

Matthew—Christ, the Messiah

Elaine Elliott

January, 2006

Matthew often has been called the gospel which presents Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, promised King of the Jews. There are more Old Testament references than in any other gospel showing that Jesus fulfills these promises. The gospel is structured around five major discourses which reinforce Jesus as a teacher greater than Moses who gave us the five books of the Law.

Matthew builds his case that Jesus is the Messiah by citing Old Testament prophecies and providing the evidence that Christ fulfills each point. In addition, he draws on a number of archetypal Old Testament characters, but particularly Moses the Lawgiver, David the King, and Elijah the Prophet. He shows us the parallels in their lives to that of Jesus. But in all cases the ultimate point is that Jesus is superior to these precursors, mighty as they were.

The implicit comparisons build to a climactic moment when Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus on a mountain, and God identifies Him as His son—someone far beyond these great heroes. Then in the passion all the themes from the sacrificial system of the law of Moses are fulfilled in the crucifixion. Elijah's ascent to heaven in a chariot of fire is fulfilled in Christ's resurrection and ascension.

My reflections seem very much like epigrams, drawing on significant Old Testament parallels, rather than on imagery. But the result for me was a deeper appreciation of these parallels and how consciously Matthew draws our attention to them. In years of reading the gospels this had not become as clear to me as it did in the process of working on these meditations.

Preparation		1-4
Parentage	1:1-17	
Promise of God	1:18-24	
Place of birth	2:1-12	
Protected	2:13-23	
Preaching by John	3:1-17	
Purpose	4:1-11	
Preaching by Jesus	4:12-25	
Discourse 1—Sermon on the Mount		5-7
Changed values	5:1-11	
Call others	5:13-16	
Confirm truth	5:17-20	
Condemning others	5:21-26	
Cast out sin	5:27-32	
Clear promises	5:33-37	
Cooperate	5:38-42	
Care for enemies	5:43-48	
Closet giving	6:1-4	
Closet praying	6:5-15	
Closet fasting	6:16-18	
Care from God	6:19-34	
Condemnation	7:1-6	
Continue asking	7:7-10	
Changed hearts	7:12-20	
Careful obedience	7:21-29	
Healings		8-9
Worship	8:1-4	
Willing to ask	8:5-13	
Welcomed	8:14-22	
Waiting	8:23-27	
Wanting help	8:28-34	
Watching	9:1-8	
Purposelessness	9:9-17	
Waiting	9:18-26	
Wishing	9:27-34	
Recruitment	9:35-38	
Discourse 2—Sending Disciples		10
Sent out	10:1-4	
Secure provision	10:5-15	
Safe in God	10:16-42	
Conversations		11-12
John's disciples	11:1-19	
Christ's disciples	11:20-30	
Pharisees	12:1-45	
Family & friends	12:46-50	
Discourse 3—Kingdom Parables		13
Prepared hearts	13:1-23	
Partial good	13:24-30, 36-43	
Process for change	13:30-35	

	Purchased by God	13:44-46	
	Partitioning good & bad	13:47-52	
Miracles			14-17
	Prophet killed	14:1-12	
	Provision of food	14:13-21	
	Peace in trouble	14:22-36	
	Purity	15:1-20	
	Plea of faith	15:21-28	
	Place of healing	15:29-31	
	Providing food	15:32-39	
	Pharisee's opposition	16:1-12	
	Peter's prophecy	16:13-28	
	Place of revelation	17:1-13	
	Possession undone	17:14-21	
	Prophecy of death	17:22-23	
	Provision of taxes	17:24-27	
Discourse 4—Kingdom greatness			18
	Relax in God	18:1-11	
	Return to God	18:12-14	
	Reconciliation	18:15-19	
	Real forgiveness	18:21-35	
To Jerusalem			19-22
	Confrontations	19:1-15	
	Choosing obedience	19:16-30	
	Clear target	20:1-19	
	Creating leaders	20:20-27	
	Coming for healing	20:29-34	
	City receives Christ	21:1-11	
	Confrontation in temple	21:12-27	
	Confrontational stories	21:28-46; 22:1-14	
	Clever repartee	22:15-46	
Discourse 5—End Times			23-25
	Hypocrites condemned	23:1-36	
	Jerusalem grieved	23:37-39	
	Destruction of Jerusalem	24:1-51	
	Stories of judgment	25:1-46	
Passion			26-27
	Plotting	26:1-16	
	Last Supper	26:17-35	
	Arrest	26:36-56	
	Trial	26:57-75	
	Judas hangs	27:1-10	
	Trial before Pilate	27:11-31	
	Crucifixion	27:32-56	
	Buried	27:57-66	
Resurrection			28
	Resurrection	28:1-10	
	False stories	28:11-15	
	Commission	28:16-20	

Introduction

Matthew moves majestically
Through scripture stories and sayings,
Connecting each one to Christ the King,
Beginning at birth of both Christ and his people,
Going through God's history of grace.
Matthew's meditates meaningfully
And slowly searches the scriptures.
Here in original order he opens
The mystery of Messiah's meaning.
Abraham is ancestor and anchor
To the promise of a people with the purpose
Of bearing the burden of blessing.
His wife Sarah seems so similar
To Mary, both mothers of mystery.
Moses' many meaningful
Parallels point to God's purpose.
The wilderness wanderings resulting in wisdom.
The Law given as living love.
Elijah and Elisha show an electric
Power, paralleled in Jesus' pastoral care.
The prophets parallel his preaching,
His justice, judgment and joy.
He is Messiah, a new Moses, Mediator,
Suffering's severe solution,
Victorious victim of the vicious
Bitter battle between
Great and small, good and evil, God and Satan.

Alliteration

Record of ancestry (1:1-17)

Birth story (1:18-23)

Great promises from the past come true now.
Christ's power is to be vast,
And David's throne is to last.

This is the great reversal which will reach
And change each fault from the fall.
Abraham's son transforms all.

We see so many blunders in Christ's line,
It is a sign we're under
Grace and transforming wonder.

Englyn penfyr

Virgin will conceive (1:23)

Joseph's dream (1:19-25)

Sarah's laughter becomes joy flung abroad,
Unaware God will destroy
All sin through her promised boy.

Abraham, surprised to hear what God tells
Through the angels come so near,
Finds faith, and lets go of fear.

Isaac's birth is a human shock, something odd
Done by God so men can walk
And begin to hear Him talk.

Mary's surprise turns to joy flung abroad,
Understanding God will destroy
All sin through her promised boy.

Joseph is surprised to hear what God tells
Through the angel come so near,
Finds faith, and lets go of fear.

Christ's birth is a human shock, something odd
Done by God so men can walk
And begin to hear Him talk.

Surprise and joy were God's gift for each one
So through each son God could lift
Our sin, and heal the old rift.

Englyn penfyr

A ruler from Bethlehem (2:6)

David came from Bethlehem,
A young shepherd who could sing.
And his Son must follow him
To be the once and future King.

Samuel anointed David
To prove he would be the one
That God had chosen to replace,
A wicked king whose rule was done.

Saul pursued young David, then,
In his angry, jealous fright.
But David slipped away from him
In the darkness of the night.

Christ was born in Bethlehem,
As one of the prophets said,
When the Magi came to ask,
The old text was found and read.

The Magi brought anointing oil
For the infant King of Kings.
Who would soon replace each ruler
Who ordered many evil things.

To keep him safe, the Magi wisely
Went quietly another way,
Hearing through the dream from God
And humble and eager to obey.

Herod pursued the infant child
In his angry, jealous fright,
But his parents slipped away
In the darkness of the night.

Ballad

Visit of Magi (2:1-12)

Called from Egypt (2:15)
Death of children (2:18)

Set by his frightened mother in the reeds,
Moses' needs were met by others
Until he knew his brothers.

Christ was made a refugee in the night.
In great fright Mary hoped he
Could rest where he could be free.

Moses and Christ escaped death even when
Other children lost their breath.

Both lived without need to run.
Both lived as a borrowed son
Both lived in Egypt and won
Victory when death was done.

Both led people through the sea in a day
Ensuring they could all flee
Ensuring they would be free

Escape to Egypt (2:13-23)
Massacre of the children (2:16-18)

Englyn penfyr

He'll be a Nazarene (2:23)

Samson's mother was
Yet another
Who could not have a child.
 She could not get pregnant.
Like Sarah
An angel spoke to her,
And gave instructions:
 "No drinking,
 No forbidden food,
 Don't cut his hair.
He will be dedicated to God.
He'll be a Nazarite."

Move to Nazareth (2:19-23)

Jesus' mother was
One
Who could not have a child.
 She was a virgin
Like none other.
An angel spoke to her,
And gave instructions:
 "Don't be afraid.
 God's love will overshadow you.
 Name your child Jesus.
He will be very great.
He'll live in Nazareth."

A voice in the wilderness (3:3)

Sitting in the dark
In the midst of a desert
Left alone
Alone to die
Another failure in the struggle to cross
Another statistic for the activists
Animal sounds
Wind
Moonscape creating crazy patterns
Fear

Then a voice speaks
A rescuer comes
Bringing water
Bringing food
A vehicle to carry the dying to the light

A voice in the wilderness

Feed on God's word (4:4) Don't test God (4:7) Worship only God (4:10)

Christ went into the desert
And when Satan tried to hurt him
Christ spoke Moses' words
From the desert.

The Israelites
Wanted food
Demanded things
Worshipped a calf

God through Moses
Sent manna
Sent water
Forgave the golden calf

The disobedient
Wanted Christ to create
Demanded drama
Wanted his worship

Christ
Chose hunger and God's Word
Chose humility and obedience
Chose to worship God

Light shines in Galilee (4:15)

Lighthouse at the center
Global south meets global north
East meets west
A piece of geography
Bearing an above average load of ironies

Ministry in Galilee (4:12-19:1)

*Do not murder (5:21) Do not commit adultery (5:27) Divorce (5:31)
Do not break vows (5:33) Law of revenge (5:38) Love your neighbor (5:43)*

Moses may have given the Law,
But David had a knack for breaking it.
Don't murder—except Uriah.
Don't commit adultery—except with Bathsheba.
Follow the rules on divorce—except with Micah.
Don't break your vows—just to Mephibosheth
Make your revenge equal to the offence—but kill Shimei
Treat others as friends or enemies—even Absalom
Yet David's heart was quick to repent
David humbly accepted consequences
And David knew God's forgiveness

“Have mercy on me, O God,
Because of your unfailing love.
Because of your great compassion,
Blot out the stain of my guilt.
Purify me from my sin.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
Renew a right spirit within me.
Do not banish me from your presence,
And don't take your Holy Spirit from me.”

Moses may have given the Law,
But Christ took it a step farther.
Don't murder—don't even let your anger out of control
Don't commit adultery—don't even live with lust
Don't break vows—just tell the truth
Make your revenge equal to the offense—don't fight back
Treat others as friends or enemies—Love friends and enemies
Yet Jesus offers us God's forgiveness

“Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Don't keep looking at my sins.
Remove the stain of my guilt.”

Removes diseases (8:17)

Elijah the prophet followed God,
He multiplied the oil and wheat,
In a small-town widow's home,
Allowing them all to eat.

Elisha was no normal man
Doing normal daily deeds.
He did strange, unearthly things
Meeting earthly needs.

When Elijah left in fire,
He saw heaven's open door,
And took this holy power on,
And spent it even more.

Elisha saw more miracles
Than any ordinary men.
He led a life of confidence
In God who acted then.

He multiplied olive oil,
And he multiplied bread.
And when it fell, he lifted up
The sunken axe-head.

He raised a child up from the dead,
And healed a leprous man,
Foreshadowing more miracles
In God's future plan.

And when Another came on down
To do His work on earth,
He began His miracles
At His very birth.

Jesus came to heal the lepers.
Not only multiplying the bread,
He could walk where there was water,
And He raised the dead.

Christ did all the prophets did
And He did so much more--
He made men see, gave them voice,
And opened heaven's door.

Ballad

Healings (8:1-9:37)

I want you to be merciful (9:13, 12:9)

**Calling Matthew; (9:9-13)
Sabbath controversy (12:1-14)**

“I have come to call sinners,

Not those who think they are already good enough.”

The people in our churches, to be honest, are always in trouble

Enthusiasm dying away

Compromising with power, privilege and money

Indulging in the flesh

Stale, stagnant

The best you can say for us is that we're weak

Jesus said, “I want attitudes of compassion and tenderness.

I'm not so interested in correct religious practices.”

Hosea told us this many years ago

And demonstrated it even in a troubled marriage.

Jesus called a man who didn't deserve it,

And took Matthew from

Tax collecting sinner to gospel writer.

Jesus repeated this quote,

Defending the actions of David

Who ate the bread reserved for priests

As he ran from Saul. Trouble-maker.

John prepared the way (11:10)

Announcing & denouncing (11:1-12:50)

Elijah announced coming end of drought,

And the fire that he could bring.

He antagonized the king.

Elijah denounced the king at great cost

And nearly lost everything,

But was rescued at a spring.

John announced he saw a dove by a spring,

Mark Israel's king coming from above,

Showing us God's perfect love.

John denounced in what he said God would bring

And the king required his head,

And so God's prophet was dead.

A prophet is in danger of his life,

Struck by strife, the arranger

Of his status as stranger.

Englyn penfyr

God's just servant (12:18-21)

God called Joseph to care for the poor
To gather the food for those in need
To share with his brothers

God called Moses to care for the poor
To collect tithes to share
To ensure justice for the weak

God called Boaz to care for the poor
To shelter his relatives living alone
To welcome them into his life and home

God called Nehemiah to care for the poor
To remove the oppression of interest
Sharing the food from his own table

God called the Messiah to care for the poor
He will not crush those who are weak
Or quench the smallest hope

His name will be the hope of all the world.

Caring for the weak (11:25-12:21)

Speaking mysteriously (13:14-15)

Parables (13:1-58)

Speaking in parables (13:35)

Sowing seeds 13:1-23 (Jer. 4:3) Mustard Seed 13:31-3 (Eze 17:22-25) Sheep and goats (25:31-46) (E 34:17)

Jeremiah wrote of tilling soil
In our hardened hearts. We should not waste
Seed among the thorns in fruitless toil.

Jesus said that growth could not be traced
From seeds scattered far and wide. But fruit
From well-tilled soil was rich to the taste.

Ezekiel wrote of a small cedar root.
Once grown tall the tree could shelter all
The birds, expanded from the smallest shoot.

Jesus said a mustard seed so small
Could grow to become a place of care
For many birds once it became so tall.

Ezekiel spoke of judging, being fair
Separating goats from other sheep,
And rescuing sheep abused and spare.

Jesus spoke of how he will keep
Sheep or fish or wheat. And what fails
He will discard from everything we reap.

Each one works to remove the scales
From our eyes with these intriguing tales.

Terza Rima

Man-made teaching vs. God's (15:8,9)

Critiquing Pharisees (15:1-20)

Prophets specialized in sarcasm
And developed it to a real art form.
They found terrific metaphors
For creative insults and denunciation.
Jesus, the perfect loving God,
Affirmed their sarcastic humor,
And I feel quite comfortable today
Laughing at the fake news
That sees the absurdity
And reminds us how it could be.

Appearance of Moses & Elijah

Mountain-top experience.
Jesus' becomes brilliant sun, a dazzling gem,
Flashing lightening from his face.
Sunlit snow clothing.
Moses and Elijah come,
Bright, dense, fiery cloud.
Mighty ocean, trumpet blast, roar-of-a-crowd voice:
"My Son, most loved, my pride.
Hear him."
Trembling, terrified, face down,
Jesus touches, "Get up. Don't be afraid."

The Transfiguration (17:1-13)

Coming on a donkey (21:5)

David danced into Jerusalem
Leading all the celebrating throngs
Delivering the ark of God to them,
Shouting, blowing trumpets, singing songs.
The people danced into Jerusalem
Shouting praise to God, eager to sing,
Spreading branches and their coats for him.
Praising as the Son of David, King.
The King rides on a donkey's colt, praised
Just as the Ark of God which once came,
Stirring the whole city, all amazed
At the one coming in God's name.
In spirit, David bowed and praised once more,
Having danced on this road before.

Triumphal entry (21:1-11)

Sonnet

My Temple a place of prayer (21:13)
Stone rejected by the builders (21:42)

Stones were pre-finished at the quarry
Jesus came and made it very clear
So there was no sound of iron tools.
Cedar panels, cypress floors
Carved gourds, open flowers.
Golden walls and floor,
Tall cherubim,
Carved angels
Palm trees
Gold.

Latticework and interwoven chains
Pillars at the temple entrance
Capitals on the columns
Formed, shaped like tall lilies
Pomegranates hang
Two bronze pillars
The entrance
Temple's
Door.

Outside in the temple courtyard are
Ten bronze water carts and basins
Carved lions, oxen and wreaths.
Lily blossom basin
Fifteen feet across
On twelve oxen
Three inch walls
Bronze tank
Sea.

God of the living (22:32)

God is alive
And He speaks from the burning light
God is alive
Not warning when He will arrive,
And a star-scape streams in the night,
Collecting angels in the height.
God is alive.

Rondelet

Cleansing temple (21:12-23:39)
Passion predicted (21:18-22:22)

Jesus came and made it very clear
The temple is not a market
It is a place of beauty
Where the talent of men
Transfigure a place
Create great art
Point our hearts
Up to
God.

Jesus drove out the temple merchants
Ruining the grandeur with kitsch
He knocked over the tables
Stalls of those selling doves
The clinking work of
Money changers.
"Return this
Place to
Prayer."

Beauty touches deeply in our hearts
Icons reflect what we can't see
The power, strength, and glory
Grace and delicacy,
Of the abstract world.
Don't ruin it
With money,
Merely
Dull.

Nonet

Resurrection predicted (22:23-33)

Love God and neighbor (22:37-40)

This is the first great commandment
That God in His mercy has sent
And in this all of life we'll find:
"Love God with your heart, soul and mind."

A second command makes us whole:
"Love your neighbor as your own soul."
Together these loves we will bind:
"Love God with your heart, soul and mind."

The law and the prophets are here,
Contained in this basis so clear
"Love all with a heart pure and kind,
Love God with your heart, soul and mind."
Kyrielle

Sit in honor at my right hand (22:44) **Ascension predicted (22:41-46)**

We rightly revere the role
Of a great and gifted governor,
The classic confident King.
But Christ offers a clear case
On the logic of levels of lordship.
Messiah means more
That a revered respected ruler.
He directs David's destiny.
Alliteration

Bless the one who comes (23:39) **Future return (23:1-25:46)**

David sings of the coming king--
They shared a birthplace
Shared an anointing for kingship
Shared rejection
David dodged Saul's spear
Jesus received the spear
David could not build the temple
Jesus raised up the temple in three days
Eternal king who comes in God's name

Powers of heaven shaken (24:29)

Final judgment (24:29-25:46)

Anguished and despairing
Broken with grief
Children staggering
Discarded as refuse
Enemies speaking against us
Fury like fire
Gates sinking in the ground
Homes destroyed
Inheritance given to strangers
Joy ended
Killed by the sword
Little children fainting
Mourning
No place of rest
Oppression
Paying for water
Quaking in fear
Rejected
Silent streets
Tiny lives ebbing away
Unending sorrow
Violated temple
Wounds as deep as the sea
Exiled
Young warriors crushed
Zeal for change

Alphabetical

Sheep will be scattered (26:31)

Disciples leave (26:69-75)

The Lord is our shepherd
But when He died
We were afraid
We ran away.
How could He go after a lion
 With a club and take us from his mouth?
How could He club a bear to death
 If He had been mauled?

Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (27:9-10) Betrayal (26:1-27:10)

Inflation

Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver

Jesus for 30

Joseph went into slavery

Jesus was condemned to death

Joseph was falsely accused of attempted rape

Jesus was falsely accused of claiming to be God

Joseph was put in prison

Jesus was put in a tomb

Joseph was raised to power

Jesus was raised from the dead

The Passion

Destruction dealt a death blow,
Suffering scattering signs of power.

Earth, stars, ocean,
Daylight, deepest caves in the sea,
Death,
Light and darkness,
Snow, hail, lightening, wind,
Rain and dew, ice and frost,
Constellations,
Ibis, rooster, lioness, ravens,
Mountain goats, deer,
Wild donkey, wild buffalo.
The speed of an ostrich,
The pride of a horse,
Hawk and eagles' flight.

Behemoth

Sea dragons

Kronosaurus, Ichthyosaur, Leviathan.

Creatures of unreasonable power.

Christ's power above them all.

Christ is risen above all suffering.