

*“Experiencing The King,  
Living Out The Kingdom”  
Seminar on the Gospel of Matthew*

The Bible Church  
18 Jan 2025



# The Seminar In Seven Questions

1. Why four Gospels?
2. Who was Matthew?
3. When and where was Matthew's Gospel written?
4. What is unique about Matthew's Gospel?
5. How is the Gospel structured?
6. What were the locations of Jesus' ministry?
7. What is the theme of Matthew's Gospel?



# Why Four Gospels?

- Why are there four gospels in the NT, and not two, three or five?
- There are other 1<sup>st</sup> century accounts of Jesus' life (Luke 1:1-2) but only four were recognised as canonical (i.e., meeting the criteria to be accepted as the inspired Word of God).
- So, again, why four?
- Because (see next slide):
  - there are four primary views of the Messiah?
  - of the need to reach out to four basic audiences?
- Matthew, Mark & Luke are called the synoptic Gospels – they are alike in many ways.
- “Synoptic” means “seen together”, from “syn-optic” – presenting a common viewpoint of the life and ministry of Jesus.



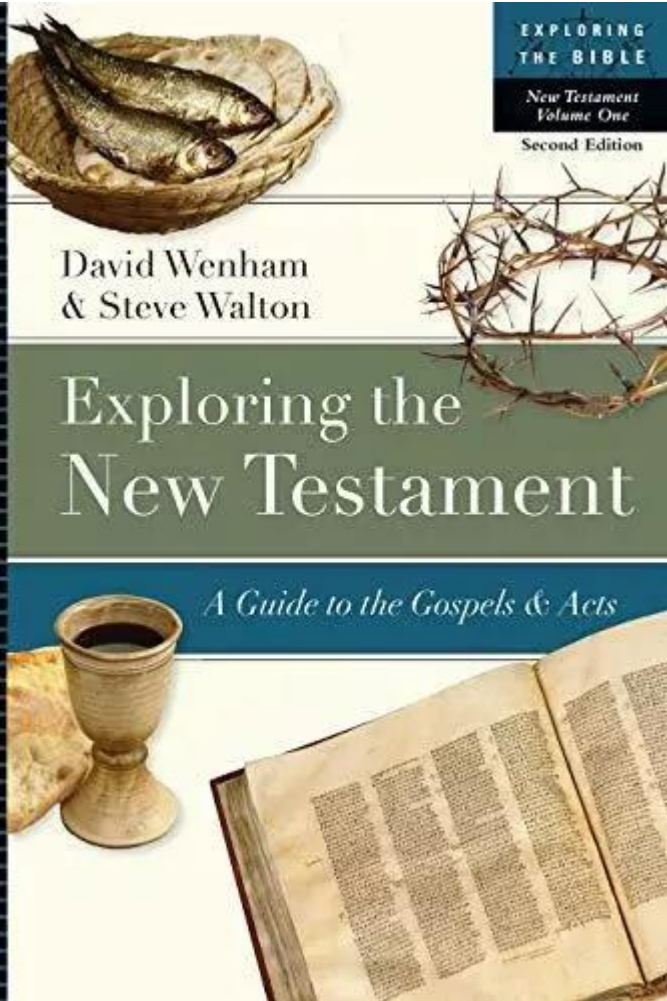
The Four Gospels in Christian art. 6<sup>th</sup> century mosaic in Ravenna, Italy

# A Four-fold Portrait Of Christ

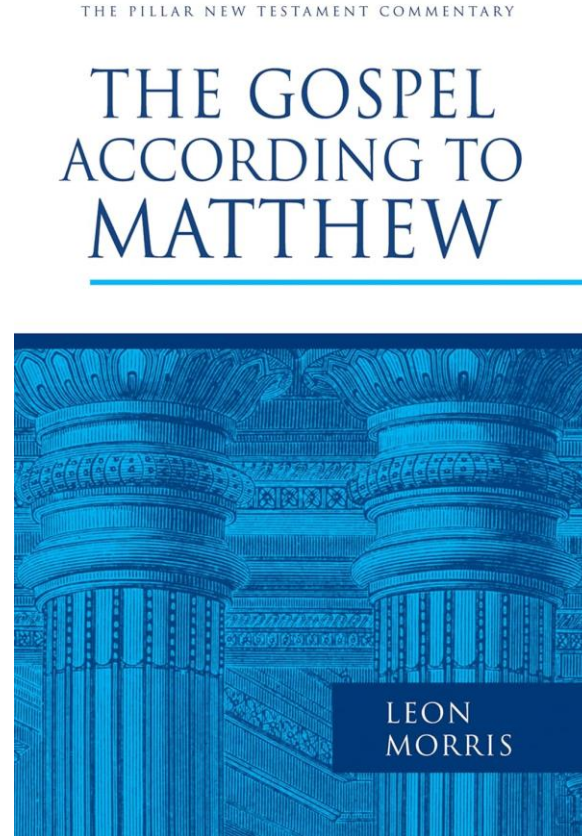
Comparisons	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Christ viewed as	King	Servant	Son of Man	Son of God
	He is King of kings. He can rightfully proclaim Matthew 28:18.	Self-less & tireless, Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).	Emphasising the humanity of Jesus. He is the ideal human. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).	The Word (referring to Jesus) was God (John 1:1). He came to reveal God to man.
Written to	Jews	Romans; they value power & position	Greeks (Gentiles)	Whole World

- If Jesus is a melody, the Gospel writers sing it in four-part harmony.
- Jesus is the King who serves, the Man who is God.

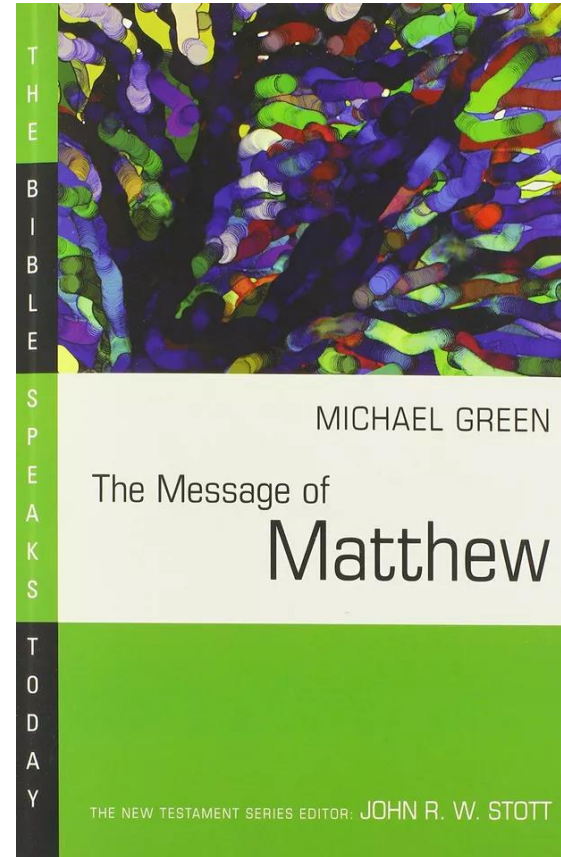
# Useful References



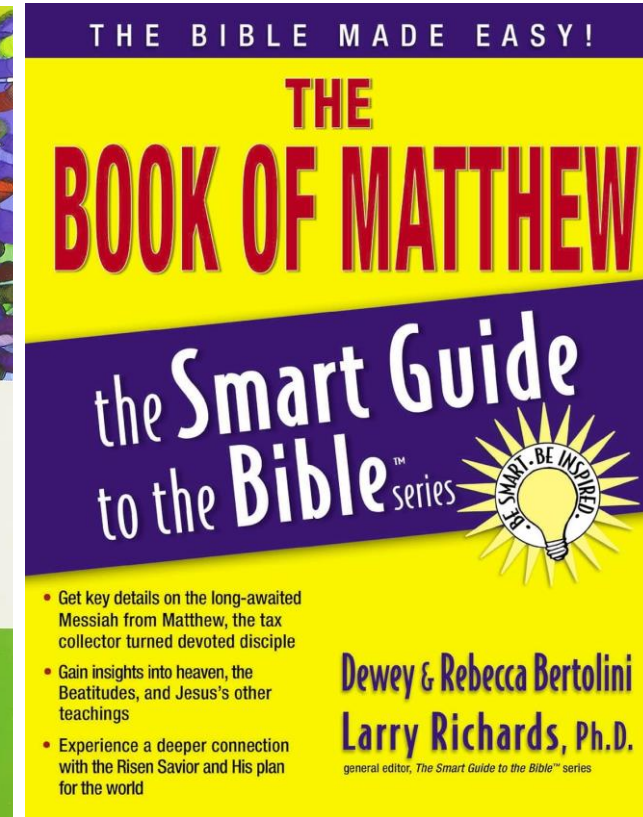
David Wenham  
& Steve Walton



Leon Morris



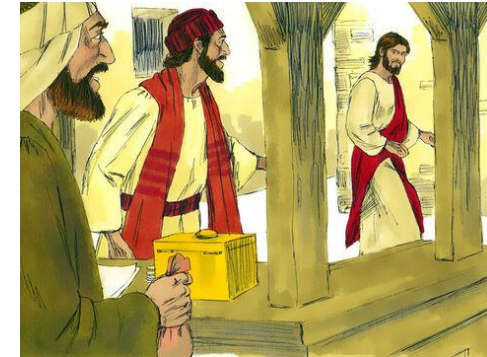
Michael Green



Dewey & Rebecca  
Bertolini

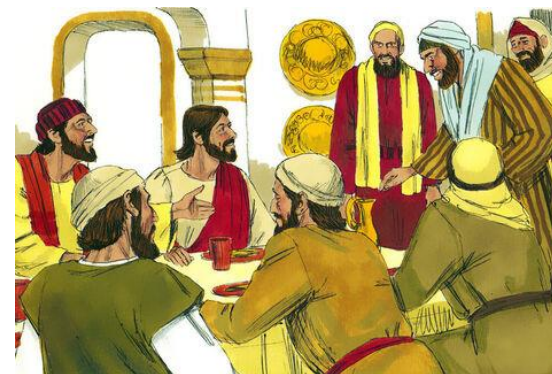
# Who Was Matthew?

- Matthew does not identify himself as the writer of the Gospel.
- From the start (late first century), the title, “According to Matthew” was attached to this Gospel by others.
- Why would this Gospel be attached to an obscure apostle unless there was strong reason behind this tradition?
- “Matthew” is a Hebrew name meaning “gift of God”.
- Matthew was a Jew.
- He is called “Levi” (also a Hebrew name) by Mark & Luke when describing Matthew’s call by Jesus (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27-29).
- But Matthew was an unusual Jew because he was a tax collector (Matt. 10:3).
- Tax collectors were regarded as traitors and thieves because they worked for the Romans and collected more than they should.



# Who Was Matthew?

- No law-abiding Jew would wish to be a tax collector since the job involved dealing with Gentiles and working on the Sabbath.
- Tax collectors were hated by Jews – they were the ostracised rich.
- Was Matthew among the tax collectors who was baptised by John (Luke 3:13)?
- Matthew gave up everything to follow Jesus.
- If things did not work out, he would not be able to go back to his former job, unlike the fishermen who could return to fishing.
- Matthew threw a big party for his friends and colleagues to meet Jesus and to celebrate “his calling” (Lk. 5:27-32).
- He celebrated:
  - ✓ going from wealth to poverty,
  - ✓ from self-determination to self-sacrifice!
- He was transformed – from despised tax collector to devoted disciple of Jesus.



# When & Where Was Gospel Of Matthew Written?

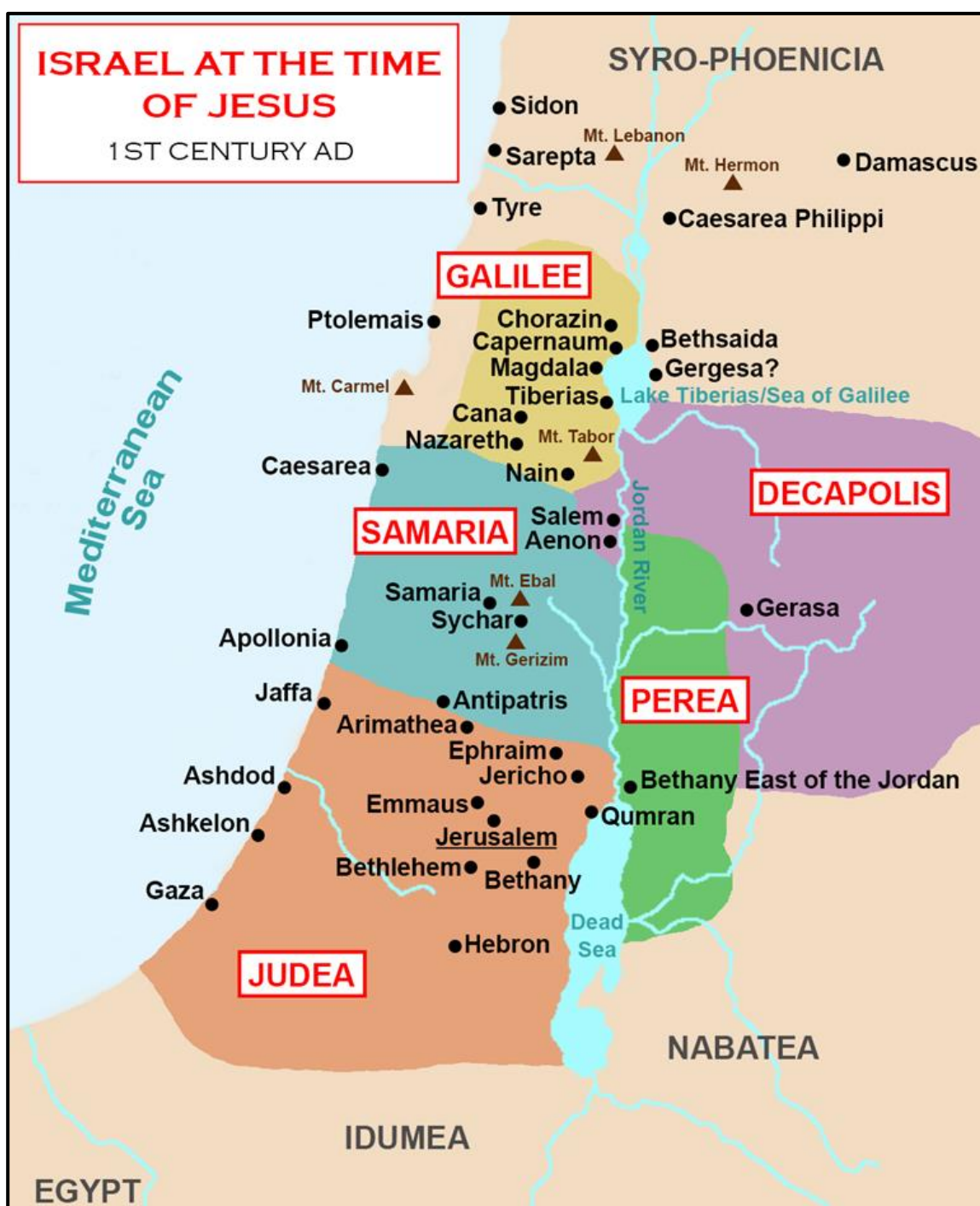
- Most scholars date Matthew after Mark, and generally to a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.
- So, a date in the 60s CE?
- Those who favour an earlier date argue that it is logical that Matthew would be written early (and possibly first) because there was an immediate need for a gospel for the Jews to offer proof that the long awaited Messiah had come.
- The place of writing is unknown because the travels of Matthew are uncertain.
- Many hold that the Gospel was written in Jerusalem but others suggest Antioch (Syria).





## ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF JESUS

1ST CENTURY AD



## Land of Israel & The Herods



- 1) After the death of Herod the Great (c. 4 BCE), his kingdom was divided among his sons (see above).
- 2) Rome later replaced Archelaus with a Roman governor.
- 3) The Herods were puppet “kings” of Rome.

# What Is Unique About Matthew's Gospel?

- Firstly, the Gospel of Matthew is the bridge connecting the OT with the NT.
- It is the Gospel of Fulfilment of the OT.
- Matthew is a Jewish gospel, rooted in OT prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah-King and His kingdom.
- The OT closed with Israel looking for their long-promised King.
- Now the 400 years of waiting are over.
- Matthew wants to prove that Jesus is the Messiah – the longed for King.
- Jesus has the right ancestry to be King because he is from the line of David.
- A herald (John the Baptist) announces the King's coming.
- The King has come for the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 15:24).
- But Israel rejected her King.
- However, the King will triumph and return one day to rule in power and glory.



# What Is Unique About Matthew's Gospel?

- Secondly, Matthew is the only gospel to mention the word “church” (16:18; 18:17).
- There are two main (geographical) sections in Matthew.
- Each section is introduced by the phrase, “from that time on ...”
  - 1) Jesus' ministry in Galilee begins at 4:17: “from that time on, Jesus began to preach ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’”
  - 2) The second section begins at 16:21, “from that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things ...”
- In the second section, Jesus is travelling from Galilee to Jerusalem.
- He is facing more opposition and rejection (15:1-16:12).
- In 16:16, Peter confesses Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God”.
- On this truth (“this rock” in 16:18) God will build a new community – the church.
- The church (Greek *ekklesia*; ἐκκλησία) = “the called out ones”, refers to people called by God to glorify God, edify one another, and evangelise the world.



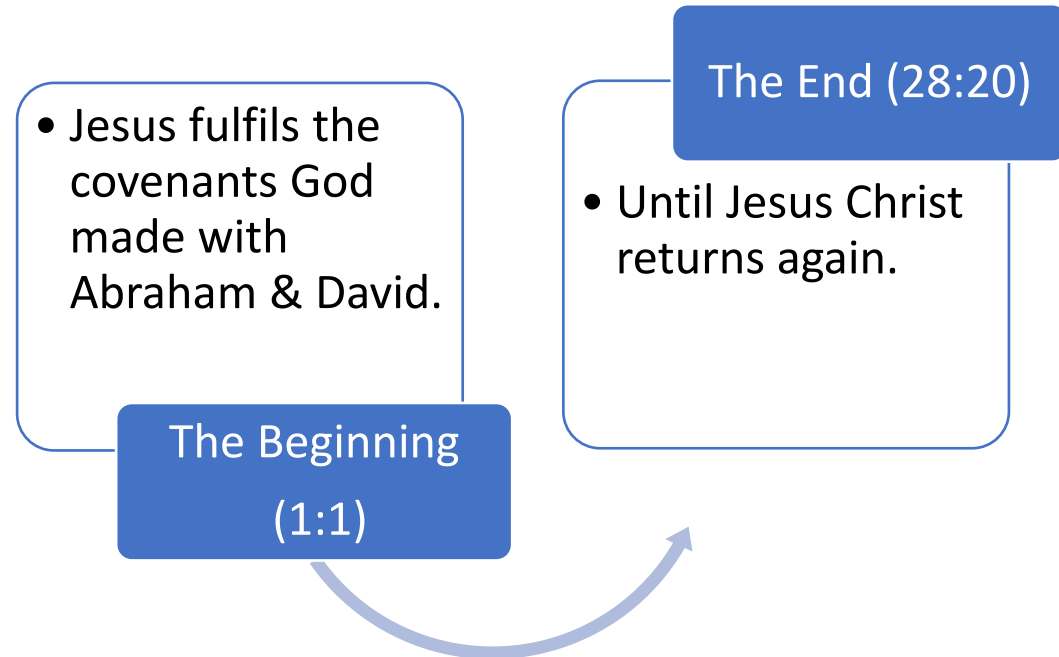
# What Is Unique About Matthew's Gospel?

- Thirdly, Jesus' teaching about the end of the age (chap. 24) and the final judgment (chap. 25).
- Matthew has a strong interest in eschatology (doctrine of last things).
- Imagine the setting of the teaching.
- Jesus and His disciples are sitting on the Mount of Olives, looking across the Kidron valley with the magnificent Herod's temple in sight.
- Earlier Jesus had said, “.. Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down” (24:2).
- To the disciples, the temple's ruin = the end of the world.
- The temple indeed was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.
- But the end of the age did not come.
- Matthew's purpose is not to have us speculate about the end of the age, but to be vigilant in waiting for His coming and to use our God given talents to serve Him.



# How Is The Gospel Structured?

- Matthew's Gospel is a carefully structured story, reflecting the orderly mind of an accountant.
- The story is magnificently framed:



- In between, Matthew has one key goal in mind – to show the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah who has come in fulfilment of OT prophecies.
- He repeatedly (16 times) stated, “All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet” (1:22; 2:15; 8:17; 13:35; 27:9-10).

# How Is The Gospel Structured?

- About 60% of Matthew's Gospel is devoted to Jesus' teachings.
- Matthew collects the teachings of Jesus into five major teaching blocks:

	Teaching Block	Topic	Jesus' Teaching About
1	Chaps. 5-7	The Sermon on the Mount	The lifestyle of the kingdom
2	Chap. 10	The charge to the 12 apostles	The mission of the kingdom
3	Chap. 13	The kingdom parables	The growth of the kingdom
4	Chap. 18	The teaching on greatness & forgiveness	The community of the kingdom
5	Chaps. 24-25	The Olivet discourse	The future of the kingdom

- Each section ends with "When Jesus had finished saying/instructing ...".
- This indicates a change in direction in the narrative.

# How Is The Gospel Structured?

- Matthew alternates the five teaching blocks of Jesus' teaching with four blocks of His deeds:

Chapters 1-4		Introduction: Birth, Baptism, Temptation
Chapters 5-7	<b>Word</b>	<b>The Sermon on the Mount</b>
Chapters 8-9	<u>Deed</u>	Miracles showing Jesus' authority over disease, demons & nature
Chapters 10	<b>Word</b>	<b>The charge to the 12 apostles</b>
Chapters 11-12	<u>Deed</u>	Jesus' divine authority rejected. Jesus began to speak in parables
Chapters 13	<b>Word</b>	<b>The kingdom parables</b>
Chapters 14-17	<u>Deed</u>	Feeding the multitudes; Jesus' identity revealed; He speaks of coming sufferings, to His disciples' dismay. Teaching shifts to life in the church.
Chapters 18	<b>Word</b>	<b>The teaching on greatness &amp; forgiveness</b>
Chapters 19-23	<u>Deed</u>	Jesus left Galilee; He is hailed as King as He enters Jerusalem (chap. 21).
Chapters 24-25	<b>Word</b>	<b>The Olivet discourse</b>
Chapters 26-28		Conclusion: Death & Resurrection

# How Is The Gospel Structured?

- Matthew clearly shows that Jesus communicated in both words and deeds, setting the example for us to follow.
- Based on the five teaching blocks, some have argued that the Gospel is modelled on the Pentateuch, the first five books of the OT, traditionally ascribed to Moses.
- Jesus is the new and greater Moses but it is not easy to see how the five teaching blocks correspond to the books of the Pentateuch.
- The Gospel may also be divided according to the locations (places) of Jesus' ministry:
  - In Galilee;
  - From Galilee to Jerusalem;
  - In Jerusalem.





# What were the locations of Jesus' ministry?

In Galilee, as prophesied in Isaiah



- Matthew shows OT prophecies concerning Jesus fulfilled.
- Example: Jesus' birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 cf. Matt. 2:1-6).
- Isaiah prophesied that in the past God humbled the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, but in the future God will honour Galilee, by the way of the sea along the Jordan with "a great light" (Isa. 9:1-2).
- This is a prophecy that Jesus will minister in Galilee (Matt. 4:12-17).
- The way of the sea (Via Maris) is an ancient highway (red line on first map) that still exists today.

# Capernaum, Galilee



- Jesus' HQ in Galilee was at Capernaum.
- Capernaum had a customs station on the way to Damascus.
- Matthew had his collection booth on the Via Maris (the Way of the Sea) linking Egypt via Syria to Mesopotamia.
- The residence of a high ranking Roman officer was here (Matt. 8:5-13).
- Also the home of Simon Peter (Matt. 8:14).
- Jesus performed numerous healings & miracles here.
- Jesus cursed the ungrateful city (Matt. 11:23-24).
- Today, Capernaum is a heap of stones by the lakeshore.

# CAPERNAUM

The Centre of Jesus' activities in Galilee



The ruins of ancient Capernaum

1. In the centre is the white limestone building of the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE synagogue.
2. Closer to the lake is the Octagon church (Peter's house).



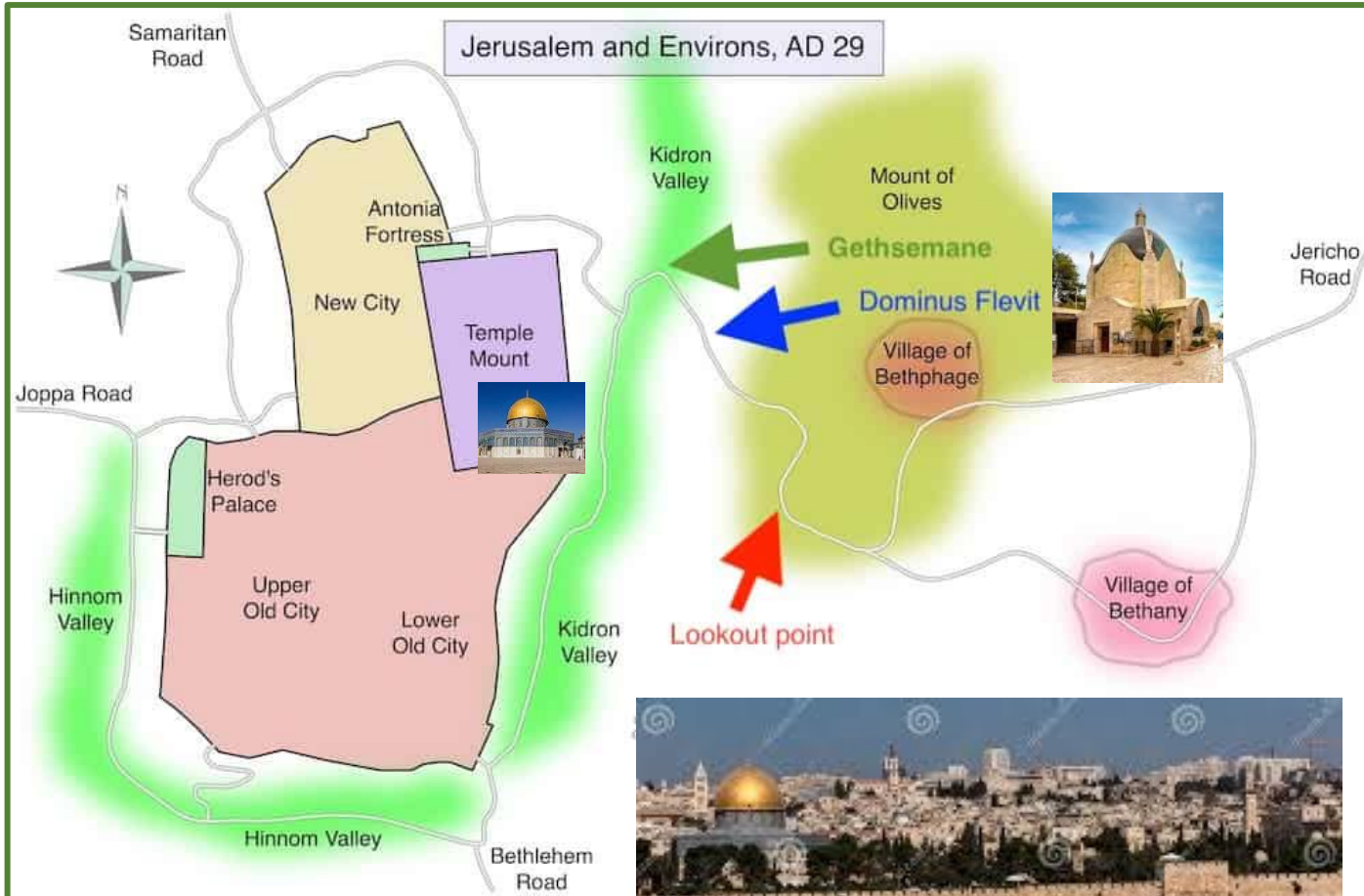
The Synagogue (4th century CE)



Under the building are remains of the early synagogue from the time of Jesus, built with (black) basalt rock.

# Jerusalem & Mount Of Olives

# The Last Week Of Jesus' Life



Present Temple Mount with Dome of the Rock



Day	EVENT
Sunday	Entered Jerusalem as King
Monday	Cleansed the temple & cursed the fig tree
Tuesday	Debated with Jewish leaders; gave the Olivet discourse
Wednesday	Rested; the plot against Jesus
Thursday	The Last Supper; arrested in Garden of Gethsemane
Friday	Crucified & buried
Saturday	In the tomb
Sunday	Resurrection

# The Theme: Kingdom Living With Christ As King

- Matthew emphasizes Jesus as King.
- Kings have kingdoms (the domains of the King).
- Matthew speaks often of the kingdom (about 50 times).
- The Greek word for kingdom is *basileia*
- It is a noun that has the idea of sovereignty, dominion or rule.
- The main theme of Matthew's Gospel is the "the kingdom of heaven".
- This phrase occurs 32 times.
- Elsewhere in the other Gospels, the phrase used is "kingdom of God".
- Why does Matthew prefer to use "kingdom of heaven"?
- To avoid using the name of God out of respect for the sanctity of God's name?
- Not quite as Matthew also uses "kingdom of God" (4X; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43).



# The Theme: Kingdom Living With Christ As King

- Moreover, Matthew actually uses the word “God” (Greek *theos*; θεός) 51X.
- One author (J. Pennington in *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*) argues that Matthew uses “kingdom of heaven” to contrast two realms – heaven and earth.
- Matthew uses “heaven and earth pairs” throughout his Gospel (5:18; 6:10; 11:25; 16:19; 18:18-19; 23:9; 24:30, 35; 28:18).
- Earth is regarded as the realm of Satan and heaven as the realm of the Father.
- The phrase “Father in heaven” is used 13X and “heavenly Father” 7X.
- The realms of earth and heaven are in direct conflict with one another.
- Matthew is asking his readers, “Are you with God’s kingdom, obeying His divine will or are you with Satan’s kingdom acting according to his evil purpose?”
- Satan’s overall purpose is to obstruct or frustrate the plan of God.
- Examples: the temptation of Jesus (4:1-11); using Peter in 16:21-23.



# “Experiencing The King, Living Out The Kingdom”

- As we study Matthew’s Gospel, we should be reflecting and checking ourselves.
- Here’s a sample of checks from Matthew:
- Am I just coming to church, ticking off attending a weekly worship service or am I seeking to grow to be more like Jesus (11:28-29)?
- Am I just gaining head knowledge about Jesus or do I experience His care and guidance on a daily basis (6:25-26)?
- Am I enjoying the kingdom of heaven by living for the things that please God (6:33).
- God wants us to have great faith (8:10; 15:28). Am I putting faith and trust in God in times of trial and suffering?
- Do others see that I belong to the kingdom of God because of my character and actions?



Kingdom Living is demonstrated in our decisions, priorities and attitudes.

# Kingdom Living NOW



Matt. 16:25