

Bible Study 2022-2023

Class #6

10/18/22

Reminder

- We will not meet for Bible Study on Tuesday, November 1st All Saints Day
- Please go to Mass as it is a Holy Day of Obligation

Matthew 1 (Cont)

- **Matthew 1:24-25** *When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him,...and he called his name Jesus”*
 - “But (he) knew her not until,” means that he had no relations with her
 - The problem of “until” came up only in modern Protestant thought
 - Prior to that, everyone understood the early Christian tradition that Mary and Joseph were always celibate
 - Father gave a detailed explanation of the meaning of “until” and “before”

Matthew 1 (Cont)

- To properly understand these terms, we must know how the 1st century audience understood them prior to modern genetics
 - If a woman was pregnant and then had an adulterous relationship or was raped, the child would be considered either a half breed or the son of the second man
 - Thus, Matthew had to answer the question of whether *Jesus* was conceived in Mary's womb after a time when Mary and Joseph had been living together (which meant that Jesus was possibly one half *Joseph* and one half God, or completely from *Joseph*)
 - Mathew's answer to this question was understood to mean that Mary and Joseph had no relations

Matthew 1 (Cont)

- Next Father addressed the term “until”
 - In modern English, “until” can mean a change of action
 - I was running **until** I saw the car
 - I was eating **until** I was full
 - In older English, “until” could mean (as above), or it often meant an action to a certain point **with no implication of change of action**
 - The pilgrims ate happily with the Indians cranberries and turkey, and we have that tradition **until** today (does this mean that we no longer eat turkey at Thanksgiving?)

Matthew 1 (Cont)

- As we saw in Old English, the Greek word *heos* (*until*) also has a double meaning which the reader must discern to understand Matthew's intention
- The Hebrew word *ad*, and the Aramaic word *adma* are used in the same way
- Matthew could be telling us that Mary had other children after the birth of *Jesus*/ **or**
- Matthew was telling us that *Jesus* (through adoption) is a son of *David* and *Abraham* and the product of a virginal birth by the power of God
- Everyone agrees with the second option as there is no indication of a change of action after the birth of *Jesus*
- This was the accepted teaching of the church and of the original Protestant reformers

Matthew 1 (Cont)

- We can see this in *Psalm 110*, “Sit at my right hand **until** I make your enemies your footstool”
- Also, this can be seen in **2nd Samuel 6:23** “And Michal of Saul had no child to (**until**) the day of her death
- The infancy narrative continues in **Matthew 2**

Matthew 2

- **Matthew 2:1-2** “*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king,...and have come to worship him*”
 - Father reminded us to place ourselves back into the context of the 1st century Jew
 - The town of *Bethlehem* referred to the place where King *David* was born
 - These Jews could not speak of *Bethlehem* without thinking of King *David*
 - Yet here, Matthew was proclaiming that *Herod* was their king

Matthew 2 (Cont)

- The Jews hated *Herod*, because he was a crazy, evil king, who served the Romans and caused a great deal of trouble
- He was a vassal king of a vassal state within the Roman Empire – (*Judea*)
- We know from the historian *Josephus* that *Herod* was paranoid, irrational, and a violent ruler who ruled with an iron fist
- Not only was he hated by the people of *Judah*, he was also a violent murderer and was not supposed to be their king

Matthew 2 (Cont)

- He had gone to Rome, where he was appointed king of *Judah* by the Roman authorities
- Father asked if we can imagine what it would have been like to be a king in a kingdom in which everyone hated you? (This may have contributed to his psychological issues)
- *Herod* hated his people, and they hated him because (under Jewish Law) he was not permitted to be the King of the Jews (Israel could not have a foreign ruler over them by law (**Deuteronomy 17:15**))

Matthew 2 (Cont)

- At this point, *Israel* had two foreign kings ruling over them: *Herod* and *Caesar*
- Herod was an *Edomite*, (a descendant of Esau), and not a Jew
- His father was an *Edomite* and his mother was an *Ishmaelite*
- Thus, he was not a Jew, let alone a king from the line of David (**2nd Samuel 7**)
- There was not a way that he should have been allowed to be their king
- Furthermore, there was nothing he could do to make himself the legitimate king in the eyes of his people or the Law

Matthew 2 (Cont)

- So, he had to rule with an iron fist, and kill anyone who might rise up and threaten his kingship
- In fact, he killed several of his sons and his wife
- Everyone in *Judea* was afraid of him
- In an effort to appease the people, he decided to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (20 BC until 63 AD)
- He also was continuously constructing various building projects in an attempt to endear himself to the Jewish people

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 21:21-35**

- The mountain range on the east side of the *Jordan River* belonged to *Moab*
- *Israel* had to cross this range causing them to encounter the *Moabites*, where they met and defeated *Sihon*, King of the ***Amorites*** and *Og*, King of ***Bashan***
- The defeat of these two kings is referenced in many places in the Old Testament (**Book of Joshua, Psalm 136**)

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 22-24**

- At this point, *Israel* was encamped in the plain of *Moab* on the eastern side of the Jordan River facing *Jericho*
- This was a large flat plain between 10 and 20 miles long
- From *Jericho* looking east, you would see the *Mountains of Moab* with ***Mount Nebo*** in the forefront
- This will be the place where *Moses* looks to the west at the Promised Land
- Eventually, *Joshua* will lead them from the plain of Moab across the Jordan just before Jericho

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 22:1-6**

- When the people of *Israel* finally arrived at the plains of *Moab*, *Balak the King of Moab* was afraid
- He had seen what *Israel* had done to the *Amorites* and the *Moabites*
- King Balak decided to send for ***Balaam***, a prophet, and pay him to offer a curse on the people of *Israel*
 - It was believed that whatever a prophet prophesied would come true
 - Balaam lived in **Pethor**, Babylon beyond the Euphrates River, approximately 400 miles from Moab

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 22:7-20**

- *Balaam* turned down the initial request to go to *Moab* after consulting overnight with God (*Yahweh*)
 - He may have been a believer in the true God of Israel
 - But, most likely, he was a heathen magician who sought revelation from his own god, but the response was given by *Yahweh* Himself
- After a second visit from the emissaries of *Balak*, God directed him to go, but to only say and do what He directed him to do

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 22:36-42**

- Upon his arrival at *Arnon* (which marked the boundary of *Moab* and the land of the *Amorites*), *Balaam* met *King Balak* and told him that he would only be able to say and do what God (Yahweh) told him
- They then offered several oxen and sheep in sacrifice, and then retired for the night

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 23:1-10**

- The next morning, they went to a peak in the Mountains of *Moab*, (*Mt. Pisgah*) offered additional sacrifices, and *Balak* pointed to the people of *Israel* who were encamped in the plains of Moab, and told the prophet to curse them
- *Balaam's first curse (Numbers 23:1-10)* turned into a blessing on the people of Israel

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 23:11-30**

- *Balak* was astonished that *Balaam* offered a blessing and took him to a second highest point where he could offer the proper curse against *Israel*
- Again, they set up seven altars upon which they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams
- The Lord met *Balaam* and instructed him to once again offer a blessing (**2nd curse at Numbers 23:18-24**)
- *Balak* was very upset
- *Balaam* reminded him that he could only relate what Yahweh told him to say
- *Balak* took him to another site hoping for the curse

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 24:1-13**

- At this point, *Balaam* knew that blessing Israel pleased God, so once again he presented an even longer oracle of blessing in which he told him (**3rd curse**) **Numbers 24:3-9**:
 - Israel shall be a very powerful kingdom higher than **Agag**
 - They shall be exalted and lay down like a lion and lioness (this should remind us of the Lion of Judah in the blessing of Judah by Israel in **Genesis 49:9**)
 - This gives an image of God being the King of Judah
 - That blessing ended with the phrase, “blessed be everyone who blesses you, and cursed by everyone who cursed you” (**Genesis 12:3**)
 - Through this blessing, God will bless the nations

Numbers (Cont)

- By this time, *Balak* was furious and he told the prophet to go home without being paid for his efforts
- *Balaam* reminded the king that he had warned him that all he could do was to relate what Yahweh told him to say

Numbers (Cont)

- **Numbers 24:14-25**

- Before he left, *Balaam* told the king what *Israel* would do to his nation in the future (**Numbers 24:14-25**)
- *Balaam* went from a false prophet to a true prophet as he predicted the downfall of *Moab*, *the Amalekites*, *the Kenites*, *Asshur*, and *Eber*
- This happened because the true God revealed Himself to him
- He even told *Balak* that he saw God (his eyes were opened)

Numbers (Cont)

- Then, he predicted the rising of the **star** and **scepter** of Israel (**Genesis 49:10**)
- This was about the human king who will govern the people of *Israel* and who would come from the tribe of *Judah* as God
- Initially, this will be King David, who will crush the head of *Moab* and dispossess the *Edomites*
- Eventually, this will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, when the wise men come from East of the *Euphrates* seeking the King of *Israel*
- *Herod the Great*, an *Edomite (Idumaea)*, was eventually dispossessed
- This is a very important prophecy that impacted King David