Jerusalem (21:5)
- It will be as king that he will judge the world (25:34)
- The genealogy prepares us for his kingship by including several kings in his ancestry (as opposed to Lk who includes prophets instead) (1:1-17)

- **He is worshipped**

Jesus’ royal status is implied in the way people approach him throughout his ministry. They bend low before him – an attitude prefiguring the worship that Christians gave their Risen Lord (1 Cor 12:3):

- The leper (8:2)
- The ruler (9:18)
- The Canaanite woman, a foreigner (15:25)
- The mother of James & John (20:20)

He is often called *Lord* (*kurios*) by his disciples & others (8:2,6,21,25)

Non-believers simply call him *Teacher* (22:16,24,36)

Judas, who was to betray him, calls him *Rabbi*, a title he forbade his

friends to use (23:8; 26:25,49).

Mt omits most of the *human emotions* displayed by the Markan Jesus. (Compare Mt's versions of Mk 1:41; 3:5; 8:12). Unusual in Mt is his "compassion" on the crowds before the feeding (14:14).

- **He fulfils the OT**

Mt repeatedly calls attention to how Jesus fulfils in his person & his mission the teaching of the OT.

*In the Infancy Narrative:*

1:23 He is the "Emmanuel" foretold by Isaiah 7:14

2:6 He is born in Bethlehem like the Messiah expected by Micah 5:1

2:15 He is the Son described by Hosea as being called out of Egypt (Hos 11:1)

2:23 He was called a Nazarene which would remind Jewish readers of Samson, the great Nazarite of Judges 13:5.

*During the Ministry:*

4:14-16 the surprising start of his ministry in Galilee rather than in the Holy City fulfils Isaiah 8:23-9:1

8:17 His miracle working fulfils the mission of the Servant in Isaiah 53:4

12:17-21 His withdrawal in the face of danger is also explained in terms of the Servant of Isaiah 42:1-4

13:35 His parable teaching followed the way of the Psalmist (Ps 78:2)

21:4 His entry into Jerusalem is described as fulfilling the words of Zechariah 9:9

*During the Passion:*

Jesus' death is explained by referring back to Zechariah 11:12-13 (27:9). Otherwise during the Passion, OT quotation is implicit rather than explicit.

***Matthew Modifies Mark's Vulnerable Jesus***

Mt tends to deepen & enrich the portrait of Jesus as Son of God & Lord of the Church. He does this by modifying texts of Mk that suggest a vulnerable or weak Jesus, in 3 ways:

*Through omission:* He leaves out the accusation of Jesus' family that he is mad (Mk 3:20-21). Similarly the incident at Bethsaida where the blind

man saw “men like trees walking” is omitted, though the incidents before & after in Mk remain (Mk 8:22-26).

*Through modification:* Mt changes Mk’s text. In describing the rejection at Nazareth, Mt says Jesus *did* no miracle instead of *could* do no miracle (Mt 13:58; Mk 6:5).

*Through clarification:* Mt suggests what appeared to be failure on the human level, turned out that way:

- Either because it was the will of the Father (e.g. 11:26)
- Or so that the Scripture might be fulfilled – Jesus endures mockery on Calvary not only in the light of Ps 22 (as in Mk) but also to bring to pass the prophecy of Wisdom (2:22-24).

### ***Jesus & the Future***

The original ending of Mk left the reader in a state of uncertainty. The women were told to tell Peter to meet Jesus in Galilee but they were afraid & we don’t know if they delivered the message (16:1-8). Mt informs his reader of both the present & future roles of Jesus.

#### *He lives on in the Church*

- The angel said his name was “Emmanuel” (“God with us” Is 7:14) (1:23)
- He told his disciples that wherever two or three were gathered in his name, he would be in their midst (18:20)
- They would meet him especially in the “hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick...” (25:44)
- His final promise was to be with his disciples until the end of the world (28:20)

#### *His Return at the End*

- As “Son of Man”, he will return “on that day” to judge the world & his Church, demanding from it not just the knowledge but the fruits of Christianity (7:21-23; 13:36-43; 25:31-46).

## **IV. MATTHEW’S PORTRAIT OF THE DISCIPLE**

Matthew’s treatment of traditions about the disciples differs from Mark’s in much the same way as his treatment of traditions about Jesus. Like Jesus, they are portrayed as less mysterious figures. Just as the Jesus of Mt takes on characteristics of the Lord of the Church even during his

earthly ministry, in the same way the disciples become representatives of the members of the Church in Mt's own time.

Though they are of "little faith", the disciples are portrayed positively. They represent the Church. Contrast their behaviour in the three boat stories described by Mk (4:35-41; 6:45-52; 8:14-21) with parallel texts in Mt 8:23-27; 14:22-33; 16:5-12. They call upon Jesus as their "Lord" & make a model prayer. If at first they don't understand, they respond to Jesus' explanations (16:12).

They are blessed (13:11-16) & are promised that they will sit on the twelve thrones judging Israel (19:28-29). Their mission continues until the end of time.

### *Models of discipleship in Matthew's Gospel*

Matthew includes almost all the "one appearance" characters of Mk, but he reports them at shorter length & their role is to throw light on the majesty & authority of Jesus. Their role as examples for the reader as in Mk passes to the disciples of Jesus who, although they are of "little faith", show themselves ready & eager to respond to Jesus.

## **V. THEOLOGY OF MATTHEW**

The Gospel of Mt tells the story of Jesus from a particular point of view. Each of the 4 evangelists sees Jesus from a particular perspective; each therefore has its own theology – there will be similarities & differences. Mt presupposes the reader is familiar with the OT (he quotes it 41x), usually with the formula "that it might be fulfilled" (1:23).

He presents Jesus in v1 as the Son of David & the Son of God. The angel's words to Joseph in ch.1 give a clue to the whole Gospel: Jesus is begotten of the Holy Spirit, he will "*save his people from their sins*", he will be born of a virgin, & he will be called "*Emmanuel*" or "*God with us.*"

Mt presents Jesus, from the start of his public life, as a teacher like Moses; he is also the Messiah but is rejected by the religious leaders of the people – just as the prophets before him were rejected. But he has not come to destroy the Law of Moses but to fulfil it (5:17-19); so the notion of "fulfilment" is a key to the proper understanding of what Mt is saying. Jesus is the fulfilment of the Law of Moses, the prophets & the psalms. The reason for their existence is to point to Jesus as Messiah, Saviour, Son of God & God with us.

Because the Jews rejected Jesus, the Kingdom is given to the Gentiles (21:33-46; 23). There is no room for him in the inn, but the magi (2:1-12), Gentiles, are among the first worshippers of Jesus. This gives us an indication of Mt's universal view that Jesus has come to save all men & women. The same idea comes at the end of the Gospel in his great missionary command to convert all nations.

Mt can be described as the Gospel of the Kingdom – since he uses the word so often. As it's used in the Gospel, “Kingdom” = the reign of God over the heart of man; so the members of the Kingdom are those who are humble, obey God, worship him alone, observe his Law, & believe in Jesus as the Messiah – the fulfilment of all the prophecies. They are the ones who belong to the Kingdom, which is not a place but a quality of life or being in reference to God & his will. Jesus calls all to enter into his Kingdom. The originality of Mt lies in his explicit identification of the Kingdom with the Church (16:18; 18:17).

In Mt the Kingdom is not just something in the future; it is present right now as an existing society. This is clear from the parables of the weeds (13:24-30, 36-43) & the net (13:47-50). That the Kingdom-Church is a hierarchical society, of which the disciples are the present existing reality & the future governing body, is clear from the “ecclesial discourse” in ch.18.

Mt's Jesus has a dignity & majesty that is very attractive. He is a great teacher & shows infinite compassion for the plight of sinners. Perhaps that's why Mt's Gospel was quoted by the Church Fathers more often than any other Gospel.

## **VI. SPIRITUALITY OF MATTHEW**

Christians read the Gospels primarily because they want to be inspired somehow by God's Word. How does Mt inspire? In this final section I will try to give a simple road map to guide you in your exploration of Mt.

Two major themes intersect at the heart of Mt's Gospel – Christology & ecclesiology. Christologically, Mt is most concerned to tell the story of the messiah & God's Son, Jesus of Nazareth, as he has come to know it. So he uses various Christological titles (Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, Lord, Christ, Emmanuel etc.) & tells the story with great reverence. Even the name “Jesus” is Christological, for Mt points out its meaning (1:21) & uses it much more than the other Gospels (150x compared to Mk's 81x & Lk's 89). He instructs his audience about the origin, identity, mission & religious significance of Jesus Christ. Into this

main story he interweaves the opposition that Jesus faced. God has enemies, Satan & all his allied forces of evil. As God's Son, Jesus bears the brunt of this opposition. As Jesus' story unfolds, so does the opposition he meets.

Another major theme intersects with this story line. Ecclesiologically, Mt wants to describe the nature of the Church as he has come to know it. Mt is often called "the Gospel of the Church" because it is the only Gospel to mention the word "Church" (*ekklesia* 16:18; 18:17). This theme centres on the disciples of Jesus. They make up a new community whose lives are forever changed because of their association with Jesus Christ. Much of Mt's teaching material focuses on explicit or implicit instruction to the disciples. Thus Mt gives his understanding of the Church as the group that follows Jesus on the path of righteousness. The Church is a new people, a new family, whose duty is to evangelise the world.

These two themes direct in large part Mt's spiritual teaching. As you read Mt's Gospel look out for his understanding of Jesus Christ & the Church (the disciples). Running throughout the Gospel are many other thematic clues to Mt's spiritual interests. Here are just 12 of them:

- *Prophecy & fulfilment*: God's plan was foretold by the prophets & is fulfilled in Jesus;
- *God's relationship to Jesus*: God is a loving Father whose chief desire is mercy, not sacrifices; Jesus is the faithful & obedient Son (Mt calls God Father 40x compared to Mk's 2x);
- *Emmanuel*: Jesus is God-with-us who abides with his people forever even down to the tiniest remnant of faithful ones;
- *Jesus the messiah*: Jesus has power in word & deed to heal people & bring them salvation;
- *Universalism*: Jesus brings salvation to all, including the Gentiles;
- *Righteousness*: God wants all to live ethically upright lives for which they will be held accountable;
- *Final judgement*: a time of separation of good & bad, along with a lot of apocalyptic imagery about fire, weeping, gnashing of teeth;
- *Discipleship*: following Jesus is not easy & will involve humility, suffering & rejection; it means a share in Jesus' ministry;

- *Faith & doubt:* believing in Jesus is often accompanied by questions or doubts, but fear is the real enemy of faith;
- *Conversion:* encountering Jesus means acknowledging one's sinfulness, accepting God's forgiveness & extending forgiveness to others;
- *Prayer:* prayer should be simple, regular, humble & from the heart;
- *Evangelisation:* Jesus sends his disciples into the world to baptise & make disciples, proclaiming the gospel message.

The list is by no means comprehensive. Much of Mt is geared toward Christian ethics. Mt is the evangelist most concerned about ethical behaviour & its consequences. Thus there are many moralistic teachings in Mt. One must try to balance this perspective with awareness of other themes, but it's not an exaggeration to say Mt's spirituality has many ethical overtones to it. For Mt, holiness cannot be separated from how we live our lives each day confronting the ethical decisions we meet.

**For Personal Reflection:**

What might be the message of this Gospel for today?

**Further Reading?**

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October 2016