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The Community of Matthew: Clues from the Gospel Itself

The community includes some Jewish Christians:

Jewish phraseology is used (“Son of David,” “King of Israel,” “righteousness,” “kingdom of heaven”).

Israel’s place in salvation history is emphasized (10:6; 15:24).

The abiding importance of Jewish law is stressed (5:17; 23:2–3, 20; 24:20).

Familiarity with Jewish tradition is presupposed (15:2; 23:5, 23, 27).

Christian missionaries are sent to the Jewish people (10:5–6; 23:34).

The community includes some gentile Christians:

Certain gentiles are cast in a favorable light (1:3, 5–6; 2:1–12; 8:5–13; 12:21; 13:38; 15:21–28; 24:14; 26:13).

The inclusion of gentiles in the kingdom of heaven is given a place in salvation history (21:41; 22:9–10).

Christian missionaries are sent to the gentiles (28:19).

The community is autonomous:

The pronouns “their” and “your” are used in reference to Jewish institutions, implying this community is separate from those institutions.

Distinctive terms are used for those who are “with Jesus” (“disciples,” “sons of God,” “servants,” “brothers,” “little ones”).

A structure for governing communal life can be discerned (16:19; 18:15–20).

Particular offices or roles for community leaders can also be discerned (10:41; 23:34).

The community is urban:

The word “city” (*polis*) is used twenty-seven times, “village” (*kōmē*) only four times (cf. Mark: “city” eight times; “village” seven times).

The community is prosperous:

Larger amounts of money are referred to than in the other Gospels (cf. Matt. 10:9 with Mark 6:8; Matt. 25:14–30 with Luke 19:11–27).

References to “the poor” are omitted or changed (cf. Matt. 5:3 with Luke 6:20; Matt. 22:9 with Luke 14:21).

Joseph of Arimathea is described as “a rich man who was also a disciple of Jesus” (cf. Matt. 27:57 with Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50).

The community faces trouble from without:

They expect to suffer persecution at the hands of the Jews

(5:11; 10:17, 23; 21:35–36; 23:34).

They expect to suffer persecution also from gentiles (10:18, 22;

24:9).

The community faces trouble from within:

They believe that some members will lose their faith and

become apostate (13:21–22; 24:12).

They believe that some members will hate other members and

betray them to their enemies (24:10).

They expect false prophets to lead some people astray (7:15;

24:11).