



## THE WAY OF THE COMMUNITY: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### Chapter 24: How to End a Gospel

#### Open with Prayer

*Read Matthew 28:16-20*

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

*Where do you hear common themes from the Gospel of Matthew in these closing words of the gospel?*

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#### The Perfect Ending

It should be clear that this passage sums up and encapsulates Matthew’s core message in many different ways. Consider the following:

— Verse 20 serves as a kind of bookend to Matthew 1:23 which claims that Jesus will be known as Emmanuel, meaning “God with us.” In this light, the entire gospel is about God’s continuing and ongoing presence with God’s people.

— The question of authority is conclusively answered here. In the post-70 world of Matthew’s community, Jesus is held up as being in the line of God’s definitive work

in the world.

*In week 2, we pondered three important questions that Jews faced after the destruction of Jerusalem. How did Matthew answer them in his gospel?*

1. *Without a nation or temple, what was the identity of the Hebrew people, the supposedly-chosen ones of God?*
  2. *What is the relation of Jew to Gentile?*
  3. *What should one think about the Messiah?*
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— If the gospel is read as a story of conflicting kingdoms — the kingdom of heaven verses the kingdoms of this world, including Rome — then this confirms the victory of God’s realm. However, that victory is only apparent in the life and witness of an alternative community of disciples of Jesus.

*According to Matthew, how is this alternative community to live? Where do we find these instructions in his gospel?*

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— This conclusion also borrows language from Daniel 7:13-14, which points to Matthew’s interest in the end times. He is always pointing to what is yet to come.

*What does Matthew believe about what will happen in the end times?*

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## **The Great Commission**

The closing words of a book are always important, particularly in the biblical writings which were meant to be read aloud. These are the words that will resonate longest with the hearers. The author always chooses these words carefully, to ensure that the audience is left with a precise impression.

Mark's gospel ends with the women expressing fear at the empty tomb; Luke's concludes with a brief ascension story; and John's ends with the author speculating that if every thing that Jesus did were written down, "the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

But Matthew chooses differently. He closes with a commission. He gives the disciples very clear instructions about what to do in his absence — go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them.

*Why does Matthew close his gospel in this way? Is it consistent with what has come before?*

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**Close with Unison Affirmation:**

**In the confidence that God is with us,  
we go on the Way with Christ.  
May the Spirit lead and guide us.**