

KINGDOM *of* HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Part 3: Matthew 14:1-17:27

Notes exclusively from 'Matthew' by David L.
Turner; Baker Exegetical Commentary on the
New Testament



Rosebank
UNION CHURCH

Matthew Series outline - 2024

	Date	Passage	Subject	
1	28 Jan	12:46-50, 13:53-58	Hearing, seeing and doing the word of God	Narrative block
2	4 Feb	14:1-12	The Death of John the Baptist	
3	11 Feb	14:13-36	True Worship	
	(Guest speaker Sam Allberry)			
4	25 Feb	15:1-20	Religion, Tradition & the Commandments of God	
5	3 Mar	15:21-31	The Faith of a Canaanite woman	
6	10 Mar	15:32-16:12	Bread & Leaven	
7	17 Mar	16:13-20	Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ	
8	24 Mar	16:21-28	The Cross & true Discipleship	
	(Series break - 2 weeks)			
9	7 Apr	17:1-13	The Transfiguration	Fourth Discourse (Kingdom Community)
10	14 Apr	17:14-27	Faith & Freedom	
11	21 Apr	18:1-14	The Greatest in the Kingdom	
12	28 Apr	18:15-20	Disunity in the Community	
13	5 May	18:21-35	The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant	Narrative block
14	12 May	19:1-12	Teaching about Divorce	
15	19 May	19:13-30	True Riches	
16	26 May	20:1-16	The Grace of the Kingdom	
17	2 Jun	20:17-34	The Shadow of the Cross	
18	9 Jun	21:1-22	The Triumphal Entry & Cleansing of the Temple	
	(Series break - 3 weeks)			
19	7 Jul	21:23-46	The Authority of the messiah	
20	14 Jul	22:1-14	The Parable of the Wedding feast	
21	21 Jul	22:15-22	Christian Citizenship	
22	28 Jul	22:23-40	Religious Leaders interrogate Jesus	Fifth Discourse (The Future Kingdom)
23	4 Aug	22:41-23:12	Jesus questions Religious Leaders	
24	11 Aug	23:13-36 pt 1	Seven woes to the Scribes & Pharisees	
25	18 Aug	23:13-36 & 37-39	Lament over Jerusalem	
26	25 Aug	24:1-14	Signs of the End of the Age	
27	1 Sep	24:15-35	The Abomination of Desolation & the Coming of the Son of Man	
28	8 Sep	24:36-51	Prepare yourself!	
29	15 Sep	25:1-13	The Parable of the Ten Virgins	Epilogue / Conclusion
30	22 Sep	25:14-30	The Parable of the Talents	
31	29 Sep	25:31-46	The Final Judgment	
32	6 Oct	26:1-30	Preparation of the Death of Christ	
33	13 Oct	26:31-56	Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus	
34	20 Oct	26:57-68	Jesus on Trial	
35	27 Oct	26:69-27:10	Peter & Judas respond	
36	3 Nov	27:11-26	Jesus before Pilate	
37	10 Nov	27:27-56	The Crucifixion	
38	17 Nov	27:57-28:10	The Resurrection	
39	24 Nov	28:11-20	The Great Commission	

Review of the structure of Matthew

- Recall that one of the distinguishing features of Matthew as a Gospel writer is his meticulous structure and very particular organisation of the material.
- This is not for aesthetic purposes, but rather a means of preserving a particular theological agenda.
- Students of Matthew have long noted the unique juxtapositioning of **narrative** and **discourse** sections in the Gospel.
- These junctions are clearly marked by the phrase “*When Jesus had finished...*”:
 - 7:28 (The end of the Sermon on the Mount)
 - 11:1 (The end of the Missionary Discourse)
 - 13:53 (The end of the discourse on Parables of the Kingdom)
 - 19:1 (The end of the discourse on Kingdom Community)
 - 26:1 (The end of the Olivet Discourse)
- Following is the condensed outline we’re using (Turner):
 - I. Prologue/Introduction: The origin of Jesus the Messiah (1:1-2:23)**
 - II. Early days of kingdom word & works (3:1-7:29)**
 - i. Narrative 1: John the Baptist, Jesus & the kingdom of God (3:1-4:25)
 - ii. Discourse 1: Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)
 - III. Galilean ministry continues (8:1-11:1)**
 - i. Narrative 2: Three cycles of miracles and discipleship (8:1-10:4)
 - ii. Discourse 2: Missionary Discourse (10:5-11:1)
 - IV. Growing opposition to the kingdom of heaven (11:2-13:52)**
 - i. Narrative 3: Three cycles of unbelief and belief (11:2-12:50)
 - ii. Discourse 3: Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven (13:1-52)
 - V. Opposition to the kingdom continues (13:52-19:2)**
 - i. Narrative 4: Various responses to the Son of God (13:53-17:27)
 - ii. Discourse 4: Values and relationships in the Kingdom Community (18:1-19:2)
 - VI. Opposition comes to a head in Judea (19:3-26:2)**
 - i. Narrative 5: Ministry in Judea (19:3-23:39)
 - ii. Discourse 5: The Olivet Discourse (24:1-26:2)
 - VII. Epilogue/conclusion: Passion, resurrection, and commission (26:3-28:20)¹**

¹ Mark’s passion narrative is approx 20% of his Gospel, Matthew is approx 10%.

Structure (chapters 14-17)

- Chapters 14-17 make up the fourth narrative block in Matthew's Gospel.
- There are approximately 16 pericopes² in this block:
 - At least seven emphasise a negative, unbelieving response to Jesus and the kingdom (13:53-58, 14:1-12, 15:1-20, 16:1-4, 16:5-12, 16:21-28, 17:22-23)
 - Five stress a positive, believing response (14:22-33, 15:21-28, 15:29-39, 16:13-20, 17:1-13).
 - The remainder are ambiguous when it comes to a faith response.
- It seems that Matthew's primary concerns in this block are twofold:
 - i. To highlight the growing opposition to Jesus's ministry**
 - This picks up on the key 'kingdom parables' in the third discourse (chapter 13) of both the 'sower' (13:1-9, 18-23) and the 'wheat & the weeds' (13:24-30), where it is clear that whilst the kingdom will advance in this world (as seen in the parables of kingdom value - the pearl, treasure etc), it will not be without opposition.
 - This narrative section will include a key transition point in Matthew, where Jesus starts to speak clearly of his impending death in Jerusalem. This will start in chapter 16 (v21-23), but be repeated.
 - ii. To prepare his disciples for his absence**
 - Jesus's prepares his disciples for his absence through 'words & works'. His teaching of the disciples includes the crucial pericope in chapter 16 (16:13-28), but also in the fourth discourse on the 'kingdom community' (chapter 18). More is coming in the final discourse (the 'Olivet discourse' - although he is leaving, he will return!).
 - Some of the teaching of the disciples happens around key events in the narrative sections (eg the feeding miracles, Peter walking on water etc). At least 11 of the 16 pericopes contribute to the growing faith of the disciples (see table below)

² A small unit within a larger passage of scripture, depicting one event or one coherent train of thought.

Text	Content	Conflict	Disciples' faith
1. 13:54-58	Rejection in Nazareth	X	
2. 14:1-12	Herod the tetrarch and Jesus	X	
3. 14:13-21	Jesus feeds the 5,000		X
4. 14:22-33	Jesus walks on the water		X
5. 14:34-36	Jesus heals at Gennesaret		
6. 15:1-20	Conflict over the elders' tradition	X	
7. 15:21-28	Faith of the gentile woman		X
8. 15:29-39	Jesus feeds the 4,000		X
9. 16:1-4	Second request for a sign	X	
10. 16:5-12	Warning against Jewish leaders		X
11. 16:13-20	Peter's confession and Jesus's promise	X	X
12. 16:21-28	Jesus's first passion prediction	X	X
13. 17:1-13	Jesus's transfiguration	X	X
14. 17:14-21	An epileptic boy healed		X
15. 17:22-23	Jesus's second passion prediction	X	X
16. 17:24-27	Question about the temple tax		X

Matthew's two themes in this narrative block: increasing opposition, lessons for the disciples.

1. Rejection in Nazareth (13:53-58)

- Jesus's rejection in his hometown, Nazareth, provides a sad yet fitting introduction to the narrative block. Jesus has made it clear that both the message and messengers of his kingdom will often be rejected (5:10-12, 10:14-39, 11:12, 12:2). This rejection starts with Jesus himself.
- This rejection also forms part of an 'inclusio' with chapter 13, where we see an abrasive interaction between Jesus and his family in 12:46-50.
- This rejection of the prophet Jesus at Nazareth leads into the following pericope on the rejection and murder of the prophet John. These two prophetic rejection passages prepare the reader for 17:12, as well as sets an ominous tone for what is to come in this narrative block as a whole.
- v53
 - With his characteristic transitional statement ('*And when Jesus had finished...he went from there*' v53, see 7:28, 11:1, 19:1, 26:1) Matthew's story transitions from the third discourse (chap 13) to another narrative block, which continues the story of mixed responses to Jesus, that has just been introduced in the parables of the kingdom (sower, wheat and weeds).
- v54-56
 - Jesus's return to his hometown does not involve a warm welcome! His teaching leads to astonishment, and there is skepticism about the source of wisdom and power, instead of praise to God for its blessings.
 - The problem is the people's frame of reference: they cannot correlate Jesus's humble beginnings with his current power and authority. In the next verse Jesus will reflect on the common human experience where well-known people are not highly regarded by those who knew them before they achieved their fame.
- v57-58
 - This lack of understanding by the residents of Nazareth precipitates a fall into 'unbelief', and ultimately destruction. They now are under the same judgment as Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (11:20-24).
 - 'Familiarity' has 'bred contempt', and their unbelief means Jesus does not do many miracles.
 - **Jesus's lack of miracles in Nazareth should not be viewed as a matter of impotence but a matter of choice.** Jesus's power is not relativised by unbelief, but he will not perform miracles simply to please skeptics or create sensation.

2. Herod, Jesus, and the death of John the Baptist (14:1-12)

- This is the second time in Matthew where the story of Jesus intersects that of the Herodian dynasty, and it is again an ominous encounter.
- In Matthew chapter 2 we encountered Herod the Great ordering the death of infants in an attempt to murder Jesus as a baby, and now we find Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, proving he is like his father in murdering John the Baptist (although his conscience plagues him, at least!)
- In Matthew's narrative, John's execution by Antipas follows upon the rejection of Jesus by the people at Nazareth (13:53-58).
- Thus while the two episodes stress unbelief in two different situations, the unifying theme is the rejection of God's messengers. This rejection of God's prophets will be stressed in 23:29-37.
- Israel's rejection of its own prophets is well documented in the Old Testament, but for Matthew, the rejection of the prophet's climaxes in the rejection of Jesus, the ultimate prophet (23:32).
- **Ultimately, this pericope shows how John's death anticipates that of Jesus (17:12) in many respects (rejection, unjust 'trial', shameful execution etc).**
- The similarities between John & Jesus are almost uncanny, which leads some scholars to describe 14:1-12 as a Christological parable.
- v1-2
 - At about the time of Jesus's rejection in Nazareth, his ministry comes to the attention of Herod Antipas.
 - Antipas's superstitious explanation for Jesus's miraculous powers evidently stems from a guilty conscience³.
 - However, this mistaken explanation of Jesus's power does serve to link John's mission and destiny to that of Jesus.
- v3-5
 - Matt 14:3-12 is a flashback that fills in the grisly details of the death of John the Baptist.
 - Antipas divorced his first wife to marry Herodias, who was formerly married to his half-brother Phillip. John had persistently pointed out that this was illegal (Lev 18:16, 20:21). Although Antipas wanted to execute John, he feared the crowd's response.
 - Antipas's fear of the crowds anticipates the fear experienced by the Jerusalem religious leaders to arrest Jesus (21:46).
- v6-8
 - Antipas's political concerns are outweighed by wanting to please his second wife, and not make a fool of himself in front of his party guests.
 - His rash promise to Herodias's daughter⁴, and Herodias's subsequent request for John's head on a platter (evidently she held a grudge against John for denouncing her marriage to Antipas), lead to John's death.

³ Antipas was evidently not the only one to think this! See 16:14

⁴ It is debatable that this dance was an erotic one, as is often thought, as the word describing Herodias's daughter is in the diminutive form, and there are no risqué details in the text.

- v9-11
 - Although Antipas regretted his oath, he wanted to save face in front of his party guests and obliged the girls' request.
 - Antipas's guilty conscience led to his fear that Jesus was John brought back to life.
 - Although beheading did not carry the same horror of crucifixion, it was still a shameful way to die, one usually reserved for egregious wrongdoers. **Thus John prepares the way for Jesus even in the manner of his execution.**
 - Similarly, Antipas's reluctance to behead John may anticipate Pilate's reluctance to condemn Jesus.
- v12
 - John's disciples inform Jesus of his death (and perform a fitting burial), which leads to Jesus's withdrawal to a remote region in v13, evidently to seek solitude to reflect on John's death.

3. Jesus feeds the five thousand (14:13-21)

- This story is found in all four Gospels, although the later similar story of the feeding of the four thousand is found only in Matthew and Mark.
- Jesus has withdrawn after John's death, yet the crowds seek him out and he compassionately heals their sick.
- His compassion is also manifested in providing the miraculous meal.
- v13-14
 - Despite Jesus's intentions to retreat, the press of needy demands Jesus's attention. He responds with compassion and heals the sick in the crowds.
 - The description of Jesus as a compassionate healer recalls 4:23-24, 9:35-36 and anticipates 15:30-32.
- v15-18
 - The disciples ask Jesus to dismiss the crowd so that the people can care for their own needs, but Jesus instead intends for his disciples to care for the crowds' needs!
 - The reluctance and disbelief of the disciples set the scene for the astonishing resolution to the problem.
- v19-21
 - Jesus takes the five loaves and two fish and blesses the bread, which is a praise to God for supplying it.
 - The food multiplies to feed over 5000 men, plus the women and children that accompanied them, and there is more left over than what there was to start with!
 - It is clear that Jesus performs this miracle out of compassion for hungry people, and to demonstrate kingdom authority so that people will believe in him.
 - **Thus, in this passage Jesus continues to strengthen and develop his disciples by modelling compassion and inspiring faith.**

- However, additional interpretive approaches to this miracle have been suggested:
 - i. There may be allegorical overtones to this historical miracle, with respect to the **last supper**. There are many clear verbal parallels between Matt 14:13-21 & 26:20-29 that some connection between the two seems undeniable. However, the pericope as primarily intended to record a miracle, in order to highlight the authority & compassion of Jesus as Messiah needs to be maintained.
 - ii. Matthew surely also intends to remind his readers of the **past miraculous feeding of the Israelites with manna in the wilderness**. This connects with Moses & Exodus typology found elsewhere in Matthew (Matt 2:15, Baptism of Jesus, Testing of Jesus, Sermon on the Mount, transfiguration to come etc).
 - iii. The story is also intended to anticipate the **eschatological messianic banquet** alluded to in 8:11 and 26:29⁵
 - iv. There are also echoes here of the ministries of **Elijah and Elisha**. Typologically, as God miraculously met the needs of his people in former days through Moses, Elijah and Elisha, so God meets their needs ultimately through his beloved Son, the definitive prophet and teacher of Israel.

4. Jesus walks on the water (14:22-33)

- After a story of a miraculous feeding, Jesus miraculously walks on the Sea of Galilee.
- This is another boat/storm/faith story, similar to 8:23-27.
- The pericope centres on the response of the disciples to Jesus as 'Son of God' with 'worship' (v32-33).
- v22-23
 - While the disciples are taking the boat back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus ascends a mountain to pray. Matthew records Jesus praying three times in his Gospel: here, in 11:25-26 and in Gethsemane (26:36-44). This was likely Jesus's original goal in 14:13 but he was hindered by the crowds.
 - No mention is given of how Jesus intends to re-unite with his disciples on the other side!
- v24-27
 - The disciples are some distance from land, perhaps 3-4km. The time stamp is around 3am⁶, and they have rowed through most of the night in pretty terrible conditions!
 - The disciples do not recognise Jesus, which leads Jesus to identify himself, followed by an exhortation to '*take heart..do not be afraid*'

⁵ also 22:4, 29:10, Rev 19:9

⁶ 'fourth watch of the night' is the custom of dividing the night from 6pm-6am in four watches of three hours each

- v28-31
 - Peter is the first to respond, which is commonly noted in Matthew. He proposes a test: if it is really Jesus, will he command Peter to come to him on the water?
 - Peter walks on water but only briefly, terrified by the wind and waves. He cries out for rescue.
 - 'In view of the discipleship context of the previous storm miracle (8:23-27) it is not a mistake to regard Peter's faith and doubt in the face of danger as exemplary of the trials of discipleship'⁷
- v32-33
 - Jesus rescues Peter, but his words are aimed at a higher sort of deliverance. He notes Peter's weak faith and asks why he doubted him, a recurring theme in Matthew (6:30, 8:26, 16:8, 28:17).
 - Peter and Jesus climb into the boat and the storm subsides, this time without a command. Here the presence of Jesus is all that is needed.
 - When the disciples realise Jesus has walked on the storm-tossed sea and stopped the storm they worship him, and utter a confession of his divine sonship (2:15, 3:17, 4:3, 6, 8:29, 12:18, 17:5, 27:54). **This is a crucial moment in the Gospel where the disciples themselves now start to 'own' the idea for themselves that Jesus is the Son of God!**
 - While this incident primarily affirms the status of Jesus as God's son, and therefore with divine authority over creation, on a discipleship level it is remarkable that Jesus can share his capacity to walk on water with Peter! However, authority to walk on water is relatively inconsequential when it is compared with authority to extend God's kingdom (10:1, 7, 11:27, 28:18-20).
 - Peter's faith may be weak, but Jesus's presence will continue to empower and rescue as inevitable future trials will be encountered.

5. Jesus heals many at Gennesaret (14:34-36)

- These verses provide the kind of summary that is by now familiar to the reader: 4:23-24, 8:16, 9:35, 14:14, 15:30-31.
- In Matthew 14, the two summaries of healing (14:14, 14:34-36) bracket the two miracle stories. Together, these events contrast the two previous episodes, which stress unbelief (13:53-58 - Jesus's rejection in his hometown & 14:1-12 - John's death).
- Thus these stories, while retaining a discipleship element (the disciples' faith is implicitly challenged in the feeding miracle and explicitly challenged in the storm encounter), serve to highlight, once again, Jesus's status as Son of God, and thus worthy of worship.
- On this dual-focus of Matthew, Davies and Allison say:
 - **'So often the First Evangelist, while addressing christological themes with his right hand, is at the same time delivering teaching on discipleship with his left'**

⁷ Turner, David pg 373

6. Conflict over the tradition of the Elders (15:1-20)

- The flow of Matt 15:1-20 develops out of the Pharisees' question (v1-2), answered in v3-9 by Jesus, who then addresses the crowd parabolically in the presence of the Pharisees (v10-11).
- Next, responding to two questions from the disciples, Jesus first denounces the Pharisees (v12-14) and then explains the enigmatic saying of v11 to the disciples (v15-20).
- The focus thus moves from (1) Jesus's enemies, the Pharisees; to (2) the crowd, which views Jesus in a superficial manner; to (3) the disciples, whose understanding of Jesus is genuine, if flawed.

a) The Pharisees (v1-9)

- v1-2
 - The Pharisees, who have not been seen since chapter 12, appear again here, accusing Jesus's disciples of not adhering to traditional teachings concerned with washing of hands before a meal.
 - The fact that they have traveled from Jerusalem indicates that this is perhaps an official enquiry, stemming from earlier conflicts.
 - Whilst they direct their charge against Jesus's disciples, his disciples must have got the practice from Jesus (see Luke 11:38).
 - Biblically speaking, this practice is a purity law concerning the priests, when offering sacrifices, not something for Israel as a whole (Ex 30:17-21, Deut 21:1-9). Evidently the Pharisees extrapolated the laws to themselves and theoretically to all Jews.
 - Jesus's disciples are thus accused of breaking the oral 'law' that has grown up to protect the written Biblical law.
 - Jesus twice refers to these traditions as 'your' traditions (v3, 6). He does not view these traditions as having authority on a par with the written Torah.
- v3-6
 - Jesus does not directly answer their accusation. Instead he questions them, charging them with breaking the written commandments of God with their man-made traditions!
 - Specifically, Jesus cites the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12) regarding honouring ones father and mother, and asserts that the tradition of the elders on gifts to God (15:5) has invalidated the true intent of the actual written law.
 - Jesus makes mention of the practice of 'corban', a word in the Hebrew Bible that refers to all kinds of offerings, but had come to refer to items removed from common use and dedicated to God. This included funds pledged to the temple.
 - Evidently, such funds were not transferable to others, such as one's parents, but were still available to the one who pledged them. Therefore, one could claim inability to meet a charitable obligation (such as helping one's parents!) because the funds had been pledged to God, when in fact no money had yet changed hands!
 - In a way, "A man goes through the formality of vowing something to God, not that he may give it to God, but in order to prevent some other person from having it."

- v7-9
 - Jesus escalates the accusation against the Pharisees by charging them with hypocrisy.
 - We came across the subject of hypocrisy in the Sermon on the Mount, in particular when Jesus dealt with giving to the needy, praying in public & judging others (6:2, 5, 7:5). Hypocrisy in the Pharisees is evident in the fact that their external obedience to the law is a pretence masking internal disobedience. This is a charge Jesus will escalate again in chapter 23.
 - Jesus quotes from Isaiah (29:13), who confronted a similar hypocritical situation. Both Jesus and Isaiah denounce empty worship stemming from human tradition that sets aside the authority of God's word. For Jesus, false piety (the 'corban' tradition) cloaks the deeper impiety of neglecting parents.

b) The crowds (v10-11)

- The conflict provides an opportunity to teach the crowds (v10-11) and then the disciples (v12-20).
- Jesus teaches the crowds that true purity is not a participation in a ritual that protects one from impurities on the outside. Rather, true purity is a matter of the heart, and this will be demonstrated in what comes out the mouth. Purity is thus located internally, but is demonstrated externally. It moves from the inside out, not the outside in!
- This is a summary of the underlying teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, that the heart is the source of ethical impurity. In the sermon the sins of anger & lust in particular were highlighted as internal acts of impurity (5:21-30).
- In that same sermon the charge of hypocrisy was also mentioned in the instances of external piety of giving to the needy and prayer (6:2&5).

c) The disciples (v12-20)

- v12-14
 - The disciples are concerned about the escalating tension with the Pharisees. Jesus however, is not concerned (cf 11:6 "*And blessed is the one who is not offended by me*"). His description of the Pharisees in v13 alludes to Isa 60:21 & 61:3, which speak positively of plants God has planted. Clearly, the Pharisees have not been planted by God, so they will be 'uprooted' through judgment at the end. This contrasts with the Mishnah's assumption that all Israelites are God's "planting".
 - Additionally, Jesus's command to the disciples to 'let them (the Pharisees) alone' (v14) echoes the command of the farmer about permitting the weeds to grow in the wheat until the harvest.

- v15-20
 - Once again, Peter speaks for the group and asks what Jesus means.
 - The teaching to the crowd was surely enigmatic, and thus Jesus explains in private, to this disciples, what he said in public (much like the parables in chapter 13).
 - Jesus twice uses the word 'understanding', referring back to the parable of the sower and the seed sown on the path (13:13-15). The question thus implies a rebuke: by now they should understand!
 - The list of seven sins that come from the heart in v19 begins with a general statement about internal thoughts and goes on to list external acts that, for the most part, are prohibited by the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:13-17, Deut 5:17-21).
 - This demonstrates the important principle introduced in 5:17 *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them"*. Jesus is not abrogating the law given to Moses, nor is he starting a new system of ritual purity! He is targeting the source of all impurity, and the person who 'understands' and acts accordingly will end up obeying the law of Moses!

7. Exorcism of the Canaanite woman's daughter (15:21-28)

- This passage contains a dialogue in which Jesus responds three times to the pleas of a Canaanite woman. The drama of the repeated requests and response heightens the readers' anticipation, and anticipates the woman's astonishing demonstration of both humility & faith, which Jesus will commend as exemplary.
- The inclusion of Ruth and Tamar in Jesus's genealogy (1:3, 5) prepares the reader for this episode.
- v21
 - This is Jesus's fourth strategic withdrawal from conflict (2:12-14, 22, 4:12, 12:15, 14:13), indicating a change in the tone of Matthew's account. Thus while the encounter with the woman may seem 'hostile', it is all part of the drama being created before the critical affirmation of the woman's faith.
- v22-23a
 - At first Jesus uncharacteristically ignores the gentile woman's request. He is evidently testing her faith, while adding to the drama.
 - The woman's surprising reference to him as 'Lord' and 'Son of David' shows she has genuine insight into Jesus's identity and mission.
- v23b-24
 - The disciples urge Jesus to send her away, again showing insensitivity towards needy people (as in the feeding of the five thousand).
 - Jesus tells the woman that the lost sheep of the house of Israel are his sole mission priority (see 10:5-6).

- v25-26'
 - The woman persists, this time bowing before Jesus, and calling him 'Lord' for a third time. Matthew likely intends the reader to view this worship in the strongest sense of the word, continuing the theme of worship from the introduced in 14:33.
 - The language describing the gentiles is offensive to modern sensibilities⁸. The point is the redemptive-historical priority of Israel, where Israel was established as God's people through whom all nations would be blessed, through the coming Messiah.
 - The theme of Gentile inclusion has been evident from the genealogy in chapter 1, through the worship of wise men in chapter 2, the faith of the Roman officer in chapter 8 (with the invitation to the eschatological feast included for gentiles!) and now his acknowledgment of the faith of this gentile woman. The conclusion of the Gospel account will of course set the final missionary trajectory to 'all nations' (28:19).
 - Whilst difficult for gentiles to accept, it is clear that the issue of Israel's election must be taken seriously. Jesus said to a Samaritan woman: "*Salvation is from the Jews*" (John 4:22). Thus the universal mission of the church does not replace the earlier mission to Israel but expands it. Matthew would thus agree with Paul that, through Jesus, Gentiles have been brought near to Israel's covenant promises (Eph 2:11-22, Rom 11:17, 15:7-12). Ultimately both Matthew's and Paul's views arise from Gen 12:3 "*In you [Abraham] shall all the families of the earth be blessed*".
- v27-28
 - Instead of offence, the woman adapts Jesus's metaphor and extends it, continuing her plea. Jesus commends the woman's great faith and heals her daughter.
 - Thus the fact of faith providing access to the saving grace of the Messiah extending to gentiles is firmly established, and perhaps some of the tense language is to build tension for this glorious revelation.

⁸ Not softened by noting that Jesus uses the diminutive word for dog, suggesting a house pet rather than a wild scavenger

8. Another miracle meal (15:29-39)

- v29-31
 - There is of course a large degree of similarity between this story and the earlier feeding of the five thousand, including the fact that it follows an attempt by Jesus to withdraw alone, only to be disturbed by crowds. Once again, Jesus displays compassion on them by healing them.
 - This time, however, there is an explicit mention of the crowd '*glorifying the God of Israel*', which continues the affirmation of faith expressed by the Canaanite woman in the preceding story, as well as the theme of worship introduced in chapter 14 with the disciples on the boat.
- v32-38
 - The compassion of Jesus is again exemplified in his desire to feed those who were with him. Once again the disciples respond with an incredulous question indicating their memories are evidently not very good in that they have forgotten the previous account of Jesus's miraculous ability to multiply their supplies!
- v39
 - It is impossible to locate with certainty the region referred to as 'Magadan'⁹, but Jesus is clearly in Jewish territory and back in touch with the Pharisees opposition (16:1).
- The story raises the question of why we have two accounts of a miracle meal.
- While some have attempted to show that this meal is in Gentile territory, and thus extends the idea of Gentile inclusion introduced in the previous pericope, the arguments are unconvincing. It would be convenient if it were so, but there is no indication of this in the text itself. This theory could only be inferred from the context (the gentile woman's faith), and one wonders why it would not be more explicit, given the explicit details of Gentile faith in previous stories.
- Why then does Matthew include two stories of miracle meals? On a theological level it is worth noting that Moses was associated with two feeding miracles (Ex 16, Num 11), and we have noted many inferences between Jesus and Moses in the past (including the specific reference in this passage to the location of a mountain as the setting of the miracle, perhaps echoes of Sinai and manna from heaven?).
- Perhaps the simplest answer is that we are learning of the flawed faith of the disciples, who, after the first miracle meal story still a) show no compassion on the crowds and b) do not trust Jesus for provision. We have seen Jesus repeat lessons for his disciples, as evidenced in the lesson on purity, a reminder from the Sermon on the Mount. We have seen that Jesus expects his disciples to have 'understood' some things by now (14:15-16), and thus they need continued exhortation and teaching.

⁹ Perhaps 'Magdala' on the west side of the Sea of Galilee

9. The second request for a sign (16:1-4)

- Earlier in Matthew, confrontations with the Pharisees occur as they respond to the words and works of Jesus. As things proceed, however, they begin to seek Jesus out in order to initiate confrontation.
- Their second request for a sign (see 12:38-42 'the sign of Jonah') leads to perhaps the most crucial christological pericope in this Gospel!
- At this crucial moment, Jesus clearly announces his death and resurrection for the first time, and then points his disciples to the self-denying lifestyle that will be required of them. However, they can expect reward upon his return!
- v1
 - Again the Jewish leaders ask Jesus for a sign (see 1 Cor 1:22 "*For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom...*"), but this time their motive is exposed: they are seeking to test him.
 - Alert readers would note the same 'testing' by the devil in chapter 4 (v1, 3, 7)
 - Their request for a 'sign from heaven' comes off the back of the miracle feeding of four thousand, and one wonders what sign could be more convincing! Jesus however, performs signs out of compassion for those in need, not in response to a 'dare'!
 - The juxtaposition of the miracle meal and the request for a sign proves that seeing is not always believing.
- v2-4
 - Jesus answer contrasts the Pharisees competence in interpreting meteorological signs, but inadequacy in interpreting prophetic signs.
 - Again the 'sign of Jonah' (see 12:38-42) is mentioned, pointing to the time the Son of Man will be in earth after his death.
 - Jesus's resurrection will be the ultimate sign from heaven, yet this generation will still not believe Jesus's message, like the Ninevites believed Jonah's message.
 - At this point Jesus walks away from the religious leaders, demonstrating his total incompatibility with them.

10. Warning against the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:5-12)

- The use of 'bread' imagery continues, with Jesus using the metaphor of leaven to warn his disciples about the Pharisees' teaching.
- v5-7
 - The disciples are not at their best here! They both forget a) Jesus's recent warning about the Pharisees (15:13-14) as well as b) his ability to miraculously provide food!
 - They clearly remain unaware of the danger of the Pharisees, as well as continue to display lack of trust in Jesus's ability to provide for them.
 - This also shows that they are unaware of the seriousness of the spiritual conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. They are clearly preoccupied with material concerns. This is evident as they immediately and automatically associate Jesus's metaphor about yeast with their hunger, and not the escalating controversy with the Pharisees.
 - This firm but clear rebuke is meant to sharpen the focus of the disciples, as it should for us today!
- v8-12
 - Jesus confronts them (again) with their lack of faith (see 14:31), which is astounding considering the two feeding miracles!

11. Peter's confession and Jesus's promise (16:13-20)

- This passage is a christological high point of the Gospel. The passage uses Peter's confession and Jesus's response to tie together the revelation of Jesus thus far: he is none other than the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.
- Additionally, he will equip his new community (ie the 'church') with authority to become the centre of God's redemptive activity in the world.
- The passage is centred around the three statements Jesus makes in response to Peter, each one crucial in the understanding of the nature of the nascent Church.
- v13a
 - Jesus travels to Caesarea Philippi, which is about 40km North of the Sea of Galilee. It is thus an extensive excursion, and Jesus must have a reason to have travelled there. However, from the account in Matthew, all that we know takes place here is the interaction between Jesus and his disciples. Thus, the teaching moment in v13-20 uses the place of Caesarea Philippi as a backdrop for a particular reason.
 - This must be due to the proliferation of religious cults present in the area. From the time of Jeroboam's golden calf, through the Greek era, to the Romans, this region included worship sites of multiple false gods and deities. Thus the Church, established on the confession of faith in Jesus, is to triumph over these false religions.

- v13b-14
 - There was clearly much speculation regarding Jesus at this time. Herod Antipas already believed Jesus was John revived (14:2), and Jesus as Elijah is based on messianic expectation from Mal 4:5, which speaks of God sending Elijah before the day of the Lord (or perhaps Jesus's miracles remind people of Elijah's miracles). The connection between Jesus and Jeremiah is not as clear, but likely due to Jeremiah's noted judgment oracles and opposition to the temple leaders of his day.
 - The important point is that all of these popular views of Jesus are positive, but inadequate.
- v15-16
 - Jesus asks the all-important question, one that everyone must answer, 'who do you say I am?'.
 - Characteristically, Peter responds on behalf of the group. **His remarkable answer links Jesus's identity as Messiah to his divine sonship.**
 - The christological highpoint here is mirrored by the low point during Jesus's (mock) trial. The high priests echoes these words, but in complete anger & unbelief:
 - *"And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God"" (Matthew 26:63)*
 - The addition of 'living God' by Peter implicitly distinguishes between the true God of Israel and the surrounding false gods.
- v17-18
 - Jesus responds that Peter's awareness of Jesus's true identity was not due to human brilliance, but to a divine revelation.
 - Jesus continues with a pronouncement of Peter's foundational authority in the church that Jesus will build. This has nothing to do with sole apostolic succession from Peter, as held by the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, it recognises that Peter is a spokesman for the group of Apostles (thus 'first among equals') and thus the platform for the church is the group of Apostles, including Peter. This is consistent with the Matthean context, and the book of Acts, where the Church was launched through the Acts of the Apostles.
 - The 'gates of hell' probably alludes to biblical 'Sheol' as the domain of Satan and death. Jesus thus promises that the evil powers which will come against it will not destroy the church that he will build. Even death itself will not be an obstacle through the proclamation of eternal life through the Church.
- v19
 - The third statement in Jesus's response to Peter links the church to the 'kingdom of heaven' through the metaphor of 'keys'. This statement simply (and profoundly!) means that **the church is the agency of kingdom authority**¹⁰.
 - On the subject of 'binding and loosing', as well as the 'rock of the Church', see Appendix A.

¹⁰ keys are often used to indicate authority. See Isa 22:22, Luke 11:52, Rev 1:18, 3:7, 9:1-6m 20:1-3)

12. Jesus's suffering and a model of discipleship (16:21-28)

- In this passage Jesus's crucial first passion prediction is contested by Peter and becomes an occasion for teaching all the disciples about the essence of following Jesus.
- **Peter's astonishingly rapid journey from the 'foundation of the church' to a 'stumbling stone' in Jesus's path to the cross teaches all disciples that to be Christ-centered is to be cross-centred.**
- v21
 - The use of 'from that time' indicates an important change in the narrative (see 4:17). While this does not indicate a structural change, it does highlight a seminal moment in the narrative. From this point forward the narrative in Matthew is encapsulated in this single verse:
 - *"From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised"*
 - Up till now the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus has only been implied (1:21, 10:21, 28, 38, 12:14, 40, 14:12), but now is revealed as a divine necessity that will fulfill scripture (26:54).
 - The reference to the leadership of Israel indicates the opposition of religious leadership to Jesus (not the Jewish people as a whole). Even in 27:24-26 the crowd that demands Jesus be crucified is manipulated by the religious leaders.
- v22
 - In this verse Peter exposes a fundamental misunderstanding of Jesus's mission, and the means by which the Messiah will establish his kingdom. Jesus's death is clearly incompatible with Peter's assumptions about God's plan for the Messiah. He has no category for a suffering Messiah who will die for his people. He only has the ruling Messiah in mind.
 - Peter's disillusionment with the prospect of Jesus's suffering is not unlike John's doubt while in prison (11:1-6)
- v23
 - Jesus's rebuke of Peter echo the words he used against Satan at his testing (4:10).
 - Peter's short trip from 'foundation stone' to 'stumbling stone'¹¹ is because of fixation on human priorities, not divine revelation. v23 is thus the polar opposite of v17: Peter opposes Jesus's death because it is in line with human interests, and not a divine revelation.
 - Jesus's sharp rebuke does not identify Peter with the devil, but does indicate that Peter's opposition to the cross makes him Jesus's adversary.
 - Peter seems only to hear that Jesus will be killed, the words about resurrection do not register. Disciples today likewise do not grasp that their present sufferings are not worthy compared to future glory (Rom 8:18, 2 Tim 2:11-13).
 - Those who seek to follow Jesus will need periodic reorientation to kingdom values, and central to this is self-denial & suffering.
- v24
 - Jesus's rebuke to Peter provides an opportunity for Jesus to explain that the cross defines not only his own future, but also the disciples' future (10:38). The way of the cross is for the present, glory and reward will come only in the future, when Jesus comes again to reign.

¹¹ The Greek word for 'hindrance' (ESV) means 'stumbling block'

- v25-27
 - These verses, and the preceding one, reiterate statements Jesus made in the mission discourse:
 - *“And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me”* (10:38)
 - Which is reinforced in 16:24:
 - *“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me””*
 - *“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”* (10:39)
 - Which is reinforced in 16:25:
 - *“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”*
 - Thus what was explicit to the twelve disciples in chapter 10, becomes explicit for ALL future disciples in the church (after the important discussion on the church in v18). This was something discussed in chapter 10 as it was **implicitly** referring to worldwide disciples then, but is **explicit** here.
 - The first statement by Jesus is a parallel oxymoron stating that self-preservation in the present life leads to ultimate self-destruction, and self-denial in the present leads to ultimate self-fulfillment. Those that think they may avoid the cross and save their lives will in the end lose their lives, but those who accept the cross will find their lives after all.
 - The second reason for self-denial indicates that one does not experience true humanness, or find acceptance with God by acquiring goods, but by sacrificing one's own interest while serving others.
 - The third reason for taking up one's cross is the near prospect of future reward at the glorious return of Jesus.
- v28
 - The statement in v27 clearly refers to the scene of the future return of Christ and final judgment. But v28 is confusing because it stresses the certainty of this future coming by stating that some of Jesus's contemporaries will live to see “the Son of Man coming in his kingdom”. All of Jesus's disciples died long ago, and so either Matthew was wrong, or the ‘coming; spoken of here is not the event that ushers in the final judgment.
 - Those who take the latter (correct!) option suggest the ‘coming’ refers to either:
 - i. The transfiguration
 - ii. The resurrection
 - iii. The sending of the Spirit at Pentecost
 - iv. A generic prediction of Christ's future glory up to his return to earth, encompassing the resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, and present heavenly session.
 - It seems most likely that the transfiguration is in view here. This event occurs only six days later, and is a ‘brief unveiling’ of the glory of Jesus, which will be fully revealed, permanently, at his second coming. It is a temporary preview of what will come with permanence when Jesus returns to earth. Some of those who hear Jesus make the prediction (ie Peter, James & John) will witness the transfiguration, thus fulfilling Jesus's words here in 16:28. Peter himself reflects on the important occasion of the transfiguration in 2 Peter 1:16-21, using the revelation of Jesus's glory as an indicator of his future return. Thus the transfiguration and future return are certainly tied together in Peter's understanding.

13. The Transfiguration and its aftermath (17:1-13)

- v1
 - The presence of the three (Peter, James & John) with Jesus for this 'royal unveiling' may remind the reader of Moses's companions Aaron, Nadab and Abihu:
 - *"Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him." (Ex 24:1-2)*
 - Thus, the presence of Moses on the mountain with Jesus (as well as Elijah) is not completely unexpected!
 - Common details between Moses on mount Sinai, and Jesus's transfiguration include:
 - The six-day interval (17:1; Ex 24:16)
 - The presence of three witnesses (17:1; Ex 24:1)
 - The high mountain (17:1; Ex 24:12)
 - The glorious appearance of the central figure (17:2; Ex 34:29-30, 35; cf. 2 Cor. 3:12-18)
 - The overshadowing cloud (17:5; Ex 24:15-18)
 - The voice from the cloud (17:5; Ex. 24:16)
 - The fear of those who witnessed the glory (17:6; Ex 34:29-30)
- v2
 - The ambiguous, but traditional term 'transfiguration' illustrates the difficulty in describing the instantaneous, but momentary, transformation of Jesus.
 - Jesus's 'metamorphosis' (μεταμορφώω - metamorphoō) is more than just an external radiance. Matthew describes this glorious event with two dazzling similes: Jesus's face, like that of Moses (Ex 34:29-35), shines like the sun, and his clothes become white as light.
 - Similarly radiant angelic beings are described in Matt 28:3, as well as Dan 10:6. Thus perhaps Jesus's transfiguration is intended to anticipate the radiance of God's people at the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the return of Jesus (Dan 12:3)
- v3
 - Given the many allusions to Moses in Matthew, as well as a few to Elijah, it is not surprising they make 'resurrected' appearances with Jesus at the revelation of his glory.
 - Various theories have been suggested as to why, in particular, it is Moses & Elijah on the mountain with Jesus:
 - Moses & Elijah respectively represent the OT law and prophets
 - They both had mountain-top experiences with God, Moses at Mt Sinai and Elijah at Horeb (1 Ki 19:8-14)
 - Later Jewish reflection on Deut 18:15-19 has Moses accompanying Elijah's return.
 - In any event, Moses and Elijah were both key prophetic figures, and so their conversation with Jesus is fitting. If their presence is understood typologically, Jesus is the 'prophet like Moises' spoken of in Deut 18:15, and John the Baptist is Elijah.
 - Luke's version of this account includes the fact that the topic of their conversation was the approaching departure of the Son of Man from the world (Luke 9:31), which would be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

- v4
 - Peter's reaction to the transfiguration suggests reenacting the Feast of Tabernacles ('Sukkot' - booths). This is a festival centred on the harvest, which can be a metaphor for eschatological judgment. This would mean Peter thinks the fulfillment is immanent.
- v5
 - Peter's well-intentioned suggestion does acknowledge Jesus's Lordship, yet his plan would blur the uniqueness of Jesus as God's Son. Jesus is not an equal to Moses & Elijah, he far supersedes them! It is a 'damning of Jesus with faint praise', as well as, conversely, attributing messianic status to Moses and Elijah. There is only one 'Christ, Son of the living God' and it is Jesus.
 - This reinforced by the voice from heaven, which reiterates the divine endorsement at Jesus's baptism (3:17), but with a significant addition: 'listen to him!'. As the eschatological prophet Jesus alone must be obeyed.
 - It is significant that the transfiguration (the royal 'unveiling'), and the divine confirmation, come just after Jesus has clearly articulated his trajectory towards death. This should function to bolster the confidence of the disciples, who would (should!) later reflect on these events at the time of the death of Jesus and be reminded of the purposes of God through His Son. The renewed divine endorsement of Jesus is thus necessary, as the disciples try to integrate the news of the suffering Messiah introduced the chapter before.
 - The mention of a 'bright cloud' (which would ordinarily be oxymoronic!) relates to Ex 24:16-17 - the visible manifestation of God's glory, but also the accompanying clouds at Jesus's return.
- v6-8
 - Peter and his companions fall on their faces until Jesus comes, touches them, and tells them to stop being afraid (see Dan 10:2-9 for a similar encounter between Daniel and the pre-incarnate Jesus!).
 - When the disciples look around, only Jesus remains. This reinforces the word from heaven that Jesus alone is to be obeyed.
 - See Appendix B for additional theological notes on the transfiguration account.
- v9
 - As they descend the mountain, Jesus commands his disciples not to tell others of his transfiguration until he has risen from the dead. After Jesus has been vindicated by the resurrection, the nature of his ministry will be clearer, and thus messianic 'confusion' reduced.
- v10
 - The disciples' question shows that despite Jesus's previous words in 11:10-14, they still do not understand how Jesus death and resurrection relate to the coming of Elijah. Having just seen Elijah, they assume that Mal 4:5-6 is fulfilled and that the 'Day of the Lord' will be immanent. But they do not yet understand that first the Messiah must suffer!

- V11-13
 - Jesus complex answer has three elements to it, including the fact that Elijah has already come, but also must still come! Thus Jesus confirms the connection between John the Baptist & Elijah, but leaves the door open for considering a still-future appearing of Elijah.
 - Jesus third statement again refers to his coming suffering & death, and confirms the fact that John's maltreatment by Antipas was a foreshadowing of his own ensuing maltreatment and death. See Appendix C for more notes on the mysterious connection with Elijah.
 - The gist of this is that the disciples hold focus on John's past Elijah-like ministry, not the recent appearance of Elijah at Jesus's transfiguration. If they do this, they will understand that John's death foreshadowed the death of Jesus.

14. An epileptic boy healed (17:14-21)

- This episode has two main parts, the healing itself and subsequent interaction with the disciples. In both parts the disciples' inability (v16, 19) is contrasted with Jesus's power (v18, 20). The problem throughout is a lack of faith.
- This lack of faith is striking when contrasted with the glory of Jesus's transfiguration. This pericope is not so much about what Jesus is able to do, as this has been well-established already. **Rather, it is about when the disciples will be able to do in Jesus's absence.**
- v14-16
 - The threatening nature of the young boy's seizure is clearly due to sinister origins: he is demon-possessed. Once again we see the intent of evil to bring destruction (see the story on the Gadarene men in 8:28-34, where this was first introduced).
 - The disciples' inability does not correlate with their commission in 10:8 ("*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons*"), which highlights (again) the disciples' weakness when it comes to faith. This is yet another unit where Jesus has to exhort his disciples.
- v17-18
 - The stern rebuke of 'faithless and twisted' is directed at the crowd, not the disciples. The disciples are often exhorted due to their 'little faith', not because they are 'faithless'. Much less does the description 'twisted' apply to them, despite their obvious failings. In addition, their own problem is addressed in v20, privately.
 - The exasperation with the crowd is because they expect miracles from Jesus, but refuse to grasp his true identity and mission.
 - The refrain 'how long' is typical of 'prophetic exasperation'. While Jesus will still demonstrate compassion (and heal the boy), the urgency of his message is increasing as he heads towards Jerusalem and his death.
- v19
 - The pattern of the disciples privately asking Jesus questions is similar to 13:36 and 15:12

- v20-21
 - The preface of 'truly I say to you' stresses the importance, as well as the authority, of the answer that is coming.
 - Jesus challenges the faith of the disciples with hyperboles for both the miniscule size (mustard seed) and the huge potential (moving mountains) of their faith.
 - When Jesus says 'nothing will be impossible', he has in mind his commission for them to preach the kingdom and do miraculous works of compassion, not literally move mountains (see 10:7-8).
 - The idea is that true faith will manifest itself in prayer and fasting in difficult situations.
 - Jesus again addresses the issue of 'little faith'. The issue herein not the intensity or amount of faith, but the extent of their ability to perceive the object of faith. The power of faith is in the person to whom it is directed. Jesus's disciples were unable to heal the epileptic boy because they had taken their eyes off Jesus and looked at the obstacles, just as Peter did during the storm when he began to sink (14:30). Faith is not believing that God will do whatever disciples demands, but whatever is best for them.

15. The second passion prediction (17:22-23)

- v22-23
 - This second prediction adds the detail that Jesus will be handed over, hinting at Judas's role in the betrayal and arrest of Jesus.
 - Jesus also uses his unique self-reference as the 'Son of Man' here.
 - The reference to the distress of the disciple indicates that they are accepting the reality of impending events in Jerusalem. However, they have still not yet grasped the significance of the resurrection!

16. The question about the Temple tax (17:24-27)

- This narrative has Peter answering two questions (again indicating his role as spokesman, and 'first among equals' in the group). He answers the question from the tax collectors wrongly, and answers Jesus's question correctly.
- There is a striking blend of humility and power in this passage as Jesus works a miracle in order to submit to the tax collectors and void causing them offence.
- v24-25a
 - After arriving in Capernaum, tax collectors ask Peter whether Jesus pays the annual temple tax of two drachmas (Ex 30:11-16). Perhaps Peter is approached here because he is perceived as leader of the disciples. Peter replies without bothering to check with Jesus, another instance where Peter speaks without thinking!

- v25b-26
 - Jesus displays supernatural knowledge (note 'Jesus spoke first') about the conversation with the tax collectors (see also 9:4, 12:25).
 - The answer to Jesus's parabolic question is clear: kings do not tax their children, but their subjects. Accordingly, Jesus, as the Son of God, is greater than the temple and is exempt from paying the tax to his Father's house. Thus Jesus teaches that God's temple should not be maintained by compulsory taxes but by voluntary offerings¹²
- v27
 - One would expect then that Jesus would have confirmed Peter's response, and that the disciples would not need to pay the tax. However, despite being exempt, Jesus decides to pay the tax to avoid offence, and does so in a miraculous manner.
 - Jesus did not mind offending the Pharisees on the matter of ritual hand-washing (15:12), but in the spirit of 12:19 ('a bruised reed he will not break') he does not protest the temple tax. He has had cordial relations with the tax collectors at Capernaum, which exacerbated tension with the Pharisees.
 - Generally, Jesus treated sinners gently and religious hypocrites more harshly. His followers today tend to get this backward!
 - Forgoing one's liberties in order to avoid offence, as well as increase kingdom testimony is also in line with Pauline teaching (Rom 14:13-23, 1 Cor 8:9-9:1, 9:19-23).
 - For similar teaching on taxes see Matt 22:15-22.

¹² This is dependent on 'sons' referring not just to disciples, but to all of Israel.

Appendix A: 'Binding & Loosing' and 'The Rock of the Church'

David Turner, 'Matthew', pg 406-408

The Rock of the Church

Since the Reformation, Matthew 16:18 has loomed large in discussions between Protestants and Roman Catholics. In response to Roman Catholic teaching about Peter as the first pope and about apostolic succession, many Protestants have argued that Jesus did not mean that Peter was the rock. It has been suggested that Jesus was speaking of himself (Lenski 1961: 626; Walvoord 1974: 123; Wilcox 1975) or of Peter's confession (most credibly argued by Caragounis 1989; cf. Calvin 1972: 2.188; Mc-Neile 1915: 241; Toussaint 1980: 201-2) as the foundation of the church.

Gundry (1994: 334-35) argues that 16:18 alludes to 7:24 and that Jesus means that he will build his church on his own words. But the distance of 7:24 from 16:18 renders such an allusion extremely subtle at best. It is also argued that Peter cannot be the rock, since the name Peter (έτο,, Petros) is masculine and the word rock (νέπα, petra) is feminine. But grammatical precision is not required in metaphors such as this.

Another argument is that Peter is not the foundation of the church because νέπα means bedrock and léto, means an individual stone. But this extremely subtle distinction would make metaphorical speech impossible. Jesus is speaking of Peter in 16:18 just as clearly as Peter is speaking of Jesus in 16:16 (France 1985: 254).

In the NT, the "foundation" metaphor refers to Jesus's teaching (7:24), Jesus himself (1 Cor. 3:10), Jesus's apostles (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14), and repentance (Heb. 6:1). The context of a metaphor determines the entity to which it points. Here Jesus's response to Peter's confession is a pun, or paronomasia, on the nickname he has evidently just given Peter (Matt. 4:18; 10:2). The pun concerns Peter's unique role as the model disciple in Matthew. Peter's future role as preacher to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2, 10) is also projected here. Jesus is not speaking of himself as the foundation of the church, since he describes himself as the builder. Neither is Peter's apostolic confession the foundation of the church - he, as the confessing apostle, is that foundation. And it is not Peter alone but as first among equals, since the context makes it clear that Peter is speaking for the apostles as a whole in Matt. 16:16 (D. Turner 1991; Viviano 1990b: 660).

This best fits the Matthean context, and it also coheres with other NT texts that speak of an apostolic foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14). The Baptist scholar J. Broadus (1886: 355-58) recognized this 120 years ago, and most of the recent evangelical commentators on Matthew concur.

The real difficulty Protestants have with the Roman Catholic teaching concerning Peter is the notion of sole apostolic succession emanating from Peter as the first bishop of Rome (Calvin 1972: 2.189-90; Morris 1992: 424). This dogma is anachronistic for Matthew, who knows nothing about Peter being the first pope or of the primacy of Rome over other Christian churches. Matthew would not have endorsed the idea of Peter's infallibility or sole authority in the church, since Peter speaks as a representative of the other apostles and often makes mistakes (15:15; 16:16; 17:4, 25; 18:21; 19:27; 26:33-35; cf. Acts 11:1-18; Gal. 2:11-14). In 18:18, binding and loosing is a function of the church, not Peter. Peter is later sent by the church and is accountable to the church (Acts 8:14; 11:1-18). James presides over Peter, and Paul rebukes Peter (Acts 15; Gal. 2:11-14). Peter himself speaks of Jesus as the chief shepherd, senior pastor, or pontifex maximus of the church (1 Pet. 5:4).

The Keys, Binding and Loosing

Jesus also speaks of Peter as custodian of the keys of the kingdom. The linking of the "foundation" and "key" metaphors indicates that one cannot divorce the church and the kingdom (as do W. Allen 1912: 177; Toussaint 1980: 204-5) and that the church is the agency that extends the kingdom on earth. Peter and the other apostles (Kingsbury 1979: 73) carry out their foundational ecclesiastical role through handling the keys or exercising kingdom authority (cf. Isa. 22:15, 22; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 9:1-6; 20:1-3).

This authority is exercised through binding and loosing. Some scholars stress the idea that keys are a metaphor of authority in exorcism (T. Levi 18.12; T. Sol. 1.14; Hiers 1985). Others understand authority over entrance to be in view: the apostles, through their confession of Jesus, control who may enter the church and have their sins forgiven (f. Scht. 10e: 1968: 37121) 023-78 compare 16:19 20 2. 187-8; Falk 1974, Schweitzer 1968: 371n1). Others compare 16:19 to 18:18 and conclude that binding and loosing describe church discipline. This is supported by references to rabbinic texts' where the motif of binding and loosing refers to halakic interpretation of biblical law resulting in specific behaviors being permitted or forbidden (Beare 1981: 335; W. Davies and Allison 1991: 638-39; Overman 1996: 245-46; B. Robinson 1984; Acts 15:10?).

It is difficult to judge among the above interpretations. Perhaps it is best (with Barclay 1975: 2.144 46) to combine the ideas of entry into the kingdom (Matt. 16:19a, the "keys") and maintenance of acceptable life within the community (16:19b-c, "binding" and "loosing"). If so, the "doctrine" and "discipline" are really one (Bruner 1990: 577), and "through preaching the will of God,... the authorized agent opens the door to the Reign of God or shuts it off" (Schnackenburg 2002: 160).

But interpreting 16:19 in terms of 18:18 may be problematic. It appears that people, not behaviors, are bound or loosed in 16:19 (cf. 23:13; Luke 11:52; Carson 1984: 372-74). It is somewhat anachronistic to read the rabbinic usage of binding and loosing back into Matthew.

In context, the imagery of Matt. 16:16-19 concerns the building of the church by the entrance of those who echo the apostolic confession of Jesus as Messiah, Son of God. As the foundational leaders of the church, the agency that extends the kingdom on earth, Peter and the apostles are the gatekeepers of the kingdom. They guide the ongoing authoritative proclamation of the truth of 16:16, and in doing so, they permit entrance to the kingdom through the church for those who confess Jesus. Those who do not confess Jesus are forbidden entrance. (See W. Davies and Allison 1991: 635-39; Hagner 1995a: 472-74; Hiers 1985 for further discussion of the possibilities.)

Appendix B: The Transfiguration and Theology

David Turner, 'Matthew', pg 419-420

The obvious biblical background for understanding the transfiguration is Moses's reflection of God's glorious presence on Sinai at the giving of the law (Allison 1993b: 243-48; T. Donaldson 1985: 136-56). Common details include:

1. The six-day interval (17:1; Exod. 24:16)
2. The presence of three witnesses (17:1; Exod. 24:1)
3. The high mountain (17:1; Exod. 24:12)
4. The glorious appearance of the central figure (17:2; Exod. 34:29-30, 35; cf. 2 Cor. 3:12-18)
5. The overshadowing cloud (17:5; Exod. 24:15-18)
6. The voice from the cloud (17:5; Exod. 24:16)
7. The fear of those who witnessed the glory (17:6; Exod. 34:29-30)

But in terms of NT biblical theology, the transfiguration should be viewed not as the external illumination of the man Jesus but as the temporary uncovering of the Son of God's intrinsic glory, which has been temporarily veiled and is to be reassumed at the resurrection and the ascension (John 17:4-5, 24; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:16-19; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-4; Rev. 5:6-14).

There is also the implication that Jesus's followers will be transformed by his glory at his return. The glory of Jesus as Immanuel (Matt. 1:23) was not borrowed or reflected (Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 3.2; Ramsay 1946: 120). As great as Moses was, the law that was initially mediated by him was definitively fulfilled and ultimately interpreted by Jesus. Moses's typological glory pales in comparison with the glory of the antitype, Jesus. Although Jesus appears in the company of Moses, at the end he alone must be obeyed (17:5).

But the manner of Jesus's transfiguration remains as mysterious as the manner of his incarnation as God-with-us (1:23; Luke 1:35; John 1:14, 18). Systematic theologians are challenged by the transfiguration to attempt an explanation of what must ultimately be inexplicable to mere humans. Precisely how the eternal Son of God came to earth as a truly human child and how the divine and human natures of Jesus were implicated in his transfiguration are known to God alone.

The amazing transfiguration of Jesus should not be totally unexpected by Matthew's readers. Jesus was born miraculously and his ministry began with the Father's endorsement. Jesus has performed compassionate works and has definitively and authoritatively taught the Torah. He has supernaturally calmed storms and fed thousands of people with a few loaves of bread. He has promised to return in glory, to judge all humankind, and to reign righteously on the earth. After his resurrection he will receive universal authority, and his presence will accompany his disciples as they disciple all nations until the end of the present age (Matt. 28:18-20).

Thus, from the standpoint of Matthew as a whole, the transfiguration fits Jesus's status as the Son of God, his fulfillment of biblical patterns and predictions, and his promise of a future kingdom.

The transfiguration is an integral part of Matthew's Son of God Christology and his apocalyptic eschatology. It authenticates Jesus's identity and anticipates his future rule over the world. In the transfiguration the disciples glimpse who Jesus is and what he will do. The worthies Moses and Elijah are only supporting actors in the drama of redemption. As the curtain falls, they have exited and Jesus alone stands at the center of the stage. The heavenly voice's "listen to him" prepares the disciples to hear Jesus "teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you."

Appendix C: The 'return' of Elijah

David Turner, 'Matthew', pg 422

Matthew 17:11 remains perplexing, since it leaves room for a yet-future coming of Elijah. The previous reference to John and Elijah in Matt 11:14 can also be understood to teach a future coming of Elijah. Revelation 11:3-6, itself perplexing, speaks of the coming of two "witnesses" whose ministry resembles that of Elijah. Whether all of this points to a future return of Elijah himself (John Chrysostom, Hom Matt. 57.1; Gundry 1994: 347) or the coming of one whose office and ministry is Elijah-like (Kaiser 1982; cf. Luke 1:17) is debatable.

In this view, Matthew's Elijah-John-Jesus typology includes a humble first coming and glorious second coming for both Elijah/John and Jesus. Boring (1995: 365) insightfully remarks that the understanding of Elijah as the rejected and executed John is just as scandalous as the identification of the Messiah as Jesus, who has announced his own suffering and death.

But for this typology to be complete, a future restoring Elijah (Matt.11:14; 17:11) is just as necessary as a future glorious reigning Jesus (7:21; 13:41; 16:27; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31).