

# Fifteenth North American LCJE Meeting

## San Diego, 2 – 4 March 1998

### The Jesus Code Issue – According to Matthew Kai Kjær-Hansen

#### I: Introduction

I am eagerly anticipating what Rich Robinson, later today, is going to say on the topic *The Bible Codes Issue*. I have not cleared anything with him in advance – and I am not encroaching on his topic when I now focus on *The Jesus Code Issue – According to Matthew*. But there may, nevertheless, be similarities between them – who knows?

In this paper I shall return to one of my favourite topics, namely the name of Jesus. At the 1992 LCJE meeting in Los Angeles I delivered a paper entitled *An Introduction to the names: Yehoshua/Joshua, Yeshua, Jesus and Yeshu*. In that paper I showed how the name *Yeshu* has become the common designation for Jesus of Nazareth in Israel today, even among scholars – but also that no less a person than Eliezer-Ben Yehuda in his prolegomena to *Thesaurus Totius Hebraicitatis* (Jerusalem 1940, pp. 215-216) uses the form *Yeshua*. The Israeli in the street today, however, does not associate anything negative with the *Yeshu*-form. The same thing cannot be said about certain Orthodox circles, for they write *Yeshu* with abbreviation signs, i.e. it is regarded as a ארושועי תבוע word which has a meaning. People in these Orthodox groups who have eyes to see will know that *Yeshu* means: *Yimmach Shemo Vezikro*, i.e., May his name and his memory be blotted out!

In my earlier paper I also showed that it is very likely that in the time of Jesus the name of Jesus was neither written *Yehoshua* nor *Yeshu*, but *Yeshua*. And I presume that people, like first-century Galileans for example, who pronounced the name *Yeshu*, nevertheless wrote *Yeshua* – with a final *ayin*. When the rabbis – unknown when – in writing chopped off the final *ayin* and wrote *Yeshu*, they were quite aware of what they were doing. Perhaps Peter and the other disciples of Jesus from Galilee had trouble with the guttural *ayin*. Perhaps they pronounced *Yeshua* like *Yeshu*. But when the pronunciation of a name is established *in writing*, something happens to that name, a matter which has not always received due attention. It is my thesis that at first the rabbis sneered at the Galilean pronunciation *Yeshu*. When later they wrote *Yeshu* without *ayin*, it was a deliberate attempt on their part to distance themselves from the soteriological connotations of the name of Jesus: *Yeshu* – just a man from Galilee. Whether or not my thesis holds good, the shift from *Yeshua* to *Yeshu* has not been sufficiently accounted for by saying, as David Flusser does in the new edition of his Jesus book (Jerusalem 1997): “Jesus is the common Greek form of the name Joshua. In Jesus’ day the name was pronounced ‘Yeshua’. We find him named in ancient Jewish literature where he is sometimes called ‘Yeshu’ that, almost certainly, was the Galilean pronunciation” (p. 24). Flusser is satisfied to observe but does not go sufficiently in depth with this.

In this paper I shall try to reach something constructive by noting what Matthew does and what he does not do with the name of Jesus. The verse in which the name of Jesus first appears in Matthew’s Gospel, namely in 1:21, functions – the way I see it – as a code to understand the purpose with Matthew’s Gospel and is *per se* the code to understand the person and work of Jesus. And this code is not a hidden code, it is a *revealed* code which is

accessible to readers at all times.

Hidden codes are for the specially initiated. Revealed codes are for the “poor in spirit”. The gospel of Jesus of Nazareth is for the “fools” They need “codes”, revealed “codes”.

I shall begin with examples of what Matthew does not do. For the time being it is enough to remember what the angel of the Lord said to Joseph about Mary’s child (Matthew 1:21): “. . . she will have a son, and you will name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

## **II: What Matthew does not do – illustrated by later examples**

### *1. The Epistle of Barnabas and number mysticism*

In the *Epistle of Barnabas* we find an example of number mysticism or number speculation. Whether this letter should be dated circa 130 or 75 A.D. it is the first literary instance of how the name of Jesus is exploited in a speculative manner among Christians.

What does Barnabas do? He achieves a holy point through unholy means. Barnabas sees the number of 318 in the story of Abraham: Abraham has 318 men (Gen 14:14 – in the Hebrew text: eighteen and three hundred). Barnabas combines this number with another text, namely Gen 17:23-27, which says that Abraham circumcised all the men of his house, but he argues from the Greek text when he has to find the numerical value! Allow me to quote the relevant passage from the *Epistle of Barnabas* (IX,7-9) in the English translation in *Loeb Classical Library* (p. 373):

Learn fully then, children of love, concerning all things, for Abraham, who first circumcised, did so looking forward in the spirit to Jesus, and had received the doctrines of three letters. For it says, “And Abraham circumcised from his household eighteen men and three hundred.” What then was the knowledge that was given to him? Notice that he first mentions the eighteen, and after a pause the three hundred. The eighteen is **I** [=ten] and **H** [=8] – you have Jesus – and because the cross was destined to have grace in the **T** he says “and three hundred”. So he indicates Jesus in the two letters and the cross in the other. He knows this who placed the gift of his teaching in our hearts. No one has heard a more excellent lesson from me, but I know that you are worthy.

It is possible that Barnabas was more easily understood in his own day – even by Jews – than he is by us. It is also possible that there were groups of Jewish believers in Jesus who were strongly influenced by mysticism and speculative thinking (cf. the material which e.g. Jean Daniélou and B. Bagatti have drawn attention to in their works). The fact that phenomena like these can be termed “Jewish Christian” is no guarantee that they are expressions of genuine faith. Of course, the same applies to the term “Christian”. Here I just put forward the claim that Barnabas goes much further than Matthew. Matthew knows nothing about such “codes” from the Old Testament.

### *2. Origen and the Name of Jesus*

For the church father Origen (died in the middle of the third century) it posed a problem that a robber named Barabbas was perhaps also called Jesus. Origen notes that there are old manuscripts who do not attach the name of Jesus to Barabbas’ name, the result of which is that the name of Jesus is not associated with a criminal. Origen presupposes that the name of

Jesus is a personal name which appears in the Old Testament although he makes every effort to “protect” the name of Jesus. Generally speaking it does not seem if it was a problem for the primitive church that the name of Jesus had been a common Jewish name.

For Matthew the name of Jesus is and remains a Jewish personal name. But it acquires christological overtones when used about Jesus of Nazareth (more about this below). Therefore it is not a problem for Matthew to mention that the robber who was set free instead of Jesus was also called Jesus (Matthew 27:16-17), i.e. Jesus Barabbas. Neither is it a problem for modern Bible scholars and Bible translators. It even gives Matthew a possibility to play on the name: They chose the wrong Jesus, they preferred a Jesus who cannot save from sin.

### 3. “Jesus” in the Vulgate

In Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible, the so-called Vulgate, there is a translation in which the name of Jesus appears. It is no wonder that this translation was made a target for criticism by Jews in the Middle Ages. Habakkuk 3:18 reads: *Agilah beElhohei Jisi*: i.e. “I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.” Jerome translates: “*Exultabo in deo Iesu meo*” (I shall rejoice in Jesus, my God).

Matthew does no such thing.

### 4. The Name of Jesus and the Tetragramme

From early in the history of the primitive church we have evidence of attempts to combine the name of Jesus and the tetragramme of JHVH or its first two letters *yod* and *he*. This was possible if one concentrated on the fact that the initial *yod* corresponded with the initial for Jesus, whether it was the Hebrew *Yeshua* or the Greek *Iesous*. In Christian sources – and the New Testament manuscripts in particular – the name of Jesus was one among several so-called *nomina sacra*, which were not written in full but were abridged; in the case of the name of Jesus it was done with the initials IH(sous). This also made it possible to combine the tetragramme with the name of Jesus.

Here is an example ascribed to one Joseppus Christianus: *yod* and *he* – the first two letters of the tetragramme and of the name of *Yehoshua* correspond with the first two letters in the name of Jesus in Greek – IH(sous). And they have the same numerical value, namely 18, he claims. This incorrect result is reached because he confuses *he* (=5) with *chet* (=8). While the correct *Yod He* only gives the value 15, Joseppus Christianus in his way gets the desired result: that the numerical values for the abridged tetragramme and the abridged Jesus name have the same value, namely 18.

Also in the Renaissance, immediately prior to the Reformation, are there speculations in connection with the tetragramme and the name of Jesus, even in the writings of so prominent a figure as Reuchlin.

Reuchlin, who was under the influence of Jewish as well as Christian Kabbalistic thinking, divides history into three periods which can be deduced from the names of God: *Ain tempore naturæ*, i.e. *Athe age of nature* we find the trigramme SDI (☉☿♁), *Ain tempore legis*, i.e. *Athe age of the law* we have ADNI and I.H.V.H. (☉☿☿☿ and ☿☿☿☿), and *Ain tempore gratiæ*, i.e. *Athe age of grace* the pentagramme ☿☿☿☿☿, which in Hebrew is written with the letters of the tetragramme and a *shin* in the middle. In Latin transcription it is written *ihshuh*. The tetragramme, which it was earlier forbidden to pronounce, now becomes pronouncable in *ihshue*, i.e. Jesus.

In other words: the added letter *shin* in the tetragramme is neither an initial for the name of God *Shadai* nor evidence of a poor knowledge of Hebrew. It is conscious Christian

symbolism – or speculation.

Matthew does no such thing, even if he has quite a lot to say about Jesus= relationship to God.

### 5. Notarikon

Notarikon was originally “employed as a method of abbreviation, to compose a word from the initial or final letter of several, or to decompose one word into several for purposes of anagogic homiletics”. As an example: אָדָם דָּוִד מָשִׁיחַ (= Adam David Mashiach).

Best known is the Jewish interpretation of אָדָם דָּוִד מָשִׁיחַ: *Yimmach Shemo Vezikro*, i.e. May his name and his memory be blotted out. This is found in the medieval so-called *Toledoth Yeshu* literature. In most versions the original name of Jesus is either *Yehoshua* or *Yeshua*, but after his outrageous acts have been known, the rabbis give him the new name *Yeshu*, written with an abbreviation sign and often with the additional explanation.

Attempts have also been made to find the name of Jesus in Gen 49:10. The initials of the words *Yavo Shilo Velo* give אָדָם דָּוִד מָשִׁיחַ. It is interesting that a *min*, a Jewish Aapostate@, discusses this question with the significant rabbinical authority *Rabbenu Tam* (12th century). This *min* asks Tam why he does not believe in Jesus – after all, *Yeshu* can be found in *Yavo Shilo Velo*. Tam=s answer is that one should also read the rest of the sentence. Rabbenu Tam then takes the two initials and the two final letters in the two last words and subsequently forms the sentence: *Yeshu Yitam*: Yeshu is going to lead them astray.

There are also examples of the whole of the verse (Gen 49:10) – with the exception of the last two words – being interpreted about Jesus. If one takes the initials of the first twelve Hebrew words, the result is a Hebrew sentence which, in translation, runs like this: There is no such wrong/deformed person as *Yeshu*.

Isak Abravanel (15th century) renders, in a treatment of Isaiah 34, Esau with the unusual writing אָדָם דָּוִד מָשִׁיחַ, whose radical letters are identical with the name of *Yeshua*.

Much more could be mentioned here. A fairly level-headed exegete who denies himself the use of such keys and codes in a text cannot help getting a little envious.

And now a few words about *gematria*.

### 6. Gematria

In gematria one uses the fact that the Hebrew alphabet also serves as numerals. This provides fantastic possibilities of reading novel and unexpected meanings into a text. A word with the value 100 may be exchanged for another word with the same numerical value. One either uses simple addition: Alef + Beth = 1+2 = 3; or one takes the sum of the letters plus 1 for the word; or the sum of the letters plus the number of the letters in the word (Alef Beth = 3 +2 = 5; or one adds the value of the names of the letters: ALF = Alef (1) + Lamed (30) + Pe (80) = 111 and so on. And it is possible to combine these methods. The only limitations are those imposed by the imagination.

Gematria speculations concerning the name of Jesus outside the *Toledoth Yeshu literature* occurred in Jewish circles before the 10th century. Here are a few examples:

YeShU = 316 = EloHeI NeKaR, which may either be understood about one who by virtue of his acts has Aalienated@ himself from his God in heaven – or about an Aalien God@.

YeShU = 316 = the word WaRiK (Aand vanity@) in the Alenu Prayer.

YeShu HaNoZRi = 671 = EreZ MiZRaIM

YeShu BeN PaNDIRA = 713 = YeS MaMZeR BeN HaNiDaH

YeShU NoZRI = 666 (Rev 13,18).

These examples must suffice. I have asserted that Matthew does not use such speculations, and as a Jesus-believer it is obvious that he does not arrive at such negative conclusions as those in the examples taken from the Jewish usage of *notarikon* and *gematria*. Then, what *does* Matthew do? If he has a code, then what is it?

### III: Matthew=s Acode@ to understand Matthew=s Gospel

Matthew has no hidden agenda. In the introduction to his gospel he puts his cards on the table. He is about to present the story of Jesus Christ. If he had written his gospel in Hebrew, he would have written *Yeshua haMashiach*. The question of which language Matthew=s Gospel was originally written in has not yet been solved. I can only argue on basis of the Greek text, and I note that in Greek Matthew renders the name of his principal character with the common transcription *Iesous* and not *Yeshua*. I also note that many people involved in Jewish evangelism today use the form *Yeshua* – also when they speak English. Actually, I do not think Matthew really minds that, I just note that Matthew does not use the Hebraicizing transcription, although he had this alternative. I think he takes for granted that when he writes *Iesous Xristos* he will be understood by the ordinary reader – Jewish as well as Gentile. The main character is the Jew Jesus, who is the Messiah – a Jewish concept. In other words, it is possible for Matthew (and perhaps also for others?) to describe the Jewishness of Jesus although he uses the Greek name forms *Iesous Xristos*. And, one might add, using the Jewish name form *Yeshua* is no guarantee for a presentation of Jesus= genuine Jewishness and unique character. Things are not as easy as that!

In the introduction to his Gospel Matthew goes on to write about Jesus Christ, the son of David and the son of Abraham. Jesus is related to the big ones: to the greatest king in Israel=s history, King David. He who has ears, let him hear, says Matthew: God gave promises to David. They were fulfilled in Jesus. And Jesus is related to Abraham, the first Jew. He who has ears, let him hear that this also means good news for Gentiles. God=s promise to Abraham implies good news for Gentiles for – as it was said to Abraham: AThrough you I will bless all the nations@ (Gen 12:3).

The very first verse gives clear signals to the readers about the main character of the Gospel: Christ/Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham. And again: no hidden agenda. Readers could roll up the scroll saying: This is not for me. And I am afraid that many modern readers have skipped chapter one because of the many outlandish Jewish names of the genealogy. This is a pity for then they miss a revealed code which I think is the very key to the Gospel of Matthew, namely the 21st verse. I will return to this verse.

Modern readers find this chapter extremely boring. When the new Danish Bible translation was completed in 1992, some churches decided to sponsor free copies of the New Testament – for evangelizing purposes. And I was asked – by people who were familiar with the Bible: AWhy couldn=t you have placed Matthew=s Gospel in a less conspicuous place in the New Testament? When people open it and on the first page see this long list of names which mean nothing to them, they are bound to say: This is not for me!@

Even we, leaders involved in Jewish evangelism, will have to admit, I presume, that several of these names from Jewish history are – just names. And this is probably also the case with many of the Jewish people we are trying to reach with the gospel.

If we assume that most of the first readers had a thorough knowledge of the

personalities of Old Testament history, their situation was a different one. Behind each name they would be able to make out the silhouette of a person with a history – unlike many of us today.

For the first readers the genealogy will have been shocking reading which must have made them rub their eyes. Not least when they read the names of the four women.

*Tamar*: It was Tamar who disguised herself as a prostitute and became pregnant with her father-in-law. A horrible story. Is it not odd that Tamar should be mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Messiah?

*Rahab*: The prostitute in Jericho who helped the Israelite spies prior to the downfall of Jericho. Is it not odd that she should be mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus?

*Ruth*: The Moabite woman who belonged to Israel=s archenemies, i.e. a Gentile woman. Is it not odd that she has her place in the genealogy of the Jew Jesus?

*Uriah=s wife*: Of course Matthew knows her name, Bathsheba. The fact that she is referred to as Uriah=s wife leads one to think of David, his misdeed and sin. Is it not odd that this event is also included in the genealogy of Jesus Messiah?

The four women of the genealogy – and we could include some of the men – are used by Matthew to show that God carries through his plan in a world of sin and sinners. And if we include Mary, Jesus= mother, we can see that the common denominator for them is something unusual. The unexpected, the atypical is part of God=s salvation history. It is also part of Jesus= history.

Jesus= mother was going to have a son by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew does not tell us about the birth itself. He says that the miraculous conception took place, he mentions Joseph=s reaction to this, and the intervention of the angel of the Lord. The words from the angel of the Lord to Joseph are important. It is said of Mary that *Ashe will have a son, and you will name him Jesus – because he will save his people from their sins@* (Matthew 1:21).

I will have to restrict myself to a few brief remarks about Matthew=s revealed *Acodes@* - for this is what I think verse 21 is.

1. The name of Jesus is divinely sanctioned. The statement comes from the angel of the Lord. Naturally, this statement applies only to Mary=s child, not to other children who were called *Yeshua*.

2. If we translate backwards, from Greek to Hebrew, we get a Hebrew wordplay: *Yeshua ... Yoshia*, i.e. Jesus will save. If Matthew wrote his gospel in Greek, it is worth noticing that he obviously takes for granted that his readers understand the correspondence between the name of *Jesus* and the verb *to save*. In other words: Matthew – or the angel of the Lord! – is not as explicit in the interpretation of the name of Jesus as when the name of Immanuel is mentioned and by Matthew translated in verse 23.

3. If the angel of the Lord had been a *Adictionary angel@*, I suppose he would have said as Philo, the Alexandrine philosopher, did: Jesus means *Athe salvation of the Lord@* or – to be more precise – *Athe one by whom the Lord saves@*. He does not. But then there is an important addition which transcends an etymological explanation of the name of Jesus. This addition is in the words: *Afrom their sins@*.

He, Mary=s child, might be the one who would save his people from the Romans. But he is not. He is to save his people *Afrom their sins@*. This addition makes explicit the nature of the salvation which the name of Jesus implies. It is not something which just flows smoothly from Matthew=s pen. This has been carefully contemplated. Revealed *Acodes@*

always are.

All else is of secondary importance – for Matthew. That something is of secondary importance does not mean that it is irrelevant. I am not blind to the fact that when Matthew divides the genealogy into three groups, each with 14 persons, this may have symbolic importance. 14 is the numerical value for DaViD, and some believe that Matthew hereby wants to indicate that Jesus, in a deeper sense, is David=s son. I don=t know! But surely it is not a revealed code! In verse 21, however, we find the decisive sign for the person and work of Jesus. Whether Matthew refers to Jesus as the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of Man, the Servant, Christ/Messiah, Immanuel, etc. – Mary=s son is God=s Son – a designation which is not explicitly mentioned in chapter one but which is implied - and this Son of God – Jesus is his name – is the one who saves from sin.

The next short section in Matthew=s Gospel is about Immanuel. The name of Immanuel comes from Isaiah 7:14 and is part of the first of Matthew=s fulfilment quotations. This is only place in the whole of the New Testament where the name of Immanuel occurs. The name of Jesus appears about 150 times – in Matthew alone. As mentioned above, the name of Immanuel is accompanied with an explicit translation, which is not the case with the name of Jesus. It is obvious that Matthew considered the meaning of the name of Immanuel important. The Immanuel prophecy substantiates the significance of the name of Jesus as expressed in v. 21. For Matthew there is no competition between these names. Formally the name of Jesus is of superior importance in relation to the name of Immanuel, for it is the naming scene which causes Matthew to quote Isaiah 7:14, the verse with Immanuel.

In other words: If it was shocking for the first readers to read, in the genealogy of Jesus, about Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Uriah=s wife/David=s sin, and if it was shocking to read that Mary was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit, it would have been no less shocking to read that Jesus was to save his people from their sins.

Saving from sin and forgiving sin is something which is the prerogative of Israel=s God.

This places Jesus in a category of his own – but not through *number mysticism* or *notarikon* or *gematria* or similar speculation. Jesus is of divine origin and he has a divine mission. He is, as Peter declares about him in the middle of the Gospel: AMessiah, the Son of the living God@ (Matthew 16:16).

This Jesus, who saves from sin, is for Matthew greater than all those he is compared to. It is true he is David=s descendent but also David=s Lord (22:41-46). He is greater than Jonah (12:41), greater than Solomon, greater than the Temple (12:6), greater than John the Baptist (3:11) – who is even said to be much more than a prophet (11:9). This Jesus, who saves from sin, is the Son of Man who is Lord of the Sabbath (12:8).

As Son of God of divine origin, he has been endowed with a unique divine authority. In the Sermon on the Mount he speaks as one who is more than and greater than Moses. Jesus= words have the same weight as God=s words. To confess him corresponds to confessing God. To deny him corresponds to denying God. Jesus speaks and acts in his own name, so to speak. He has his authority from his heavenly Father. Everything has been given to him by his heavenly Father: AMy Father has given me all things. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him@ (Matthew 11:27). Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). Therefore he can also say to the paralysed man in Capernaum A... Your sins are forgiven@ (Matthew 9:2) – a statement which the religious leaders regarded as

blasphemous, which indeed it is if Jesus had been no more than a great prophet. For Matthew he is more than that: he is the Son of God, who through his suffering and death gave his life to redeem many people (Matthew 20:28). He, Jesus, who saves from sin, is God=s obedient Son who in every respect does the will of God – also when he is Ahanded over@ by God to suffering and death.

That Matthew even at the end of Jesus= life sees him as the one who saves from sin, emerges clearly from the words said in connection with the Lord=s Supper in Matthew 26:28: AThis is my blood, which seals God=s covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.@ Among the synoptics only Matthew has the words Afor the forgiveness of sins@ in his tradition of the Lord=s Supper.

Those who remember the Acode@ from chapter 1 verse 21 are not surprised.

And now let me sum up.

#### **IV: Summary and challenge**

Matthew=s code in 1:21 is an opened or revealed Acode@. Through this Acode@ Matthew makes it clear who Jesus is and what Jesus= mission is. The interpretation of the name of Jesus is the Acode@. For it holds a description of the nature of the salvation which Jesus brings.

For Matthew the name of Jesus continues to be a personal name. But the name of Jesus acquires, through its interpretation in 1:21, a christological overtone which accompanies the name and the person of Jesus throughout the Gospel.

Matthew=s code holds nothing that even smacks of number mysticism or speculation. Let the so-called wise and learned indulge in that if they so wish; revealed truths are for the simple and the unlearned, and for real sinners.

The way Matthew describes Jesus is as the friend of sinners who offers forgiveness of sin and salvation to all who come to him. To come to Jesus means, in Matthew=s terminology, to believe in Jesus.

It is as simple as that!

And the moment I have said that it is simple, I realize that there are also other themes which engage us who are involved in Jewish evangelism, which is a quite legitimate matter. But I will nevertheless allow myself to be challenged by the Jew Matthew and pass on the challenge. I suppose it is possible to say quite a lot about Matthew=s view of Israel. Many people have done so and have often concluded that Matthew has given up Israel. This is not my opinion, but it is not the topic which engages us at the moment. I only mention it because I want to pose a challenging question to us who are involved in Jewish evangelism today.

Is it Israel and apocalyptic and calculations of the date of the return of Jesus, etc., which is the point of orientation for Jewish evangelism? Or is it – I know it sounds trivial and it is a gross simplification – Jesus, the way Matthew portrays him in his Gospel?

In the latest issue of *The Jerusalem Report* (February 19, 1998), which reached me immediately before I left Denmark, there is a highly readable article entitled *Warning! Millennium Ahead!* (pp. 14-19).

When I read that article and read what Christian friends of Israel are quoted for there, it seems to me that for some Israel rather than Jesus has become their point of orientation. If this is true, it is no small matter.

No one will be saved through speaking about or Abelieving@ in Israel. And no one will be saved through dealing with or trying to fix the date for the return of Jesus – the day

which not even God=s own Son knows.

In Jewish evangelism it is obvious that we also have opinions about the topic of Israel. In the LCJE network there are different views of these things. But when it comes to priorities, I hope that we shall continue to say: The primary purpose of Jewish evangelism is to proclaim the gospel about the Jew Jesus to Jewish people today, to offer salvation through faith in him who came to save his people from their sins.

That is our primary and principal task.

Thank God we have Matthew to remind us of it.