

Matthew's gospel No. 1

Because Matthew explains how Jesus is Israel's promised Messiah-King, he helps Jewish readers with his numerous quotes from the Old Testament.

So a characteristic word Matthew uses is “fulfilled” as he highlights no less than sixty Old Testament references to the coming Messiah and links them all to Jesus.

In the course of explaining to Jewish readers that Jesus was offering his kingdom to the Jews first (Matthew 10.5-7; 15.24), the word “kingdom” occurs fifty-five times and “kingdom of heaven” thirty-two times.

But Jesus is fiercely rejected by the Jews! So they succeed in having him put to death by crucifixion. Matthew 27.37,41-42. In Matthew's final chapter, therefore, there is now no mention of the kingdom. It has necessarily been postponed.

Instead Matthew highlights (1) Christ's triumphant resurrection from the grave, (2) his clear statement (verse 18) that he has by no means lost his earthly authority, and (3) his new approach – sending his disciples to reach out *beyond* Israel! Verses 19-20.

Earlier Jesus had foretold, “This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all the nations.” Matthew 24.14.

Was that wishful thinking? No! It's happening before our eyes.

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How close to us is Jesus? He is “Immanuel” which means “God with us.” Matthew 1.23.

Ken Packer