

# Bible Study 2022-2023

## Class #18

2/7/23

# Matthew 5 Background

- Father pointed out two of Jesus' important themes being introduced at this point as He:
  - Went up the mountain
  - Taught them the "Beatitudes (Mt 1:3-12)
- Jesus used the reoccurring theme, "you have heard that it was said. But I say to you"
- What they had heard were the teachings of Moses
- Matthew was proclaiming that Jesus was greater than Moses which was of great interest to his Jewish audience

# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- The Hebrews loved to combine two words together in a Semitic image (interference) such as:
  - “He sat down and **opened his mouth** and **taught them**”
  - “Jesus **arose** and **went** to Cana”
- Biblical Greek (*Konia* Greek) combined regular Greek with many “Semitic interferences”
- Father suggested that this was a major hint of how early this Gospel was written

# 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Worldview

- The Jewish worldview at this point in Jesus' public ministry reveals that:
  - The people were experiencing hard times and suffering a national crisis under Roman rule:
    - They were taxed by the Romans in addition to their religious tithes
    - Jewish leaders were handpicked by the Romans while others were assassinated
    - Resisters were being executed

# 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Worldview (Cont)

- The risk of assimilation was growing because of the many Roman citizens who moved into the Holy Land brought a new lifestyle
- The Law stated that God was the King of the Jews, but the Romans demanded that allegiance be given to Caesar
- The Jews believed (hoped) that one day God would rescue those who remained faithful to the covenant from the Romans

# 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Worldview (Cont)

- Many could not agree on what it meant to be a true, “loyal, and holy” Jew during this time of oppression:
  - One view of “Holy” in Hebrew meant to be “set apart”
  - The Pharisees imitated God’s holiness by setting themselves apart from anything that was unholy
  - The Essenes separated themselves from society altogether
  - The Zealots believed that “holiness” could only be obtained by driving the Romans out of Israel, and returning God to His position as king over Israel

# 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Worldview (Cont)

- Meanwhile, Jesus' public ministry was about to take off like lightning in Galilee (Mt 4:23-25)
  - People from all over Galilee and beyond flocked to see and hear Jesus because He was offering the message that the long-awaited "Kingdom" was now arriving
  - Many Jews began to place their hopes in Him as the one who would rescue them from their enemies (Romans and Herod), and restore the Kingdom to Israel

# 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Worldview (Cont)

- This set the stage for Jesus' "call," like a revolutionary leader, for a special discourse about the "Kingdom"
- Many who followed Jesus up the "mount" were expecting a call to arms for the revolution and many, like Simon, may have been "Zealots"



# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- Matthew presents Jesus' revolutionary new way of life in his "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt 5 - 7)
  - "On the Mount" is an allusion to the "Mt. Sinai" event (Ex 19-24) thus it should be seen as a renewal of Law, or the unveiling of the "New Law"
  - It was also the fulfillment and perfection of the Law
  - Only Matthew provides this teaching (Luke offers a less detailed version in the "Sermon on the Plain" - Lk 6:17-49)

# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- Matthew depicts Jesus as the “New Moses” since both:
  - Fled execution as a child
  - Came out of Egypt on their return to Israel
  - Spent time (40 years, 40 days) in the wilderness
- Moses, in Deuteronomy 28, contrasts the “blessings” vs. the “curses” that will result when Israel obeys or disobeys God’s Law

# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- Jesus, following this pattern, presents seven:
  - Blessings in the “Sermon on the Mount” in Galilee (Mt 5-7)
    - 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> are similar and can be seen as one
  - The curses (woes) can be found later in the “Sermon on the Temple Mount” in Jerusalem (Mt 23:13-29\*)<sub>1</sub>

## 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

# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, offers Israel a clear choice to either:
  - Follow His way of mercy, peace, and enduring persecution ending in the kingdom's restoration
  - or
  - Follow the way of revolutionaries and separatists culminating in their destruction (70 AD the temple and Jerusalem was destroyed) +

# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- At that time, the people of Israel:
  - Longed for “God’s Kingdom” to come
  - Wanted to inherit the earth
  - Thirsted for justice
  - Hoped for mercy
  - Looked for a vision of God
  - Desired to be called the “Son’s of God”
  - Wished to be vindicated in a national victory

# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- Jesus shocked those who climbed the mountain to hear him by introducing in the “Beatitudes” an unexpected lineup of those to be “blessed” to include:
  - The poor in spirit
  - The mourners
  - The meek
  - The hungry
  - The merciful
  - The pure of heart
  - The persecuted
  - The peacemakers

# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- Therefore, Jesus tells his listeners that:
  - He is “the way” to the Kingdom of God
  - To inherit the earth, one must become “**meek**”
  - To attain justice, one must become “**humble**”
  - To attain mercy, one must be “**merciful**”
  - To acquire a vision of God, one must have “**purity of heart**”
  - To be the son of the creator, one must “**be a peacemaker**”
  - To be vindicated, one must “**accept persecutions**”



# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- The Greek word Matthew used for “blessed” is *makarios* which has two meanings:
  - Blessed – the recipient of divine favors
  - Happy – one who is fortunate
- Jesus combines both meanings and gives a road map to help us find not only happiness, but also the blessings and graces of God in our lives
- His words were just as jarring in his day as they are for us today

# Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- **Mountain** (Mt 5:1) – An allusion to the Sinai event (Ex 19-24). A renewal of the Law as in the fulfillment and perfection of what came before
- **Sat** (Mt 5:1 ) – a possible allusion to the “seat” of Moses
- **Beatitudes** also appear in Ps 1:1; Proverbs 3:13; 28:14

# Definitions

- **Poor in Spirit** – Those in whom the need for God is more important than anything else in life (Ex 22: 25-27; 23:11; Lev 19: 9-10; Deut 15: 7-11; Isa 61: 1)
- **Mourn** – Isaiah comforts the mourners (Isa 61: 2-3; Sir 48:24)
- **Meek** – Those who understand that neither we nor anyone else is better than any other person in the world (Ps 37:11; 2 Kings:24:14; 25:12; Jer 40-44)

# Definitions (Cont)

- **Hunger and thirst for righteousness** – Those who believe that as with as nutrition and hydration our very survival requires our being righteous. God and the Torah are what give satisfaction (Sir 24:19-23; Ps 107:5,8-9)
- **Merciful** – Those who are willing to go beyond fairness to respond in favor of the sinner (Prov 14:21; 17:5; Hos 6:6)

# Definitions (Cont)

- **Pure of heart** – Those who possess a single heartedness (one track mind) toward Christ
- **Peacemakers** – Those who need to live an ordered life centered on Jesus
- **Persecuted for righteousness** – Those who are willing to suffer persecution (even death) for Jesus who is righteous

# Matthew 5 (Cont)

- **Matthew 5:1-2** *“Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying”*
  - Father began with another discussion of the geography in and around *Capernaum*
  - The hill on which Jesus gave this opening teaching is called the *Mount of the Beatitudes*
  - It is fairly high for that region, and offers an incredible view of the entire Sea of Galilee
  - It also contains (even today) an incredible acoustic presence allowing one to speak at the top and be heard clearly at the bottom

# Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Next, Father pointed out Matthew's use of Semitic way of speaking (as discussed earlier, by using multiple verbs in a row) as he says that Jesus "opened his mouth and taught them" (How else could He teach them?)
- In the Hebrew Old Testament, we hear this way of speaking every time Abraham went somewhere
  - He always **gets up** and **goes somewhere**
  - He **arose** and **went**
  - He **stood up** and **took off**
- This is not the case in the Greek or the Latin

# Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Most likely, Matthew originally wrote in *Aramaic*, and this is why we see this Semitic practice
- Further, this points to this being the first gospel
- Father again raised some of the more modern ideas found in biblical scholarship, such as Markan primacy and the Q theory, which are rapidly being discredited



# Headings in the Sermon on the Mount from the Jerusalem Bible

- The Beatitudes – Mt 5: 1-12
- Salt of the earth and light of the world – Mt 5:13-16
- The fulfillment of the Law – Mt 5: 17-19
- The new standard higher than the old – Mt 5: 20-48
- Almsgiving in secret – Mt 6: 1-4
- Prayer in secret – Mt 6: 5-6
- How to pray. The Lord's Prayer – Mt 6: 7-15
- Fasting in secret – Mt 6:16-18
- True treasures – Mt 6: 19-21
- The eye, the lamp of the body – Mt 6: 22-23

# Headings in the Sermon on the Mount from the Jerusalem Bible

- God and money – Mt 6: 24
- Trust in Providence – Mt 6: 25-34
- Do not judge – Mt 7: 1-5
- Do not profane sacred things – Mt 7: 6
- Effective prayer – Mt 7: 7-11
- The golden rule – Mt 7: 12
- The two ways – Mt 7:13-14
- False prophets – Mt 7: 15-20
- The true disciple – Mt 7: 21-27
- The amazement of the crowds – Mt 7: 28-29

# Matthew 5 (Cont)

- **Matthew 5:3** *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*
  - Once again, Father pointed out how Matthew avoided the use of the sacred name (**Yahweh**) in deference to the practice of the Jews of his day
  - He also pointed to **1<sup>st</sup> Maccabees 3:16-22**,<sup>3</sup> where we can see an earlier example of this practice
  - The translators of the RSV have capitalized “Heaven” to ensure that we see it being used as a circumlocution for God
  - Suddenly, almost out of nowhere, the author of Maccabees says: *“He himself will crush them”*

# Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Once we understand that “Heaven” is a circumlocution, then we know that this “He” is referring to “God” (Heaven was understood to be the place where God dwells)
- Again, this is why the RSV capitalizes “God” in English
- We will see all sorts of different ways these early authors referred to God without using the holy name
- This is another reason why we cannot properly understand the New Testament until we properly understand the Old Testament
- The two books of Maccabees were written very near to the writings of the New Testament

# Matthew 5 (Cont) \*

- At that time, Galilee was a hot bed of Zealots who were waiting for the restoration of the kingdom
- They were waiting to conquer the Romans
- Father said that some of His audience might have been Pharisees who were searching for “righteousness” (compliance with the *Torah*)
- They might, at that point, have believed that Jesus was their guy

# Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Father also stressed the importance of **Malachi** and **Zechariah**, as being among the most important post-Exilic prophets
- There are numerous references to them in the New Testament (along with, to a lesser extent, **Isaiah**, **Jeremiah**, and **Ezekiel**)
- The **Gospel of John** is full of quotes from **Zechariah**
- **Zachariah** and **Malachi** were among the last prophets to write, and are therefore quoted frequently in the New Testament
- It is also important for us, as we read the New Testament, to understand the literature that came right before it (latter books of the Old Testament)
- Father suggested further, that we need to know the writings of the Early Church, that came right after the completion of the New Testament

# Matthew 5 (Cont)

- We should be familiar with:
  - The Didache
  - The Letters of Ignatius of Antioch
  - The Letters of Barnabas
- As we go along, we will see how important these early writings are as they link back to the gospels
- This means to be a good scholar, you will want to study the literature that surrounds the gospels

# Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Once again, Jesus was speaking about the Kingdom of God (Father asked if we see how that works?)
- God's kingdom was Israel
- Thus, it means that the “poor in spirit” will be blessed as theirs is the kingdom that is coming; the kingdom of Israel which is about to be re-established