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## Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is organized into three sections:

1. Presentation of Jesus (1:1–4:16)
2. Ministry of Jesus (4:17–16:20)
3. Journey, passion, and resurrection of Jesus (16:21–28:20)

The beginning of each new section is marked by the formulaic phrase, “From that time on, Jesus began to . . .” (4:17; 16:21). The significance of this structure is that Matthew devotes an entire introductory section of his Gospel to answering the question “Who is Jesus?” The ultimate answer to that question is that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus is the son of David and Abraham, but not of Joseph.

Rather, Joseph is the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born (1:1–17).

Jesus is born to Mary, a virgin, through the work of the Holy Spirit (1:18–25).

God says of Jesus, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (3:13–17).

Satan tempts Jesus by saying, “If you are the Son of God . . .” (4:1–10).

At the end of the first section of Matthew's Gospel, the reader knows that Jesus is the Son of God. The reader also knows that it is possible to respond to Jesus the Son of God in two ways:

God's way is to be pleased with Jesus the Son of God.

Satan's way is to challenge Jesus the Son of God.

Throughout the rest of Matthew's story, lines are drawn according to these two possible responses.

He is the Son of God

Disciples confess that Jesus is the Son of God (16:16) and worship him as the Son of God (14:33).

Demons challenge Jesus as the Son of God (8:29).

He is not the Son of God

Religious leaders of Israel sentence Jesus to death because he says that he is the Son of God (26:63–64; cf. 21:33–46; 27:41–43).

The crowd of people vacillates but ultimately joins in challenging Jesus as the Son of God (27:40).

The significance of this dichotomy is heightened when it is realized what Matthew means when he calls Jesus "the Son of God." Basically, he means that Jesus is the one in whom and through whom God is present.

The birth of Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Emmanuel, which means “God is with us” (1:23).

Jesus promises that his Father will do what people ask him, because “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (18:20).

Jesus tells his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and promises, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:20).

Matthew emphasizes that God is present in Jesus and that Jesus continues to be present in the church.

The disciples who confess Jesus to be the Son of God are the foundation on which Jesus will build his church (16:18).

Matthew is the only Gospel in which Jesus speaks of the church, much less describes it as “his” church or says that he will “build” it.

So, in Matthew’s view:

People who follow God’s way and are pleased with Jesus the Son of God are those who are “made disciples” (28:20) and become part of the church.

People who follow Satan’s way and challenge Jesus the Son of God are those who challenge the church in which Jesus remains present.