

The Gospel of Matthew: A Portrait of Jesus

SESSION 4: OPPOSITION to the KINGDOM: Mt 11-18

Opening Prayer/Review from Last Session

Session 4 - OPPOSITION to the KINGDOM, Mt 11-18

- 1) 11:1-19 Jesus and John the Baptist - **Q Material**
 - a. No **REPORT** on the 12 after their experience of mission, as Mk and Lk do;
 - b. **Has JohnB changed his mind about Jesus?**
 - c. **Was the Messiah expected to do something different?**
 - d. **No agreed upon understanding of the Messiah**
 - e. **The messages of John and Jesus were and will continue to be rejected!**
- 2) 11:20-24 Consequences of Rejection: Unrepentant Towns
 - a. How might Jesus react to greater Israel's lack of repentant response?
- 3) 11:25-30 The Revealer's Yoke
 - a. **Most vulnerable and marginalized = the most receptive to Jesus' message!**
- 4) 12:1-14 **Sabbath Controversies**
 - a. **PICKING GRAIN on the SABBATH:**
 - b. **WITHERED HAND on the SABBATH:**
 - i. Anyone would save an animal on the Sabbath so why not save a person
 - ii. **More attention on the controversy and conflict than healing!**
- 5) 12:15-21 Approved by God: The Chosen Servant
- 6) 12:22-37 Power from the Spirit of God in contrast to Beelzebul
 - a. **Story does not emphasize the healing but the REACTION!**
 - b. **Beelzebul**, prince of demons (2 Kngs 1:2, Baalzebub, Lord of the Flies, one of the Philistine deities);
 - c. **One cannot remain neutral** - was this warning of particular importance in Mt's community to prevent apostasy?
 - d. **Unforgivable sin = To call the light darkness is to refuse the light and what light offers!** Those who call God, Satan refuse, on their own accord, the gifts of God, one of which is forgiveness;
 - e. **Who else called the Pharisees, "brood of vipers," before?"** Mt 3:7;
- 7) 12:38-45 An Evil Generation: The Sign of Jonah and Unclean Spirits
 - a. Pharisees express **BLINDNESS** to God working signs in Jesus;
 - b. **Gentiles have shown greater acceptance of God than Jews:**

- c. Those (like the Pharisees) who cling to an **outer image of order and tidiness** actually may be **empty on the inside**, vulnerable to possession!

8) 12:46–50 The True Family of Jesus: Will of families vs. the will of God!

9) 13:1–53 THE PARABLE DISCOURSE 3rd of 5, with 7 PARABLES

- a. **C. H. Dodd: (20th century Welsh, Protestant, New Testament Scholar, 1884–1973) A parable is:**

- i. **“a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life,**
- ii. **arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and**
- iii. **leaving the mind in sufficient doubt of its precise application to tease it into active thought.”**

10) 13:1–9 PARABLE #1 - The Sower, Seed, Soil and Harvest

11) 13:10–17 The Reason for Speaking in Parables

- a. Perhaps it is the responsibility of each one to be open and respond to “the kingdom of heaven;”
- b. Jesus clearly differentiates between the crowd and his disciples, in terms of their privileged intimacy with Jesus and their blessedness to see and hear Jesus;

12) 13:18–23 Explanation of the Parable of the Soil

- a. **PURPOSE** of a parable: invite the hearer to **ponder, wrestle and respond;**

13) 13:24–30 PARABLE #2 - Weeds Among the Wheat

- a. **Unique to Mt** alludes to the **origin of evil and how to respond to it;**
- b. Weeds, “**zizanon**,” refers to a **pernicious weed** that, after germination, closely resembles wheat;
- c. Alludes to teaching in the **Sermon on the Mount (5:45)** about God’s rain falling on the just and the unjust, therefore we should not try to forcibly get rid of evil; **know them by their fruits;**

14) 13:31–32 PARABLE #3 - Mischievous Mustard

- a. Translated in English as “mixed,” the verb, “**krypto**,” literally means **“hidden;”**

15) 13:33–35 PARABLE #4 Hiding Leaven: leaven is more negative than positive!

16) 13:36–43 The Weeds and the Wheat Explained

- a. Mt uses an **allegorical** way of explaining the parable to his disciples;
- b. Scholars (**Joachim Jeremias**, 1900–1979, German, Lutheran scholar of Near Eastern Studies) believe that **because of significant changes in literary style and language, this explanation was probably NOT the words of Jesus but instead the work of the author, perhaps reflecting how the community understood the parable;**

17) 13:44–53 PARABLES #5–#7 - Treasure Found, Stored and Shared

a. **#6 A Treasure buried in a field**

- i. KOH as something found that **someone else has hidden!**

b. **#7 A merchant searching for fine pearls**

- i. KOH as something that **someone is searching diligently for!**

c. **#8 A net thrown into the sea**

- i. KOH as something that is **found among many other things of different value!**

- ii. What is "bad," or not able to be eaten, is thrown away:

1. Bad, or "**sapra**," refers to:

- a. Sea-creatures that cannot be eaten;
b. Fish that are considered unclean by Jews and therefore, inedible;

2. **What is bad is thrown out, not thrown back into the sea;**

d. Last paragraph v.51-53 summarizes the pertinent points of all parables:

- i. **Disciples are given a privileged understanding of the parables!**

18) **13:54-58 Rejected Prophet/Home in Nazareth among Family**

a. **Jesus' brothers** (James, Joseph, Simon, Judas) & unnamed sisters:

- i. **True siblings**, other children of Joseph and Mary:

1. Catholic tradition does not embrace this understanding and **it is not known if Mt was aware of the tradition of Mary's perpetual virginity;**

- ii. **The children of Joseph from a previous marriage;**

- iii. **Cousins** or some other form of extended family;

19) **14:1-12 Death of John the Baptist**

a. Mk's version (6:14-29) puts **more blame on Herodias** for John's death;

b. **Story serves to foreshadow/preview the death of Jesus:**

20) **14:13-21 Feeding of the 5000**

a. **CRITERIA of MULTIPLE ATTESTATION** – test of historicity!

b. As will happen in the **Last Supper**, Jesus will **bless, break and give to the disciples;** in this case the disciples will give to the crowds;

c. Mt's version of this miracle follows immediately after the Herod story, **contrasting two types of "banquets:"**

- i. **The banquet where Herod presides** – villains (Herodias), fools (Herod), temptress (Herodias' daughter), and indiscriminate death;

- ii. **The banquet of Jesus** – great abundance from small provisions, food for body and soul, community participation (disciples are instruments of distribution);

21) 14:22-36 Walking On Water

- a. **More favorable portrayal of the disciples than Mk 6:45-52;**
- b. **Peter, first among disciples (Mt 10:2), willing to risk what Jesus is doing;**
- c. Final comments of each version summarize how apostles are characterized:
 - i. In **Mk**, the story ends: "their hearts were hardened;"
 - ii. In **Mt**, "Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God;"

22) 15:1-20 Blind Guides

- a. Mk (7:1-23), has a **longer list of Jewish practices/rituals**, perhaps because **Mk was writing for a Gentile community**
- b. There was much lively debate at the time for how to live **oral tradition** (extension of the Torah) and what sort of authority it carried;
- c. **Korban** – a way of declaring something as dedicated to God; Mt does not use this word, as Mk does, but rather explains it;

23) 15:21-28 Tenacious Faith: The Canaanite Woman

- a. **Tyre/Sidon**, ancient Phoenician port cities, now in Lebanon = Gentile territory;
- b. **"kynarion,"** meaning little or worthless dog or even puppy;
- c. Was Jesus **"converted"** to extend his mission to Gentiles?

24) 15:29-39 Healing and Feeding More Multitudes: The 4000 (only in Mt & Mk)

25) 16:1-12 The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

- a. **"peirazo,"** or test, just as the devil tested Jesus;
- b. **Leaven = hidden, inner means of influence or power, negative here!**

ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM 16-18

Note that this section follows the outline of Mk 8:27-10:52

This gospel section can be outlined as:

Passion Predictions

Misunderstanding by the Disciples

Corrective Teaching about Following Jesus

1) 16:13-28 Following the Messiah to the Cross

- a. **Caesarea Philippi**, source of the Jordan River, rebuilt by Philip, Herod's son;
- b. **Jesus wishes to confirm his identity** through questioning his disciples;
- c. Mt is unique in adding the name of **Jeremiah**
- d. **Simon is renamed by Jesus:** Greek – Petros, from petra = rock; Aramaic, Kephas, which has been "Latinized" to Cephias, since there is no "K" in Latin;
- e. Son of Jonah: in Aramaic, bar Jonah; Hebrew, ben, as in Ben Hur!

- f. Jesus tells Peter that he has received a **divine revelation**;
- g. **Mt unique among the gospel writers in using the word, "ekklesia,"** or church;
- h. **Peter's special role** continues as Jesus declares him to have "keys" to the kingdom and the **power to "bind" and "loose,"** meaning that God will support and refute whatever Peter deems as justifiable;
- i. Mt 16:21 is the **first prediction of Jesus' passion**; there will be three total;
- j. The "rock" quickly is labeled as "**Satan,**" meaning that, like Satan, the words of Peter are **testing** or tempting Jesus not to comply with God's will;
- k. Jesus calls Peter a "**skandalon,**" or stumbling block – word-play on rock??

2) 17:1-13 The Transfiguration of Jesus and the Coming of Elijah

- a. **Transfigured, "metemorphothe,"** meaning a change in form;
- b. "**skenes,**" which are tents or booths refers to the **Jewish Pilgrimage Feast of SUKKOT (Tabernacles or Booths),** a fall harvest festival commemorating the time of the Israelites in the wilderness, celebrated by the building of booths made out of branches in which the Israelites would live in for seven days (**Lev 23:33-44**);
- c. The "**voice**" repeats the words at Jesus' baptism (Mt 3:17)

3) 17:14-20 The Power of Little Faith

4) 17:22-23 Second Prediction of the Passion

- a. Note the **geography** here: Jesus and the disciples have been in the region of Caesaria Philippi, gone up to the mountain, back down again and are now "gathering in Galilee," on the way south to Jerusalem;
- b. **disciples became "overwhelmed with grief;"**

5) 17:24-27 The Temple Tax, unique to Mt

- a. **Temple Tax** = paid by Jews to support the upkeep of the Temple in Jerusalem – something like the 11% tax that Catholic parishes pay on income (collections, etc.) to support the diocese/cathedral within which they exist;
- b. **Peter is once again a spokesperson** AND his fishing skills are put to use!
- c. Settles issues surrounding tax AND Christian claim that Jesus was Son of God:
 - i. A good Jew would want to support the Temple by paying for its upkeep;
 - ii. There may have been disagreement as to how the tax was used;
 - iii. **Since Temple was destroyed, maybe tax used for Temple to Jupiter?**

6) 18:1-14 Greatness in God's Realm – **FOURTH MAJOR DISCOURSE:**

- a) social status among community members;
- b) scandal, and
- c) apostates, those who would stray and/or abandon the faith)

a. Part 1-The greatest in the kingdom of heaven/Parable of the Lost Sheep

b. Part 2-18:15-20 Forgiveness/Reconciliation Process, in 3 steps;

i. Face to face confrontation;

ii. testimony of a witness or two or three;

iii. Bringing issue to the greater community or church (ekklesia – only other use of this word in Mt);

1. This last step = failure to reconcile, like excommunication!

iv. Privilege of Peter to bind and loose now given to disciples!

1. "If two of you agree . . . about anything," is not to imply any petition of prayer but rather to judicial matters in the community;

2. Peter, once again, speaks on behalf of the disciples!

3. 7 times is generous; 77 times = without limit!

7) 18:21-35 Forgiveness Aborted

a. The "huge" = ten thousand talents:

i. A talent was about 6,000 denarii;

ii. A denarii was an entire day's wage;

iii. Do the math:

1. Florida's minimum wage is \$11/hour=\$88 for day (denarii);

2. 1 talent = 6000 x \$88 (\$528,000) x 10,000!

3. He would need to work for 60 million days! Unforgivable debt!

4. The "small" amount owed was 100 denarii, or about \$8800 on the low end;

b. God is willing to show mercy to those who also show mercy!

CLOSING PRAYER

PREPARATION for NEXT SESSION

Session 5

MINISTRY in JERUSALEM/PASSION & RESURRECTION, Mt 19-28