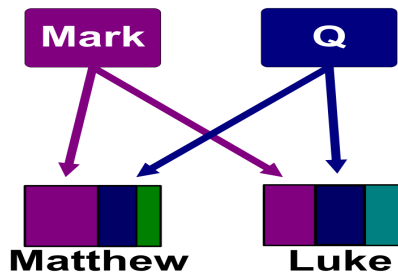


5 Themes in Matthew

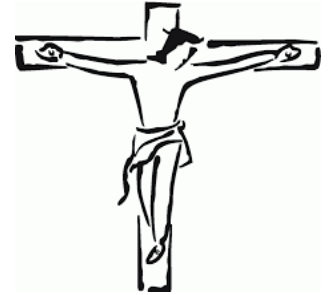
Two-source Hypothesis



Theme 0: Jesus

Jesus, and more importantly Jesus and the Cross.

One way of thinking of all the Gospels is, this is how Matthew/ Mark/ Luke/ John answer the question, 'How do we think about the fact that Jesus was crucified?'



Theme 1: Messiah¹

The word **ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ** appears 16 times in Matthew

Matthew 1.1: An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Matthew 11 points us to a picture of the type of Messiah Jesus is. In John we see a conflict explained perhaps by the difference between his expectations of the Messiah, and the reports of Jesus' ministry. Many Messianic expectations

centred on judgement. Jesus' own self understanding seems to be more significantly informed by the lense of Hosea 6.6

Hosea 6.6: For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings, which Jesus quotes twice (Matthew 9.13; 12.7)

Theme 2: The Kingdom of heaven²

Jesus teaching on the kingdom of heaven has elements of being already present and a future reality. As it breaks into the present it is characterised by God's power, demands righteousness and is inclusive in outlook. In its' final realisation, bought about by the power of God, it will be marked by judgement by and then acceptance of God's people



Matthew 11.12: From the days of John the Baptist until **now the kingdom of heaven** has suffered violence,...

vs: **Matthew 4.17:** From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

¹ Brendan Byrne: *Lifting the Burden: Reading Matthew's Gospel in Church Today*

² S. McKnight: *Matthew Gospel of in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*



Theme 3: Integrity and Hypocrisy³

The Wheat and the Weeds (Matthew 13.24-30) is an example of the theme of integrity and hypocrisy, which only God can truly discern.

Matthew 25.32-33: All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

The idea of sheep and goats is another example. In this sense it is connected to the theme of 'kingdom of heaven', in that in the final form of the kingdom, inaugurated by God, after the nature of people is revealed (judged), those who have integrity will be separated from those who do not. Importantly this judgement can only be done by God.

Theme 4: Structure⁴

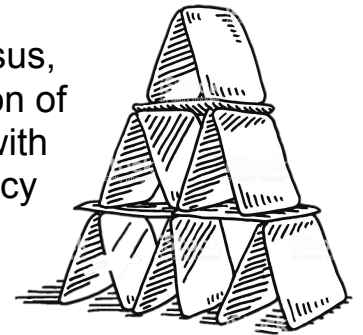
Matthew weaves together various structures.

At one level the structure follows a chronology of the life of Jesus, echoing the ancient Greek literary form of the *bios*. The function of the *bios* was to reveal the underlying character of its' subject with carefully chosen stories. It is important to understand the infancy and crucifixion in this revelatory light.

Matthew also dedicates much of the Gospel to a story/teaching structure.

The main teaching episodes are

- 1) Ch 5-7 Teaching about the Kingdom (Beatitudes/ Sermon on the Mount)
- 2) Ch 10 Preaching of the Kingdom (Missional teaching)
- 3) Ch13 Mysteries of the Kingdom (The Kingdom of heaven is like...)
- 4) Ch 18 How to be the Kingdom (Calling a child/ importance of forgiveness)
- 5) Ch 24-25 Last days and final judgement



Theme 5: The cross

Perhaps the best way to understand the crucifixion and resurrection in Matthew is that it is the culmination of the other themes. It answers the question as to what type of Messiah this is. It demonstrates the present and future Kingdom of God, through revealing and healing. It reveals the divine integrity of Jesus, and finally it is the lead in to the final teaching.

Matthew 28.19-20: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

³ Judy Stack: *The Gospel of Matthew on Integrity & Hypocrisy* Ep 83 The Bible for Normal People

⁴ I.R.C. Cousland *Introduction to Matthew in The New Oxford Annotated Bible NRSV 4th Ed*