

Bible Study 2020-2023

Class #30

5/9/23

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- **Matthew 11:16-19** *“But to what shall I compare this generation?...,yet wisdom is justified by her deeds”*
 - This generation was the generation of people Jesus was talking to at that moment
 - He was saying that the children were playing games, but they were not playing along
 - Since John the Baptist was an extreme ascetic living out in the wilderness, the Jews said that he had a demon
 - Then they said that Jesus (the son of Man) came eating and drinking, therefore He was a glutton and drunkard

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- Father said neither could make the Pharisees happy
- Yet, **wisdom** is justified by her deeds, and in the passage, Jesus is the wisdom of the earth
- Wisdom in Greek is *Sophia* which means “here the word of God is justified by the way He acts and what He does”
- They witnessed Jesus sitting with tax collectors, eating with sinners, and having a glass of wine with His meals
- Thus, they called Him a glutton and a drunkard

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- Yet, eating a meal in the Middle East was the most intimate thing a person could do
- For them, it was a very sacred and important social event
- For Jesus, eating and drinking with people was a way to talk with them
- Jesus was saying that what He was doing was justifiable, and He continues to explain it to them

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- **Matthew 11:20-23** *“Then he began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done,... Would have remained until this day”*
 - Father pointed out that it was in the northern part of the Sea of Galilee where the principle source of water entered the sea
 - It was in this location that several of the towns existed that Jesus performed many of His mighty deeds (*Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida*)
 - Today, there is nothing left of these towns but ruins
 - Jesus pointed out that if these same mighty deeds had been done in *Tyre* and *Sidon* (major pagan cities in Lebanon), the people would have repented in sackcloth and ashes

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- If the people of *Capernaum* (his hometown) had repented, that city would have remained until today
- Most of these towns were destroyed by a series of earthquakes
- *Bethsaida* was destroyed by mudslides which caused it to disappear all together
- Peter and Andrew were originally from *Bethsaida*

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- **Matthew 11:24-26** *“But I tell you that it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you...for such was thy gracious will”*
 - It is not that God had kept secret from those who were wise, it is because Jesus was speaking metaphorically here
 - Those who were wise should have known better, and been able to figure this out
 - But, as often was the case, the very simple and most innocent were the ones to whom God gave extra grace, and they were able to figure things out

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- **Matthew 11:27-30** *“All things have been delivered to me by my Father;...For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”*
 - Father pointed out that his can be read as the Son and the Father (the son of God is the Messiah and that is Jesus)
 - But, all through the passage we get hints that there is something more than the Messiah here
 - This person is also the “divine king”
 - We also can see here that John was preparing the way for the “glory cloud”

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- This is the type of language we find in the **Gospel of John**, where he is really emphasizing the divinity of Jesus
- Jesus talks about God as His father and as He is the son
- We can read this at a messianic level, where God is the Father of the Davidic king
- Then, the text says: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, Take my yoke.”*
- There are two ways that we can read this:
 - This is the new son of Solomon (*“Rehoboam I will make my yoke heavier upon you” 1st Kings 12:4;14*) ¹
 - The yoke is the Law that He was going to impose upon the people

Matthew 11 (Cont)

- But Jesus says, “*My yoke is easy*”
- Jesus as the new *Rehoboam*, would be a better son of Solomon, who was the son of David
- Thus, we could read this passage at the Davidic level, as He refers to the Law
- In the Old Testament, the Torah was understood to be a yoke that you put on the backs of man, like a yoke on the back of an oxen
- Peter talks about this in **Acts 15:10** ² (The yoke of the *Torah*)
- Again, we get the hint of the divinity, but this will become clearer in the second half of Matthew’s gospel

Matthew 12

5/1/23

Matthew 12

- **Matthew 12:1-2** *“At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath;...your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath”*
 - Father described what the disciples were doing was a mere snack (like eating from a bag of sunflower seeds in their shells)
 - It would appear that the Pharisees were a part of a larger crowd that followed Jesus everywhere He went
 - When the Pharisees saw the disciples picking and eating some of the grain, they proclaimed that this was a violation of the Sabbath Laws!

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- But, the first law of the Sabbath was in **Exodus 12:16₃**, which said that one must “rest” on the sabbath, and the only permitted work was the preparation of food
 - *“The seventh day was a holy assembly; no work shall be done on those days; but what every one must eat, that only may be prepared by you”*
- This is the real irony here, as the disciples were not even preparing food (just plucking grain and eating a few seeds)
- This, once again, is an example of the Pharisee placing a hedge around the Law
- The Pharisees were accusing the disciples of violating the Sabbath because Deuteronomy forbids one to “harvest” on the Sabbath

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- Harvesting consisted of a large number of laborers with sickles going into the wheat fields to collect the grain
- The Pharisees developed this hedge, which implied that merely plucking grain on the Sabbath was in some way harvesting (what they assumed would happen next would be for them to get their John Deere tractors and work the field!)
- Jesus asked the Pharisees who were the most learned if they had read a certain passage in the Scriptures

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:3-4** *“Have you not read what David did when he and his men were hungry,...which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?”*
 - Father pointed out that Jesus could have just taken them to task for misinterpreting the Law
 - Instead, Jesus used this event to teach them something, not just about the Law, but about His identity
 - Obviously, the Pharisees knew the story of David and his men being permitted to eat the “show bread” from the tent of meeting (1st Samuel 21:1-6)₄

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- Once again, Jesus could have gone after them for their hedge around the Law
- Instead, Jesus pointed out that even though the law had a certain purpose, there were exceptions

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:5-6** *“Or have you not read how on the Sabbath how the priests in the temple profaned the Sabbath, and are guiltless? I tell you something greater than the temple is here”*
 - Father reminded them that the priesthood of Aaron required to work seven days a week in the Temple offering daily sacrifices in accordance with the Law
 - In this passage, we are learning that Jesus is greater than the temple priests and even the temple itself
 - This can be understood because the Temple was the place where the Jews believed that God dwelt among them, and Jesus is the new temple
 - He is God incarnate (which will be fully understood at the Transfiguration)

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:7-10** *“And if you had known what this means,...So they might accuse him”*
 - Jesus was teaching them that He was greater than the temple when he identified Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath, who was the Son of Man from **Daniel 7:13**
 - Thus, He is the great and final Messiah
 - The Pharisees knew that Jesus often had compassion on people who were ill, and He would heal them on the Sabbath
 - This story was obviously being told about His being in a synagogue on the Sabbath, where He asked them if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:11-14** *“What man of you, if he has on sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath,...But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how to destroy him”*
 - Father said that it would appear that the Pharisees holding a council should be considered “work”
 - Again, the irony is that they are accusing Jesus of working on the Sabbath, while at the same time, they were working on the Sabbath
 - At this point, the Pharisees had totally turned against Jesus

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:15-21** *“Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there....And in his name will the Gentiles hope”*
 - Again, we see the messianic secret
 - This reference is from one of the four “Suffering Servant Psalms” from the Prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 42:1-4**)⁵
 - These Psalms were about a person in the Old Testament who sometimes seemed to be the Messiah, sometimes he might be God, or a righteous Israelite, or even the Prophet himself
 - This was an area of debate among the Pharisees

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- We saw (in the Book of Acts) that the Ethiopian's official conversing with Philip was reading from **Isaiah 53** (an other Suffering Servant Psalm)
- This passage was from one of the the "Suffering Servant Psalms"
- The authors of the New Testament often identified the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah were about the messiah
- We can see this in **Matthew 12:18**, where it says: "*I will put my spirit upon him*" followed by Jesus healing the blind and dumb demoniac

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:22-27** *“Then the blind and dumb demoniac was brought to him,...by whom do **your sons** cast them out?”*
 - Jesus was arguing from basic logic here
 - Father said that if he were Jesus, by this point he would have given up trying to help them
 - Jesus, on the other hand, was merciful and patiently using basic logic with them
 - As they watched Him healed people with infirmities, they accused him of doing it by the power of *Beelzebub*

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- In a technical sense, *Beelzebub* was the god of the *Philistines* called *Ekron* (but that is not what they meant here)
- At that time, the Jews used the names of pagan gods as another name for Satan
- Paul said as much in **1st Corinthians 10** where he said that what the pagans were worshiping were “demons”
- In the **Book of Revelations**, John described the throne of Satan as the throne of *Zeus*
- Thus, the Jews identified the sub-gods of the pagan pantheon with Satan
- The term *Beelzebub* was used here merely as Satan

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- Further, the term “your sons,” did not mean the “children” of the Pharisees
- At that time, this term meant a “disciple”
- This was a Hebrew way of describing someone who followed, or imitated a person

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:28-29** “ *But if it is by the spirit of God that I cast out demons,...Then he may plunder his house* ” (**Matthew 12:18**)
 - Father said there are only two options here:
 - Satan is casting out Satan (which does not make any sense)
 - Jesus is doing this by the power of God (which would mean that the Kingdom of God had arrived)
 - Jesus gave them further logic when he described how a strong man defended his house
 - Father said that if Jesus was doing these things in Satan’s realm, how was He not more powerful than the one they say was possessing Him?

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:30** *“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters”*
 - This is a **major turning point in Jesus’ ministry**
 - By this point, the Pharisees had already rejected Jesus, and were actively trying to turn the people against Him
 - Here, Jesus **“draws a line in the sand”**
 - He declared: **“This is it!”**
 - He told them that they were either on His side or on their (the Pharisees) side

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- From here on, Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees will be very different (as their interaction with Him had already changed, and they were trying to trip Him up)
- Jesus had been very patient up to this point with them
- He had given a sort of Bible Study to them, but they failed to heed its message
- Now, He was working miracles in front of them, while using basic logic from the Old Testament
- None of this was working
- So, **He gives them the ultimatum** of either being with Him or against Him

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:31-32** *“Therefore I tell you,...but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come”*
 - The Pharisees had just accused Jesus of blasphemy for doing these miracles by the power of the Devil (*Beelzebub*)
 - This means that they were speaking against the Son of Man
 - Earlier, when Jesus raised a man from his paralysis, the Pharisees said that He must be the Messiah and they glorified God, but when He forgave men of their sins, they said His power was from the Devil

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- At this point, **the crowds had rejected Jesus**, and began to speak against Him
- They believed that His “words” gave testimony to His “works”
- Thus, they identified the Holy Spirit as Satan, and blasphemed against the Holy Spirit as there were no other options
- Father pointed out that after witnessing Jesus raise someone from paralysis, they concluded that His power was from the Spirit and He was therefore from God

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- But, when they conclude that his power was from *Beelzebub*, they have committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
- There were no other ways that Jesus could help them

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:33-34** *“Either make the tree good, and its fruit good;...How can you speak good, when you are evil?”*
 - Father told a personal story about a plum tree in his garden that had been grafted into and growing out of the trunk of an apricot tree
 - When he tried to eat some of the plums, they were tasteless and worthless (so he cut off the plum branch and let the apricots continue to grow)
 - This reminded him of the saying, “You know a tree by its fruit”
 - Jesus was calling on the people to judge what He had done by looking at His fruits

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- He was using basic logic
- Father asked that we look at His language: *“You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil?”*
- Something profound has changed in their attitude toward Him here

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:35-40** *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks....and three nights in the heart of the earth”*
 - This is in direct response to their claiming that He was under the dominion of Beelzebub
 - “Evil” here means lawlessness
 - “Adulterous” means sexual licentiousness
 - Jesus is talking about adultery in the Old Testament context (those who worshiped other gods than Yahweh)

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- The Old Testament idolaters were seen as covenantal adulterers
- Jesus was saying that, “this generation” has rejected the one true God
- Thus, no “sign” will be given to them
- Father pointed out that things were changing at this point
- He had just given them a sign, and now He told them that the only sign they would receive was the sign of the Prophet Jonah (he spent three days, three nights in the belly of a whale)

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- **Matthew 12:41-45** *“The men of Nineveh will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it;...So shall it be also with this evil generation”*
 - Father pointed out that Jesus gave the people a very scary warning
 - He said that when a demon is exercised from a man, he will later go back and check on things
 - The key word in this passage is “empty” (swept and put in order, but left empty)
 - Jesus, has basically cleansed this land of demons, leaving the area clean and empty

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- The people had rejected both Jesus and the Holy Spirit
- So now, seven other demons will come in
- This entire generation of Jews who experienced His teaching, preaching, and exercising demons have ended up “fruitless”
- They are going to be worse off than they were before He came to them
- Father discussed a similar situation he experienced in his parish
 - A young woman who had been using Tarot cards and a Ouija board for over a year was experiencing some demonic presence within her home

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- Father advised that she get rid of the Tarot cards, the Ouija board, and all her astrology books
- The day after she complied, the problems were gone
- Since she was not baptized, he told her that if she did not fill this void with the power of the Holy Spirit, her house would be an empty space, and the demons would return worse than before
- Father said he did not know if she heeded his advice as he encouraged her to be baptized and change her life

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- Matthew 12:46-50 *“While he was still speaking to the people,...For whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister, and mother”*
 - Father pointed out that some Protestants point to this passage as Jesus not being pleased with His mother
 - But, He was saying just the opposite
 - He was pointing out that what makes Mary great was that she was the greatest of His disciples
 - Later, we hear someone cry out, *“Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breast that nursed you”*

Matthew 12 (Cont)

- Jesus said “No,” rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it”
- What makes Mary so great is that she and the disciples heard the word of God and kept it
- Next fall we will begin with **Matthew 13 on Tuesday, September 12, 2023**

Structure of Matthew's Gospel

Narrative about Jesus' Baptism, John the Baptist, Jesus being tested – Mt 3-4

A. Discourse on Sermon on the Mount – Mt 5-7

Seven beatitudes/blessings

Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be known as the children of God

Narrative on 10 Miracles – Mt 8-9

B. Discourse to the 12 Apostles on Authority - Mt 10

Narrative on the mysteries of the kingdom – Mt 11-12



C. Discourse on the Seven Parables – Mt 13 most important – like meat in a sandwich (bread, mustard, meat, mustard, bread) – the parables begin here

Narrative on the Church, First Fruits of the Kingdom of Heaven – Mt 14- 17

B' Discourse on the Church to the 12 Apostles – Mt 18

Narrative on the Approaching Advent of the Kingdom of Heaven – Mt 19-22

A' Discourse on the Temple Mount – 23-25

Woe to you blind guides

Woe to you brood of vipers, you children of hell