

gospel according to saint matthew

The Gospel According to Saint Matthew is one of the four canonical gospels in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. Traditionally attributed to Matthew, one of Jesus Christ's twelve apostles, this gospel presents a unique portrait of Jesus, emphasizing His role as the Messiah and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. This article delves into the key themes, structure, and significance of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, providing insights into its theological implications and historical context.

Historical Context

The Gospel of Matthew is believed to have been written between AD 70 and AD 90, a period marked by significant events in early Christianity, including the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. This event deeply influenced the early church and its understanding of Jesus as the Messiah.

- Audience: Matthew's gospel primarily addresses a Jewish audience, highlighting Jesus' ties to Jewish traditions and prophecies.
- Purpose: The gospel aims to affirm the belief that Jesus is the promised Messiah, encouraging Jewish Christians to remain steadfast in their faith amidst growing tensions between Judaism and Christianity.

Structure of the Gospel

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew is structured in a way that interweaves narrative and discourse, leading to a climax in the passion narrative. It can be broadly divided into several sections:

1. Introduction (Chapters 1-4)

This opening section includes:

- Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17): Establishes Jesus' lineage from Abraham through David, highlighting His Jewish heritage.
- Birth Narrative (1:18-25): Describes the virgin birth and the significance of Jesus' name, "Emmanuel," meaning "God with us."
- Flight to Egypt (2:13-15): Fulfills the prophecy of Hosea regarding God's son calling out of Egypt.
- Baptism and Temptation (3:1-4:11): Marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry after His baptism by John the Baptist and His subsequent temptation in the wilderness.

2. The Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7)

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most famous sections of Matthew, encompassing essential teachings of Jesus. Key elements include:

- Beatitudes (5:1-12): A series of blessings that outline the characteristics

of those who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven.

- Fulfillment of the Law (5:17-20): Jesus emphasizes that He has come to fulfill the Law, not abolish it, reinforcing His role as the Messiah.
- Ethical Teachings: Includes teachings on anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and love for enemies, urging a higher standard of righteousness.

3. Miracles and Ministry (Chapters 8-10)

This section illustrates Jesus' authority through various miracles and His compassionate ministry. Notable events include:

- Healing Miracles: Jesus heals a leper (8:1-4), a centurion's servant (8:5-13), and Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15).
- Discipleship (9:9-13): Jesus calls Matthew to follow Him, showcasing His mission to the marginalized and sinners.
- Commissioning of the Twelve (10:1-15): Jesus sends out His disciples to preach the gospel, emphasizing the urgency of their mission.

4. Parables and Teachings (Chapters 11-13)

In these chapters, Jesus employs parables to convey deeper spiritual truths. Notable parables include:

- The Parable of the Sower (13:1-23): Illustrates different responses to the gospel message.
- The Parable of the Weeds (13:24-30): Explains the coexistence of good and evil in the world until the final judgment.

5. Peter's Confession and the Passion Prediction (Chapters 16-20)

This pivotal section includes:

- Peter's Confession (16:13-20): Peter declares Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus affirms Peter's role in building the church.
- Passion Predictions (16:21, 17:22-23): Jesus foretells His suffering, death, and resurrection, preparing His disciples for the events to come.

6. The Final Week (Chapters 21-27)

The climax of the gospel centers on Jesus' final days in Jerusalem:

- Triumphal Entry (21:1-11): Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy.
- Cleansing of the Temple (21:12-17): Jesus challenges the commercialism in the Temple, asserting His authority.
- The Last Supper (26:17-30): Jesus institutes the Eucharist, symbolizing His body and blood as a new covenant.
- Crucifixion and Death (27:32-56): Details the events leading to Jesus' crucifixion, highlighting His suffering and the fulfillment of prophecy.

7. Resurrection and Great Commission (Chapter 28)

The final chapter describes:

- The Resurrection (28:1-10): An angel announces Jesus' resurrection to the women at the tomb.
- The Great Commission (28:16-20): Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations, emphasizing the universal scope of His message.

Theological Themes

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew is rich in theological themes that have shaped Christian thought. Key themes include:

1. Jesus as the Messiah

Matthew emphasizes Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The genealogy and numerous references to prophetic texts underscore this identity.

2. The Kingdom of Heaven

The concept of the Kingdom of Heaven is central to Matthew's theology. Jesus describes its nature, ethics, and the attitudes required to enter it, highlighting the transformative impact of His teachings.

3. Discipleship

Matthew outlines the cost of discipleship, emphasizing commitment, sacrifice, and the call to spread the gospel. The teachings of Jesus challenge followers to live righteously and serve others.

4. The Role of the Law

Matthew presents Jesus as the authoritative interpreter of the Law. Jesus' teachings reaffirm the Law's importance while revealing its deeper spiritual intent, stressing mercy and justice over mere ritual observance.

Significance and Influence

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew has had a profound impact on Christian doctrine and practice. Its emphasis on Jesus' teachings and the call to discipleship continues to resonate with believers today. Key aspects of its influence include:

- Liturgical Use: Matthew's gospel is frequently read during liturgical celebrations, especially during Advent and Lent, highlighting its relevance in the Christian calendar.
- Foundational Text: The Sermon on the Mount has been a foundational text for Christian ethics, influencing moral teachings and social justice movements throughout history.
- Interfaith Dialogue: Matthew's strong Jewish roots make it a vital text for interfaith dialogue, bridging understandings between Judaism and Christianity.

Conclusion

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew stands as a vital document in Christian scripture, offering a unique perspective on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Its emphasis on Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, along with its rich theological themes and profound moral teachings, continues to inspire and challenge Christians around the world. Through its narrative, Matthew invites readers to explore the depths of faith, the nature of discipleship, and the transformative power of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew?

The main theme of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, presenting Jesus as the Messiah and King, who brings salvation to both Jews and Gentiles.

How does Saint Matthew's genealogy of Jesus differ from that in the Gospel of Luke?

Saint Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus' lineage through Joseph, highlighting his legal right to the throne of David, while Luke's genealogy traces it through Mary, emphasizing Jesus' biological descent.

What are the Beatitudes and where can they be found in Matthew's Gospel?

The Beatitudes are a collection of blessings pronounced by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5:3-12, and they outline the attitudes and characteristics of those who are part of the Kingdom of Heaven.

What is the significance of the Great Commission in Matthew's Gospel?

The Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:19-20, is significant as it commands the disciples to spread the gospel and make disciples of all nations, marking the mission of the Church and the universal call to evangelism.

How does Saint Matthew portray the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish law?

Saint Matthew portrays Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish law, emphasizing that He came not to abolish it but to fulfill it, teaching that true righteousness surpasses mere legal adherence.

What parables unique to Matthew are important for understanding Jesus' teachings?

Key parables unique to Matthew include the Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30), the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), and the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), each illustrating moral and spiritual lessons.

How does Matthew's Gospel address the theme of discipleship?

Matthew's Gospel addresses discipleship by emphasizing the costs and commitments involved, illustrating through Jesus' teachings and the actions of the disciples the importance of following Him wholeheartedly and living out the values of the Kingdom.

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