
UNIQUE MESSAGES OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

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DAY 2: MATTHEW

INTRODUCTION

Matthew was for centuries considered the most important and earliest of the four gospels. It was the favorite of the Catholic Church because it uses the word “**church**” and because of the special commission to **Peter**, on which they based their papal succession. It’s also the **most quoted** of the four gospels generally.

It’s fascinating to note that possibly not more than **30 days** of Christ’s three-year ministry are recorded in the gospels, with an intense focus on the last few days in all four books. Matthew has most of those days in his book, but there are entire sections that cover only a single day, something that is easy to overlook if you are only reading small parts or from a harmony-version.

Matthew **quotes Mark** extensively—in many cases word for word (in the Greek). The substance of 606 of Mark’s 661 verses appears in Matthew. Some are also shared with Luke but not in Mark. That leaves about 42% of Matthew that is unique.

Gospel	Exclusive	Common
Mark	7%	93%
Matthew	42%	58%
Luke	59%	41%
John	92%	8%

In the Joseph Smith Translation, the title of the eyewitness Matthew’s work is changed to “**The Testimony of Matthew.**” John gets the same title, but not Mark or Luke, who get their content second hand.

Q

As stated, Matthew and Luke quote extensively from Mark. This overlapping material is called the “**Triple Tradition.**” But there are about 220-235 verses (depending on who is counting) that are *not* in Mark but are in both Matthew and Luke. This is called the “**Double Tradition.**” So where does this overlapping text come from? Is Matthew quoting Luke, or Luke Matthew? Or are they both quoting a third source that we no longer have?

There are several competing theories about it, but the dominant one among scholars today is a hypothetical document called “**Q**” (from the German word for ‘source,’ *Quelle*). Many believe that this document was used by both Matthew and Luke as the basis for their shared sections. The theory is basically that there was first an **oral tradition** about Jesus (people told the stories). Then someone **wrote some of this** so that it might be preserved. This is Q. Then the gospel writers took the oral stories, testimonies from eyewitnesses (including themselves with Matthew and John), and Q, and wrote their own accounts. The existence of Q helps explain some of the wording in Matthew and Luke that is nearly identical—implying that they are not simply interpreting an oral tradition but are **both copying from a written source**.

We could spend the entire class or more talking about Q theories—where it came from, who wrote it, what it contained, how it relates to Paul, and more. It is important to understand that **there is no Q document**. One has never been found, not even a little scrap of papyrus. It is completely **hypothetical**. So all the debate about what it contains is simply drawn out of what we see in Matthew and Luke. But I wanted to mention it because if you begin to look at any New Testament studies and commentaries today, you will run into it, and I have found that Latter-day Saints are sometimes confused or concerned about it.

We need not be. It is a handy way to explain the “Double Tradition,” the overlapping texts in Matthew and Luke. And if such a document did exist at one point, it doesn’t cause any problems for our doctrine or theology. After all, it is fairly logical that someone would write down things that Jesus said and did early on, as some believe that Matthew did, perhaps even while Jesus was alive.

Where the controversy sometimes arises is that *some* scholars have taken the Q concept as the **only original story** of Jesus, and because the 220 or so verses that are overlapping in Matthew and Luke are almost **all teachings** (only **one miracle** is included), they have used this to claim that the stories of Jesus’ divinity and power are late creations by his disciples and thus not the ‘true’ Jesus. But those conclusions are based on a host of assumptions about when the gospels were written and by who, all of which are intended to deny faith in Christ. They deny the resurrection and they deny all prophecy. We could not possibly agree with this extreme group. But we should not be concerned with a discussion about Q or any similar early record of the life and sayings of Jesus. Indeed, our own Book of Mormon and early Church history attests that God encourages his Saints to write things down early on.

THEMES

There are three common themes in Matthew:

- 1) ***The importance of the Church and Kingdom of God.*** Matthew is the only gospel to use the word “**church**” (*ekklesia*), such as 16:13-19.
 - a. Matthew **18** is a unique chapter about **regulating the church**, including **conversion** (1-5), **removing harmful elements** (12-14), **resolving differences** (15-17), and genuine **forgiveness** (21-35). D&C 42:84-92 is similar in content and concludes by quoting Matthew 18:17. This is heightened in the JST by emphasizing commandments (5:50; 6:29-30; 9:35-36; 16:25-29) and ordinances (5:1-4; 18:10-11).
 - b. **Jesus as King and Messiah** are both emphasized as well, starting with the **genealogy (1:1-17)** which is the royal line, which emphasizes the number 14 (the

number for the name of “David” in Hebrew; d=4 + v=6 + d=4). This is demonstrated by: the **wise men** searching for the king and **Herod’s alarm** over it (**2:1-16**); **parables** of the kingdom (**13:1-52**), the **triumphal entry** (**21:1-11**), and the **inscription** above Jesus’ head at the crucifixion (**27:37**). The Greek phrase “**kingdom of heaven**” occurs **33** times in Matthew, and “**kingdom of God**” **4** more.

- 2) **Jesus’ condemnation of first-century Judaism and traditions.** In Matthew, Jesus **attacks** the **formalism** and **hypocrisy** of the Jews more than in the other gospels. This comes out even **more strongly in the JST** (adding to the uniqueness of Matthew), such as **9:15-16**, where it is expanded to talk about the deadness of the Pharisee’s baptism. In the JST version of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches the disciples to call the hypocritical Jews to repentance (**Matt 7:6-7**).
- 3) **Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.** Matthew, like **Jacob (7:11)** saw Jesus’ mission as the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophesies. He did not come to destroy but to fulfill (**5:17**). Scholars have identified at least **60 Old Testament quotations** in Matthew. **Eleven** of these are in chapters **26-27**, the “Passion” chapters of Matthew. More specifically, Matthew cites 14 specific scriptures as being fulfilled by Jesus, 8 of which come from Isaiah. These citations take the form, ‘**Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet**’ or something similar. The list is:

Matthew	OT Scripture
1:22-23	Isaiah 7:14
2:5b-6	Micah 5:1 and 2 Samuel 5:2
2:15b	Hosea 11:1
2:17-18	Jeremiah 31:15
2:23b	Isaiah 4:3 (perhaps) and Judges 16:17
3:3	Isaiah 40:3
4:14-16	Isaiah 8:23-9:1
8:17	Isaiah 53:4
12:17-21	Isaiah 42:1-4
13:14-15	Isaiah 6:9-10
13:35	Psalm 78:2 (though Matt says Isaiah)
21:4-5	Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9
26:56	formula without citation (cf Mark 14:49)
27:9-10	Zechariah 11:12-13 (also Jeremiah 18:2-3; 32:6-15)

Some of these relate to the minutiae of Jesus’ life, showing to the early Christians that Jesus was the fulfillment of scripture **in every detail of his life**.

Other scriptures that are just cited but not called out include: 2:5-6; 3:3; 4:4, 6-7, 10; 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43; 9:13; 10:35; 11:10; 12:7, 40; 13:14-15; 15:4, 7-9; 18:16; 19:4-5, 7; 19:18-19; 21:9, 13, 16, 42; 22:24, 32, 37-38, 43-44; 23:39; 24:30; 26:31, 64; and 27:45.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW

Matthew is also known as **Levi** in the New Testament (**9:9**; cf Mark 2:14). He was a **tax collector at Capernaum**, probably working for Herod Antipas. He exhibits a **great knowledge of the scriptures**—even though as a publican he would **not have been allowed into the synagogue**. As a

tax collector, Matt/Levi was probably well-educated, with the ability to read and write, do arithmetic, and probably speak Greek.

The gospel with his name today was attributed to Matthew as early as Papias (c. 140) and certainly by Irenaeus (c. 185). Said **Papias** (according to Eusebius):

“Matthew composed his history in the Hebrew [Aramaic] dialect, and everyone translated [or, ‘interpreted,’ according to *ANF* 1:155] it as he was able” (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.16).

Irenaeus stated:

“Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect [Aramaic], while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome” (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.2).

Matthew may well have written down some of the sayings and events of Jesus’ life at the time they happened—hence the comment that he first composed his work in Hebrew/Aramaic. The only early versions we have of Matthew are in Greek.

Matthew was probably written **after Mark**, thus AD 65-70.

The **JST** version of **1:18** indicates that Matthew was drawing on **at least one written source** for his infancy narratives, though his is the only source we have today with that information.

AUDIENCE

Matthew was written for a **Jewish audience**, because he gives some of the same events and words as Mark but without the explanation (cf. **Mark 7:1-4** with **15:1-2**; see also 1:1-7 which is a royal Davidic line; 5:22; 23:5; and 27:6).

Matthew’s audience is further indicated by several factors: 1) He speaks of the **synagogue** in the **second or third person** (“their” or sometimes “your”, 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34); 2) He speaks of the **scribes in the third person** (“their scribes”, 7:29). 3) He alludes to a time of **tension between Jewish and Gentile converts**, solely mentioning Jesus’ admonition to only take the gospel to the Jews (10:5-6; 15:24), but he also lists **Gentile women in Jesus’ genealogy** (1:3-6), has **Gentile wise men** (2:1), and emphasizes the **faith of two Gentiles** (8:10-12; 15:28). He also includes the **great commission** to teach all nations (28:19), showing that his message is to accept Gentiles into the Church.

AUDIENCE EXAMPLES

Thinking of his Jewish audience, Matthew portrays Jesus as the new Moses:

- 1) He came out of Egypt (2:13-23).
- 2) He gave a new law on the mountain (5:1).
- 3) He gave five sermons that match Moses’ five books (5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25).
- 4) He ends each sermon with the same wording (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1) except the last which ties them all together (26:1). These phrases are unique in Matthew and in fact unique in the entire New Testament.

In addition, Matthew uses Jewish titles that reflect the Messianic expectation, such as “Christ,” “anointed one,” “Son of Man,” “King of the Jews,” and “Son of God.” A particular example is in his baptism, where Matthew refers to him as ‘the coming one’ (*ho erxomenos* in Greek; KJV says “he that cometh”), though Mark and Luke do not use that phrase (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16). John’s disciples later asked if Jesus was the coming one (11:3). The answer is provided in the previous chapters, from 4:23 to 9:35, a chiasm/bracketing that portrays Jesus as the healing and preaching Messiah.

OUTLINE AND STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW

Matthew writes to testify that Jesus is the manifestation of God’s love and care for his people. Jesus is *Emmanuel* (God with us) at the beginning (1:23) and likewise promises to be with the disciples always at the end (28:20). This concept brackets the entire structure of the book to remind us of what he does for us.

Matthew breaks his work into seven sections: a **prologue** and **climax**, with **five** middle sections, each concluding with a major **discourse** by Jesus. This makes it similar to the **five books of Moses**. The discourses are:

- 1) Prologue—Birth and Infancy (1-2)
- 2) Proclamation (3-4); Sermon on the Mount (5-7)
- 3) Galilean ministry (8-9); Missionary discourse (10)
- 4) Opposition (11-12); Parables (13)
- 5) Christ and the Church (14-17); Church life and order (18)
- 6) Jerusalem (19-23); Eschatological discourse (24-25)
- 7) Climax—Passion, Death, and Resurrection (26-28)

UNIQUE MESSAGES IN THE SEVEN SECTIONS

PROLOGUE: BIRTH AND INFANCY (1-2)

As mentioned, Matthew teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT. The book begins with a **unique Old Testament-like genealogy** that ties Jesus both to Abraham and David (1:1). It is important that Matthew includes four women in his genealogy, each of which is Gentile: **Tamar (1:3)**; **Rachab (1:5)**; **Ruth (1:5)**; and **Bathsheba (1:6)**. This helps establish part of his message that Jewish Christians need to accept Gentiles into the church.

It is only through Matthew that we have any **insight into Joseph** and his experience with the birth. He was “a just man” (1:19) and though certainly feeling betrayed by Mary’s pregnancy, determined to quietly divorce her. An angel appeared to him in a dream, assuring him that the baby is divine and he should still marry her and call the baby Jesus. Joseph was obedient and faithfully carried out his instructions (1:20-25).

Continuing the Gentile theme, all nations symbolically come to Christ in the Matthean story of the **Magi**, even while the Jews (through Herod) symbolically reject him and try to kill him (2:1-18).

Matthew is the sole gospel to tell us of the going to and coming back from **Egypt** that is the Exodus for Jesus, fulfilling Hosea's prophecy that he is God's son (**2:13-15, 19-23**).

BOOK 1: PROCLAMATION; SERMON ON THE MOUNT (3:1-7:29)

John the Baptist is not just the forerunner, but the **foreshadower**. He declares in Matthew (**3:2**) what Jesus declared in Mark (**Mark 1:15**). In the baptism, it is only in Matthew that we learn that Jesus is baptized "**to fulfil all righteousness**" (**3:15**), a phrase which also appears in **2 Nephi 31:6**, more than 500 years before John the Baptist (though in a bit of circular reasoning, the translation of whatever phrase was on the plates became Matthew's KJV text).

Satan's three **temptations** in Matthew (**4:1-11**) are similar to Luke's account but given in a **different order**. Matthew's is probably the correct order as Luke probably changed it to match his temple-focus (more on that tomorrow).

All the gospels mention Jesus going to **Capernaum**, but he sounds like a visitor passing through. Matthew only tells us that he went to **live there** (**4:13**), apparently with Simon Peter, whose house is probably known today through archaeology. Matthew sees this as a fulfillment of a statement from **Isaiah 9:1-2** (**4:14-16**).

In Matthew, Jesus' ministry is threefold: **teaching, proclaiming, and healing** (**4:23**). The first example of teaching is thus introduced: the **Sermon on the Mount**, which represents the fulfilling of the Law of Moses (which came from the mount) by the new Moses. There are a large number of unique teachings in the Sermon. Some are found in Luke and a few in Mark, but in different settings. Examples of unique teachings in Matthew include:

- 5:19-20 – Righteousness must exceed the scribes and Pharisees
- 5:21-22 – Don't be angry with your brother
- 5:27-28 – Adultery in the heart
- 5:33-37 – Do not swear at all
- 6:1-4 – Giving alms
- 6:5-6 – Prayer
- 6:16-18 – Fasting

BOOK 2: GALILEAN MINISTRY; MISSIONARY DISCOURSE (8:1-11:1)

This second book does not have much that is unique in terms of text, but it is how Matthew organizes the stories. He portrays **three sets of three miracles**, each buffered by a **pericope** (segmented story).

First is 8:1-17, the story of three marginalized people being healed—the leper, the centurion's (who is Gentile) servant, and a woman (Peter's mother-in-law). (Then Matthew describes him healing many others that evening, noting it all as a **fulfillment of Isaiah** in **8:17**.) The buffer is 8:18-22 describe the cost of discipleship.

The second, 8:23-9:8, shows the power of Jesus over nature (calming the storm), over devils (healing of the **two possessed** Gergesenes in **8:28**—different from Mark and Luke where it is just

one), and over sins (healing the sick of the palsy), which extends to the buffer story of eating with publicans and sinners (9:9-17).

The third (which actually has four events, though the ruler's daughter and woman with an issue of blood are typically counted as 1) is 9:18-34, teaches the power of faith over death/illness, blindness, and deafness/Satan. The last event also transitions to the third book, as the antagonism with the Jewish leaders builds. The buffer is 9:35-38, where Jesus speaks of the work that needs to be done to save souls.

The discourse in this book is 10:1-11:1, which includes the commissioning of the Twelve (**only to the house of Israel** at this time, according to Matthew, **10:5-6**) and was preparatory training for their service. It includes three warnings about persecution, two of which are unique to Matthew—that they will be dragged before **governors** and **kings**, and that **families will contend** with each other (**10:17-21**). These persecutions are not what they should fear. Rather, they should only fear the eternal judgment (10:26-42).

BOOK 3: OPPOSITION; PARABLES (11:2-13:52)

This section portrays the increasing tension between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. John was praised (11:7-15), after his disciples saw how Jesus did the mighty works of the Messiah (11:2-6). Jesus declared “woe” to the cities who had rejected him (11:20-24) but thanks the Father for the faithful disciples who were with him (11:25-27). This teaching is concluded with the famous and unique Matthean “**Come unto me**, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me...For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (**11:28-30**) to those who repent and follow his teachings.

Jesus defied Pharisaic Sabbath rules twice, first by picking grain (12:1-8), then by healing a man with a withered hand (12:9-13). Part of the healing is the unique Matthew query about **pulling a sheep out of the pit** (**12:11-12**). As Jewish opposition grew (12:14), he gained increased popularity with the people (12:15-16). Matthew alone quotes **Isaiah 42:1-3**, saying this scripture about the **Gentiles** trusting in “my beloved” was fulfilled in Jesus (**12:17-21**). He healed a man who was possessed, blind, and dumb (12:22-23). The Jewish leaders charged him with doing all this by Satan's power (12:24), but he refuted them (12:25-30). When asked for a sign, Jesus said adulterous people seek for signs, but gave them two anyway, both relating to Gentiles—Jonah and the repenting of Ninevah (12:39-41), and the queen of the south who came to learn from Solomon (12:42). Finally, he declared that his followers are his family (12:46-50).

The discourse is 13:1-52, a collection of parables that is given in response to his previous forthright declarations, now veiled from those who do not have the Spirit to help them understand. The parables emphasize the **themes** of the universal victory of God, the certainty of judgment, and the separation of the true disciples from the world and the synagogue (portrayed physically as Jesus finished the discourse separately and alone with his followers in v. 36). Five of the parables presented here are unique to Matthew:

1. Parable of the **wheat** and the **tares** (**13:24-30, 36-43**)
2. Parable of the **hidden treasure** (**13:44**)
3. Parable of the **pearl** of great price (**13:45-46**)
4. Parable of the **net** (**13:47-50**)

5. Parable of things **old** and **new** (13:51-52)

BOOK 4: CHRIST AND THE CHURCH; CHURCH LIFE AND ORDER (13:53-18:35)

This part closely parallels Mark 6-8, but includes unique references to Peter's position and the Church. Thus Matthew leads us toward the formation of the Church unit itself, and towards a greater understanding of the Jesus' coming passion. Jesus was rejected at Nazareth (13:53-58), and we learn of the death of John the Baptist (14:1-12), foreshadowing Jesus' own death. Jesus fed the church while at the same time heightening the role of the disciples with the people (14:13-21; 15:29-39), and he symbolically saved the church from the storm in the **walking on the water** incident, including saving Peter, the model disciple—a story only found in Matthew (14:22-33). Sometimes Peter is criticized for being of little faith, but he did get out of the boat in the first place, he did walk on water, and after he took Jesus' hand, he did walk again on water back to the boat with Jesus' help. The story shows that through faith in Christ, we can achieve all things.

The break with the Jews is heightened by his teaching to reject their rituals and food laws (15:11, 17-18). Matthew includes the condemnation of a common practice during that day of taking funds that should be used to care for parents and claiming to have given it to the temple (15:3-6). Unlike Mark, the disciples in Matthew are not **'blind'** but the leaders (15:14); the followers are simply "of little faith" (14:31, meaning they have faith but panic in a crisis) or "without understanding" (15:16).

Matthew uniquely calls out Peter's **revelation-based testimony** and **reception of keys** (16:17-19). The first passion prediction is given (16:21) though Peter rebuked him and was in turn rebuked by Jesus, who called them all to take up their own crosses and follow him (16:22-28). The transfiguration confirmed Jesus' divine role and mission (17:1-8) and was followed by a second passion prediction (17:9-13) and then a third (17:22-23). Showing continuing preference to Peter, Matthew alone tells the story of Jesus miraculously providing **tribute money** (temple tax) **from the fish** for the he and Peter (17:24-27), which perhaps led to the question in 18:1.

The discourse is 18:1-35, focused appropriately on church life and order, with much unique material. Jesus addressed both the need to care for little ones (children and those of lower station, 18:2-14) and how discipline is handled in the church (18:15-35). Unique teachings include:

- We must be **converted** and **humble** like **children** to enter the kingdom (18:3-4).
- **Angels** watching over **children** always behold the face of the Father (18:10).
- How to handle **church discipline**, including witnesses and confession (18:16-17).
- Peter's question about **how often to forgive** (18:21).
- The parable that answers the question, the **unforgiving servant** (18:23-35).

BOOK 5: JERUSALEM; ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE (19:1-25:46)

The story part of this, the longest section, is in two halves: the journey to Jerusalem (19-20) and the clash with the Jewish authorities (21-23).

Going up to Jerusalem, Jesus first responded to a challenge about marriage from the Pharisees (19:3-9). Matthew records a unique conversation (19:10-12) when, hearing his response, his disciples suggested that, perhaps "**it is not good to marry.**" Jesus' response was basically to say

that the higher law of marriage he was teaching is not for everyone. Then he blessed some children (19:13-15).

Next, a rich young man came to ask what he needed to do, but couldn't bring himself to give everything up, as requested, eliciting a comment about how hard it is for the rich to enter heaven. Matthew's unique contribution to this story is subtle but interesting. All three accounts have him say that he keeps the commandments Jesus first lists. Only Matthew has him ask the logical but telling follow-up question: "**what lack I yet?**" (19:20). Jesus' response is also unique: "**If thou wilt be perfect...**" (19:21).

Much of Matthew 20 is unique. Jesus gave the parable of the **laborers in the vineyard** to show how laborers in his kingdom are rewarded equally (20:1-16), then gave a detailed passion prediction mentioning both crucifixion and the role of Gentiles (20:17-19). James and John's mother spoke in their behalf, seemingly ignoring the passion prediction and causing a reaction among the other ten. Jesus only promised suffering like his own (20:20-28). **Two blind men** (one only in Mark and Luke) receive sight and follow Jesus, typifying the blindness of the disciples who need healing to see who Jesus really is (20:30-34).

The Triumphal Entry and cleansing the temple both fulfill prophecy in Matthew, and he alone cites relevant Old Testament verses. Matthew's details on the animal ridden is unique, with Jesus telling them to "**find an ass tied, and a colt with her**" (21:2) presumably the mother and offspring. Matthew is not clear which animal Jesus rode, though the scripture quoted from **Zechariah 9:9** makes it sound like it was the mother (21:4-5). Once in the city, he cleansed the temple (21:12-13), but Matthew adds that afterwards, he **healed** the blind and the lame that were there (21:14). The **angry chief priests and scribes** told him to stop the praise (21:15), but he **quoted Psalm 8:2** that "perfected praise" comes from such (21:16), and left for Bethany (21:17).

In Matthew, the "**chief priests and the scribes**" (sometimes "elders") are only mentioned in relation to **attempts on Jesus' life**. This starts with the babes in Bethlehem (2:4) and continues in this section. An encounter with them about his authority (21:23-27) leads to three parables, the **first one** unique to Matthew and the other two having unique Matthean elements, about God's rejection of them for others:

- The parable of the **two sons** (21:28-32).
- The parable of the wicked husbandmen (21:33-46), which includes the unique pronouncement in Matthew that the kingdom will be **given to another nation** (43).
- The parable of the marriage supper (22:1-14), including the phrase unique to Matthew, "**many are called, but few are chosen**" (14), which ends up in Doctrine & Covenants 95:5 and 121:34.

This is followed by four 'dispute' stories where the Jewish leaders attempt to challenge and "entangle" Jesus (22:15):

- Paying tribute to Caesar (22:16-22).
- Marriage in the resurrection (22:23-33).
- The greatest commandment, which in Mark the scribe and Jesus agree but in Matthew it's a **dispute** (22:35-40).
- Who is Christ (22:41-46).

The result is an unprecedented uniting of the Pharisees and Sadducees against him (22:34). Jesus concludes the section by stumping them with a question about whose son the Messiah is, which is the last time they talk to him until his trial (22:41-46).

In chapter 23, Jesus turns away from those disputes and to his disciples and the crowd, and pronounces eight woes upon the Jewish leaders (which they surely heard). Luke has an abbreviated version of this, but the details and depth of the condemnation is best preserved in Matthew (23:1-39).

The discourse is chapters 24-25, much of which is in Mark 13 and Luke 21. Interestingly, in the Joseph Smith Translation, the Prophet basically **replaced Mark 13 with Matthew 24**, making the two accounts nearly identical, the only place in the translation where he did that with such a large portion of text. He did not do that with Luke 21, but rather made changes that **make Luke's version even more unique**.

Thus in chapter 24, Jesus prepares the disciples for his return by giving them signs that will lead up to it. In chapter 25, he supplies three parables that all teach patience and vigilance in waiting for that coming, one of which is unique to Matthew—the **parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13)**.

CLIMAX: PASSION, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION (26-28)

The last three chapters in Matthew include the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Matthew's account provides a number of unique items, including the following:

- The section begins with Jesus clearly teaching that he will be **crucified**, not a singular pronouncement but unique in Matthew to this setting (26:2).
- The “chief priests and elders” **meet at the palace of Caiaphas**, the high priest, to plot Jesus' death (26:3). Notice that at this point, two days before the Passover, they have no plans to act until after the feast (26:5). Those plans will change because of Judas' unexpected offer.
 - This is the first time we encounter Caiaphas in Matthew (he was not mentioned by name in Mark). He was high priest from AD 18 to 36, very long for a period of history when the average high priest was in office for only four years. His longevity was likely due to his close alliance with Pilate, who appointed the high priest under Rome's authority. When he arrived in AD 26, Caiaphas was already in office, but the two seem to have had a tight alliance and common goals. Both were dismissed from their respective offices at about the same time by the governor in Syria, Vitellius. Understanding their alliance is important to understanding what happened to Jesus.
- Though the other gospels talk about Judas betraying Jesus for money, only Matthew gives the amount—“**thirty pieces of silver**” (26:15), which he agreed to ahead of time and which was a symbolic price: the value of a slave from Exodus 21:32.
- During the Last Supper, Jesus announced that one of the Twelve would betray him. All the synoptics record the group asking, ‘Is it I?’ Only Matthew, however, records Judas' individual question: “**Master, is it I?**” Judas shows his arrogance and deceit by the question—he has already made the deal and taken the silver. Jesus' response shows that he also knows Judas' role but will make no effort to stop him: “**Thou hast said**” (26:25).
- In his Gethsemane account, Matthew makes some subtle changes to Mark's account, which he appears to be copying, which improve the story and clarify certain items.

- For example, in Mark, he uses the names **Simon** and **Peter** interchangeably—they both belong to the same person, Simon being his birth name, and Peter (*Cephas* or rock in Aramaic) the name Jesus gave him. And interestingly, in Mark’s account, Jesus tends to use “Peter” (“the rock”) when he is doing well, and “Simon” when he needs some correction, as when Jesus returned from praying to find him asleep. But Matthew does not assume that we know all of that, and so in Gethsemane just calls him Peter (26:40).
- Also, Matthew is more specific about Jesus’ action. Mark says he “fell on the ground” (Mark 14:35), but Matthew wants us to know that he is in the most humble attitude of prayer: “he went a little further, and **fell on his face**” (26:39).
- When the mob comes to arrest Jesus and a sword is brought out for defense, Jesus said to put it away, for he could call on the Father and get “more than **twelve legions of angels**” (26:53). A legion is about 5,000 infantry, so 12 legions would be about 60,000 angels! Jesus does not call on them, however, because “how then shall the scripture be fulfilled” (26:54)?
- After Jesus was condemned, **Judas regretted** his decision, and took the silver back to the chief priests and elders. When they refused to do anything differently, he threw the silver on the ground and went **hanged himself** (27:3-8). The Jewish leaders used the money to buy the potter’s field to use as a cemetery for strangers. Matthew sees this as a specific fulfillment of **Zechariah** (he says Jeremiah) **11:12-13** (27:9-10). Note that though no other gospels speak of Judas’ death, Acts does (1:16-20). Matthew says he hanged himself, while Acts says that purchased a field, fell, and “burst asunder in the midst.” In the **Joseph Smith Translation** of Matthew, Judas hangs himself, but then fell down (because the branch broke?), “and his bowels gushed out, and he died,” harmonizing the two accounts.
- Speaking of Judas, BYU professor Richard Holzapfel (currently a mission president) has pointed out a fascinating parallel between Judas and Jesus and two characters from **2 Samuel 15-17—Ahithophel** and **David**. Matthew’s Jewish audience would surely have recognized these seven similarities, heightening both the sense of Jesus being the fulfillment of the Old Testament and his link to the royal line of David.
 1. Both stories have an intimate friend turn traitor—Judas betrays Jesus and Ahithophel betrays David. Ahithophel was David’s counselor who defected to the gathering forces of David’s son, Absalom (2 Samuel 15:12).
 2. Both David and Jesus cross the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives (2 Samuel 15:23, 30).
 3. Both David and Jesus pray in their struggles, Jesus in Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, and David weeping with his head covered (symbolizing prayer) as he went up the Mount Olivet (2 Samuel 15:30).
 4. Like Peter to Jesus, Ittai the Gittite pledges to defend and stay with David in life or death (2 Samuel 15:21).
 5. Jesus prayed for the will of the Father to be done, as did David (2 Samuel 15:25).
 6. Judas brought soldiers to Gethsemane at night to arrest Jesus. Likewise, Ahithophel told Absalom to give him 12,000 men and he would pursue and take David that night (2 Samuel 17:1-3).
 7. Judas and Ahithophel both deeply regretted their actions later, and as a result, both hung themselves (2 Samuel 17:23).
- During Jesus’ encounter with Pilate, Matthew alone tells us that **Pilate’s wife** had a disturbing dream about Jesus and tells her husband that he should do nothing “with that just man” (27:19). Pilate, of course, ignored her counsel.

- Pilate’s offer to release a prisoner and the crowd’s choice of **Barabbas** is recorded in all three synoptics (in Matthew, 27:20-21). While it is not in our KJV, many **ancient manuscripts** of Matthew has a fascinating addition that leading New Testament scholars believe is the original reading—and highly ironic. These manuscripts state that the released prisoner’s name was also **Jesus**. This means that Pilate was offering a choice to the people: release Jesus bar Abbas (Yeshua son of the father, since Abba means father) or Jesus the Christ (Yeshua the Son of God). How telling that the crowd chose to release the rebel, murderer, and zealot over the peaceful Jesus, probably because the former was the one they thought could provide them freedom from oppression (Rome).
- He did, however, attempt to absolve himself of the situation by **washing his hands** before the people, something only Matthew describes (**27:24-25**).
- Each of the four gospels gives different sayings of Jesus while on the cross. Jesus’ **final utterance** in Mark and Matthew is simply a cry in a loud voice. But in the JST version of Matthew, we get the actual words of the Savior, which somewhat matches what John says (19:30) but echoes back to Gethsemane as well: “**Father, it is finished, thy will is done**” (**JST 27:50**).
- Matthew is the only one to mention an **earthquake** in conjunction with Jesus’ death, which earthquake was associated with the tearing of the veil of the temple and led to the pronouncement of the centurion and others that Jesus was “the Son of God” (**27:51, 54**).
- Matthew also uniquely describes that after Jesus was buried, the now-collaborating Sadducee chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate together to explain that they needed permission to **put a guard at the tomb**, in order to make sure Jesus’ disciples didn’t steal the body and claim he was resurrected, as he had said he would do (**27:62-66**). When Jesus did indeed rise from the dead, these same leaders **bribed to guards** to lie about what happened and promised to **protect** them if they got in trouble for sleeping while on guard duty (their fake cover story, **28:11-15**).
- Matthew is the source for the fact that an **angel rolled back the stone** in front of the tomb (**28:2**).
- Finally, it is only in Matthew that we get the Galilean divine commission to “Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (**28:19**). Matthew concludes with Jesus’ promise to be “**with you always**, even unto the end of the world” (**28:20**).

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