COURSE GUIDE

CRS412
THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
CREDIT UNIT: 2

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MODULE 1 THE SETTING AND ORIGIN OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Unit 1 Authorship of Matthew's Gospel
Unit 2 The Date and Place of Origin
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UNIT 1 AUTHORSHIP OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the course, CRS 412 Gospel of Matthew, you are being introduced to the issues in current study of the Gospel. It must be note that every book of the Bible has its own peculiarities in terms of its agenda and purpose. To understand any book, you need to know something of its background. This would include the authorship of the book. Some of the questions associated with the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew may include: In Who is the author of the Gospel of Matthew? When did he write or compose the Gospel? And what were his concerns and relationship to his audience? Bearing in mind that Matthew is not only the canonical and extant Gospel today, you may further want to know the relationship of the Gospel to the other Gospels. From the Early Church up till the 18th century, Christians simply had one voice about Matthew's origin, agenda, and purpose. The Church held that Matthew, also known as Levi (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27), one of the twelve disciples of

Jesus, wrote the book to project Jesus as the Messiah. This position, however, changed during the Enlightenment. Consequently, today, Matthew's concerns have almost been overblown through the rise of many new methods of interpretation. This course will introduce you to the background to Matthew's Gospel and the rise of these new hermeneutical methods. It will highlight Matthew's peculiarities and help you understand his concerns about the central character in the story he narrates. In doing so, you will also learn something of the more pressing issues relating to current Matthean study. We will begin by identifying the person called Matthew and his relationship to the title of the Gospel associated with that name.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this study, you should be able to:

- Appreciate the challenges associated with the identification of the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew
- Explain how the tax-collector came to be associated with the Gospel of Matthew
- Discuss the alleged tension between the external and the internal evidences about authorship.
- Defend or reject the arguments favouring Matthean authorship of the Gospel.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 The Person, Matthew and the Gospel's Title

It is important for us to first, establish the author of the Gospel we are to study. When you know him, you will better understand his concerns and agenda. There are two main sources for our knowledge of the man called Matthew in the New Testament, whom many holds to be author the First Gospel. This centres on the inferences drawn from the book itself (internal evidence) and upon assessment of the credibility of the patristic testimony that Matthew the apostle wrote the Gospel (external evidence) (Turner, 2008). In current study of the Gospel of Matthew, these sources (internal and external) are alleged to contradict each other. The aim of this unit is to help you understand the issues in current debate about this matter.

In Biblical record, the name Matthew occurs five times in the (Mt. 9:9; 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15 and Acts 1:13; cf. *b.Sanh*. 43a). The last four are in the catalogues of the Apostles. The name in Hebrew means "gift of Yahweh (Turner, 2008, 12).

The name is also mentioned in Matthew 9:9 where the author of the Gospel is reporting on Jesus' call of a tax collector to be his disciple. This calling is probably paralleled by similar records in Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27. You will notice that in the accounts of Mark and Luke, the tax gatherer is called Levi. Both of them identify him as the son of Alpheus like James (Mk 3:18). But Matthew and James are not likely to be brothers; the Bible does not mention it as is the case with Peter and Andrew, and also with the sons of Zebedee.

From Early Church tradition, Jerome (Of Illustrious Men 3), tells us that "Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and aforetimes publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed." This short statement is important in that it identifies Matthew with Levi who had been a tax collector, but later became an apostle. He further informs the reader that this Matthew, surnamed Levi, published a Gospel in Judea for Jewish believers. This latter piece of information will be more useful to us later in the course when we more directly engage the issue of authorship. But it is also helpful now in identifying the person called Matthew in the biblical texts cited above. As you read through the works of the early Church Fathers you will come across the fact of a Matthew writing a Gospel many times. And in all places, the Matthew so mentioned is associated with the Apostle of Jesus (Irenaeus Haer. 3.1.1; Eusebius Hist. Eccl 3.39.16; Cyril of Jerusalem Cat. 14.

Can you see any reason to believe that both Levi and Matthew in these accounts refer to the same person? First, you can notice that this is implied in the identification of Matthew as "the tax gatherer" in the list of apostles in Matthew 10:3. Mark and Luke do not add this note to his name in their lists. They probably presumed that they already identified Levi as a tax collector and everybody knew Matthew to be Levi's second name. Second, by comparing the accounts of the call of this tax gatherer (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27 with Mt 9:9), you can also see evidence that the same person is meant though different names are used. It was common in ancient Palestine for the same person to have two names (cf. Acts 4:36; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.285; 18.35, 95; 20.196). This was the case with Peter who was originally called Simon (16:18). In fact, in the entire Early Church history, we know only one Matthew. That is the tax collector who became Jesus' disciple and apostle as seen in the Biblical data above.

To call Matthew a tax collector means he was a local official in the employment of Herod Antipas and collected custom dues on goods in transit (France, 1989) and the fixed taxes like "ground tax, grain and wine taxes, fruit tax, income tax, and poll tax" (Green, 2000:25). The biblical record also shows that Matthew had a tax booth in Capernaum

along the major road leading from Damascus to Egypt (Green, 2000). By virtue of the high density of traffic on this road which linked important commercial regions, Matthew was probably a very wealthy person. We have learnt from both the Bible and Early Church tradition that tax collectors enriched themselves by extorting the populace. That means he belonged to the group that was hated by the Jewish society. This is the Jew who joined the band of Jesus' disciples and even became his apostle.

It is also plausible that the name *Matthaion* is used because of its assonance with *mathētēs* (disciple) since discipleship is a key theme in the First Gospel (Turner, 2008, 13).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Can you see difference between the Gospels to in the account that both Levi and Matthew refer to the same person?
2. What are some of the implications of calling Matthew a "a tax-collector"?
3. Discuss some of the implications of identifying Matthew as a tax or toll-collector.

3.2 External Testimony to Matthean Authorship of the First Gospel

You saw in the preceding section that the Early Church's tradition knew only one person with the name Matthew. That tradition, especially from early to mid-fourth century AD, identified the Apostle Matthew as the author of the First Gospel. The earliest and most important recorded information that the Apostle Matthew wrote the First Gospel is from Papias.

Papias was the bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor (present day Turkey) until he died about 155 AD. He wrote a commentary entitled Exegesis of the Oracles of the Lord which was published in five volumes (Eusebius, Hist. Eccl 3.39.1). This commentary is usually dated around 110 AD., although some object to this date. The commentary is now lost. But we have many quotations from it. Most of these are in the "Church History" of Eusebius.

Eusebius was a church historian who wrote in the fourth century. He quotes Papias as stating that "Matthew on the other hand compiled the oracles in the Hebrew [Aramaic] dialect and every person translated them as he was able" (Hist. Eccl 3.39.16). This statement makes three points which became the pillars of Early Church's belief concerning the

authorship of The Gospel according to Matthew. Indeed, up till the 18th century, the Early Church interpreted this statement to mean that:

i. The Apostle Matthew wrote the First Gospel;
ii. The author of Matthew wrote the First Gospel originally in Hebrew language.
iii. Matthew, by implication, was the first to write a Gospel (Good News) and Mark and Luke were among those who "translated" his work and produced their own Gospels.

After Papias, this tradition continued to grow including Irenaeus (c 180 AD, *Haer.* 3.1.1; cf. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 5.8.2;d), Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechesis* 14), Epiphanius (*Refutation of All Heresies* 30.3), and Jerome (*Prologue to Matthew*). Irenaeus further informed the reader that the Apostle Matthew composed the First Gospel in Hebrew language while Peter and Paul were establishing the church in Rome. He added a statement that Mark wrote his Gospel after Peter and Paul departed; probably meaning when they died. Th is makes Matthew the first Gospel that was written. Next, Eusebius stated that Matthew wrote the First Gospel when he was leaving his people (Hist. Eccl. 3.24.6). It is important for you to know that much of the tradition that has come down to us was preserved and transmitted by Eusebius in the fourth century. Jerome supplied much fuller information about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. He wrote (Apology 3) that: "Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and aforetimes publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek though by what author is uncertain." Origen (cited in Hist. Eccl. 6.25.4) supported Jerome's information that the First Gospel was written for Jewish believers. Further independent tradition which supports the apostolic origin of Matthew comes from Cyril of Jerusalem (Cat. 14). By this large number of witnesses, you may have now seen that the Early Church was unanimous that the Apostle Matthew wrote the First Gospel.

Although the patristic testimony to the apostle Matthew as the author of the First Gospel is early and unanimous, many current scholars discount the value of this testimony and prefer to think that authorship by Matthew the apostle is "most unlikely" (Nolland, 2005, 4).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What are the three major points that could be read from Papias witness to the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew?
2. Besides Papias, name other early witnesses that attributed the authorship of the Gospel Matthew to the Apostle Matthew.

3.3 Internal Evidence

Beginning from the eighteenth century, a majority of scholars who study the Gospels started observing some discrepancies between the text of Matthew and what tradition holds to the authorship of the Gospel. Some of them challenged and even rejected the Early Church's consensus testimony that the Apostle Matthew wrote the First Gospel. They claim that the evidence in the Gospel itself contradicts the tradition about it on all its three pillars: that (i) the Gospel was written in Hebrew language/dialect, (ii) as the earliest Gospel, and (iii) by an apostle.

3.3.1 Objection to a Hebrew Text of Matthew

The copy of Matthew that we have today came to us in Greek from a very early date. This creates the problem of how the Greek version is related to the Hebrew version. The theory of Papias (cited in Eusebius Hist. Eccl 3.39.16) corroborated by Jerome (Apology 3) that it was translated into Greek has been rejected by most Gospels' scholars in our day.

Turner (2009) and Sim (2007) argues that the Gospel does not show any signs of being a translated work. This cream of scholars back up their arguments with the following reasons:

One of the pillars of the argument disproving the Hebrew Matthew is found on Markan priority, which serve as a major source to the Gospel of Matthew. So, the author of the Gospel could not have been an apostle since no apostle could borrow material about Jesus from a non-apostle who after all was not an eye witness.

It has also been argued that in quoting the Old Testament, the author of Matthew alternates between using the Septuagint (LXX) and the Masoretic Hebrew text (MT) as you will find in 12:18-21 and 13:14,15. It is said that, if the author wrote in Hebrew, his citations would have been from the Hebrew text only. If on the other hand, he was translating from Aramaic to Greek, he would have used the Septuagint throughout (France 1989:63). It has also been observed that the Greek in Matthew is too polished to be a translated Greek. Many of "the stylistic infelicities found in Mark's 'market-place' Greek" (Green 2000) are absent from the Gospel. It also has no Aramaic words as does Mark. France (1989: 66) however, concludes that whereas the extant Gospel was written in Greek, it is nevertheless, the work of the Apostle Matthew. Sim (2007) represents those who completely reject both the existence of the Hebrew Matthew and its apostolic authorship.

The next objection requires you to closely examine the context to better appreciate its concerns. It is that the background to Papias' witness: "Matthew collected the oracles (*logia*) in the Hebrew language (*Hebraidi dialekto*), and each interpreted (*hērmēneusen*) them as best he could" (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16). You will see that almost everything about the statement appears ambiguous and could be understood in more than one sense (Hagner, 2012:193-94). The first challenge is the use of Greek expression *logia*, which could be translated as oracle. It was taken by the early Church to refer to Gospel of Matthew itself and thus as establishing the priority of Matthew over the other Gospels. In other words, those who "translated" (or "interpreted" [*hērmēneusen*]) Matthew's oracles became in this view, later Gospel writers including Mark and Luke.

The three major concept that have occupied the attention of the majority of the Matthean scholars are:

i. *Logia* = oracle, logia Jesu, OT logia, the Gospel in its entirety.
ii. *Dialektos* ("dialect"): language, style
iii. *Hērmēneusen* = translate, interpret (explain)

Taking into consideration the possible meanings as stated above, one may see clearly the ambiguity and challenges that may confront any interpreter of the statement. Thus, the usage of the Greek expression, *Hebraidi dialekto* "in Hebrew language" and the usage of the Greek language itself, indicate that Papias is contrasting Mark's disorderly style with Matthew's style that is marked by orderliness. On this premise, in Greek language, the expression, Hebraidi dialekto is best interpreted as "in a Hebrew rhetorical style" rather than "in Hebrew language"; McKnight 1998; Sim 2007: 288-291). This interpretation has some problems though.

First, *Hebraidi dialekto* is used with another word, *hērmēneuse*, translated either as "translated them" or "interpreted them." But as France (1 989: 57) points out; it would be more natural for a Greek reader to understand the combination of Hebraidi dialekto with hērmēneusen as translation from one language to another.

Second, the context favours an understanding of the construct as translation rather than interpretation. Eusebius was talking about Mark and Matthew in the context of the accounts of how both evangelists produced their Gospels. Concerning Mark, he reports Papias as saying, "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things done or said by Christ" *(Hist. Eccl* 3. 39). Here, Papias talks about Mark interpreting Peter using the same word hērmēneuō as in his statement

about people's handling of Matthew's work. But the fact that he says Mark remembered means that he did not have a text of Peter's writing in front of him. He was writing from his memory of Peter's preaching, which obviously involved not translation, but interpretation. In the case of Matthew's collection of the Lord's words, a copy was before the person who then translated it. You may wish to consider how plausible and fair it is to see that those who had Matthew's Gospel in their front translated rather than interpreted it as best they could.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Explain the terms LXX and MT. Use them as among the tools to prove or disprove the apostolic authorship of the First Gospel
2. What do you understand by the claim that "almost everything about Papias' statement on the apostolic authorship of the Gospel of Matthew is ambiguous"? Explain this with reference to the three main Greek expressions: (i) *logia*, (ii). *dialektos* and (iii) *hērmēneusen.*

3.3.2 Objection to Apostolic Authorship of Matthew

Now, let us consider the objection about the improbability of apostolic authorship of Matthew.

It is argued that Matthew is not as vivid as Mark and Luke, therefore, could not have been written by an eye witness. This argument proceeds from the observation that Matthew gives more attention to presenting Jesus in his human aspect as the Messiah of the Jews. This is largely true. That Matthew is designed for Jews is evident from the text itself. Matthew shows his Judeo-Christian readers that Jesus is the Messiah of the Old Testament, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. He is born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Mt. 2:6); he flees to Egypt and is called out of it; his coming is heralded by John Baptist (Mt. 3:3); he labours in Galilee of the Gen tiles (Mt. 4:14-16); he heals (Mt. 8:17); and he teaches in parables (Mt. 13:14 ff).

But if you read the text of Matthew carefully, you can see that he equally gives attention to the divine aspect of Jesus (Mt. 16:16; 22:45). So, you may not be wrong to argue that the Matthean Jesus is both a divine and human Messiah, which agrees with the Jewish portrait of the Messiah.

With regard to the vividness of the Gospel, the case becomes clearer as you read through the Gospel. You will discover that Matthew does not arrange his work chronologically as does Mark and to some extent, Luke. In line with his aim, he arranges his work topically. So, he cannot

be as vivid as the other evangelists. Can you observe that he has grouped similar material together? This is why he presents the addresses and parables of Jesus consecutively, although they may have been spoken at different times. It also explains why material scattered in especially Luke's Gospel is found combined in Matthew. You can see some examples of these two points in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5-7), the Kingdom Teaching session (Matthew 10), the Kingdom parables (Matthew 13), the further teaching in parables (Matthew 18), the anathema against the Pharisees (Matthew 23), and the material of the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24; 25).

Some scholars who disagree with apostolic authorship equally argue that, to associate Papias with the apostles alongside Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp and thus, make his testimony early is just to make it appear accurate. For them, this is questionable (Sim 2007: 286). But you can see that the Early Church is unanimous in its early dating of Papias' life and work (e.g. Irenaeus *Haer* 3.33.4; Eusebius 3.36). This witness could be accepted as credible on the same grounds of the 'traditional' proximity to the events and absence of a more credible date. In fact, if you read the works of the Apostolic, Nicene, and Ante-Nicene Fathers, especially those of Irenaeus (Second century), Jerome (second and third century), and Eusebius (fourth century), you will have reason to hold their testimony as credible. Consider, for instance, their witness concerning the source of Papias' information about the Apostle Matthew's authorship of the First Gospel. The Fathers are unanimous that Papias received the tradition he passed on from the apostle John (Irenaeus *Haer* 3.33.4; Eusebius (*Hist Eccl* 3.39). If this was the case, the claims of today's scholars may be treated as mere guesses, and do not hold much water.

Another perspective of the objection to apostolic authorship is that the Gospel of Matthew was a product of the Community he belonged to and not the apostle's own work. This objection has two versions. The one ascribes the book to a community; the other ascribes it to some supposed Matthean school. We will not discuss all this in detail here; there is a place for them later in the course. He argues for instance, against the belief in recent scholarship that Matthew's name was the Early Church's appendage to the book. He says, it is inconceivable that "gospels could have been in existence for anything up to sixty years without titles" (France 1989: 51). Consequently, he agrees with Hengel that in virtue of the numerous references to Christian literature in the second century "and the general practice of book- distribution in the Greek world, where titles were necessary for identification of a work to which reference might be made" (France 1989: 51) the titles of the Gospels (including Matthew) cannot be the attribution of the Early Church but of their authors.

The objection about the sequence of the Gospels is a major issue of the synoptic problem. We will not delve into it at this point. You only need to know that the overarching argument is that the structure of both Matthew and Luke betray their use of Mark as their primary source for their Gospels.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Give at least two reasons to justify the claim that Matthew could not have been as vivid as Mark or Luke in his presentation of the story of Jesus.
2. Do you agree with Sim (2007:286) that by linking Papias' witness to the apostolic authorship of the Gospel(s) with the apostles alongside Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp is simply to make his testimony early and to appear accurate?
3. What is the possible implication to attribute the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew to a Matthean community or school?

3.4 Relieving the Tension between External and Internal Evidences

In this unit, you are being challenged to attempt a solution to the age-long problem of Matthean authorship of the First Gospel. To make an informed contribution, you need to properly understand the arguments. That means their summary as presented in this unit only introduces you to some of the issues at stake. For you to make an informed decision on the authorship matter, and any issue in dispute pertaining to the Gospel at all, it is good that you closely examine all the strands of evidence as presented above. That means you should carefully read the Gospel and examine it against the tradition of the Early Church and the arguments of modern scholars. You can consult the works suggested below for further reading and also go online for more works. The following paragraphs will provide you with some hints or show you the way.

Concerning the argument that the First Gospel shows no signs of translated work, there are three points made. The first of these argues that an apostle as an eye witness of Jesus' activities could not borrow information about him from a non-apostle who was not an eye witness. This argument is based on the claim of source-critics that Mark wrote his Gospel first and Matthew and Luke used his Gospel as their main source in writing theirs. It means that to have an informed understanding of the first argument, you must also have good knowledge of the synoptic problem (Cf CRS213). So, before you read the suggested further sources to broaden your knowledge on the matter, acquaint yourself with the argument concerning Markan priority as a solution to

the synoptic problem. The claim that Mark wrote first is the view of most scholars who study the synoptic Gospels today. But an increasing powerful minority led by Farmer (1994) argues for the traditional position that Matthew wrote first. And they have a case. In fact, if you follow both arguments carefully you will get many reasons to question the claims of the majority. You may wish to ask David Sim, for instance, whether it is more likely for scholars living 2000 years away from the events about Jesus to have more accurate information about those events than someone who lived in the time of the apostles who participated in the events. Otherwise, one needs not question the unanimous witness of the Apostolic, Nicene, and Ante -Nicene Fathers.
When you also read the Gospel carefully and compare it with Mark and Luke, you can see that it is more likely that Mark and Luke followed its structure rather than the priority of Mark. Such facts as these will also help you respond adequately to the claims that the Apostle Matthew could not be the author of the First Gospel on grounds of borrowing from a non-apostolic writer.

In discussing the identity of Matthew, we pointed out an important fact that can be an internal support for Matthean authorship. You recall that Mark (2:14) and Luke (5:27) identified the tax collector whom Jesus made his disciple as Levi, but in the First Gospel he is called Matthew (9:9). When listing Jesus' apostles, all three evangelists call him Matthew, not Levi. This could mean that Matthew is the author of the First Gospel, and for him, the name, Matthew (Gift of Yahweh), had more significance than Levi and so he preferred it. Many people, both in those days and today, when they come to a new faith, they take new names which become more important to them. In Matthew's day, you can recall the case of Simon bar Jona who became Peter. This is in accord with the traditional view of apostolic authorship.

In the same manner there is another internal evidence that supports the external testimony of Matthean authorship. When you read the Gospel carefully, you can see that the author is very methodical in arranging his material. You may argue here that Matthew the tax-collector allows his profession as tax-collector to bear on his writing by giving it special ordering. If that is the case, it fits the Apostle Matthew, the only Matthew in the Early Church's records who is also identified as a tax collector.

If you are not versed in Greek, you may not be able to follow the arguments on the second objection concerning the background to Papias' usage of the Greek expression, *Hebraidi dialektō* "in Hebrew language." So, we can skip that one in this section. But the third objection is that, Matthew's lack of vividness betrays second hand information and so cannot be the work of an apostle. You can answer

this by reading and analysing the Gospel itself and comparing it with Early Church tradition as we did above. This will lead you to see the recurring ideas (motifs), which point to the author's major concerns. There are many of such ideas in Matthew's Gospel. They include a missionary motif seen in Jesus' own teaching and healing ministry (Matt 4:23; 9:35). It is also seen in his commission to his disciples to go and preach to the lost sheep of Israel (Mat 10:5-6) and his statement to the Samaritan woman seeking healing for her daughter that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel (Mat 15:24). Others which tend to be in tension with these ones espouse a Gentile mission (Matt 24:14; 28:19). The former of these is uniquely Matthean and accord with his concern to present Jesus to the Jews as their Messiah. The latter indicate his global concern. These and similar statements of Jesus occur frequently enough for one to see them as a motif in the book. But most importantly, in the contexts where they occur, they are topically discussed. If you follow that topical arrangement, you can easily see Matthew's plot and find that he has no cause for the said vividness of Mark or Luke.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Give three points to prove Matthean priority (cf. CRS213)? What effect has the Matthean priority to Apostolic authorship of the First Gospel?
2. Do you agree that Matthew's plot has no cause for the said vividness of Mark or Luke?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit we have tried to identify the person called Matthew and to establish his relationship to the Gospel bearing that name. In that bid, we saw that from the biblical record and the Church's tradition, it is possible to see that both Levi and Matthew mentioned in the Gospel refer to the same tax collector whom Jesus made his disciple. We also saw reason to believe that he wrote the First Gospel. This position has been disputed by majority of those who study the Gospel of Matthew today. But as far as the records go, there is good cause to see the former tax gatherer turned apostle of Jesus as the author of the First Gospel.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have been introduced to the issues in the study of Matthew, particularly its authorship. Issues considered in this unit included those pertaining to the identification of the person of Matthew, his relation to the book that bears that name, external and internal testimony to the Matthean authorship, and some suggested solutions to the problem. You were also introduced to some form of methodology of understanding the

arguments involved. This will become more useful to you as you continue the course.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What are the main issues in the objection to a Hebrew text of Matthew?
2. Critically assess the arguments about the impossibility of an apostolic authorship of Matthew's Gospel.

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UNIT 2 DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CONTENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The attempts to establish the author of Matthew's Gospel was characterised by complex arguments, as you saw in Unit One. The case of the date and provenance of the Gospel will not be different. This should not surprise you; it is the common problem scholars have with understanding the background to ancient books. This is the case because modern scholars are far removed from the origin of such ancient books in time, space, and culture. In most cases, the conclusions scholars arrive at are at best, good guesses.

The concern of this unit is to introduce you to the issues in current debate about the date and place of origin of the Gospel of Matthew. The arguments largely hinge on two poles. When you read through the Gospel, you will find no mention in it as to the time or place of its origin. For this reason, scholars think it necessary to assess and value both external and internal evidence. That means the first pole is the Early Church's tradition about both Matthew's authorship and its priority. The second is the evidence found in the Gospel itself; the indicators of the time and circumstances in a given place that could prompt such a book.

To make it easier to understand these issues in the debate, the study is organised in four clusters. You are expected to follow these clusters carefully and engage in the debate yourself.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this study, you should be able to:

- State the Early Church's tradition about date and provenance of Matthew's Gospel
- Discuss internal indicators of date and provenance
- Analyse modern scholarly opinions on date and place of origin of Matthew's Gospel

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 The Early Church's Tradition about Matthew's Date and Provenance

Attempts to date the Gospel of Matthew present a number of challenges. Unlike its evidence for the Gospel's authorship, the Early Church's tradition about the date of Matthew is not unanimous. The challenge of dating the Gospel is further compounded by the attitude of modern scholars. Many of the arguments about date do not focus on specific features in the Gospel which point to a date of composition. Rather, they are based on an overall scheme of dating the New Testament documents and how Christian life and thought were developed in the first century.

Modern scholars in this light, often link the date of the Gospel with the synoptic problem. That is, they tie it in with the question of which Gospel was written first and which author borrowed from the other. This approach is problematic because even the Early Church's tradition has two strands of information on this issue of the date of the Gospels. According to Eusebius (Hist Eccl 3.39.15), Mark wrote first and Mathew used Mark's outline as a guide to his work. But Augustine described Mark as "a camp follower" and abbreviator of Matthew. The two witnesses are apparently antithetical to each other. In spite of these and similar problems, the information we have from the Church Fathers, which you saw in Unit 1, is very helpful in deciding a probable date for the Gospel of Matthew.

There is a line of argument that notes that one of the best method to determine the dating of the Gospel is to talk about the earliest and latest possible dates. A number of indicators point to these limits. First, about 90-96 AD Clement of Rome used sections of the Gospel of Matthew, though in a conflated quotation (Matt 5:7; 6:14-15; 7:1-2, 12; also Luke 6:31, 36-38) in his Letter to the Corinthians (1 Clem. 13:1-2). Further, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who wrote around 100

AD, clearly quoted the phrase "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt 3:15) in discussing Jesus' baptism (Smyr. 1.1). The author of the Didache (Did. 8:1-3 c. 110 AD) quoted from Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer. These data are seen to indicate that Matthew's Gospel was in circulation before 90 AD, and was therefore written sometime before that date. For a number of reasons, the earliest possible date on these categories is to be fixed by mid 30s AD, after the events recorded in the book. Usually, therefore, the early dates of 40-48 AD are suggested. The latest dates are suggested to be between the mid-70s to the early second century AD.

There are two major pieces of information from the Church's tradition that are of particular importance in determining the date of Matthew. The first of these is the one passed down by Papias. As you saw in the previous unit, Eusebius argued that Papias stated that, Matthew compiled the oracles of Jesus in the Hebrew dialect and every person translated them as best he could (Hist. Eccl 3.39.16). This tradition does not name a specific or even probable date, though. But it implies that Matthew was written quite early in the Church's life; probably, between the early 40s and the 50s. Recall that Eusebius said Matthew wrote the First Gospel when he was leaving his people (Hist. Eccl. 3.24.6). If the Gospel in Hebrew is the one Matthew wrote when he was leaving Palestine, its probable date would be between 40 and 48 AD. That is, if the tradition, which says that the apostles left Jerusalem, in connection with Jewish persecution of the Church, which could be about 12 years after Jesus' ascension is correct. One could then deduce that Mark and Luke were among those who "translated" Matthew's work and produced their own Gospels.

The second strand of tradition, which is from Irenaeus (c. 180 AD), is very important in dating Matthew. He writes:

Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundation s of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. (*Haer* 3.1.1; cf. Eusebius *Hist. Eccl*. 5.8.2)

This statement also has its own problems. First, we have no information about Peter and Paul both preaching in Rome at once elsewhere. So, since Irenaeus was separated from the Apostles by over one and a half centuries, it is difficult to rely on this exclusive information. But by this statement, Irenaeus and probably his Christian community thought the date of the Gospel was in the early sixties of the first century. Both Apostles Peter and Paul were martyred in the persecution under Emperor Nero. Thus, the phrase, "after their departure" is probably a

periphrasis referencing the death of the apostles Peter and Paul. Nero's regime ended in 68 AD. So the statement also suggests that, the mention of Mark's writing of his own Gospel in this context, indicates that Mark wrote after Peter and Paul were martyred. This would place the date of Mark after 64 AD, possibly in 65 AD, when the apostles were probably martyred and Matthew before this date since he wrote during the lifetime of Peter and Paul.

Our attention is called to the information provided by Clement of Alexandria as quoted by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl* 2:15.1-2; 14. 6-7), that Mark wrote his Gospel while Peter was alive. If Matthew wrote before Mark and Mark wrote while Peter was still alive, it means that Matthew was probably written earlier than the 60s AD. This is necessary to give room for the circulation of Matthew's Gospel for Mark to access it. In any case, whereas this tradition negates the information from Irenaeus (*Haer* 3.1.1) cited above, it strengthens the case for an early date of Matthew.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What are some of the issue that made the discussion of the dating of the Gospel of Matthew more compounding in current dispensation of scholarship?
2. Discuss the two strands in the Early Church Tradition that account for the dating of the Gospel of Matthew? Do you think that they have any influence in your effort to determine the dating of the Gospel?
3. Do you subscribe to the claim in your self-study material (CRS412) that the earliest for the dating of the Gospel of Matthew, as suggested in your self-study material (CRS412) is AD 40-48 and the latest in the mid of 70s? Give reasons for your position.

3.2 Opinions in Modern Scholarship on Matthew's Date

Modern scholars have widely rejected the traditions of the Early Church on the date of the composition of the Gospel of Matthew. The issues they consider in taking this position are usually many and variegated. Many of the suggestions of date by modern scholars tend to hinge on some indicators in the Gospel itself. These include, among others, the relationship between Jesus' supposed discourse in Matthew 24 and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD; Matthew's record of the parable of a wedding banquet in chapter 22:1-14 which some identify with Luke's parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24), and thus considers it as t an explicit reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 . There are also some other similar indicators.

The arguments in most cases are not very much appealing. But in the spirit of the goal of this course, to encourage you to decide on your own, it is expedient to consider and value the evidence on each point on its merit. You will observe that, such arguments, though repudiating tradition, are based on Eusebius' tradition of the priority of Mark (*Hist Eccl* 3.39.15) which however, conflicts with that of Augustine as discussed earlier. The following are the major strands of evidence usually adduced.

a) Based on the two-source hypothesis, we can say that Matthew must have been written after Q and Mark. There are also good reasons for dating Mark a few years either side of A.D. 70. So, Matthew could have appeared enough later for Mark to have become the sacred tradition of the Matthean community.

Although one may argue that it is possible for a book to circulate widely within few years, or even within a year, of its publication. Not only were Matthew and Mark concurrently involved with the kerygma in different regions of the same empire, but the Church as the one body of Christ had a good communication network. You can see this from the way Paul in an unimaginable short of time mobilised support for the famished brothers in Judea across the empire simply through the letters he wrote.

b) The war of 66–70, and the consequent destruction of Jerusalem, is almost certainly reflected in 22:7. Yet Matthew does not seem to be overwhelmed by the catastrophe, which seems some distance away in both space and time. Although some scholars to argue that Matthew reflects a situation which suggests that "the hostilities of the Judean-Roman war (AD 66-70) remain fresh" rather than being some distance away. But they agree that the Gospel could not have preceded 70 AD.

c) The argument is furthered by the claim Matthew seems to be intensely concerned with the developments in formative Judaism in the generation after A.D. 70, even if one argues that it is difficult to determine whether he reflects the specificity of the *Birkath ha-Minim*, which was apparently promulgated in the A.D. 80s. But no one doubts the fact that the author engages Pharisaism and reflects a Jewish worldview close to that of the rabbinic movement which achieved prominence only after AD 70.

However, it is important to examine some of the implications of the argument. According to the argument, the antagonism expressed in Matthew's Gospel represents the true situation between the Matthean community and the Judaism of the day: 8:10-12; 21:43, 23. The 'Jewishness' or "anti-Jewishness' of the Gospel cannot be equated with

earlier date beyond the period of formative Judaism. The Gospel could have been written in the wake of a recent painful parting from Judaism, hence could not earlier than 70 AD., and not in Palestine. Some of the supporting texts to the argument include 21:23, where Jesus declared that the kingdom of God will be taken away from the Jewish leaders and given to a new people who will produce its fruit, and also some other conflict stories between Jesus and Jewish leadership, that could have reflected later tensions between the Church and the synagogue.

It is further observed in a number of passages that Matthew refers to the Jewish synagogue as "their synagogue(s)" (Mat 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34). Some see this as pointing to the time when Christians were excluded from the synagogues of the Pharisees. Some have even gone further to link this with the revision of the 18 Jewish benedictions by Samuel the Small in about 85 AD which excluded Christian Jews from the synagogues of the Pharisees. At that time, the twelfth benediction of *Amidah* (standing) or *Shemoneh Esreh* (eighteen prayer) was supplemented in such a way as to discourage Christians from continuing with the synagogue. To the original line, "For apostates let there be no hope, and the kingdom of arrogance quickly uproot," was added: "In a moment let the Nazarenes and the heretics be destroyed; let them be blotted from the Book of Life, and with the righteous not be inscribed".

But you may notice that the way Matthew uses the phrase, "their synagogues" does not necessarily mean he and his community were excluded from the synagogue system. Most of the occurrences of the phrase are in reports of events that took place within or around the synagogue precincts. There were synagogues in various cities; and unless Matthew was reporting about the synagogue in his native Capernaum, he had no cause identifying himself with the synagogue in question.

Again, you may observe in the Matthean account in 17:24-27 that Matthew presents the Temple tax issue in a way which shows that the Christian community had not yet broken ties with Judaism. By a careful consideration of several similar issues of dispute between Jewish leadership and Christians, the controversies seem to reflect what started during the lifetime of Jesus and continued through the early years of the Church. This is the picture in the frequent attacks on Christian evangelism by the Jewish leaders in Acts of the Apostles (4:1-20; 5:14-42; 6:8-8:1). But it is evident that this started with Jesus (Jn 11:45-48). Note also that the preaching of the Gospel was a recounting and retelling of the historical events in the life of Jesus by people who witnessed these events and were excited about them because of their experiences (Acts 4:19-20).

d) Yet other scholars would insist that the hostilities of the Jewish war with the Romans are not readily evident in Matthew's Gospel Even if it is, it does not guarantee a comfortable tool to date the Gospel, for the Acts of the Apostles, which, for certain scholars, far predates 70 AD., highly reflects both Pharisaic antagonism against the Christian movement and the Rabbinic worldview.

e) There is also a view that the author of the Gospel of Matthew used the Hebrew Old Testament (MT) in his Gospel in several places, even more than other Gospel writers. This is interpreted as having easy access to the Hebrew scrolls which were kept in the synagogues. If the close association with the synagogues would stand, then it may imply that the Gospel was written before the Church's break with the synagogue was complete. But it must be added that the possibility of using the MT does not prove the case. The author could have other means to access the text or even might have learnt much of the text by heart, especially if the role of memory in relation to sacred texts in the time of the author is something to reflect on.

f) A related argument denies Jesus capacity to predict the future, and makes the record of his prophecies a matter of anachronisms of the Gospel author. You will find out that some scholars will use this as a tool to analyse Jesus' predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as a reportage of *vaticinia ex eventu* (prophecies after the event). It is only purported predictions that are circumstantial. Even a closer look at the Matthean presentation of the destruction of Jerusalem is much more remote than all the other evangelists. It indicates a display of Matthew's knowledge of the circumstances of the Roman invasion in 70 AD. This is well reflected in Jesus' statement in the parable of the wedding feast that the king sent his armies and destroyed those who turned down his invitation and murdered his slaves and also set their city on fire (Mat 22:7).

Again, where Matthew records Jesus prophecies about the fate of his disciples, for instance, is seen to reflect a time when the Church had become well established and known by the appellation, church (cf. 16:18) and about the treatment of the erring sisters and brothers within the community (18:10). Matt 10:17-23) reflects the contemporary situation of the Matthean time. Thus, Jesus stated that the disciples will be handed over to the councils, scourged in their synagogues, will be hated and brought before governors and kings for His name's sake and driven from city to city, and that in the process they will give testimony for Him. In 28: 18-20, Jesus commissioned the disciples to teach all nations and make them His disciples. All such statements of Jesus are said to reflect the lapse of many years when the Christian Church was

established and was undergoing its cruel persecution by the Jews and even by Roman emperors and governors. It is, therefore, argued that such a time could not have been much earlier than the year 100 AD. For that reason, it is argued that Matthew only cast back a real event and purported it to be Jesus' prediction. These together form the basis for late dating of the Gospel on the categories of modern scholars Jesus'

Morris (1992) and Gundry (1994) would argue differently.They demonstrate the incongruity in the association of the "burning of the city" in Matthew 22:7 with the destruction of Jerusalem. Morris says the reference to the destruction of the city is drawn from the common attitude of the Roman army in dealing with its captured cities. Moreover, all such references are forward-looking and therefore "should be taken to point to a time before it occurred" (Morris 1912:10). Gundry sees in it a theological motif and traces it to Isaiah 5:24-25 rather than to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. But this could contribute to the dating of the Gospel is another issue that ought to be examined critically. Incidentally, Josephus reports that it is not the invading Roman army that burn down the city of Jerusalem; it is the defending Jews who kindled the flames (War 6.251, 281, 409; 7.1). The Roman armies only burn down the temple (War 6.249-50).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Read through this section again, classify the arguments in tabular form indicating the pre-70 AD and post-70 AD arguments in the dating of the Gospel of Matthew. Which of the group would you subscribed to and why?
2. Discuss some of the indicators deployed by modern scholars to rejected the traditions of the Early Church on the date of composition of the Gospel of Matthew, and placed it as a document of later age.
3. Make a case that in spite of the argument of some modern scholars that the account of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is anachronistically witnessed in the Gospel passage of Matthew, one cannot use the argument to establish the dating of the Gospel.
4. Do you subscribed to the argument that Matthew is structured with the Gospel of Mark? How would you prove your case?
5. In an apologetic fashion, address the claim that in the composition of the Gospel, the author of the Gospel of Matthew only cast back a real event and purported it to be Jesus' prediction. Has this any impact the dating of the Gospel?
6. Explain the terms (i) the *Birkath ha-Minim* and *vaticinia ex eventu*, and relate them to the argument for or against the late dating of the Gospel of Matthew.

3.3 Tentative Dating of the Gospel of Matthew

As Slick (2010) points out, dating the Gospels is very important. If it can be established that the Gospels were written early, we would have good reason to believe that they were written by the apostles who were eyewitnesses of the events they record. Consequently, their historical reliability, authenticity, and accuracy would be better sustained. The debate about the date of Matthew is not a debate over the historical reliability of the Gospel, though. It is an effort to best understand the circumstances in the early Church that this Gospel addressed. The better we understand those circumstances, the better we will understand the logic of the book, and the better we will be able to hear and apply its message to our own circumstances.

It has already been argued on the extensive use of the MT by Matthew indicates the author's affinity with the synagogue. The Gospel equally transmits several sayings of Jesus that concern the role of the Temple in the life of the Jewish people (Matt 5:23-24; 12:5-7; 17:24-27; 23:16-22). If we consider the probability that an author would not include sayings of Jesus that were no longer relevant to his readers, we might conclude that Matthew's Gospel was written before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Furthermore, Matthew exclusively reports certain events and situations in and around Jerusalem (2:3, 16; 21:10; 27:3-8,24, 25, 52-53, 62-66; 28:4, 11-15). This also supports an early date of composition for the Gospel – when the city was still standing and important in the life of the Christian community. Some of these include the seven times reference of the author to the Sadducees while Mark and Luke both mention them only once. This points to a pre-70 AD date because after that year Sadducees lost influence. In the same vein, Matthew emphasises Jerusalem as the place where Jewish antagonism to Jesus took place (Mat 2:1-12; 16:21; 24:10, 17; 22:7; 23:31-39). This also favours a date before 70 AD. because then the city had been destroyed by the Romans. In reporting on Jesus' prophecy about the fate of the Jews at the Roman invasion, Matthew emphasises the immediacy of their flight and the Parousia (24:29). If he wrote after 70 AD., he would have given an allowance between the flight and the Parousia. You will notice that in their parallel passages, Matthew omits Mark's emphasis on the immediacy of events they report. So, for Matthew to depict these events as happening "immediately" after the other implies that he probably saw the invasion associated with the end time. But this did not happen in 70 AD; and Matthew apparently well knew it.

Notice also that Matthew does not mention the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 AD. This is significant for dating the Gospel because Matthew records Jesus' prophecy concerning this important event in

Jewish history. You may also observe that Matthew was very fond of showing how prophecy was fulfilled. If he wrote after 70 AD., he most likely would have recorded such an obvious fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy.

But how precisely before 70 AD. can we date the Gospel? The dating of the book of Acts which Luke wrote as a sequel to his Gospel (Acts 1:1-

2) might help. Acts is a history of the Christian church beginning with the events right after Jesus' ascension. But it does not mention the significant event of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. in spite of its relevance and prophetic importance to the theme and objective of that history. This fact is very strong evidence that Acts was written before the destruction occurred. You will also notice that Acts does not include the accounts of Nero's persecution of Christians in 64 AD or the deaths of the apostles James (62 AD), Paul (64 AD), and Peter (65 AD). This is further evidence that it was written early, certainly after Festus's appointment as procurator (24:27), which occurred between 55 AD and 59 AD. Since Acts was sequel to Luke and Matthew and Luke were probably written by the same time, none of them could have been written later than 70 AD.

Considering the internal and external evidence, we may tentatively conclude that the traditional early dating of Matthew by 60-65 AD is more plausible.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What is the primary value and contribution of the discussion of the dating of the Gospels in general, and Matthew in particular, to Gospel research?
2. What are some of the possible implications of the extensive use of the Hebrew Old Testament scripture in the Gospel of Matthew in matter of dating the Gospel?
3. Do you agree with the view that Matthew exclusively reports certain events and situations in and around Jerusalem (2:3, 16; 21:10; 27:3-8,24, 25, 52-53, 62-66; 28:4, 11-15) supports early dating of the Gospel?
4. Why is it that the seven-time mentioning of the Sadducees in the Gospel of Matthews is a point of interest in the dating of the period of the composition of the Gospel?
5. Briefly state the contribution of the Acts of the Apostles in the dating of the Gospel of Matthew.

3.4 Provenance of the Gospel of Matthew

It is important to note early in this section that various scholars have defended several locations for the Matthean community, and also the place where the Gospel originated: Palestine (Galilee, Caesarea, Jerusalem), Syria (Antioch, Tyre or Sidon), Egypt (Alexandria), Transjordan (Pella). It is also a common assumption that the author of Matthew was writing for the people who lived near the place he wrote. And there are several possible indications, drawing from internal evidence, that suggests the provenance of the Gospel.

You may recall the Papias Hebrew Matthew and the case we have already established. The challenge you may face to insist on Hebrew Matthew is that our extant copies of the Gospel are in Greek. But that equally provides a clue to both provenance and destination of the Gospel. In this case, the Gospel is associated with Palestinian origin, precisely Jerusalem. For them, the Hebrew Matthew could point to an earlier version of the Gospel written in Palestine for Jewish Christians living in that region. However, Jerusalem would seem out of the question, since James plays no role in the 'Greek' Matthew.

But Syria is the most commonly suggested place for the writing and the audience of Matthew. Those holding to the Hebrew Matthew argue that it was when Syria became a major Christian centre, still quite early in the first century AD and when Matthew, for some historical incidence, shifted his base to that region with Greek dominance that he produced the Greek copy of the Gospel, thus using the Hebrew version as guide. In this sense, Matthew could have produced two different copies of the Gospel, for the Palestinian Jews and the 'Syrian' Jews. Internal evidence of the Gospel points here to some Greek-speaking urban area where Jews and Christians were in intense interaction. Greek was the dominant language of Antioch, which probably had the largest Jewish population in Syria. Little wonder then that Matthew seems to breathe a more urbane air than either Q or Mark. Whereas Mark refers to cities eight times and villages seven times, Matthew has twenty-six references to cities and only four references to villages

Historically, Antioch in Syria was an early centre of Jewish Christian faith, and the need for such writing could have been expedient. Again, the prominence of Syria as a centre for Jewish Christian faith was necessitated by the Jewish war. When the war broke out, the Christian Jews (the "Nazarenes") refused to participate. They rather fled Jerusalem and Judea and moved northeast into Syria. It is on this basis that some scholars even argue specifically that Antioch was the place of

origin. But many still feel that we cannot be so precise; "somewhere" in Syria is enough identification of provenance.

Another pointer to the Syrian provenance is the Jewish flavour of the Gospel. The author of Matthew could not bother himself explaining the Jewish customs and places as is done in the other Gospels. This implies that he took for granted that his audience understood these. This is not surprising when we speak of Syria, for Syria is known to have had a heavy Jewish presence, which could explain this attitude.

Matthew introduces "Syria" into his sources (4:24), perhaps as a pointer to his own church and to ground it in the saving history. You can make a good case out of this, for the author of the Gospel of Matthew, in contradistinction to the two other synoptic writers (Mark and Luke). Thus, in reporting on the spread of Jesus' fame in the Gospel and miracle working, Matthew stresses Syria as the geographical area of that spread whereas Mark (3:8) and Luke (6:17) speak of Tyre and Sidon. This indicates the mindset of the author and suggests that he could have been in Syria when he wrote.

Again, Matthew (17:24-27) depicts the Roman denarius (*stater*) that was used for the Temple tax as two drachmas. It was only in Syrian region (Damascus and Antioch) that the denarius equalled two drachmas. This also indicates that Matthew could not have been outside the region of Syria when he wrote the Gospel.

If we also accept the claim that the Gospel of Matthew is a Gospel for both Jews and Gentiles, then it fits well to Luke's description of the Church in Syrian Antioch, where Palestinian Christians started the Antiochene Church, which then developed a Gentile mission, though not without tensions.

You may also discover that Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, one of the early successors of the Apostles, quoted from Matthew's Gospel (Smyrn. 1.1), which also coincide with the other evidence for Syrian origin.

Peter is prominent in both Matthew and in Antiochene tradition, which made him the first bishop of Antioch. After the encounter between Paul and Peter in Antioch (Gal. 2), Paul seems to have lost popularity there.

The early and widespread acceptance of the gospel implies "sponsorship" by a major church. There is no evidence for Rome or Ephesus as the sponsor; Antioch is the best remaining possibility

It is also to draw your attention to the fact that there have also been few scholars who argue that Alexandria in Egypt was the place of origin of Matthew. But this has not received popular support.

Self-Assessment Exercise

How would you prove that in spite of all the connections of the Gospel of Matthew to Palestine, the Syrian accounts of the provenance of the Gospel remain more plausible?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The debate about the date and provenance of Matthew is based on the internal and external witnesses. The majority of scholars, who is more inclined to working exclusively with internal evidence, find strong clues in Matthew on which basis the Gospel reflects the situation of Christianity after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. A powerful minority however, sees enough evidence in both early Christian tradition and in the text of Matthew itself for an early date of the Gospel. Comparing both strands of evidence, it seems more plausible that Matthew was written before the start of the Jewish war. To be sure, since by 67 AD the Romans had surrounded the city, the possibility of the city's inhabitants running out of it (24:16), for instance, was sealed off. While we cannot be certain about either date or provenance, the most plausible date would be in the early 60s. To be specific, this would be by 60-64 AD since according to Irenaeus, Matthew was written when Peter and Paul were in Rome; for both of them died by 64 AD. The Jewish flavour of the Gospel and the probable references to circumstances in Syria lend support for a Syrian origin.

5.0 SUMMARY

In sum, modern scholars' dating of the Gospels is dictated by the general tendency to deny Jesus' predictive power. Since this is the case, the belief that Mark wrote first and the other evangelists used his work in composing theirs now governs the dating of all the Gospels. The warning accredited to Jesus in Mark 13:14, namely "when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains" paralleled in Matthew 24:15, is said to indicate that Mark was written shortly before the Roman war with the Jews in 66-70 AD. The events of the day made it clear to him that the trouble of the kind he so describes was imminent. Mark is therefore to be dated by 65 AD. It follows that no one could have the mind and heart to write anything like the Gospels in the war years. Thus, Matthew and Luke must be dated about 70-80 AD. In which case, their purported predictions of Jesus are

mere reflections of their experiences of the war period. But you will notice that, Jesus evidently not only predicted the future, but other theological and historical factors, like Matthew's missionary concerns (Mat 28:18-20), stand against a late dating of his motivation and efforts to leave a written record of the life and times of Jesus for his new converts (Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 3.24.6).

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. List and discuss three internal clues and three external pointers to the date of Matthew's Gospel.
2. What makes Matthew's omission of the destruction of Jerusalem as a fulfilment of prophecy an interesting point in the dating of the Gospel of Matthew?
3. Where did the Gospel of Matthew originate? Why do you think so?

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UNIT 3 THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Evangelist, Matthew, neither explicitly states the circumstances that occasioned the writing of his Gospel nor his purpose as does John (20:30-31). Rather, the Gospel is infested with tension between an emphasis on Jewish teaching and criticism of official Judaism. This creates a major challenge for Matthean scholarship today. This has invariably aroused the interest to search for the specific occasion and purpose for the Gospel. Thus, one of the challenges, which has become obvious, is on how to fit Matthew within a presumed development of early Christianity. In most cases, such suppositions lead scholars either to leave out too much or include too much in their bid to determine the sort of life-setting which might have produced the Gospel.

You will also discover that the text of Matthew itself does not seem to specify only one purpose just as its many themes indicate. The Evangelist was as much concerned to present the life and times of the historical Jesus as he was of the theological value of that history to his own community, the church he addressed. In this unit, we have attempted to reconstruct in some measure, the circumstances which led Matthew to write his "Gospel".

Our discovery here will aid us in the next unit to discover what Matthew intended to achieve in his project. We will do this by considering scholarly views on the issue and particularly, the way Matthew presents certain information about Jesus and his depiction of other characters and scenes. These might reveal the author's psychological and theological motivations and goal which might determine his historical milieu.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss current scholarly views on the occasion and purpose of the Gospel of Matthew.
- Contribute to the debate about circumstances that prompted the writing of Matthew.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Recent Discussion on the Circumstances of Matthew's writing

The fact remains that no speech is made in a vacuum. A speaker is always motivated by some situation to make certain utterances. Also, there is always a goal to accomplish for every speech made. The Gospel of Matthew contains indices which point to both the author's motivation and purpose in the way the author presents certain information about Jesus. Modern scholars have made several references to this in the Gospel of Matthew, and have often presented their views on these indicators in various ways. Standing out conspicuously in this line is. Jesus' two-time commission to his disciples, which suggests the situation of the Gospel's composition. On the one hand, the disciples are forbidden to preach to others than Jews (10:54); on the other, they are commanded to preach to all nations (28:18-20). Because of this divergence, some scholars have suggested that Matthew's concern was to preserve the traditions of two distinct communities—one that remained narrowly Jewish and the other that was more outward looking. Others think Matthew is confronted with two different conflicting perspectives within his own community, and decided to preserve both viewpoints—a sort of committee report that satisfied neither side. For others, there was a more specific "occasion" for this tension; there was a conflict between the church and the synagogue over the place of Gentile mission. In this view, Matthew took a mediating position to unite the two groups. But has he really achieved that?

There are serious flaws with this kind of reconstruction of the occasion for Matthew's Gospel however. When you take a closer look at the Gospel, you can see that Matthew does not seem to show any concern to depict the situation in his church in the two passages (10:5-6 or 28:18-20) or in other related passages. The New International Version Bible Commentary (NIVBC 1998) makes a revealing remark: Matthew in 10:5-6 records what Jesus wanted his disciples to accomplish in their first-recorded major assignment. It does not necessarily say anything

about what was going on in Matthew's day. It tells the obvious why Matthew includes 10:6 as well as 28:18-20, and all the texts akin to either of the passages. Therefore, the texts reveal the beginning and growth of the Church: how Jesus began God's New Creation Community with God's own chosen people, Israel, and the movement outward from there. In this case, Matthew is more probably concerned in demonstrating the necessity of world evangelism—how from the nascent community during Jesus' ministry the present commission of the church developed. This point will be expanded in section 3.3 of this unit.

Granted this is the understanding of the author's concerns in the verses considered, you can hardly see him battling with the two strands of tradition, still less, trying to reconcile the opposing traditions either within his own community or in two distinct communities.

There could have been several possible reasons why Matthew wrote as you can see in the following list culled from the NIVBC (1998).

It may be that by this retelling of the changed perspective affected by Jesus' resurrection Matthew is encouraging Jewish Christians to evangelize beyond their own race. Or it may be that he is justifying before non-Christian Jews what he and his fellow Christian Jews are doing. Or it may be that he is explaining the origins of Christian mission to zealous Jewish-Christian personal evangelists who after the warmth of their initial experience want to learn about the historical developments and teaching of Jesus that made the Jewish remnant of his day the church of their own day. Or it may be that, though such questions have not yet arisen, Matthew foresees that they cannot be long delayed and, like a good pastor, decides to forestall the problem by clear teaching. Or it may be that Matthew has Gentile readers in mind. Or it may be that all these factors were at work because Matthew envisages an extensive and varied readership.

But it will be very interesting for you to note that in the entire Gospel, Matthew talks about Jesus and the kingship of God, not a Christian community in any decade of the first century. That kingship of God is over his new creation community, his counterculture which Jesus called the Church (Mat 16:18; 18:17). It is, therefore, necessary to take you back to the account of Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl*. 3.24.6) that Matthew's Gospel was occasioned by the evangelist's departure from his Jewish brothers in Palestine to others. This may be an important guide in understanding the motivation for writing the Gospel. Other early Church Fathers (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat*. 14; Epiphanius, *Haer*. 30.3; Jerome, *Prol. in Matt.*; *Praef. in Quat. Ev.*; *Vir*. 3) would seem to support this

traditional understanding of the circumstances surrounding the writing of Matthew.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Read these two passages from the Gospel of Matthew: 10:5-6 and 28:18-20. How would explain that the two texts should come from the same author dealing with the challenges confronting the same community?
2. Is it possible that the two passages in Matthew (10:5-6 and 28:18-20) is a pointer that Matthew initially wrote more than one community, which were later redacted to form a document known today as the Gospel of Matthew?
3. Critically evaluate the list of suggestions by the NIVBC (1998) that could have occasioned the Gospel of Matthew. Which of these suggestions appeal more to you and why?
4. Explain the traditional understanding of the circumstances surrounding the writing of the Gospel of Matthew. Cite correctly one of the traditions as reported by any of the Fathers of the Church.

3.2 The Life and Times of the Historical Jesus in Matthew's Text

When you read the Gospel of Matthew carefully, clues to the circumstances of its writing become evident in the life and times of Jesus, its central character. Indications from Matthew's Gospel show that, Jesus came as the Messiah of the people of God and fulfilled the messianic prophecies in Jewish literature. The Jews, especially their leadership, however, failed to appreciate and embrace Jesus as the fulfilment of these prophecies. Consequently, they opposed and antagonized him until they succeeded in convincing the Roman authorities in Judea that Jesus was a seditionist, thus he was executed for treason.

The Jewish Establishment was the collective client of the Roman Emperor enjoying both the status of "the rulers of the people" (Mat 20:25) and the benefits accruing to that position. They had sought and gotten permission to institute direct rule through the Sanhedrin (Storkey 2005:40) so that the Roman governor in Judea was only an overseer (Jos Ant. 18.251-52). Therefore, they would resent and work against force that threatened such a privileged position—that is, what would disturb the "colonial peace" (Storkey 2005:40) and dethrone them (cf. Jn. 11:45-48). As you read through the Gospel, you will see that Matthew carefully shows that such opposition oozed out of the authority's

misapprehension of the Messiah's person and mission, particularly, the nature of the kingdom he came to establish.

You will notice that Matthew weaves together two important ideas in his Gospel. Throughout the text, Matthean Jesus is involved in the proclamation of the dawn of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Associated with this is a serious polemic against the Jewish Authorities—usually on the subject of Jesus' messianic claims. This indicates that the Gospel is plotted on the dual motif of Jesus' messianic mission and its opposition by the Jewish Establishment. If this was the case, proper understanding of both concerns will greatly help in reconstructing the situation that prompted the writing of the Gospel.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you subscribe to the view that the Gospel of Matthew is plotted on the dual motif of Jesus' messianic mission and its opposition by the Jewish Establishment?
2. How would you explain to your audience that the Jewish Establishment benefitted much from the Roman colonial rule such that it could go outside its own way to protect the rule?

3.2.1 The Case for Global Evangelism

Let us begin with the Evangelist's depiction of Jesus' concern for global evangelism. As you saw in section 3.1, the reason Matthew includes 10:6 as well as 28:18-20, and all the texts akin to either of the passages may be to explain how Jesus began God's New Creation Community with God's own chosen people, Israel, and moved outward from there. This might well be a pragmatic expression of Matthew's understanding of the Old Testament's portrait of Israel as God's chosen people (Ex 19:5-6; Am 3:2). The author of the Fourth Gospel probably had the same understanding of the phenomenon. It informed his perception of Jesus' statement to the Canaanite woman in John 4:22 that "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews". One might argue that Jesus' own example is the foundation of Paul's "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom 1:14-17).

Matthew was personally deeply involved with actualising Jesus' commission to his disciples to evangelise the entire world, beginning from the Jerusalem Jews (Mat 10:5-6) to the entire nation (28:18-20; Lk 24:47; Acts 1:8). The intent of the commission was to create a new people of God to rework the creation community that was marred by the Fall, which the chosen Israel failed to accomplish.

The idea of the new people of God is simple. The original creation community, the Adamic community, and the Noahic community which replaced it (Gen 1-11), failed to attain to God's standards of relationships- among human and with God. God then chose one man to learn His ways and inductively transform the rest of the human race to conform to God's relational values and standards (Gen 12:1-3). But this project was marred by Jewish misapprehension of the idea of "divine election" and consequent violation of the covenant undergirding that relationship (2 Kg 17:1-23). Instead, the Jews saw themselves as a favoured race through which God destined to rule the world (Dan 7:13-28).

Consequent upon this third failure, another process was started for a new people of God, a new creation community or counterculture (VanGemeren, 1990) as a community of people who recognize the sovereignty of God and do his will (Jer 31:31-34). As France (1985) puts it, "where the will of God is done, there is the kingdom of God" (p. 147). The Messiah, on arrival, raised that new people of God (Stanton 1992:124-131; Mat 1:21; 2 :6; 21:43). He identified them as "the Kingdom of Heaven", "the Kingdom of God", "the Kingdom", and ultimately as the *ekklesia*— "Church" (Mat 16:18; 18:17) with the connotation of "the called-out ones"[1]

The summary of the genealogical table (Mat 1:17) makes clear that, Matthew presents Jesus, who is often called "King of the Jews" (Mat 2:6, 20, 21; 15:31), as the Davidic Messiah who culminated the royal line of Judah (France 1985: 168; Schnackenburg 2002: 6). He is the "King of Israel" (27:42) who, along with his twelve apostles sitting on the twelve thrones of Israel, shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel at the "restoration" (19:28).

This kingdom motif is made evident by the statistics of its occurrence in the book. The expression, "Kingdom of Heaven" (Mat 3:2) occurs 32 times; "Kingdom of God" (Mat 12:28; 21:43 – four times); "the kingdom" (Mat 4:23; 6:13; 8:12; 9:35; 13:19, 38; 24:14; 25:31); and "the kingdom of their Father" – once (13:43). Thus, in Matthew's view, Jesus came to establish God's kingship on planet earth: "Let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven" (Mat 6:10; cf. 26:29).

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ekklessia denotes an assembly of people called out. In Greece, this was often the people's parliament where the *politēs* (citizens) - members of a polis (city) met and united their minds in discussing matters of mutual interest - *politiké*, (politics) and democratic decisions were taken for common good of the *politēs*. For more detailed discussion of this subject, see Iorjaah, Igbakua. "Utilisation of Religion for Unity in Nigeria: A Viewpoint." Issues in the Study of Religion. Ilorin: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, 2006, 123-130.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do find any relationship between Jesus's missionary strategy and that of Paul?
2. Expatiate on the intent of the universal commission to evangelise all nations was to create a new people of God to rework the creation community
3. Discuss the Matthean concept of the 'new people of God', and relate it to the covenant theology, which finds its fulfilment in the ecclesia.
4. What do you understand by the kingdom motif as expressed in the Gospel of Matthew?
5. Analyse two prominent texts in the Gospel of Matthew to demonstrate that Jesus came to establish God's kingship on earth.

3.2.2 The Idea of the Government of God

As you may have seen, the idea of a "new people of God" revolved around the personage of Jesus the Messiah. Thus, Matthew presents Jesus as coming to establish God's government on planet earth. He made and lived out this utterance: "Let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven" (6:10). Invariably therefore, the working idea of the new creation community is the kingship of God—the situation where God's sovereignty is expressed in thought, speech, and behaviour. Matthew indicates this motif as the basis for the plot of his Gospel: Jesus recruited a twelve-man team to recruit followers (Mat 4:19). This appointment of the twelve marked the formal founding of a new social reality; a visible socio-political intervention (Yoder, 1997), which challenged the existing system. Political organisations that were on ground—Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians—understood this action as the usual political process of gathering popular support (Storkey 2005: 30). That is why they joined forces, planning strategies to put him down (Mat 12:3-45; cf. Jn. 11:45-48).

See how at his very first public appearance after his wilderness retreat (Mat 4:1-11), Jesus launched his kingdom campaigns (4:12-17). His message was simple, but politically charged: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (4:17). "Kingdom" and "kingship" are no doubt, political terms. This is how those in power understood Jesus who was born son of David, in a royal line and accorded the title, "King of the Jews." You can see why the news of his birth irritated Herod the Great, the ruling "King of the Jews" (Mat 2:14).

With the twelve, Jesus embarked on a vigorous campaign for popular support concentrated in the Galilean region. His campaign strategy and style are captured in a three-point agenda: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Mat 4:23). The basis for this agenda is apparent: Jesus knew that the way people think dictates their behaviours. So, he began his mission by proclaiming the good news of the dawn of the government of God, which the people had been expecting. This would reorient the thinking of the citizenry to accord with the essential nature of the kingdom and the way of life in it. But by Jesus' psychology of the masses, hunger and sickness among the people were serious distractions from his teaching. So, he constantly fed them and also healed the sick. These acts of compassion, which positively affected the people's life, won their confidence in him and validated his claims for the dawn of God's rule and so prepared the people for ready acceptance of his campaign message.

His motivation is also well captured: Jesus saw his contemporaries "distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd," felt compassion for them (9:36), and embarked on the mission of their salvation. In this manner he spontaneously emerged the masses' leader. Matthew underscores this fact: "Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him" (4:25). The Messiah thus confirmed himself the true "ruler who will shepherd my people Israel" (Mat 2:6). This hints at why Jesus appeared as a "messianic threat" (Storkey, 2005). It also indicates why from the start to the end, Jesus' messianic mission was characterised by intense and prolonged opposition, principally from the Jewish religious establishment.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How did the author of the Gospel of Matthew indicate that the motif of the Gospel is the kingship of God?
2. Explain how the simple proclamation of the kingdom of God by Jesus became a political threat to the Jewish establishment.
3. How does the axiom "thinking controls action" influence missionary strategy of Jesus?
4. Show clearly how Jesus proved that "needs" could be a major distraction from the reception of the Gospel message.
5. Analyse the statement that the missionary activities of Jesus made him a 'messianic threat'.

3.3 A Reconstruction of the Situation of Matthew's writing

You can see that there are several indicators within the book itself of what prompted Matthew to write his Gospel. But first, this summary might help you to have a bird eye's view of the book. Matthew's foremost concern, according to his plot, seems to be to demonstrate that:
i. Jesus was the promised Messiah, the son of Abraham through David (Mat 1-2);

ii. He came to inaugurate the messianic kingdom (the kingship or reign of God) on earth as it is in heaven (Mat 6:9-13) by giving his life as a ransom for many (Mat 20:28);
iii. The messianic kingdom is the counterculture, the new creation community begun with Abraham (Gen 12) and developed through the raising of national Israel (Ex 19-23); but in its eschatological expression, it comprises of both Jews and Gentiles;
iv. It is characterised by man's submission to the sovereign will of God (Mat 6:10) by living out the kingdom life as spelt out in the kingdom constitution (Mat 5-7);
v. But some Jews, especially the leadership, painfully, failed to understand this and so constituted themselves into an opposition party and ensured Jesus' execution on false charges of political sedition.

Matthew aimed in this portrait "to inspire deeper faith in Jesus the Messiah, along with a maturing understanding of his person, work, and unique place in the unfolding history of redemption" (Expositor's Bible Commentary 18). Probably, when he was present with his Jewish community, he told them these facts by word of mouth. But when he was going away to evangelise others in obedience to the Great Commission, he saw the need to leave a written word on these matters for his community so they can build on it. Such would be a plausible occasion of the Gospel of Matthew.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you agree with the author that Matthew's community was Jewish? Which authority supports the author's view?
2. Explain the idea that the Messianic kingdom is a counterculture that challenges the Jewish establishment.

4.0 CONCLUSION

On the basis of the data given above, one may conclude that Matthew was primarily written as a tool for worldwide evangelism.

But in view of the Jewish antagonism against this bid to recover God's global creation community, the Gospel also had to contain the apologetic flavour that is latent throughout the text. The overall goal of Matthew in this scheme would be first of all, to win his fellow Jews over to his understanding of the kingdom concept which kept the Jews together throughout their turbulent history. Once the Jews accepted the universal character of the kingdom concept, the Jewish-Gentile tensions would ease. Furthermore, the vacuum created by Matthew's response to Jesus' commission (Mat 28:18-20) by leaving his Jewish community for others would not only be filled by the Gospel of Matthew, but his departure would be accepted in good faith.

5.0 SUMMARY

From material that speaks of the historical Jesus you can reconstruct the situation in the church of Matthew's time, which he addresses. But you must be careful not to read your own presuppositions into the Gospel. For instance, from the way Matthew roots the material about Jesus in the Old Testament and relates him to the Jewish authorities, you can see that the author had much interest in history. At the same time, he intended to address his contemporaries. But what Matthew alleges to have happened in Jesus' day is not necessarily immediately transferable to his own day. It is probable that the evangelist felt a strong urge from the situation of his audience to produce a record of the life and teaching of their Messiah for them. This would serve as both teaching manual for the new-found community and its source of edification at par with the Scriptures which foretold the Messiah's advent.

We may conclude that Matthew was primarily motivated to write his Gospel by the need for the evangelism of the wider world in response to Jesus' commission to all his disciples to accomplish this task. When he was with his community, he taught them all that Jesus commanded personally. But as he was to leave them, there was need to leave them a written document that will fill the vacuum created by his personal absence. This document will also provide the community with tools for Christian apologetic against Jewish antagonistic charges. This latter point is evident throughout the Gospel in Matthew's polemic against the Jewish Establishment.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. State Eusebius' contribution to identifying the occasion for the writing of the First Gospel.
2. Using Matthew's idea of a new creation community, attempt to reconstruct the Situation of Matthew's writing.

3. How does the idea of the government of God contribute to your understanding of the occasion for Matthew's writing?

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UNIT 4 THE LIFE-SETTING OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CONTENTS

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    3.4 A Reconstruction of the Life Setting of the Gospel
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we talked about the circumstances that occasioned the writing of the Gospel of Matthew. You will be introduced to another aspect of the Matthean studies: the life setting of the Gospel. It is about the early church setting on which Matthew's concerns reflect? As in most other topics in Matthean studies, this question too has received varying answers. There are some who follow the early church's tradition and argue that Matthew was addressing a Christian community that mainly turned to the faith from Judaism.

In recent times however, many scholars are saying that Matthew's audience was not a Christian community, but rather a sect within Judaism. As Hagner (2004) summarises it, the argument concerns whether "Matthew's community should be regarded not as representing a Jewish Christianity, but rather a Christian Judaism" (p. 264). It is a question of whether we have in Matthew a Judaism with a Christian overlay or a Christianity that has Jewish characteristics. As you proceed through this unit you can see that the way you understand this issue influences your understanding of both the Gospel of Matthew and early Christianity. In this unit, you are expected to examine these positions against the data in the Gospel itself and take your own position.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain some of the biblical and theological terms that expresses certain elements connected with the life-setting of the Gospel of Matthew
- Discuss the major arguments on the life setting of the Gospel of Matthew.
- Evaluate scholarly arguments on the basis of biblical data.
- Form your own scholarly opinion on issues in the debate.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 Explication of Some Biblical and Theological Terms

3.1.1 Normative and Formative Judaism

You saw in the previous unit that many Matthean scholars conclude that the Gospel was written by a Jew to Jewish Christians. This is based on certain emphases in the Gospel. More details of these emphases and other indicators are in the next unit. In the present one, we drive to sample opinions on the subject matter and attempt to take a position, though based on the results presupposed in the next unit. The discovery that Matthew wrote to a Jewish community led many to the notion that there was a normative or standard Judaism in the first century AD and Matthew's audience was part of it. In effect, the setting of the Gospel is the Judaism of that period. This is not easily ascertainable, though. More recent Matthean scholarship is almost unanimous that there was no standard or normative Judaism as supposed. Rather, we should talk of formative Judaism – that is Judaism in the making (Hagner, 2004). There were many Jewish sects who were both competing with one another, claiming to follow the true interpretation of the Law, and so were the righteous remnant of, and therefore, the true Israel. All such sects were also against the temple authorities. Christianity began as one such sect and shared many similarities with, for instance, the Qumran community which preceded it. But with passage of time, it completely broke with the synagogue because of fundamental and foundational differences in faith. One of them was the belief against the synagogue that the Messiah, Jesus, had already come.

Matthew's Gospel is addressed to this group and so, its setting is not Jewish but Christian. Much of the argument about Matthew's setting borders on these issues as you will see in the next paragraphs.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Explain the concept of 'formative Judaism'
2. What did Christianity in Palestine at its nascent stage share with other Jewish sects?

3.1.2 Particularism and Universalism

Particularism and Universalism in the Gospel of Matthew are loaded with significance theological import. You may still remember that before the emergence of Christianity, the Jews believed that they were exclusively the people of God, and other people could only be tolerated to the level the community considered it convenient. But sequel to the activities of Jesus, who was called the Christ, and those of his disciples after him, there was heavy influx of Gentiles into the community of God's people. This made conservative Jews to become worried that the community was going predominantly Gentile (Acts 15; Gal 2). The Matthean Christian community, however, believed that the universal dimension that the community of God's people took was not by accident but God's own design. Thus, Christianity, in the view of Matthew and the community he represents, is an expression of a new creation community, which in fact, was prepared in and by the old community. This explains his juxtaposition of both particularism and universalism in the Gospel.

Hagner (2000 & 2004) suggests that the reason for this particularism is probably to underline the fulfilment of the covenant promises in the person and work of Jesus Christ as a manifestation of God's covenantal faithfulness to Israel. But Matthew also made clear that this covenant idea prefigured the global mission since the covenant in its earliest conception was universal (Gen 12:1-3). Jesus came, in the first instance, for Israel, but Israel did not receive him with the enthusiasm expected of them. Consequently, Jesus established a new community through which he would work out the salvation he brought for the world. He called it the Church (Mat 16:18, 18:17).

Notice how Matthew develops the idea of Jesus' Worldwide Mission:

i. As Hagner (2000) points out, early in the Gospel John the Baptizer indicates that descent from Abraham can guarantee nothing, but that God can raise up sons for Abraham from stones (3:9). This prefigured a new community to be established to replace ethnic Israel.
ii. In the course of the Gospel, that community is established and called the church (16:18, 18:17).

iii. Towards the climax of the Gospel, Matthew records three successive parables showing the movement away from ethnic Israel, and towards the Church as the new community reflecting the kingdom of God (21:28–32; 21:33–43; 22:1–10).

Hagner (2000) sounds as if Matthew saw the Church as replacing Israel. But in Matthew's view, this new community is a continuation of Israel in modified form. That is why he so carefully shows how the promises and events of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the people and events of this new dispensation. You can trace this idea throughout the Gospel of Matthew as shown in many references above.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Evaluate the claim that the influx of Gentiles into the 'new community' of the people of God was the motivating force for the development of the theology of particularism and universalism in the Gospel of Matthew
2. Is it correct to argue that the birth of the Church is thanks to the refusal of the Jesus's message by the Jewish establishment?
3. How would explain the elements of particularism and universalism in the Gospel of Matthew?
4. Using some passages in the Gospel of Matthew, briefly explain how Matthew develops the idea of Jesus' Worldwide Mission

3.1.3 The Tensions between Conservative Judaism and Christianity

It is obvious that the tensions between Jewish Christians, such as those represented by Matthew, and conservative Jews who did not accept Christ or his teaching, greatly deepened as the first century progressed. You can see this hostility in such passages as 3:7; 6:1–18, and chap 23, and the Jews' self-curse of 27:25, where the people say: "His blood be on us and on our children." However, in most part of the Gospel, however, Matthew's concern is on the position of Israel in the kingdom of God that he proclaimed. That is why Matthew's missionary motif primarily focused on Israel (10:5–6; 15:24), and only secondarily on the worldwide (24:14; 28:19).

You will also notice that, among the Gospels, Matthew is the only one that focused Jesus' missionary activity primarily on Israel. This indicates that a gradual but eventually final separation took place, which must have started quite early in the life of Matthew's group until it felt necessary to stop thinking of itself as part of Judaism (France, 1989).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Explain the possible reason for the tension between the conservative Judaism and the Matthean group in the Gospel of Matthew.
2. Examine Jesus' itinerary in the four Gospel. Would you still agree that Matthew was the only one among the Gospel writers that centres Jesus' missionary activity primarily in Israel?

3.1.4 The Fulfilment Motif

The idea of fulfilment forms a distinctive theological motif in Matthew, which you can easily see in the formula quotations like the following thirteen references. The first ten are particularly compelling in that they are Old Testament quotations introduced by a slightly varying formula which is nevertheless distinctly noticeable (1:22–23; 2:15; 2:17–18; 2:23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:35; 21:4–5; 27:9–10. The remaining three references are not quotations, but citations that have used the same fulfilment formula as do the quotations (3:3; 13:14–15; 26:56). Virtually all these quotations and citations explain something of the origin, person, or work of Jesus as the Messiah of Jewish expectation. The identity of Jesus as the Christ (that is Messiah) and Son of David (another messianic title) as you can see in 22:42, is very important to Matthew and his readers.

These and many similar concerns and themes are very important in determining the life setting of the Gospel of Matthew. In the next section therefore, we shall attempt to reconstruct that life setting.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Demonstrate how the fulfilment motif projected the identity of Jesus as Christ and Son of David.
2. What is the central theological message one may draw from the Matthean fulfilment motif?

3.2. Major Arguments about the Life-Setting of Matthew's Gospel

3.2.1 The Central Question

The central question in the search for the setting of Matthew's Gospel is whether Matthew's community considered itself a part of Judaism or a separate group. There are various answers to the question. Some have

argued that the Gospel reflects imminent break as evident in the hostilities expressed in the Gospel's language of mutual rejection, but not final breach. But majority of the current study of the Gospel sees Matthew's group as outside Judaism. A major challenge in the current study of the Gospel is how to reconcile the author's apparent inconsistent attitude toward Judaism. As you were intimated on this issue in the previous units, Matthew at once wants to persuade the Jews to embrace his view of Jesus as Messiah and criticises Jews, particularly their leadership, for rejecting Jesus and the government of God he offered them. To settle the question of his Gospel's setting, therefore, you must properly appreciate the place of Matthew's group in Judaism and its concerns. This can be achieved by two ways: you need to understand what others have said about the question and what the text of Matthew itself says. A good starting point is to survey scholarly opinions on the matter.

Over time, much of Matthean studies have sought the solution to the problem of its setting in composition criticism. It has often been argued that an earlier strand of conservative Jewish-Christian tradition was worked over by a subsequent writer who was no longer in close touch with official Judaism. Thus, what we now have in Matthew is a mixture of that original religious conservatism and the later Jewish-Christian hostility to non-Christian Judaism (France 2007; 1989:95). By implication, this is an argument to the effect that there were two life-settings for the Gospel of Matthew; one from early Conservative Christian Jew, who shared the values of conservative Judaism of the time, and the other from later Christian Jew that became hostile to the conservative Jewish group. You will notice that this is more a question of the relations of Matthew and his community to official Judaism than that of the life-setting of the Gospel. Nevertheless, it is an essential part of the question of life-setting. But our concern should be to specifically figure out the life-setting which produced such a mixed attitude toward Judaism as Matthew's Gospel displays.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you see any difference between the two expressions: "Christian Judaism" and "Jewish Christianity"?
2. What do you understand by composition criticism? How do you relate this in accounting for the setting of the Gospel of Matthew?

3.2.2 The Setting of the Gospel in the Late-First Century Judaism

One major viewpoint, promoted by those like Anthony J. Saldarini (2001), is that Matthew was "a Jewish teacher in conflict with other

Jewish teachers in the broadly diverse Jewish community of the eastern Mediterranean at the end of the first century" (p. 167). In his view, Matthew rejected neither Judaism nor the Jews as many treatments of the Gospel today tend to see. Rather, he attacked and rejected groups such as the Pharisees, Scribes, Chief Priests, elders of the people, Sadducees (16:1; 22:23) and Herodians (Mat 22:16) who were the leaders of Israel. In the time of Jesus, they opposed Jesus' increasing popular authority. These groups remained in the leadership of the people up until the late first century when Matthew wrote his Gospel. But Matthew saw them as "blind guides of the blind" (Mat 15:14) and attacked their legitimacy to "rule over the Jewish community by attacking their personal integrity and the accuracy of their interpretation of the Jewish law and the divine will" (Saldarini, 2001:170).

The way he presents these attacks indicates that he was in serious controversy with his fellow Jews in these groups and was only using Jesus' polemics against them to discredit the community leaders and legitimize his own group and its authority. His aim was to grab the community's leadership and use it to "bring about the reforms which Jesus taught and to turn the Jewish community toward the recognition of Jesus as Messiah ... to Israel and the Gentiles" (Saldarini, 2001:168). It is a case of power tussle just as the parable of the wicked tenants (Mat 21:33-46) makes it clear. This parable condemns the Jewish leadership (Mat 21:23, 45) rather than the Jews as a people (the vineyard) as some think. They are the group from whom Matthew says the kingdom will be taken away and given to his own group, the ethnos of leaders which can lead Israel well. That group is Matthew and his community of followers of Jesus. In this view then, the setting of the writing of the Gospel was the late first century Judaism; and it was occasioned by the power tussle between Matthew and his group of believers in Jesus as Messiah who wanted to actualise Jesus' reforms.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you see anything in the Gospel to prove that Matthew was a Jewish teacher? Use some Matthean texts to support your view.
2. How would you convince your audience that the polemic in the Gospel of Matthew is not directed to the Jews but the Jewish leadership?
3. Do you agree with the author that the Matthean parable of the wicked tenants (Mat 21:33-46) is best understood within the context of power tussle between the Jewish leadership and Matthean community?

3.2.3 The Setting of the Gospel: A Jewish Christian Community Separated from Judaism

There is another major viewpoint that Matthew's community, which provided the setting for the Gospel, was made up of Jewish Christians, not Christian Jews. Emphasis here is on the noun. Thus, in "Jewish Christians" "Christian" is the noun and the adjective "Jewish" only describes the Christians as of the Jewish race. In "Christian Jews," the reverse is the case. It means that the community is Jewish only insofar as the Christian community that provided the setting for the Gospel constituted of Jews. Neither of these has something to do with theological position of the group.

Richard S. Ascough (2001) builds on the social science framework of Bruce J. Malina and similar works of Dennis C. Duling, Anthony J. Saldarini, and Michael H. Crosby to argue that the Matthean community was a "deviant association." That is, "an association that has been formed by those who have been rejected by the dominant forces in society and are attempting to defend and restore 'respectability to their deviant behaviour'" (Ascough, 2001:98). Fundamental to this position is the argument that the Matthean community was a voluntary association, which had a sense of distinct identity informed by its concern with the wellbeing of collective selves. It had broken with the synagogue owing to the conflictual situations the Jewish Christians were experiencing in that setup. The need for the Matthean group to organise itself into a separate community from the synagogue arose when they perceived that "the social well-being of those who identified themselves with the Messiah named Jesus was not being enhanced through continued contact with their former small group, i.e., the synagogue" (Ascough, 2001:102). The community borrowed the term, *ekklesia*, which meant 'an assembly of citizens of a free city' from the civic government as its designation. The name, *ekklesia*, set the group apart from the Jewish groups, which were known as synagogues (Mat 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34). Matthew retrojected its foundational stage back to the time of Jesus (Mat 16:13 -17) by situating it in the section of his narrative which connects it with Israel's rejection of Jesus (13:53-17:27).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How do you evaluate the Christians in Nigeria: Nigerian Christians or Christian Nigerians? Explain the implications of your stand.
2. When your religion is in conflict with your family, which one do you think should take precedence?

3. Following (Ascough, 2001:98). argument, do you think that the Jewish Christian community as *ekklesia* really won "respectability to their deviant behaviour"?

3.2.4 The Setting of the Gospel in a Jewish Christian Community that Sees Itself as the New People of God

Hagner (2000) has argued that the Gospel of Matthew reflects a time when Jewish Christians had broken with the synagogue. And this was quite early in the life of the church. In this view, the Matthean community had a problem with the wider Jewish community. On the one hand they had to defend their faith to the non-Christian Jewish community, which criticized them for departing from the faith of Israel. On the other hand, they knew that they had become part of a new entity that united them with Gentile Christians (Hagner, 2000). Their major challenge was to demonstrate in word and deed that the present state of the community of God's people was a continuation of the old, which is made possible and necessitated by the work of the Christ. The view holds that "If we are to understand the evangelist, we must think of him first of all as a Jew who believes that his Jewish faith has not been abolished, but rather fulfilled in Christ" (Hagner, 2000). That is to say that while Matthew and his Jewish Christians saw themselves as broken with the synagogue, they still believed that Christianity had its roots in Judaism. In that case, Jewish Christianity was not Christian Judaism; that is, not a sect in Judaism (Hagner, 2004) as you saw in Saldarini's view.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you think that Hagner's view of the life-setting of the Gospel of Matthew is able to reconcile the tension in Matthew's approach to the Judaism of his time?
2. Why was it important for Matthew to establish a link between his community and the Judaism of old?

3.3 Evaluation of Some of the Proof Texts for the Life-Setting of the Gospel

In the three sample positions above, Saldarini (2001) represents those who see the setting of Matthew in a sect of the late first century Judaism; Ascough (2001) represents the view that Matthew's setting was a Jewish-Christian community that believed in Jesus as the expected Messiah and saw itself as *ekklesia*, a distinct and completely separate community from Judaism. Hanger (2000 & 2004) represents the view that Matthew had its setting in a Jewish-Christian community, which

though broken from Judaism, saw itself as continuation of the old people of God in a new expression. What can you make of these similar and widely varied positions? How can you determine the most plausible setting for the Gospel of Matthew? As usual, you need to examine the text of Matthew in perspicuity with the rest of Scripture to decipher the setting from Matthew's concerns as reflected in the Gospel's subject matter. So, let us make a trial.

Within the text of Matthew, certain passages seem to suggest a non-Jewish origin of the Gospel. In fact, some have specifically argued on the basis of these passages that the Gospel had a Gentile setting. The author (with his group) for instance, apparently distances himself from Jewish culture expressed in the phrases, "their synagogues" (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54), "your synagogues" (23:34), and "their scribes" (7:29). Many see this as a sign of dissociation from these Jewish institutions and conclude that by the time the author wrote, his group had broken away from Judaism. But make a close reading of the context of each of these references.

You must have discovered that in almost each of these instances, the context indicates something to which the term "their" or "your" points to. France (1989:107) calls our attention to the fact that in most cases, this refers to a particular group rather than to Jews as a whole or else it is to a geographical area. In Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 12:9 and 13:15, the reference is to the geographical area of the next phase of Jesus' activity. Matthew 10:17 and 23:34 refer to opponents of the Christian movement while 7:29 refers to the crowds the author just mentioned. So, as he rightly concludes, in all these there is no indication that the author is dissociating himself or his group from Judaism by referring to "their synagogues." The setting of Matthew cannot therefore, be Gentile merely on these grounds.

A similar case; Matthew repeatedly associates Sadducees with Pharisees (Mat 16:1-12; 22:23) in a manner which seems that he was unaware of the difference between the two groups. This, at face value, appears to portray the author as ignorant of the Sadducean sect. The point is that if Matthew was a Jew, he would certainly have known more about the Sadducees than the picture painted in these passages. Some scholars thus, see this to indicate a non-Jew writing to a Gentile audience. On close consideration of these references, however, the case is not as strong as it appears to be. It is probable that Matthew frequently mentioned these two groups together simply as groups who joined forces against Jesus. It does not imply his ignorance of their theological difference. This is the case, for instance, where he explains the import of Jesus' warning about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees as their teaching (16:11-12). Recall that Pharisees and Sadducees were the two

major components of the Sanhedrin, the Jews' highest ruling council (Acts 23:6). Thus, you will notice that in Matthew 16:1 and 22:23, 34, these groups apparently formed a "commission of enquiry" (France, 1989:107) to investigate Jesus' activities just as they did the teaching of John the Baptizer (Mat 3:7). Matthew probably wanted to highlight this reason of these groups' coming together. On the basis of these facts, this second case too does not necessarily point to a Gentile setting of the Gospel of Matthew.

There are several indications in the Gospel as well, which particularly point to early Jewish-Christian setting probably about the middle of the first century AD. By this time, the relation between Conservative Judaism and the followers of Christ perhaps had gotten so sour that the Christians, who were predominantly Jews, saw no need to continue to go with the synagogue. Judging from the warmth of the polemics in the Gospel, it is likely that the "Church" had just declared itself a separate organisation from Judaism. It saw itself as the true people of God that the Old Testament spoke about, a multi-racial and multi- national people who transcend ethnic Israel (Ps 2:8-12; Isa 2:2-4; 9:1-7; 11:10-12). You can see this in a number of ways in the Gospel.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Draw a table representing the three major position and insert their theses in respective columns. Search also for their respective Matthean proof texts and do the same. What are your observations?
2. Address the case that the author of the Gospel of Matthew apparently distances himself from Jewish culture expressed in the phrases, "their synagogues" (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54), "your synagogues" (23:34), and "their scribes" (7:29).
3. State some of the socio-literary implications of the Gospel of Matthew if the author of the Gospel really distanced himself from the Jewish culture?
4. Do you agree that the author of the Gospel of Matthew succeeded in confusing the role of the Pharisees with the Sadducees'?
5. What do you think are some of the possible roles that the Pharisees shared in common with the Sadducees in the time of Jesus?
6. From the discussion in this section, make your independent decision on the possible life-setting of the Gospel of Matthew, and try to convince your colleagues to reason along with you.

3.4 A Reconstruction of the Life-Setting of the Gospel

As you saw in the introduction and the foregoing sections of the main body of this unit, the question of the setting of Matthew's Gospel is one of the relationships between his Christian communities and the contemporary Judaism. To have informed understanding of this relationship we draw from Stanton (1992) some questions that summarise the issues in scholarly discussion on this subject. These questions may serve as a guide and springboard in our attempt to reconstruct the setting of the Gospel.

i. Matthew's Gospel is characterised by much polemics against Jewish authorities. Does this then, reflect Judaism with internal Jewish conflicts or is it a reflection of an author whose community saw itself as distinct from Judaism?

ii. The author talks about certain Jewish cultural institutions, specifically Sadducees and Pharisees, as though they were of the same theological school. Was Matthew therefore, himself a Jew or a Gentile who used Jewish traditions concerned with tensions between Christians and Jews to compose his work?

iii. Were the hostilities latent in the book still current by the time he wrote or were they already classified as history?

iv. What did Matthew hope to achieve in writing this book? Did he hope, by his predominant focus on the Jews, to convince more of them that Jesus of Nazareth was their Messiah? Or was he using the Jews' rejection of Jesus only as means to convince Gentiles that Jesus was for them?

With these questions in our heart, we may recapitulate some of the information we already have, with special emphasis on the concerns of Matthew. You already know that Matthew calls his book a gospel (24:14; 26:13). He refers to his recipients as "a new people" (21:43). But what was or were his concern(s) in writing to this "new people"? As you saw in the earlier discussions, there is no clear-cut answer to this question. Stanton (1992) says "the evangelist does not have one over-riding concern which provides the key to his Gospel" (p. 3). He thinks of the "new people" of Matthew as a distinct religious entity. But this identification and his denial that Matthew has one overriding concern negate the author's messianic motif that is central to the Gospel. Nevertheless, Stanton's identification of Matthew's audience as "a new people" and the fact that the author calls his book a gospel would provide an important starting point to determine its setting.

You can trace Matthew's idea of a new people back to God's idea of a new creation community in Abraham and Israel in the Old Testament. The main issue about that new creation community was for it to be a counterculture to the prevailing culture of evil that took over the original creation culture of obedience to God. But Israel failed to live up to that reputation and responsibility. The Old Testament prophets, many times over, accused them, especially their leadership (Isa 3:12-15; cf. Mat 21:33-46; Jer 12:10; 23:1-8; Ezek 34), and announced the coming of a Messiah-saviour of the people of God. This failure of Israel continued even in the time of Jesus. Whereas Matthew and his community accepted Jesus' Messiahship, majority of orthodox Jews rejected him and persecuted the community of believers in Jesus.

The persecution would precipitate most of visionary prophecy associated with the Gospel of Matthew, otherwise known as apocalypse. It is a kind of literature usually produced to encourage a people in difficult situations. The manner in which Matthew has traced Jesus' genealogy, his childhood, public ministry, death and resurrection presupposes a concern to demonstrate Jesus' victory over his non-Christian Jewish ploughs. If this is the case, it is probable that he was addressing his Christian community which was predominantly, Jewish. That means a community that had painfully separated from Orthodox Judaism after a long time of mutual hostilities on account of interpretation of events in Jesus' life and work in light of Scripture. The way the evangelist presents his narrative indicates that he intended to "set out the story and significance of Jesus in order to assist Christians come to terms with their identity as communities distinct from Judaism" (Stanton, 1992:3).

You can see now, even from the heavy presence of the discourse material that the author's primary aim is apparently to teach his group about the person of Jesus, the Christ. Equally, in his many controversy stories, he frequently tries to equip his group to respond to criticisms brought against them by their orthodox Jewish brothers (and sisters). The genealogy of Jesus and many of his childhood experiences, the miracles he performed, and many events in his life, for instance, fulfilled some Old Testament messianic prophecies confirmed in Jesus. You can notice the same trend of equipping his community in his emphasis on the continuing validity of the Law (5:17-25). This is evidently the import of Jesus' statement that their righteousness must surpass that of Conservative Judaism.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Give instances from the Gospel of Matthew to support the claim that the author has more than one overriding theological concern in his Gospel.
2. What do you understand by the statement that the Gospel of Matthew is primarily counterculture to the prevailing culture?
3. See if it is possible to make a connection between the countercultural approach of the Gospel of Matthew and the Old Testament covenants.
4. Taking the Gospel of Matthew as a 'mini apocalypse' reconstruct the life-setting of the Gospel.
5. How do the heavy presence of the discourse material and controversy stories in the Gospel of Matthew play out to support the thesis that the life-setting of the Gospel is in 'a Jewish-Christian community, a community that had painfully separated from Orthodox Judaism after a long time of mutual hostilities on account of interpretation of events in Jesus' life and work in light of Scripture'?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The present study has shown that Matthew wrote his Gospel in the context of his Christian community that was predominantly, made up of Jews, but also a sizeable number of Gentiles who believed in Jesus as the Messiah. The life situation that gave rise to his writing of the book was probably the challenges of consolidating that community as a distinct entity from Judaism. The group had just recently broken away from the Synagogue after some time of mutual hostilities owing to their inability to agree on their interpretations of the person and mission of Jesus. Whereas the Christians saw him as fulfilling the Old Testament messianic prophecies, for the conservative Jews, he was an impostor whose ideas were to be uprooted and his followers erased. Matthew probably wrote in the wake of intense persecution of this believing community to encourage and confirm them in their faith.

5.0 SUMMARY

You saw in the previous unit that many Matthean scholars conclude, on the basis of certain emphases in the Gospel, that Matthew was written by a Jew to Jewish Christians. The discovery that Matthew wrote to a Jewish community led many to the notion that there was a normative or standard Judaism in the first century AD. A close study of the Gospel however, showed that there was no standard or normative Judaism as supposed, but formative Judaism (Hagner, 2004). There were many

Jewish sects who were both competing with one another in claiming to be the true Israel. This can equally be said of Christianity, which began as one such sect and found itself in hostile relations with the temple authorities. With passage of time, it completely broke away from the synagogue because of fundamental differences like their belief against the synagogue that the Messiah, Jesus, had already come. This break was however, only insofar as the new community wanted a distinct identity for itself. It saw itself as the fulfilment and continuation of the old people of God, though thoroughly modified. Matthew wrote from among them to encourage them to maintain this identity in spite of all odds.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. List and discuss two major arguments about the life setting of Matthew's Gospel.
2. What do the phrases, "their synagogues" (Mat 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54), "your synagogues" (Mat 23:34), and "their scribes" (Mat 7:29) in Matthew say about the setting of the Gospel?
3. Matthew is both particularistic and universalistic in his presentation of the Gospel message. Comment on this development.
4. What does the fulfilment motif in Matthew say about its setting?

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UNIT 5 THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CONTENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you had the opportunity to go through many different arguments to establish the life setting of the Gospel of Matthew. In this unit, your attention will be drawn to the purpose of writing of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthean scholarship would seem to be more united on the purpose of the author's writing than it is on any other topic. This is not to say there is unanimity on the question of Matthew's purpose. There are several viewpoints though agreeing on the major issues. Some scholars see a single purpose, namely that Matthew wrote to show the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah they had been expecting. Others see two major purposes and yet others find three purposes. In each case, the author's desire to prove Jesus' Messiahship is underlined. It becomes the point of agreement on the question of Matthew's purpose. Consequently, it is our intention to present the variety of the viewpoints in some detail and then examine the content of the Gospel for possible pointers to Matthew's purpose(s). On the basis of such pointers, we shall then reconstruct the author's purpose for writing the Gospel.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the various proposals for Matthew's purpose.
- Identify possible pointers to Matthew's purpose.

- Reconstruct Matthew's purpose.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 The Jewish Character of the Gospel of Matthew

There are various perspectives concerning what purpose(s) Matthew intended to achieve in writing his Gospel. You will notice that all of them are determined by various clues from the Gospel and from the traditions of the Early Church. A few scholars, however, identify Matthew as a Gentile writing to Gentiles. But most scholars see the reason to believe that Matthew was a Jew writing with a Jewish audience in mind. For such scholars like Woods (2007) and Constable (2010), the following indicators make Matthew's Gospel stand out as a Jewish book: the author's thought patterns, general style, parallelism, elaboration, vocabulary and subject matter are characteristically Jewish. Again, Matthew thinks as a Jew by focusing on the fulfilment of the Old Testament to prove his points. For instance, he employs the genealogy in chapter one to trace Jesus' Jewish ancestry. He quotes from the Old Testament more than any other Gospel writer. Going by the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament listing, the Gospel has 316 Old Testament references; it directly cites the Old Testament 54 times and has 262 widely recognized allusions and verbal parallels to it. The book also follows a five-fold division common to Jewish way of categorising items, such as the Books of Psalms and the Pentateuch. It has five major sermons delineated by the concluding formula "when He had finished saying these things" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

Concerning style, Matthew's use of *tote* ("then" or "at that time") ninety times as against six times in Mark, fourteen times in Luke, and ten times in John is an evidence of Jewishness. You can see his distinctly Jewish vocabulary and subject matter in such terms as David, the Holy City, Jerusalem (4:5; 27:53), city of the great king (5:35), lost sheep of the house of Israel (10:6; 15:24), kingdom of God, and kingdom of heaven. Among the topics covered are the Law, ceremonial defilements, Sabbath, kingdom, Jerusalem, temple, Messiah, prophecy, prophets, David, Abram, Moses, scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees.

A further indicator to Matthew's Jewishness is the fact that he does not explain Jewish customs, for instance, Jewish rulers (Matt 2:1, 22; 14:1; Luke 2:1-2; 3:1-2) and ceremonial cleansing (Matt 15:2; Mark 7:3-4), as the other Gospels meant for Gentile audiences do. He rather explains Roman customs (Matt 27:15) although he also explains a few Hebrew terms (Mat 1:23; 27:33, 46). From traditional witness too, various church fathers, such as Irenaeus, Origen, and Eusebius believed that Matthew wrote to Jewish Christians.

Another pointer to Matthew's Jewish concern is in its content where about 60 percent of the Gospel emphasises Jesus' teaching. Matthew has five discourses which present Jesus as a rabbi of repute; they include the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5-7), two discourses for kingdom ministers on "The Character of the Kingdom" (Mat 10, 13), teaching on forgiveness (Mat 18), the denunciation of Israel's leaders (Mat 23), and the Eschatological Discourse on Olivet mountain (Mat 24-25).

Matthew also has a transitional character, which further distinguishes it from the other Gospels. The author refers to the church two times (Mat 16:18; 18:17) in a manner which presents him as thinking of a transition of the old people of God to a new people. That is to say, a new Israel, the church, was being created out of the old, the national Israel. Paul seems to refer to the same transition in Romans 11 where he talks about Israel's rejection of their Messiah and the grafting of the Gentiles on their stump.

In sum, there are three points you need to remember concerning the various perspectives people have about the purpose(s) of Matthew's Gospel. The first two relate to the Jewish character of the Gospel. This is evident in his thought patterns, general style, parallelism, elaboration, vocabulary and subject matter and secondly, in the content of the book which emphasises Jesus' teaching. The third point is the transitional character of the Gospel wherein Matthew presents the church as succeeding national Israel as God's new people in continuation of his reorienting of his creation community. Cumulatively, these present Matthew's Gospel as concerned to confirm Jesus as the Jewish Messiah who transforms into a world Messiah due to Israel's initial rejection of him.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Itemise some of the indicators in the Gospel of Matthew that could justify the claim that 'Matthew was a Jewish writer with a Jewish audience in the heart'.
2. The Gospel of Matthew would seem to have been marked out with five discourses. Copy out the first and last verse of each of the discourses and underline all the common similar literary elements among them.

3.2 Suggestions of Possible Purposes for Matthew's Gospel

It is important for you to note that the discussions on the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew are usually associated with the issue of the Gospel's original recipients. It is believed that if we know of an author's

recipients and their situation which occasioned that author's writing, the purpose of the author's writing can be understood. In this regard, the author's concerns (as discussed earlier) and other indicators in the Gospel would reveal his purposes. As you saw in the preceding section, most scholars see Matthew's Gospel as written by a Jew to Jews.

Again, Matthew talks about Jewish culture but does not explain it as the other evangelists have done (cf. Mk 7:3; Jn 19:40). This also adds to the argument that he was writing to Jews. Matthew is the only author to use the phrase, "kingdom of heaven," in referencing 'the kingdom of God'. The reason for this is not farfetched. Jewish reverence for 'the name of God' explains this.

You have also been told that Christianity began among the Jews, more or less as a sect of the Jewish religion. From its earliest times, the non-believing Jews antagonised the Christian movement and persecuted 'the believing Jews' (Jn 11:45-48; Acts 4:1-21). Matthew heavily criticises the Jewish leadership, especially the Pharisees, while at the same time emphasising the fact that Jesus came primarily for the Jews (10:6; 15:24; cf. Jer 50:6). There are many indications that Matthew addressed this issue in an apologetic manner. The Gospel tries to distinguish Christianity from Judaism and correct some misconceptions about Christ during the early and rapid influx of heresies. These and many more of similar reasons have led many scholars to conclude that Matthew's purpose was to show the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was their expected Messiah, and that both his genealogy and resurrection were legitimate proofs of this.

Other studies of the Gospel see more than one purpose in it. For Wallace (1997) Matthew's congregation(s) already had the sayings of Jesus which Matthew had years earlier produced in Aramaic. But when Mark's Gospel was published, Matthew's congregations felt they should also have a framework for the dominical sayings; they wanted the life of Jesus of Nazareth, too as Mark gave to his own people. Thus, in his view, the occasion for Matthew was the evangelist's congregation's desire to have a document on the life of Jesus in addition to the dominical sayings (1997:9), possibly, as a means of edification and encouragement in their persecutions by their non-Christian Jewish brothers. Because of this motivation, Matthew had three purposes to achieve

i. He wrote to demonstrate that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah as evident in his genealogy, miracles and the Old Testament proof texts among others.
ii. Matthew also intended to answer the question why Jesus did not establish the kingdom, if he was the Messiah as some Jews were

asking. In his view, Matthew demonstrated that indeed, Jesus inaugurated the kingdom for those who embraced him as the Messiah, But the kingdom was going to be consummated only at the end of the age.

iii. Finally, Matthew wrote to confirm the legitimacy of the Gentile mission in light of the failure of national Israel to embrace Jesus as Messiah.

Woods (2007) also finds three major purposes and three sub purposes:

i. First, Matthew wrote to convince his Jewish audience that the Christ in whom they had believed was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. He did this by showing that Christ was the rightful heir to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, using such devices as genealogies, fulfilled prophecy, messianic titles, kingdom teachings, and miracles.
ii. Matthew's second purpose was to explain why the kingdom of the Messiah was postponed although the king had already arrived. This would allay Jewish curiosity that the messianic kingdom was to be immediately established once the king arrived (Isa 9:6-7; Matt 20:20-21). By this thinking, Matthew achieved this second purpose by a third one.
iii. His third purpose was to explain God's interim program, which included the Gentiles who were beginning to become more prominent (2:1-12; 8:11-12; 13:38; 15:22-28). He introduced this program (Mat 13) as the advent of the church age (16:18; 18:17; 28:18-20); the age in between Israel's past rejection and future acceptance of the Messiah and His kingdom. Matthew explains that the kingdom was offered to Israel (3:2; 4:17; 10:5-7; 15:24); But national Israel rejected it (11–12; 21–23; 26–27); so, in the interim other people (sons of the kingdom) had to inherit the kingdom (13, 16:18); yet, national Israel will eventually accept the kingdom (23:38-39; 24:14, 31; 25:31).

On these categories, the sub purposes include:

i. Matthew's desire to confirm the Jewish Christians in their faith by validating Jesus' messiahship in spite of the delay of the messianic kingdom and the new direction it took.
ii. He wrote from Syrian Antioch, intending to assist the Church through its delicate transition wherein it was becoming predominately Gentile through the missionary journeys launched from that locale.
iii. Lastly, Matthew wanted to encourage the Jewish Christians that although Israel had rejected her king and God brought in the

Gentiles, he was eventually going to restore the kingdom to Israel in the future.

From Matthew's content and his emphases, Constable (2010) finds him with a twofold purpose in writing his Gospel and three wider purposes. Matthew wrote primarily to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, but also to explain God's kingdom program to his readers. On his categories, there are three aspects to this kingdom program.

> First, Jesus presented Himself to the Jews as the king that God had promised in the Old Testament. Second, Israel's leaders rejected Jesus as their king. This resulted in the postponement, not the cancellation, of the messianic kingdom that God had promised Israel. Third, because of Israel's rejection Jesus is now building His church in anticipation of His return to establish the promised messianic kingdom on the earth. (Constable, 2010:9)

The three wider purposes he suggests are that

i. Matthew intended to teach non-Christians about the person and work of Jesus
ii. provide an apologetic to aid Jewish Christians in evangelising other Jews; and
iii. encourage all Christians to witness for Christ without fear (Mat 13:52; 27:57; 28:19; cf. Acts 14:21).

There are several other perspectives. But for our purpose of demonstrating the variety of viewpoints, these are sufficient.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Examine this section closer. Do you have any additional information regarding the Jewish nature of the Gospel that had not been mentioned earlier? List them and see how they fit in to argue in favour of the author as a Jewish with Jewish audience in mind.
2. Compare the Messianic arguments of Wallace (1997) and Woods (2007) to establish the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew. Do you find any difference between them? Emphasise their similarities and differences.
3. Wallace (1997) and Woods (2007) offer different arguments to establish the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew. Which among them appear more convincing?
4. Do you think that the arguments presented by Constable (2010) to underline the purpose of the First Gospel add anything

significantly new to the arguments of Wallace (1997) and Woods (2007)?

3.3 A Reply to some of the Theses on the Purpose of the Gospel of Matthew

In reconstructing the purpose of Matthew in writing his Gospel, it is germane to note some problems in some of the positions examined above. First, the view that Jesus came to establish the kingdom, but postponed it due to his rejection by national Israel, does not seem to tally with Matthew's concerns. As you saw in the previous unit, following the logic of Matthew, Jesus came to reorient God's creation community, that is, the kingdom of God. Of course, national Israel was to be the point of contact with the rest of human creation. Matthew makes this clear to his Jewish audience in an evangelist's tone by emphasising the premier portion of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:6; 15:24) in the kingdom. But at the same time, he also emphasises the universal character of the kingdom. This is the import of such passages as 2:1–12; 4:14–16; 12:21; 28:19. In that case, passages such as 12:28 ("the kingdom of God has come upon you") and 26:28 (where the new covenant is established in the death of Christ) would clearly suggest that the kingdom was not altogether postponed, though its full manifestation was to come later (23:38-39; 24:14, 31; 25:31).
Second, to think that the Gospel of Matthew was occasioned by the rivalry intent of the Matthean community, or at best, his congregation's envy of Mark's Gospel introduces the category of personality-worship which is hard to be found within the framework of the Gospel of Matthew. You can see this clearly in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, but hardly in any of the Gospels.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you think that two arguments presented above as a reply to some of the theses on the purpose of the First Gospel are plausible enough? What other perspective would you like to bring into the arguments?
2. What do you understand by 'personality-worship'? Do you see any relationship between 'personality-worship' and 'personality-cult'?

3.4 Reconstructing the Purpose of Matthew's Gospel

Let us now engage the text of Matthew ourselves to reconstruct his purpose(s). As you saw earlier, although the author does not state his purpose in writing this Gospel, it is clear from the content and emphases

of the narrative. This means that if you engage the Gospel as a narrative, you will more easily discover its purpose.

As you saw in the preceding unit, the Gospel of Matthew was occasioned by the necessity of the author to leave his initial social location for another community in furtherance of the Great Commission. The purpose then was to leave his former, predominantly Jewish Christian community, with a document that would fill the information vacuum about the life and teaching of Jesus, which could be created by his absence. Again, Matthew's premier concern about the life of Jesus was the confirmation of his Messiahship according to Jesus' own teaching to his disciples and the public on the subject matter.

The messiahship of Jesus is sufficiently demonstrated in Matthew by the fulfilment formula (2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9; cf. 26:56). The evangelist introduces his case with Jesus' genealogy to adequately locate him in the Davidic royal family of the promised Messiah (1:1-17). His birth and childhood fulfilled the messianic prophecies (1:18-2:23). The Old Testament prophets predicted that the Messiah would be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), of the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18), in the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), and of the family of David (2 Sam. 7:12-13) in the city of Bethlehem (Mic 5:2-5; Mat 2:1-6). The birth of Jesus was integral to the life struggles of the new creation community; it was prefigured by the situation in the time of King Ahaz which Prophet Isaiah related (Isa 7:10-14; Mat 1:22-23). In Isaiah, this son of a virgin signified the mediation of God's presence (Immanuel) with his new people for the purpose of their salvation – as their shield and help in crisis situations. The purpose was to establish the kingship (kingdom) of God on planet earth as it is in heaven (Mat 6: 10; 26:29).
The fact of the messiahship of the Child Jesus was revealed by the pilgrim magi from the East, it aroused the envy and jealous fury of Herod the Great who was then king over Judea. He could not contemplate, still less condone, a rival "ruler who will shepherd my people Israel" (2:6). In Matthew's plot, this marked the beginning of a prolonged conflict between Jewish leadership and Jesus whom they saw as a "messianic pretender" (13:54-57), which eventually led to his execution. The prophets saw this and predicted that, during his childhood, the Messiah would sojourn in Egypt and then return to Nazareth (Ex 4:22-23; Num 24:8; Hos 11:1; Mat 2:13-23) and finally settle in the land of Zebulun and Napthali (Isa 9:1; Mat 4:14-16).

In Matthew's plot, when Jesus so settled in Capernaum, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, he inaugurated his messianic mission. "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (4:17). In quick narrative succession, he shows Jesus forming his government (4:18-23). From beginning to the end of his

public mission, Jesus' message had the political tone of the messianic kingship predicted by the Old Testament prophets. The transitional prophet, John the Baptizer, introduced him to the New Covenant age as the Messiah (3:1-4:11).

Further, in Matthew's narrative, Jesus' entire public mission characteristically fulfilled the messianic aspirations of the people of God. He identified the people's many-sided problem as absence of good leadership and elected to fill that gap. After choosing a cabinet, he embarked on gathering public support through teaching and preaching about the dawn of the government of God and validating this claim with healing and provision of other needs of the people. In this manner he spontaneously emerged as the leader of the masses. Matthew underscores this fact: "Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him" (4:25). With large crowds now following him, the Messiah began in-depth teaching on kingdom living (5:1-7:28). The Kingdom teaching was interrupted by other demands of the holistic care for its citizens. In Matthew's plot, Chapters 8 and 9 capture Jesus' healing activities as demonstration of his messianic care for the wellbeing of his followers. But the religious establishment opposed him, claiming that he distorted their traditional religious values. They, for instance, challenged his authority to forgive sins which they saw as God's prerogative (9:3). This conflict continued and intensified, basically as sectarian opposition (cf. 11:27; 12:1-15). But Jesus often put it down and continued his reorientation of the people for his counterculture.

Matthew next presents Jesus as holding a train-the-trainers workshop with his kingdom ministers (chap 10). The theme was the character of the kingdom he proclaimed. The leadership team he recruited was now trained and sent on a sort of industrial training programme with the commission: go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Cf. 15:24; Jn 4:21f), preach the kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons (10:1-16). Further training of this sort captured what Jesus meant by the kingdom (chap 13). The kingdom is a revolutionary countercultural concept which gradually, but effectively reorients the faculty of human thought and behaviour as a household (13:51-52) toward the good (13:31-33; 36-43).

In view of the public concern about Jesus' true identity, especially expressed by the religious establishment, and similar concerns among his disciples (8:27) when they got to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus decided to reveal his personality to his inner circle, the disciples. He is the Messiah of Jewish expectation (16:16), the Danielic Son of Man (16:27-28), the Son of God (17:5), who was to be introduced by Elijah redivivus (3:17; 17:5); the person destined to suffer as a ransom for many (19:28). But he

warned them that this was only meant to clear their own doubts, not for public consumption (16:20).

You will notice that once Jesus made this clarification, his disciples became consumed by the political thinking of the age. Peter demanded to know what benefits accrued for them, who had left all their businesses for the messianic cause when Jesus finally formed his government (19:27-29). The disciples started serious lobbying for positions (20:17-28).

On the other hand, the Jewish authorities got more grounds to charge Jesus of treason and had him executed (chap 27). Matthew carefully shows that the persecution, and invariably, the crucifixion could not terminate the messianic mission. The Messiah was victorious (7:15; 24:23-26). But in the eyes of the Jewish leadership, it was a failed project. Thus, when Jesus was crucified,

> the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking *him* and saying, "he saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God rescue *him* now, if he delights in him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (27:41-43).

Yet, Matthew shows the victory of the Messiah in Jesus' post resurrection appearances. The Messiah's resurrection demonstrated his authority even over death. This One with all authority in heaven and on earth commissioned his disciples to embark on a global mission of recruiting membership into the counterculture he started (Mat 28:18-20). Thus, the present global character of the messianic mission appears to be a product of the Messiah's attention to and understanding of the universal character of his authority. He is not simply a national figure, but the world's sovereign.

You can see that the above analysis of Matthew's narrative reveals his portrait of Jesus Messiah. Going by the data in the Gospel, it becomes evident that Matthew wanted to confirm in writing, what he had orally told his audience, that Jesus was the promised world Messiah that was to come from the Jews. This is attested by the large number of Old Testament messianic prophecies he adduces as having been fulfilled in the person and life of Jesus. He also wanted to show his Jewish community that their failure to recognize Jesus as their Messiah did not, and could not stop God's programme of recovering his original creation community. God had gone ahead to inaugurate the counterculture made up of the Jews and Gentiles who believed and acknowledged Jesus' Messiahship (16:18; 18:17). At the consummation of all things, when

Jesus would return in his royal glory, all Jews will acknowledge him as their king (chap 24; cf. Zech. 12:10-14; 14:4, 9-11; Rom. 11:26). It was thus, impinging on all who had enlisted in this government of God to carry the message of its advent to others (10:5-6; 28:18-20). In other words, Matthew has a double purpose: to demonstrate the dawn of the government of God through the teachings of Jesus and his relational concerns for the needy and to reaffirm the necessity of globalising the countercultural community.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you subscribe to the thesis that the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew was to establish the kingship (kingdom) of God on planet earth as it is in heaven (6: 10; 26:29)? State clearly your position in order to convince your colleagues.

2. How do you mean that from the beginning to the end of Jesus' public mission, his message had the political tone of the messianic kingship predicted by the Old Testament prophets? What are the implications of the statement to the Jewish and Roman establishments?

3. What are the messianic expectations of the people that Jesus' entire public mission characteristically fulfilled? Which of the expectations would seem to negate the mission of Jesus?
4. Explain the other demands of the holistic care for the people that seem to interrupt intermittently Jesus' teachings on 'Kingdom'? Relate these cares to the contemporary mission of the Church in Nigeria?
5. Show how the plot of the Gospel of Matthew is a story engulf by conflicts. Use some specific texts to prove your case.
6. State some of the pollical demands made by the disciples of Jesus for their sacrifice for Kingdom of Heaven? Do you think that Jesus adequately address those demands? Do you such demands coming up among the contemporary followers of Jesus?
7. Using some proof-texts from the Gospel of Matthew, demonstrate the project of Jesus in the eyes of the Jewish leadership was a failed project.
8. The author concludes the section by insisting that Matthew has a double purpose. Do you agree with the reasons he gave? Restate the reasons and analyse them critically.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Matthew seems to have manifold purposes. But it most probably was written to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah. In this regard, the genealogy was probably meant to demonstrate that Messiahship to a Jewish audience that required proof of Jesus' lineage; the miracles of Jesus affirmed Jesus' authority as a spokesman for God who was ushering in a new age; and the Old Testament quotations showed that Jesus is the fulfilment of the hope of Israel. Some motifs and themes in the Gospel indicate that Matthew wrote to encourage his audience to stand firm in their faith in their Messiah and resist the Jewish authorities who were persecuting them. In all, the bottom line is that Matthew wanted to demonstrate the advent of God's government prophesied by the prophets of old and to emphasise its global character.

5.0 SUMMARY

Various scholars hold different opinions on the purposes of Matthew in writing his Gospel. Most of these opinions are guided by clues in the Gospel itself. For instance, Matthew's way of thinking, style, vocabulary, and subject matter are found to be characteristically Jewish. Coupled with the Gospel's two-time reference to "church" (Mat 16:18; 18:17) many see him as thinking of a transition of the old people of God to a new people. A central determinant of this way of thinking is the thought of Israel's rejection of their Messiah and the grafting of the Gentiles on their stump. Governed by this thinking, Matthew's purposes are often seen as to demonstrate that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah as evident in his genealogy, miracles, to answer the question why Jesus did not establish the kingdom, if he was the Messiah, and to confirm the legitimacy of the Gentile mission in light of the failure of national Israel to embrace Jesus as Messiah. On close reading and analysis of Matthew's narrative however, it is difficult to see the suspension motif in the Gospel. But that the evangelist purposed to demonstrate the advent of God's government prophesied by the prophets of old and to emphasise its global character is easily traceable in the narrative.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. List and explain any two suggested purposes of Matthew's Gospel.
2. What function does Jesus' genealogy Matthew's Gospel?
3. In what ways did Jesus' public mission demonstrate his Messiahship?

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UNIT 6 THE PLACE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW AMONG THE GOSPELS

CONTENT

1.0 Introduction
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3.0 Main Content
    3.1 Matthew's Place: The Tension Created
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

You are welcomed to the last unit of the first module of this course. In the previous units, you have been studying the various preliminary issues about the Gospel of Matthew. These have led us to this last unit on these issues. This unit introduces you to the study of the literary and historical relationships of the Gospels. In our day, it is better known as the synoptic problem although this reduces the picture of the issue. It is a quest of the history of the Gospels' formation as well as their theology. Constable (2010) describes it as "the game of deducing which Gospel came first and who drew from whom" (p. 4). The specific question you are expected to answer in the unit is how is Matthew related to the other Gospels? As in the other issues we have previously discussed in the preceding units, there have been several answers to this question. The most popular today, however, are two: The Two-Document (Two-Source) and the Two-Gospel Hypotheses.

Majority of scholars have bought into the Two-Document or Two-Source Hypothesis. But there is also a growing and effective minority, championed by William R. Farmer, which espouses a Two-Gospel hypothesis. The former group believes that Mark wrote his Gospel and Matthew used it to compose his own with some additional material. The latter group argues that Matthew wrote before Mark. Mark only abbreviated Matthew's work. Each of these positions has a number of variants in details as more scholars get into the study of the texts. We cannot treat the subject here in much detail but only to remind you of what you have learnt earlier (cf. CRS213).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the Two-Document hypothesis
- Discuss the Two-Gospel hypothesis
- Differentiate between the two-document and the two-Gospel Hypotheses

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 Matthew's Place: The Tension Created

In the first two Christian centuries Matthew was the most widely circulated Gospel. In fact, from the patristic Church age up to the 1700s, it enjoyed preeminent patronage and literary influence in the Church's literature. This was because of the belief that Matthew was the earliest Gospel, and so, closest to source; the most Jewish and thus most authentic (Utley 2005). On these categories, Luke was considered the most Gentile or Pauline; and Mark, only a second century attempt to abridge Matthew with Luke to produce his Gospel. This belief is probably what influenced Matthew's first position in the traditional order of the Gospels in the earliest complete Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Such preference is retraceable to the 2nd century Irenaeus (c. 180 AD), who explicitly ascribed that traditional order to sequence of composition. According to him,

Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure [implying their death], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Then Luke, the follower of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel as it was preached by him. Finally, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had lain on his breast, himself published the Gospel, while he was residing at Ephesus in Asia (*Haer* 3.1.1; cf. Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 5.8.2)

By the 1700s, mostly German non-Christians, but also some believers who claimed liberty began to study the Bible like any ancient literature (Blomberg, 1997). Consequently, many became sceptical about the reliability of Matthew's text as inspired word of God. In specific, in 1750, Michaelis closely examined Papias' claim that Matthew was originally written in Aramaic. He discovered that the Gospel's extant copies are translations and so are likely to misrepresent the original in

some places (France, 1989). This made him doubt the inspirational status of Matthew. He also rejected Luke and Mark on the ground that they were not authored by apostles. Later, G. E. Lessing pointed out that, indeed, behind all the synoptic Gospels laid a lost "primal gospel" (the logia referred to by Papias) written in either Hebrew or Aramaic. From this time onwards, a growing number of studies of the inter-relationship of the Gospels were governed by these ideas.

It is important for you to understand this background to present day conceptions of Matthew's relation to the other Gospels as a long-standing scholarly attempt "to reduce the Gospels to their apostolic content" (France, 1989:20). Since it was launched, the process has taken various dimensions to this day. In the course of time, Mark was seen to be a less developed literary piece and so closer to the 'primal Gospel'. Consequently, it was taken to have been the earliest Gospel which was only improved upon by Matthew and Luke. This is what is termed the priority of Mark, which has had serious negative effect on Matthean studies; it at least, temporarily, drew scholarly attention away from Matthew, which was the fate of Mark prior to the 1800s.

This new trend of seeing the relationship of Matthew's Gospel to the others was further spurred on by the synoptic problem, (McKnight, 1998; Farmer 1994). "The Synoptic Problem" is simply a way of referring to questions and possible explanations about the literary relationships between the first three New Testament Gospels. When studied together, the first three Gospels are found to have both similarities and divergences in a manner which suggests that their authors likely knew and even depended on works of their predecessors. The Gospel of John sometimes resembles the other three Gospels, but it tells the story of Jesus in significantly different ways, including a different order of events, different perspectives and points of emphasis. It also has its own unique vocabulary and style. Such differences can be understood in terms other than literary relationships between the Gospels. For this reason, John is not included in the Synoptic Problem.

a. Similarities

Some of the important similarities which the first three Gospels contain over against the fourth include:

1. Similarity of arrangement (order or structure) – All these three Gospels talk about Jesus' concentrated ministry in Galilee with its turning point as the transfiguration following Peter's confession during which time, Jesus journeys to Jerusalem. There, he is arrested, tried, and crucified.

2. Vocabulary and style – These are also very similar. Sometimes, they have an almost verbal agreement. For instance,

a) The healing of the leper (Mt. 8:1ff; Mk 1:40ff; Lk 5:12ff).

b) The questioning of Jesus' authority (Mt 21:23ff; Mk 11:27ff; Lk 20:1ff).

c) Some sections of the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24:4ff; Mk 13:5ff, 14ff; Lk 218f, 20ff)

3. Similarities in two of the Gospels – Sometimes, while all three Synoptists record an event, Mathew and Luke would agree more closely in vocabulary and style, and in some cases, even content over against Mark (cf. 3:7-10; Lk 3:7-9; Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13).

4. Though all three often agree together in sections that all of them have recorded, there are sections where Mathew agrees with Mark against Luke and many where Luke and Mark agree against Matthew. In very rare cases – about 6% - Mathew and Luke agree against Mark.

Because of these similarities, the first three Gospels have been called "synoptic". The term, "synoptic" derives from two Greek words, the preposition *sun* (together) and the verb *optonomai* (to see) thus literally meaning to "see together". Because of these similarities too, it has been held that if these three Gospels are studied together, they will be better understood. This is based on the assumption that:

1. The authors of the Synoptic Gospels probably drew their material from the same source(s) and only adapted it to their particular needs. That is, each of them redacted the material to address his specific concerns. These sources are uncertain, however. But they are thought to have been most likely

a. An oral gospel committed to the memory of converts by the Apostles' repeated preaching from time to time, first, in Aramaic, and then in Greek according to the needs in the Gentile mission

b. The collections of apostolic fragments. Or

c. An original Gospel that is now lost, except for its contents preserved as the Gospels.

2. Another possibility is that one of the evangelists wrote first and the others depended on his work for theirs. In this case, it is thought that, if the first author is known, the rest could be understood in his light except for a few details of emphasis.

b. Divergences

There are differences in the structure, vocabulary, and content among the synoptic Gospels. Some of the observations are as follows:

1. Many events recorded by all three evangelists lack verbal agreement.
2. Many of such events are located in different historical settings and contexts in the various Gospels. An example of this is the story of the healing of the centurion's servant (Mt 8:5ff; Lk 7:1ff).
3. There are also differences in narration and order.
4. In many instances, each Gospel has some events recorded exclusively by its evangelist; particularly Mathew and Luke. Some examples are

a. The birth narratives in Mathew and Luke.
b. The travel narrative only in Luke 9:51-18: 14.
c. Peter's walking on water (only in Mathew 14:28f) and the coin in the fish's mouth.
d. See also Mathew's relations of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-7:29) and Luke's Sermons on the Plain (Lk 6:17-49).

So, in effect, "the Synoptic Problem" is the way that people studying the Gospels attempt to understand the origin and interrelationship of the first three Gospels that will reconcile the differences with the similarities between them satisfactorily. When compared with the fourth gospel, the problem was further complicated by the quite different chronological and geographical framework of John from the Synoptic Gospels. While the Gospel of John sometimes resembles the other three Gospels, it tells the story of Jesus in significantly different ways, including a different order of events, different perspectives and points of emphasis, and with its own unique vocabulary and style. Those differences can be understood in terms other than literary relationships between the Gospels. This is the reason John is not included in the Synoptic Problem.

This situation however, raised the fundamental problem of understanding the essence and chronology of the life of the historical Jesus especially when attempts were made to harmonise the accounts of the various Gospels (McKnight, 1998). It further challenged both the reliability of the Gospels' texts necessary for their objective explication and of the relationship among the gospels, which should enhance overall understanding of each Gospel (Wallace, 2011). More fundamentally, the situation raised the problem of how to understand Jesus himself (Farmer, 1994). We are more concerned with the relationship between the Gospels, especially as it affects the place of Matthew among them.
One of the ways to solve this problem of the relationship among the Gospels was the introduction of Source-Criticism. Even on casual reading of the Gospels you can find internal evidence (within the individual Gospels themselves) that the writers used source materials as

they wrote. An obvious example is the authors' frequent references to Old Testament passages either directly or indirectly. When "source critics" (scholars who study sources of information for written documents) began to closely study these Gospels, they arrived at a number of varying positions. In 1776 and 1779 two essays by A. E. Lessing were posthumously published in which he argued for a single written source for the Synoptic Gospels. He called this source the Gospel of the Nazarenes, and he believed it was written in the Aramaic language. To him one original source best explained the parallels and differences between the Synoptics. Many other scholars were influenced by this idea of an original source or primal Gospel. Two variants of the idea developed; some scholars believed there was a written source, but others held it was an oral source.

Further efforts at a solution proffered the "two-document" or "two-source" hypothesis, which has influenced most of Gospel study in the last one and a half centuries to this day (Keener 1997). That is, Q and Mark were said to be the sources which Matthew and Luke used in producing their own Gospels. A good number of scholars today however, hold to the Two-Gospel Hypothesis rather the Two- Document Hypothesis.

By this introduction, you can see right away that there are two major positions about the relationship of Matthew to the other Gospels. The first is called the Two-Source hypothesis; the second is the Two-Gospel hypothesis. You can find a concise summary of these positions on The Synoptic Problem Home Page, http://www.mindspring.com/~scarlson/synopt/index.html. Let us now look at each of these positions a little more closely to better understand their points of view.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. State some of the possible reasons that could have influenced Matthew's first position in the traditional order of the Gospels in the earliest complete Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.
2. Adduce some arguments to prove that even if the Gospels as we have them today cannot be traced to any extant original copy(s), that would not affect their quality as inspired document.
3. Describe the scholarship attitude to study of Matthew and Mark in the course of the centuries.
4. Enumerate the major areas of agreement among the synoptic Gospels? Amidst the agreements, do still observe some differences even where the synoptic Gospels agree?
5. List areas of difference between the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John.

6. Do you agree that if the synoptic Gospels are studied together, one would understand each of them better? Give reasons for your position.
7. Explain the concept of 'synoptic' n the Gospel scholarship.
8. Do you think that the divergences among the synoptic Gospels are strong enough to discountenance any literary relationship among the first three Gospels?
9. What are some of the obvious challenges in reading the four canonical Gospels synoptically?
10. Discuss the two variants of idea of the Source Criticism.

3.2 The Two-Source or Two-Document Hypothesis

The Two-Source Hypothesis is the dominant theory of the relationship of the Gospels among scholars today. It holds that Mark was the first Gospel to be composed and Matthew and Luke drew the materials they used for their Gospels from it. That is, it was the primary narrative source for these latter Gospels (Markan priority). In addition, Matthew and Luke also independently used a source containing the sayings of Jesus with which they supplemented their Markan material. That sayings collection, termed "Q" is now lost, however, and is known only by its fragments as used in these Gospels.

Over time, the Two-Source Hypothesis has undergone serious changes as more scholars joined the close study of the Gospels. Today, it has up to eight versions. You have here some of the most pronounced of those versions as examples. In 1924, Streeter argued that in addition to Mark and Q, the authors of Matthew and Luke both had certain material which was exclusively theirs. Streeter called these "Special Matthean" and "Special Lukan" material respectively. That means there were more than two sources for the Gospels: Mark, Q, Matthew, and Luke since Matthew's and Luke's own special sources are postulated to be distinct, written sources. In the same 1924, in the case of Luke, Streeter supported by Vincent Taylor, postulated that in addition to Mark, Q, and Matthew, Luke also used another document he earlier prepared as another source for his Gospel. This latter source they called proto-Luke.

A third variation of the Two-Source Hypothesis is called Markan Hypothesis. It was propounded by Weisse (1856) and Holtzmann (1963). Their view is that all the three Synoptic Gospels independently derive from a proto-Gospel, namely Ur-Markus. That document is similar to Mark, but is not the same Mark. It also included the narrative and Baptist material now assigned to Q. Advocates of the Markan priority use this view to defend their position whenever they are challenged that the extant text of Mark is corrupt and that Matthew and Luke better reflect the original text in certain places.

A serious challenge to the Two-Source theory was posed by the agreement of Matthew with Luke against Mark in important incidents all the three report. Proponents of the hypothesis try to explain such anti - Markan agreements as a result of Matthew's and Luke's access to a "corrected" version of Mark that is no longer extant. This version of the second Gospel was called Deutero-Mark by Abbott in 1901.

A final example of the variants of the Two-Source Hypothesis is that propounded by Parker (1953 and 1980). In 1953, he came up with an explanation of the relationships between the Gospels in what he described as proto-Matthew, represented by k. According to him, this was a document which constituted essentially of Mark and the special Matthean material. Matthew and Mark used this as their additional source, but Luke never knew of it. This explains the agreements of Mark and Matthew against Luke in many places. In 1980, however, Parker modified his position by amplifying his previous hypothesis. He adopted the suggestion Streeter made earlier that there was a document, called proto-Luke, which was the source of both the Q and L material. He also adopted the position of Griesbach by making Mark a conflation of proto-Matthew ("K") and proto-Luke (1983).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Explain the concept of 'Two-Source' / 'Two Document' hypothesis.
2. Discuss the idea of proto-Luke and the literary role it could have played in the composition of the Gospels.
3. Do you agree that Ur-Markus and Proto-Luke could have served the same literary functions?
4. What do you understand by the term 'anti-Markan agreements'?
6. Examine the relationship between the concepts of Ur-Markus and Deutero-Mark.
7. How would you account for the many agreements of Mark and Matthew against Luke in the study of the synoptic Gospels?
8. Evaluate the most recent teachings on the Two-Source hypothesis by Parker in 1980.

3.3 The Two-Gospel Hypothesis

The Two-Gospel Hypothesis is essentially, the view of the relationships of the Gospels which holds to the traditional position of the priority of Matthew. The tradition was first explicitly expressed by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c. 170-180 AD). Clement of Alexandria supported it by 200 AD. By 400 AD., Augustine added the strong note that each Gospel was dependent on the preceding ones. By his variant of the position, Mark was simply an abbreviation of Matthew; Luke drew on

both Matthew and Mark, and John used all the three to compose his Gospel.

In 1783, J. Griesbach modified this view by reversing the order of the Gospels with his suggestion that the order should be Matthew, Luke, and then Mark. He was trying to explain some of the unique features of Luke as well as why Luke was written in the first place since Mark had already abridged the previous two. In Griesbach's view, Mark did not only abridge Matthew, but he actually conflated both Matthew and Luke.

In our contemporary times William Reuben Farmer (1994) is championing the Two-Gospel hypothesis variant of the Matthean priority. He challenged the assumptions of the Two-Source hypothesis, emphasising that the hypothesis was based on a faulty solution of the synoptic problem. For him, Matthew was the earliest gospel, written from a definite Christological motif that has high interest in the redemptive consequence of the death and resurrection of Jesus and not just his words as espoused by the Two-Source hypothesis. He argues that "the Two-Source Hypothesis, especially in the hands of the Thomas-Q school of exegesis, gives us a different Jesus than the Jesus that has been transmitted by the Church since the time of the apostles" (Farmer, 1994:5).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Evaluate the statement that the Two-Gospel hypothesis is more traditional than the Two-Source hypothesis.
2. Explain the difference between the Griesbach hypothesis and Farmer's.
3. Consult your previous course material (CRS213) and identify other information to augment the information in this section and to refresh your memory.

3.4 Conclusions on the Debate

3.4.1 The Challenge for the Two-Source Hypothesis

Do you find anything from the foregoing discussion special about the relationships among the Gospels that can guide you in your conclusion? You may see from the wide variety of positions on the Two-Source hypothesis that it is built on a shaky ground. The inability of its proponents to have a consensus position on what constitutes the sources and therefore the relationships of the Gospels casts doubts about its credibility and so reliability. But beyond this, its emphasis on the historical reliability of the Gospels determined by their closeness to

Jesus, threatens the reliability of the entire Gospels. It becomes difficult for one to read and preach from the Gospels with a clear conscience once one imbibes their teaching. But that the Gospels are historical documents that present the life and work of a historical person called Jesus of Nazareth can hardly be gainsaid.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. State some of the weak points of the Two-Source hypothesis. Do you think that the Two-Gospel hypothesis is immune from the same criticism?
2. What are some of the missionary and pastoral implications to hold exclusively to the Two-Source hypothesis?

3.4.2 The Two-Gospel Hypothesis Vis-à-Vis the Church Tradition

The Two-Gospel Hypothesis as an alternative to the Markan priority is more or less the traditional conclusion reached from the observations about the relationships among the Gospels. The earliest tradition to this effect is that preserved by Papias (c. 110 AD). In his apology on the integrity of Mark's Gospel, Papias wrote:

Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things done or said by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely." (qtd. in Eusebius *Hist Eccl* 3.39)

On close consideration of this statement, you could deduce that Papias implied Matthean priority. It is found in the context of an apology where Papias was primarily concerned to defend the evangelist against alleged disorderliness in his Gospel. In Papias' view, as Peter's interpreter, Mark was concerned to write only the essential matters from Peter's preaching that addressed the immediate needs of his community which requested a written record of them. This much he succeeded in doing. But you may wish to ask, what was the conventional order of the Gospel from which Mark deviated? And how was it determined? It seems to suggest that there was a previous Gospel by which the accusers of Mark were familiar with the order of the events of the life and work of Jesus.

Most likely, such a Gospel was Matthew's. In Papias' day, Matthean priority was almost universally upheld because of its apostolic authorship and the fact that Matthew preserves much of Jesus' teaching not found elsewhere. Remember that Papias also said Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew; and we concluded in previous study that this would have been the earlier copy he made for the Judean Christians before he produced its Greek version for the mixed Church of Syria. That copy must have been produced quite early since it was found in India by Pantaenus who went there as a missionary and discovered that Bartholomew had taken the Hebrew Matthew there in the apostolic times (Clement Alex. Stromata 1.2.2). The fact that this Gospel was produced while Peter and Paul were yet preaching and laying the foundation of the Church in Rome and Mark's Gospel was written subsequent to Peter's preaching, probably after his demise, strongly argues against Markan priority.

Around 170 or 180 AD Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons, became the first to draw this conclusion in his famous work, *Against Heresies*. He says:
So, Matthew among the Hebrews issued a writing of the Gospel in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel at Rome and founding the Church. After their decease Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also handed down to us in writing what Peter had preached. Then Luke, the follower of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel as it was preached by him. Finally, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had lain on his breast, himself published the Gospel, while he was residing at Ephesus in Asia. (*Haer* 3.1.1)

Later, Clement of Alexandria (c. 200 AD) said Matthew wrote his Gospel first, Luke used Matthew to write his own, and Mark conflated the two to produce his. According to Eusebius Clement said that:

those of the Gospels comprising the genealogies were *progegrapthai* (written before) but that Mark had this disposition: that when Peter was in Rome preaching the word *desmosia* (openly) and proclaiming the gospel by the spirit, those present, who were many, entreated Mark, as one who followed him for a long time and remembered what was said, to record what was spoken; but that after he compose d the Gospel, he *metadounai* (shared it) with those who wanted it; that, when Peter found out about it, he did not actively discourage or encourage it; but that John, last, aware that the physical facts were disclosed in the Gospels, urged by friends, and inspired by the spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel. (Eus., *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.5-7).

You will notice that Clement's statement in this quotation that the Gospels containing genealogies were the ones written first conflicts with Irenaeus' tradition quoted above that Mark which has no genealogy

preceded Luke. It also poses some difficulty of understanding when viewed against the statement of Irenaeus in the same quotation that Mark wrote after the death of Peter and Paul. Origen's statement on the order of the Gospels also seems to conflict with that of Clement:

As learned by tradition about the four Gospels, which alone are undisputed in the Church of God under heaven, that first written was Matthew, once publican but later apostle of Jesus Christ, who published it for the believers from Judaism composed in Hebrew letters; but second, Mark, who composed as Peter led him, ... and third, Luke, who has composed for those from the gentiles the gospel praised by Paul; after all of them, John. (qtd. in Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.*6.25.4-6).

Nevertheless, two statements make it apparent that Clement was concerned, not with the chronology of the Gospels, but the nature of their publication. First, Matthew and Luke, which have genealogies, were *progegrapthai* (publicly published) for wider readership whereas Mark was written primarily for local consumption. Second, it was circulated to interested persons. In any case, these statements also say something about the chronology of the Gospels, namely that Matthew and Luke preceded Mark and John which had no genealogy.

This position is based on the recent observation that the Greek "pro" could mean "before" in the sense of time as well as a sense of being "before the public" according to the context. Both the historical and literary contexts of this statement of Clement agree with a locational use of *progegrapthai*. This would indicate that soon after Matthew and Luke were written, they were set forth before the public, but after Mark was written, it was not. Remember what you were told during the introduction to this course that Matthew's Gospel enjoyed, not only fast and wide circulation and wide acceptance in the early church, but also the fact that it was the most quoted Gospel in early Christian literature. This additional fact of its public target then, explains such spread acceptance, and use. So, on the basis of early Church's tradition it is fair conclusion that the Gospel of Matthew was the first to be written. That also implies that it probably became a source for the other Gospels.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. State some of the weak points of the Two-Source hypothesis. Do you think that the Two-Gospel hypothesis is immune from the same criticism?
2. What are some of the missionary and pastoral implications to hold exclusively to the Two-Source hypothesis?

3. Evaluate the statements of Clement and Irenaeus concern the sequence of the composition of Gospel. Draw out their similarities and differences. Which of the two appeal more to you and why?

4. Use your Greek dictionary to decipher the meaning of the word "*progegraptha*". Do you think that the word fits better a temporal (chronologically before) or spatial (locale in view of being made public) context? Give reasons for your choice. What are the implications in connection with the literary relationship of the Gospels?

3.4.3 Internal Evidence

There is ample evidence within the Gospels themselves that the other Gospels depended on Matthew for their works when they are seen together. For instance, if Mark's sequence of verses is set against Matthew 's, using Matthew as the standard we find that many Markan verses are seriously out of order, especially from Matthew 12:1 onwards. Furthermore, using Matthew as the standard of comparison, only 3 verses seriously violate the sequential order from Mt 12 onwards, whereas comparing the two Gospels using Mark as standard shows 13 verses in serious violation. This strongly indicates that if one writer copied from the other's work, the listing using Matthew as standard better explains the copying. This in turn suggests that the writer of Mark was the copyist and abbreviator. When you also compare Mark with Matthew, you can also find 75 instances which show that Mark knew and used Matthew in various redactional ways. These include additions or omissions as well as textual or logical alterations often for the purpose of improving such texts. You can find similar alterations in Luke's Gospel when you do the same exercise.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Give reasons to support the idea that Mark could have depended on Matthew for his composition of the Second Gospel.
2. Do you think that one can conveniently use the same internal evidence to argue for the priority of Mark (cf. CRS213 Course Material)?

4.0 CONCLUSION

As you saw in the preceding paragraphs, the question of the relationships between the Gospels in general, and that of Matthew's relationship to the other gospels in particular, is not an easy one to decide. However, as you also saw, positions have been taken. Whereas

majority of scholars today prefer to go with the eighteenth-century proposal that Mark is more primitive and so was the earliest, it seems more reasonable to accept the traditional attestation to the priority of Matthew. Apart from this position's proximity to the origin of the Gospels, it has much that makes it more plausible a solution to the problems posed by the Synoptic Gospels.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has avail you the opportunity to participate in the discussion about the literary and historical relationships of the Gospels. It pointed out the major ideas in the Church's life concerning the history of the Gospels' formation and their theology. The premier focus was on how Mat thew is related to the other Gospels. A brief history of the debate on this issue was presented, highlighting the two major views in Christian history and their variants. You were told that the most popular of these views today are two, namely the Two-Document or Two-Source Hypothesis and the Two-Gospel hypothesis. Whereas most scholars today favour the former and espouse that Mark wrote his Gospel and Matthew used it to compose his own with some additional material, a growing minority is arguing that Matthew wrote before Mark and Mark only abbreviated Matthew's work. Each of these positions has a number of strong points and weaknesses. But in all, the heavy traditional and internal evidence tilts more toward Matthean priority.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the Two-Document Hypothesis?
2. How does the Two-Document Hypothesis differ from the Two-Gospel Hypothesis?
3. What is the synoptic problem?
4. Identify and discuss three similarities and three differences of the Synoptic Gospels.

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MODULE 2 THE MATTHEAN JESUS AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Unit 1 The Matthean Jesus as Messiah
Unit 2 Jesus as Magician and Deceiver
Unit 3 Jesus and the Church Today
Unit 4 The Mission of Jesus

UNIT 1 THE MATTHEAN JESUS AS MESSIAH

CONTENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the first module of this course, you have been taken through the preliminary issues in the study of the Gospel of Matthew. In this Module, we will begin to examine the debate about the presentation of Jesus by the Gospel writers. This unit, which is the first unit in this module, would focus on the presentation of Jesus by the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew presents two major ways that Jesus' contemporaries saw him. Those Jews who believed his preaching and followed him, the Christians, saw him as their Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

But majority of the Jews, led by the Jewish authorities, rejected Jesus' claims to be the promised Messiah. Instead, they saw him as an impostor and called him names, like magician and deceiver. Matthean scholarship from the Enlightenment tends to see a glorified Messiah in the way Matthew talks about Jesus rather than the Jesus from Nazareth who walked the streets of Palestine. This has ultimately led to the question whether the historical Jesus differs from the Christ of faith.

In this module, therefore, you are expected to familiarise yourself

with the portrait of Jesus as it is painted in the text of Matthew and the views of recent scholarship on the issue. The present unit specifically focuses on the way Jesus' followers understood and characterised him, namely as the Messiah of Jewish expectation. You should pay particular attention to how Matthew traces this messianic idea in the Old Testament through his numerous validating quotations from those Scriptures. You can also see this messianic motif in Matthew through the titles he ascribes to Jesus. All of these are built into a theological concept called Christology. Thus, invariably, your overarching concern should be to understand the theology of Matthew which encapsulates his portrait of Jesus as Messiah.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss Matthew use of the Fulfilment Formula in Old Testament Quotations
- Discuss the implications of Matthew's use of messianic titles for Jesus
- Identify Matthew's Christology

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 Christology in Matthew: An Introduction

As you saw in Module 1, Unit 5, the premier concern of Matthew was to demonstrate to his audience that Jesus was the Messiah who was to come from the Jews. The Jewish world into which Jesus was born and preach the arrival of the kingdom of God, was a politically tensed environment. It had been in subjugation for 700 years right from the time King Ahaz invited Assyria to protect him against his threatening neighbours (France, 1989). By the time of Jesus, oppression of the poor through the heavy Roman taxation policy became common and demeaning (Storkey 2005; France, 1989). The situation would have given high expectation and anxieties among the people, especially the weak and poor of the society, who are anxiously wating for the arrival of the Jewish Messiah from the house of David as predicted by the Old Testament prophets.

The Old Testament launched this expectation of a world-wide Jewish kingdom, mounted by the Lord's Anointed with its promises of a "branch" that God would raise for David (Jer 23:5–6; Isa 11:2–9; Mic 5:2). These promises were known to all the Jews throughout their 700

years of foreign domination (France 1989; cf. Sir 47:11, 22; 1 Macc 2:57). In the period of Persian and Hellenistic domination, Jews principally, simply groaned without serious reactions against their overlords. But during the Hasmonean period, the hopes of an anointed royal figure who would deliver Israel were enkindled in the Jews. This led many Jews in the last two centuries before Jesus, and the century after him, to lead many political revolutions against Hellenistic and Roman dominion.

It happened that after the death of Herod in 4 B.C. the Jews pressed Herod's son and heir apparent, Archelaus, for a number of reforms. During the Passover, when the demands reached their peak, Archelaus sent his armies into Jerusalem and massacred thousands of worshipping pilgrims. This action catalyzed revolt in every major area of Herod's kingdom, and some of these revolts took the form of messianic movements. Josephus identifies several leaders of these movements: Judas, the son of Ezekias (Ant. 17.10.5.271–72; J.W. 2.4.1.56); Simon, servant of King Herod (Ant. 17.10.6.273–76); and Athronges (Ant. 17.10.7.278–85). Josephus clearly indicates that they aspired to be Israel's king (J.W. 2.4.1.55; Ant. 17.10.8.285). All of these messianic figures were of humble origins, and their followers were primarily peasants. Josephus describes one of them thus: (he) took his followers and marched off to Masada. There he broke open king Herod's arsenal and armed other brigands, in addition to his own group. With these men as his bodyguards, he returned to Jerusalem as a king, and becoming a leader of the insurrection, he organized the siege of the palace (J.W. 2.17.8.433–34; cf. 2.17.5.422–42).

Jesus was largely understood in this light by many of his contemporary Jews (cf. Jn 6:13-15; 11:45-48). But he disappointed the political expectations of these popular circles; he did not let himself be made a political Messiah. Yet, his opponents used the political misinterpretation of his person to condemn and execute him through the Roman authorities in Judea as a Jewish rioter who rebelled against Roman sovereignty. Jesus' self-understanding of his Messiahship was preserved and has been transmitted to all Christian generations through the kerygma of the apostles. The Gospel of Matthew preserves one of the versions of that Messiah-centred Christology. His concern is both apologetic (refuting their branding of Jesus as magician and liar) and evangelistic (confirming the Messiahship of Jesus to believing Jews and Gentiles).

Matthew appeals to a variety of devices to accomplish this double purpose such as genealogies, fulfilled prophecy, messianic titles, kingdom teachings, and miracles. One of Matthew's major tasks was to paint a portrait of Jesus, which will prove his qualifications for

Messiahship. The evangelist did this principally, in two ways; first, he drew heavily on the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament) to prove that Jesus fulfilled the promises God made to the Jews of a Davidic Messiah. This is obvious in the frequent phrase in his Gospel: "That Scriptures might be fulfilled" or a close variant of it, used nine times in the Gospel (1:22; 2:15, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56). In all, there are up to 40 formal quotes, 14 fulfilments, and over 100 allusions to Old Testament prophecies in Matthew. This is aside from several uses of such prophecies as illustrations of certain happenings in the life of Jesus and Israel. Second, he identified Jesus by titles which were familiar to his contemporary Jews as messianic. We shall consider each of these approaches of his to get a more informed understanding of it. To begin, let us take Matthew's fulfilment formula.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Describe in a very brief way the world into which Jesus was born
2. Mention the various forms of oppression meted out against the poor and weak in the days of Jesus.
3. If the messiahship of Jesus is not political, what then do you think it is?
4. How do you mean that the concern of the author of the First Gospel is both apologetic and evangelistic?
5. What are the literary and theological devices applied by Matthew to accomplish the purpose of his Gospel, and what are his major sources?
6. Give some scriptural evidences from the Gospel of Matthew that Jesus is the expected Messiah foretold in the Jewish Scripture

3.2 Matthew's Fulfilment Formula in Old Testament Quotations

The first segment of Matthew's Gospel, chapters 1-4, demonstrates Jesus' qualifications as the Messiah of Jewish hopes (Deut 17:15) in a number of ways. But for our present purposes, you be concerned with how he adduces Jewish Scriptures to prove his claims. First of all, notice how Matthew presents Jesus' genealogy (1:1-17) to properly locate him in the Davidic royal line and so prove his qualification to occupy the Davidic throne promised in the Scriptures. While he does not specifically use the formula quotation here as such, it is clear that the genealogy presents Jesus as fulfilling two foundational covenants in Jewish national life. These are God's universal covenant with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 17:1-8) and his national covenant with David (2 Sam 7:2-16). This grounds Jesus in these covenants and thereby identifies him as the world's Messiah that God promised through the seed of Abraham who was reaffirmed in the time of King David to come through his royal line.

From this foundational portrait of Jesus as a member of the Abrahamic family through King David, Matthew paints a second portrait of Jesus. He is not just a human Messiah, but he is indeed, the divine son of the Living God (1:18-25). This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that a virgin would give birth to a saviour-son (1:22-23; cf. Isa 7:14). It is true that by the time of Jesus, the Jews' conceptions of the promised Messiah were variegated, but Matthew still holds the view that the Messiah would be a divine-human being. He continues his fulfilment strategy of identification of Jesus as Messiah by adducing four Old Testament prophetic texts which are rather difficult to interpret in his contexts. You may wish to understand them from the perspective of prophetic typology rather than direct messianic predictions. In that case, the coming of the magicians (the magi) from the East to Jerusalem in search of the new-born "King of the Jews" (Mat 2:1-12) fulfils Micah 5:2. Jesus' flight to Egypt to evade Herod's hostility (Mat 2:13-15) fulfilled the prophetic t ypology of Hosea 11 :1 and Jeremiah 31:15. In like manner, the massacre of infants in Bethlehem (Mat 2:16-18) fulfilled Jeremiah 3:15. Again, Jesus' return to the land of Israel from his sojourn in Egypt is in fulfilment of some unspecified prophecy (Mat 2:19-23). It could be any or all of these: Judges 5-7; 16:17, Zechariah 3:8; 6:12, or Isaiah 4:2.

Matthew continued to use this fulfilment formula to portray the Nazarene messianic prophet as indeed, the Jewish Messiah in events throughout his public life. His introduction of John the Baptizer's ministry (3:1-3) is a preparation for the public ministry of the Messiah in fulfilment of Isaiah 40:3. The Baptizer is in vv.3-11 portrayed in the garb and ministry of Elijah. In 2 Kings 1:8 you can see that the garb and behaviour of Elijah and John are remarkably similar. Both had ministries to believing Israel and against apostate Israel as well (Campbel l, 2010). The idea of the winnowing fork is, however, an allusion to Hos 6:13. The Baptizer's introduction of the Messiah as one who brings the nation's eschatological baptism in the Spirit and cleansing fulfils Joel 2:28-29 and Malachi 3:2-5. According to Constable (2010) Jesus' baptism was the occasion at which His Messiahship became publicly obvious. Matthew recorded this event as he did to convince his readers further of Jesus' messianic qualifications. Thus, John's baptism had two purposes: to prepare Israel for her Messiah (3:1-12) and to prepare the Messiah for Israel (3:13-17; cf. John 1:31).

Jesus' public life as Messiah is depicted by his teaching and miracles which demonstrate his royal authority. He gave new teaching on the Laws of the messianic kingdom (chap 5-7). He also demonstrated his messianic authority by a chain of miracles (8:1-11:1). The miracles are sort of back-up or validation for his Messiahship. They validate Matthew's portrait of Jesus as a divine human Messiah, the Son of Man

(8:18-22 in fulfilment of Daniel 7) who saved his people from the ploughs of a coalition of kings.

The human Messiah is emotional; he is compassionate, taking care of his subjects' health problems as seen in his healing them of their leprosy, paralysis, fever and other miscellaneous diseases (8:1-17), thus, fulfilling the prophecy in Hos 6:6. The divine Messiah is authoritative (7:28-29; 8:23–9:8) in the realm of nature (calming the storm, 8:23-27), in the realm of the supernatural (healing the two demoniacs in Gadara 8:28-34), and even in the realm of the spiritual (healing and forgiving a paralytic of his sins, 9:1-8). This is significant because the Jews understood that only God has the power to forgive sins. But by this portrait, Matthew shows the immensity of the king's authority and the nature of his kingdom as more than physical.

Matthew depicts this double character of the Messiah and his kingdom throughout the rest of the Gospel. You can see this especially in his stories of Jesus' controversies with Jewish authorities. Most of them are concerned with the identity of the person of Jesus. In Matthew's views, these controversies began with the Jews' rejection of Christ in the various cities (11:16-30). The Jews are like children who are never pleased with anything (11:16-17). They were not pleased with John's asceticism nor were they pleased with Christ's ministry methods (11:18-19) that brings him closer to 'normal' life. The permanent break between Christ and the Pharisees occurs in Matthew 12. The conflict is further provoked when the Messiah refused to adhere to Pharisaic Sabbath regulations (12:1-14). Again, when he healed the demoniac (12:22), the nation's unbelief reached a climax (12:23-24). The people doubted that Christ was the Son of David and the Pharisees attribute the miracle to the work of Satan. This chain of events allows Matthew the opportunity to show how Christ was the fulfilment of the servant's ministry to the Gentiles (Isa 42:1-3).

If you give close attention to all this, you can notice a certain thread running through Matthew's depiction of the Messiah. It is that he is using both recapitulation and typology in identifying the Messiah. Thus, according to Matthew's typological exegesis, Jesus is a sort of new Moses, he brings a new Exodus, and he is a kind of new Israel (Mat 1:18–2:23; 3:3). Further, he brings the fulfilment of the Law and prophets (Mat 3:15; 5:17–48; 12:17–21; 13:35; 21:5, 16, 42; 22:44; 23:39; 26:31; 27:9, 35, 46) and has become the suffering and rejected Servant of Yahweh (3:17; 8:17; 10:35; 12:17–21; 13:14–15; 21:5, 42; 23:39; 26:31, 38; 27:9, 35, 46).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Use some texts from the Jewish scripture to explain that claim that Jesus is both a universal and national messiah.
2. Demonstrate to your colleagues how the author of the Gospel of Matthew successfully located Jesus in the Davidic dynasty.
3. Describe the dual main missions of John the Baptizer using Matt 3:1-17 as supporting text. Do you think that these missions were finally achieved by the Baptizer?
4. How did Matthew prove that Jesus is both human and divine messiah?
5. With the aid of any biblical dictionary, find the meaning of the words: 'typology' and 'recapitulation'.
6. Do you agree that John's baptism was not only to prepare Israel for her Messiah (3:1-12) but also to prepare the Messiah for Israel (3:13-17; cf. John 1:31)?
7. Evaluate the claim that the miracles of Jesus in the First Gospel are a kind of backup for Jesus' messiahship.
8. How correct is it to argue that Jesus rejection by the Jewish establishments started early from his birth?
9. How did Matthew use the controversy stories to prove that Jesus is the divine-human messiah?
10. Point out some of the Matthean typological exegesis that reflect Jesus as a new Moses.

3.3 Matthew's Use of Messianic Titles for Jesus

You have now known that the Gospel of Matthew is the record of his understanding of the life of Jesus – that is his theology. By the theology of Matthew, we mean the emphases and patterns of thought which form the factors by which he shaped his story of the life of Jesus. It relates to Matthew's beliefs and their meaning in his religious and cultural milieus as expressed in his book. The central theological concept in Matthew is the person of Jesus of Nazareth or Christology. Matthew develops this concept from a number of motifs. The most important for our purposes is the messianic or kingdom motif, which reveals Matthew's understanding of God's thinking about and dealing with humanity through the person of Jesus Messiah. Thus, the portrait of Jesus as Messiah dictates Matthew's emphasis on salvation history as is evident in his interpretation of the past, present and future.

A summary of what Matthew is saying is this: Jesus is God's Messiah who fulfils Old Testament promises, reveals God's will, and inaugurates the kingdom of heaven through his public ministry, passion and resurrection, and consequently, reigns over God's new creation

community (McKnight 1998). The title, Messiah, occurs very frequently in the First Gospel (1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2 :4; 11:2; 16:16, 20; 22:42; 23:10; 26:63, 68; 27:17, 22). These convey the idea that for Matthew, Jesus is pre-eminently the Messiah. The use of the term, Messiah, as designation for Jesus, signals that Matthew and his community believed that the OT promises of salvation and restoration are fulfilled in Jesus (Mat 2:4; 26:63).

But what precisely does Matthew mean by Messiah? Messiah in Matthew is a reflection of Jesus' self-understanding. Jesus saw himself as the Son of God who assumed human form as a means to realize his mission of human salvation. In Matthew, the term, Messiah, is imbued with two major conceptual categories, namely the divine and the human aspects of the one person, Jesus of Nazareth. Concerning the former, Jesus is presented from the backdrop of one who bears some concept of pre- existence (2:4; 22:41–46). He is the eternal son of God. But above all, the Messiah that Matthew portrays is the human heir of David who fulfils the Old Testament in his person and ministry (1:1–2:23; 5:17–48). Here are a few details to illumine the point.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Is it correct to evaluate the Gospel of Matthew as a theological history of Jesus of Nazareth? Explain your understanding of 'theological history'.
2. What is the central theological concept in the Gospel of Matthew? How did the author of the First Gospel develop the central theological concept of book from a number of motifs?
3. Explain the Matthean concept of Messiah.

The Son of God

As Messiah, Jesus is described at several crucial points in the Gospel as "Son of God." This is obviously a central and important Christological term for him. Thus, Jesus is so declared by the Father: "this is my Son" (3:17; cf. Mk 1:11 and Lk 3:22: "you are my Son"); Jesus' arch enemy, the devil, similarly addresses him (4:3, 6) as God's Son (11:27). Jesus describes his relationship to God as that of a son to a father; at 14:33 and humans confessed Jesus as God's Son. Peter, a disciple of Jesus, confessed Jesus as "Son of the living God" and God's Messiah (16:16). Again, during Jesus' transfiguration, the Father confirmed to the inner circle that Jesus is the Son of God (17:5). Jesus also reaffirmed himself the Son of God (24:36). The high priest explains the term Messiah with "Son of God" (26:63). Even mere passers-by acknowledged Jesus as

Son of God (27:40, 43); and finally, Roman soldier, a Gentile, acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God (27:54).

This heavy attestation of Jesus as the Son of God points to the importance of this title of Jesus to both Matthew and his community. You should now ask, what is Matthew saying about Jesus by identifying him as Son of God in the light of Jesus' words and actions, and the perception of the people about him. Before you attempt any answer, notice how in two instances Matthew associates the concept with the temptation and suffering of Jesus (3:17–4:11; 16:16, 21). Notice also that Matthew usually refers to the Messiah as "Jesus" in his narratives. The name "Jesus" is derived from the Greek *Iēsoûs*. The Greek form is a transliteration of the Aramaic name *Yeshua*, a short form of Hebrew Yehoshua, known in English as Joshua. The Name *Yeshua* means the Lord is salvation, or literally Yahweh saves. You can sense a theological thread here; the man Matthew calls Jesus is God's son, the Messiah the Jews were expecting to come and save them from foreign domination and establish God's kingdom in Jerusalem with the Jews at the helm of world affairs.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Demonstrate in clear terms that the knowledge of Jesus as the 'Son of God' is not limited to the insiders.
2. What are the implications of the overwhelming attestation of Jesus as the Son of God in the First Gospel?
3. Try to make the connection between the Greek name *Iēsoûs* and the Aramaic *Yeshua*, and explain some of the theological implications of the name.

Christ

Christ is not a name but a title, which derives from the Greek Christos, meaning "anointed". It is the rough equivalent of the Hebrew *mashiyakh* or Aramaic *m'shikha*, meaning "Messiah" or "Anointed One." In the Old Testament it refers generally to people anointed for a special purpose including priests, kings, and the patriarchs (metaphorically). It came to have particular reference to the King whom God would provide from David's line who would rule over Israel and the nations eventually (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 2:2: 105:15; et al.).

The early Christians believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of the Old Testament. Because they used both names together, "Christ" became a virtual name for Jesus, a titular (title turned name).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you agree with the author that the title Christo is not the special reserve of Jesus?
2. Explain the meaning of Christo to a Hebrew-minded personality.

Prophet

In view of verses like Matthew 10:41; 13:57; 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16; 13:33 and 24:19, you can attest that most of the contemporaries of Jesus thought of him as a prophet. Notice that in Matthew 13: 57, Jesus saw himself as a prophet (cf. Mk 6:4; Lk 4:24). Prophets in the first century Jewish world were God's speaking tubes – men and women who spoke with God and proclaimed God's words and will to his people. By the time of Jesus, there were many messianic prophets as Josephus attested: the Samaritan (*Ant*. 18.4.1.85–87); Theudas (*Ant*. 20.5.1.97–98); and the Egyptian (*Ant*. 20.8.6.169–71; J.W. 2.13.5.261–63; cf. Acts 21:38). These popular prophets led sizable movements of peasants in anticipation of the appearance of God's eschatological liberation. That liberation was perceived as imminent, and when it arrived the Jews would be freed from their political bondage and again govern Palestine, the Land of Israel. Josephus describes the leaders of these popular prophetic movements:

Impostors and demagogues, under the guise of divine inspiration, provoked revolutionary actions and impelled the masses to act like madmen. They led them out into the wilderness, so that there, God would show them signs of imminent liberation (*J.W*. 2.13.4.259; cf. *Ant*. 20.8.6.168).

According to Matthew, however, Jesus saw himself not in the light of these popular prophetic movements, but as the one who reveals God's will as it pertains to his relational design for his creation community. This is the import of the Sermon on the Mount and several other discourses in the Gospel.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Review some of the sources from Josephus to ascertain that there were many messianic figures in the time of Jesus. Write out clearly the citations that give weight to your claims.
2. Why is it that majority of the followers of the acclaimed messianic prophets is from the peasant class?

3. Could you identify the relationship between religion, economics, politics and power in the messianic movements of the time of Jesus?
4. Why the messianic figures always lead the masses to the desert? Explore the psychological and spiritual dimension of the perception of the masses.
5. What do you think that makes Jesus different from the popular prophetic movements of his days?

The Son of Man

Jesus exclusively refers to himself by the title, Son of Man (Aramaic: *bar nasha*), 29 times in the Gospel of Matthew. This is likely an allusion to Daniel 7:13, which talks about "one like a son of man" in a messianic sense that is developed by the author of 1 Enoch. Two key ideas frequently occur in both Israelite-Jewish and Christian literature, which seem to refer to the expectation of the Messiah. In the Psalms of Solomon, the Messiah is presented as a human prince from the line of David (Ps Sol 17: 21, 32). But in more visionary-prophetic literature, the Messiah (1 En 52:2) seems to be portrayed as a celestial being, "one like a son of man" (Dan 7: 13), or "the Son of Man" to be revealed only at the end of time when he will establish a heavenly kingdom and judge the nations:

> One half portion of them shall glance at the other half; ...and pain shall seize them when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory. ... for the Son of Man was concealed from the beginning, and the Most High One preserved him in the presence of his power; then he revealed him to the holy and the elect ones. (1 En 62:5-7; cf. 48:2,6).

In 4 Ezra 12:32; 13:26, he is even a military Messiah. Although 4 Ezra is by the rating of scholarship consensus a late first century document, it possibly reflects pre- Christian messianic hopes. The same is true of 1 Enoch 37-71, which bears the Son of Man tradition, but is often said to be a late Christian addition because of its absence from the manuscripts of 1 Enoch in the Qumran finds.

When Matthean Jesus calls himself the Son of Man in allusion to Daniel 7, he is echoing the salvific role of that figure as we noted before in his compassionate works of healing and feeding the needy. The one like a son of man in Daniel 7, as a representative of the people of God, smashed the kingdoms oppressing God's people and established an everlasting kingdom for them.

According to I. Howard Marshall (1990:53) Jewish messianic expectation took two forms. They were hoping for the coming of Elijah to announce and prepare men for the end (Mal 4:5-6). Similarly, a prophet like Moses was being expected on the basis of Deuteronomy 18:15-22. He was to perform the messianic task of restoring the paradise conditions of the wilderness period.

Jesus seems to have put these two ideas together in his answer to John the Baptizer's question whether he was indeed the Messiah of Jewish expectation (11:2-19; Lk 7:18-23). It is particularly interesting that he later claimed these messianic prophecies as fulfilled in him (Lk 4:18-22). If this is so, it suggests that these ideas possibly developed into an expectation of the messianic figure quite early. One thing is, however, certain: the Jews were looking forward to a political Messiah having been under foreign rule for over 700 years by the time of Jesus and John. It was amid these growing messianic hopes that John the Baptizer suddenly arose from no known background in an ascetic mode of life, announcing the nearness of the inauguration of the messianic kingdom, as he called for repentance (Mt 3:1-12). He was only preparing people for that inauguration, however. He refrained from claiming to be the Messiah and was never identify by the masses as one of the messianic figures in the politics of the time.

Notice that simultaneous with the Baptist was this other prophet (or prophet-like figure) from Nazareth, called Jesus (Jn 1:45). He first came to public notice in Palestine through his miraculous activities around the Galilean towns. Thus, attracting public attention, he devoted his short-lived ministry to teaching the Jews about the kingdom of God. However, on Jesus' categories, this kingdom is spiritual in nature rather than political. This is why he downplayed the Jewish national pride and advocated Gentile inclusion in the God-family irrespective of his recognition of the special status of Israel as a chosen people of God (cf. Jn 4: 24). He devoted his entire ministry to trying to convince his contemporaries of this idea, to the effect that they interpreted, or misinterpreted his position as threatening their social and political survival (Jn 11: 47-48).

Matthew certainly has something in mind in so presenting Jesus' Messiahship. As the Gospel unfolds, it becomes clear that the Jews needed to accept Jesus as the promised Son of David before He would bring the blessings promised to Abraham (cf. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45). Jesus presented Himself to the Jews first. When they rejected Him, the he turned to the Gentiles. Yet he explained that their rejection was only temporary. When he returns, the Jews will acknowledge him as their Messiah, and then he will rule on the earth and bless all humankind (cf. Zech 12:10-14; 14:4, 9-11; Rom. 11:26).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Which of the two key ideas that are associated with the Messiah in both Israelite-Jewish and Christian literature appears more appealing to you? Explore the possible implications of your preference within the context of Christian theology.
2. What do you think that still makes 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra relevant and weighty in the circle of the discussion on the concept of the Son of Man, despite their rating as late first century documents?
3. Examine some of the inferences of the Matthean Jesus referring to himself as the Son of Man in allusion to the Danielic prophecy (Dan 7).
4. Following the argument of I. Howard Marshall (1990:53), use some information outside the course material to discuss the two forms of the Jewish messianic expectation.
5. Read the texts of Matt 11:2-19 and Lk 7:18-23, and situate them in the context of the messianic expectations in the time of Jesus.
6. How do you prove that Jesus' understanding of his messiahship is spiritual, not political?
7. Analyse the dialectics between the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish establishment and the salvation of the Gentiles

4.0 CONCLUSION

The heightening sufferings of the Jews following 700 years of political subjection made Palestine a politically tensile place by the time of Jesus. There was high rate of oppression and exploitation of the poor through the heavy Roman taxation policy. This raised anxieties in many for the actualisation of the messianic promises that the Old Testament prophets to the Jews. But these anxieties were products of Jewish misdirected zeal. Rather than grasp the community relational emphasis of the spiritual kingdom of God Christ proclaimed, many of Jesus' contemporaries erroneously took him for a political Messiah. The Gospel of Matthew is an effort of a follower of Jesus who understood him to correct this error by painting a portrait of Jesus' self-understanding. By his depiction, Jesus was not a national political Messiah, but a global spiritual saviour.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Jews in Matthew's day had been expecting a messianic figure that was to appear from the house of David and establish the Kingdom of God which was to be headquartered in Jerusalem. From there, the Lord's Messiah was expected to gather the tribes of the chosen people and establish a world kingdom of peace from Jerusalem. By the time of Jesus, oppression of the poor through the heavy Roman taxation policy

raised anxieties in many for the arrival of the Jewish Messiah that the Old Testament prophets predicted from the house of David. Th ese anxieties gave birth to many messianic movements whose leaders led a number of insurrections against the Roman authorities in power. Many of Jesus' contemporaries erroneously understood him as one such Messiah. Matthew took pains to correct this error by painting a portrait of Jesus' self-understanding. He made his Jesus far from being a national political Messiah. He is a global spiritual saviour. It is this point that Matthew proved from the very Scriptures of the Jews, applying the messianic titles from those Scriptures that give support to the Nazarene messianic claimant he projected.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Sketch the background to the messianic anxieties that Matthew addresses in his Gospel.
2. Discuss the concepts "Son of Man" and "Son of God" as messianic titles.
3. How did Matthew use his fulfilment formula to demonstrate Jesus' qualification as the Jewish Messiah?

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UNIT 2 JESUS AS MAGICIAN AND DECEIVER

CONTENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you were made to understand that Jesus' contemporaries saw him in two different ways according to the Gospel of Matthew. Whereas for those who believed and followed him, he was the Jewish Messiah promised in the Old Testament, Jewish authorities led majority of the Jews to reject Jesus' claims to be their promised Messiah. Rather, they attributed his miracles to magic and concluded that he was a deceiver. In this unit, you are required to consider some of the allegation against the Matthean Jesus as a magician. We will draw heavily on the work of Graham N. Stanton (1992) and only supplement it with some additional information on the subject.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain Matthew's and his community's stand on their position of Jesus as the Messiah.
- Explain the concerns of the non-believing Jews' for rejecting Jesus' Messiahship.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 Jesus was a Magician

In the preceding units you were informed that a premier purpose of Matthew in writing his Gospel was to prove that Jesus was the Messiah the Jews were promised in the Old Testament. He largely succeeded in

accomplishing this purpose. First, he achieved this by citing Old Testament messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Second, he identified Jesus with crucial messianic titles in Jewish faith. That is to say Matthew was concerned to present a portrait of Jesus' personality that satisfied the messianic expectations of his clusters of Jewish friends who had turned from Judaism to Christianity. In other words, Matthew's primary purpose was christological. The next question we should try to answer is what motivated Matthew to set about this Christological goal? Or as Stanton (1992) puts the question, "are Matthew's rich and varied christological themes related in any way to this social setting?" An informed answer to this question requires us to closely inspect the text of Matthew, especially at points where the Gospel depicts conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities.

A closer look at the Gospel will tell you that a good number of Matthew's passages are dealing with claims and counter-claims of Jews and Christians pertaining to the identity and power of Jesus. Constable (2010:176) describes it as "personal abuse and character assassination." Such passages are obviously apologetic in motif and were most probably motivated by the disputes between the Christians – possibly Matthew's Christian communities – and the Jewish leadership. This is the probable import of Matthew's statement that Jewish leaders fraudulently formulated the story, which "has been spread among Jews to this day" (28:15), that Jesus' disciples stole his body from the tomb.

In these passages, you will see that each time Jesus was identified particularly as the "Son of David," the Jewish leaders would take offence. Thus, the evangelist seems to have been at pains to highlight the Jewish leadership's rejection of Jesus and the dawn of the messianic kingdom he proclaimed. A possible reason for doing this would have been his concern to strengthen the faith of his Christian communities in Jesus and validate the multiracial and multicultural character of the church that was being challenged by unbelieving Jews (Woods 2007:30). For a sample, we shall here consider some of such passages in which two major identities of Jesus are prominent. In the first cluster of four passages wherein the Jewish leadership identify Jesus as a magician, in the second cluster, they call him a deceiver.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you still remember the primary purpose of Matthew embarking on the production of the First Gospel? Did he finally achieve his purpose? If he did, how? If he did not, why?
2. How do mean that Matthew's primary purpose for embarking on his Gospel was christological?

3. What can you read from the apologetic character of the Matthean texts in the First Gospel?
4. Do you think that the controversy stories in Matthew is a clue to the 'make-up' of the Matthean community?

3.2 Some Conflict Passages in the Gospel

3.2.1 Matthew 9:24

The first conflict passage for our purposes is 9:34, which has a parallel in 12:24, 27. The passage (9:34) falls within the context of Jesus' demonstration of his messianic power and concern for the wellbeing of citizens of the messianic kingdom through healing and exorcism (8-9). He noted that Jesus' healings fulfilled Isaiah's messianic prophecy of the role of the Suffering Servant (Isa 53:4): "When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. This was to fulfil what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "He himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases" (8:16-17). The writers of the Jewish inter-testamental literature spoke of demons as responsible for making people ill just as Matthew carefully implies regarding the healing of the mute demon-possessed man that "After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke" (9:33). As you can see many times in the story of Job, the Old Testament taught that all sickness is the direct or indirect result of sin (cf. 9:5). So, in chapters 8-9, Matthew pictured Jesus as the Messiah who not only would cast out many demonic spirits and heal many who were sick but also one who would remove infirmities and diseases by dying as a substitute sacrifice for sin.

But the Jewish leaders rejected this portrait of Jesus. As far as they were concerned, the so-called miracles of Jesus were a demonstration of his ability to manipulate satanic power (9:34). That is to say he was a magician. Hence, it becomes clear that Matthew was not interested in reporting the miracle as such, but in the confrontation that it produced (Constable 2010:177). This fact becomes even clearer in the parallel passage (12:24-27) where another allegation of using satanic power is levelled against Jesus. If you read both passages closely, you can discover that they are responses to acknowledgements of Jesus as "Son of David." In the first case, two blind men who came for restoration of their sight cried out to Jesus, "Have mercy on us, Son of David" (9:27) and he healed them. Even though he warned them to conceal the miracle, out of excitement, they broadcasted the news of their experience of the miracle from the hands of the Son of David. Since one of the marks of the expected Davidic Messiah was that he would perform miracles (cf. 12:38), to call him Son of David and associate him with such miracles was to confirm him the Messiah.

The two groups who responded to the healings and exorcisms, the crowds and the Pharisees, express both astonishment and doubt about the identity and power of Jesus. In 12:23-24, the amazed crowds asked, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" as you can see, this is an expression of doubtful assertion. The crowds raised the faint possibility that Jesus might be the Messiah, but primarily their question reflected their amazed unbelief. The Pharisees who also witnessed these healings and exorcisms however, out-rightly rejected the notion of the miraculous associated with these activities. As far as they were concerned, magic better explained them (Mat 12:24).

Stanton (1992) compellingly demonstrates that the association of Jesus' exorcisms with magic or sorcery by the Jewish leadership was a commonplace phenomenon in the Jewish world of Jesus' day: "Exorcism is unquestionably the best attested form of magic among the Jews before Bar Kokhba" (p. 178). He cites a number of Jewish literatures which attest to this proposition as we present some of them in this and the subsequent sections. First, Josephus wrote that Solomon composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved, and left behind forms of exorcisms with which those who are possessed by demons drive them out, never to return. He also said he himself witnessed an exorcism carried out with magical rites and incantations by a fellow Jew called Eleazer in the presence of Vespasian (*Ant* 8.45-49).

Statements of the Jewish Sanhedrin, b.Sanh 43a and b.Sanh 107, categorically call Jesus a magician (magos), thus, associating his exorcisms with magic. Origen (Contra Celsum I. 68) was refuting Celsus for alleging that Jesus' exorcisms were as a result of magical powers. In fact, Celsus, a pagan philosopher, called Jesus a sorcerer on the basis of a statement of a Jew which he quotes: "the actions of Jesus were those of one hated by God and of a wicked sorcerer" (Contra Celsum I. 71).

In Matthew's Gospel three times over, the Jews accused Jesus of exorcising by the power of the prince of demons (9:34; 10:25; 12:24, 27). You will notice that when one is talking or writing, the point the person continually repeats is the matter that is of special interest to him or her. This seems to have been the case with Matthew in respect to these accusations of magic and sorcery levelled on Jesus. If you closely inspect Matthew's narrative of his presentation of Jesus' messianic activities, you can see that he places these allegations at strategic positions of that narrative. The first reference, 9:34, is the Jewish leadership's summary dismissal of Jesus' healing and exorcising ministry in the region of Galilee, which Matthew captures in a cycle of miracle stories (chapters 8-9). They seem to have been irritated by the ecstatic praise of Jesus by the crowd in 9:33: "Nothing like this has ever

been seen in Israel." In reaction against this ecstatic praise, the Pharisees said "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons" (9:34). This interpretation is suggested by the praiseworthy tone of the narrative about the chain of miracles Jesus performed in this cycle.

When you move to the next accusation of magic against Jesus in 12:24, 27, you will again find the Pharisees as the arch opponents of the messianic claimant. Notice particularly, Matthew's slant on this point in 9:11 and 9:14 where he emphasises the Pharisees rather than Scribes as in Mark 2:16, 18. Then also notice that in 12:14 Matthew expressly states that the "Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him." This gives you the idea that Matthew's major, or at least, one of his major concerns in this section is to highlight a "developing conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees" (Stanton, 1992:174).

But what was the issue in contest between Jesus and the Pharisees? Obviously, it pertained to the growing popularity of Jesus' personality and political power as a messianic claimant. In other words, the bone of contention was Jesus' claims to have been the Messiah the Jews were expecting as the son of David, which Jesus' miracles tended to confirm. John 11:45-48 makes this clear:

Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. Therefore, the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation'.

Notice that many of those who received either healing or exorcism miracles from Jesus called out to him as Son of David as the two blind men did (Mat 9:27). When the crowds began to also assert, though doubting, the Pharisees became more disturbed about his growing popularity. Acting from this motive, the most plausible thing to do was to discredit Jesus through personal abuse and character assassination. Hence, they charged him with fraudulently using magic in the guise of miracles.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How did the author of the First Gospel align himself with the popular Jewish belief that demon is the root cause of diseases and sickness? Use some texts from the Gospel to prove your case.

2. Do you think that Jesus finally succeeded to eradicate our infirmities and carry away our diseases? Explain this in the context the current sufferings and lamentation in Nigeria.
3. Why must most of the miracles of the Matthean Jesus are subsequently followed by controversies? What are the literary and theological functions of such controversy stories?
4. Read Matt 12:23-24 and contextualise the question of the crowds: "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" What are the possible implications of the question?
5. What is the message from the Matthean triple emphasis (9:34; 10:25; 12:24, 27) that Jesus was accused by the Jewish establishment exorcising by the power of the prince of demons?
6. What was the central interest of the author of the First Gospel in the miracle stories found in the Gospel?

3.2.2 Matthew 10:25

We need to examine the next passage (10:25) together. First, it is Jesus himself who makes reference to the Jewish jibe that he is Beelzebul. He refers to this allegation in the context of his commissioning of his twelve disciples to embark on the campaign to propagate the news of the advent of the messianic kingdom. In 10:16, Jesus began to warn the disciples that hard times awaited them; they were like sheep among wolves. The following verses (17-42) are a series of admonition, encouraging the vulnerable disciples to stand firm and remain resolute in spite of the persecutions they would face. 10:25 therefore, is part of this encouragement to the disciples. Should they be maligned they should take it easy and see it as normal of those who do their kind of work. He, the master of the house experienced it; that means they should expect it even more – that is, prepare their minds for it so they receive no shock when it comes. Notice that in this passage, Matthew pitches Jesus and his disciples against the Jewish authorities in a head-on confrontation. The jibe that he was exorcising by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, was a plough to discredit him as the Messiah he claimed to be and thwart his efforts to realise that kingdom. In the face of such schemes, Jesus empowered his disciples to even multiply his exorcism and healing activities so the presence of the messianic kingdom will be more felt. But just as he himself was maligned so they too will have that experience. The entire context is about this messianic kingdom idea.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you see any christological controversy associated with the series of admonition given to the disciples by Jesus himself (Matt 10:16-42)?

2. What do you think could have been the motive of the Pharisees accusing Jesus of exorcising with the power of Beelzebul?

3.2.3 Matthew 12:24, 27

In this passage Matthew identifies the Jewish authorities as Pharisees and depicts them with a negative view of Jesus. Here, they categorically ascribe Jesus' exorcisms to satanic power (12:24). What is particularly important is that Matthew counters the allegation by declaring that Jesus was acting in the spirit of God (12:18, 28, 31-32). This indicates continuing bitter arguments about the person and power of Jesus. Further, he adds some important contextual information that reveals the motive behind this consistent negative view of Jesus by Jewish leaders. It oozed from the desire of the Pharisees and Scribes to truncate Jesus' bid to realise the messianic kingdom (12:14). He makes this clearer by citing the fulfilment of the messianic prophecy of Jesus' healing ministry, which aroused the jealousy of Jewish leadership (vv. 17-21). Thirdly, in this passage, Matthew clearly makes Jesus' response a self-defence against the accusation of magic levelled against him. That defence clearly sets Jesus' kingdom against Satan's with which the Pharisees identified it (vv. 25-29). Fourthly, the Beelzebul accusation was specifically made as a response to the comment of the crowds that Jesus' miracles suggested he was the Son of David (vv. 23-24).

With these additional pieces of information, it becomes easy to see what Matthew is trying to do. He wants his readers to have no doubts that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah that Israelite prophets, like Isaiah, predicted his coming. According to the evangelist, this information supersedes the counter identity the leadership of the Jews were painting of Jesus, namely that he was a magician.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Analyse the self-defence strategy of Jesus in Matt 12:24, 27 against the accusation by the Pharisees that he possessed demonic powers that lend him forces to work miracles.
2. Examine the Matthean Beelzebul controversy (Matt 12:24, 27) as a literary device to set the two kingdoms (of God and of Satan) in conflict?

3.3 Jesus Was a Deceiver

In two passages (Mat 27:63-64) the Jewish leaders called Jesus a deceiver, usually in reaction to the public acclamation of Jesus as Messiah. Hence the Pharisees join the chief priests to appeal to Pilate for

security at Jesus' tomb. The aim was to deter his disciples from stealing his corpse and claiming that he rose from the dead as he was deceiving people that he would do. In Matthew's assessment, the conspiracy of the Jewish leaders was part of a grand fraud. They formulated a tale that Jesus' disciples had stolen his corpse while the guards were asleep to distort the facts about his resurrection. Matthew emphasised the fact that it was being spread among the Jews up till the time he was writing (28:15).

In this passage is found again the wholesale personal abuse and character assassination launched by the Pharisees against Jesus to thwart his messianic claims. This again depicts Matthew's intent to correct the distorted portrait of his community's Messiah by presenting the erroneous portraits and countering them with positive pictures of Jesus. Against the allegation that Jesus was exorcising by the power of Beelzebul the evangelist said no, the Messiah was acting in the power of God. Similarly, he dispels the allegation of deceit preferred against Jesus by hurling back a counter accusation of fraud at the Jewish leadership. Rather than Jesus being a deceiver as they claimed, Matthew said, the Jewish leadership were the fraudsters who distorted the truth of his resurrection with lies backed up with bribery.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Identify the contradictions of the Jewish establishment in their actions to negate the resurrection of Jesus (cf Matt 27:63-66; 28:11b-15)
2. Do you see any christological motif in the story of the resurrection as reported in Matt 27:63-66; 28:11b-15?

3.4 Disputes against Jesus' Claim to be the Son of David

You have seen that the controversy depicted in the First Gospel is about the identity of the person of Jesus Messiah. One of Jesus' major messianic titles was "Son of David." Matthew shows that Jewish leaders challenged Jesus' descent from David as his heir. So, he carefully traces Jesus' Davidic sonship and as his heir and shows that Jewish leaders were wrong in depicting him otherwise.

There are nine passages where Matthew identifies Jesus by the Son of David title. Four of these references are connected with Jesus' healing ministry as you saw above. In all four instances, when Jesus was acknowledged as the Son of David, the leaders of the Jews exhibited serious hostility. In response to the Jewish leaders, Matthew insisted that Jesus was the Son of David, the expected Jewish Messiah. This implies

concern to prove his Messiahship against denials of that claim in some quarters.

The genealogy shows that Jesus was adopted in David's royal line; it is introduced as "the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, son of David" (1:1) who is identified as "David the king" (v. 6). The Gentile magicians from the East enquiring of Jesus' birth place identified him as "he who is born king of the Jews" (2:2). This caused surprise in the incumbent king, Herod, and the city people (2:3-4). Consequently, Herod exhibits serious hostility to the new-born king which resulted in a sweeping infanticide. You can see a similar reaction of the city people and Jewish leaders when Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem to conclude his mission (21:1-11).

Why was there such hostility from the Jewish leaders? They saw Jesus' messianic claims as a threat to them (cf. Jn 11:45-48). For instance, his appointment of the twelve marked the formal founding of a new social reality; a visible socio-political intervention, which challenged the existing system to a point his words by himself would have posed no threat. The existing political organisations—Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, etc. understood this action as the usual political process of gathering popular support. That is why they joined forces, planning strategies to put him down (12:14).

Matthew, however, carefully shows that the perception of a political Messiah was not only erroneous but also folly. In his portrait, Jesus was a humble and harmless Davidic Messiah. He was the Messiah of compassionate deeds as the two blind men implied in their cry for help "have mercy on us, Son of David" (9:27-28). Notice also how, in this portrait, Matthew subtly presents two characters of Jesus. Jesus came as Son of David, a humble messianic king. But he is also going to come a second time as "the Son of Man" when he will come in his royal glory. Then, he would sit on his throne and as judge of all, reward each person for what he has done (16:27-28; 21:5; 25:31-46). This means that Matthew understood the Messiah as scheduled to make two comings (parousia Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39).

You will have seen that Matthew has mentioned this idea of a second parousia many times. Christian writers defending the Faith from the middle of the second century imply that non-Christian Jews were challenging the Messiahship of Jesus Christ on grounds that his failure to establish the messianic kingdom contradicted the triumphant Messiah predicted by the prophets. Origen (Contra Celsum II.29) quotes his opponent as saying, "the prophets say that the one who will come will be a great prince, lord of the whole earth and of all nations and armies, but they did not proclaim a pestilent fellow like him (Jesus)." Justin

Martyr in his book, Dialogue refutes Trypho, the learned Alexandrian Jew, who argued that "... passages of Scripture compel us to await One who is great and glorious, and takes over the everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of Days as Son of Man. But your so-called Christ is without honour and glory" (32.1). Such statements indicate that Matthew was addressing similar concerns in his day. In that case, we could say that he was repainting the distorted portrait of the person of Jesus Messiah.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Read through the Matthean genealogy to establish if there is any polemic tone in defence of Jesus' Davidic lineage.
2. Who are the Gentile 'magi' from the East (Matt 2)? Use your dictionary and encyclopaedia to establish whether the word has any relationship with magic.
3. Correlate the two stories of Matthew in 2:1-12 and 21:1-11, and establish the role in the proof of the messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth.
4. Granted that the appointment of the twelve as apostle is primarily of spiritual purpose, could it be possible as well to identify any political implications in the action?
5. Matthew presents two portraits of Jesus Messiah: a humble and harmless Davidic Messiah and the glorious Parousia Jesus. Examine their eschatological implications.
6. Refute the statement that the Christian Messiah is a pestilent without honour and glory.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The major concern of Matthew, as you saw in this and the preceding units, was to prove that Jesus was the Messiah the Jews were promised in the Old Testament. He adduced evidence from the Old Testament prophecies to show that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in his life and public ministry. For political reasons, the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus' claims to the Davidic Messiahship. Instead, they saw him as a magician and deceiver. But a close inspection of the evidence adduced by Matthew in comparison with other early Christian and non-Christian, especially Jewish literature in the early years of Christianity shows that Matthew was probably right in asserting Jesus' Davidic Messiahship.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit is all about Matthew's purpose in presenting a portrait of Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah who was destined to rule the world from Jerusalem. He largely succeeded in accomplishing this purpose,

first, by citing Old Testament messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus and by identifying Jesus with crucial messianic titles in Jewish faith. That is to say Matthew's primary purpose was christological.

We also learned that the motivation of Matthew to set out for the christological project could be seen in the text of Matthew, especially at points where the Gospel depicts conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. We also discovered a kind of personal abuse and character assassination of Jesus by the Jewish leadership. Surprisingly, the Gospel is loaded with claims and counter-claims of Jews and Christians pertaining to the identity and power of Jesus. Each time Jesus was identified as the "Son of David," the Jewish leaders became hostile. This led us to conclude that the Jewish leadership rejected Jesus and the dawn of the messianic kingdom he proclaimed for political convenience.

It is also important that we noted that amidst the polemics, Matthew used the same opportunity to strengthen the faith of his Christian communities in Jesus and validate the multiracial and multicultural character of the church that was being challenged by unbelieving Jews. On the charges that Jesus was a magician, using the power of Beelzebul to exorcise demons and heal sicknesses, Matthew projected a portrait of Jesus as the expected Son of David, the Messiah, who was to be known by, among other features, the miracles he would perform. He equally countered the charge that Jesus was a deceiver with the argument that the Messiah as David's son and master rose from the dead as prophesied. In all, Matthew presents Jesus as a humble and harmless Davidic Messiah, but who will come in glory on the last day.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Cite and discuss two passages in Matthew where Jewish leaders accused Jesus of being a magician.
2. Discuss the basis on which the Jewish leadership called Jesus a deceiver (Matt 27:63-64)
3. How does Matthew's multiple mention of Jesus' second parousia relate to his portrayal of the person and work of Jesus the Messiah?

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UNIT 3 JESUS AND THE CHURCH TODAY

CONTENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have studied the different perceptions the Jews had about Jesus. In this unit, we will be focusing on the concept of the church that Jesus had. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus told Peter, "you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Later, in 18:17, Jesus gave instructions to the community he organised which emphasise communal responsibility and humility. These two passages have become central to most contemporary discussions of the essence, function, and authority of the church. In this unit, you are expected to investigate the church's understanding of Jesus' conception of it as a community that acknowledges God's sovereignty in God's original creation plan. There are two important components in this study. First, you should familiarise yourself with the concept, church, both from Jesus' perspective and in its popular usage. Then you should ascertain whether members of that community are reflecting Jesus' purpose for its creation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define what Jesus meant by the term 'ekklesia'.
- Discuss contemporary understanding of the church.
- Evaluate the contemporary church vis-a-vis Jesus' concept of the community.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 The Church in Jesus' Conception: The *Ekklesia*

In our time, we call the body of Jesus' followers by the English word, "church." But Jesus designated this community as the *ekklesia.* These two terms have different meanings. *Ekklesia* denotes an "assembly" or "gathering" and derives from a Greek verb that means "to call out" or "to summon." In common usage the word applies to the "calling out" of citizens for a civic meeting or of soldiers for battle. It has different etymology from the word church. "Church" is a transliteration of the Greek word *kyriakos*. In classic Greek, it meant "house of the lord" (Thayer, 2000). How then, are we to understand the church in this combination of imports in light of Jesus' usage? Perhaps, if we knew the origin and development of these words, particularly in Christian circles, we might have useful light.

Surprisingly, the origin of the English word "church" is not precisely known. It might have gotten into its present designation for the assembly of Christ's followers through German "*kirche*" or the English "church" which is derived the German cognate. Both words connote a possession of a lord: "house of the lord". Lord in this usage simply means master as in the designation "lord of the manor." Since Christians acknowledged Jesus as their Lord, it might simply have started as a way of referring to the assembly of persons who met in, and maintained the building/house of the Lord, and then was applied to the larger institution consisting of the union of local congregations (Jones, 2003).

The origin of the word *ekklesia* is equally uncertain. Although it is heavily used in both the Old and New Testaments of the people of God (e.g., Deut 4:10; 9:10; 31:30; Mt 16:18; 18:17; Acts 5:11; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:22; 3:10; Heb 12:23), it is not a uniquely Christian word. In the Greek world it had numerous applications, often indicating an assembly of citizens, such as a town meeting. In biblical usage, the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament (3rd–2nd century BC), uses the term *ekklēsia* to translate *qhl*, the general assembly of the Jewish people, especially when gathered for a religious purpose such as hearing the Law (9:10, 18:16) (Britannica 2011).

In the New Testament, we find the same word *ekklēsia* used for both Christian and non- Christian referents. It is used of the entire body of believing Christians throughout the world (16:18), of the believers in a particular area (Acts 5:11), and also of the congregation meeting

in a particular house—the "house-church" (Rom 16:5).
Luke used *ekklesia* several times in Acts with various connotations. In Acts 5:11, he speaks of the congregation of the new-born church in these words:

> "And great fear came upon the whole *ekklesia* and upon all who heard of these things." Stephen described the assembly the children of Israel whom Moses called out of Egypt and gathered them at Sinai, as "the *ekklesia* in the wilderness…." (Acts 7:38).

Acts 19:23-41: Demetrius, the silversmith, summoned the silversmiths and other craftsmen in Ephesus and started a riot against Paul's evangelism successes that threw the whole city into confusion. Luke says the Ephesian mob, who was pagan, came out shouting solidarity cries to Great Artemis of the Ephesians. Some cried out one thing, some another, for the *ekklesia* was in confusion. Luke goes on to describe how the town clerk intervened and rebuked the assembly and asked the rioters to allow the regular *ekklesia* settle their problem. Then, he dismissed the *ekklesia*. You can see th at *ekklesia* is used here in two senses. The first and the third occurrence refer to the assembled mob, while the second pertain to the democratic assembly – the town meeting that deliberated on issues of the town. Both assemblies are not Christian.

In all four Gospels, only Matthew presents Jesus as having used *ekklesia;* only three times in the entire Gospel (16:18; 18:17). The first usage occurs in Jesus' response to Peter's confession that Jesus was the Messiah the people were expecting. Jesus said, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my *ekklesia*" (16:18). This signals the idea of community. Notice how this idea is developed: Jesus speaks of building "my congregation" in his capacity as the Messiah. So "my congregation" means "the congregation of me, the Messiah." Such a community may be seen in the concept of the "remnant" in the Old Testament and especially in the "saints of the Most High" in Dan 7:13 who are represented by the Son of Man as their leader (Marshall, 1998).

The focus of Matthew (16:13-19) is on Jesus' identity as the Messiah popularly being expected. It suggests the idea of the church has some connection with the messianic kingdom that was being expected. Do not forget as well that the idea of 'messiah' conjures up political ideas. But what is that relationship in terms of the 'Church'? Perhaps it means that the foundation of the Church is the content of Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah. It then suggests the association of *ekklēsia* in this usage with the messianic kingdom that Jesus proclaimed.

As found in other contexts, Jesus' idea of kingdom seems to espouse a community that acknowledges the sovereignty of God in their thought and deeds (6:9-13). In the present context, the term, church, is evidently synonymous to kingdom. Notice that since Jesus would have been speaking to Peter in Aramaic, he would not have used the Greek word *ekklesia*, but an Aramaic word for 'community' (Hagner, 2000) such as the Hebrew *qahal*. This also sends an important signal about the meaning of church or kingdom in Jesus' usage.

The idea of community suggested as Jesus' meaning of church is especially seen in Matthew's second use of the term in 18:17. This text concerns a matter of community discipline. Jesus instructed Peter and the other members of the church's leadership to ostracise from the community any member who refused to listen to the church. Notice how the authority given initially to Peter in 16:19 is extended to all the members of the community, thereby putting the power of ostracism in the community as a collective organism (18:18). The statement of Jesus, that 'where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them' (18:19–20) seems to imply that the community is to exercise that authority under the leadership of Jesus. This agrees with his teaching elsewhere that sovereignty belongs to God alone; and all humans only exercise delegated authority in service to fellows.

By this data, it becomes clear that the church in Jesus' conception is essentially "the community" of those who believed his message of the dawn of the messianic kingdom and enlisted in the government of God. The choice of *ekklesia* was appropriate. The word links two Greek words to mean "a called-out assembly." The gospel proclamation called lost people out of the world to gather together in a unique fellowship under Jesus. Believers, who were so joined together, formed a new community: a community committed to Jesus and to the radical lifestyle expressed in God's Word. It is the allegiance of the new community to Jesus that makes its members different from those "outside"—in the world (1 Cor 5:12; 6:4).

Jesus' idea of community can also be seen in the fact that he directed his kingdom mission toward Israel and was concerned with the group's renewal as the people of God. His goal in this endeavour was "the renewal of the people as a community and not simply the repentance of individuals" (Marshall, 1998). Evidence for this is found in Jesus' statements about Israel. He for instance, used imagery which spoke of Israel as a vine yard which needed new tenants to care for it. He also refers to his disciples as a "city" (Mt

5:14), brothers (Mt 23:8), and as members of his family (Mk 3:34–35). All these are communal images. This communal language of Jesus serves enough as a build-up to the idea of his disciples as *ekklesia* as congregation or community of God's people.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. From the study, we noticed that the *ekklesia* and *kyriakos* are of different etymology, and yet depict the same reality from different perspectives. Discuss their similarities and differences.
2. Discuss the special usage of the word *ekklēsia* in the LXX. Do you see any difference between the usage and in that of the secular Greek?
3. List the possible usage of '*ekklēsia*' in the New Testament. Which among them agree with the understanding in the LXX?
4. If the idea of *ekklesia* is connected the idea of the messianic kingdom, and if the Messiah conjures up political ideas, can you conclude that the idea of church implies also some level of political activities?
5. What does the Matthean Jesus imply in his usage of the word '*ekklēsia*'?
6. What are the implications of the Marshall's (1998) statement that the goal of Jesus by using the word *ekklesia* as found in the First Gospel is a communal language that implies "the renewal of the people as a community and not simply the repentance of individuals"?

3.2 The Church in the Post-Easter Church's Perception

In our discussion of Jesus' conception of the church in the preceding section, you saw that it was characterised by the idea of community in unique relationship with Jesus. This is significant for our understanding of the concept, church, also in the Post-Easter Church's and in our contemporary perception of it. In this section, you will see that the relationship of the church to Jesus continued to be central to the idea of *ekklēsia* by which Jesus called his followers from the beginning. This centrality is brought out in a variety of images. But for our purposes we will discuss only three of these many. Emphasis will be placed on their meaning and place in Jesus' original conception of his messianic community. The three images are those of "church" as Christ's body (Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, Eph 4), temple, and family or household.

The Church as the Body of Christ

Paul depicted the *ekklēsia* as the body of Christ (Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, Eph

4). This indicates that the church is a living organism, not a religious organization (Marshall, 1998). It is a vital living extension of Jesus himself. The common elements stressed in these passages include interdependence, spiritual gifts, allegiance to one another, and love. Dependence of members on one another is stressed in view of tendencies, such as their differing gifts or their different cultural and social backgrounds, which might cause them to pull apart from one another.

Members of the body of Christ have different functions of service to one another, just as parts of a human body do (Rom 12:4, 5; 1 Cor 12:4, 5, 7-11; Eph 4:11). When love, intimacy, and involvement in one another's lives dictate the quality of interpersonal relationships in the body, it grows and builds itself up in love (Eph 4:14-16). You can see that the emphasis in all these references is on the quality of relationships and mutual responsiveness that believers have with each other (Rom 12:3–8; 1 Cor 12:12–31). This is probably the import of Jesus' statement about the group meeting together "in my name" (Mt 18:20), which is precisely what "church" signifies. It then, means that the essence of the church is in this imagery of a body.

You may also agree with me that the Church as the body of Christ occupies a highly significant role in the purposes of God. You can see this in Eph 1:23, where Paul asserts that Christ's rule over all things is for or on behalf of the church. The same is true in Eph 3:10 which states that through the *ekklēsia*, the wisdom of God is made known even to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places (Eph 3:10). The Church as the body of Christ is described as Christ's fullness in Eph 1:23.

It is also important to note that every living body needs a head to function. As such, Christ is the head of the Church (Eph 1:22). This demands individual and corporate recognition and submission of the community of believers to him (Eph 5:23-24). The idea of a body naturally extends to that of the Church as a family and then as a temple.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. In Paul's description of the 'Church' as the body of Christ, some common elements are among his stress points. List these

elements and see whether all of them are present in the church where you worship presently.

2. How do you "mean that the essence of the church is in this imagery of a body"?
3. Explain the statement that the Church as the body of Christ depicts the fullness of Christ (Eph 1:23).

The Church as a Family or Household

The entire New Testament presents God's people as a family, using a cluster of terms, drawn from family life. Jesus characterised the members of his new creation community as the children of God called to live together as brothers and sisters (5:22-24; 12:50; 18:15; Lk 17:3). That means they are a household, an idea which the post-Easter Church understood as emphasising the correct behaviour of members in the household of God (1 Tim 3:15; Gal 6:10; Eph 5:22–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1; 1 Tim 3:1–13 and 5:1–20).

According to Paul, the idea of Christians' corporate identity as a family stems from God's fatherhood of the community (Eph 3:14-15). Several other passages present God as "Father" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:9), and those who are redeemed by Jesus Christ as God's children (Gal 4:1–7), with Jesus Christ being the firstborn of the family (Rom 8:29). Every person who believes in Jesus becomes a child of God (Gal 3:26) and is expected to love other believers as brothers and sisters (1 Th 4:9; 1 Pe 1:22; 1 Jn 3:11-15; 4:7-21).

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he describes the church as a household of God (1 Tim 3:15). Members are to treat one another as they would treat the members of their own family (1 Tim 5:1–2). They are to care for one another in need (1 Tim 5:5, 16). It is in this respect that Paul admonished Timothy to consider elderly people as fathers and mothers and the younger ones as brothers and sisters (1 Tim 5:1-2). This implies that in becoming children of one Father, each believer has been drawn into God's universal family of faith and thus into family relationship with one another. It is a picture of the *ekklēsia* "called-out community" as a network of intimate, loving relationships that is best known of the family. As in any family, relationships are maintained by members behaving appropriately to one another.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. The entire New Testament presents God's people as a family, using a cluster of terms. List these terms, and relate them to the life of your current church.
2. Can one speak appropriately of a 'post-Easter Church' within a theological context? What is the challenge of using such expression to depict the Church?
3. The understanding of the church as a family evokes a kind of relationship among the members of the community. Explain such relationship to a disputing community, and encourage the community to use same to resolve its conflict.

The Church as the Temple of God

The idea of the church as God's temple can be traced to the apostolic times. It is most developed in Paul's writings. The Christian community probably drew this idea from its self-understanding as a new people of God – a central theme that Matthew develops. In the wake of the disagreements that eventually led to their parting of the ways, the Christian community began to see itself more and more as distinct from the synagogue. A major point of difference was the way of worship. As Jesus intimated in John 4:21-24, the Christian worship ought to be more of spiritual essence and not be defined on one's relationship to the Temple. The meeting of the people of God as a body already creates a temple of worship because God is in their midst (18:20). Therefore, the Christians, as the Church of God, see themselves as the very temple of God.

It will also be very interesting for you to note that the temple, in the OT tradition, is an extension of the tabernacle, the dwelling place of Yahweh. The theology of Exodus would depict the temple as "the tent of the Lord," or "the tent of meeting." As the Israelites gradually transform themselves from a nomadic to sedentary life "the tent of the Lord" becomes "the house of the Lord." But the tabernacle was a make-shift arrangement for God to meet with his people during their wilderness wanderings. When they settled in Canaan, it was replaced with the temple – a more permanent structure of God's residence with his people. The temple thus, became the house of the Lord where they met with God to receive his blessings and protection (Isa 6:1; Jer 7:1-14).

'The tent of meeting' (ca 125x in the OT) with emphasises on the tabernacle tells you that it is the place where God and human beings meet. It is there that people could approach God with sacrifice, and God

could communicate his revelations to them. Human beings would approach God with sacrifice, and God would respond with forgiveness, revelation, and answered prayers (Ex 25:22; 2 Chr 6).

The followers of Jesus saw the temple as symbolising the realities we now possess in Christ. They believed that his death on the cross was self-sacrifice which Jesus entered the true temple in heaven and offered the sacrifice that forever reconciles us to God. Jesus himself thus becomes the place of meeting (Heb 9-10) and the earthly temple has become merely a shadow of the heavenly one. As people who have been commissioned to continue Jesus' mediating role on earth, the church has become the dwelling place of God among men; the living personality of the believer replaces the beautiful but cold stone of the temple (1 Cor 3:16). Moreover, the church, the body of Christ itself, united by the bond of peace, is growing into a holy temple for the Lord (Eph 2:21).

God now lives both among and within his people, not in buildings but in a living community (1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16–18; Eph 2:20–21). You can see this metaphor in the many references to building (16:18; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10; Jude 20). To understand the church as the place where God dwells by his Spirit demands that Christians must live in unity with each other and in holiness of life. This is necessary because under the new covenant, all believers have become priests (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), to actualise the unfulfilled design of the old covenant (Ex 19:6). It is under this condition that the church can continue to reconcile the world to God.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the socio-religious history of the terms "the tent of the Lord," "the tent of meeting" and "house of the Lord." Do you see any relationship among the terms?
2. Use any good bible dictionary and search for the meaning of the word "tabernacle", and reflect on the possible implications of associating the term with 'the tent of meeting' by the wilderness generations of the Jews.
3. It is said that nature abhors vacuum. If the early Jewish Christian could no longer have any direct relationship with the temple, what then could replace that ever-important religious reality among the Christians?

4. It has been argued in this section that Jesus himself is the place of meeting (Heb 9-10) and the earthly temple has become merely a shadow of the heavenly one. Do still see any sense for Christians to invest so much resources in church-building project?

5. Explain how unity, peace and holiness of life is central to the understanding of the Church as the Temple of God.

3.3 Jesus' Concept of *Ekklēsia* and the Face of the Contemporary Church

The face that the church wears today largely differs from the way Jesus conceived it and as the early post-Easter church perceived it. This divergence in conception is reflected in the church's relation with the world or state wherein it is no longer easy to find any dividing line between a community called out of the world and that world itself. The *ekklēsia* was called the temple of God to stress the unity and holiness of that gathering (1 Cor 1:10–17; 3:5–9) as the dwelling place of God (1 Cor 10:16–17). Consequently, it was exhorted to separate from all that is unclean (2 Cor 6:17 citing Isaiah 52:11). O'Brien (1998) leads us to see that in 1 Cor 12:12–27, Paul impressed on the *ekklēsia* members that they have mutual duties and common interests which they must not neglect (1 Cor 12:27). The one body has true diversity—a multiplicity of functions as a real body does (1 Cor 12:17–20). Each member with his or her gifts is necessary to the other members for the good of the body as a whole (1 Cor 12:17–21).

You can see that central to all this is the idea of coming together for a purpose. That purpose is made clear in a number of ways. First, it is to edify (to build up) the members (1 Cor 14:3–5, 12, 17, 26; 1 Thess 5:11; Eph 4:11–16) to worship God (Rom 12:1; Eph 4:13). The well-being and strengthening of the congregation is a fundamental aim of the members gathering together. Evident also is the ordering of social life found in the imagery of household or family with which the *ekklēsia* is described. A central concern of Matthew's Gospel particularly, is to express what it means to be the people of God in the light of the coming of the Son of God. This is tied in to the idea of the dawn of the kingdom of God. Notice how Matthew strongly emphasises spiritual kinship. Jesus gathers a remnant to replace Israel as God's true children who obey and follow Jesus in doing the Father's will (6:9). They are Jesus' true family (12:46–50), and the relationship they share with each other in the *ekklēsia* is characterised as a kinship (23:8) or as a household (18:1–4; 23:9). This takes priority over ties of natural kinship and the responsibilities of family life (8:18–27; 10:21–23, 24–25, 34–39).

As you can see from the Gospel of Matthew, belonging to God's household brings with it obligations in the realm of family life as part of obedience to the commandments of God's Son, such as the demand of restraint and control immoral of relations, the prohibition of divorce and the duty of filial piety (Mt 5:27–30, 31–32; 19:3–9, 19).

All this negates the internal schism, divisions or party spirit that characterizes the Church today. There are today, many different denominations, conflicting beliefs and doctrines, most of them leaning, not on the voice of Jesus, but on the authority of the human persons behind them. Denominations are multiplying almost daily because of doctrinal differences, egotism, political factors, race, national divisions, and a host of other factors. And this tendency probably stems from contemporary conceptions of the *ekklēsia* as *kyriakos* "church." The idea of *kyriakos* as "belonging to the lord" elicits proud identity in people, so that many members of the institutional church today join the *ekklēsia* as a club and have no sense of its spiritual demands. Edgar Jones (2003) suggests that this probably started when Constantine converted to Christianity. He legalised Christianity and began to use the Faith as a political tool to govern the state. Since then, governments worldwide tend to use the institutional church in the same manner. In Nigeria, the Church has become the safe haven for political campaigns.

This situation is to be expected since *ekklēsia* has become *125yriakos*. The called-out assembly has re-merged with the world (the collection of all human beings outside the congregation, together with their institutions). The world's institution that has the most telling effect on the character of the *ekklēsia* today is the "nation." The nation has subsumed the *ekklēsia* into one of its departments to promote its political interests. You see, the Church and the state draw their membership from the same pool, namely "the people." The Christians who make up the various congregations are also, first of all, citizens of the nation and the nation commands loyalty and allegiance from every citizen. This includes, of course, all people associated with the Church. Members of the Church of today, being also citizens professing patriotic duties, have made the modern Church one of the most supportive institutions of the nation. For instance, politicians who hold high office find it expedient to join one of the many religious congregations in the land since this gives them a certain aura of godliness that helps win elections in a democracy, or to retain the loyalty of their subjects in a monarchy. The nation also supports the Church in various ways. For example, the state makes and enforces laws needed to preserve the freedom of religion which the Church enjoys. In Nigeria, the state even sponsors religious pilgrimages. This mutually beneficial relationship between the two institutions – Church and State – drawn from the same pool, "the people," has blurred the dividing line that Jesus drew between the *ekklēsia* "the gathering of called out people" and the world.

It is however, expedient and necessary that we strive to maintain the distinct identity that Jesus gave us as a congregation of God's people just as the early Jerusalem Church understood and designated itself as "the *ekklēsia* of God" (1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal

1:13; plural in 1 Cor 11:16, 22; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:4). This equates the idea of a new creation community (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) and the new humanity (Eph 2:15, 4:23–24; Col 3:9–10) by which the early Christian community identified itself. It is the eschatological community of salvation (1 Cor 15:9; cf. Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6) with a spiritual and socio-religious function of reconciling those who once were divided in Christ (Gal 6:15; Eph 2:11–22; Col 3:10–11). But this requires rejecting worldly standards. It means redefining the concept of unity, different from the secular standard of "judgment and divisiveness" (Levison 1998; cf. Gal 6:15; cf. Eph 2:11–22). Similarly, individual rivalry has no place in the new creation. The *ekklēsia* can perform this social function effectively only when it remains an *ekklēsia* not a *126yriakos*.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the fundamental purpose of the *126yriakos* as the body of Christ.
2. Do you subscribe to the claim that the face that the church wears today differs largely from the way Jesus conceived the Church to be?
3. Analyse the practices in your current church and endeavour to trace them back to the apostolic period.
4. Is it theologically appropriate to argue that the idea of *kyriakos,* that is, "belonging to the lord" is responsible to most of the current challenges facing the Church?
5. Following closely the argument in this section, would you align with author that it was Constantine who taught the world the political manipulation of the Church?
6. Use your knowledge of Church-State relationship to evaluate the statement that Church today serves as a department of the nation
7. Is it to benefit of the Church to maintain a distinct identity from State?
8. Explain the concept of the Church as an eschatological community.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Jesus conceived and designated the messianic kingdom-movement he founded as *ekklēsia,* the idea of a congregation of people called-out and gathered by God to be a kingdom of priests for him. The ecclesial assembly's mission is to reconcile those who were hitherto divided. In this regard, the present designation of the *ekklēsia* as "church" distorts the God movement in both essence and function. The situation is worsened by the influx of filial members in the body and household of God, which has moved it from its original creation-community

conception and clothed it with the club connotation. But from all indications, the *ekklēsia* can perform its social function effectively only when it remains an *ekklēsia* not a *kyriakos*.

5.0 SUMMARY

The metaphors used in reflecting our thought condition the way we think and behave. This is very true of the way contemporary Christendom has designated the body of Christ's followers. Whereas Jesus conceived and designated the messianic kingdom-movement he founded as *ekklēsia*, meaning a congregation of people called- out and gathered by God to be a kingdom of priests for him, Christendom calls it "church." But the term, church, pertains to something possessed by a lord, not a congregation of 'the called-out ones' as *ekklēsia* means. It seems evident that this new and differing designation of the assembly of Jesus' followers was informed by the filial character that the Assembly assumed over time; especially from the time Constantine converted to Christianity and began to use the institutional church as an instrument of governance.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What is the meaning of ekklesia and how is it used in the New Testament?
2. What is the meaning of "church" and how did it come to designate the body of Christ's followers?
3. Comment on the terms, bod y of Christ, household, and Temple as th ey relate to the concept, church.

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UNIT 4 THE MISSION OF JESUS

CONTENTS

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    3.2 Jesus' Mission Statement
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we had the opportunity to discuss the various symbols of the Church used by the Matthean Jesus. Closely linked to the concept of the Church is the mission of Jesus. Hence this will be the focus of this unit. Talking about Jesus' mission is invariably talking about the Matthean theology. By Matthean theology, we mean the record of the life of Jesus as presented by the author of the First Gospel. We will examine some of the literary elements that embedded the theology. It would be argued that among the literary elements are the author's *emphases* and *patterns of thought*. These patterns and themes centre on the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. We shall also examine Matthew's depiction of Jesus' mission—his story of the emergence of the countercultural organization called the Church.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the study, you should be able to:

- Evaluate the implications of Jesus' self-identification
- Explain the import of Jesus' mission statement
- Identify Jesus' mission programme

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 Jesus' Self-understanding

You saw in the preceding unit that the Matthean Jesus came to establish or confirm the kingdom of heaven on earth. We came to

understand that that kingdom is the countercultural organisation called the Church. Most scholars do not agree with the idea of the Church as the kingdom of God. Yet Matthew seems to weave the two ideas – church and kingdom – together in his discussion of the mission of Jesus. In this unit, we shall take a closer look at these concepts and other related ones so as to have more informed understanding of Jesus' mission as Matthew perceived it. To be specific, we shall consider Jesus' self-identification in light of his mission, Jesus' mission statement, and his outworking of that mission program.

While Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi (Mat 16:13-20), he asked his disciples about his identity in the minds of the public, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" The answer he received indicates the public opinion that he was seen to fulfil the people's long- standing expectations of some form of saviour figure, who would possibly be a prophet. Some identified him with "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets" (Mat 16:14). When he further probed his disciples' own opinion about his personality, Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Jesus lauded Peter's view, which was possibly that of the entire inner circle of The Twelve, and then tied in to that confession the fact that he would build his messianic community on that Rock, Peter.

Lest you misunderstand Jesus, Peter in this metaphoric usage is not necessarily a proper name as the history of the Church's interpretation of Jesus in this passage has shown. Jesus was fond of using metaphors to drive home important messages in this manner. For instance, in the very context that he addressed Simon bar Jona as Peter, he also called him Satan. At another time he told his disciples elsewhere that "You are the salt of the earth; … You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (5:13-14). You can agree that Jesus never meant that either Simon or the disciples were literally Satan and salt or light of the world. Peter's behaviour was only likened to that of Satan. The disciples only had to play the roles of these substances in preserving and guiding the world in the right direction of the counterculture Jesus established and elected them to continue.

As you can see, Jesus approved of Peter's identification of him as the Messiah of Jewish expectation. Thus, his questioning his disciples about people's perception of him was a way of self-identification. It was a way of clarifying the air about who he was; he was the Jewish Messiah. But what did it mean to be a Jewish Messiah in Jesus' day? The question about Jesus' identity was intrinsically associated with his mission, namely of establishing a messianic community, a new creation community that would acknowledge God's sovereignty in all its social and spiritual life. This is clear from the fact that immediately after the

air was cleared about his identity, Jesus unrolled the final lap of his mission programme: "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that "the Son of Man" must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day" (16:21).

What could have influenced the saying that "the Son of Man must…suffer many things" (16:21)? Two Old Testament passages come to mind: Dan 7 and Isa 53, which reflect the thoughts of Jesus' contemporaries. Dan 7 expresses one of two key messianic ideas among the Jews of Jesus' day. In one of those strands the Messiah was conceived politically. In the Psalms of Solomon, the Messiah is presented as a human prince from the line of David (Ps Sol 17:21, 32). But in more visionary-prophetic literature, the Messiah is portrayed as a celestial being, "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13; 1 En 52:2), or "the Son of Man" who was concealed from the beginning, and the Most High One preserved him in the presence of his power; but would be revealed at the end of time when he will establish a heavenly kingdom and judge the nations (1 En 62:5-7; cf. 48:2, 6). In 4 Ezra 12:32; 13:26, he is even a military Messiah.

There is scholarly disagreement in respects of these Messiah-Son-of-Man ideas, which tends to becloud one's understanding of Jewish expectations in the period between the exile and Jesus, consequently Christian expectations. Aune (1983) holds that it is the earthly Messiah, the Son of Man of the Israelite prophets that has become the transcended Messiah of the apocalyptists, first so applied in Dan 7:13. But for the Daniel reference, this position appears acceptable on the basis of the attestations from the literature of this period cited above. If you still remember the argument of Marshall (1990) that the Jewish expectation took two forms. In some circles, they were hoping for the coming of Elijah to announce and prepare men for the end (Mal 4:5-6). In others, a prophet like Moses was being expected on the basis of Deut 18:15-22. He was to perform the messianic task of restoring the paradise conditions of the wilderness period.

Jesus seems to have put these two ideas together in his answer to John the Baptizer's question whether he was indeed the Messiah of Jewish expectation (11:2-19; Lk 7:18-23). Interestingly, Jesus earlier claimed these messianic prophecies as fulfilled in him (Lk 4:18-22). If this is so, it suggests that these ideas possibly developed into an expectation of the messianic figure quite early. One thing is however, certain: the Jews were looking forward to a political Messiah having been under foreign rule for over seven hundred years by the time of Jesus and John.

It was amid these growing messianic hopes that John the Baptizer suddenly arose from no known background in an ascetic mode of life, announcing the nearness of the inauguration of the messianic kingdom, as he called for repentance (3:1-12). Simultaneous with the Baptizer was another prophet (or prophet-like figure) called Jesus of Nazareth (Jn 1:45). He first came to public notice in Palestine through his miraculous activities around the Galilean towns. Thus, attracting public attention, he devoted his short-lived ministry to teaching the Jews about the kingdom of God. John introduced him to the Jewish public and thence Jesus became the dominant messianic prophetic figure among the people. This messianic identity of Jesus was indeed, Matthew's premier concern in writing his Gospel. The theme runs through the Gospel in a variety of ways.

You can see with me that the context in which Jesus identified himself and his mission was where and when he was discussing about the kingdom of God on earth. Matthew only hints about the subject context in his depiction of Jesus' concluding statement about Peter's cowardice behaviour. Concluding his response to Peter's advice that he should refrain from giving himself up for the cross, Jesus said, "the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, … Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (16:27-28).

Mark supplies further and so more enlightening information on this occasion. The way he presents the story is that after Jesus was identified as the Messiah of Jewish expectation, he told his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem where he would consummate the messianic kingdom he launched. But he went ahead and informed them about the huddles created by Jewish antagonism, the ultimate of which would be his death on the cross. Although he assured them of his victory over the cross, his disciples were uncomfortable with the idea of the cross. Peter out-rightly rejected it and Jesus had to rebuke him for setting his mind not on God's interests, but man's (Mk 8:33). Jesus explained further that that interest of God is the establishment of his kingdom. The accomplishment of his messianic kingdom mission was therefore, a necessity that demanded self-denial from every member and would-be member of the kingdom community. Jesus emphasised that "whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mk 8:35). That further idea therefore, is Jesus' linkage of the messianic programme with the gospel. You will better understand this when you consider Jesus' messianic programme as contained and lived out in his mission statement.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How do you mean that 'church' and 'kingdom' are two ideas in the First Gospel that are weaved together?
2. Examine some of the ecclesiological implications to argue that the name Peter was not, in first instance of the usage by the Matthean Jesus (16:18), a proper name but a metaphor.
3. Search for the meaning of 'metaphor'. Then identify 10 passages in the Gospel of Matthew where the literary device of metaphor is applied and give the real meaning of the passages.
4. Explain the background of the saying of the Matthean Jesus that "the Son of Man must…suffer many things" (16:21).
5. What is the difference between the messiahship of Jesus and the expected messiah of the Jews?
6. How true is the claim of Jesus that some of those who were standing with him during his life on earth would not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (16:28)?

3.2 Jesus' Mission Statement

As you saw above, Matthew presents Jesus' messianic manifesto or mission statement in the context of John the Baptizer's imprisonment. The gospel, the good news, that Jesus brought is about the dawn of the kingship of God. Both John (3:1-2) and Jesus (4:17, 23), who appeared as prophets in the fashion of Elijah and his Old Testament stock, proclaimed the coming of this kingship as good news. Matthew specifically says of John that he came to prepare the way for Jesus as Isaiah had predicted (3:3). Along the way however, John was imprisoned on account of his proclamation of the dawn of this kingdom and the necessity of people's reorientation of their values on the kingdom values (chap 12). When he became disturbed about the turn of events as they affected him and Jesus seemed numbed about it, he enquired whether he had been right in heralding Jesus as the messianic king (11:2-3).

Jesus answered John by pointing to John's messengers the works he was doing: "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind received sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel (good news) preached to them" (11:3-5). Elsewhere, Jesus clearly outlined these works of compassion as the core of his messianic manifesto (Lk 4:18-22). Matthew explained these works in the following words: "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people" (4:23).

Incidentally, the Jews had in all their history associated these works with the Messiah and his kingdom when it would finally be established (Lk 24:19-21; Jn 6:14-15). Their experience in Jesus' mission was, therefore, good news; the rule of God—the government of God was now among men.

The import of all this to both Jesus and his contemporary Jews was that the coming of the kingdom of God was the coming of bliss for the people who hitherto were oppressed, suppressed, and affronted in their own land. This was the good news. But Jesus added a new perspective to the kingdom concept. The kingdom of God was, for Jesus, primarily the community of those who acknowledge God's sovereignty in their thought, speech, and deeds. He identified that community as the *ekklēsia* (called-out ones) (16:16; 18:17). It is this community that Jesus set out to establish. That is, his mission was to craft a community of people who would relate to God and fellow man on the terms of God's own government which subordinates every ruler to a servant status under the sovereignty of God. That is where justice and mercy and faith dictate daily life (23:23). The essence of that government of God in Jesus' conception was therefore, the accomplishment of the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven (6:9-10).

Matthew's fulfilment motif vividly paints this picture. He begins his story of Jesus' messianic mission by identifying him as the son of Abraham, through David (1:1). By implication, he identifies Jesus' mission with God's plan of a new creation community through the patriarch, Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). The Adamic and the Noahic communities failed to attain to God's standards of relationships, among men and with God. God then chose one man to learn his ways and inductively transform the rest of the human race to conform to God's relational values and standards (Gen 12:1-3). But this project was again marred by Jewish misapprehension of the divine idea of "election" and consequent violation of the covenant undergirding that relationship (2 Kgs 17:1-23). Instead, the Jews saw themselves as a favoured race that God destined to rule the world through them (Dan 7:13-28).

A process was then started for a new people of God, a new creation community or counterculture (VanGemeren, 1990) as a community of people who recognise the sovereignty of God and do his will (Jer 31:31-34). As France (1989) puts it, "where the will of God is done, there is the kingdom of God" (p.147). The Messiah, on arrival, raised that new people of God. He identifies them as "the Kingdom of Heaven" (32x); "the Kingdom of God" (5x); "the Kingdom" (11x); and ultimately as the *ekklēsia*—"Called-out people" (16:18; 18:17) with the connotation of separation. Matthew's narrative, thus, captures Jesus' concentrated teaching as a strategy for ideological reorientation of the people about

this kingdom as a community of people who live under the government of God. There are discourses for kingdom ministers on "The Character of the Kingdom" (5-7; 10; 18-20) and a plenary session focused on the masses (11:1 - 16:1).

In this teaching, the kingdom is not a visible territory, but a relational concept which outlines how people relate in the government or rule of God (13:3-23). It is a countercultural revolutionary concept which gradually, but effectually reorients human thought faculty and behaviour toward the dignity of the human person and the common good (13:31-33; 36-43). It is the inauguration of a different worldview, one which "holds everything in light of relationship with God". The kingdom is a counterculture (13:44-46) with the character of a household (13:51-52), which encompasses all those who are worthy of it (13:47).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Following closely the Matthean account of John the Baptiser sending his disciple ascertain the identity of Jesus, would you conclude that even John himself did not recognise Jesus as the Messiah? (Matt 11:2-3)
2. List some of the signs that the Jews in the time of Jesus would associate with the Messiah?
3. The understanding of the Kingdom of God by Jesus and his contemporary Jews are similar and dissimilar. Tabulate the similarities and differences.
4. How did Matthew through his fulfilment motif in the genealogy prove the messiahship of Jesus, the Son of Joseph
5. Explain the statement that messiahship of Jesus is as a consequence of broken covenants.
6. How would you delineate the spiritual boundaries of the kingdom preached by Jesus?

3.3 Jesus' Mission Programme

How did Jesus accomplish his messianic mission programme? According to Matthew, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people" (4:23). In this statement, Matthew captures Jesus' mission in a three-point agenda: first, Jesus went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the good news of the dawn of the government of God. Second, he was also teaching in their synagogues to reorient their thought to accord with the essential nature of the kingdom and the way of life in it. Thirdly, Jesus was validating his claims for the dawn of God's rule through his acts of

compassion, which positively affected the people's life, so that he won their confidence in him (4:23). Matthew adds that as Jesus was doing this, he spontaneously emerged the masses' leader. Matthew underscores this fact by reporting: "Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him" (4:25). The Messiah thus confirmed himself the Son of David, the expected true "ruler who will shepherd my people Israel" (2:6; cf. 2 Sam 5:2; Ezek 34:22-25). This hints at why Jesus appeared as a "messianic threat" (Storkey, 2005:84).

The manner Matthew also captures Jesus' motivation for the mission well portrays him as the expected messianic king of Israel. Jesus saw his con temporaries "distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd," felt compassion for them (9:36), and embarked on the mission of their salvation. It is on these prongs that we can understand Jesus' messianic programme in Matthew's presentation. From Matthew's perspective, Jesus came to redeem Israel and that redemption was holistic. That means it was social, political, and above all spiritual. In this manner, he went a step ahead of his contemporaries' perception of the purely political Messiahship and therefore, mission programme of Jesus. More a more spiritual than political Messiah, Matthean Jesus came to reorganise the creation community that had been marred by man's disobedience of God in Paradise. Life in this community was devoid of rancour, bitterness, and in fact, diseases of any form.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the three-point agenda of Jesus as presented by the author of the First Gospel.
2. In line with the portrait of the Matthean Jesus, what are the striking points in his actions that confirmed him the expected Messiah

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have learned that in Matthew's view, Jesus came to inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. This was Jesus' mission and he accomplished it through proclamation of the dawn of that kingdom, teaching about the kingdom, and sharing the kingdom life of bliss with citizens of the kingdom. This latter was done in various acts of compassion, which included healing, exorcism, and feeding of the needy.

5.0 SUMMARY

According to Matthew, Jesus came to establish or confirm the kingdom of heaven on earth. That that kingdom is the counterculture called the Church of Christ. Matthew weaves the two fundamental ideas in Jesus' mission – church and kingdom – together in his presentation of that mission of Jesus. In this unit, we considered Jesus' self-identification in light of his mission, Jesus' mission statement, and his outworking of that mission program. By our analysis, it was clear that Jesus saw himself as the Messiah the Jews were expecting for many centuries. The mission of that Messiah as Jesus explained to his disciples and his forerunner, John the Baptizer, was to re- establish the kingdom of God on earth. He did this by announcing the advent of that kingdom and making its presence felt among the people by providing for their spiritual, health, and material needs.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discuss the mission of Jesus according to Matthew
2. How does Matthew outline Jesus' mission?
3. According to Matthew's view, how did John the Baptizer feature in Jesus' announcement of his mission manifesto?

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MODULE 3 THE UNIVERSAL RELEVANCE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Unit 1 The Theology of Matthew
Unit 2 Matthew's Primary Missionary Focus: Israel
Unit 3 Matthew's Universal Missionary Focus: The Gentiles
Unit 4 The Relevance of Matthew to Africa

UNIT 1 THE THEOLOGY OF MATTHEW

CONTENT

1.0 Introduction
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3.1 Matthean Christology
3.2 Matthean Ecclesiology
3.3 Relationship between Matthew's Christology and His Ecclesiology
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You are welcomed to the last module in this course. We discussed in the first module the preliminary issues relating to the First Gospel: the authorship, date and purpose of the Gospel. In the second module, our attention was drawn to the portrait of the Jesus of Matthew and the questions revolving round the historical Jesus. In this last module we will be examining issues relating to the universal relevance of the Gospel of Matthew. There is no gainsaying that the Gospel of Matthew has universal relevance. This is surely evident in the theology of the Gospel.

Many indicators in the Gospel show that the evangelist has special interest demonstrating the universal relevance of the Christ and his new creation community. That means Matthew's theology is predominantly christological and ecclesiological. In this module therefore, you are expected to understand the thinking of Matthew concerning the person and work of Jesus Messiah in crafting a new people of God with a universal character to replace the exclusivist theology of the Jews of the time of Jesus. This is what we call Matthean theology.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss Matthean Christology
- Write critically on Matthean Ecclesiology
- Identify the relationship between Matthean Christology and his Ecclesi ology

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 Matthean Christology

You already know that the Gospel of Matthew is a record of Matthew's understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus. This is what we called Matthean theology. It is Matthew's beliefs and the interpretation of the beliefs in the religious and cultural milieus of the period as expressed in his book. That means Matthew's theology is not a single thought developed as a single theme throughout the book. Rather, it is a number of ideas – his beliefs – woven together to produce a picture of Jesus and what he stood for and what he accomplished as world Messiah among the Jews. In studying Matthew's theology therefore, attention is focused on those particular contributions and shaping of tradition that one can observe in the Gospel.

You may notice that many of the themes covered in this module will seem to be repetitions. That is true. But they have different foci here, and you should pay close attention to grasp that new focus. For our own purposes, we shall particularly consider two themes in Matthew's theology: (i) christology and (ii) ecclesiology. We shall also make some statement on the relationship between the two themes.

Matthean Christology pertains to what Matthew believes about the person and function of Jesus called Christ. According to Matthew, this Christ is from the lineage of David (1:1–17), hence the Son of David (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 3; 21:9, 15, 42). Matthew at once traces Jesus' Davidic ancestry through Joseph (1:20) and asserts that Jesus was not, in fact, the biological son of Joseph. Therefore, the Matthean Jesus is Son of David by adoption but Son of God by conception (2:15; 3:17). Such thinking makes no case for the Jewish mind, for a child became a man's son not so much by physical procreation itself as by acknowledgment on the part of the man. In Matthew's view, the Christ is primarily the Son of God and only secondarily the Son of David (Mat 22:41-46).

There is an important thread running through this seeming complex of titles. It relates to the identity and function of the person of Jesus called Jesus Messiah. The titular use of Christ, Son of David and Son of God, all represent his messianic status. The term "Christ" is an anglicized form of the Greek word *christos*, which was originally an adjective meaning "anointed (with ointment or oil)" (Hurtado, 1998). When Greek culture came under the influence of ancient Judaism and Christianity, Christos acquired a special religious significance accorded this term in Judaism and Christianity. Such influence probably came through the Septuagint (LXX) where *christos* translates *mashiach* (ca 45x) Among the Jews, persons so anointed with oil were installed in a special office such as king or priest (e.g., 1 Sam 9:15–16; 10:1, Saul; 16:3, 12–13, David; Ex 28:41, Aaron and his sons (1 Chr 29:22: Zadok and Solomon). Anointing therefore, signified a commission or approval of the affected person for the office or responsibility.

In the Gospels, each evangelist applies *christos* to Jesus, but with particular nuances and emphases. Matthew has particularly noteworthy distinctions in his use of the term. Its occurrence in the earliest part of the Gospel (Mat 1:1, 16-17) links Jesus of Nazareth with the history and hopes of Israel. Because of the thwarting social and political circumstances of the exile they came to experience, the Jews in Matthew's days were anxiously expecting the anointed one, who would save them from the yoke of their pagan overlords (Dan 7:12, 18-28; 1 Enoch).

The OT had begun to shape this expectation with its promises of a "branch" which God would raise for David (Jer 23:5–6; Isa 11:2–9). Such a Messiah had a function, namely "to reconcile the people to their God, re-establish Israel in the land, cleanse the land of foreign oppressors as well as unrighteous Israelites, and cause peoples from all over the earth to flock to Jerusalem where they would behold the glory of Yahweh" (Baur, 1998) (2 Sam 7:10–16; Jer 23:5–8; 30:21–22; Ezek 37:21–23; Zech 3:8–10; 6:12–15; Hag 2:21–22). Micah contributed to the expectation by identifying Bethlehem as the home town of the Messiah (Mic 5:2). The Messiah thought of in these circles was entirely a mortal man, who would inaugurate an everlasting dynasty through his descendants (Ps 89:3–4; Jer 17:25; 33:15–18).

During the Hasmonean period, the hope of an anointed royal figure who would deliver Israel became more prominent as Jewish literature of the period evidences (Pss. Sol. 17-18). In this work, the "Son of David" will (1) violently cast out the foreign nations occupying Jerusalem (17:15, 24–25, 33); (2) judge all the nations of the earth (17:4, 31, 38–39, 47) and cause these nations to "serve him under his yoke" (17:32); (3) reign over Israel in wisdom (17:23, 31, 42) and righteousness (17:23, 28, 31,

35, 41; 18:8), which involves removing all foreigners from the land (17:31) and purging the land of unrighteous Israelites (17:29, 33, 41) in order to eliminate all oppression (17:46) and gather to himself a holy people (17:28, 36; 18:9).

After the death of Herod in 4 BC, many messianic pretenders emerged in Israel with the principal goal of overthrowing Herodian and Roman rule. They include Judas, the son of Ezekias (Ant. 17.10.5 §§271–72; J.W. 2.4.1 §56); Simon, servant of King Herod (Ant. 17.10.6 §§273–76); and Athronges (Ant. 17.10.7 §§278–85). Josephus clearly indicates that they aspired to be Israel's king (J.W. 2.4.1 §55; Ant. 17.10.8 §285). Matthew presents Jesus as yet another messianic claimant, though with a difference. In this frame of mind, many occurrences of *christos* in Matthew have a royal connotation. He identifies the new-born child as the "king of the Jews" (2:1-4). The Christ that Matthew so identifies is the son of David (22:41–45), the one and only teacher of his disciples (23:10; cf. chaps. 5–7, 10, 13, 18, 23–25). But in 16:16, where Peter acclaims Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matthew extends his perception of the anointed one by acknowledging his exalted divine status. The Messiahship of Jesus becomes even clearer in Matthean thinking when he presents those who were tormenting Jesus as challenging him to "Prophesy to us, you Christ!" (26:68; cf. Mk 14:65; Lk 22:64). And finally, in a uniquely Matthean wording, Pilate twice asks what the Jews wish him to do with "Jesus who is called Christ" (27:17, 23). The way Matthew presents these materials makes the question of Jesus' Messiahship quite explicit.

Underlying all this presentation is Matthew's understanding of Jesus as the saviour-king of a new people of God. This idea comes out in a number of ways. First, Matthew identifies Jesus as Son of David ten times in his Gospel (1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:42). This is six times more than Mark's and Luke's four times each. Marshall (1998) rightly observes that Matthean "Jesus is not simply a son of David; he is the Son of David." As you have seen in previous units, to call Jesus "Son of David" is to identify him as the Messiah-king in the line of David who was sent by God specifically to the people of Israel to bring them salvation and deliverance (cf. Lk 4:18-22; 24:21). Matthew stresses this idea on the lips of people who were either healed by Jesus or had need of him to heal them (9:27; 15:22; 20:31). It is this connotation of royal identity intrinsic in the identification of Jesus as the son of David that often irritated the Jewish leadership so that they took offence against him.

As David's son, Jesus fulfils the promises God made to David regarding the eternal reign of David's "offspring" (e.g., 2 Sam 7:12–16), and he acts as the unique agent in bringing the government of God to the earth.

In Matthew's view, he does that by teaching and living the kingdom life evident in his acts of compassion. That rule or government of God is therefore, characterized by salvation and blessing. In this wise, Matthew's Davidic Messiah contrasts with all the streams of popular messianic expectation among the Jews in his day. Like the other Jewish messianic claimants, Jesus was popularly acclaimed the Messiah (cf Josephus *J.W*. 2.13.4 §259; *Ant*. 20.8.6 §168). But unlike them he refused to establish a political kingdom; he dissociated himself from political ascendancy or military conquest (cf. Jn 6:14-15; 18:36). The Davidic Messiah instead showed his royal might and power by caring for the needs of the poor and oppressed (4:23-24; 9:36), and by suffering and dying as a substitute for his people and so becoming their salvation (20:28).

The Matthean Jesus questioned the Pharisees about their understanding of the Christ, the son of David. He also proved to them that the Christ is not simply a son of David. He ist primarily the Son of God (22:41–46; cf. Mk 12:35–37). The Son of God in this connection is the eschatological figure in whom God has drawn near to dwell with his people (1:18–25; 3:17; 16:16; 27:54). This was something new in the history of Israel. It marked out Matthew's emphasis on the *ekklēsia* as a new people of God; indeed, a counterculture. Although Matthew does not anywhere mention it in his Gospel, the implication is that the old apostate Israel was being replaced by a new Israel that would be obedient to God. This is reflected in the entire Gospel, especially in the preaching of repentance by John the Baptizer as preparation for the coming messianic kingdom (3:1-3) and Jesus' kingdom teaching (Mat 5-7; 10; 13; 18-20). It is this emphasis on the character of the new people that informed Matthew's interest in Jesus' teaching on the *ekklēsia* so that he alone reports it in his Gospel (16:18; 18:17-19). This countercultural character of the new people is well captured in Matthew's understanding of Jesus' intentions concerning the *ekklēsia*.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How do you mean that the theology of the Gospel of Matthew is not a single thought pattern or theme that runs through the book?
2. Why is it that the biological fatherhood of Jesus could not make an issue for Joseph again after the encounter with his angel of the Lord (1:19-24)?
3. Justify the claim that in Matthew's view, the Christ is primarily the Son of God and only secondarily the Son of David.
4. Discuss the significance of anointing in the context of a "commission" or "approval of the anointed for an office or responsibility".

5. In line with the Old Testament tradition, enumerate the character and functions of the anointed one that Jews were expecting.
6. What was the mental picture of the 'anointed one' during the Hasmonean period?
7. Name some of the messianic pretenders that emerged in Israel after the death of Herod in 4 BC. What were their principal objective? Did they finally achieve that objective?
8. State the characteristics that made the Matthean messiah different from other messianic claimants.
9. Prove that Matthew highlighted the messiahship of Jesus in the trial of Jesus more than the other evangelists.
10. Demonstrate vividly that the Matthean Jesus is not simply a son of David but *the* Son of David. What are the implications of the appellation: The Son of David?

3.2 Matthean Ecclesiology

Jesus' entire mission was principally on the creation of a community which he described as the *ekklēsia* (16:16-18). It is this community of the called-out ones that formed the basis of the church which developed after Easter and Pentecost. You will see that in Matthew's view, this community is the earthly expression of the kingdom of God. And for him, the kingdom of God is not so much a territory but a realm where the will of God reigns. This is the import of the Lord's prayer (6:9-13) as a model for his community. You will notice that prayer, especially in Matthew's version, emphasises the kingship of God. Central to that prayer is the doing of the Father's will. But kingship is not exercised in the abstract but among the people. Moreover, the concept of the kingdom of God implies a community. It refers to a community of people who acknowledge God as king and in whom his gracious power is at work.

Matthew seems to understand Jesus' teaching on the kingship of God from the backdrop of Jewish concept of the kingdom of God. It is based on their theocratic ideology in which the ideal kingdom, indeed, the only kingdom is that of Yahweh. Nel (1996) maintains that "the kingdom of God" in Jewish conception "denotes the divine and absolute rule of Yahweh over the entire creation in which chaos is a constant threat". Consequent on this understanding, the Jews were critical of the idea of monarchy; they saw it as rebellion against the theocratic lordship of Yahweh (Klappert, 1976:374; cf. Jdg 8: 23; Hos 3:4; 7: 3; 13:19-11).
Only in the time of David was the monarchy legitimized in Israel because now it was seen as a sacred occasion. By the depiction of 2 Samuel 7:11; 23:5 and Psalm 132 Yahweh elected David, covenanted with him and established Israel's monarchy through him (2 Sam 7). But even then, King David only consequently, became the servant of

Yahweh (Ps 132) and Zion became the dwelling place of Yahweh and his earthly seat of power from where he will rule the whole world through his servant, David.

This portrait of the Davidic king gave birth to various messianic hopes (cf. Isa 9: 5-6; 11: 1-5; Hag 2: 22-23). It is evident that the Jews, as descendants of David, claimed the promises of Yahweh made to him of an everlasting dynasty (Alexander 1998:114-119). They were spurred on by Jewish visionary prophets (apocalyptists). Daniel particularly speaks of a time when "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom [for the Jews] that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever" (Dan 2:44). In Dan 7, the Davidic king is modified by the visionary prophet who saw the king of the kingdom, the Son of Man, as a transcendental heavenly being who was to come and deliver God's people all over the world (Dan 7:13-28). But this was a misdirected zeal. In biblical times kingship connoted a wide range of attractive ideas. The king was responsible for all the functions of modern government – the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. In essence, the king provided whatever leadership and control that were required to govern the people. His power to exact taxes from his subjects gave him unlimited wealth (cf. 1 Sam 8:11-18). This is probably what enticed the Jews to begin looking forward to occupying this position in world politics. Matthew's Christ and Son of David set out to correct this Jewish erroneous perception of the Davidic kingdom. The kingdom of David is pre-eminently, the kingdom of God wherein David is only God's servant with responsibility to lead fellowmen to do the will of God.

In Matthew's view, this kingship of God, which means God's sovereignty over the community that does his will, was central to Jesus' mission as his teaching sessions emphasise. As proclaimed by Jesus, the kingdom of God had continuity with the Old Testament's promise of a house for David as well as with Jewish visionary prophetic thinking of a Davidic Messiah, but differed from them in important respects. For example, it signified God's eternal assertion of his sovereignty rather than an earthly kingdom, its scope was universal rather than limited to the Jewish nation, and it was imminent and potentially present in him rather than a vague future hope, being inextricably connected with his own person and mission. This is clearly seen in the Lord's model prayer (6: 9-13), if well understood as a teaching on the kingdom of God. In Jesus' model (Bruner, 2004) or formula (Jeremias, 1971) prayer, the sovereign king of the universe is God, the father of all. As the supreme ruler, all other rulers are subject to him. They are his servants, serving him through the people they lead by virtue of the authority he has delegated to them. Thus, leadership is service. The leader (or king) is the

servant of both the supreme ruler (God) and of those whom he leads (people).

The teachings on the kingdom the Sermon on the Mount is about how people of every age live when they submit themselves to God's will. The structural analysis of the Sermon makes it clearer. Thus,

- Jesus begins by describing the values of a person living a kingdom lifestyle (5:3-12).
- He goes on to provide illustrations, showing how inner values find expression in kingdom lifestyle (5:17-42).
- Jesus gives a discourse on religious hypocrisy: its description and overthrow, to transform the character of his subjects (6:1-18).
- Following this is a discourse on kingdom perspectives (6:19-34).

Having condemned religious piety that is little more than ostentation, Jesus warns against the opposite sins of greed, materialism, and worry that stem from misplaced and worldly priorities. Instead, he demands unswerving loyalty to kingdom values (vv. 19-24) and uncompromised trust (vv.25-34).

- He then teaches on how we should relate to other kingdom citizens as brothers and sisters and reject every claim of a right to judge or control them (7:1-14).
- Instead of relying on human leaders, we should rely on the simple words of Jesus and commit ourselves to obey them (7:15-27).

You can now see why the prayer focuses on the sovereignty of God and man's obedience to God's will; it seeks to reorient Jewish royal ideology on Jesus' royal ideology which emphasises obedience to God's will in community. By the light shed by this analysis, you can also see why the opening designation establishes the kind of God to whom prayer is offered: He is personal and is thus, to be addressed as "Our Father in heaven", which is to be sure, an adoration. That he is "our Father in heaven" reminds us of his transcendence and sovereignty (NIV Bible Commentary CD-Rom) and of the parental character of God's relationship to the citizens of the kingdom.

Notice that Matthew's emphasis is on the three imperatives, which some (Jeremias, 1971; Bruner, 2004) see to be requests or petitions about God and his glory and further three about ourselves and our needs. The imperatives are expressions of a feeling of awful admiration and love to God. They form a fitting address to the king or a person of substance as was done in that culture and even ours today. Thus, the first imperative, "let your name be sanctified" corresponds to the "homage in word (acclamation) and gesture (*proskynesis*)" (Jeremias, 1971:198)

addressed to kings such as "may the king live forever." The next two imperatives thus, confirm the sovereignty of God. The first of these two, "Let your kingdom come" imposes the necessity of the reign of the king. Its emphasis is that it is impinging for humanity to subject itself to the sovereign control of God. In truth, this is an expression that God's rule be recognized in the countercultural community as indeed the second of the imperatives, "let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" makes it clear. You may have observed that the second imperative stands in apposition to the first. That is because only when the king, God, is thus, properly addressed that we can put before him any requests we have. This is common knowledge: you do not expect any favours even from your local community chief or governor when you do not recognise his authority over you.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What is the role of the Lord's Prayer for the *ekklēsia* of Jesus Christ?
2. Discuss the Jewish concept of 'the kingdom of God' in the Old Testament traditions.
3. Demonstrate how the Jewish aversion for the monarchy as a form of government was represented in the Old Testament.
4. How and why was the monarchy legitimized in Israel in the time of David?
5. Describe the Danielic understanding of the 'kingdom' and the 'king', who will rule over the kingdom.
6. It has been argued that the kingdom of God as preached by Jesus shared some common elements with the Old Testament promise of Yahweh dwelling in the house of David. State the similarities and differences.
7. What is the nature of the leadership envisaged in the Lord's Prayer?
8. Review the structural analysis of the Sermon on the Mount as presented in this section. Underline its strength and weakness
9. Examine the 'three imperatives' associated with the Lord's prayer and identify their place in the day-to-day lives of the people.

3.3 The Relationship between Matthean Christology and His Ecclesiology

The theology of Matthew as presented in this unit has two prongs, namely christology and ecclesiology. Christology details Matthew's thinking about who Jesus, called the Christ, was, what he stood for, and what he did. Our analysis revealed that by the titles he identified Jesus, Matthew knew him to be the saviour- king or Messiah whom the Jews

long awaited. The Matthean Jesus qualified as that Messiah of Jewish expectation because he was first and foremost, the Son of God and only secondarily adopted Son of David. As at once divine and human, Jesus fulfilled both the transcendence and human qualities of the Messiah in Jewish expectation.

Central to the expectations of both Old Testament prophets and the later visionary prophets was that the Messiah on arrival would re-establish the eternal throne of David and restore the paradise conditions of the people of God. Matthew sees Jesus as fulfilling this primary function of the Messiah. He identified the stump of David, collected the remnant of Israel, and founded the *ekklēsia* as a community living the life under the government of God. In so doing, the Messiah accomplished the foundational and fundamental responsibility of restoring the lost kingdom of David, which is invariably the kingdom of God. Herein is the relationship between Matthew's perception of the Christ and his teaching on the countercultural community called the *ekklēsia*.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What are the two prongs of Matthean theology? Explain them to a colleague who is eager to know the purpose why the author of the First Gospel wrote.
2. Show clearly how Matthew used his ecclesiology to prove the messiahship of Jesus.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As you have seen, theology is one's thinking about how God thinks about and relates to man. From this premise, Matthean theology is his emphases and patterns of thought which guided him as he shaped his story of the life and work of Jesus. That means Matthew's theology is not a single thought developed as a single theme in his Gospel, but a weaving together of his beliefs to produce a picture of Jesus and what he accomplished as world Messiah among the Jews. According to Matthew's theology therefore, Jesus the Nazarene was the Messiah that the Jews had been expecting for centuries. He fulfilled all the requirements of this office; for he was the transcendent Son of Man and the expected Son of David by adoption in the family of Joseph. Above all, he fulfilled the expected messianic role of restoring the lost Davidic kingdom in its universal character by founding the *ekklēsia*.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learned that Matthew's theology has many strands. Two of its fundamental and foundational strands are his christology and ecclesiology. Christology details Matthean thinking about the person and function of the Messiah or Christ, while h is ecclesiology pertains to his beliefs about the Messiah's formation of the countercultural community that lives under the government of God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Matthew at once traces Jesus' Davidic ancestry through Joseph and asserts that Jesus was not, in fact, the biological son of Joseph. Comment on this apparent contradiction.
2. Trace the development of Matthew's messianic idea from the Old Testament prophets to the time of Jesus, the Nazarene.
3. How did Jesus both share and differ from his contemporaries' messianic expectations?
4. What is the *ekklēsia* in Matthew's theology?

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UNIT 2 MATTHEW'S PRIMARY MISSIONARY FOCUS: ISRAEL

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew is all about Jesus and his mission in the world. Matthew defines that mission as both focused on Israel and universal in scope. These foci are captured in Matthew's carefully designed mission discourse (9:36-10:39) and the Great Commission (Mat 28:18-20). In previous units you were made to understand that If you are to understand the evangelist you must think of him first of all as a Jew who believed that his Jewish faith has not been abolished, but rather fulfilled in Christ. Matthew's community was predominantly Jewish Christian and they found themselves in a difficult position. On the one hand they had to defend their faith before the non-Christian Jewish community, which criticised them for abandoning the faith of Israel. On the other hand, they knew that they had become part of a new entity that united them with Gentile Christians. The challenge they faced was to demonstrate that their faith was a continuation of the Jewish Faith spelt out in the OT scriptures and at the same time show that it is a new direction of that Faith as defined by the Christ. In the present unit and the following one we shall examine what informed Matthew's view of Jesus' mission in this manner and how he worked it out in his Gospel as the mission discourse and the great commission show.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss Jesus' Mission Discourse and the Salvation of Israel
- Explain the Reconciliatory and Restorative Nature of Jesus' Mission
- Identify the Challenges on the Mission-field: Israel's Rejection of Jesus and the Need for a Global Mission

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 Jesus' Mission Discourse and the Salvation of Israel

You can have more informed understanding of Matthew's perspective of Jesus' mission if you consider his overall plot as concerned with Jesus' desire and conscious effort to re-establish God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven (6:9-10). You have already seen that that kingdom of God in Matthew's view is the Church of Christ, the ecclesial assembly of people called and gathered by God to be part of God's Humanizing Movement in and for the world. You can see this in the fact that from the outset of his public ministry (4:17). Matthean Jesus announced and enacted God's government (His supreme control over nature and the supernatural world) in words and actions. Both of these embodied God's healing and restoration of creation to its paradise condition as he explained to John the Baptizer (11:4-5, but completed in 12:18-22; cf Lk 4:18-22.). It is this task that Jesus bided his followers to do both in the mission discourse and the great commission. Both the mission discourse and the Great Commission are the way Matthew captures Jesus' definition of the Church's responsibility. That is, for Matthew, Jesus' mission is the same as the ecclesial assembly's mission to announce the nearness of God's reign as good news and to undertake its healing and restorative ministry (cf 10:7-8). But this has two levels. There is the level of the Jewish Christian community when the Church was almost one hundred percent Jewish. And then, there is the level of the universal Church. In this unit you should focus attention on the level of the Jewish church which was the primary target of Jesus in crafting a people for God's new creation community.

Of all the evangelists, and the New Testament writers for that matter, Matthew alone focused Jesus' mission on Israel. This is evident in the way he appeals to the Old Testament to validate his messianic interest as you saw before. But Matthew's interest in focusing Jesus' mission on the Jews is evident in many other ways. His Gospel depicts a more

restricted Jewish Christianity. Guthrie (1970) lists a number of texts that easily support this stance. Matthew emphasises that not one jot or title of the law will become invalid (5:18-19); the Scribes and Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses and their instructions are to be observed (23:2-3); Matthean Jesus enjoined the fulfilment of the commandments (Mat 19:17ff; 23); he encouraged the payment of the Temple tax (17:24ff); and also expects his disciples to fast, keep the Sabbath, and offer sacrifices as in the Jewish tradition (Mat 5:23f; 6:16ff; 24:20). From another perspective, the Matthean Jesus was sent only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24); his mission assistants (the disciples) were thus, similarly, to restrict their missionary outing to these "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:6) which Jeremiah (50:6) identifies with Israel, God's people. As was emphasised in previous units, Matthew's presentation of Jesus as the Son of David, the Christ, and his triumphant entry into Jerusalem were all meant to focus his Jewish Christian community's attention on Jesus as the one who fulfilled their national aspirations. Those Jewish national hopes, you will remember, included the restoration of the sovereignty of the people of God and indeed, the establishment of God's government over the entire created world headquartered in Jerusalem.

And for Matthew, the constitution of the new people of God, now the members of his Christian community, marks the peak of God's plan to craft a new covenant people as Jeremiah prophesied:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "They will not teach again, each man his neighbour and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer 31:31-34).

Matthew's reason for seeing Jesus' mission in this manner was probably to underline the fulfilment of Old Testament covenant promises in Jesus' person and work. You have seen that those promises were made to Israel. For Matthew, God's purposes for his people, Israel, reached their climax in Jesus. One important way in which Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament is that he embodied Israel as God's creation community in his person and the new community he founded; that is the Church. To

demonstrate this, Matthew for example quotes Hosea 11:1 in 2:15 "Out of Egypt I called my son." This passage talks about Jesus' flight from Herod's sword to Egypt and his return after Herod's death. In its Old Testament context in Hosea, it referred to the exodus of Israel from Egypt. That is to say Matthew saw Jesus as completing the story of Israel. His story takes up the story of Israel in God's salvific plan where it was left off.

See how this thinking comes out. Israel is described in Ex 4:22-23 as God's son, the same way Jesus is also described by Matthew (2:15). Both contexts are dealing with the sojourn and eventual return of a son of God. It was customary in Jewish thought to talk of an individual in corporate terms. Jacob who was renamed Israel was often described as God's son in this manner: "... I will make them walk by streams of waters … For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn" (Jer 31:9). The same line of thinking underlies Matthew's quotation of Jeremiah (31:15) in 2:17-18. This refers to the weeping of Rachel over her children who were taken in to exile in Babylon. Rachel was Jacob's second wife. The use of her name here is a depiction of Israel's women weeping for their exiled children. That is a corporate use of the name just as Israel is addressed as "my firstborn son." Similarly, the messianic Son of Man in Dan 7:13-14 is spoken of as a corporate representative of the people of God. The kingdom identified as the everlasting kingdom of the Son of Man becomes the kingdom of the saints of the Most High (Dan 7:18, 24-27). As you saw many times in previous units, Matthew identifies Jesus with this Son of Man. That makes it easy to understand him. In Daniel's interpretive vision the Son of Man is a transcendent heavenly being; a Son of God. Jesus is therefore, that Son of God whom the visionary prophet envisioned as "one like a son of man" who received the everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of Days, destroyed all earthly kingdoms, and established his sovereignty over all dominions of the earth.

In this manner, the Son of Man embodies his community, the Saints of the Most High. Elsewhere, Israel is described both as the saints and the people of the Most High God (Ps 34:9; Acts 9:13, 32, 41). Thus, since Matthew saw Jesus as the Son of Man in Daniel, he could also very easily associate him with Israel whom that Son of Man embodied.
In Matthew's view, Jesus' mission on earth was to re-establish God's government of his creation community, and you have seen that that community is Israel. This is why he began his story of Jesus' mission by locating Jesus in Israel's genealogical tree as the son of David through Joseph (1:1). By implication, he is identified with God's plan of a new creation community through the patriarch, Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). In Matthew's view, the Jesus story is a continuation of an ancient story begun by historians of the Jewish prophetic tradition – the Old

Testament. This story is detailed in documents of the Old Covenant of Yahweh with the Jews where it has its origin. He thus, saw the birth of Jesus as integral to the life struggles of this new creation community. It was prefigured by the situation in the time of King Ahaz which Prophet Isaiah (Isa 7:10-14) relates (1:22-3). This son of a virgin signified God's presence with his new people (Immanuel) for the purpose of their salvation – as their shield and help in crisis situations.

The entire Gospel of Matthew is therefore, plotted on the messianic motif, which for Jesus' contemporary Jews, was a failed project, but for Matthew and his countercultural community, it was a great victory of truth over falsehood, good over evil. In Matthew's plot Jesus' messianic mission proper began with John the Baptizer, an ascetic prophetic forerunner, preparing the way in fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the eschatological messianic mission (3:1-17). He was proclaiming the dawn of the messianic kingdom: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (3:2) and administering to people a baptism as a sign of their repentance (3:11) and enlistment into the kingdom community. Crowds of Jews came from all walks of life (3:5). Even the least expected persons, the Pharisees, presented themselves as potential members of this counterculture. However, because of their apparent insincerity, the Baptizer warned them, that there is no half-way in the kingdom business (3:7-12). This note of suspicion becomes a very central motif throughout the Gospel as is particularly evident in the controversy stories. In this plot, the baptism scene was the platform on which the messianic forerunner introduced the Messiah to the public when he came to receive baptism "to fulfil all righteousness" (3:13-17).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Draw some concrete examples from the Gospel of Matthew to demonstrate that the missionary focus of the author of the First Gospel is on the Jewish nation.
2. What do you think was trying to achieve by dedicating the missionary activities of Jesus to the Jewish nation?
3. Use some text from the OT to prove that Matthew presented Jesus as completing the story of Israel.
4. Name some persons in the Old Testament that were treated as corporate personalities, and the literary and theological roles they play in the Gospel of Matthew.
5. What is the significance of Jesus' baptism in relation to his messianic mission?

3.2 The Reconciliatory and Restorative Nature of Jesus' Mission

You must have now noticed that according to Matthew, the establishment of the kingdom of God through Jesus' mission was God's way of reconciling his people and restoring them to their original status as his people. This is seen clearly on his emphasis on the law. The covenant establishing Israel as his people was validated by the law which demanded the people's unreserved obedience and observance of the covenant statutes, commands, and precepts (Ex 19:5-6). Along the way, however, Israel derailed and strayed (Ps 119:176). Isaiah (53:6) captures this fact in his popular servant song: "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." Consequently, the Holy Nation and Kingdom of Priests lost its status and position in God's salvation programme and became slaves (1 Kgs 17:1-25). God's declaration of his intent for a new covenant with these wayward children emphasised their reconciliation and restoration (Jer 31:). Again, Isaiah captures it well:

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from my sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow. "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; … Then I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning; After that you will be called the city of righteousness, a faithful city." Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant ones with righteousness. (Isa 1:16-27)

Matthew espouses this idea of God reconciling and being with his people in his use of Isaiah's prophecy of Immanuel (Isa 7:14; 8:8; cf. Matt 1:23). In Jesus (Yahweh saves) God is reconciled with his people and has saved and now lives among them. Since God is perfect, the people must therefore also be perfect (5:48). They must exhibit a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20). The kingdom community ethics demands of the citizens justice and mercy and faithfulness alongside the religious duties of sacrifice and rituals (23:23).

Look at another indicator of Matthew's idea of reconciliation and restoration. According to him, Jesus presented his mission as that of Isaiah's Suffering Servant (8:17; 12:17-21) and Daniel's Son of Man (10:23; 16:27-28; 24:30, 34; 26:64). In this light, Jesus not only fulfilled

or completed Israel's story; he transcends national Israel and so filled up the gaps created by Israel's limitations. France (1989) can lead you to see that Matthean Jesus saw himself as something greater than even the most important elements in Israel's story. These "include the central features of Israel's national life and constitution, her kings, prophets, wise men, priests and temple" (France, 1989:210). The import of these statements is not only that in Jesus, Israel as a corporate entity of the people of God has found its fulfilment, but that in Jesus, Israel is perfected.

The idea of perfection refers to Israel's restoration to the status of a holy nation and kingdom of priests which God gave them as his covenant community (Ex 19:5-6). But they lost this through disobedience and apostasy. The meaning is that, Israel failed to live up to their reputation and responsibility, but Jesus fulfilled all righteousness (3:15). Righteousness in Matthew is a term meaning covenant faithfulness, obedience to God. Christ had fulfilled all righteousness. He had been perfectly obedient to the Father's will. He is, therefore, qualified as, and has become that covenant that Israel, as the people of God, was supposed to be. Thus, Jesus is the new and perfect Israel. It means also that those who accept and follow Jesus and live by God's standards which he taught, form a new community of the restored people of God. As France (1989) notes, this is imbued with "the prophetic notion of the 'remnant' and in the early stages of the growth of the Christian community, this is likely to have been how they understood their role" (p. 211).

Matthew perceived this restored new people of God from the Old Testament notion of *qahal* (congregation) of the people of God. That is why he alone preserves Jesus' designation of that community – the group of restored Israel he gathered around him – as the *ekklēsia* (called-out assembly). This understanding of Matthew's thinking is strengthened by the fact that *ekklēsia* is the word that the LXX used to translate *qahal*.

You can see further evidence for understanding this as a figure of the people of God in the way Jesus defined that congregation, he gathered around him. He gives six contrasts between this new people of God and the people of old (5:21-48). You find him redefining their relational code of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven he mediated on earth with the rabbinic formula: "You have heard that the ancients were told …, But I say to you that …" (5:21-22). That is to say, the righteousness of the new people, the *ekklēsia*, has to surpass that of the old people o f God whom the Scribes and Pharisees represented. In fact, the new creation community is to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect (5:48). This echoes the earlier demand from the old people, which they

could not meet (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26). Notice that such holiness was demanded of the old people because they were separated from the other peoples (Ex 19:4-6; also the references in Leviticus). In the same vein, the new creation community – the holy people of God and so kingdom of priests (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) – is an *ekklēsia*, a people called out o f a larger group for a particular purpose.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Do you subscribe to the claim of the author that Jesus stands as a symbol of reconciliation between God and his people Israel? Use some Matthean texts to elucidate your arguments.
2. Explain how Israel is perfected in Jesus, the Son of David and the Son of God.
3. Examine the relationship between the Greek *ekklēsia* and the Hebrew *qahal* within the context of the Gospel of Matthew.
4. Discuss the concept of righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew.
5. What are the six ethical contrasts made by Jesus between the new people of God and the old?
6. How do you mean that the righteousness of the new people has to surpass that of the old people of God whom the Scribes and Pharisees represented? Use some textual evidences from the Gospel of Matthew to argue your case.

3.3 Jesus' Mission Discourse and Israel's Task of Restoration

Bailey (2003) makes an important point which is a good guide for understanding the present topic. He says, in Matthew, Jesus speaks of the Church not as an end in itself, but as a movement of people gathered by God to be part of the humanizing movement that Jesus launched. With the people he gathered around him, Jesus launched the ministry (4:7) of announcing and enacting the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven. The mission discourse in Matthew presents the ecclesial assembly's mission as also to announce as good news the nearness of God's reign and to undertake its healing and restorative ministry (10:7-8).

Following Bailey's footsteps, the mission discourse begins when Jesus saw the crowds and had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (9:36). You will notice here that the words used to describe the crowds present a people who are weary and dejected, people whose pitiful plight was a direct consequence of having no leader ("as sheep without a shepherd"). This paints the picture of the crowds in Matthew's narrative as needy and in

search of food and healing. In contrast, the ecclesial community is enabled to move beyond its own needs to be in ministry for others. For Matthew, therefore, the ecclesial assembly was congregated to empathize with needy people. Within the confines of the mission discourse, these people were the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was a very big and demanding task. Jesus lamented the shortage of staff to carry it out and prayed for more hands. In 10:1-5, Matthew reveals the answer to Jesus' prayer for workers – Jesus summoned twelve of his disciples and granted them authority to cast out unclean spirits and to heal diseases. Matthew is likely suggesting their transformation from followers/learners to apostles (messengers) sent with authority.

Note particularly what motivated Jesus to take the steps he did. Matthew makes it clear that when Jesus saw the needy crowds, he was moved with compassion. The Greek word translated "compassion" implies a visceral response to the plight of others, allowing one to connect with their pain. This is what was required of Israel as God's countercultural community: "Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isa 58:6-7). In the same vein, the mission of the ecclesial assembly is identification with others' pain which leads to concrete action on their behalf. But this begins with members being drawn into Christ's compassion for needy crowds. In Matthew's view, this is the first step to restoration of the kingship of God that is seen in the relational lifestyle of the *ekklēsia* which is to be a countercultural community.

And so Bailey's (2003) conclusion is in order: "Whenever a Christian congregation takes a close look at the geographical neighbourhood in which it exists (which we designate as "parish"), it discovers weary and dejected people with neither direction nor help from leaders. The challenge is: Will a congregation allow itself to be drawn into Jesus' compassionate care for the people in its parish?" Jesus preached the good news (4:23) to Jews (Galilee and Judea, 4:25) and Gentiles (Decapolis, 4:25). His disciples and the church which they founded (16:18) were to do the same.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Following Bailey's (2003) reasoning, describe the character and role of the church as *ecclesia* instituted by Jesus, the Son of God.
2. Read Matt 10 and show how Matthew has proved that the ethics of the kingdom for the members is service and sacrifice.

3. Do you agree that the appointment and empowerment of the disciples by Jesus is primarily for the reconciliation and restoration of Israel?
4. Analyse the context of Matt 9:36-10:39 and draw out some of the possible implications of the mission of Jesus.

4.0 CONCLUSION

If you look back at what you have studied so far in this unit, you will see that Matthew is making one important point. That is to say, Jesus came for the express purpose of reconciling Israel with God and restoring her to her original status of God's new creation community, a counterculture that acknowledges God's government of all creation. Matthean Jesus accomplished this primary mission by gathering a crop of disciples around him which he used to launch a humanizing movement for Israel. The crux of the matter for Matthew is that the body so called and gathered has the responsibility to extend Jesus' mission to the rest of Israel. And the mission is concerned with reconciling and restoring all Israel to God as his people in their original status.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you saw that Matthew's Gospel is concerned to depict Jesus and his mission in the world. Matthew defines that mission as primarily focused on Israel and only secondarily universal in scope. The primary focus is captured in Matthew's carefully designed mission discourse (9:36-10:39). In that discourse Matthew shows how Old Testament covenant promises were fulfilled in Jesus' person and work. He emphasised that God's purposes for his people, Israel, reached their climax in Jesus. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament in that he embodied Israel as God's creation community in his person and the new community he founded; that is the Church. Thus, Jesus' mission was also the mission of God's new creation community. According to Matthew, Jesus' mission on earth was to re-establish God's government of his creation community, and that community is Israel. The entire Gospel of Matthew is therefore, plotted on this messianic motif. The establishment of the kingdom of God through Jesus' mission was God's way of reconciling his people and restoring them to their original status as his people. Matthew went ahead to say that the reconciled and restored *ekklēsia* has the responsibility to carry on the same task to the rest of Israel. The community is to identify the needy of the crowds and empathise with them.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How does Matthew understand Jesus' mission discourse and Israel's salvation?
2. What do you understand by the reconciliatory and restorative nature of Jesus' mission?
3. What is the role of the Church as Israel in Jesus' mission of restoration?

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UNIT 3 MATTHEW'S UNIVERSAL MISSIONARY FOCUS: THE GENTILES

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
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3.4 The Essence and Course of the Universal Mission
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

You learned in the previous unit that Matthean Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by embodying Israel as God's creation community in his person and the new community he founded, namely the Church. According to Matthew, Jesus' mission on earth was to re-establish God's government of his creation community, and that community is Israel. The establishment of the kingdom of God through Jesus' mission was God's way of reconciling his people and restoring them to their original status as his people. Matthew went ahead to say that Jesus' mission was also the mission of God's new creation community; the reconciled and restored *ekklēsia* has the responsibility to carry on the same task to the rest of Israel. Later in the Gospel however, Matthean Jesus expanded his mission to cover non-Israelite nations. At face value, this universal character of Jesus' mission seems to contradict the particularistic focus. But on close reading of Matthew's Gospel, you will discover that Matthew only understood Jesus' mission as having two phases. Phase one relates to the restoration of the house of Israel as God's new creation community; phase two concerns the extension of that community to the ends of the earth (28:18-20). In this unit therefore, you should concern yourself with understanding on how Jesus' mission was at once particularistic (focused on Israel) and universal (included all nations).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- State God's plan of salvation of the world
- Narrate how God worked out that universal salvation in Jesus' ministry

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 God's Plan of World Salvation

Matthew presents to us God's plan for the salvation of his creation which the devil usurped as it is worked out in the life and work of Jesus Messiah. You have already been told who Jesus is and what he accomplished in his ministry of reconciliation and restoration of God's people to their original status and position in God's plan. At the present, you only need to have more informed understanding of that plan. This is the main concern of the present unit. That means you should know the characters involved in that plan, their roles, the course of development of the plan, and the specific points of the various individuals' participation in the plan.

In Matthew's Gospel we find Jesus, the Son of David, as God's Messiah who fulfils Old Testament promise, reveals God's will and inaugurates the kingdom of heaven through his public ministry, passion and resurrection, and consequently, reigns over the new people of God. By this depiction, Jesus is the main character in God's plan of world salvation and so the focus of our study. McKnight (1998) summarises this idea well. For him, Matthean Jesus is pre-eminently the Messiah (1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2:4; 11:2; 16:16, 20; 22:42; 23:10; 26:63, 68; 27:17, 22), the one in whom the Old Testament promises of restoration and salvation are realised (cf. Mat 2:4; 26:63).

Matthew employs typology to show his community that the Messiah primarily fulfils the Old Testament in his person and ministry (1:1–2:23; 5:17–48). According to Matthew's typological exegesis, Jesus is a sort of new Moses; he brings a new Exodus – the idea of the restoration of the people of God to their original creation status.

Some scholars even find Matthew presenting this Messiah as a kind of new Israel (1:18–2:23; 3:3; France, 1989; Leithart, 2007). For Matthew, however, the new Israel is not Jesus but the *ekklēsia* assembly (16:16-18; 18:17). This is the universal body of believers in the Messiah and his

kingdom course (28:18-20), which started with Israel (10:6; 15:24). Matthew brings out clearly this idea in a number of ways.

Notice that in his view, Jesus' use of *ekklēsia* (16:18 and 18:17) with reference to the messianic-community. He intended to build on the rock (Peter's confession that Jesus was indeed, the Messiah, the son of the living God), thus referring to Israel (LXX Deut 4:10). This implies that the Matthean Jesus conceived of his messianic-community as a counterculture, the "new Israel" of His disciples, in contrast to the "Gentiles" outside. "In short, Jesus is forming an Israel from Israel by gathering around him those who believed in his messianic kingdom, just as Elijah and Elisha had done during the Omride dynasty" (Leithart, 2007:16). By this understanding, the Church becomes the next major character in the Matthean presentation of God's agenda of salvation. Let us find out how this is worked out in the Gospel of Matthew.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Explain the thesis that Jesus is a kind of 'new Exodus'
2. Would you agree with the views of France (1989) and Leithart (2007) that Jesus is a type of a 'new Israel'. Give reasons to buttress your arguments.

3.2 The Old Israel, the Ecclesial Community and the Messiah

Matthew presents the Old Israel, the countercultural ecclesial new Israel, and the Messiah as distinct characters in his storyline. The difference between the new Israel and the old one is in their faithfulness to the community ethos. The new Israel is to exhibit allegiance to God's community ethos beyond the ceremonial approach of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20). According to 18:17 this will be made possible because the new *ekklēsia*, "the called-out ones", will have its own structures of authority to enforce the community's standards. Leithart (2007) suggests that the idea of a called-out group can be traced even to the time of Israel's building of a golden calf (Ex 32). When God became angry with their attitude and decided to wipe them out, Moses intervened by calling out of the camp, those who remained loyal to Yahweh. The Levites alone went out and the rest were punished.

The new Israel, the new creation community, in both the views of Matthew and of Jesus, was also distinct from the Messiah. When most of the biblical evidence is put together, it seems very plausible that the Messiah also belonged to God's new creation community; as its leader. This seems to be the import of Dan 7:18, where the kingdom that the Son of Man received in verse 13 is spoken of as received by "the saints of the Highest One." In verse 27 the apparent ambiguity is cleared when

"the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; [and] His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him." The pronouns, his and him in this last sentence, which is in apposition to the first, have their antecedent in verses 13-14. It is intuitively logical that the leader of a group is an individual member of the group, in which capacity he does not become the group. To be sure, he can be referred to, in a representative capacity, as the group, especially when acting officially; but he does not become the group in concrete terms as Leithart (2007) sounds in the case of his "Jesus-as-Israel."

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Try to make a good case using the information provided in the First Gospel that the old Israel, the ecclesial community and the Messiah are three distinct but inter-related realities.
2. Identified the three major characters involved in God's plan of reconciling and restoring his people Israel to a new creation.

3.3 The Roles of the Characters in God's Restoration Plan

We have identified three major characters involved in God's plan of reconciling and restoring his people to their original state as a new creation or countercultural community. These include the old Israel, the Messiah, and the new Israel. Each of these had their roles in God's plan. To have informed understanding of those roles, you need to consider each of them more closely.

First, take the old Israel. As you learned in the previous units, the role of the old Israel in God's plan of restoration was to form a counterculture that would positively influence the relational attitude of the rest of the human world. But Israel failed in this assignment. A number of reasons account for their failure. First, Israel became entangled in the desire to be like other nations (1 Sam 8:5) instead of remaining a counterculture – a holy (separated) kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6). Second, Israel became haughty in their thinking about God's choice of them to be his special people; they became exclusivist in their thinking and behaviour. Israel's exclusivism came to its peak with the rise of Pharisaism. Israel's failure was reflected in their rejection of Jesus and his offer of God's kingdom.

The next important figure in the realisation of God's restoration plan is the Messiah. To be Messiah is to be the king of Israel (2:2; 21:5; 27:11, 29, 37, 42). The theocratic nature of Israel would make the king, not necessarily Lord but servant of Yahweh (3:17–4:11; 16:16 and 16:21).

Yahweh is the king and God of Israel and of all the earth (Ps 47:7). Every other king is subject to the rule of Yahweh. Thus, the Matthean Jesus as a king, who has come to restore the kingdom of heaven would then serve God by preaching the advent of the kingdom of heaven on earth (4:23), teaching the ethics of the kingdom (5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25), and acting out the inauguration of God's kingship in his miraculous works of compassion (9:32–34; 12:24). Notice how Matthew connects Jesus' works of compassion with his ministry as servant and his atoning sacrifice (8:16–17; 12:15–21; 27:51–53). In doing so, Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth (11:2–6; 12:28). This was done in three phases: in his public ministry, in his passion and in his vindicating resurrection. It is this kingdom that Matthew describes as the church with universal focus. This role of the Messiah will be more fully discussed alongside that of the *ekklēsia*.

Our final note is on the role of the *ekklēsia*r. The ideas of Lowery (n.d.) on the role of the *ekklēsia* are very instructive in understanding that subject and you should consider them carefully. He points out how the Fourth Gospel records Jesus' self-confession, "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12). He finds this same idea with the same meaning in Matthew. In his Gospel, Matthew underscores the disciples' missionary responsibility by recording Jesus' statement, "You are the light of the world" (5:14). This is consonant with what you have already learned in this course. As you are aware, the disciples, and the church, were to continue the ministry of the Christ. They were to make disciples of all nations. That means Jesus' mission, which primarily focused on Israel was to continue in other nations. And the person to continue the mission to the Gentiles until Christ returned at the end of the age was the *ekklēsia* (10:23; 28:20; cf. Rom. 11:11-12, 25-26).

You will remember that as you saw it in the previous unit the *ekklēsia* was given a duty to extend God's new creation community to the ends of the earth. Oftentimes, scholars narrow this assignment to Jesus' statement in Matthew 28:18-20. But the idea is found as much in the entire Gospel. See how the announcement of the birth of the new born king of the Jews greatly troubled not only King Herod but all Jerusalem (2:1-3), yet the Gentile magi were overjoyed to find him and offer him their homage and their gifts (2:10-11). This foreshadows his ultimate rejection by the mass of his own people and his acceptance by the Gentile nations.

The earliest occurrence of the idea of a global focus of Jesus and his *ekklēsia* mission is in Matthew's use of Old Testament theological ideas in a quotation from Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8. In Matthew 1:23, the evangelist plugs into the idea of the presence of God – the idea of Immanuel ("God is with us"). Going by the wider context, this is a statement about who

Jesus is and particularly, his role in God's plan of restoration of his creation community to its original state. By linking Jesus with the concept of Immanuel in Isaiah Matthew is making a theological connection about the mission of this child in the world. This is how he makes that connection: Matthew's Gospel ends with the Great Commission

– Jesus' directives to his followers to make disciples from all people (28:19-20). Matthew (28:19-20) states: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

According to Matthew, this is the mission of the *ekkesia* in God's process of restoring his creation community to its original state; it is to make disciples, to proclaim the teachings of Jesus and incorporate all people into the *ekklēsia*, the present manifestation of the government of God. That is a rather difficult task to accomplish, especially with humans. God in the person of Jesus knew this well and promised to be with the apostles who had been trained for this task and were now commissioned to accomplish it, just as he had always been with his people, like Moses (Ex 3:12), who were in difficult situations and most of his prophets.

As Dennis Bratcher points out, you can observe that apart from its occurrence as the name of Jesus at 1:23, Matthew uses the concept of "God with us" in only one other place in his Gospel – that is at the Great Commission (28:20). In doing so, Matthew is saying that the same God who revealed himself as present among his countercultural community in the incarnate Jesus, the Christ, will continue to be present with the *ekklēsia* as it carries out its commission of integrating all people into the counterculture. It is to drive that message home that, Matthew drew on the Old Testament theological ideas of Isaiah 7:14. Thus, the concept of 'God with us' becomes a key theological structure for the entire Gospel of Matthew. In using the idea of "Immanuel", Matthew showed God's continuing presence with his people throughout history. He linked God's presence with his people in the past to the Incarnation (1:23) and also went ahead to link the mission of the church backward to the Incarnation and also forward to God's continuing presence with his *ekklēsia* (28:20) to enable it fulfil its role in his restoration plan.

Just as you saw, Matthew uses the idea of Immanuel only at beginning of his Gospel and at the end of it where Jesus commissioned his apostles to embark on a mission of the world's harvest (28:20). This is the idea underlying Jesus' calling of the many disciples. It is especially evident

in the special attention he gave to training the twelve as their preparation to continue his mission where he would leave off. Jesus' mission discourse in 9:36-10:39 is also imbued with the idea of the *ekklēsia's* evangelistic duty. The command to the twelve to proclaim the nearness of the government of God as good news (10:7-8) is the central concern of the ecclesial assembly's duty.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. State the basic reasons for the failure of old Israel in God's plan of restoration.
2. How did the Matthean Jesus demonstrate his kingship in the God's plan of restoration?
3. Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth in three phases. Identify the three phases and show their interconnectedness.
4. How do you mean that the mandate 'go and make disciples of all nation, baptising them and teaching them' is not limited to the passage in Matt 28:19-20 but could be read from other passages within the Gospel? Use some Matthean passages to buttress your argument.
5. Do you see any kind of similarity between the "1-AM" statement of the Fourth Gospel (Jn 8:12) and the "YOU-ARE" of the First Gospel (5:14)?
6. Use at least two passages in Matthew to prove that Jesus' mission, which was focused primarily on Israel (15:24), was extended in the time of the apostles include all nation until the end of time.. 11:11-12, 25-26).
7. Establish the connection in the Gospel of Matthew between the statement "God with us" (1:23) and "I am with you always" (28:20). Discuss their implications for the *ecclēsia* as a countercultural community whose existence and operation stretched back beyond the incarnation and advanced farther than the resurrection of Jesus.
8. Assess the claim that the concept of 'God with us' is a key theological structure for the entire Gospel of Matthew.

3.4 The Essence and Course of the Universal Mission

What is the essence and course of this mission? Making disciples involves preaching the gospel, and much more. According to Matthew, Jesus' commission to his disciples was for them to make disciples by proclaiming the dawn of God's kingdom in word and then "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (28:20). A disciple was to be righteous, to be obedient to God. Jesus modelled the perfection required of the disciple as he fulfilled all righteousness by

being completely obedient to the Father's will (4:4, 10). That is the righteousness that the disciple of Jesus or the citizen of the kingdom was to exhibit; righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20; 5:48; 6:33).

At this juncture you should recall some points from your lessons in Module 2. There, you learned about the moving cause for Jesus' launching of the bid to restore Israel to its status as God's people, God's new creation community of a countercultural character and to re-establish God's government of the human world. This was a response to the Fall and its aftermath. This process, which God inaugurated with Abraham, Jesus re-launched with his 12 disciples representing the twelve tribes of Israel. But as Abraham was to be a blessing to all nations (Gen 12:1-3), the new people, reflecting Jesus' acts of compassion under the leadership of the twelve disciples, was to be a blessing to all peoples of the earth. This is the spirit of the Great Commission.

In Matthew's estimation, the essential nature and concern of the Great Commission lie in its universal character. It breaks Jewish exclusivist tendencies which necessitated Jesus' particularism. That particularism aimed to prepare the Jews as a springboard on which to launch the global phase of God's new creation community.

This mission to the Gentiles was to continue till the "end of the age" (28:20). As Matthew understood Jesus and makes it clear, when the gospel has been preached to all nations, then the end will come (24:14) and Christ will reign as king (25:31-34). This is the meaning of Matthew's frequent references to the idea of kingdom throughout the Gospel. You can count his use of the phrase "kingdom of heaven" thirty-three times and the phrase "kingdom of God" four times. This is far more frequently than the number of references of the phrase or idea of kingdom that you can find in any of the other Gospels. Some have attempted to distinguish between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. But it is more plausible to see the expressions as probably equivalent with a possible difference in emphasis only.

The term "kingdom" seems to have both spiritual and physical facets to its meaning. Both the spiritual and the physical aspects were present in the ministry of Jesus. There is overwhelming emphasis on the authority and power of the Matthean Jesus over the spiritual world (cf. the exorcism passages). Matthew explains this in his report of the healing of the blind and mute man whose condition he traces to the activity of demons. According to him, the healing of the man was evidence of the coming of the kingdom of God among men (12:22-28). Again, it is important to note that the key to the kingdom of heaven preached by

Jesus is repentance (4:17), and then forgiveness through the death of Jesus Christ (26:28).

The ministry of the kingdom carried on by Christ is continued by the church (16:18). The Spirit who enabled Christ to carry out his work (12:28) will enable the disciples to continue it (10:20). Therefore, the ministry of the church is a phase of the kingdom program. Ultimately God's program with Israel would also be completed at the "end of the age" (28:20) with a positive response to the gospel of the kingdom (19:28; 23:39; cf. Rom. 9:4-6; 11:25-27). It is then that the king will separate the righteous from the unrighteous (7:21-23), the sheep from the goats (25:31-46), the wheat from the tares (13:37-43). Those who have not done the Father's will (7:21), who have not believed in Christ (18:6), will merit eternal punishment (13:42; 25:46). The righteous will enter into eternal life (13:43; 25:46). Until then, the followers of Christ will continue to "make disciples of all nations" (28:19).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the concept of the righteousness of the disciples of Jesus as citizen of the kingdom, which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.
2. Do you agree with the author that the Twelve shares the symbol of blessing to the whole world? Read through the section again, and make case out of it.
3. How do you mean that Jewish exclusivist tendencies necessitated Jesus' particularism?
4. Use your concordance and identify places where the term kingdom occurs in the Gospel of Matthew. Classify them accordingly, and endeavour to analyse them to find out if there is any difference in the various usages.
5. What are the preconditions for entrance into the kingdom preached by Jesus?
6. Applying some passages in the Gospel of Matthew, present a convincing argument that the ministry of the Church is a part of the 'kingdom program' for the restoration of Israel.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The question that we set out to answer in this unit is whether there is contradiction in Matthew's presentation of Jesus' mission as both particularistic and universal. The data before us show clearly that one cannot read any contradiction from the account of Matthew. Matthew only understood Jesus' mission as having two phases. The first phase focused on the restoration of the house of Israel as God's new creation community whereas the second phase concerned the extension of that

community to the ends of the earth (Mat 28:18-20). In the course of the study, it became clear that Matthew saw Jesus as handing over battens to his apostles to lead the countercultural community in non-Israelite nations.

5.0 SUMMARY

You attempted to understand God's plan of the world's salvation as Matthew saw it. In that endeavour, you were made to understand that in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus, the Son of David and the Messiah-God, inaugurated the kingdom of heaven in Israel through his public ministry, passion and resurrection, and recruited the new people of God to carry on the task of extending that kingdom to other nations. By this depiction, Jesus is the main character in God's plan for the salvation of world. The *ekklēsia* is the unconsummated part of the kingdom. It is the countercultural community primarily made up of believing Jews, but expanded in phase two of the restoration mission to include peoples of all other nations. The leading character in phase two of this mission is obviously the *ekklēsia*. But it is empowered by the presence of God with it (Immanuel). In other words, the *ekklēsia* is both an agent and beneficiary of the kingdom preached by Jesus Messiah.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Briefly sketch God's plan of world salvation according to Matthew.
2. How can you distinguish between the old Israel, the Ecclesial Community, and the Messiah?
3. Explain the essence and course of the universal mission in Matthew's view.

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UNIT 4 THE RELEVANCE OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL TO AFRICA

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

You are welcomed to the last unit of this module and this course. The Gospel of Matthew is very important and relevant to African peoples as individuals as well as groups. There are many reasons for this assertion. First, Matthew is a community document; it discusses issues of community identity and community relations that are very much African issues. Matthew also contains good teaching on community ethics that are well applicable to various peoples irrespective of time and geographical divides. The Gospel's teaching on servant-shepherd leadership is as African as it is oriental. For all these and many more areas Matthew's Gospel is very relevant and can be useful to Africa.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this study, you should be able to:

- Highlight the relevance of Matthew's Gospel to Africa.
- Explain Community relations in Africa
- Identify the Relevance of Matthew's Gospel to Africa.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1 Africa and Community Relations

Africa is populated by peoples of diverse backgrounds and cultures. Most of these peoples, however, have as a commonality, the concept of community. They think and act in concert. Underlying or associated

with the idea of community is another important guarding idea of egalitarianism. This idea of parity, which allows equal opportunities to all members of the given community or people, guided most African peoples' relational attitudes, and indeed ethos, until the advent of European colonialists on the continent. It is evident in their political and social organisations.

Take the Tiv of central Nigeria, for instance. Tiv society held in very high esteem, their genealogy; hence, the society was organised on kinship and was, therefore, gerontocratic in administration. Each genealogical group was headed by the most senior person in that lineage category, whether it was ya (compound), yeingyôr (family group), ityô (patrilineal segment), or tar (the lineage area as far as can be traced) (Makar, 1975; Tseayo 1974). This denotes the idea of community. This communal consciousness is conditioned by Tiv egalitarianism, which is informed by their deep sense of corporate responsibility and continuity. The Tiv believe that all members of their one family are equal and should have the same rights and opportunities. This is the basis on which the various levels of lineage elders' councils adopt consensus as means of decision-taking on all matters (Varvar, 2003) and authority is based on a real and living consent that is continually ratified by all.

You can especially see the character of the Tiv as a community-oriented people in their perception and praxis of religion. Tiv nation is holistically religious. In a typical Tiv society, religion is an important social control reflecting Tiv communal character. It makes even their leadership not merely social or political, but especially a religious facility. The religious leaders are also the political leaders. They employ certain social controls in maintaining the equilibrium in the symbiosis of man, the cosmos, and nature. On these categories, Tiv leadership is synonymous with guard and guidance; the idea of directing life's course, using certain controls, like kinship; continuity of the individual and his group in their egalitarianism as well as the symbiosis of man, his tar (his people living and dead) and the cosmos. It also involves the idea of preserving the harmony of macrocosm and microcosm and maintaining equilibrium of the community. The need for harmony of the macrocosm and microcosm refers to the necessity and strategy to maintain the equilibrium of the community. As an egalitarian and religious society, the Tiv live is a communal life. Anyone who expresses unusual individualism threatens the cosmic harmony and thus, the equilibrium of this set up, which includes superhuman forces.

The social organisation of the Igbo speaking peoples is, like the fragmented societies of the Niger Delta tribes, village-centred. They organised themselves in small villages which were grouped together somewhat, according to their clans. That is, a clan that believed itself to

be descendants of a common ancestor, would build their villages close together in an area where it was usually thought, the ancestor made his compound. Afigbo (2003) opines that the coming together of these previously scattered and autonomous kin groups to form villages and even village-groups was consequent on the need for self-defence as was the case with the Nike village-group near Enugu or else on population explosion. In view of the fact that most African settlements are organised according to kinships in those nationalities, the probability of kinship as determinant of Igbo village grouping is hardly in doubt. Whatever was the determinant of Igbo settlement, you can see in it the tendency toward community; for most who so grouped themselves. Anyanwu (2002) testifies that even "the king in Igbo society had to rule in collaboration with other organs like the titled societies, palace chiefs, age-grade associations and the general assemblies of the people as provided for by each community" (p. 71).

The case of the Hausa is not very different from the above two examples regarding community orientation of African peoples. Even prior to the advent of Islam, the fourteen segments of the Hausa people, (the Hausa Bakwe and the Banza Bakwe) settled in cities, towns, and hamlets although the great majority of the population was rural. Each of their scattered settlements was operating as a city state, which shielded the surrounding countryside and muzzled enough strength to resist external aggression. For some concrete examples, the initial ruler of Kano settlement was the founder of the village, giving us the idea that it was gerontocracy. He exercised both political and religious authority as a priest-king. His most salient leadership role was to protect his subjects, the ability of which became an important means of influence that maintained the people's loyalty to him, including the surrounding countryside.

As you saw in previous units, the Gospel of Matthew similarly presents to its audience a new Israel, the *ekklēsia*, a countercultural community. In Matthew's view, Jesus, the Messiah from Nazareth formed this community as an expression of the kingdom of God in earthly form. That countercultural community is better known today as the church. This should let you see that it is not out of place to see the Gospel of Matthew as a book about the new creation community called the church. It is, therefore, very rewarding to study Matthew as a community document since the church was originally conceived and formed as a countercultural community.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss at least two important guarding philosophies of African before the advent of European colonialists on the continent.
2. Explain the concept of gerontocracy.
3. What is the popular process of decision taking in a traditional republican African society?
4. How do you mean that religion makes Tiv leadership a religious facility?
5. Discuss some of the possible determinant factors that led to the formation of Igbo villages and even village-groups along the line of kinship?
6. Explain what the author could mean from the statement that leadership role in the Northern states of Nigeria before the advent of Islam was encapsulated with political and religious authority expressed in the ability to protect and defend the subject.
7. What are the advantages for Africans studying the Gospel of Matthew?

3.2 Gospel of Matthew as Community Document

Matthew's Idea of Community – The Gospel of Matthew can be seen as a community document. This is evident in the way he characterizes his audience and through the concerns he expresses in the text; such include the centrality of the identity struggle of its subject matter and his emphasis of community discipline (chap18) and relational ethics (chap 5-7) among other concerns. First, consider his characterization of his audience. In Matthew's depiction, his community is characteristically multiracial and multicultural as you can see in his Gentile emphasis (1:1–17; 2:1–12; 4:12–16; 8:5–13; 15:21–28; 28:16–20). Matthew's community reflects tension between universalism (2:1–12; 4:12–16; 8:5–13; 21:43; 28:16–20) and particularism (1:21; 10:5–6, 23; 15:24). In Matthew, "Jews are naturally put on the defensive by their non-Christian Jewish community, and probably more so if they have insisted on preservation of their Jewishness and have resisted assimilation, thus making at least the implicit claim of being the true Israel" (Hagner 1993:lxix). This suggests that Matthew presents a Jewish Christian community struggling with the problem of self-identity in the midst of competing concerns from its opponents. His kind of Christianity has a complex relationship to the evolving, diversifying world of Judaism, with its wide range of toleration and differences. It is a portrait of a community in a difficult position: one that is faced with the problem of deciding between holding to cherished old traditions and a new self-understanding. There was clearly a combination of the desire to anchor their faith in the traditions of Israel (particularism; true Israel) and,

because of the new faith in Jesus Messiah, the desire to anchor their hope for the future in a totally inclusive people of God (universalism; new Israel). This is why Matthew adds "so both are preserved" to the parable of new and old wine (9:17). This is a signal of community concern of the Gospel; a big question of self-identity. Is Matthew's audience to see itself as national Israel, God's new creation community, or to see itself as Jesus Messiah's global countercultural community?

The way Matthew presents his story of Jesus Messiah indicates that he saw his audience stuck in between these two poles, and intended to help them resolve their problem. His solution was that to be sure, national Israel was God's new creation community, crafted out of Abraham and his posterity. But since that community also failed in their responsibility and reputation, Jesus came to salvage the situation. And he did that by first reclaiming Israel, and then using national Israel as a springboard, reached out to the Gentile world. In the present, therefore, the new people of God are the *ekklēsia*, not national Israel. But the *ekklēsia* incorporates both national Israel and all else who believe Jesus' message of the dawn of this new era and acknowledge God's sovereignty in their lives.

Contemporary Matthean scholarship has rightly identified this focus as is evident from the attention given to studying the relationship of Matthew's supposed community to its parent religion, Judaism. This community concern of Matthew is important and relevant to contemporary Africa for a number of reasons. The chief of these is the fact that many peoples of Africa are today struggling with the same question of self-identity as was Matthew's community in the first century AD. But Matthew's non-violent solution to the identity crisis is also an important example and model that African nations can adopt and possibly adapt to their situations and so resolve issues arising from their ethnic differences without arms. These and several others of Matthew's ideas of community considered in this unit can apply to Africa with amazing positive results.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Drawing from the available information in this section, make a table containing the similarities between the Matthean Christian community and a typical traditional African society.
2. How would you prove that the Matthean Christian community was stuck in identity crisis? Do you think that the crisis was fully resolved in the Gospel, and how?
3. Did Jesus finally achieve his mission of restoration of old Israel? If yes, how; if no, why?

4. How do you mean that Judaism is the parent religion of the Matthean Christian community?
5. Do you think that the Matthean approach to the identity crisis of his community has something positive to offer to Africans currently challenged with national and religious identity crises?

3.2.1 Internal Indicators of the Character of Matthew's Audience

The idea of identity struggle in Matthew is evident in the way the evangelist treats Jewish-Jesus antagonisms in the Gospel. In Matthew, the Jews often take offence and rise up with all force to either stop Jesus from parading himself as the Jewish Messiah or to stop individuals or groups from acclaiming him their Messiah. This is the case as you saw in their furry against some persons acknowledging Jesus as Son of David, the one who could miraculously heal diseases and even exorcise demons.

You can also see identity struggle in the fact that Matthew's community defines itself over against the Gentile world and over against non-messianic Judaism but curiously, does not identify itself as a new religion. It is rather, the true Israel, the remnant of the end times, that has found God's promises fulfilled in Jesus Messiah (Campbell 2000). Its mission is primarily to the Jews (10:5–6; 15:24) since it pays the Jewish tax (17:24–27). But the Jewish mission in Matthew is only a springboard to a worldwide mission of preparing all people to become members of the kingdom of the Messiah (28:19-20). You have already seen in previous units that the kingdom is the *ekklēsia* – that is the countercultural community that Jesus called out and gathered around him to teach it God's relational ethos by which it is to live and influence others to reflect the character of God in their own lifestyles.

As the previous units revealed, the debate today concerns the relationship of Matthew's supposed community to Judaism. You saw those for whom Matthew's community defines itself over against the Gentile world and over against non- messianic Judaism but does not identify itself as a new religion. For them, the community is the true Israel, the remnant of the end times, that has found God's promises fulfilled in Jesus Messiah. A number of scholars argued that Matthew's community was already separated from Judaism and is to be understood as the Church, a new religion of faith in Jesus. There were yet some who took a position between these two trends. Such scholars argued that the Matthean community had broken with Judaism but made this move reluctantly because it still defines itself within Judaism and over against non-messianic Judaism (Stanton, 1992; Hagner, 1985, 1993, 2012). Hagner particularly argued that the Matthean Christian community

reflects several incidents of tension between universalism (2:1–12; 4:12–16; 8:5–13; 21:43; 28:16–20) and particularism (1:21; 10:5–6, 23; 15:24).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What insight can we derive from the Jewish-Jesus antagonisms in the Gospel of Matthew in the search for the Matthean community?
2. How did the Matthean community define itself over against the Gentile world and non-messianic Judaism, yet does not identify itself as a new religion?

3.2.2 A Closer Look at Matthew's Concerns

Seeing Matthew in this light, Hagner concluded that the Gospel reflects a community struggling with the problem of self-identity. It was stuck between a combination of the desire to anchor one's faith in the traditions of Israel (particularism; true Israel) and, because of the new faith in Jesus Messiah, the desire to anchor one's hope for the future in a totally inclusive people of God (universalism; new Israel). This is why Matthew adds "so both are preserved" to the parable of new and old wine (Mt 9:17).

The arguments of Hagner and other scholars you have seen above illumine occurrences of certain indicators in the Gospel to the effect that Matthew is a book about community. A number of times there are appeals in the Gospel to the Old Testament as well as passages (cf. 1:21 and 19:28), which clearly evince a case for Matthew's community seeing itself as the true people of God who are in direct continuity with Israel's biblical heritage (McKnight, 1993; Hagner 1993). We identified this new Israel as in Matthew's perception of Jesus' teaching, a countercultural community. You have also seen how that many times Matthew depicts a situation of unending wrangling between Jesus and the Pharisees. It is common thinking among scholars today that this demonstrates that Matthew's community was defining itself in the context of such a debate. These are important contributions to our quest to understand the Gospel of Matthew. The debates depict Matthew's understanding of the early Christian community's problems and their ability to manage its crises. An informed understanding of this subject will therefore, enable Africans to have yet another window of seeing solutions to their community problems, many of which are quite similar to the problems of the Matthean community. Many African communities, for instance, are faced with the problem of credible leadership just as Matthew's community.

You will notice that one of the major concerns Matthew addresses was the issue of the credibility of the leadership of the Jewish establishment. In all the passages that the issue comes up, Matthew seems to be arguing that the apostles of Jesus are the true leaders of Israel. The motif recurs several times (cf. 9:35–11:1). On its basis, you can observe that for Matthew, the apostles have in fact replaced the Pharisees (21:43). It is also his view that Jerusalem was destroyed as God's judgment on the Pharisees for leading the people astray (McKnight, 1993). Thus, one of Matthew's major themes is that the followers of Jesus must abandon the leadership of the Pharisees (15:13–14; 23:1–7).

You will notice ample evidence that these debates between Jesus and the Pharisees concerned the place of Jesus and the proper interpretation of the Law of Moses. It seems reasonable to think that the debates preserved in the First Gospel are the debates Matthew's community had with Pharisaism: thus, they fought over at least the issues of the sabbath (12:1–8), of table purity (9:9–13) and of taxation (17:24–27).

This summary of the central concern of Matthew makes the Gospel quite relevant to the African state since at least, the social concerns of Matthew's community and Africa dovetail. For example, power tussle such as the one that Matthew depicts in his community is a common African problem and the solution becomes of benefit to Africa as a people. It is equally important to note that the Matthean solutions were not and would not be acceptable to the pharisaic leadership.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the claim of Hagner that the Gospel of Matthew reflects a community struggling with the challenge of self-identity.
2. What are the signals that one gets from the frequency of OT quotations in the Gospel of Matthew in the context the self-definition of the Matthean community?
3. Reply to the argument of McKnight, 1993) that Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed as a punishment for the Pharisees, who led the people astray.
4. Explain to a younger colleague how the Gospel of Matthew evinces that one of the major concerns of the author was the credibility of the leadership of the Jewish establishment and the replacement of the establishment by the apostles.
5. Do you agree that the debates preserved in the First Gospel are the debates between the Matthean Christian community and Pharisaism?

3.3 Relevance of Matthew's Gospel to Africa

Matthew's Gospel is important to Africa because of the good news it proclaims that God is Immanuel (God is with us). This statement is imbued with the idea of community. A close reading of the Gospel shows that the Church is that new community empowered by the living presence of God through his Messiah, to live in the promise of mutual forgiveness. As you also saw, scholars today have attempted to reconstruct the Church's life and social conditions in which Matthew wrote. Such reconstructions indicate that Matthew bears a message of the kingdom of God as a new community seeking to resolve matters of dialogue and conflict with the traditions of Judaism in the first century. It is important that you take a second look at this subject at this moment by considering at least, one specific indicator as a case study.

Community ethos/ethics and discipline

There is much teaching in Matthew that focuses on community ethics and discipline, which is very relevant to African communities. The Sermon on the Mount, for instance, bears marks of a concern to reorient a people's conceptual and behavioural attitude toward the ethos of their community. Matthew (5:11-12) appears as a warning from Jesus to his newly gathered community: All of you who have joined God's kingdom train are likely to be insulted and persecuted by those who hold this course in disdain. Should that happen, do not be perturbed; rather, rejoice that you are members of God's kingdom – and they are envying your position. This is a call for patient endurance when one is pursuing a genuine cause.

The saying on salt and light (5:13-16) continues the warning focusing on the human tendency to laxity: Being members of God's kingdom train places heavy responsibility on you: you are like both salt and light to the world. That means you are responsible to influence and reorient the world to acknowledge your Father in heaven (5:13-15). This is achievable only through the life of the kingdom, hence the kingdom ethics. The kingdom of God is characterised by the rule of law; any who disobeys the law is not worthy of it! While the Law is the inevitable basis for kingdom ethics; the kingdom ethic surpasses the Law (v 20).

Notice how the Matthean Jesus clears some looming misperceptions about his mission and asserts the importance and necessity of the Law in his kingdom agenda. The Law prefigured and today serves as the kingdom's constitution or ethical code. The kingdom code, however for Jesus, focuses on the causes of immoral acts, not on their effects as the Law did. Thus,

1. The Law on murder forbids anger, not the result of anger (v 21-26)
2. The Law on adultery addresses the problem of lust as its root cause (27-30)
3. Divorce is forbidden to avoid adultery (31-32)
4. The law on oaths emphasises integrity (33-37)
5. There should be no revenge as those who avenge themselves violate God's sovereignty (38-42)
6. Citizens of the kingdom of heaven eschew partiality to illumine the world (43-48).

   There is some specific instructions on the practice of piety in the kingdom community; Genuine piety that worths God's reward must not be hypocritical. Thus,

1. Alms giving should glorify God, not the giver (6: 2-4)
2. Prayer should bring honour to God not man (5-15)
3. Fasting should be genuine (16-18)

These and many other teachings in Matthew's Gospel are quite relevant and helpful to Africa. For instance, Jesus' teaching on leadership ideology in 20:17-28 is important in reorienting African leadership concept and ideology on servant-shepherd leadership, which most African peoples were at home with, before the advent the European colonialists.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Having gone through the Gospel of Matthew, attempt to reconstruct the social conditions in which Matthew wrote.
2. What role does the Sermon on the Mount play in the formation of a community ethics for the Matthean Christian community?
3. Would you understand the Sermon on the Mount as a prophetic warning from Jesus in order to prepare his disciples for the worst?
4. Explain the statement that the Law is the inevitable basis for kingdom ethics, yet the kingdom ethics surpasses the Law.
5. Demonstrate in a tabular form the difference between the kingdom ethics and the Law.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you were introduced to the application of the Gospel of Matthew. We specifically considered the question of relevance of the Gospel to Africa. In the course of the study, you saw that African peoples though of diverse cultures are equally communal in their thoughts and actions. But today most African nations have a chain of

problems resulting from their community orientation. Matthew's audience was also a community-conscious people. They too had problems oozing from their community orientation. But Matthew's community had important solutions to their problems from the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Africa stands to benefit immensely from those solutions if African nations understand and imbibe those ideas.

5.0 SUMMARY

It is true that the Africans have diverse backgrounds and cultures, they also have a commonality, namely community thinking and behaviour that is undergirded by egalitarianism. This character can be seen very much in the Tiv of central Nigeria, among the Igbo and the Hausa. Among all these sample ethnic nationalities, the community orientation is readily seen in their social organisation as well as in their religious praxis which is a major characteristic of an African person. Today, many African nationalities are caught up in the problem o f ethnic self identity. The y are trying, with much di fficulty, to define, may be redefine their identities in order to be relevant in the comity of nations. The Matthean community went th rough all this. Matthew presents the story of this community highlighting these problems and the solutions Jesus of Nazareth provided in his teaching on the kingdom of God and its relational ethos. This teaching is applicable to even our contemporary times and the geographical area of Africa. It is therefore quite relevant to the continent today.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. With at least one concrete example, demonstrate how African nationalities are community-oriented.
2. What do you understand by the gospel of Matthew being a community document? Demonstrate that in the text of Matthew.
3. Give at least, two examples of the relevance of Matthew's Gospel to Africa.

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