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Salvation History in Matthew's Gospel: Two Views

Three chronological periods have been discerned:

1. time of Israel
2. time of Jesus
3. time of the church

The question becomes “What is the extent of continuity and/or discontinuity between these periods?”

John Meier stresses:¹

- Continuity between time of Israel and time of Jesus:
 - Jesus views the Jewish law as valid (5:17–18).
 - Jesus limits his ministry to Israel (10:5–6; 15:24).
- Discontinuity between the time of Jesus and the time of the church:
 - Jesus, after his resurrection, instructs his disciples to teach his commandments (rather than those of Moses).
 - Jesus says that the post-Easter mission (of the church) is to “the nations”—that is, no longer to Israel (28:19).

Jack Dean Kingsbury stresses:²

- Discontinuity between the time of Israel and time of Jesus:

The time of Israel is essentially one of prophecy; the time of Jesus is one of fulfillment (see the fulfillment citations throughout this Gospel).

The coming of Jesus marks a new development in the relationship of God and people: God is now “with us” (1:23).

- Continuity between the time of Jesus and the time of the church:

The disciples and others respond to Jesus during his earthly ministry the same way that Christians respond to Jesus during the time of the church: they worship him as the Son of God, they have faith in him, they call him “Lord.”

The time of the church is marked by the continuing presence of Jesus (18:20; 28:20).

Meier defines continuity and discontinuity in terms of *ecclesiological* issues, while Kingsbury defines continuity and discontinuity in terms of *christological* issues.

1. See John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel*, TI (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

2. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew, Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).