

The Gospel of Matthew: Son of Abraham, Son of David

SESSION 5: ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM: Mt 19-28

Opening Prayer/Review from LAST SESSION/REVIEW OF GEOGRAPHY

Part 1: Teachings and a Final Healing before Jerusalem - Ch 19-20

1) 19:1-15 Teaching on Divorce and Blessing of Children

a. Back on the **DIVORCE** (previously covered in Mt 5:31-32):

- i. Why? Hot topic needing more clarification for Matthew's community;
- ii. **This time focus is on GROUNDS for divorce;**
- iii. Cleverly, Jesus quotes **Gen 1:27** and **2:24** as a response!
- iv. The "**no human being must separate**" is not any human being, such as a third-party judge, etc. but the husband/man [sic] in the contract, since marriage was a contract;
- v. For the record, **woman divorcing their husbands** was more common in Roman law than in Jewish law!
- vi. Why do the disciples find Jesus' response problematic? **Is a decision to marry based on the loophole of an easy divorce?** Strange!
- vii. Perhaps the reaction of the disciples is **Mt's literary technique** to introduce the additional comments Jesus makes about eunuchs:
 1. **Eunuchs** - male slaves who were castrated, mostly at a young age, for positions of trust with their master, such as caring for the bedchamber/personal needs of the master. From two Greek words which mean to "have hold or care of the bed;"
 2. Also refers to those who are **incapable of reproduction**, either by birth or from some other cause;
 3. Some may renounce marriage (making them like eunuchs) for the sake of the kingdom of heaven - in other words, **CELIBACY** - not a common option among Jews, since marriage was deemed more wholesome/responsible. Celibacy was not for everyone!

- b. It was not unusual to ask someone in a teaching position, like Jesus to bless children; contrary to the wishes of the disciples, **Jesus has regard for those, like children, who present little to no social value;**

2) 19:16-30 Discipleship and Possessions

- a. Once again, the **pitfalls of wealth!** A HOT topic in Mt's community?
- b. **At least two methods for entering "eternal life:"**
 - i. **Keeping the commandments as Jesus identifies them;**
 1. Opens salvation to those who don't follow Jesus;
 - ii. **Being "perfect," (becoming complete or whole) by selling one's possessions in order to follow Jesus as a disciple;**
 1. Adhering to **evangelical counsels** of poverty, chastity, obedience;
- c. A **needle referring to a particular gate** around the city of Jerusalem? No evidence, historical, archaeological or otherwise to support this!

3) 20:1-16 Justice in the Vineyard

- a. A **parable**, unique to Mt, on God's generosity/sense of justice in 2 parts:
 - i. **The HIRING of the workers;**
 1. End of day workers indicate a GREAT HARVEST coming!
 - ii. **The PAYING of the workers;**
 1. Why pay all workers at same time? Maybe because the gift of the age to come (harvest) is God's gift freely given to anyone.

4) 20:17-28 To Drink the Cup

- a. The journey toward Jerusalem is "up," = Jerusalem is a city set on a hill;
- b. The **THIRD prediction of the Passion**, the most detailed by far:
 - i. Chief priests/ scribes, **no Pharisees** – who will condemn Jesus to death;
 - ii. **handed over to the Gentiles** = Romans, Pilate in particular, who will carry out the execution because the Jews, under Roman occupation, could not execute anyone themselves;
 - iii. **last part of the prediction** – raising on the third day? (Compare to Mk's phrasing of "after three days;")
- c. **Mt softens Mk (9:33-36)** by having **Mama Zebedee** (the mother of James and John) approach Jesus for seats of honor in the kingdom;
- d. A "cup" is normally of joy but Jesus paints it as a **cup of suffering** for him and anyone who follows him;
 - i. Cup also at **Last Supper** (26:27-29) and **Gethsemane**;
- e. How **IRONIC** that request of honor follows Jesus' THIRD passion prediction;

5) 20:29-34 A Final Healing

- a. **LAST HEALING STORY** closely follows Mk's healing of blind **Bartimaeus**;
- b. A **strategic point** before Jesus enters Jerusalem: "**Let our eyes be opened!**"

PART 2: THE FINAL DAYS - Ch 21-23

1) 21:1-11 Entry into Jerusalem

- a. In keeping with **program of fulfillment**, Jesus reaches the **end, his journey to Jerusalem** - according to Mt, **his FIRST visit as an adult, public figure**;
- b. Entry into Jerusalem and Temple area fulfills several scriptural passages;
- c. BEFORE in **Bethphage** (house of figs), Jesus prepares for his entry by:
 - i. sending two disciples to fetch the animals he will mount, in order to fulfill the scripture **Zec 9:9** - "**Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, Meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.**"
 - ii. Mt literally interprets the scripture: Jesus seems to ride **two animals!**
- d. Scriptural formulas depict an **eschatological event**:
 - i. **Zec 14:3-4** - regarding the significance of the Mount of Olives, a place of eschatological fulfillment for the end times, "**Then the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations, fighting as on a day of battle. That day his feet shall rest upon the Mount of Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem to the east.**"
 - ii. **Ps 118:26** - "**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord;**"
 - iii. **Hosanna**, meaning, "Save, please!"
- e. Note the reaction of this entry:
 - i. Whole city in general was, **eseisthe**, shaken, as from an **earthquake**, foreshadowing some sort of earth shaking at death and resurrection;
 - ii. People in Jerusalem, being shaken, ask, "Who is this?"
 - iii. Crowds reply, "This is Jesus, the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee;"

2) 21:12-17 Confrontation in the Temple

- a. Jesus continues the fulfillment of scripture as he takes possession of the Temple area by entering and driving out the money changers, according to:
 - i. **Isa 56:7**; "**For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples;**"
 - ii. **Jer 7:11**; God's house as "**a den of thieves;**"
- b. The blind/lame approach Jesus in Temple area and he cures them, fulfilling:
 - i. **Isa 35:5-6**; "**Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; Then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the dumb will sing;**"

- c. **Children** continued to cry out, "**Hosanna to the Son of David,**" fulfilling:
 - i. **Ps 8:3, "Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have drawn a defense against your foes, to silence enemy and avenger;"**
- d. Chief priests/scribes **offer no resistance** after Jesus' reply to them (above);
- c. Jesus spends night in **Bethany**, two miles east, into the hills, above Jerusalem;

3) 21:18-22 The Withered Fig Tree

- a. Jesus speaks often about **producing the fruit of good works** and that one is known by the fruit one produces.
- b. **Those who do not produce fruit are subject to judgment**, just as salt that has lost its taste is to be thrown out and trampled upon;
- c. The fig tree provides for a **teaching on the power of faith**;

4) 21:23-27 The Authority of Jesus vs. John the Baptist

- a. **Pharisees are not part of the public opponents of Jesus here!**;
- b. Jesus turns the question back on elders who get trapped!

5) 21:28-22:14 THREE PARABLES:

1) 21:28-32 PARABLE #1 - Saying and Doing what one says and one does;

2) 21:33-43 PARABLE #2 - Treacherous Tenants:

- i. **Isa 5:1-7** - a vineyard that is destroyed because it bears sour grapes;
- ii. In Mt's the **tenants are destroyed**, not the vineyard;
- iii. foreshadows the story of Israel AND what will happen to Jesus:
- iv. beaten, killed, stoned, like **many of the prophets sent to Israel**;
- v. The son and heir symbolizes **Jesus**, who was seized (arrested), thrown out of the vineyard (taken outside the city walls) and killed (crucified);
- vi. The response of the elders is one of self-condemnation (similar to David's reply to Nathan in **2 Sam 12**);
- vii. **Ps 118:42** is a reference, first, to **David, as an unlikely type for king** and also a reference for **Jesus as an unlikely or unexpected Messiah**;

3) 22:1-14 PARABLE #3 - Dressed for the Feast

- i. Invitation and response with strange twists:
 - i. First invitation receives **refusal**;
 - ii. Second invitation receives **mixed response** of apathy and then **mistreatment/killing** of those extending the invitation, which, in turn, leads to the king destroying the murderers, burning the city, perhaps a **hint of what happened to the city of Jerusalem?**

- iii. Third invitation to those in the streets, both bad and good with one person in the hall **without the proper "wedding garment."** Surprisingly, he is thrown out. **What could this mean?**
- 4. Why should someone invited at the last moment need to be properly attired?
- 5. Could the wedding garment symbolize **one's good deeds?**

6) 22:15-46 FOUR CONTROVERSIES - Plotting to Entrap Jesus

a. CONTROVERSY #1 - 22:15-22 Taxes to Caesar

- a. **Herodians**, supporters of the dynasty of Herod and, in the time of Jesus, Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Herod and his family owed their power base to collusion with the Romans and therefore, would of course support a tax to Caesar!
- b. The trap involves whether to pay the **census or head tax**, collected by the Roman Empire from every man, woman or slave above the age of 12-14 up to 65 years old. It was to be paid in Roman currency and was the equivalent of a denarius, or a full day's wage:
 - i. To not pay the tax would mean a revolt against Roman law;
 - ii. To pay the tax meant corroboration with the enemy;
- c. **what belongs to Caesar** (the coin and thus the tax) is Caesar's and **what belongs to God** (actually, everything!) should be given to God, thus avoiding seeming collaboration with the Romans;

b. CONTROVERSY #2 - 22:23-33 The Question of Resurrection

- a. **Sadducees** did not accept resurrection but Pharisees and others did;
- b. The idea of an afterlife of resurrection first appeared in **Dan (12:2)** which was written in the second half of the second century, B.C.;
- c. The example offered by the Sadducees is **outrageous**, even if the book of Tobit includes a story of a woman who outlived seven husbands who died before consummating marriage (**Tob 2:8 and 6:14**);
- d. **life continues after death**, not necessarily in marriage but as living beings, like angels, as in **Ex 3:6, 15-16** - God of the living, in communion with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, also in some way alive!
- e. Mk's version is a friendly conversation whereas Mt's version is a test from the Pharisees of scriptural knowledge of the law;

c. CONTROVERSY #3 - 22:34-40 The Greatest Commandment

- a. **Disregarding one law for another** when all 613 in the Torah were important?
- b. **which part(s) of the law might summarize all of the law;**

- c. Jesus uses the familiar Shema (Hebrew for hear) from **Deut 6:4-9** plus love of neighbor from **Lev 19:18** to sum up the entire law of Moses;

d. CONTROVERSY #4 - 22:41-46 David's Son

- a. This last of the "scripture tests," is **initiated by Jesus** to the Pharisees;
- b. An examination of **Ps 110:1** which, in Hebrew, is easier to identify the substantial issue in this psalm surrounding the word, Lord;
 - i. In **Hebrew**, the first Lord is actually the word, Yahweh, the God of Israel and the second, smaller case "lord" is adon;
 - ii. Translated into **Greek**, as was the Septuagint, Yahweh becomes Kyrios and adon also becomes kyrio and therefore, the confusion of two "lords;"
 - iii. Many psalms attributed to David, whether or not he actually composed them so in **Ps 110**, David is presumed to be the speaker;
 - iv. Jesus interprets this text as David speaking about God in reference to the Messiah, also being called lord, who sits at God's right hand;
 - v. Yet if the Messiah is David's "lord," how can he also be David's son, since no one would refer to their son, an inferior, as a lord!
 - vi. The Pharisees do not know how to respond!
- c. Jesus, illustrates his **expertise in scripture** over and above the Pharisees, proving that he is the consummate interpreter of scripture;
- d. Jesus has effectively **silenced all his opponents!**

7) 23:1-12 Warning Against Hypocrisy - do NOT follow example of leaders!

8) 23:13-36 Seven Woes of Scribes & Pharisees - JESUS AT HIS MOST ACERBIC!

- a. **WOE #1 - Hypocrites! Locking the kingdom of heaven**, preventing entry for self and others - reminiscent of **Peter's** gift of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to bind and loose;
- b. **WOE #2 - Hypocrites! Making Gentile converts to Gehenna!**
- c. **WOE #3 - Blind Guides! Taking oaths**, swearing by the gold of the Temple or the gift of the altar, harkening back to previous critiques against oath-taking and oral tradition that, in the end, does not serve God;
- d. **WOE #4 - Hypocrites! Emphasis on small matters** (tithing) and avoidance of **weightier matters** (mercy, fidelity, etc.);
- e. **WOE #5 - Hypocrites! Blind Pharisee! Cleanse inside** first so outside will be clean;

- f. **WOE #6 – Hypocrites!** Beautiful (falsely righteous), white-washed on the outside, but **dead on the inside**;
- g. **WOE #7 – Hypocrites! Mourning the dead prophets** but ultimately being responsible for killing those of innocent blood, examples given of:
 - i. **Abel**, first victim of murder in the bible (**Gen 4:8**);
 - ii. **Zechariah**, last to be murdered, although there is some scriptural discrepancy that the son of Barchiah in Zec 1:1 was not murdered but another Zechariah was in **2 Chr 24:20-22**

9) 23:37-39 Lament Over Jerusalem

- a. After Jesus' diatribe against the scribes and Pharisees, his mood shifts to one of **lament and sadness** as he mourns the fate of Jerusalem and longs to gather her children, using the image of a mother bird gathering her young;
- b. Jesus ends his verbal confrontation with the scribes, Pharisees and religious leaders by telling them they will not see him again until they cry out in the same way that the crowds cried out at his entrance into Jerusalem, "**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**"

Part 3: APOCALYPTIC DISCOURSE - Ch. 24-25, Last of 5 DISCOURSES

Jesus leaves the Temple area/Jerusalem, not to return until his arrest.

Jesus directs his words to disciples, preparing them for the final days, the eschaton!

Apocalypse = "uncovering" or "lifting of the veil," meaning disclosure or revelation

10)24:1-14 The Beginning of the End

- a. Disciples remark on the **Temple building**, most likely a commentary on the progress of **Herod's building campaign on the Temple**;
- b. Jesus **predicts the destruction of the Temple** which, by the time Mt's gospel was written, had already occurred.
- c. Jesus then takes his seat, once again, on the **Mount of Olives**, according to **Zec 14:4**, an important site associated with the **eschaton**, final days;
- d. Jesus' prepares the disciples privately for final days, **warning** them of:
 - i. Deceptions;
 - ii. False Messiahs;
 - iii. Rumors/reports of wars as nations/kingdoms rise against one another;
 - iv. Famines;
 - v. Earthquakes;
 - vi. And the disciples will face:

1. Persecutions;
2. Killing;
3. Hatred by all, because of the name of Jesus;
4. Falling into sin;
5. Betrayal;
6. False prophets who will deceive many;
7. An increase in evil that will make love grow cold;
8. **Perseverance, to the end, will bring SALVATION!**

e. The end comes after gospel has been preached to all the nations (Gentiles);

11) 24:15-31 Signs of the Coming of the Son of Man, also known as "parousia"

a. The "desolating abomination," will occur before the end and will initiate a period of great tribulation that, if not shortened, no one would survive:

i. The "desolating abomination," has dual reference:

1. **Dan 8:13, 9:27, 11:31, 12:11** "horrible abomination," referring to when the Seleucid ruler (one of the ruling factions that took over a portion of the Greek empire after the death of Alexander the Great), **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**, brought into the Temple "Holy of Holies" (inner sanctuary/altar) a profane stone or image and set it on the altar of sacrifice from 167-165 B.C., creating a huge outcry from the Jews after such a desecration (this event is also covered in **2 Maccabees 6**);
2. What was perhaps more recent in the memory of Jews and equally as offensive was a threat made by the **Roman emperor Caligula** in 40 A.D. to set up within the Temple a statue of himself which may have been experienced as equally offensive as the previous desecration, although Caligula's threat never occurred;
3. In either case, Jesus speaks of something similar that had not yet occurred and most likely was NOT referring to the destruction of the Temple, as does Luke when editing the same story;

ii. **Immediate flight** is the response to this warning sign of the end and it will be **particularly difficult for**:

1. Those pregnant and/or nursing;
2. If it should happen in winter when the rains made travel difficult;
3. If it should happen on the **Sabbath** (travel on the Sabbath was a violation of the law) – a clue that Sabbath worship was still an important issue for Matthew's community!

iii. Care must also be taken not to be **deceived by the false messiahs** that will appear and deceive many;

- iv. **Son of Man will come immediately and deliberately, like lightning!**
- v. The vultures, or in some translations, eagles, refer to something very public and identifiable;
- b. Previous warnings refer to **time of tribulation**. What follows are **cosmic signs**:
 - i. A darkened sun and moon and falling stars from the sky;
 - ii. The powers of heaven will be “shaken;”
- c. After cosmic signs, **the sign of the Son of Man** will appear, causing earth’s tribes to “**mourn**,” referring to those not prepared or do not welcome him;
- d. The gathering of the elect has many scriptural references!

12)24:32-51 SHORT Parables of Watchfulness

- a. Jesus begins a **series of scenarios/parables to ready his disciples** for the final days and to indicate a sense of timing, even if **only the Father knows** the exact timing of such events;
- b. The **fig tree** is a symbol for Israel and is one of the few plants that **sheds its leaves in winter**, since most other trees/shrubs are evergreen. The swelling buds indicate leaves that will come forth, just as Jesus’ warning signs indicate the imminent coming of the Son of Man;
- c. Some scholars translate “**this generation**” as “**this present race**,” from **genea** root of the word for genealogy, but it still presents a problem and tension with v. 14 where Jesus indicates that **before the end comes, the gospel is to be preached to all the Gentiles**;
- d. **NOBODY KNOWS FOR CERTAIN** the exact timing, except the Father;
- e. Disciples are to **BE WATCHFUL** and **READY** for the coming of the Son of Man, who will surprise many, such as:
 - i. Those in the **days of Noah** were surprised when the flood came;
 - ii. Two men in a field working, one prepared and thus, taken;
 - iii. Two women grinding at a mill, one of which will be taken;
 - iv. A master of a house who does not know when a thief may come;
 - v. A wicked servant who takes advantage of his master’s delay by abusing his fellow servants and eating and drinking with drunkards;
 - vi. **ALL THOSE UNPREPARED and/or NOT READY will find themselves severely punished** (dichotomesei, literally, cut in two, which may refer to being **cut off from the community**) and placed among the “hypocrites” (leaders) with **wailing, grinding of teeth**, indicating **intense frustration** at being denied entrance to the KOH;

13)25:1-13 Ready Maidens – PARABLE of READINESS

- a. Many scriptural references to Yahweh as a bridegroom;

- b. There was often **much waiting** during 1st cent. Palestinian bridal ceremonies for when the bridegroom would return to the groom's house with the bride after finalizing the contract at the house of the bride;
- c. The oil brought by the wise maidens **cannot be shared** with foolish, unready maidens because the oil symbolizes one's good deeds;
- d. **No one can prepare another for readiness for the KOH!**

14)25:14-30 Investing Talents – PARABLE of PREPAREDNESS

- a. A **talanton** is a particular amount of money – a **very large sum!**
- b. There are several approaches to understanding this parable:
 - i. Barbara Reid's version as a **polemic against greed** – I find doubtful and inconsistent with previous Matthean language/symbols in the gospel;
 - ii. **Using ones "talents" wisely** prepares one for the KOH;
 - iii. Another understanding is that the parable speaks to current religious trends at the time of Mt with the **lazy servant referring to Jews who would not receive the message of active and enterprising Jewish-Christian missionaries** to revitalize Judaism through the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah; these unyielding Jews would then be considered the lazy, fearful servant;
 - iv. IN ANY CASE, parables will always have **multiple possibilities!**

15)25:31-46 Final Judgment – PARABLE (or FUTURE VISION) of JUDGMENT

- a. Most of previous section dealt with **HOW and WHEN** Son of Man will come. This parable (or vision of the future judgment) **timed AFTER THE ARRIVAL** of the Son of Man, depicting judgment of the nations (Gentiles);
- b. This periscope (story) involves **JUDGMENT**;
- c. Compare to Mt 16:27 on repayment according to deeds;
- d. **RIGHT** side (Mediterranean culture) considered favorable, the side of honor and greater strength; (for contrast, the word for LEFT in Italian is **sinistra**, which has an obvious connotation in English!)
- e. As in all parabolic discourses, multiple understandings emerge:
 - i. **If panta ta ethne is translated as ALL OF HUMANITY**, then:
 - 1. The sheep unknowingly cared for Jesus when they cared for the least members of society;
 - 2. The goats are those who did not recognize Jesus in the least members of society and therefore did nothing;
 - ii. **If panta ta ethne is translated as ALL THE GENTILES**, then:
 - 1. The sheep are those Gentiles who treated Jewish-Christian missionaries as Jesus, with mercy because their treatment was

- first how Jesus was treated (stripped naked, left hungry and thirsty, thrown in prison, etc.);
2. The goats are those Gentiles who did not treat Jewish-Christian missionaries with mercy because they did not perceive the meaning of Jesus' earlier words, "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receive me receives him who sent me," Mt 10:40;
 3. This interpretation takes into account that a **separate judgment of the Jews has already been indicated** in Mt's gospel from 19:28, where Jesus tells his disciples that they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel;

Part 4: THE PASSION AND THE RESURRECTION 26-28:15

16)26:1-16 Preparation For Death: Treacherous Plotting and Prophetic Anointing

- a. End of FIFTH, final discourse: "**When Jesus finished these words;**" Compare to Deut 32:45, 49-50, "**When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel,**" how God prepared Moses for his own death;
- b. Jesus' **FOURTH prediction of his death** (FIRST to connect his death with Passover) **produces no reaction from among the disciples!**
- c. **With regard to the Passion with Passover:**
 - i. Irony - those in authority celebrating **freedom from oppression** will do so by killing Jesus, who has come to free them from the oppression of sin and to lighten their burdens;
 - ii. There are also **TIMING PROBLEMS** of Jesus' passion with Passover:
 1. Although the **synoptics concur** on the same course of events, it is highly unlikely that a gathering of the chief priests and elders would occur on the night in which Passover was celebrated;
 2. **Jn's gospel** places Jesus' execution on "**preparation day for Passover,**" which was the afternoon BEFORE the first day of Passover and the time when the lambs for the Passover meal would have been sacrificed. This pushes Jn's "Last Supper" scene well before the Passover and perhaps was an anticipatory meal BEFORE the Passover meal;
- d. Immediately following Jesus' warning, **his opponents gear into action for an arrest and a capital conviction, but NOT during the Passover,** for fear of a riot and probable violent retaliation from the Roman governor, Pilate. A new name is introduced here, **Caiaphas**, high priest from 18 - 36 A.D.
- e. Jesus has been staying at a home: **Simon, the leper, in Bethany;**

- f. **Jesus is anointed** by an **unnamed woman** who, in John 11:12 Mary of Bethany.
 - i. Oil poured on **Jesus' head** = kingly anointing, recognizing Jesus as Messiah, the "anointed one," although hard to defend when Jesus interprets her actions as a burial anointing;
 - ii. **Disciples react indignantly**, whereas Mk has "some," and John cites Judas as the one to react. Luke omits an anointing before Jesus' death but includes it earlier, while at dinner in the home of a Pharisee;
 - iii. Mt and Mk have Jesus interpret the anointing as **done for Jesus' burial**, since his execution and burial would not allow for a proper burial anointing and therefore, the woman who go to the tomb after his death are not going to anoint him, since it already occurred here;
 - iv. A nameless woman **understands Jesus** whereas the **disciples do not**;
 - v. Jesus' provides a defense of **appropriate expenditure on things of value**; Jesus' words, "the poor you will always have with you," can also be **misconstrued to justify neglect of the poor**; the key lies in discerning what is of greatest value;
- g. In great contrast to the woman, **Judas** takes his opportunity to betray:
 - i. Only in Mt are we told the price - **thirty pieces of silver**;
 - 1. In **Zec 11:12-13** is found the allegorical story of a good shepherd who shepherds God's flock, which is being slaughtered and who asks for his wages - "**And they counted out my wages, thirty pieces of silver. But the Lord said to me, 'Throw it in the treasury, the handsome price at which they valued me.' So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the Lord.**" This is exactly what Judas will later do after his betrayal;
 - 2. 30 pieces of silver = value of a slave, gored by an ox (**Ex 21:32**);
 - ii. There is **no motive given for Judas' actions**, other than **greed**: "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?"

17)26:17-35 The Last Supper

- a. First day of the Feast of Unleavened bread = the first day of the eight day celebration of Passover;
- b. **Jesus is aware of his imminent death and takes charge of many of the details**, such as the plans for the Passover meal, which the disciples carry out accordingly, "as Jesus had ordered;"

- c. **Ps 41:10, "Even the friend who had my trust, who shared my table, has scorned me."**
- d. Only **Judas, uniquely in Mt** as having a **dialog with Jesus at the meal**, calls Jesus, "**Rabbi,**" against Jesus' words prohibiting such titles (Mt 23:8);
- e. Jesus' response to Judas, "**You have said so,**" is the same response that Jesus will give to the high priest (26:64) and to Pilate (27:11);
- f. The words of Jesus during the meal should be **familiar** with us: "Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples . . . ," the same formula used in the feeding miracles;
- g. The cup, here, will be a cup of **forgiveness of sins** (unique to Mt) yet also a cup of suffering for Jesus whose blood will be shed to ratify the covenant;
- h. The sharing of the cup will continue beyond earthly life, in "the kingdom of my Father;"
- i. The celebration of **Passover** may have been **particularly endearing to Mt's Jewish/Christian community** AND since the Temple had been destroyed, all pilgrimage feasts to the Temple (like Passover) had to be reinterpreted;
- j. Jesus and the twelve leave the table after singing appropriate **Passover hymns** (traditionally Ps 113-118 which conclude the Passover meal) and go to the **Mount of Olives** – the place associated with eschatological fulfillment;
- k. Jesus predicts how the apostles will be "**scandalized,**" in him, meaning their faith will "stumble" over what is about to happen to Jesus;
- l. **Zec 13:7 – "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my associate, says the Lord of hosts. Strike the shepherd that the sheep may be dispersed, and I will turn my hand against the little ones."**
- m. Jesus reassures them that after his resurrection, he will return to them in **Galilee**, the place where Jesus first encountered and later commissioned the disciples, foreshadowing the very message that he will send them after the passion for a final commission;
- n. **Peter denies** that his faith will stumble and the other disciples reciprocate yet shortly they will all be asleep as Jesus suffers anguish;

18)26:36-46 Prayer At Gethsemane

- a. Only Mt and Mk provide a name for this section of the Mount of Olives whose name means, "**oil or olive press,**" signifying an olive orchard nearby;
- b. Mount of Olives, during pilgrimage feasts, more like a **camping ground** for pilgrims who could not afford an inn during the festivals. We should not imagine too private a scene as depicted in many holy images;

- c. All the disciples follow Jesus to a seating place but only three, **Peter and the sons of Zebedee** (the same who were with Jesus during the Transfiguration) accompany Jesus at prayer, further on;
- d. **Three times** Jesus asks, "My Father," to **let the cup pass** (once again, the cup of suffering) yet only if it be the divine will;
- e. **Disciples are already failing miserably** because they not only do not keep watch and pray with Jesus but are found sleeping as the "hours is at and;"

19)26:47-56 Jesus' Arrest

- a. **Judas arrives with an armed crowd** sent by the chief priests and elders and Judas has a **pre-arranged signal** to identify Jesus so that Jesus can be taken quickly to avoid any commotion which might stir up a riot;
- b. **The passion narrative is filled with IRONY**: Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss and once again, disobediently calls Jesus, Rabbi;
- c. Judas is not the only disobedient one as an **unnamed disciple** (against the words in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:38-48) to offer no resistance to one who is evil) draws a sword and **cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant** (Malchus in Jn and in Lk's gospel, the man's ear is healed);
- d. Unique to Mt: "**all who take the sword will perish by the sword;**"
- e. **Jesus allows himself to be arrested** and taken (denounces the sword and does not call upon divine/angelic assistance) as the disciples flee, **ALL in order to fulfill scripture**, in keeping with Mt's program of fulfillment;

20)26:57-68 Interrogation before the Sanhedrin

- a. **Only Peter follows Jesus from a distance**, up to the high priest's courtyard and sits with the servants while Jesus is taken inside where a "Sanhedrin, (Jewish court but interestingly in this case, minus the Pharisees!) is assembled;
- b. **Two witnesses** were important to obtain testimony against an accused person, especially in the case of a capital crime. **IRONICALLY** they were called false witnesses yet they testify to Jesus being able to rebuild the Temple in three days, something that Jesus, will in fact, symbolically do!
- c. **The silence of Jesus** is reminiscent of the **Suffering Servant** in **Isa 53:7** (read on Good Friday), "**Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth; Like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth;**"

- d. **IRONICALLY**, Jesus is put **under oath** (what did Jesus say about oaths?) to reveal if he is the Messiah, the Son of God, something that the reader is most likely already convinced of!
- e. Jesus' response is the same one given to Judas, "**You have said so,**" followed by an eschatological citation from **Dan 7:13-14** "**coming on the clouds of heaven,**" and **Ps 110:1**, "**Take your throne at my right hand, while I make you enemies you footstool.**"
- f. In the face of true **blasphemy** (misuse of the divine name) a judge was expected to **rend his garment**, as modeled in the action of the high priest. The punishment for blaspheming was death by stoning (Lev 24:16);
- g. Unique to Mt, it is the **Sanhedrin that abuses Jesus** by spitting, slapping, etc.

21)26:69-75 Peter Denies Jesus

- a. The scene changes to the **courtyard** where Peter has been sitting;
- b. **Peter has shined like a star and failed miserably in the narrative** so we cannot be surprised by his **three-time denial**, even taking an oath, cursing and swearing his denial – after all, Jesus predicted it would happen;
- c. After the cock crows and Peter weeps bitterly, this is the **last we will hear of Peter** other than within the group of 11 disciples whom Jesus will commission after his resurrection;

22)27:1-2 The Council Hands Jesus Over

- a. By the early morning, the **Sanhedrin has made their charges official** and bind Jesus, leading him to **Pontius Pilate** (Roman governor 26-36 A.D.) who had to be involved with a **capital offense and consequent execution**. This **fulfills Jesus' THIRD prediction of his passion**, that he would be handed over "to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified (Mt 20:19);

23)27:3-10 The Death of Judas

- a. Only Mt records the **death of Judas**, although another, quite different account occurs in Acts 1:15-20 – different stories and perhaps different traditions!
- b. Judas has a **change of mind/heart** with regard to turning in Jesus, although the verb used is not the typical metanoia, or repentance; **metameletheis**, or deep regret, is used instead;
- c. Judas does not receive a warm greeting from the chief priests after he confesses his sin – **they do not really care**, so Judas flings the money into the temple (from **Zec**) and hangs himself – **Compare the outcome of Judas' sin with that of Peter's denial!**

- d. Mt makes reference to how the **Field of Blood** is still named as such, "today," 50 years after the event, and named as such
- e. Quote attributed to **Jeremiah**, actually refers to **Zec 11:12-13**. Hebrew word for treasury (oser) and potter (yoser)? Hard to determine;

24)27:11-14 Trial Before Pilate

- a. Jesus responds to governor, as before, "**You say so;**"
- b. Jesus, once again, remains **silent**;

25)27:15-26 Choice of Barabbas

- a. **No extra-biblical evidence of a custom whereby a prisoner is released**, such as Barabbas, whose full name, according to some biblical manuscripts, is Jesus Barabbas, **IRONICALLY** meaning, "**son of the Father**" in Aramaic!
- b. Mt edits Mk's version of the sentencing of Jesus so that it is clear that **Jewish leaders take a greater responsibility for Jesus' execution** and less responsibility falls on Pilate:
 - i. They are **given a choice**, before Pilate, of either Barabbas or Jesus;
 - ii. Reason given for handing Jesus over: "**out of envy;**"
 - iii. **Unique to Mt:**
 - i. **Pilate's wife** warns him to "have nothing to do with that righteous man," because of a vivid dream she suffered;
 - ii. Pilate **washing his hands** of the "innocent blood" of Jesus, handing Barabbas over to the crowd to avoid a potential riot;
 - iii. "**His blood be upon us and upon our children,**" although "children" may refer to one generation only and this outcry was meant to apply only to those who opposed Jesus, not all Jews forever!
 - iv. Note here that the crowds, once fond of Jesus, seem to have **turned on Jesus** through the persuasion of the chief priests and elders (v.20);
- c. **Jesus is scourged** through a typical practice to weaken one who is to be crucified so as to **shorten the time of death**;

26)27:27-31 Mockery by the Soldiers

- a. Soldiers also mock Jesus, as Sanhedrin did after the accusation of blasphemy;
- b. A **cohort** (speira) was a group of six hundred soldiers;
- c. Mt has **scarlet garment** (Mk purple), color of Roman cloaks, readily available. How could Romans might find such a luxurious/expensive royal fabric?
- d. The mockery included:
 - i. A **crown** made of thorny brambles, easily available but not something necessarily to inflict pain;

- ii. A reed, to signify a **scepter** used by a king;
- iii. False **kneeling, mocking** plus **spitting, striking** Jesus;
- iv. **IRONICALLY, they call him, King of the Jews, which he is!**
- e. Jesus' clothes are returned to him after the mocking session;

27)27:32 Simon of Cyrene

- a. It was not unusual to "**press someone into service**" (Mt 5:41) to help a convicted man make it to the place of execution;
- b. Cyrene in present day **Libya**, indicating many Jewish foreigners in Jerusalem for the pilgrimage feast of Passover. Mk 15:21 offers more detail on Simon;
- c. Simon of Cyrene helps carry the cross; **Simon Peter is nowhere to be found!**

28)27:33-44 Crucifixion and Mockery

- a. **Golgotha** = Greek transliteration of Aramaic or Hebrew word; Latin, **Calvaria**, named either for shape of the hill or because of the death associate with it;
- b. **Wine mixed with gall (Ps 69:21)** was a practice of offering the condemned something like a narcotic to ease the pain;
- c. **Lack of description** and detail in the **crucifixion**, which was a particularly cruel form of execution, used as a deterrent, on slaves, political rebels, violent criminals, but not on Roman citizens (which is why Paul was beheaded). Death involved asphyxiation or perhaps cardiac arrest. **Why the lack of detail?**
- d. A **criminal's clothes** became property of the executioners, in this case, the Roman soldiers, yet see **Ps 22:18** for another fulfillment passage - "**they divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots;**"
- e. **Every gospel writer agrees** upon the charge with which Jesus was condemned and executed, claiming he was "**King of the Jews;**"
- f. Jesus is crucified **between two "revolutionaries,"** on the right and left but unlike Luke, there is no dialog;
- g. The **shaking of heads** by passersby fulfills **Ps 22:8**, "All who see me mock me: they curl their lips and jeer; they shake their head at me;"
- h. Mockery of Jesus continues (after the Sanhedrin and Roman cohort) by the crowds, the chief priests and elders, and **even those crucified next to him!**
- i. Interestingly, some of the mockery is reminiscent of the testing from Satan in the wilderness: "**If you are the Son of God . . . ;**"

29)27:45-56 Death of Jesus

- a. **Creation responds**, as it will in the end days, as **darkness envelops the land from noon until 3pm**, at which point Jesus cries out with a phrase that,

again, fulfills scripture: **Ps 22:2**, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" in Aramaic;

- b. After more **misunderstanding from the crowd** ("This one is calling Elijah") and a refused attempt to take in more wine, Jesus cries out one last time before he "**gave up his spirit**," in this case, not the Holy Spirit, but **pneuma**, which is his life-breath. **There is a sense of deliberateness in this action!**
- c. Four "**signs**" follow the death of Jesus:
 - i. **Veil of the sanctuary**, torn in two from top to bottom, was a curtain that hung in front of the holy of holies (**Ex 26:31-35**), indicating:
 - 1. The beginning of the destruction of the Temple?
 - 2. The end of the former way of worshipping God and the beginning of a new way, such as practiced by the Matthean community or as among the Gentiles?
 - ii. An **earthquake** – certainly a familiar symbol in Mt's gospel with many references and still references to come with respect to the resurrection AND part of the cosmic reaction to Jesus, as in his birth (star) etc.;
 - iii. **Open tombs**, saints raised up, who, after the resurrection, appear to many, reference here to **Ez 37** and the raising up of dry bones, as well as an important distinction that **others could not be raised up before Jesus was raised up!**
 - iv. The **centurion**, most likely a Gentile as in Mt 8:5-13, makes the declaration, based on his reaction to what happens after Jesus' death, that, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"
- d. The **women who accompany Jesus** and are present, at a distance, at his death, vary in the gospels:
 - i. **Mary Magdalene**, in all 4 gospels, appearing first time here in Mt;
 - ii. The other Marys are different in each gospel. Here, unique to Mt, is the **mother of the sons of Zebedee** and **Mary, the mother of James and Joseph**, which may or may not be Jesus' mother, based on Mt 13:55;

30)27:57-66 Witnesses at the Tomb

- a. Mt introduces a **rich** man (unique to Mt) who is also a disciple, named **Joseph of Arimathea** – how hard it was for a rich one to enter heaven (Mt 19:16-26) but alas, success!
- b. Joseph is granted Jesus' body and provides **clean linen, his new tomb** and a "huge stone" to secure it from grave robbers or animals.

- i. The limestone outside Jerusalem was soft enough to carve into graves which held inside, niches where bodies would be laid. Later, the bones would be collected into ossuary boxes so other burials could take place and such a site could be used by a family for generations.
- c. There is **no anointing of the dead body**, since Jesus was anointed in Bethany a few days before his death;
- d. Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of James and Joseph **keep watch** (what happened to the mother of the sons of Zebedee! Did they need her?)
- e. Unique to Mt is the placing of other witnesses, **Roman guards**, ordered by Pilate at the bequest of the chief priests/Pharisees (they're back!);
 - i. The Jewish leaders want to **prevent a grave robbery** that would lead to rumors about Jesus being raised, as he predicted, after three days – **HOW IRONIC**, for this is, in fact what happens!

31)28:1-15 The Empty Tomb

- a. Both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, witnesses to the death of Jesus and his burial now return after the Sabbath on the first day of the week. They have come only to **"see" the tomb**, unlike in Mk 16:1, where they go to anoint the body;
- b. The women witness a **"seismos metas," a great earthquake**, already noted several times in Mt's gospel (storm – 8:24, eschatological discourse – 24:7, resurrection of the saints after Jesus' death – 27:54 and here);
- c. An **angel of the Lord returns**, as in the **infancy narrative**, to roll back the stone and interpret the events for the women;
- d. The women **take the message** (which includes telling the disciples and to meet Jesus in Galilee) with **fear AND joy** (compare to Mk 16:8 of the women fleeing in fear and saying nothing to anyone);
- e. Unique to Mt, **the risen Jesus surprises the women** on their way to the disciples and, typical of Mt, as they embrace his feet, **they do him homage**, and Jesus repeats the angel's message to them;
 - i. The women embrace his feet, indicating **Jesus is not a ghost or spirit!**
 - ii. The women are told by Jesus himself to tell his disciples – Mary Magdalene has this special role in each of the gospels, thus her title as **"apostle to the apostles;"**
- f. Unique to Mt, the **guards are bribed** by the chief priests to tell people that Jesus' disciples stole his body and Mt tells us that story circulates up to the present day (of Mt's community);

**Part 5: FINALE: BACK TO GALILEE; COMMISSION TO THE WHOLE WORLD;
JESUS' ABIDING PRESENCE**

32)28:16-20 The Great Commission

- a. Unique to Mt, the risen Jesus **meets the disciples for the first time on a mountain** (typical for Mt!) in Galilee, where he first called them and commissioned them;
- b. Like the women meeting the risen Jesus from the tomb, the disciples **worship Jesus, although some doubt**, or another translation is "hesitated," which can have many connotations;
- c. This time, however, the commission includes making disciples of "**panta ta ethne**," meaning **all the Gentiles or nations**, depending on the translation, as in Mt 25;
- d. The **baptismal formula** is added here for the first time - perhaps this account has been shaped by the experience of Mt's community and the early church
- e. Mt's gospel ends, as it began, with a sense of **Jesus' constant presence**, Emmanuel, from 1:23;

CLOSING PRAYER - Friday