

MATTHEW

All quotes and comments by Eugene Boring unless otherwise stated.

- 1) – Means "Gift of the Lord," and is the English version of Mattathias. The gospel was possibly written by the disciple Matthew, probably in Aramaic and then soon translated into Greek. But Eugene Boring (NIB) believes that the author wrote in Greek as his primary language and actually didn't speak Aramaic and Hebrew fluently, which would leave Matthew out. It is the fullest of the synoptic gospels, had the greatest influence in the early Church, linked the new message with Jewish traditions. Probably written in Antioch, but there is no direct evidence that the Pauline corpus influenced the author. It doesn't represent itself as a new religion, rather as a "continuation of the People of God." Matthew does however see those Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah as having forfeited their claim as the people of God.. Matthew gathers sayings of Jesus into five great sermons or collations, perhaps to parallel the five books of Moses. In Christian art, Matthew is sometimes represented by the symbol of an animal with a human face, from the four symbolic animals in Ezekiel's vision. Early Christians connected Matthew with the human-faced animal because he begins his Gospel by tracing the human descent of Jesus. Jesus is Greek for Joshua, meaning "the Lord is Salvation." "Christ" is Greek for the Hebrew "Moshiah," meaning "the anointed one." See end of notes for family tree.
- 2) 1:1 – 12-21 – . Matthew redefines the meaning of kingship as suffering love, provokes opposition by Satan represented by the scribes and Pharisees who decide to kill Jesus. Considered to be Part I, in which Matthew lays out the conflict between God's kingdom as introduced by Jesus, whose greatest commandment is love, and the "normal" concept of earthly kingdoms which function in violence, intimidation, and selfishness.
- 3) 1:2-17 – There were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 18 from David to the Exile, and 13 from the Exile to Jesus. No known significance for Matthew's attempt at numerological symmetry. The first two words in the original Greek mean "book of Genesis." When used elsewhere in the Bible, it refers to a book of scripture, usually attributed to Moses. So here it probably refers to the entire book of Matthew, not just the genealogy to follow. It can mean "story," or "origins," or "continuing life," or the first book of Moses.

First 14. Abraham to Perez listed in Genesis, the rest in Ruth. **Three women: Tamar**, who tricked Judah into conceiving a child in her by playing a harlot for him when he refused to marry her when her husband died (see Genesis 38); **Ruth**, wife of Boaz and a Moabite; **Rahab**, wife(?) of Salmon, and who some say was the harlot who sheltered Joshua's spies in Jericho. But this is an impossible anachronism because Rahab lived during the time of the Conquest, 200 years before Salmon.

Second 18. Omits four kings. Three (Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah) were between Joram, who died in 844 BC, and Uzziah, who began his reign in 780 BC (Ahaziah was the grandson of Ahab, whose wife was the "wicked queen" **Jezebel**, adding a **fourth** "tainted" woman to Jesus' line. A **fifth** was **Bathsheba**, Uriah's wife (with whom David committed adultery.) (The numerical value of David's name in Hebrew [DWD] is 14, twice the perfect number 7.) The fourth omitted king was Jehoiakim, who was father of Jeconiah (Jehoiachin), not Josiah.

Third 13. The first two are found in 1 Chronicles. But after Zerubbabel, none are found elsewhere in the Bible, and must have been taken from genealogical listings no longer available.

Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba – Why did Matthew choose these

rather than Rachel, Sarah, etc? Perhaps because they were all foreigners:

Rahab – Canaanite

Ruth – Moabite

Bathsheba – perhaps Hittite (Uriah was a Hittite), but Boring says that she was an Israelite but considered to be a Hittite because of her marriage to Uriah.

Tamar – lived in Canaan; origin unknown but probably not an Israelite.

- 4) 1:4 – Ram (Aram) is the only name to appear for a space of 400 years.
- 5) 1:15-16 – Matthew clearly understands that Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph, but was the “heir” in the legal line of Davidic kingship. See Luke 3:23, where Joseph’s father is named Heli. Some commentators therefore believe that Luke is actually tracing *Mary’s* lineage at this point. For them, this passage should read *son-in-law*.
- 6) 1:18-25.– (The first four verses, 18-21, form the basis of the veneration of Joseph in the Catholic Church.) For the monotheistic Jews, angels were always messengers of God, incapable of independent action, representing the Spirit of God on earth. (See Judges 3:10, 6:34, 14:6.) Matthew's emphasis on the virgin birth seems to negate his earlier emphasis on the genealogy of Jesus. Perhaps: a) Mary was of Davidic descent, not ever claimed in the gospels but firmly ensconced in Christian tradition. b) Joseph was considered the father of Jesus by the people of his time and this fulfilled Jesus' Messiahhood. c) Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy of the virgin birth, but the Hebrew word used (*alma*) clearly means "young woman." *Betulah* is the word for virgin. d) The actual details of his birth aren't known because of its obscurity so an embroidered legend had to be built up to account for such a remarkable person. e) Greek versions of the Bible used "virgin" (*parthenos*) in the Isaiah verse; there were many Jews in Alexandria and other places where Greek influence was strong and Greek was the common language of the people. The Greek version, the Septuagint, translated in Alexandria, does use “*parthneos*.” Matthew may have been faced with two traditions and although mutually exclusive, may have accepted both. /// Jesus/Yeshua/Joshua was a common name at the time. “The savior received a common name, a sign that unites him with the human beings of this world.” Literally, “*Jahweh helps*,” but used by Matthew 80 times to mean “*Yahweh saves*.”
- 7) 2:1-2 – Background for Herod's rise to power: Pompey invaded Judea in 63 BC and ended the Maccabean monarchy. Pompey died in a civil war with Julius Caesar. Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC, Antipater the Idumean in 43 BC, and then the Parthians (modern day Iran) swept westward again as in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Antipater's son, Herod, escaped to Rome, persuaded Mark Antony to make him king of Judea, and began his rule in 37 BC when he took Jerusalem with Roman arms. Herod executed the remaining male Maccabeans, including his second wife, then married eight times after that. Herod died in 4 BC, so Jesus was probably born in 6 BC. /// The "magi" were priests, possibly from Persia, and were probably astronomers as well. Legend has them as three "wise men," given the names Melchior, Gaspar, Balthazar, and whose bodies were taken by Helena, mother of Constantine I, to Constantinople, then later to Milan, and finally to Cologne, Germany. Clearly they were searching for the Messiah. The Maccabees' dream of a Messiah from their own Levite dynasty was dead. The Jews were ready for a Messiah, under the heavy hand of alien Idumean Herod, plus the Roman arms.

- 8) 2:7 The star: nothing in OT prophecy about a star, except possibly Isaiah 60:3, which is his vision of an ideal Jerusalem and isn't quoted by Matthew. The star may have been a comet; Halley's comet appeared in 11 BC. Or a close approach of Jupiter and Saturn, which occurred in 7 BC. Or a supernova, which was not seen (or at least not reported) in that period.
- 9) 2:11 – Gold: kingship. Frankincense: divinity. Myrrh: burial spice. Because of the three gifts it has long been a tradition that there were three men, but nowhere in the narrative does it say this. /// See note at Luke 2:7 for the suggestion that Jesus was born in Joseph's family stable. Here the magi visit Jesus in a "house," implying that the family was now occupying the *kataluma* (guest room) of Joseph's family, as long as two years after Jesus' birth (note that Herod ordered all children under two to be killed).
- 10) 2:13 – Boring: What kind of a God would warn one family and not the others in Bethlehem? Several attempts to explain, NIB p.148-149 (in our church library).
- 11) 2:18 – Ramah was the site of Rachel's grave, and she was the ancestress of the chief tribes carried off to exile by Sargon. But she was **not** the ancestress of the Judaeans; Leah was. There is no mention elsewhere in the Bible or secular histories of this "slaughter of the innocents," so it may be apocryphal, merely a story by Matthew to a) parallel Cyrus who founded the Persian Empire, or b) Romulus who founded Rome, or c) Abraham who in Jewish legend survived King Nimrod's attempts on his life, or d) Moses escaping Pharaoh's wrath in the Sea of Reeds.
- 12) 2:22-23 – Note that the family does not **return** to Nazareth. They bypass their home in Bethlehem to settle in Nazareth. Adam Hamilton in *The Journey* says that Joseph and Mary were betrothed in an arranged marriage and he was living in Bethlehem and she in Nazareth when Gabriel visited her. She traveled nine days south to Ein Karem, Zachariah and Elizabeth's home just four miles from Bethlehem. It was from there that Joseph took Mary to Nazareth, then came back for the census. (JB: why did they not go a family rather than to a stable if Joseph lived there?) /// There is no OT reference to the Messiah living in Nazareth. There are two possibilities: a) Judges 13:5, where Samson's mother is told that her son shall be a Nazarite, or one who separates himself unto the Lord, "like a monk." b) Referring to the habit of the prophets calling the Messiah "The Branch," or "Netzer" in Hebrew (Isaiah 11:1, Zech 6:12, others). A play on words, therefore -- Nazarite or Netzer -- matched with Nazarene, rather than a direct prophecy. "Nazir" in Hebrew means "consecrated." /// The Greek word used to describe Joseph is *tekton*, which can also mean woodworker, craftsmen, possibly stone mason. *Arch-tekton* was a master builder, from which we get "architect."
- 13) 3:1-4 -- 3:1: Probably in John's final year of life, age 33 or 35 or even older.
 3:2: Meaning the "kingdom of God." Matthew is still reluctant to use a divine name.
 3:4 John models himself on Elijah (1 Kings 17:6, 2 Kings 1:8) A late development in Jewish Messianic thinking was that Elijah would return as precursor of the Messiah the last passage of the last book states this: Malachi 4:5. Later Jesus confirms this identification: Matthew 17:12,13.
- 14) 3:4-6 – Locusts were eaten by the poor people of the desert from ancient times to today.
- 15) 3:7 -- "Brood of vipers" literally means "sons of snakes." Not merely an insulting term, but pictures them as poisonous false teachers who pervert the people. The Pharisees and Sadducees were opposing factions, but Matthew makes them a united front against John, prefacing their unity in opposing Jesus.

- 16) 3:11 – Boring interprets “after me” as meaning that Jesus would become John’s disciple.
- 17) 3:13 -- Why was Jesus baptized? 1) To identify with us, that is, to set an example for us to follow. 2) To put the stamp of approval on *John’s* ministry. 3) A public act where he begins his public ministry. 4) For the sins of the nation. 5) We don’t really know! /// Significance of baptism of infants: 1) Grace comes to the infant before he can understand or accept on his own (prevenient grace). 2) Membership in the Kingdom. 3) Reception of the holy Spirit. 4) God says, “I chose you.”
- 18) 3:16-17 – Christopher Moore in “Lamb” describes the scene: “...a rift opened across the desert sky which was still pink with dawn, and out of the rift came a bird that looked to be fashioned from pure light.” /// God’s words are a combination of Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1.
- 19) 4:1-11 – The “kingdoms of the world” was the Roman Empire, a rebellious world with selfishness and practical atheism, as well as the Decapolis, the “ten cities,” Greek cities who formed a league after Pompey “freed” Judea from the Maccabees, and included Damascus. /// Boring says that Jesus resisted the temptation to mis-use his miraculous powers, an option we humans don’t have. But he did use those powers later when he needed/wanted to.
- 20) 4:12 – We don’t know if this happened days, weeks, months, or even years later. /// In John’s gospel, the Baptist’s and Jesus’ ministries run concurrently, but in Mark and Matthew Jesus’ ministry begins after John was arrested.
- 21) 4:15-16 – These verses do not belong together. Isaiah 8:23 is where Isaiah talks of the destruction of Israel by Sargon the Assyrian. 9:1 is the beginning of a coronation hymn for (possibly) Hezekiah. This is a further example of how Matthew stretched to predict Jesus’ career from the OT. /// Galilee was predominantly Gentile. Nazareth was in the OT tribal area of Zebulun, Capernaum in Naphthali .
- 22) 4:17 – The Greek word for “repent” means literally “to change one’s mind,” and was the standard prophetic Jewish means of reconciliation with God.
- 23) 4:19 – Boring doesn’t think this is a metaphor for fishing in the modern sense. Rather, in the pagan and Jewish tradition, it is the deity (God) calling people to a new life. (I don’t see the difference!)
- 24) 4:20 – The first miracle: These men didn’t know Jesus, hadn’t seen any miracles, heard no teachings. This is in contrast to John 1:35-51, where Andrew leaves John the Baptist to follow Jesus, then goes looking for Peter and tells him that the Messiah has been found.
- 25) 4:23-7:24 – The Sermon on the Mount was known to Matthew and his church for a long time. Matthew’s version is taken almost completely from that Q source. But he does add passages from elsewhere than Q, from M, and from Mark. Boring doesn’t think this is a random collection of sayings, but a carefully composed discourse with deliberate structure. But it is Matthew’s sermon, not a “speech actually given on a Galilean hillside.” /// Matthew continues his “christological Moses typology”: Jesus conceived in a miraculous way, threatened by a wicked king, rejected by his own people, comes out of Egypt, passes through water, tested in the wilderness, ascends the mountain and gives authoritative instructions, does ten great deeds (more parallels in 9:36, 17:1-9).

25.5) EXCURSIS

Parallels with the Old Testament (OT), Talmudic Writings (TW), and others:

5:3 (Isaiah 66:2) 5:4 (Isa 61:2) 5:5 (Ps 37:11, Isa 57:13, 60:21)

5:7 TW: "He who has compassion upon men, upon him God has compassion."

- 5:8 (Ps 73:1) 5:9 (Ps 34:14) 5:10,11 (Isaiah 51:7-8) 5:12 (Deut 7:11)
5:13-19 Gospel in the mass of a Doctor of the Church (Augustine, Aquinas, etc.)
5:17 The Law and the Prophets are the first two divisions of the Hebrew canon.
5:18 In some translations, "jot or tittle." Yodt is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Tittle is the smallest hook on a Hebrew letter.
5:21 Jesus follows a Talmudic formula in which the rabbi quotes a verse, then supplements or revises it.
5:21-26 Prov 10:12: "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses."
5:27-30 TW: "Immoral thoughts are worse than immoral deeds." "He also is an adulterer who lusts with his eyes."
5:39 (Prov 20:22) and TW: "A righteous man must be among those who are insulted but do not insult, who hear themselves reviled without answering."
5:43 (Ex 12:49, Lev 19:18, Ex 23:4-5, Prov 25:21, Ps 137:7-9), Dead Sea Scrolls' manual of Discipline: "...to love all men of ill repute" and "...to keep in seclusion from them."
6:2 TW: "He who gives alms in secret is greater than Moses." "Do not put a poor man to shame by giving him your gift in public."
6:5 TW: Four classes of men do not receive the face of the Shekinah (presence of God): the mocker, the hypocrite, the liar, and the slanderer. Ps 148:8.
6:9 The Lord's Prayer is taken almost entirely from Jewish writings. Only the "doxology" was added by the early church and it was taken from 1 Chron 29:10-13, David's blessing on the assembly gathered to hear David pass on the kingship to Solomon
7:1 TW: "Judge not thy neighbor until thou art come into his place."
7:12 TW: "What is hateful to you, do not do unto thy neighbor. This is the whole Law, the rest is commentary. Go and study." (Rabbi Hillel, when asked to recite the "whole Law" while standing on one foot!)
7:13 (Ps 117:20)
- 26) 5:1 – The disciples are not the 12 (only 4 have been called) but the entire crowd as well as Matthew's readers of this gospel.
- 27) 5:3 – There are many other beatitudes in the Bible other than here. E.g.– Isaiah 30:18, Daniel 12:12, Revelation 1:3, etcetc. /// Referring to those that do not rely on their own arrogance but submit to God's control of their lives.
- 28) 5:4 – Those that lament the present condition of God's people and God's program in the world..
- 29) 5:6 – The Greek word *dikaiousune* can be translated "righteousness" or "justice." Obery Hendricks (Politics of Jesus) believes "justice" is much better, but the point of that whole book is that Jesus **was** political! (Cf. Isaiah 51:1)
- 30) 5:8 – See Psalm 24:6. "Seeing God" is not a mystical vision but an eschatological hope.
- 31) 5:13 – Salt was used in sacrifice (Leviticus 2:13, "To all your offerings [to God] you will add salt.") Loyalty and covenant fidelity (Ezra 4:14, Numbers 18:19). Eating together was called "sharing the salt." /// "Salted with fire" – a reference to Mark 3:11 and Luke 3:16 – baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire – a more powerful means of spiritual cleansing than water. /// "Salt within" alludes to a healthy state of the spirit which enables you to coexist peacefully with your brothers.
- 32) 5:14 – In all three metaphors of salt, light, and city, Jesus "strikes a death blow to all religion

- that is purely personal and private.” (It is in tension with Matthe7,9,w 6:11-18.)
- 33) 5:17 – A Matthean redaction. He is looking back on the career of Jesus from a post-Easter perspective and includes all the prophets in the Hebrew bible. But it doesn't suggest (as does John's gospel) that Jesus had a pre-existence in heaven. /// Christians wonder today about Jesus fulfilling the law, while we do not observe many of Jesus' commands: foot washing, holy kisses, fasting, exclusion of women from leadership (JB: did Jesus preach this?), prohibition of divorce, circumcision, food laws, animal sacrifice.
 - 34) 5:18 – Probably added by a later Christian prophet when the early church began to seriously wonder if the Torah and Prophets really needed to be heeded. /// Amen (in Greek: Am_n), an affirmation of something already said, meaning, “Truly I tell you.”
 - 35) 5:23:26 – Imprisonment for debt was not in the Jewish legal system so this is probably a gloss by a later Gentile writer. The message also is eschatological: make amends with your brother before you go before God, the judge.
 - 36) 5:33-37 – Entirely of M tradition and Matthean composition, but since there is no precedence in Judaism prohibiting oaths, the core of this saying goes back to Jesus. V. 33 paraphrases Leviticus 19:12: “You shall not swear falsely by my (God's) name.” However, prior to Jesus, Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, and the Essenes all held that a man's word was his bond and was therefore better than an oath.
 - 37) 5:38-42 – Jesus changes Jewish tradition as advocated in Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21 (an eye for an eye, etc, etc). But prior to Jesus' coming, there was already a stream of pagan, biblical and Jewish tradition calling for restraint in extracting revenge. But Jesus radicalizes these by telling his disciples to forgo revenge entirely. V. 41 reacts to the Roman practice of forcing people to carry their equipment a prescribed distance for them.
 - 38) 5:43-48 – There is no command in the OT to hate your enemy. But there are statements that God hates all evil doers (e.g. Psalm 5:5), and other statements that others should do the same (Deuteronomy 23:3-7, 30:7, Psalm 26:5)(although these passages do not say “hate,” but advocate ostracizing certain people). /// Loving your enemy was not an entirely new concept to Jesus's listeners. Moses in Ex 23:4-5 enjoins the Jews to help an enemy lift a donkey that had fallen under a heavy burden, and to return to an enemy a donkey which had gone astray. Josephus, contemporary with Matthew and Luke, declares in his summary of the Law that one should show kindness/gentleness even to an enemy. /// The tax collectors -- or publicans -- usually were wealthy men and were employees hired by Rome to collect taxes, and who could keep all the money above a certain amount contracted with Rome.
 - 39) 6:1-4 – The Greek word translated here as “hypocrites” is literally “stage actors,” implying playing to the grandstand. This criticism should not be taken as a contrast between Christian and Jewish practices; many contemporary Jewish writings also criticize ostentation in worship.
 - 40) 6:9-13 – The Lord's Prayer was a constituent part of Q and was “part of the Matthean community's tradition and liturgy from its earliest days.” /// The human pronouns are all plural, indicating communal prayer. /// Jewish prayers of the first century addressed God as “Our Father.” God as Father was a basic element of OT theology. Ab-ba: father. Ab-ram: exalted father. Ab-raham: father of a multitude. Ab-ner: father is a lamp. Ab-salom: father of peace. Ab-imileck: my father is king. And at least 20 other OT names begin with “Ab.” Inversely: “Israel is my first-born.” (Exodus 4:22 where Moses quotes

God to Pharaoh.) /// The prayer was probably taught by Jesus in Aramaic, then translated into Greek in Q. The Aramaic “Abba” connotes an intimate personal relationship between child and father. Jesus must have been familiar with ancient Aramaic prayers that contained phrases like, “sanctified be his great name,” “according to his will,” “may he establish his Kingdom during your life,” “their Father who is in heaven.” /// “Hallow” means to honor as holy. /// “Bread”: 1) bread (manna) of the final coming of the kingdom. 2) survival, especially of the poor, 3) sacramental bread. The meaning of “daily” is unknown since it appears only here in the Greek texts. May mean “continual,” or “necessary,” or “for tomorrow.” /// God does not lead his disciples into temptation. This is an eschatological reference to the final days when the power of the Evil One will intensify, persecuting the people and testing them. The prayer asks God, who always leads his people, not to lead them to this testing. Some churches, Lake St. in one service among them, now substitute, “Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil,” similar to v.13 here (NRSV). /// This Bible has the correct translation of *opheleimata* as “debts,” whereas the King James has “trespasses” and other translations use “sins.” *Opheleimata* refers to legal obligations such as debts. The Greek *aphiemi* has as its primary meaning “release,” not forgive. So the line should read, “Release us from our debts as we release our debtors.”

- 41) 6:16-18 – Only one “official” fast in Jesus’ time – the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29ff) but individuals could fast any time, usually Monday and Thursday, wearing sack cloth, ashes on head, abstention from bathing. Here Jesus deplors such ostentation.
- 42) 6:20-23 – “Treasure in heaven” was a common Jewish eschatological reward. /// Dead Sea Scroll 4Q186 states that everyone is inwardly made up of nine parts of light and darkness, determining if one is all good, all bad, or a mixture.
- 43) 6:24 – “Love” and “hate” does not refer to the emotions, but to “choose” or “not choose.”
- 44) 6:33 – Not chronologically, but seek the kingdom above all else.
- 45) 7:6 – This enigmatic saying does not belong with the demand against judging. Boring declines to decipher its meaning, saying, “it is provocatively obscure.” A reference to Matthew's bias toward a Jewish-oriented Christianity?
- 46) 7:9-11 – Flat cakes of bread were similar to Palestinian stones. Eels were similar to snakes.
- 47a) 7:12 – The Golden Rule was present in the rabbinic tradition but in a negative way: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbors.” The “golden rule” was coined in the 16th century. But in its negative form it was circulated centuries earlier than Jesus’s time. I.e. Tobit 4:15: “Do not do to anyone what you yourself would hate.” Also found in the Sayings of Ahibar, Ecclesiasticus, Philo, Hillel. The latter used it to reply to a potential convert to Judaism, who demanded that the entire Torah be summarized while Rabbi Hillel stood on one foot (probably a true story, according to Vermes).
- 47b) 7:13-14 – The idea of “dualism of destiny” goes back to Adam and Eve. (Jeremiah 21:8: And to this people you shall say, “Thus says the Lord: See. I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death”). The Community Rule of Qumran speaks of the spirit of light and darkness. The 4th book of Ezra: There is a city built and set on a plain, and it is full of good things, but the entrance to it is narrow and set in a precipitous place so that there is fire on the right and deep water on the left, and there is only one path lying between them. Matthew’s metaphor is more complex, in that it states that the broad gate leads to perdition and is easily found by the masses, whereas the narrow gate is hard to find and that only by the small company attached to Jesus.

- 48) 7:15 – The false prophets are not the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, or any other non-Christian men, but Christian prophets misleading the churches. Probably referring to antinomian errorists (See 2 Peter 2:1-3).
- 49a) 7:24ff – A similar simile can be found in Proverbs 10:25. Proverbs 14:11, in two places in the Dead Sea Scrolls, two rabbis in 1st and 2nd century CE. By accepting and practicing Jesus's teaching, one builds a solid house which will withstand all calamities.
- 49b) 8:1-9:34 – Three sets of miracles: 8:1-15 (acts in power for the marginal). 8:18-9:17 (acts to generate a Community of Disciples). 9:18-34 (acts' power creates faith and unbelief).
- 50) 8:5-6 – Capernaum was Jesus' home in Galilee (see 4:13).
- 51) 8:7-12 – Boring thinks that Jesus is asking, not telling, "I should come and heal him?" Referring to the fact that the centurion is a Gentile and Jesus had come to the lost sheep of Israel. /// Also surprising is Jesus lament that he has found no one in Israel with such faith.. Vermes: Doubts that Jesus said this. He had said that the Kingdom of God was meant for the Jews (Matt 10:5-8, 15:24). Most likely the passage was put into Jesus's mouth by a later Gentile editor of the Gospel. (JBD: Isn't it as likely that an earlier Jewish writer edited the Gospel to have Jesus targeting only the Jews for the Kingdom?)
- 52) 8:18 – East, that is, out of Galilee, in Decapolis territory.
- 53) 8:19 – In Luke 9:57 it is "someone." In Q it is "a certain one."
- 54) 8:20 – A commonly used phrase of the time, meant simply "man," emphasizing the inferiority of Man to God. See Ezek 2:1, Dan 8:17, 7:13, Ps 2:7. But now in the NT it becomes a metaphoric way of speaking of the Messiah.
- 55) 8:21-22 – Three possible meanings -- 1) The man wants to stay at home until his father dies and he can settle the estate, 2) "Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead," 3) A hard saying to be taken literally: absolutely nothing may take priority over Jesus' call to discipleship. Boring prefers #3. See note at Luke 9:60.
- 56) 8:23 – First of many "boat episodes," resulting in the ship becoming a symbol of the early church. Scandinavian churches to this day have a ship hanging over the altar. "Nave" comes from the Latin word for ship, "navis."
- 57) 8:24-27 – The boat is the post-Easter church, weathering storms that only belief in Christ can subdue.
- 58) 8:29 – Literally "What to you and to us" – meaning "What do we have in common?" A far more detailed account in Mark 5:1-20.
- 59) 9:9 – Boring claims that there is no evidence to support the idea that the Levi in Mark 2:14 is the Matthew of Mark 3:18 and here. He says that it was extremely rare for a Jew at that time to have two Jewish names.
- 60) 9:27-31 – A story of discipleship. A retelling of a story in Mark 10:46-52 where one blind man calls Jesus "rabboni" and "follows" Jesus, an idiom for conversion to discipleship. Additional proof is the call of the blind man, "Son of David."
- 61) 9:36-37 – In Numbers 27:17 "sheep without a shepherd" is used when Moses is preparing for death and worries about a legitimate successor. /// The metaphor of the harvest is also used in rabbinic literature, but Jesus's point of view is original because of the eschatological emphasis.

62) EXCURSIS

The miracle stories in Matthew:

Has all the Markan miracles except three: Mark 1:21-28, 7:31-37, 8:22-26. Total of 20, compared to 18 in Mark, 19 in Luke, 7 in John. Thirty-two different miracles in all

- the gospels. All miracles were for the benefit of people, even the “nature” miracles. Each miracle shows some aspect of human need. Each looks back on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. But there were also many miracles in Judaism, accepted by the Jews as natural acts of God, not supernatural (see pp 246-7 NIB). There were also pagan miracle stories (see p. 247 NIB). The NT miracle stories are vehicles for proclaiming a faith, not evidence on which faith is based.
- 63) 10:1-33 – Same story with variations in Mark 6:77-11, Luke 20:2-12.
- 64) 10:2-4— Simon the Cananean is called Simon the Zealot in most translations. The Zealots were a sect of Pharisees who demanded military and political action against the Romans. Later, they would force the Jewish revolt in 66-70 AD and would be totally wiped out. /// “Iscairiot is thought by some to be a copyist's transposition of Sicariot, a member of the "Sicarii," meaning "assassins" in Greek. They were the most extreme Zealots, who believed the only way to get rid of the Romans and pro-Romans was to kill them. Today, Judas would be Judas the Terrorist. (Boring thinks that there were probably 14 disciples/apostles, that Mark's Levi and Matthew's Matthew, John's Nathaniel and the Synoptics' Bartholomew are different people.) /// “Alphaeus” is the Aramaic equivalent of Cleopas, who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).
- 65) 10:5b-8 – Although the historical Jesus came to the sheep of Israel, he would not have forbidden his disciples to go to the Gentiles. However: The Samaritans had established themselves as a distinct sect when the Jews returning from Exile refused to allow them to help rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. So they built one of their own on Mt. Gerizim (later profaned by Antiochus IV). The Maccabees conquered Samaria and in 129 BC John Hyrcanus I destroyed their temple. Then the Romans "liberated" them when they took control of Judea and allowed them free exercise of their religion. The wrongs they had inflicted on each other caused an intense hatred in Jesus' time and resulted in the Samaritans being classed with Gentiles in this passage.
- 66a) 10:10 – Q says “laborers deserve to be paid.”
- 66b) 10:16 – A saying from the Midrash. “Wise as serpents” probably refers to the snake in the Garden of Eden, but I don't think the snake was wise, just crafty, which is far from being the same. The “innocent dove” probably refers to Hosea 7:11 where the tribe of Ephraim is called a “silly dove.” But here again, “silly” is not truly a synonym for “innocent.”
- 67) 10:21-22 – This refers to the end times, not to the end of one's life nor to the temporary persecutions. Frankly eschatological.
- 68) 10:25 – Or, Baalzebul. Means "Lord of the lofty dwelling." Baalzebub means "Lord of the flies." (See Matthew 12:24). Baalzebub was the chief god of the Philistines at Ekron, where insect plagues with their concomitant human diseases were prevalent (See 2 Kings 1:2).
- 69) 10:34 – The sword is not a political one but an eschatological one (see Revelation 6:4 and Micah 7:6). This reflects a real situation in Matthew's church where people had to choose between family or faith.
- 70) 10:38 – This passage illustrates the retrospective, post-Easter perspective of the entire narrative.
- 71) 11:20-24 – May reflect the unsuccessful mission conducted by the Q source or Matthew's church, and may be partly or wholly from early Christian prophets rather than Jesus.
- 72) 11:25-27 – Vermes and most NT scholars believe that this prayer is a product of Gentile

Hellenistic Christianity, while admitting that Jesus did teach that the “little ones” were the true heirs of the Kingdom, and did teach that one comes to the Father through Jesus. Although Matthew here doesn’t presume Jesus’ pre-earthly existence, many scholars now believe the words do describe a “pre-historical heavenly transaction among the members of the Trinity” – an exclusive mutual knowledge between Father and Son.

73) 11:28:30 – The “yoke” is the artificial burdens of a religion impressed on the people by the scribes and Pharisees – the “yoke of the Torah.” The yoke analogy comes from Sirach 51:26. “Rest for yourselves” is from Jeremiah 6:6.

74) 12:1-14 – Matthew does not deny the importance of the Sabbath, nor does he pit Christian morality against Jewish piety and legalism. He makes it clear that Jesus permitted the disciples to eat grain because they were hungry. /// The Sabbath began with creation (Gen 2:2,3) and re-affirmed by Moses (Ex 20:8-10). But it was not firmly entrenched until the Pentateuch reached its final form during the Exile, hardly being mentioned in the historical books of the pre-Exilic period, and not at all in Psalms, Proverbs, or Job. Probably originated among the Babylonians as a full-moon festival -- see 2 Kings 4:23, Hosea 2:11, Amos 8:5, for examples. Ezekiel in 20:12 may have made the significant contribution toward its observance. That was followed by stronger observance, as in Neh 13:15-17. By the time of the Seleucid persecution, the Sabbath had become a touchstone separating orthodox Jews from the Hellenizers. See 1 Maccabees 2:37 for the massacre of the Hasideans who would not fight on the Sabbath.

75) 12:18 – The first reference to the Messiah coming to people other than the Jews. The “bruised

reed” is good for nothing; the “smoking wick” must be trimmed or thrown out.

Metaphors for people unacceptable to the religious authorities. **(For those scholars who divide Matthew into two parts, the second part begins with 12:22.)**

76) 12:28 – Matthew changed Q’s “finger of God” to “spirit of God” to correspond to Isaiah 42:1 just quoted.

77) EXCURSIS

The Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew:

1) Matthew adapts and adopts an old established tradition of kingdom language.

2) The kingdom of heaven is central to Matthew’s theological messages. To Matthew it is exactly the same as “kingdom of God.”

3) The kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of our Father, kingdom of the Son of Man, are all the same thing.

78) 12:31 – Barbieri, quoting extensively from Chas. Ryrie, claims that once Christ no longer existed in human form on earth, there is no “unpardonable sin.” The sin of the scribes was a “sin of the heart” directly against Jesus. It required the visible and personal presence of Christ on earth. “A person’s eternal destiny is determined in this life, but no sin is unpardonable as long as a person has breath.” (See also Mark 3:28-30)

79) 12:38-45 – Three sayings once separate in Mark and Q. The “sign” is not a miracle healing but a cosmic sign. /// “Adulterous” in this context is metaphorical for Israel’s relation to God, not unfaithfulness in marriage. /// vv 43-45 -- Original meaning unclear. Matthew had preserved the connection present in Q in which the saying about the return of the evil spirit was a response to the Pharisees’ charge of collusion with Beelzebul. Vermes: Unless repentance and faith are profound and lasting, the old devil and new companions will “stage a homecoming.”

- 80) 12:48-50 – Jesus’s point is that those who have found the kingdom of God have found a new family in the community of disciples.
- 81) **Chapter 13** – Parables are a means of disclosing new truth that cannot be reduced to discursive language, as can metaphors and allegories. There was nothing like them in either the Hebrew Bible or LXX, or in rabbinic teachings. /// A turning point in Jesus’ ministry: from mostly in synagogues to mostly outdoors, which also happened to John Wesley when church after church denied him access to the pulpit.
- 82) 13:8 – The average yield was ten fold, 15 exceptional.
- 83) 13:24-30, 36-43 – An important feature has been left out by the interpreter: the servants are told to allow the weeds and grain to “co-exist.” Probably the core of what Jesus wanted to get across: let God be the final judge at the moment chosen by him.
- 84) 13:31 – Vermes: The mustard seed is Jesus. The grown bush is the envisioned growth of his Word.
- 85) 13:33 – Three surprising features: 1) Yeast as a positive substance, usually a symbol of corruption in ancient Jewery (cf. Exodus 12:15-20, Matthew 16:16). 2) “Three measures” is ten gallons, enough to feed 100-150 people. 3) The verb for placing the yeast is actually “hid,” to coincide with 13:35, which is obscured in the New American Bible as well as the NIV and NRSV, though not in the KJV or RSV.
- 86) 13:44-52 – These three parables do not appear elsewhere in the canonical gospels. /// The sorting of fish is not evangelists “fishing for people,” but the final judgment. The “new and what is old” is Jesus’s teachings and the law.
- 87) 13:58 – Jesus never returns to Nazareth nor does he ever enter a synagogue again.
- 88) 14:1ff – The "palace intrigue" that John denounced: Herodias was the granddaughter of Herod the Great, the daughter of Aristobulus. She first married her half-uncle Philip, then her half-uncle Herod Antipas. Antipas was still married to the daughter of Aritas, a Nabatean king. Herodias was still married to Philip I, so they eloped. John violently denounced this new marriage as incestuous, invoking Leviticus 18:16. (You shall not have intercourse with your brother’s wife, for that would be a disgrace to your brother.) He was imprisoned for that, not because of his teachings. In fact, Antipas was afraid to execute John because of his strong following. But Herodias maneuvered him into the rash vow to give her daughter whatever she asked for, which was John’s head. The daughter is named by Josephus as Salome, daughter of Philip, Herodias' first husband. (Salome later married her half-grand-uncle Philip the tetrarch [not her father], so to Herod Antipas she was half-grand-niece, step-daughter, and half-sister-in-law.) /// Matthew reduced Mark’s story (6:14-29) from 302 to 172 words.
- 89) 14:13 – Jesus may have been afraid for his life when there were no repercussions from John's beheading. Luke 9:10 says he went to Bethsaida, which is east of the Jordan, north of the Sea of Galilee, and is in Iturea, outside Herod Antipas's jurisdiction. Then, in 15:39, he takes ship again, crosses the Sea of Galilee but returns to Iturea almost immediately. It may be that he felt abandoned by being driven from place to place, and it may be now that he upbraids the cities (Matt 11:20-23).
- 90) 14:15ff – The only miracle recounted by all four gospels. /// (See 2 Kings 4:42-44) /// Were there any **fish** left over?
- 91) 14:22-36 – The boat is the church at sea, which represents the forces of chaos, held at bay by God but always threatening. To be “at sea” invokes images of death, the power that threatens the goodness of life. The sea separates the disciples from Jesus (God). In the

midst of chaos they are left alone.

- 92) 14:28-31 – Peter’s failure to walk on the water is symbolic of all Christians vacillating between complete faith in Jesus and doubt. In fact, “doubt” here is better translated as “vacillate” rather than “skeptical.” /// These vv were probably composed by Matthew because Mark doesn’t relate it and ends with the disciples hardening their hearts.
- 93) 15:2 – This was not a matter of hygiene but a specific breeching of Pharisaical tradition, washing the hands (and sometimes feet) to make one clean after being defiled in some way.
- 94) 15:19-20a – Sins listed in the same order as in Exodus 20.
- 95) 15:21-28 – Why is Jesus so harsh? Was he bested by the woman? How did she come to have faith in the “the son of David?” God’s plan for salvation history is Jews first, Gentiles next. This story is a preliminary sign of what is to be, “springs the boundaries of theology without breaking it.” A worshipful struggle with God (see Genesis 32 where Jacob wrestles with God) is here pronounced as great faith. The contrast between her great faith and Peter’s little faith a few vv earlier cannot be accidental. /// “Canaanite” in many versions is “Syro-phoenecian.”
- 96) 15:29-31 – If on the east side of the Sea of Galilee (as indicated in Mark 7:31), probably a Jewish (rather than a Gentile) crowd.
- 97) 15:39 – Location of Magadan unknown. May be Magdala, Magalen, or Mgedan.
- 98) 16:1 – The combination of Pharisees and Sadducees is striking because they were antagonists. Furthermore, it’s unlikely that Sadducees would be out in the desert debating with an itinerant preacher.
- 99) 16:2-3 – In parentheses in many versions because many important mss omit it.
- 100) 16:13 – Caesarea Philippi – 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, formerly Paneas because the god Pan was worshiped there. Renamed by Herod’s son Philip to honor Caesar Augustus and himself. Philip never ruled, was the husband of Herodias, father of Salome (who danced).
- 101) 16:18 – The most influential pun in history. Jesus says to Simon, “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.” Peter went on to become bishop of Rome and – according to Catholics – the first Pope. Catholics believe this verse confers the primary position in Church jurisdiction on Peter. The verse is inscribed in Latin around the inside of the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.
- Most Protestants disagree, quoting Matthew 16:21-23: From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.” He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”
- ...and from Matthew 26:69-70: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it in front of everyone, saying “I do not know what you are talking about!”
- ...and claiming that the Church was to be built on Christ, not Peter, quoting 1 Corinthians 3:10-11: “According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid the foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus

Christ.”

„,and Galatians 2:11: “And when Peter came to Antioch, I (Paul) opposed him to his face because he clearly was wrong.” /// Boring: Should read, “Simon you are Rock.”

“Peter” was not an Aramaic name, although it has become a common name in the West due to Christian tradition. /// In John 1:42, Jesus names him Peter on their first encounter. /// “Netherworld” is better translated “Hades,” which is not Hell, but synonymous with “death.” Matthew is referring in eschatological terms to the church never dying.

- 102) 16:19-20. “I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Catholics regard this verse as the Biblical basis for the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences. Protestants say purgatory is not a Biblical word, whereas the NT shows dying men going directly to heaven. See Luke 23:42-43: Then he (the thief hanging on the cross beside Jesus) said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” See also Acts 7:56, 59. Stephen is being stoned and says, “Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Then he calls out to Jesus, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” As for indulgences, “keys of the kingdom” must be interpreted by Revelation 1:18 -- “I hold the keys of death and Hades,” says God. ...and Matthew 18:15-20 -- “Whatever you allow on earth shall be allowed in heaven,

etc.”

...and also Isaiah 22:15-25, especially verses 22-23: “I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; when he opens no one shall shut, and when he shuts, no one shall open.” (This verse probably gave Jesus the idea of keys to the kingdom.)

Boring: The keys of the kingdom are not the keys to heaven nor the function of deciding who goes to heaven, but the holder of the keys is the chief teacher of Christ’s message. The language of binding and loosing is rabbinic terminology for authoritative teaching, interpreting the Torah, deciding what is or is not permitted.

- 103) 16:21 – Matthew makes it clear that it is the Jewish hierarchy, not the people, who will kill Jesus.
- 104) 16:23 – “Behind” in the discipleship attitude, that is, to follow behind Jesus to the cross. Jesus calls Peter “Satan” because he is tempting Jesus to disregard his call to messiahship (Matt 16:21).
- 105) 16:24-28 – The conditions of discipleship. These five sayings probably circulated independently, and were integrated into a unified response by Matthew.
- 106) 16:28 – The first assurance that the Messianic kingdom was about to be established. Further interpretation of the verse is impossible. The “kingdom of God” may be the a) transfiguration, b) resurrection and ascension, c) Pentecost, d) spread of Christianity, e) internal development of the gospel, f) destruction of Jerusalem, g) parousia. Barbieri claims that the transfiguration was the “taste of the kingdom of God.” Because: a) it takes place on earth; when Jesus rules from David's throne, that will also be on earth, b) the Lord **is** in his glory, as he will be on David's throne, c) all the people who will be part of Jesus' kingdom are represented: Peter, James and John represent the saint in physical bodies; Moses represents the saints who have passed through death but who will be resurrected to share in the Kingdom; Elijah represents those who never tasted death but

- will be caught up at the rapture of the church. (But he ends his exegesis with: "Perhaps this is why this was a taste of the kingdom of God.") /// Boring: Parousia is most likely, even though it doesn't occur in the hearers' lifetime. Vermes: "...all kinds of exegetical acrobatics on the part of ecclesiastical interpreters of this passage..." when it is perfectly clear that Jesus was in error, which is still fully compatible with belief in incarnation.
- 107) 17:1 – If the “three” is reminiscent of David’s “three,” Matthew redefines kingship because David’s three were all renowned for their violence. For Moses' theophany see Ex 19:16-20, 24:15-18, 34:29-30. For Elijah's, see 2 Kings 2:9-12. (Moses finally crossed the Jordan to the Promised Land!) The Feast of Booths is derived from Succoth, the Feast of Booths. See Zech 14:16. The word used here for “booths” is the same word used for tents, the tabernacle, and the temporary booths built for the Festival of Booths. Some Jewish traditions associated the Festival with the advent of the kingdom, so some understanding of the kingdom “may lurk in the background.” If so, this was missed by Matthew. He interprets the word “sk_n_” as the Shekinah, the fiery cloud that symbolized the continuing presence of God among the people.
- 108) 17:12 – This story anticipates the eschatological events of the resurrection and parousia of Jesus. /// The prophetic roles of Elijah and Moses fulfilled by John and Jesus as they suffer and die.
- 109) 17:15 – Epileptic – literally “moonstruck,” from the belief that the moon or moon goddess caused epilepsy. A longer, better story in John 9:14ff.
- 110) 17i:24 – The “temple tax” was derived originally from Nehemiah 10:32-33, which states that every male would pay _ shekel every year to support the temple and its priests, guards, etc. The Pharisees later changed this to a one time contribution of ½ shekel for every male throughout the world but said it was voluntary.
- 111) 17:27 – This story has problems with physics as well as ethics. Jesus never used his miraculous powers for his own benefit. /// Weatherhead in *The Christian Agnostic*: There is a fish in Palestine, the “musht,” or St. Peter’s fish, that picks up bright metals and carries them in his mouth. /// Some people think that Jesus said, “Go catch a fish, sell it, and give the money to the Temple.”
- 112) 18:3-6 – vv 3-4: Unless you trust God with perfect faith like a child trusting his father, you will never enter the Kingdom. **But**, Paul in 1 Cor 13:11 prefers an adult who has given up childish ways, and in 1 Cor 14:20 he admonishes his readers to cease thinking like a child.
- V 6: One explanation: The “little ones” are the adults who are immature Christians, and who literally have no power in the Christian community or society in general. But Boring thinks he’s referring to his disciples – see Matthew 10:42.
- 113) 18:10 – “look down on” is better than “despise,” because despise connotes dislike and the Greek word does not imply that.
- 114) 18:12-14 – Shows the influence of Ezekiel 34:66-8. A fictional account inspired by Isaiah 5:1-7 (see there, notes no. 16,17,18). Metaphorically, the vineyard is the Jews, the tenants their leaders. The landlord is God, the servant messengers are the prophets, the beloved son is Jesus. The tenants are destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE and the vineyard is inherited by the Gentile church.
- 115) 18:18-19 – One of the two dozen vss used by Catholics to claim that only ordained priests have the authority to forgive sins and require penances. See 16:19 for another. /// Similar to 5:29-30. More sexual implications in earlier pericope, more power struggle in

- this one.
- 116) 18:20 – Derived from a Talmudic concept: "When three men sit discussing the Torah, God is in their midst."
- 117) 18:23-27 – For Jesus, the king is a Gentile tyrant. For Matthew he is God, and "debt" represents sin. /// 10,000 talents is totally unrealistic. **One** talent was 50# of silver, the wages of a manual laborer for 15 years. Herod's total income from all his territories was 900 talents a year. One theory is that the "servant" was a public official who had mismanaged public funds in such a way as to prohibit the king from realizing the profits he expected. But the point is that the debt is unpayable, and yet, against all expectations, it is forgiven, the king responding with compassion.
- 118) 18:32-35 – (JB) Does God ever "take back" his forgiveness because a person fails to forgive one who sins against him?
- 119) 19 :1-26 – "Quite literally devoted to the new understanding of family."
- 120) 19:1 – Here begins Jesus' prophesied Messianic activities, en route to Jerusalem.
- 121a) 19:9 – See Deut 24:1ff for Jewish position, which allows for man's weakness.
- 121b) 19:12 – Some Christian ascetics actually did this, including Origen (AD 185-254).
- 122) 19:25 – Astonished because OT teaching regarded wealth as a sign of God's favor.
- 123) 19:27 – See Mark 10:35,37, 41; Matt 20:20. These may have all been at the same time.
- 124) 19:28 – This was probably added by a Christian prophet. Some thinkers believed in the re-gathering of the 12 tribes at the parousia for judgment, which derives from the 10th petition of the 18 Benedictions. /// The "renewal of all things" in the NRSV and NIV, meaning literally "rebirth" in the original Greek, is "new age" in the NAB.
- 125) 21:1-11 – This episode in Matthew occurs on a Monday and "palms" are not mentioned (only in John.)
- 126) 21:5 – First two lines from Isaiah 62:11. Next two from Zech 9:9. Not quoted in the other gospels and misquoted here by Matthew -- there is Jewish parallelism here, not two animals.
- 127) 21:9 – Hosanna means "Save now, we pray." Psalms 118:25-26. Clear evidence that Jesus was being acclaimed as the Messiah by the people. Using the term "Son of David" makes this explicit. See Luke 19:39-40. /// Boring disagrees. He says that the *original* meaning of Hosanna was as stated above, but by Jesus's time it was only a content-less shout like "hurrah." It had no religious meaning.
- 128) 21:12-17 – Jesus' act here had to be symbolic only, because there were pens and stables for hundreds of sacrificial animals, and housing for their keepers. There would have been dozens (if not hundreds) of money-changing stalls. By the time Matthew wrote, the temple had been destroyed, so he's not concerned with geographical accuracy.
- 129) 21:18-22 – One of two instances where Jesus uses his powers in a negative way (the other: the Gadarene swine). This is a parable/metaphor for the withering effect of the judgment of God on unproductive religion – not producing fruits (good works). This passage may be based on Luke 13:6-9.
- 130) 21:23-27 – Matthew is speaking to the post-revolution Jews, who now question who has authority to reconstitute the people of God. The people already know that Jesus teaches with authority, but the Pharisees refuse to accept this. Here Jesus equates himself with the whole line of prophets who were killed by the people.
- 131a) 21:28–29 – He who says he won't go, but goes, represents the prostitutes and tax collectors. Those who said they will go, but don't, are the Pharisees and Sadducees who

- went to see and hear John and then didn't accept his message.
- 131b) 21:33 ff – A fictional account inspired by Isaiah 5:1-7 (see there, notes no. 16,17,18). Metaphorically, the vineyard is the Jews, the tenants their leaders. The landlord is God, the servant messengers are the prophets, the beloved son is Jesus. The tenants are destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE and the vineyard is inherited by the Gentile church.
- 132) 22:1-11 – A very difficult story to interpret! The king is God. The son is Jesus. The invited guests are Israelites. The wedding celebration is salvation. The first group of slaves are the Hebrew prophets. The second group of slaves are the Christian prophets. Vs 7 is highly unrealistic – waging war while the banquet waits. Most scholars see this as a retrospective Matthean view of the destruction of Jerusalem, a judgment on rebellious Israel. See also Luke 14:16ff. Vermes: there were *several redactors* who influenced the text. One introduces the inappropriate murder of the servants of some of those invited and did not attend, then are punished by being murdered and burning their city (destruction of Rome in 70 CE?). Another redactor spoils the narrative by inviting “bad and good” people alike. Another makes the unreasonable punishment of the man who came in off the streets and not in his best clothes. But the basic message is that Gentile replace the Jews who are not receptive of the preaching of Jesus and later his disciples. See Luke 14:16 ff.
- 133) 22:11-13 – A composition by Matthew, not found in Q or Luke. It is so unreal that it must reflect Matthew's theological meaning. Conversion to Christianity was pictured as donning new clothes. Matthew is thinking not of an actual wedding party but of the final judgment.
- 134) 22:15-22 – David Bell – Bible Review -- Apr '03: Caesar's image was on the coin so it was clear what was to be given to Caesar. The second implicit question that modern readers **don't** ask is, “What's to be given to God?” Jews familiar with the Torah know that it is we humans who bear God's likeness (Gen 1:26, Ex 13:9): we owe taxes to Caesar but owe our very beings to God. Jesus used the rabbinical (also Socratic) method to defuse the question. So Jesus was not making the point that they should pay their taxes to Caesar, but that they should be rendering **themselves** to God. /// Boring: this is not an abstract doctrine of the separation of church and state. The kingdom of God embraces all aspects of life, including religion and politics. The evasion by Jesus in v.21b angered the Zealots, including Judas Iscariot, who wanted Jesus to say NO and thus begin the Messianic battle to overthrow Roman rule.
- 135) 22:37ff – The Shema: Vs. 37, Deut 6:15, and Vs.39, Lev 19:18. See footnote 35 in Mark for more details. The word used here for “love” is “agapao,” the verb form of “agape.” “Agape” has come to mean love for God and neighbor but it can also mean adulterous lust (Jeremiah 2:25) and love of money (Ezekiel 5: 9 and 2 Peter 2: 15)
- 136) 22:41 – **The Jewish argument against Jesus being the Messiah.** In the first couple chapters of Matthew and Luke, Jesus' lineage from David is given, and his birth in Bethlehem. Nowhere else is this taken into account. Instead, he is identified as being of Nazareth, as in Matt 21:10-11, and John 7:41. Suppose that it is a legend of late origin that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and was of Davidic descent. Then Jesus would have to prove that the Messiah did **not** have to be of Davidic descent. He does this by quoting Psalms 110:1, where the second "lord" is the Messiah, and David would never address his own descendant as a superior. That is, the "lord" he refers to must be someone other than Jesus, who **was** a descendant, and therefore **not** his "lord." (For Christians, this argument

- is fanciful, if for no other reason than that a descendant **can** be greater and worthy of the term "lord.") To the Jew, this passage then presents only the "historic Jesus," a Galilean carpenter who insisted on being regarded as the Messiah. /// If you read 110:1 in this way -- "The Lord *says to you*, my lord, 'Take your throne...'" -- then David is saying to *Jesus, his lord*, to take his throne.
- 137) 23:2 – Scribes had formal training in the law, so were analogous to lawyers today. Pharisees were untrained strict followers of the law. Some scribes were Pharisees in practice, but few Pharisees were scribes
- 138) 23:12 – Taken directly from the Sayings of Rabbi Nathan where the exaltation or humbleness refers to the person's relation to the Torah. So, here, in the NT, it may be our relation to the Gospels.
- 139) 23:13-36 – Matthew addresses the conflict between the rabbinic movement and Matthean Christians of **his** day, not an outburst of the historical Jesus.
- 140) 23:16-22 – A woe against making meaningless oaths – the distinction between gold and Temple, sacrifice and altar – may have had something to do with what a creditor could attach. Matthew considers it casuistic hair-splitting – a devilish attempt to find loopholes in the law.
- 141) 23:24 – Both gnats and camels were unclean, so rigid Pharisees strained gnats from their liquids. Also an Aramaic word play: quaimä/gamiä.
- 142) 23:27-28 – Tombs were regularly white-washed so that strangers to the area would not inadvertently touch them and render themselves ritually unclean.
- 143) 23:30 – The apocryphal book, *Lives of the Prophets*, written in late first century, lists six major prophets killed: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Amos, and Zechariah(son of Jehoida), not the Zechariah (son of Berekiah) who wrote the book.
- 144) 23:34-36 -- In the Hebrew Bible, Cain is the first murderer and Zechariah is the last. If so, the copyist made an error and confused Zechariah's father with the one mentioned casually in Isaiah 8:2. (Just the opposite: Zechariah was killed, was not a murderer!) Boring: Matthew erroneously confused the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 where Zechariah is the son of Jehoida, with the Zechariah of Zechariah 1:1 where Zechariah is the son of Berekiah. 145) 24:1-3 – Jesus leaves the Temple for the last time and leaves the city for the last time except for his arrest and crucifixion.
- 146) 24:15 – The heathen altar set up by Antiochus IV. See 1 Maccabees 1:54 and Daniel 9:27.
- 147) 24:45 – The behavior of the wicked servant implies that the master is not urgently expected, so the message of the parable is likely a warning to those church leaders in whom eschatological urgency is on the wane.
- 148) 25:1 ff – Vermes: the selfish "wise" virgins and the heartless bridegroom are a travesty of the teaching of Jesus on generosity and confident prayer.
- 149) 25:14 – Jesus entrusting the gospels too us/
- 150) 25:31-46 – Coming at the end of a passage describing the parousia, this emphasizes the suddenness of its coming and on the destruction of many. It may have been added by the early church but is certainly part of Jesus's world view. /// The only judgment scene in the New Testament. And the criterion is not faith in Christ, grace, justification, or forgiveness of sins. Only whether one has acted with loving care of needy people. /// Weatherhead: In v. 46, the word translated from the Greek "kolasis" as "punishment," is actually "pruning," clearly something done to promote subsequent growth. Dr. Spencer of Oxford translates v. 46, "These will go away to the corrective punishment of the age

but the righteous into the life of the age.” There is no suggestion of endless punishment. Furthermore, the parable is not about individuals but about **nations** (v. 32). /// Scene by Michelangelo in Sistine Chapel -- Daniel 7:13. /// Vermes: Akin to the judgment scene in 1 Enoch 69:26-29, written at the end of the first century and possibly affecting this story in Matthew. A passage in the Talmud recommending Jews to follow the attributes of God: God clothed Adam and Eve, visited Abraham after his circumcision, comforted and blessed Isaac after the death of his father, buried Moses on Mt. Nebo.

151) 26:1-2 – Crucifying their Messiah at Passover is like executing Abraham Lincoln on the 4th of July.

152) 26:3 --Appointed by Herod, so not of either the Zadokite or Maccabean (Hasmonean) line of priests.

153) EXCURSIS – THE ANOINTINGS OF JESUS

Matthew 26:6ff, Mark 14:3ff, Luke 7:36ff, and John 12:1ff

There may have been one, two, three, or four anointings of Jesus with oil. An anointing is recorded in all four gospels and they all vary in details. Perhaps there was just one anointing and the four gospel writers -- writing at different times -- just remembered the incident differently and so told the story differently. Most scholars believe that there were *two* anointings.

Let’s look briefly at each account:

- 1) The accounts in *Matthew* and *Mark* are almost identical, with the exception that in *Matthew* the anointing is done with a perfumed oil and in *Mark* a spikenard *oil* used. This latter detail may be questioned because spikenard is an ointment and must be smeared, not poured. The anointing takes place in Bethany, where “a woman comes up to Jesus” in the house of Simon the leper. The time is two days before Passover.**
- 2) The locale in *Luke*’s account is not given. (The last place mentioned is Nain, but it seems unlikely that all the events that happened between the mention of Nain and the anointing could have taken place in Nain.) A “sinful woman” comes off the street into a Pharisee’s house, uses an ointment to anoint Jesus, and is sent out of the house. The time is very early in Jesus’ ministry.**
- 3) The account in *John* takes place in Bethany, with Martha serving, so it is likely that it is in her house, with sister Mary and brother Lazarus. Mary is named as the woman who uses a perfumed oil, again called spikenard even though spikenard is an ointment. The time is six days before Passover.**

In all the accounts except *Luke*’s, Jesus tells his critics that the woman has prepared him for burial with her anointing. In *Luke*’ account, where the anointer is a sinful woman, he does not do so. He tells a parable instead.

It is claimed by one writer, Sir Laurence Gardner, that it was Mary Magdalene who did the anointing in *Luke*, that this was the first part of a two-part marriage ritual between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. *Nowhere* in this story (*Luke* 7:36 ff) does it say that this was Mary of Magdala, coming in to perform part of a two-part

marriage ritual. There is much evidence that it certainly *wasn't*. Mary Magdalene was frequently part of Jesus' retinue, so if she was Jesus's betrothed, why would she be called "a sinful woman" and come in off the streets, weeping and kissing Jesus' feet? Why would the writer not identify her if she were engaged to Jesus? Why would she come into the house of a *Pharisee* to perform the first of two stages of a marriage contract to Jesus? Why would she anoint Jesus's *feet*, not his head? After the anointing, Jesus tells his host, Simon the Leper, a parable and sends the woman *out* of the house again. Would he have done that to his betrothed wife?

This is a good time to make the point that almost no scholars and few Christians now believe that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. That inference was erroneously drawn because the story of the "sinful woman" bathing Jesus' feet with oil is followed in the very next chapter by the description of Jesus journeying from one town to another with his disciples and an entourage of women -- including Mary Magdalene -- who provided for Jesus and his disciples.

The anointing in Matthew and Mark is in the house of Simon the leper, in Bethany: We will never know who this woman was. If it had been either Mary of Magdala or Mary of Bethany, she would certainly have been identified as such. I think we can safely say that this anointing had nothing to do with Mary Magdalene *or* Mary of Bethany.

The anointing in John: This woman is unquestionably Mary, sister of Martha and brother of Lazarus. And it is absurd to even postulate that it could be Mary Magdalene, for reasons already given.

154) 26:8 – In John 12:4, it is Judas who complains, probably because he already feels betrayed, that

Jesus is not the Messiah and doesn't deserve anointing.

155) 26:26 – Vermes: Neither Mark nor Matthew suggest that the Last Supper was to be repeated in "remembrance of Jesus," as does both Luke (Luke 22:15) and Paul (1 Cor 11:23). It was Paul who dramatized the Last Supper by giving it a "mystical enactment of the redemption of mankind through the Passover tragedy of Jesus celebrated in the form of a symbolic Passover meal." He also believes that Luke "borrowed" this account for his gospel. Furthermore, Mark and Matthew's account pictures Jesus as believing that the Kingdom of God was already "looming on the horizon" so there was no need for any remembrance ritual. /// Aramaic doesn't have a word for "body" so Jesus probably used was the word for "self" or "ego," like, "This is myself broken...."

The Eucharist points **backward** to Christ's death and resurrection for us.

The Eucharist points **forward** to fulfillment of the kingdom

The Eucharist points **inward** to call for self-examination

The Eucharist points **upward** to the heavenly kingdom

The Eucharist point **outward** to the whole church and the world.

157) 26:36 – Just outside the east wall of Jerusalem, on the western lower slope of the Mount of Olives. Gethsemane means "oil press." It may have been a cave, according to BAR (July-Aug, '95). There is a cave still there, with its entrance near the Tomb of the Virgin Mary. It is quite large, 36 x 60 feet, with a 16-foot-wide entrance. In Jesus' time, olive

presses were always in caves, and were quite massive, built with three stones weighing 300-1100 pounds that hung from the long arm. This may have been where Jesus slept with his disciples during the week before his death, when he left Jerusalem and went to the Mount of Olives.

- 158) 26:55 – The word translated here as “bandit” is the same used by Josephus for the freedom fighters who fought the Romans in 70-73.
- 159) 26:59 – Not a trial, but a preliminary inquiry, for trial of capital cases had been taken over by the Romans.
- 160) 26:63-64 – “You” in “You have said so” is singular. “You” in “You will see...” is plural.
- 161) 27:3-10 – By now, Judea was firmly ruled by a Roman procurator, or governor. Herod the Great had been followed by his harsh and oppressive son Herod Archelaus, who was deposed in 6 AD by the Romans, replaced by procurators, one of whom was Pontius Pilate in 26 AD. Pilate was a protege of Lucius Aelius ejanus, the leader of the Praetorian Guard, the soldiers who guarded Rome. Sejanus was strongly anti-Jewish. Pilate therefore moved the Roman headquarters from Casearea (Maritime, on the Samaritan coast) to Jerusalem, and stationed troops in the city. He was ready to quell a Galilean "mob," and had already done so at least once (Luke 13:1). He remained procurator only until 36 AD, after Jesus' death, when he was recalled by Rome because his tastelessness aroused revolts by both Jews and Samaritans. Hostile tradition has him executed by Rome. Friendly tradition has him converting to Christianity (with his wife?), this even referred to by early Christian writers who quote from other writings no longer extant. /// Boring likens this story to Ahithophel's story in 2 Samuel 17:1-23. But Ahithophel hangs himself because Absalom does **not** follow his counsel. Judas hangs himself because the priests **did** follow his counsel. /// One of two stories of Judas's end. (The second is in Acts 1:18-19.) This one in Matthew is suspect. The OT quote is not from Jeremiah, but from Zechariah 11:13, and refers to a "potter" in the house of the Lord in the KJ version, and as "treasury" in this and other translations. 162) 27:11b – A better translation is, “It is as you say.” It is the only time he speaks in the governor's presence. He will not speak again until he is on the cross. See Isaiah 52:14-15, Isaiah 53:7.
- 163) 27:15 – Barabbas was held by the Romans because he was a "notable" prisoner. In fact, he was probably one of the Secarii, the terrorist arm of the Zealots, and had murdered a Roman official in an insurrection (Mark 15:7). So he was one of the group who like Judas were disenchanted with Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. So he was clearly more in favor with the mob than Jesus was. **Side light:** Barabbas is not a proper name at all -- it means "son of the father" -- bar-abba. "Christ means "son of the Father. Tradition asserts that Barabbas's proper name was Joshua, or Jesus. What Pilate asked then was whether the crowd wanted Jesus, son of the father, or Jesus, son of the Father. It has been suggested that they were the same person, that Jesus was tried and released as Barabbas, that is, son of the father, and the rest of the story is legend. /// Boring thinks the incident is highly unlikely – the Romans would not release a political prisoner on a Jewish feast day.
- 164) 27:19 – Claudia Procula, who according to legend later became a Christian. See footnote 154 above.
- 165) 27:25 – This passage was “tragically misinterpreted” by later Christians to imply guilt on **all** future generations of Jews, not just the contemporary generation and the next

- generation who witnessed the destruction of the temple.
- 166) 27:33 – The location of Golgotha is not known. No account places it on a hill. Usually crucifixion took place near a busy thoroughfare. Taking place outside the city walls may be Matthew's theological idea rather than geographical.
- 167) 27:37 – INRI: IESUS NAZAARENUS REX JUDAEORUM I—King of the Jews in Latin
- 168) 27:44 – No repentant thief in Matthew.
- 169) 27:45 – In John's gospel, Jesus is still with Pilate at noon.
- 170) 27:56 – The "other Mary" here and in 28:1 was probably Cleopas's wife. (See Luke 24:13ff for the "Road to Emmaus" story.)
- 171) 27:57-61 – Perhaps in Ramathaim-Zophim, birthplace of Samuel, 20 miles NE of Jerusalem, in Ephraim. See 1 Samuel 1:1 and footnote -- later called Arimathea. /// The method of sealing the stone: a string or cord was stretched across the stone and fastened at either end by sealing clay. Then an official used his signet ring to imprint his seal. Breaking the seal would break Roman law and incur Roman wrath. /// Only in Matthew is Joseph not a member of the Sanhedrin, but is a disciple, buries Jesus in his own tomb which he had carved out for himself, and Joseph is wealthy. With Jesus' resurrection on Sunday morning, Sunday gradually took on the characteristics of the Sabbath for early Christians. /// The appearance of the risen Jesus in the various gospels cannot be harmonized into one narrative. "Each story is a testimony to the church's resurrection faith, not part of a single historical report."
- 172) 28:1 – Magdala was a suburb of Tiberias on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 8:2). The other Mary was probably Cleopas's wife. (See Luke 24:13ff for the Emmaus road story.) – In Mark 16:9, Mary Magdalene is alone when Jesus appears, but here is with Mary, mother of James, and Salome.
- 173) 28:2 – The stone was probably square. "Rolled" ("kوليو" in Greek) can also be translated "moved" or "dislodged." The angel could not have sat on a round stone once it had been rolled back into its niche. Furthermore, round stones were *extremely* rare in Jesus's time and were limited to the *very* wealthiest.
- 174) 28:9 – Weatherhead: "Greetings" is better translated as "Rejoice!"
- 175) 28:19 – The only place in the entire NT where baptism is administered in the name of the Trinity.
- Giza Vermes: added by the early church when they realized that the Parousia was not imminent.