



# **THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

**GOD'S BIG IDEAS**

**SESSION 2**

# SYNOPTIC RELATIONSHIPS

- Matthew and Luke date from around the same time
- Both use Mark
- Matthew stays closer to Mark (includes 90% of Mark's verses; Luke has c.50%)
- Luke has the largest proportion of distinctive material

# MATTHEW AND MARK

- Many key themes in common
- Matthew develops some themes differently and more fully:
  - Identity of Jesus
  - Observance of the Jewish law
  - Church and its common life
- Thematic structures much the same

# 1. ERAS OF PROMISE AND FULFILMENT

A historical framework for understanding Matthew's story:

- The era of promise:
  - Old Testament law and prophets
  - Explicit promises and stories
  - Divine revelation incomplete and restricted
- John the Baptist: the transitional figure

# 1. ERAS OF PROMISE AND FULFILMENT

- The era of fulfilment:
  - Eschatological age of the kingdom
  - Inaugurated by Jesus, esp. his death and resurrection
  - Jesus the unique focus of biblical promise
  - Continued in the time of the church

## 2. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

God's eschatological (end-time) saving rule through Jesus

- John the Baptist prepares the way
- Jesus proclaims, demonstrates and teaches the kingdom
- In the present it is
  - Concealed and unexpected
  - Powerful and opposed
  - Growing

## 2. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The parables of Jesus:

- Explain the kingdom and call for response
- Both disclose and conceal it
- Warn of retribution for those who reject it

But judgment is held back until Jesus' return

# 3. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

Very rich understanding of Jesus:

- Expressed in titles, fulfilment of prophecy, words and deeds
- Twelve dimensions to consider (could be more or different!)
- Certain ideas recur

# 3. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

1. Fully human
2. Preacher and teacher
3. Prophet like *Moses*
4. Saviour
5. Servant of the Lord
6. Christ / Messiah

# 3. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

7. Lord

8. Son of God

9. Son of man

10. Emmanuel

11. Wisdom

12. Object of prayer, reverence etc.

# 4. JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Jesus' death:

- Redemptive sacrifice for many
- Provides forgiveness
- Defeats death
- Foundation for the kingdom

# 4. JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Jesus' resurrection:

- Vindicates Jesus against his opponents
- Launches new and greater phase of the last days
- Includes God's gift of universal, sovereign authority

# 5. THE RETURN OF JESUS

- Jesus will return to complete the kingdom
- He will exercise God's judgment
- Delay and imminence
- Judgment for disciples on basis of works
- Judgment for outsiders on basis of identification with Jesus
- Eternal reward and condemnation

## 6. THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Jesus will baptise with the Spirit
- The Spirit comes on him for mission
- He casts out demons by the Spirit
- The Spirit will speak through his persecuted disciples
- The Spirit is the agent of Jesus' conception

# 7. ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

- Jesus' mission is directed to the Jews...
- ...including especially the lowly in Israel
- But he (re)defines 'Israel' as those who believe and submit to him

# 7. ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

- Israel's leaders fail to recognise Jesus
- They are hostile to him and pursue him to death
- Israel collectively rejects Jesus and the kingdom
- Ethnic Israel loses its exclusive privilege as God's people
- The nation and temple are destroyed
- Many Jews are excluded from the kingdom, and the leaders lose their position

# 7. ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

- The kingdom will now be extended to Gentiles
- Some share in its blessings during Jesus' ministry
- Jesus sends out his followers to make disciples of all nations

## 8. DISCIPLESHIP

- Jesus reveals God and calls people to follow him
- Basic response is repentance and faith
- Forgiveness, provision, revelation, life, rest
- Following the way of Jesus, greatness in service
- Love of God and neighbour, including the enemy

## 8. DISCIPLESHIP

- Perseverance through suffering
- Seeking the kingdom
- Readiness for Jesus' return

## 8A. DISCIPLESHIP: KEEPING THE LAW

- The Jewish law is the will of God for Jesus and his disciples...
- ...including Jewish religious practices
- ...and the interpretations of scribes and Pharisees
- BUT it is authoritative only as interpreted by Jesus...
- ...and in light of the gospel and kingdom
- Jewish tradition is rejected when it conflicts with Jesus' teaching

## 8A. DISCIPLESHIP: KEEPING THE LAW

- Jesus' disciples must obey the law by a 'greater righteousness' to enter the kingdom
- Jesus' teaching radicalises, intensifies and transcends the law
- The law becomes an expression of the love commands and the 'Golden Rule'
- It includes inward motives and attitudes
- It prioritises ethical conduct over ritual

## 8A. DISCIPLESHIP: KEEPING THE LAW

- Goal of Jesus' commands is perfection, not as a condition for entering the kingdom, but as a genuine aspiration
- Righteous deeds must not be done to be seen by others

# 9. THE CHURCH

Jesus creates his disciples into a new community:

- Heir to the scriptures and promises of Israel
- Israel for the end times: assembly of God, keeper of the law
- Grounded on Peter and the Eleven
- Egalitarian structure
- Includes good and bad people
- Local and cosmic

# 9. THE CHURCH

At a local level:

- Authority vested in the assembly
- Community life: forgiveness, pastoral care, discipline
- Ministry of prophets and scribes

At a cosmic level:

- Opposition and persecution, but sustained by Jesus
- Small beginnings and massive growth

# 10. MISSION

- The Twelve share Jesus' authority and mission
- They have authority to declare the conditions for entry to the kingdom
- After the resurrection, the Eleven are sent to make disciples of all nations
- This is also a task for all disciples

# APPLICATIONS

- Living in the age of fulfilment: raised expectations of God's work; Old Testament fulfilled only in Christ
- Orienting ourselves to the greatness of Jesus
- Reckoning with Jesus' demand for a 'greater righteousness'
- Considering the place of the law in Christian discipleship
- Resourcing our common life as God's people