

I

The Gospel of Matthew

Last week: the discussion of Mark – the “basic” and probably first gospel, from which others drew. In Mark we saw a basically twofold division: ministry and passion. The Matthew we find several new things to look at. Have a pen and paper ready

A little background. The Apostle Matthew almost certainly did not write the first Gospel that bears his name. Remember what I said last week: numbers footnotes and the superscriptions or titles of the books were added later. Why did he get this name: the tax collector in 9:9 gets named (unlike so many others) , so the author must have known it was himself.

Why is it the first Gospel? In antiquity the earliest church fathers believed that he wrote it before any other the others wrote theirs, and that Mark's Gospel is a shortened version. We now think otherwise because both Matthew and Luke quote Mark verbatim, so they seem to be drawing from him. Like the other two synoptics, Mt seems unaware of John

Our author, whom we shall call Matthew, was prob a Jewish male, perhaps in Syria writings about 80 AD

Where was it written?

a. A four fold story: infancy, ministry, passion and resurrection, which we will see again in Luke. Mt is based on Mark, and has about 90% of Mark's content and sometimes 10% the exact same words. Plagarism!? We met the usual run of paralytics and lepers being healed, the possessed, the famous parables, scribes and Pharisees and the lot. What is interesting – is what is added, and how it is organized

b. We find here the most Jewish of the Gospels. If Mark was written for the slave classes of Roman Italy, Matthew has a new audience, which is the Christian community as it comes to terms with its Jewish heritage. It quotes the OT more than any other. This is a twofold matter. First, what is the relationship of gentile Christians to the Hebrew heritage, specifically if God is revealed in Israel, how Jewish do I have to be to be a Christian. Second, for the Jewish Christians, what does it mean to be faithful in a Church which is increasingly Gentile. These are hard questions. We know that Christianity

was at first a almost totally Jewish sect, but now because one is admitted to the community by baptism alone and not by birth, who do all of us come to

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terms with an increasingly Gentile, Greek speaking fellowship? To make a modern analogy: think of an immigrant to this country – they all face the question of how much of my heritage to I want to hang on to and how American do I have to be.

c. The third thing we shall see in Matthew is that it is the most ethical of the gospels, in the sense that Matthew is very interested in what is correct morality, how should we behave in this life? As we shall see in a moment, the famous sermon on the Mount, which begins with the Beatitudes at the beginning of Ch. 5 and running non stop to the end of ch. 7, is the source and foundation of the vast majority of Christian ethical teaching. If you want to know what is right and wrong, Mt. 5-7 is your text book.

d. The structure of Matthew is very interesting. Between Jesus baptism and His Passion we find five major speeches of Jesus where He teaches. Between five these are stories of his adventures and the usual dialogues and healings. Why five? Certainly because for Jewish Christians five is the number of the books in the Torah, the five books of Moses, for Jews the most important part of Scripture. Traditionally Moses gave the Five Books to Israel, and so Jesus is presented as a new Moses setting out the new Law. (cf red letter editions) The new is based on the old – but given a new interpretation. As you read the text, note that in these five teaching discourses, Jesus sits to speak while the mobs stand or sit around Him, which is the way rabbis taught in antiquity and they still do some Islamic countries. (cf modernity) To the text then:

I Infancy narratives and preparation: chapters 1-3 we find several things

a. The genealogy – which goes back to Abraham, the father of Israel. Cf Luke who goes back to Adam, the father of all tribes

b. We have the famous “shady ladies: Tamar, (pregnant by seduction) Rahab (Jericho harlot) Ruth (who hopped into bed with Boaz) the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba seduced by David) and Mary (immaculate of course but people questioned Jesus parentage) This points out that Jesus was born into a sinful company – but also that the role of women in history,

though in this case colorful, is still important AND we have Joseph who in ch 13:55 is referred to as a TEKTON and in Latin as a FABER. MT gives us more information than anyone else saying he was a just man and the issue of divorce. Certainly a good and protective man, held highly in RC tradition, patron of the Church and a holy death

c. We meet the high and the powerful and their reactions to Jesus. On one had the Magi, the wise men. (note: possibly female, a term used elsewhere eg Virgil's mom and Zoroastrians. There are not "three" of

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them nor are they kings. But they are gentiles, from outside the Covenant to show Mt listeners that their Hebrew heritage will not be seen by the nations. And then we have Herod who was by all accounts a right sod. What can we say about a politician who thinks infanticide is ok?

d. Another interesting pairing: John the Baptist and the evil one.

Interesting that Mt does not seem to know that John and Jesus are related

Note: John knows Jesus is God and loves it/satan knows the same and hates it. Also: how do we avoid the evil one: scripture and sacraments

II. First teaching narrative 4-7: we note the constant redefinition, not obliteration of the Torah but casting it anew. Note the series of contrasts: before you knew, now I say. This ends with one of the most beautiful passages: v 28 the lilies

ff. by narrative of adventures and we meet the usual collection, but note two things: many are outsiders to Israel: 8:2 leper, 8:5 centurion, v. 28 gadarene demoniac and the pigs, vv 9:19 woman is an issue of blood ff by first threat: accused of blasphemy 9:24 a dead girl, 9:32 another demoniac.

III Second teaching narrative ch 10: the costs of discipleship

10:5 they go poor (10:12 blessing the house)

10:16 sheep among wolves

10:18 hauled before kings ff by lots of betrayals

10:24 accusations of being called demonic

:34 I have not come to bring peace

Ff by narrative in which we see Jesus beginning to encounter the Jewish authorities

11:2 John the Baptist: the last prophet of Israel the new Elijah

20 various Jewish cities

Pharisees in the grainfields and then with deaimonic

v.46: one of the reference to Mary (read)

this is our promotion not her demotion

IV Third Teaching Narrative: what is the Kingdom of God

Mk wants to say the Kingdom is not like an earthly one, it is invisible

MT wants to say it is something that is growing

13:3 sowers sow seeds and they land in different

13:24 more planting metaphors about judgement and weeds

IV

13:31 Mustard seed

34 yeast in bread

44 hidden treasure

45 merchant in search of pearls

47 fish in the sea

Concludes with two stories of unbelief: Capernaum and Herod

Ff by narrative: the feeding of the 5000

*The most popular NT story one of the few events that appears in all 4 gospels

* the most problematic 15:21ff the crumbs under the table

Is Jesus learning?

Is He teasing

Is He teaching?

He is breaking through boundaries: Canaanites were terrible idolators, child sacrifice

V Fourth teaching narrative ch 16

The relationship between Israel and Christianity

Mt 16:16 Arguably one of the most debated verses

Petrine authority is clear, P speaks more than the rest combined, compare Isaiah 22:15 ff.

To wit: we cannot say it is not about authority & church

FURTHER: *later on it is used by Paul for congregations

However: but there is more at stake here than Peter and the Papacy: Did

Jesus come to earth to est a Church?

- *Jesus calls the new community not the “children of Israel” or anyone else; the new covenant, The kingdom, is not a tribal assembly or a democracy. It is an ECCLESIA (ecclesiasatical)

- *it is a sacred assembly: first ref in Athens in 5th century reforms of Solon the Lawgiver.

- *it consists of those “called out” (“eck kaleo”) for special purpose

- *it carries moral and religious authority over a number of people

- *it is of highest honor to be a part of it.

- *It has power:

15 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two

others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17 If they still

refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a

pagan or a tax collector. Matthew 18:15

V

Moral of story: we are not called to a new race, tribe or even a new religion: we are called into an ecclesia, an assembly which will include both Jews and gentiles, and in that sense the successor to Israel (caveat: the old is not abolished) This teaching on the ecclesia as the successor to Israel is confirmed by what follows: the Transfiguration, where the Law and the Prophets of Israel both point to Jesus.

Ff by narrative on the entry to Jerusalem

VI: The Fifth Discourse: on the Second Coming 22-24

Judgement is certain: 21:21 a man with two sons

21:33 the wicked tenants

22: the invitation to a wedding but they all bugger off for lack of commitment

Ch 23: the religious teachers of the day gonna get toasted

Ch 24 nation against nation and false messiahs

25:1 get the heck ready: wise and foolish maidens

25: 14 the talents: there are rewards and punishments, this must be prepared for

25:31 how did you treat the poor

The Passion: beginning in 26-27

The Resurrection: 28: Along with Luke our first account of it in full

But note: doubting is normal

28: 19: go to all nations/