

Study of the New Testament

Lesson 3: The Gospel according to Matthew

Literary Structure:

Outline based on Missionary Journey and Geography:

The Early Life of Jesus: *Matt. 1:1-4:11*

The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee: *Matt. 4:12-18:35*.

The Ministry of Jesus in Judea: *Matt. 19:1-28:20*.

Literary Outline:

Epilogue: The Passion and Resurrection of the Messiah (26-28)

- A. Introduction: The Messianic King (1:1 – 2:23)
 - 1. Genealogy (1:1-17)
 - 2. Infancy Narrative (1:18 – 2:23)
- B. The Gospel of the Kingdom (Mt. 3:1 – 7:29)
 - 1. The Messiah had Come (3:1 – 4:25)
 - 2. Discipleship Sermon: The Call to the Kingdom – Sermon on the Mount: (5:1 – 7:29)
- C. The Spread of the Kingdom (8:1 – 10:42)
 - 1. Jesus' Miracles and Reactions (8:1 – 9:38)
 - 2. Missionary Sermon: The Apostolic Call to be Emissaries of the King (10:1-42)
- D. Signs and Parables (11:1 – 13:53)
 - 1. Signs and Reactions (11:1 – 12:50)
 - 2. Kingdom Sermon: Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-53)
- E. Faltering Faith and True Greatness (13:54 – 18:35)
 - 1. Resisting Faith in Jesus (13:54 – 17:27)
 - 2. Ecclesial Sermon: True Greatness within Kingdom Family Life (18:1-35)
- F. Present Opposition and Future Victory (19:1 – 25:46)
 - 1. Intensifying Opposition (19:1 – 23:39)
 - 2. Eschatological Sermon: Future Victory (24:1 – 25:46)
- G. Culmination of Jesus' Ministry (26:1 – 28:20)
 - 1. Conflict, Discipleship and the Cross (26:1 – 27:66)
 - 2. Resurrection Victory and the Great Commission (28:1-20)

The Spread of the Kingdom (8:1 – 10:42)

Last Week: Jesus' Miracles and Reactions (8:1 – 9:38)

Missionary Sermon: The Apostolic Call to be Emissaries of the King (10:1-42)

The 12 Disciples are Commissioned

Jesus commanded his followers to pray for God to raise up evangelists and leaders: “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers out into his harvest.” (9:37-38)

Jesus extended his personal kingdom ministry by empowering twelve disciples for authoritative ministry “over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and affliction.” (10:1) Jesus commanded them to announce and enact the presence of the kingdom. (10:7, 8) The message would be validated by acts and signs of compassion.

Jesus agents are called to live simply and travel light, trusting in the Lord to provide for their needs. Hospitality and welcome would be given to the disciples by those households and villages that received the authority of Jesus. “Whoever receives you, receives me; whoever receives me, receives the one who sent me.” (10:40) Jesus would be their letter of recommendation. The responsibility for accepting the message/messenger of Gospel resides with the hearer/host. To reject the messenger, is to reject the message of hope.

Persecution is Promised (10:16-25)

Persecution and proclamation are inseparable. Jesus promises to empower his disciples when they come against opposition, and they will! In their own strength they are helpless: he is sending them out as sheep in the midst of wolves! (10:16) However, he promises to provide for their faithful witness in the hour of need. They will endure even physical suffering and shame on account of Jesus.

The persecution will even divide families. There will be betrayals by those closest, brothers, sisters, parents—even children will “rise up against their parents and have them put to death!” (10:21) There will be no safe refuge from persecution, every town, hated by all.

Promises for the Persecuted

The disciples are called to fear God, rather than men. The promised persecution should only make the disciple of Jesus bolder in his proclamation: “shout it from the rooftops!” God will not be mocked, his disciples are precious to him, and he will vindicate them. God is ultimately sovereign and in control: not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the sovereignty of God, the Father. The Lord intimately knows his disciples and their situations “even the hairs of your head are numbered”. (10:30)

So, commit your life to an unrivaled and passionate discipleship for the King and the Kingdom. Love and follow the Lord Jesus—even over love of life and loyalty to family.

Signs and Parables: Matthew 11:2-13:53

Narrative: 11:2-12:50 Signs and Reactions

- John the Baptist: 11:2-19
- City Crowds: 11:20-30
- Healing on Sabbath: 12:1-21
- Power of Beelzebub: 12:22-37
- Sign of Jonah: 12:38-50

Doubts and False Expectations

The section begins with John the Baptist asking, “Are you the one to come, or shall we look for another?” This is the question being wrestled with in this narrative: Are the expectations of Israel for their coming Messiah correct? While Jesus reassures John in his doubts, the Jewish crowds and religious leaders remain unconvinced.

Jesus pronounces a prophetic Woe oracle on the Jewish towns in Galilee for their lack of faith in spite of the mighty acts. He compares them to gentile cities which would have repented “long ago” if the people of those cities had seen what these towns have seen. God has hidden the revelation of the Kingdom from those who are “wise and understanding” and has revealed them to “little children”. But the invitation to the kingdom is open to those who are weary and heavy laden.

Likewise, Jesus faced continuing rejection by the religious leaders for his behavior, especially his disciples eating on the Sabbath.

Lord of the Sabbath

The disciples were accused of doing what is “not lawful on the Sabbath”. (12:1) The response of Jesus argues for the validity of their actions on the basis of three arguments:

- I. David and his followers ate the bread from the temple. Implication: Jesus is King, like David, only greater.
- II. The priests are allowed to work in temple service on the Sabbath: Jesus is priest, only something greater than the temple itself.
- III. What could be greater than the temple itself??? The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath of the Lord is subservient to the Son of Man: The Lord of the Sabbath. To reveal his sovereignty over the Sabbath, Jesus then performs a “mighty act” by healing a man’s hand. Matthew then ties the entire work of Jesus to the servant song of Isaiah 42 which was connected to the divine voice in Jesus’ Baptism.

“Can this be the Son of David?” –Or is it Satan?

The healing of the blind and mute demoniac engenders wonderment whether Jesus is the Messiah, “the Son of David,” the Pharisees determine that Jesus is doing the work of the “prince of demons” (12:24). Jesus puzzles why Satan would work at cross-purposes with his own evil kingdom. But then again, why

would someone supposedly working for the Kingdom of Heaven work against the Son of Man and blaspheme the work of the Holy Spirit? Their judgment will be well-deserved.

People can tell who truly is a teacher of the kingdom of God and who is not by the fruit they bear and the treasure they bring forth (12:33-37). The demand for a sign by “an evil and adulterous generation” would be met by the sign of Jonah: discipline and judgment for themselves and repentance and mercy for the gentiles (12:38-42).

Those who would become Jesus’ disciples must make loyalty to the will of the “Father in Heaven” higher than even their most cherished loyalties and social conventions: even their own families (Matt 12:46-50).

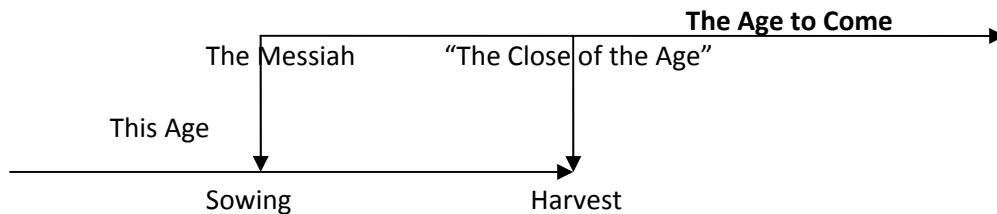
Discourse: Matthew 13:1-53 Kingdom Parables

- The Sower: 13:1-23
- The Weeds: 13:24-30
- The Mustard Seed and Yeast: 13:31-43
- The Hidden Treasure and Pearl: 13:44-45
- The Net: 13:47-53

The fundamental problem of the prevailing Jewish expectation was a desire to see the Kingdom of Heaven immediately consummated with the coming of the Messiah.



However, Jesus taught through his Parables of the Kingdom that their expectations were mistaken. While the coming of the Messiah did bring forth the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom would take time to develop and mature before the final consummation.



First, the Son of Man would come to plant the seeds of his Kingdom. Later, he would return later for a great harvest. In the parable of the sower, Jesus taught that the seed of the “word of the kingdom” would bear great fruit in the good soil of those “who have ears to hear”. Many would not respond in

faith to the call of the Kingdom of Heaven because of trials, worries of life and the work of the evil one. (13:1-23)

Jesus taught that the nature of the kingdom of God was progressive like leavening working through dough and in accordance to the Word of God. It would begin small “like a tiny mustard seed” but over time it would grow to be massive in size. While the kingdom was developing, the good and bad would grow and develop together like weeds in the midst of a vibrant wheat field. But make no mistake, the harvest will come. On “that day”, the righteous sons of the kingdom will be gathered as wheat, the evil and wicked will be judged like bundles of weeds being burned in the “fiery furnace”.

Therefore, Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven was of supreme value and was to be sought at all cost. If it were a pearl or a treasure in a field it would be wise to sell everything you possess to buy it (13:44-46).

Faltering Faith and True Greatness

- Narrative: Resisting Faith in Jesus (13:54 – 17:27)
- Discourse: Ecclesial Sermon: True Greatness within Kingdom Family Life (18:1-35)

Resisting Faith in Jesus

- People of Nazareth: 13:54-58
- Herod and John the Baptist: 14:1-12
- Feeding Five Thousand: 14:13-21
- Walking on Water: 14:22-36
- Dispute with Pharisees: 15:1-20
- Canaanite Woman 15:21-28
Four Thousand: 15:29-39
- Pharisees and Sadducees: 16:1-12
- Peter’s Confession: 16:13-20
- Peter’s Rejection: 16:21-27
- Jesus’ Transfiguration: 17:1-13
- Young Demoniac: 17:14-23
- Temple Tax: 17:24-27

Great Faith vs. Little Faith

All thirteen episodes share the major theme of faith in Jesus. The focus is primarily on the faith of the disciples in particular who consistently falter in having strong faith. Their lack of faith is in direct contrast with the Canaanite woman who is commended, “O woman, great is your faith.”

In the first two stories, Jesus is completely rejected. In his home town of Nazareth, Jesus was recognized as one of “wisdom and mighty works” and yet the still took offence at him. “Jesus did not do many mighty works there, because they lacked faith.” (13:58)

In the second story, Herod does not dispute Jesus “fame” in doing mighty works. Rather, is under judgment for murdering God’s prophet John the Baptist.

The next three episodes focus on the disciples need to grow in their faith. With the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus challenges the faith of the disciples, “You give them something to eat.” But they replied, “We only have five loaves and two fish.”

Jesus would send them out on the lake and come to them walking on water. Peter demonstrates a measure of faith but then doubts, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (14:31)

Jesus gets into a conflict with the Pharisees over internal and external righteousness. When Peter asks for a simple clarification about Jesus teaching, he is questioned: “Are you still without understanding?” (14:16)

And so it continues....the Canaanite Woman is commended for having “great faith” (15:28). The disciples continue to show a lack of it, with another feeding of the 4000 and the same doubts. In 16:8, he says his disciples have “little faith”.

Peter expresses tremendous faith in his bold confession of Jesus as the Christ and then immediately is rebuked as “Satan” and “Not having in mind the things of God, but men” for his denial of the cross.

He sees the Glory of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration and yet mistakenly wants to set up a shrine to Jesus on the mountain.

In 17:14-23, Jesus explains the reason why the disciples could not exercise the young demoniac, “You have too little faith,” and if only they had “faith like a grain of a mustard seed” nothing would be impossible for them.

Who do you say I am?

The climactic turning point of the Gospel of Matthew is the confession of Peter in answer to the question: Who do you say that I am? The focus of the Gospel to this point has been to answer this key question through the teachings and mighty acts of Jesus and show the various reactions of faith, doubt, fear and rejection. Peter concludes the matter with a dramatic confession that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” (16:16)

With the confession of Peter, both Jesus and the story line of the Gospel now shift to answer the question: “What is the Messiah going to do?” From that time on, Jesus began to teach....(16:21)

Jesus will teach his disciples three times that: “he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (see also 17:22 & 20:18) Peter and the other disciples will completely fail in their understanding of the mission of the Messiah. “Far be it from you Lord, this shall never happen to you!” (16:22) As far as Jesus’ identity is concerned, Peter is “rock” solid—it is the nature of Jesus’ mission that causes Peter to become a stone of “hindrance.” Satan offered Jesus a kingdom without a cross in the temptation in the desert, now his offer returns on the lips of the disciple, Peter.



If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” –Matthew 16:24-25



Peter and the other disciples must now learn that being a follower of the messianic suffering servant will entail suffering and humility on their part as well.

The Transfiguration

The Mount of Transfiguration is to be compared to Mount Sinai (see Exodus 24:15-18). There the inner three of the New Covenant, Peter, James and John meet the inner two of the Old Covenant, Moses and Elijah. The Shekinah Glory cloud of YHWH is manifest. Only the Glory is radiating from the personhood of Jesus. The divine voice again confirms the kingly identity of Jesus (see Psalm 2) and commends obedience to Jesus as they would to God's law.

Peter will recount this event later in his ministry as grounds for his authority to write prophetic scripture (2 Peter 1:16-21). And the Apostle Paul would use the transfiguration to cast a vision of what God wants to do in and through us: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed from one degree of glory to another." –2 Corinthians 3:18

The path to glory begins with a cross. Have you the faith to pick up your cross and follow Jesus?



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