

Read the Bible in a Year

Week 38 – February 20-26

Read on Your Own this Week:

Psalm 112-114

Mark 1-4

Readings in Class:

Isaiah 28-43

Introduction to Matthew

Matthew was written by the disciple Matthew (read the account of his calling in 9:9-13) most likely around 50 AD. His audience is most likely the Jews. A major emphasis in the book is that Jesus is the Messiah and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The Old Testament is quoted or paraphrased over 60 times in this Gospel. The focus of the Gospel is who Jesus is and what he has come to do. Other themes are the Kingdom of God and Jesus' authority.

A Brief Summary of Matthew

1. Genealogy, birth, Childhood (1:1-2:23)
2. Ministry of John the Baptist and Christ baptism and temptation. (3:1-4:25)
3. Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)
4. Healings of Christ (8:1-9:38)
5. Ministry Discourse (10:1-11:1)
6. Opposition and Division to Jesus (11:2-12:50)
7. Parable Discourse (13:1-52)
8. Jesus Christ's identity and Peter's Confession (13:52-16:20)
9. Transfiguration & Final Mission to Jerusalem (16:21-17:27)
10. Fourth Discourse Opposition & Final Healings (18:1-20:34)
11. Ministry in Jerusalem & Rejection of Christ (21:1-23:39)
12. Eschatological Discourse (24:1-25:46)
13. Passion of Christ (26:1-27:66)
14. Risen & Sending (28:1-20)

Fulfilling the Old Testament Story

A major emphasis in this Gospel is that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. This is why Matthew starts with the genealogy of Jesus. It traces the promise back to Abraham (all

nations will be blessed through him), to David (a son of David would sit on the throne forever), through all the kings of Judah. Besides the overt references to the Old Testament, there are some other more subtle points. For one, Jesus goes through the Old Testament stories: going to Egypt, temptation and wandering in the wilderness (40 days vs 40 years), miraculous feeding of many (bread and fish vs manna and quail). He is Israel reduced to one. He also gives five great discourses or teachings as a parallel to the first five books of the Bible that were written by Moses.

The Kingdom of God

What is the Kingdom of God? This is a major focus in Matthew. He first starts with the genealogy tracing Jesus' line through the Kings of Judah. Then we get the magi who are seeking the King of the Jews. Then there is John the Baptist's testimony that "the kingdom of heaven is near." After the stage is set, we get all of Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom. In the Sermon on the Mount we hear about what life in the kingdom. Later we hear parables about what the kingdom is like and during the Passion Week we are told about what the kingdom will look like on the last day.

To quote Luther's Small Catechism: "*How does God's kingdom come?* God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity." As baptized children of God, we are already part of God's Kingdom.

The Authority of Jesus

Another major emphasis in Matthew is the authority of Jesus. The people are amazed by how Jesus speaks because he speaks with authority. What do they mean? The teachers of the day would always teach by quoting other rabbis. Even the Old Testament prophets would say "Thus says the LORD." But Jesus comes along and says "you have heard it said....., but I say to you...." He teaches with authority. This is also a subtle way of Jesus saying he is God.

I don't want to be a Pharisee

One of the major antagonists in the Gospels are the Pharisees. Who are they? They were a sect of Judaism that emphasized following the Law of Moses and elevated oral tradition to be equal to or, in many cases, above the Scriptures. In Jesus' day they controlled the synagogues. They were very legalistic and failed to see that the purpose of the Law was to point to Jesus. They thought they were good with God because of their work.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, rejected oral tradition, but they also rejected the resurrection of the dead. They were in charge of the temple and were in the pockets of the Romans. Their issue with Jesus was that they feared he would upset the Romans.