Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Matthew
Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew portrays Jesus Christ in the context of building the Kingdom of God.\(^1\) This is relevant to our time, because the Church is the kingdom of God.\(^2\) Sri, in his book *Mystery of the Kingdom of God: On the Gospel of Matthew*, illustrates how a first century Jew would have understood the Gospel of Matthew. Sri explains the background in which the actions of Jesus Christ took place, draws out the importance and meaning of those actions, and reveals how those actions served as elements and signs of the building up of the Kingdom of God by Jesus Christ.

**Revealing the Mission of Jesus Christ**

The Jews during the time of Jesus were eagerly waiting for the coming of the Messiah, the son of David who was to deliver Israel from oppression.\(^3\) Saint Matthew’s Gospel first starts off with a listing of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.\(^4\) In doing so, Matthew makes it clear that Jesus is the descendent of David, and that Jesus is the new David.\(^5\) Reading the genealogy of Jesus would have called to the mind of a first century Jew the glorious reign of David, as well as God’s promise to send a Davidic king to restore Israel.\(^6\) Moreover, by announcing the name of Jesus (“God saves”) and giving Jesus the title Emmanuel (“God with us”), Matthew is setting out the mission of Jesus and the nature of Jesus.\(^7\) The Jews understood that the root cause of their

---

2 Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 16.
4 Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 19.
6 Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 20–24.
oppression was their fall into sin; and Jesus was sent to save Israel (and mankind) from the power of sin.\(^8\) Jesus, fully God, through the Incarnation came to be with Israel and all of mankind, and he remains with us through the Church and especially through the Eucharist.\(^9\)

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by John the Baptist was a symbolic event of epic proportions. The Jordan River carried a great significance for the Israelites. The crossing of the Jordan River by the Israelites marked the end of the Exodus and their entry into the Promised Land.\(^10\) Among other events, it was also the place where Elijah passed his prophetic role on to his successor, Elisha.\(^11\) During his time, John the Baptist was seen as fulfilling the role of Elijah, as had been foretold in the book of Malachi: paving the way for the Messiah.\(^12\) With the Spirit descending upon Jesus at His baptism in the Jordan, Jesus is marked as the Davidic king, the Messiah.\(^13\)

Following the baptism, the first act of Jesus was to go do battle with Satan in the desert.\(^14\) Jesus goes to confront the root of the cause of Israel’s problems.\(^15\) This is in marked contrast to the expectations of the Israelites, who were waiting for a warrior-Messiah who would drive out the Romans and form Israel into a powerful nation.\(^16\) Jesus is setting about establishing a kingdom that is far different from the one the Jews were expecting.\(^17\) As the Messiah-King

---

\(^8\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 24–25.
\(^10\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 32.
\(^11\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 35.
\(^12\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 33–34.
\(^14\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 43.
\(^15\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 45–46.
\(^16\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 43–45.
representing His people, Jesus stands in place of Israel and succeeds and passes the tests that the
Israelites failed.\(^\text{18}\)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows that the kingdom He is building is not a mighty
and powerful kingdom in earthly terms.\(^\text{19}\) Instead, it was a kingdom meant to convert the world
through love.\(^\text{20}\) Jesus was starting a revolution, but not against the Romans; it was a revolution
against the power of sin.\(^\text{21}\) In interacting with the unclean and sinners, Jesus was restoring them
to their place within the kingdom.\(^\text{22}\) Jesus was cleansing, forgiving, and gathering them in.\(^\text{23}\)

**The Twelve Apostles, and Jerusalem**

Choosing twelve apostles was a sign from Jesus that He was rebuilding Israel, and thus
he was fulfilling the phrophecy of Israel’s redemption.\(^\text{24}\) Jesus Christ bestowed His authority
upon the apostles.\(^\text{25}\) In a special way, Jesus Christ made Peter the leader of the apostles, the
prime minister of His kingdom here on earth.\(^\text{26}\) By using the metaphor of the keys, Jesus also
makes it clear that this authority of Peter is to be passed on to Peter’s successors (the Popes).\(^\text{27}\)

The Messiah-King was expected to rule from Jerusalem.\(^\text{28}\) So Jesus, the new Passover
lamb, goes to Jerusalem and suffers death on the Cross in order to redeem Israel and mankind.\(^\text{29}\)

\(^\text{18}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 46–50.

\(^\text{19}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 59–60.


\(^\text{21}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 61–63.

\(^\text{22}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 69–70.

\(^\text{23}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 70–76.

\(^\text{24}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 86.

\(^\text{25}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 88.

\(^\text{26}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 93–101.

\(^\text{27}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 93–101.

\(^\text{28}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 108.

\(^\text{29}\) Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 108–160.
References