

A LITERARY GUIDE TO THE LIFE OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Matthew's Portrait of Jesus

The order of the four Gospels consistently reflected in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament is the same order found in our modern Bibles—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Appropriately, Matthew opens the New Testament canon even as Chronicles closes the Hebrew canon. Chronicles begins with an extensive genealogy and closes with a commission from King Cyrus to rebuild the earthly Jerusalem and its temple. Matthew, similarly, begins with a genealogy and ends with a commission from another King to fill the earth with disciples of the heavenly Jerusalem. The royal status of Matthew's King is set as an *inclusio* in his Gospel from the opening question of the magi ("Where is He who is born King of the Jews?" 2:2) to the closing answer placarded on the cross ("This is Jesus the King of the Jews," 27:37).¹⁷ As the closing of one canonical division is compared to the opening of another, Matthew directs our reading from the outset into a rich typology that finds fulfillment in Jesus. His Gospel is designed to seamlessly join the testaments through a typological reading that guides and informs the outcome of Old Testament expectations.¹⁸

Matthew artfully and seamlessly coalesces two themes in his portrait of Jesus, depicting Him as both a New Moses and a New Israel.¹⁹ The two themes are like magnets attracting each other since Moses was often viewed as representative of Israel and could even be viewed as a federal head of the nation since he was the human mediator of the covenant at Sinai. The suggested blending of these two themes forms a rich, far-reaching typological reading of the first Gospel.

¹⁷ Royal images also inform other details at the beginning and end of Matthew's Gospel: (1) the royal gifts of the magi anticipate the gift of a rich tomb, and (2) Herod's efforts to eliminate Jesus as a rival to the throne are matched against Pilate's attempts to impede the spread of the news of the resurrection.

¹⁸ Dale Allison insightfully comments in the conclusion of his landmark study *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 273. "One wonders not at all that Matthew opened his book by naming David and Abraham, that he immediately followed 1:1 with a genealogy full of old Jewish names, that he sprinkled formula quotations throughout, that he frequently employed Septuagintal idioms, and that he constructed a Moses typology: the evangelist was determined to put the new wine in old wineskins...the newness we encounter...is that of completion...there is repetition and the past lives on. Indeed, the old vindicates the new, through the resemblance of the two."

¹⁹ These twin themes of Jesus the New Moses and Jesus the New Israel are given extensive development respectively in (1) Allison's work just cited, and (2) an unpublished article by Peter J. Leithart, "Jesus as Israel: The Typological Structure of Matthew's Gospel," <http://www.leithart.com/archives/002966.php>.

Peter Leithart has assembled the strongest case for an overarching Israel typology. He notes that the sequence of events in Matthew 1-7 mimics the sequence of the Pentateuch, and while he agrees that in these early chapters, the typological thread of a Moses typology is the strongest, yet even here he argues that Jesus is as much Israel as Moses.²⁰ Herod's pharaonic-like threat to male infants compares Jesus to Moses, but the flight out of Israel to Egypt fulfilling Hos 11:1 mingles in the image of Israel the nation called out of Egypt. The "my son" in Hosea's statement, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," is clearly Israel not Moses. Furthermore, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan parallels the baptism of both Moses and all Israel in the sea (I Cor 10:1-4), and finally, Jesus' forty days of testing in the wilderness is laced with Deuteronomy quotes emphasizing a comparison with the nation's forty-year sojourn in the wilderness.²¹

However, Jesus' ascent up the mount where He sets forth a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees moves back in the direction of a stronger parallel with Moses on the mountain, as He gives a new Torah to a new Israel. What follows in the development of the overarching mountain structure of Matthew is a particularly strong reinforcement of a Moses typology while leaving room for an Israel typology as well. Consequently, it will be argued that *the design of Matthew was to portray Jesus as Israel's promised Messiah through a carefully developed portrait of Him as the New and Greater Moses.*

The exodus deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage displays the covenant faithfulness, loyal love, mighty power, and passionate desire of God to dwell with His people. Matthew shows how the greatest deliverance of the Old Testament foreshadowed a greater exodus in the New Testament accomplished by Jesus, the One greater than Moses.

1. Matthew carefully selects and arranges his material to depict Jesus as the New Deliverer of God's people who will lead them through this greater exodus into His kingdom. Matthew celebrates the kingship of Jesus who comes to set captives free from every form of spiritual oppression and bondage.
2. Extending from the revelation of Jesus as greater than Moses is his identity as God's prophet, priest and king. There are indicators ranging from clear statements to textual inferences suggesting that Moses is the nascent expression of all three of these.

²⁰ The reader is referred to Leithart's insightful study that notes the typological flow of Matthew demonstrating how Jesus recapitulates Israel's whole history, and along the way re-enacts the roles of major characters in that history, including Joshua, David, Elisha and Jeremiah.

²¹ R. T. France shows that the typology of Jesus as Israel informs the temptation narrative (Matt 4:1-11) with the contrast between God's son Israel and God's Son Jesus, and the cited quotes from Deuteronomy that come from contexts clearly reminding of the nation's failures in the wilderness. *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971), 50-53.

The complex nature of Moses' identity is seen in the structure of Exodus 2.

- A Moses is born into a Levitical priestly family in Egypt (2:1-2)
- B Moses is recognized as Hebrew by Pharaoh's daughter in Egypt (2:6)
- C Question of Moses' identity: ruler or judge? (2:14)
- B' Moses is recognized as Egyptian by Jethro's daughters in Midian (2:19)
- A' Moses marries into a Midianite priestly family (2:19-22)²²

AA' introduce the first two 40-year cycles in the life of Moses, and each cycle begins with connecting him with a priestly family. BB' suggest that Moses' identity has many elements to it. C foreshadows the controversy and struggle that Moses will have being accepted for who he is throughout the wilderness journey with his people.

So this opening narrative of the life of Moses and the literary structure of Exodus 2 introduces the complex nature of Moses' identity. Interestingly, this section closes in Exodus 2:22 with Moses identifying himself as a foreigner, which raises the question: *in which arena does Moses consider himself a foreigner—the land of Egypt, the Hebrew community in Egypt, or the priestly nomadic tribe in Midian?* The text seems to be intentionally ambiguous, suggesting that to pin Moses down to a specific time, place, and role would be to misconstrue his fundamental identity. Moses intercedes for Israel as a priest in Exodus 32-34, and later identifies himself as a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15. Moreover, his role as Israel's lawgiver and judge gives him clear resemblance to a king.

Of the three anointed offices of the Old Testament (prophet, priest, and king), Moses as a royal figure would be the one most debated. However, there are hints that he was to be viewed as a royal figure, beginning with his very name. While the name "Moses" is indicated in Exod 2:10 to come from the Hebrew verb "to draw out," giving the picture of one drawn out of water, ironically his name also seems to overlap in its assonance with the Egyptian root *-mose* meaning "born of," which was compounded with the names of Egyptian gods to create the names of kings. The element *-mose* is found in such royal names as Tut-mosis, Ra-meses and Ah-mose meaning respectively "born of Toth," "born of Ra" and "born of Anu." The name "Moses" could therefore serve a double meaning moving from Hebrew to Egyptian, one "drawn from water" to Israel and one possessing royal status to the Egyptians.²³

Added to these royal images is another important note. God defines the relationship of Moses both to Aaron and Pharaoh as like that of God Himself. The Lord declares as He describes the relationship to Aaron, "you shall be to him as God" (Exod 4:16), and then

²² Danny Mathews, *Royal Motifs in the Pentateuchal Portrayal of Moses* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 98.

²³ Mathews, *Royal Motifs*, 50-51.

He expands that same language to Pharaoh announcing, “See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh” (Exod 7:1). Moses is given God-like status and authority both with his brother Aaron, the high priest who also served as Moses’ prophet, and with Pharaoh, the highest of the kings of the earth in his day. Functioning with divine likeness and authority in a status transcending one who is both priest and prophet and another who is king suggests that God fashioned Moses to preview Jesus as the God-man.

In keeping with these complex identity issues where Moses is concerned, Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is both God-man (“Immanuel, God with us,” Matt 1:23) and God’s anointed (“You are the Christ,” Matt 16:16, making Him unequivocally God’s prophet, priest, and king), which collectively qualify Him for His Moses-like roles of Israel’s new lawgiver and promised Messiah.

The Call of Matthew

While Matthew reports his call to be Jesus’ disciple (Matt 9:9-13), the way that Luke reports Matthew’s call is highly instructive concerning the role that Matthew and his Gospel were intended to play in the early church. Interestingly, sometimes we learn more about each of the writers of the New Testament through the eyes of the other writers rather than from the persons themselves. What this tells us is that the apostles and their close companions all loved and respected one another. Even when there is tension between them, as is reported in Gal 2 between Paul and Peter because of Peter’s hypocritical actions, the one thing that was never compromised was their love for each other. We gain important insights into each of the apostles as we note how they describe each other.

Luke’s account of Matthew’s call is made a centerpiece of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Note how Luke structures Jesus’ early Galilean ministry around two enterprises: the establishing and confirming of Jesus’ messianic identity and the calling of the twelve.

Luke 3:1-7:35: John and Jesus and Early Galilean Ministry

- A **John and Jesus** (3:1-22)
 - B **Unbelief in Nazareth:** Jesus announces **messianic identity and mission** (4:14-22)
 - C **Prophetic foreshadowing** of Jesus' ministry *illustrated* (4:23-27)
 - I Elijah's ministry to a **widow** (4:25-26)
 - 2 Elisha's ministry to a **foreign military officer** (4:27)
[Two miracles reported: a cleansing and a healing 4:31-39]
 - D Jesus' **healing and teaching ministry** to multitudes in Galilee 4:40-44
 - E **Jesus calls Peter** along with Andrew, James and John (5:1-11)
(Galilean fishermen whose sentiments would have been anti-Roman)
[Two miracles reported: a cleansing and a healing 5:12-26]
 - X **JESUS CALLS LEVI (MATTHEW)** (5:27-39)
(A tax-collector with more pro-Roman leanings)
[Two Sabbath controversies reported (6:1-11)]
 - E' **Jesus chooses the twelve** (6:12-16)
 - D' Jesus' **healing and teaching ministry** to multitudes coming from Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon (6:17-49)
 - C' **Prophetic fulfillment** of Jesus' ministry *illustrated* (7:1-17)
 - 2' Jesus' ministry to a **foreign military officer** (7:1-10)
 - I' Jesus' ministry to a **widow** (7:11-17)
 - B' Uncertainty of John and his disciples: Jesus confirms **messianic identity and mission** (7:18-23)
- A' **John and Jesus** (7:24-35)

As Luke writes to the early church, he emphasizes the fundamental truth by which the identity of the church is framed and held secure—the identity and mission of Jesus. His framing boundaries of Jesus' early Galilean ministry establish His identity and mission, and thereby establish also the foundation upon which the church rests. The church's mission is to exalt and declare the identity and mission of Jesus.

The other key element for the early church is their link to the apostles. The church is safeguarded as it is anchored in the apostles' doctrine. Thus, in the interior of Luke's chiastic patterning of Galilean ministry, he centers everything around the calling of the twelve. **EE'** match the call of Peter with the full list of the twelve where Peter is mentioned first. Together, these two sections emphasize that Peter is the first among equals. In keeping with this emphasis on the call of Peter, Luke later reflects the central role that Peter has in the life of the early church in Acts 1-12.

However, surprisingly at the very center is Luke's account of the call of Matthew. With the emphasis on Peter flanking Matthew in the center, Luke gives deference to Peter as the first among the apostles, and to Matthew as the first among the Gospel writers. By this pivotal place, Luke is honoring the strategic role that Matthew, his fellow-gospel writer, played in the early

church. Centering Jesus' early ministry around the call of Matthew shows us how Luke regards the importance and significance that Matthew's Gospel had in giving shape to the new community in Christ. His Gospel was particularly important in setting forth to Jews the convincing evidences of Jesus' messianic identity, that the story of His life declared Him to be the new and greater Moses, and the promised royal seed of the lineage of David.

In fact, the strategically important role that Matthew played in the early formative stages of the church is discovered in the following.

- (1) ***Matthew is uniquely the gospel of the kingdom of God.*** "Kingdom" (56x) and "king" (23x) are found more times in Matthew than any other gospel. Matthew's kingdom emphasis describes the coming of the kingdom of heaven into the earth in the appearance of heaven's anointed King, and His coming meant judgment for the corrupt leadership of second temple Judaism. Jesus concludes the parable of the wicked vinedressers declaring to these wicked leader, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matt 21:43). Their stewardship of God's kingdom was being revoked and given to a new called out people called the church.
- (2) ***Matthew is the only Gospel that mentions the church*** (16:18; 18:17). The church becomes the new community entrusted with the advancing of God's kingdom, and Matthew is the only gospel writer to record Jesus' words concerning the church. He affirms the sure growth and triumph of the church ("the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" 16:18), and describes how the church will govern itself (18:15-20).

These twin themes of kingdom and church are strategically important to the self-understanding of the church, and Luke recognizes the place that Matthew's Gospel had in the formative stages of the church, just as he also highlighted the strategic importance of Peter's ministry in those same formative stages. Hence, Luke honors their place in the apostolic community by the way he forms and tells the story of Jesus' early Galilean ministry.

The Structure of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew blends two structural devices in arranging the interior flow and architecture of his Gospel.

1. ***The first structural feature is an alternating pattern of narrative and discourse.*** Matthew arranges his Gospel in five alternating units of narrative (events) and discourse (teaching), framed by a prologue telling the birth story and an epilogue centering on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Each of the five discourses concludes with the words: "*when Jesus had finished....*"

This structure was first argued by B. W. Bacon (Cf. his journal article “The ‘Five Books’ of Matthew Against the Jews,” *The Expositor* 15 (1918) 56-66; and his later commentary, *Studies in Matthew*, 1930). Built around this alternating pattern, Matthew unfolds in the following structure:

Prologue: Birth Narrative 1:1-2:23

Five Cycles of Narrative-Discourse 3:1-25:46

<u>Narrative</u>	<u>Triggering Event</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
3:1 – 4:25	National Following 4:25	Sermon on the Mount 5:1-7:27 “finished” (7:28)
8:1 – 10:4	National Need 9:36-38	Mission of the Disciples 10:5-42 “finished” (11:1)
11:1 – 13:2	National Rejection 12:1-50	Parables 13:3-52 “finished” (13:53)
13:53 – 18:2	Disciples’ Question 18:1	Greatness and Forgiveness 18:2-35 “finished” (19:1)
19:1 – 22:46	Opposition of Religious Leaders Disciples’ Question 24:3	Woe to the Pharisees and the Olivet Discourse 23:1-25:46 “finished” (26:1)

Epilogue: Death-Resurrection Narrative 26:1-28:20

Viewed structurally, Matthew’s Gospel, with this five-part alternating pattern of narrative and discourse, becomes an architectural miniature of the Pentateuch, which similarly contains an alternating pattern of narrative and law spread through five books.

2. *A second structural feature of Matthew’s Gospel is organization around seven mountain scenes chiastically arranged*, with the fourth mountain scene constituting the literary center of the Gospel (15:29).
 - a. The seven mountains are arranged in a 3:1:3 pattern with the central mountain (the fourth) flanked by three pairs of mountains carefully arranged to correspond to one another:

First (4:8) = Seventh (28:16)
 Second (5:1) = Sixth (24:3)
 Third (14:23) = Fifth (17:1)

The seven mountains thus fall into the following chiastic pattern through the Gospel:

- 1) the mountain of the temptation (4:8),
 - 2) the mountain of the beatitudes (5:1),
 - 3) the mountain of separation (14:23),
 - 4) the mountain of the feeding in the wilderness (15:29),
 - 5) the mountain of transfiguration (17:1),
 - 6) the mountain of the Olivet discourse (24:3),
 - 7) the mountain of the commissioning (28:16).
- b. It appears that Moses ascended seven times upon Sinai to meet with the Lord God on the mountain (Exod 3:1; 19:3; 19:20; 19:24; 24:9; 24:12; and 34:2). If this count is accurate, perhaps Matthew has patterned his mountains after the seven ascents of Moses. *In presenting the theme of Jesus as the True Moses, Matthew portrays Christ as the Prophet who brings the word of the Lord from the mountain of God.*
- c. An event recalling Moses is associated with each of these seven mountains, demonstrating that Jesus is the Prophet who brings the word of the Lord from the mountain of God, just as Moses had before Him. The mountain structure employed by Matthew reinforces his central message about Jesus, i.e., that He is the new and greater Moses who will lead His people through a new and greater exodus.
- d. The central mountain

Jesus goes up on a mountain where He heals the multitudes and feeds the four thousand in the wilderness (15:29-39). There is a clear Mosaic association when the language of Matthew and the LXX of Exodus are compared.

Matthew

(15:29-31) “And Jesus...went up on a mountain... and great multitudes came to Him, including those that were lame, **blind**, *dumb*, maimed, and many others...and He healed them, inasmuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the *dumb* **speak**...and the **blind see**. And they glorified the **God** of Israel”

Exodus (LXX)

(Exod. 4:11-12) “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Who has given a mouth to man, and who made the hard of hearing and the deaf, the **seeing** and the **blind**? Have not I, **God**? And now go, and I will *open your mouth*, and teach you what you shall **say**.’”

Note the similarity in the description of Jesus' healing ministry to the language of Exodus 4:11-12. The power of Jesus over the infirmities of the disabled reveals the divine character of His ministry. Jesus is shown to be greater than Moses, who himself was like the dumb, in need of the Lord to “*open his mouth*” (Exod 4:12). Moses suffered from his own disability, but Jesus not only has no infirmity but also is able to heal those who do have them, making the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the dumb to speak.

The Moses connection is also reinforced in that the signature miracle associated with the ministry of Moses was the feeding of Israel in the wilderness. So the appropriate, authenticating sign of the True Moses would be the feeding of the multitude in the wilderness. Note the following comparison:

Matthew

(15:32-39) “Then Jesus said, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, for they have been with Me for **three days**, and I will not send them away hungry...’ And His disciples said to Him, ‘Where shall we find so much **bread in the wilderness**, to *fill* such a multitude?’...and He commanded the multitude to *sit*...and they all **ate**, and were *filled*, and *they took up* the fragments, seven baskets full (for the disciples).”

Exodus (LXX)

(Exod. 5:3; 16:3,16,18) “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go **three days** into **the wilderness**...” “Would that we had died in Egypt...where we *sat*...and **ate bread to fullness**...” “This is the **bread** (the manna in the wilderness) which the Lord has given you **to eat**.” “...he who gathered much had *nothing over*, and he that gathered less had *no lack*.”

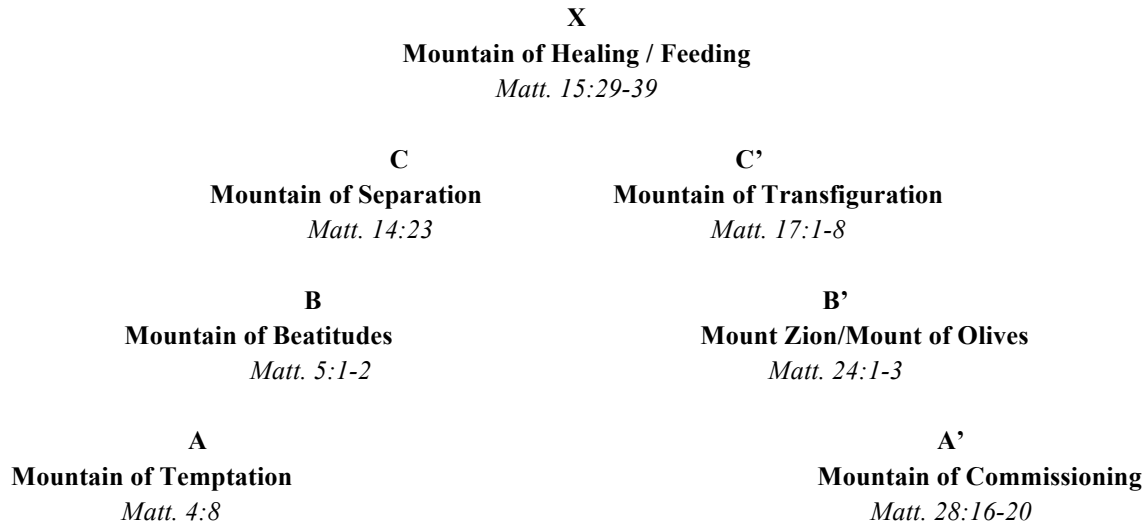
The miraculous character of the provision of so much and yet just enough to satisfy the need of the whole multitude clearly parallels the provision of manna in the wilderness under Moses.

The same emphasis is found in John's Gospel. John records that after Jesus fed the five thousand, the multitude acknowledged Jesus as the Prophet Moses had foretold (John 6:14, cf. Deut 18:15). Further, when the religious leaders demanded an authenticating sign from Jesus, they asked for a miracle like that of Moses, who caused their fathers to eat bread in the wilderness (John 6:30-31).

The account of Jesus' *healing* and *feeding* at the central mountain of the Gospel sets Jesus forth as both the One who does the works of God (making the deaf hear and the blind see) and Moses (feeding the multitudes with the bread of heaven). Therefore, the miracles that occur at the summit of the central mountain of the Gospel combine to portray Jesus as both the Lord of Israel and the True Moses, both the Prophet and God at the same time. So while He is like Moses, He is also greater than Moses!

- e. The seven mountains of Matthew's true Moses

The uniqueness of the central mountain along with the three corresponding pairs of mountains arranged around it produce an **A B C X C' B' A'** chiasmic pattern. If this pattern is turned from a vertical to a horizontal orientation, it takes on the visual shape of a “mountain,” producing the following likeness.



Analysis of the Chiasmic Structure of Matthew’s Mountains

The **first mountain**, the mountain of temptation, is the scene of Satan’s offer to give Jesus world dominion for His disobedience (4:8-10). The **last mountain**, the mount of commissioning, is the place where Jesus proclaims that He has been given universal dominion after His obedience (28:16-20). The authority Satan claimed on the first mountain in Matthew (cf. Luke 4:6) belongs exclusively to Jesus on the last mountain of Matthew (Matt. 28:18).

(Matt 4:8-9) “and again the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high **mountain**, and showed Him *all the kingdoms* of the world...and he said, ‘*All these things* will I **give** You, if You will fall down and **worship** me””

(Matt 28:16-18) “then the eleven disciples went away into...a mountain Jesus had appointed for them. And when they saw Him, they **worshipped** Him...And Jesus said, ‘*All authority* is **given** to Me...Go therefore and teach *all nations*””

In the temptation narrative, Jesus defeats the temptations of Satan by appealing three times to Deuteronomy (Deut 8:13 = Matt 4:4), (Deut 6:16 = Matt 4:7) and (Deut 6:13 and 10:20 = Matt 4:10). His obedience to Deut 6:16, which recalls Moses’ disobedience by the waters of strife at Meribah (Num 27:12-14), demonstrates that He is greater than Moses.

The **second and the sixth mountains** are the sites of the first and last discourses in Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:28) and the Olivet Discourse (24:3-25:46). The Sermon on the Mount begins with the nine blessings or “beatitudes” (5:3-12), while the Olivet Discourse is preceded by the eight “woes” or curses (23:13-39).

These mountains are juxtaposed so as to recall Gerizim and Ebal, the mountains of blessing and cursing in Deuteronomy 27-28. In that light there are a number of interesting correspondences between the nine beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12) and the eight woes (Matt 23:13-36). The beatitudes and woes are enumerated in order. The correspondence to the seventh beatitude is deliberately gapped because the Pharisees were only strangers and enemies of God, not His sons!

Beatitudes for the People of God

- (1) “for theirs is **the kingdom of heaven**” 5:3
- (2) “blessed are *they that mourn*, for they shall be comforted” 5:4
- (3) “they (the meek) shall inherit *the earth*” 5:5
- (4) the blessed have a passion for righteousness 5:6
- (5) “blessed are the **merciful**” 5:7
- (6) “blessed are the **pure in heart**” 5:8
- (7) “they shall be called the sons of God” 5:9
- (8) Disjunction of appearance and reality. “blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness” 5:10
- (9) “rejoice...for so *persecuted they the prophets*” (5:11)

Woes Against the Pharisees

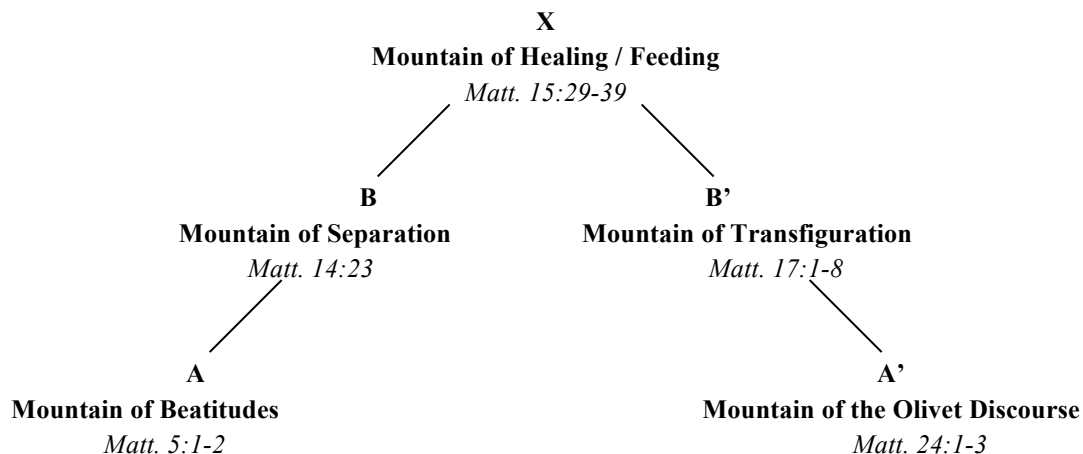
- (1) “you shut off **the kingdom of heaven** from men” 23:13
- (2) “you devour *widows*’ houses” 23:14
- (3) “you go about *sea and land* to make one convert” 23:15
- (4) the cursed have a passion for legalism 23:16-22
- (5) “(you) have omitted the weightier matters of the law:...**mercy**...” 23:23
- (6) “you **purify the outside** of the cup, but *within are full of extortion*” 23:25
- Intentionally blanked
- (7) Disjunction of appearance and reality. “whited sepulchers, which appear beautiful outwardly, but...are full of uncleanness” 23:27
- (8) “you are the sons of those who *killed the prophets*” 23:31

The **third and fifth mountains** emphasize the singularity of Jesus alone. At the mountain of separation, Jesus ascended alone (14:23). On the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus is left standing alone (17:8).

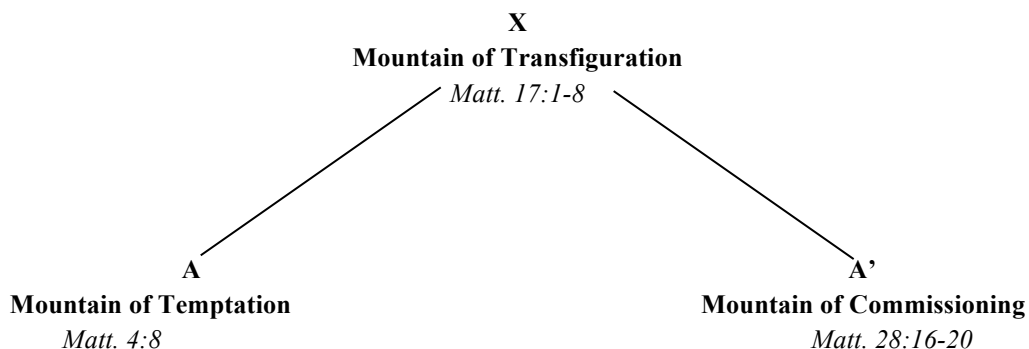
Although the mountain of the transfiguration is not the central mountain of Matthew (being the fifth of the seven mountains), Matthew gives this mountain a special dignity by a unique literary strategy.

1. The seven mountains of the Gospel are divided into two groups of five and two. *The five central mountains* (5:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; 24:3) **frame the five discourses of the Gospel**, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount as the mountain of the beatitudes and concluding with the Olivet Discourse on the mountain of Olives. As we have noted, Matthew arranges the teaching ministry of Jesus to His disciples into five discourses, each discourse concluding with some variant of the formula “when Jesus had finished these words” (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Now we note that they are framed as a type of literary pentateuch within the five interior mountains, creating a pentagonal geography in the interior of the Gospel.
2. Now while the *five interior mountains pivot on the Mountain of Feeding* in the wilderness, *the two outer mountains (Mountain of Temptation and Mountain of Commissioning) pivot on the Mountain of Transfiguration*.

MOUNTAINS FOCUSED ON ISRAEL



MOUNTAINS FOCUSED ON THE NATIONS



We can now observe the crucial importance of the transfiguration to Matthew, because the evangelist has incorporated this mountain both into the **five interior mountains** at the heart of the Gospel, whose **particular focus is Israel**, while also making it the pivot of the two most remote mountains as well. The **two remote mountains**, the first mountain of temptation and the last mountain of commissioning, have in common the vantage point of all the **kingdoms** (4:8) and **nations** of the world (28:19). They are the mountains that relate to the nations. Together with the five interior mountains, which focus especially upon Israel, Matthew's seven mountains embrace all the nations of the earth. Consequently, the mountain of the transfiguration, where Christ's transcendent glory was manifest, is the literary intersection of the five mountains of Israel and the two mountains of the nations. This is Matthew's way of attributing a universal significance to the transfiguration.

The mountain of transfiguration is replete with references to Moses. Note the overlapping vocabulary and themes between Moses at Sinai and Jesus at the Transfiguration.

Exodus 24:12-17; 34:30; 40:34-35 (LXX)

Matthew 17:1-8

<p>24:12 “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘<i>Come up</i> to Me on the mountain and be there’ ... 13 So Moses arose with his attendant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God...and a cloud covered the mountain. 16 Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day <i>He called to Moses out of</i> the midst of the cloud. 17 The sight of the glory of the Lord was <i>like a consuming fire</i> on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. 18 So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and <i>went up</i> into the mountain.”</p> <p>34:30 “And Aaron and all the elders of Israel saw Moses, and the appearance of the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.”</p> <p>40:34 “Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud overshadowed it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”</p>	<p>17:1 “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, <i>led them up</i> on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly <i>a voice came out of the cloud</i>, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ 6 And when the disciples heard <i>it</i>, they fell on their faces and greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’</p> <p>8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”</p>
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Sinai and the Mount of Transfiguration are the only two places in the Bible where the vision of the glory of God, a voice, and a cloud all come together, suggesting that the glory of Christ manifest on the Mount of Transfiguration is one and the same glory of God manifest on Sinai. The God of Sinai has revisited the earth in the incarnate Son, and His voice and word is to be heard above all others!