



The Gospel of Matthew

Matthew as Jewish Theologian

Hilary, Winter 2025

Dates: Jan 13 - Mar 17
Module(s): Bible (B7301)
Difficulty: Moderate
Instructor(s): Joshua Shaw, *Lecturer* (j.shaw@davenantinstitute.org)
Meeting Time: Thursday 6:00 PM CST/ 7:00 PM EST
Zoom Link: [Populi](#) > click My Courses tab > click course > click Conferences (left menu).

Ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσεται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσιν.
Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.
Matthew 24:35

“The mightiest of the four Gospels.”
- DA Schlatter

Course Description

Matthew’s preservation and arrangement of the words of Jesus into five discourses (ch. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23-25) is what makes his Gospel so magnificent and will engross our attention for the bulk of the course.

To achieve a synthetic picture of Matthew’s achievement as “one of humanity’s three great religious teachers alongside Paul and John,” we will exegete as much of the text as possible while reading large selections from Josephus. Our other main course text will be a commentary from the *Talmud* and *Midrash*. Though modern theologians often suppose that Matthew is at odds with John and Paul, we will observe - in addition to the stark differences between them - the wide ground they share in common.

Matthew’s Gospel, as has been long recognized, bears in all its parts the marks of Palestinian Judaism. It is a Gospel written for war and for peace in Israel, for the hate of mother and father and for the love of enemies. Matthew arranges and delivers to us Jesus’ fundamental teachings in the aforementioned discourses: His new righteousness and true worship, the principles of apostolic action, the mysteries of the kingdom, the new measure of worth, and the righteous judgement of Jesus both now and to come - all these establish the ethical footing of the New Testament with crystalline clarity. What is the will of God for man? Pharisaical uncertainty evaporates in the face of Matthew’s teaching. If we build upon these words of Jesus, the house of our faith will stand.

Pharisaical Judaism (in virtue of its leadership of Israel) informs everything in Matthew’s Gospel, and so we will pay careful attention to the historical notices and explore the relationship between Jesus and the existing political and religious groups.

All this taken together will enable us to draw a picture of the church for whom Matthew is writing his Gospel in Judea. We will see that Matthew thus wrote his Gospel for the sake of his church, since Matthew believed no less than Paul that “all scripture” was to be written “for our sakes.”

Objectives

1. Fully appreciate the new righteousness of Christ

2. Gain a clear grasp of Matthew's theological position through the concepts of repentance, forgiveness, kingdom of heaven, worth, judgment, and love
3. Discern the relationship of Jesus to John the Baptist, the Pharisees, Zealots, Sadducees, Israel, and his Disciples
4. Gain an awareness and appreciation of the Jewish historical background of the New Testament
5. Wrestle with the relationship of Matthew's Gospel to John's as well as to Paul's doctrine

Course Texts

- The New Testament - The student may use his/her own preferred translation, though the NASB or ESV are recommended, as well as of course the Greek New Testament (if he/she has Greek).
 - Greek New Testaments:
 - [NA 28](#)
 - [USB 5](#)
 - [Reader's Greek NT](#)
- *Commentary on the New Testament from Talmud and Midrash: [The Gospel of Matthew](#)* by Strack and Billerbeck. This has only recently been translated to English, which will be an enormous boon for laymen and pastors wishing for accessible, relevant passages of Talmud to read in the interpretation of the New Testament.
- *The New Complete works of Josephus*: available [for purchase](#) or as [PDF](#). As it is inexpensive and a valuable reference work, I highly recommend purchasing it. The reader may also purchase one of the two more recent translations of the *Jewish War* by Penguin or by Oxford.¹

Recommended

- *Philo's complete works*
- *Introduction to the Talmud*
- *Introduction to Talmud and Midrash -*
- *The Talmud: Selections -*

Course Format

Class sessions will begin with 20-45 minutes of formal **lecture**, varying from week to week, but will proceed in a seminar-style. **Readings** will be 50-100 pages per week. **Reading questions** will be given for the Gospel of Matthew, and **weekly posts** are expected on Populi, 30 minutes before class.

Course Delivery

Classroom Resources

- [Populi](#) online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.
- [Zoom](#) links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page Conferences tab. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).

Attendance: Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

Auditors: No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

Late work: Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

¹ Note that the translation is sadly not new, but there is no new translation for the *Antiquities*, his most important work. However, the "newness" of Maier's version gives some genuinely helpful footnotes and does, I believe, occasionally correct errors in the original. If the reader goes with the PDF of the original, he/she will be responsible to observe differences.

Requirements

Attendance : 10 %

Per Davenant policy, two absences per quarter are permitted. Show up!

Weekly Course Participation: Reading Questions 15%

“But I cannot help thinking that knowledge soonest acquired is least treasured up and remembered”
-BF Westcott

Reading questions will be sent each week to be completed together with the reading; sometimes specific, sometimes general in nature, they will improve understanding of the reading and provide excellent discussion fodder for the class.

The student will be required to share **one substantive response** to one of *these questions* and **one further insight** from the Jewish background reading with all course participants at least *30 minutes* before the beginning of class.* They need not be long: just answer a question and share some bit of Talmud, Midrasch, or Josephus from the week that you found helpful and explain in one sentence why (no second-hand summaries). This will be done on the **Populi discussion boards**.

* In accordance with the Davenant absence policy, I will waive the two lowest RQ grades (which I only mark down for tardiness or incompleteness)

Preparatory Essays: 25%

"VISION: Its three qualities are clearness, completeness, proportion."
-FJA Hort

If the student has carefully read the texts with the aid of the reading questions and secondary readings, possible paper topics will present themselves, though not, of course, without revision and reflection. *Begin as you mean to go*: from the first, you should begin gathering detailed observations of the biblical text, especially as it relates to your interests.

Submission: Submit on Populi as .DOCX, .PDF, or Google Doc link.

- **Week 4 (5%) : THESIS** : This is just a proposal (**250** words) of your final paper topic. It should be centered around some discrete passage of Matthew. It may begin larger (Matthew 24, Matthew 10, etc.) and then be whittled down in subsequent weeks. There should be some leading idea that you are pursuing. The better the job you do here the easier your final paper will be
- **Week 6 (10%): LOCUS** : In the first paper (**1000** words), you will treat your proposed topic synthetically and theologically *from the greater context of Matthew's Gospel*. You need to have accounted for the whole of the Gospel as it relates to your topic and only pull from elsewhere in Scripture as a secondary support or explanation of what Matthew means. Here the goal is to gather like the bees: gather and synthesize by genus and species.
- **Week 9 (10%): EXEGESIS** : Now you must march through your text doing exegesis with all means necessary (**1500** words). If you have Greek, use it; if not, use a couple of translations and one solid or historically important commentary (Origen, Chrysostym, Bede, Calvin). You should try to write your own commentary on all the verses respecting your particular topic. Obviously you will need to pull from everywhere in Matthew; you should only write an explicit commentary on 10 or so verses that will form the hard core of your research paper.

Instructions: see the Research paper instructions. It is especially important that you set yourself up for success in these early papers, to which I will give extensive feedback.

Research Paper: 50%

Length: c. 12-15 pages (c. 3000-4000 words)

Essential Sources: 1) Matthew! 2) Josephus, 3) Talmud and/or Midrasch.

There should be substantive, extended engagement with 2 and/or 3 in your paper. This requires of course that you are doing the reading throughout the course and

Additional Sources: Scripture, Philo, Tacitus, further Commentaries (provided as PDFs); Westcott, Schlatter. Some of these should certainly occur in your paper, but I will not be tallying occurrences or headhunting. Just do good exegesis and good scholarship, noting where your ideas come from!

You are welcome to find additional secondary sources; if you are uncertain about the credibility of the source, *please ask*.

Instructions: Present concrete observations and be thorough. Your previous essays should set you up well.

Don't say what you will say - you won't have time for that. Just say it. Don't forget the inimitable injunction of William Strunk to "OMIT NEEDLESS WORDS" with the aim that "every word tell." Also, avoid colloquialisms (and contractions!) unless you are certain that they are necessary or stylistically unimpeachable.

Signpost, signpost, signpost. Let me know where you are going, where you've been, and where you are. Ask yourself *why* incessantly.

In your final paragraph, after doing the hard work, say something suggestive or provocative. For more help, please ask.

Due Date: A week after our last class.

Grading Scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	67	63	60	

Course Calendar

Subject to change. [Click here](#) for the most current syllabus.

*Reading questions are linked (handouts below table); for non-purchased readings, I have provided links or will send around a PDF. Non-bolded readings in the Primary Sources column are optional. Strack and Billerbeck (SB) : read their **summaries first**, reading only as much of the supporting material as you can. You **will** be required to use Talmud/Midrash in your paper(s), viz., **not SB's summaries**. JA = Josephus' Antiquities; BJ = Bellum Iudaicum (Josephus). Note that, for Josephus, there are two trajectories: 1) the history from Herod the Great to the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD; 2) his account of Abraham, Moses, and David (from the first part of the JA). As you are familiar with the latter stories, skim them with an eye to interpretative details or connections to the Gospels. Josephus is everywhere influenced by then-current traditional interpretations. The goal here is simply to familiarize you with the most important, contemporaneous historical source outside the NT (in Greek).*

Week	Dates	Key Topic	Primary Source(s)	Background Reading
1	Jan 13-19	Miracles in Matthew: Promises Fulfilled Reading Questions 1	Matthew 1-2 , 8-9 Psalm 2; I Chronicles 1-11	Characteristics of Gospel Miracles , Westcott (sermons I-III); SB on c. 1, 2:23
2	Jan 20-26	John the Baptist: The Way of Righteousness Reading Questions 2	Matthew 3-4 , 9:14-17, 11:2-15, 14:1-13, 21:23	SB c. 3-4 (10 pgs. JA : 1:7-17 (Abraham-10 p.); JA : 15: 3-4, 6, 8; 16: 5, -7; 17:1-2,

			Psalm 45; Malachi	7-8; 18:6 (Herod - 26 pgs.)
3	Jan 27 - Feb 2	The First Discourse: The New Righteousness Reading Questions 3	Matthew 5-7 Psalm 1, 14, 139	SB c. 5-7 (50+) JA 18:1-8 (Gaius Caligula)
4	Feb 3-9	The Second Discourse: The Principles of the Apostolate Reading Questions 4	Matthew 8-10 Ezekiel 34	SB 10 Philo , Legatio ad Gaium JA 20:5-11 (NT,, Messianism, Theudas)
5	Feb 10-16	The Third Discourse: The Kingdom of Heaven Reading Questions 5	Matthew 11-14 Hosea	SB : 13 JA : 2:9-16 (Moses) BJ : preface, 1:1-5, -7, 20-21, -33
6	Feb 17-23	The Fourth Discourse: The Transvaluation of all Values Reading Questions 6	Matthew 15-18	SB : 18 (15) JA : 3 (Moses) BJ : Book 2:1-14, 17, 20
7	Feb 24 - Mar 2	Jesus' Road to the Cross: Giving God What is God's Reading Questions 7	Matthew 19-22 Psalm 110,	JA : 4 (Moses) BJ : Book 3:3-5, 7-8, 10; 4:8-11
8	Mar 3-9	The Fifth Discourse: The Unreligion of the Pharisees Reading Questions 8	Matthew 23 Jonah	SB : 23 (15) JA : 6:8-14 (David) BJ : Book 5:4-5, 10-13; 6:4-6
9	Mar 10-16	The Fifth Discourse (2) The Return of the Master Reading Questions 9	Matthew 24-25 Daniel: <i>all</i>	JA : 7 (David) SB : 24-25 BJ : 7:1-4 Tacitus : Histories 5.1-15
10	Mar 17-22	The Cross and Resurrection: Matthew's Church Reading Questions 10	Matthew 26-28 Psalm 22, 69	SB : 26-28 "Matthew's Church" by DA Schlatter (PDF)

Institutional Policies

Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

Drop Date (100% Refund): Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

Drop Date (50% Refund): Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

Withdrawal: Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students who cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students' GPA falls below 3.0, Davenport will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

Grading Scale

Passing: ≥93:A • ≥90:A- • ≥87:B+ • ≥83:B • ≥80:B- • ≥77:C • ≥73:C

Retake if Core: 70–72:C- • ≥67:D+ • ≥63:D • ≥60:D- • <60:F

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at davenanthall.com