

# Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

## Lecture 7: The Gospel of Matthew

### Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rlst-152/lecture-7>

#### Overview

The Gospel of Matthew contains some of the most famous passages that both Christians and non-Christians are familiar with. However, Matthew also presents itself paradoxically as preaching a Torah observant Christianity and a Christian mission that seeks to reach gentiles. The figure of Jesus in Matthew is that of a teacher, the founder of the Church, and the model for the apostles and Matthew's own community. Matthew seems to be writing for a church community that needs encouragement to have faith in a time of trouble.

#### 1. *Matthew: The Most Famous Gospel*

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* The Gospel of Matthew, from the second century on, has been pretty much the most popular famous of the Gospels, that's probably why it's first in our Bible, simply because it was the most populous. It's certainly the Gospel that's most familiar to people nowadays and pretty much throughout history, if people were familiar with the text at all. Both for Christians and non-Christian often, so for example, you have the familiar birth story. Joseph has a dream, he's warned, the star appears in the east, the Magi, the wise men, come and they go to Herod first. This is Herod the Great, so they go to Herod the Great's palace in Jerusalem and they say, where do we find this new king that's been born because we want to go and worship him and bring him gifts. Herod gets all worried because he doesn't want to [lose] his own throne. Remember this story? He tells the wise men, well I think you have to go Bethlehem—his wise men, his own wise men, they looked it up in the scriptures, and they say go to Bethlehem. But he says, come back and tell me once you visit him because I want to go worship him too, and the wicked evil king does not want to go worship Jesus, the baby Jesus, he wants to kill the baby Jesus. The wise men are warned in a dream not to go back. You know the story, right? The whole thing about that, the Egyptian sojourn, the holy family goes to Egypt to escape the wicked king. The slaughter of the innocents.

[2] The beatitudes: “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted, blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.” All these blessed, there are some in Luke, but if you start saying them and somebody starts picking it up after you, and repeats it and they—it shows at least they know it enough so they can kind of finish one every now and then. They almost always finish it in the Matthew form, not the Luke form. The beatitudes are slightly different in Matthew and Luke, and people are—they're famous in their Matthean form. Turn the other cheek, that's also in Luke 6:29, but most people know it from Matthew 5:39.

[3] In Matthew, the Pharisees are called, over and over again, hypocrites, and in fact if you look up the word “Pharisee” in a dictionary, an English dictionary, “hypocrite” will be one of the definitions you'll find for it. Now this is all part of a long tradition of Christian anti-Semitism because of course the word Pharisee doesn't mean “hypocrite” to most Jews, but who traced back Rabbinic Judaism to the pre-seventy Pharisees themselves, Gamaliel in the Book of Acts is considered a Pharisee, and he's a famous rabbi in rabbinic materials. Jews don't think of the word Pharisee as being a bad term, but in a lot of English, and a lot of languages it is because Christians used it. They took it straight out of Matthew, where the Pharisees are called hypocrites over and over

again, and they just take that into their own language.

[4] Then you have the great commission that ends the Gospel of Matthew, that people might recognize, Matthew 28:18: Jesus meets the disciples in Galilee after his resurrection, and he says,

[5] “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you and remember I am with you always to the end of the ages.”

[6] That’s a very famous verse that’s called “the Great Commission” because this is Jesus telling his disciples after his resurrection, go out and proclaim the Gospel throughout the earth, not just to the Jews.

[7] All these things make Matthew look very familiar even to people who may not know much about Christianity because this is stuff that you see in our culture over again. Matthew, therefore, is at the same time unfamiliar to people if they start reading it carefully because it’s the most Jewish of the Christian Gospels that are in the canon, that is. There are some other Gospels from the ancient period that are even more Jewish than Matthew, but they didn’t make it into the New Testament. It’s the most Jewish, and yet it’s also at the same time, one of the most universal of the Gospels because you precisely have an ending with Jesus commanding the apostles to make disciples of all nations, that is all the Gentiles too. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus limits his ministry during his lifetime pretty much to Israel, he’s going to Jews. He makes a point of this in the Gospel of Matthew. After his resurrection then the message is supposed to go out.

[8] Look also at the way that Matthew begins. I talked about this the very first lecture of class. Matthew begins with, “The book of the genesis of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.” Notice he calls him son of David, as a descendant of the great king of Israel, son of Abraham as the father of the Jews. Even the Greek word there, “the book of the genesis;” “the genesis” means “the beginning”, and of course it’s the Greek term that was given for

the first book of the Hebrew Bible when they translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, genesis just means “the beginning.” Of course in the Hebrew Bible it’s the beginning of the world, the beginning of earth, the beginning of history. Matthew appropriates that term, and he begins his own text with that same word, probably meaning for his readers to recall the book of Genesis in a way.

[9] Then you have what we call an Haggadah on Moses. The term Haggadah is used in rabbinic scholarship. Rabbinic work often divides up a lot of rabbinic materials into Halakah and Haggadah. Halakah refers to the teachings that are about how you should live. Haggadah, though, are stories that are about the patriarchs or great figures, and they’re meant to make a moral lesson or something like that, but they don’t give straightforward teachings. They tell stories and that’s how Matthew starts out. All that stuff about the evil king wanting to kill the baby Jesus because he’s afraid that it’ll be a threat to him. Think of—who does that remind you of? Who does that sound like? The child that comes out of Egypt, who does that sound like? These are all meant to remind you of Moses and so Moses—Jesus is portrayed over and over again like Moses or like Joseph, also from the Hebrew Bible.

[10] Then again you have the fulfillment-of-scripture motif. Now notice that in spite of the fact though that Matthew has throughout Christianity been interpreted as actually a rejection of the Law, the Jewish law, or it presents Jesus as a new Moses, but Christians they’ll often taken that to say that Jesus is not only the new Moses who can—fulfills Moses, He displaces the old Moses. So Matthew’s may have been put first in the canon because it was read by Christians as being sort of almost like the new Law, the new Torah. And so you have Jesus talking about the Law, the Jewish law Torah, and also getting new commandments. Christians have taken that to mean the displacement of the Jewish Torah with now a new Christian Torah, and that actually puts Matthew in a very odd position.

[11] Of the different Gospels in our canon it’s the most Jewish looking and sounding, and I’ll emphasize later in the lecture today, but Matthew has also been the source of some of the worst Christian anti-Semitism. Precisely by portraying Jesus as rejecting the Law of

Moses, in much of Christian interpretation, and substituting his own law that's Christian anti-Semitism. Notice it's from—as I said it's from Matthew that you get the idea that Pharisees are all hypocrites, and then that gets transferred to being that all Jews are hypocrites. You get the idea in Christianity traditionally that Jesus rejected the Law because that's legalism. The Jews are all legalistic and we Christians are all full of grace and truth. So this idea that the Old Testament represents a God of anger, and a God of strictness, and a God of judgment, and the New Testament represents a God who's a father, and loving, and full of grace. This dualism that's so much a part of European history, even common sense, even people who are not religious will often come up with this caricature that the Old Testament God is the God of anger and judgment, the New Testament God is a the God of grace and forgiveness. Well that's just not true. If you read either testament with any care at all. The Gospel of Matthew has been one of the texts that's been used in this way. Remember it's in the Gospel of Matthew that you get the most anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic line that's been used throughout Western history, when the Jew—when Pilate wants to release Jesus from being crucified the people, the Jews say, “His blood be upon us and our children.” That became the Christian charge of deicide; the Jews were then accused of killing God, and especially in medieval Europe. So Matthew is in this very peculiar place when it comes to the history of the interpretation of the New Testament. It is at the same time the most Jewish of our canonical Gospels, in many ways, and yet it's been used in Christian anti-Semitism more than any other Gospel, possibly maybe with the Gospel of John being a rival for that.

[12] Look at the structure of Matthew though. Some people have even suggested that Matthew is intentionally structuring his Gospel to make it look like the Torah, the Jewish law. There are five speeches by Jesus in Matthew. These same sayings—you learned about the synoptic problem last week. If you take a synoptic problem kind of analysis of a lot this stuff that are in some of these speeches in Matthew, a lot of these sayings might have occurred in another context in Luke or in Mark. Matthew seems to have taken tradition—

materials that were traditional to him, that he found either in written sources or in oral sources, and he combines them into five separate speeches. Some people say maybe he meant to reflect the five books of Torah; the Pentateuch is the Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Pentateuch is just the Greek word meaning “the five,” so the first five books of Jewish scripture are called the Pentateuch and maybe Matthew is imitating that and making five separate speeches for Jesus and his Gospel.

[13] First, chapters 5-7 you have Jesus giving—with the famous Sermon on the Mount. Then chapter 10, you have him giving a speech to his disciples about the mission to Israel, so all of chapter 10 is here's how you're supposed to do your mission when you go out to preach to Israel. You'll be persecuted; this will happen, do this, do that. Chapter 13 in Matthew is all parables. The parables that you'd find in different places in Mark or Luke, Matthew kind of groups them into one chapter and has Jesus kind of give it as one sort of speech. He likes neatness like this. If you look at chapter 18, it's another speech by Jesus, again to His disciples, and this one is mainly about church rules. Jesus talks about when you're neighbor does something that you don't like, go to the neighbor first, try to settle it peaceably, if your neighbor won't receive you or won't settle, take it to the church and let the church handle it. That sort of thing. Jesus is giving instructions about how the church should behave itself and what the church will be like.

[14] Then in chapters 23-25, you get a very long speech by Jesus which includes a big synoptic sermon. Remember last time I talked about Mark 13 and about Jesus' prophecies of all this happening when the end of time would come, and the Messiah would swoop down in the clouds. Matthew takes over that speech from Mark, where he finds it, he adds a lot of materials on his own, he also brings it up to date, because remember I talked about last time, Mark didn't explicitly tell us about the destruction of Jerusalem in his Gospel. You'll find that when we get to Matthew and Luke, they put more stuff in there that shows they were writing after the time of Mark, and using Mark as a source. That's all in that chapter, but then there's all these long woes to the scribes and Pharisees. Woe to the blah, blah, blah; woe to you who do this, there's a whole section of

that speech. So five different speeches that some scholars have even suggested may be designed to imitate the five books of the Pentateuch.

## 2. *Jesus and the Torah in Matthew*

- [15] As I said, the ending of Matthew is universalizing. It takes this Israelite vision that you've seen all the way through the book and then universalizes it to the whole world. It's a universalism to all that's firmly anchored in Judaism and the Torah. What does the Torah, the Law, mean in Matthew? Look at 5:17; I hope you did bring your Bibles. Remember, we're all bringing our Bibles to class all the time because you have to check me out. Most Christians are taught, and most people just under the influence of Christianity have the idea that what Christianity is, is the supersession of Judaism. The thing that makes Jews and Christians alike, they both worship the same God. One of the things that make them different is not only the worship by Christians of Jesus, but also the neglect by Christians of the Jewish law. Christians can eat shellfish, bacon, and pork; don't have to keep the Sabbath. Is that the view of the Law we find in Matthew? 5:17:
- [16] Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.
- [17] Now in a lot of Christian doctrine what you're taught is that Jesus did fulfill the law in his own person. But that's not what he says here. Notice, "Until heaven and earth pass away," that's what he's talking about the fulfillment of it.
- [18] Therefore whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them, will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
- [19] Jesus is not saying, okay I've come, now you don't have to keep the Jewish law. He's

actually teaching his own disciples—remember if Matthew didn't want this as a message to the members of his church he wouldn't have put it in his Gospel.

- [20] One of the things that I'm trying to teach you in my lectures is: what does it mean to do an exegesis of this text? Because you're going to have to write exegesis of your own and this Friday your section leads will walk you through how to write an exegesis paper. There are a couple things that are not exegesis. It's not exegesis to try to figure out what actually happened. Did Jesus actually say this? Did Jesus actually believe that? That's part of the historical Jesus quest which we'll talk about later in the semester too, but exegesis doesn't do that. Exegesis doesn't assume you're trying to read the text to get behind the text for something that happened in history. Nor does exegesis try to figure out is this true or not. We don't care if it's true or not in an exegesis class. What we want to do is what did the writer—what was the writer trying to do with this text? You have to imagine yourself in an ancient context. What would he have been saying to members of his own Christian community in the first century?
- [21] This obviously means that we read this text as not Jesus necessarily teaching this. We don't know yet whether Jesus actually taught this. Matthew could have gotten it from some written source, from some oral source, or he could have just made it up. We'll talk about that problem later when we talk about the historical Jesus. Right now we're not going to concern ourselves, we're just going to say, Matthew could have written this but we're trying to figure out what did Matthew want to do with it. What was this testament to them? Obviously it means this writer believes that the proper Gospel and the proper church should be a Law abiding church. He's expecting people in his church not to do away with the Jewish law. Look at "the antitheses," we call these, the Matthean antithesis, 5:21: "You have heard that it was said to those in ancient times you shall not murder, and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. But I tell you that the time of the law is over and it's okay to murder." That's not what it says, right? What does it say? Just shout it out. What?
- [22] *Students:* [Inaudible]

- [23] *Professor Dale Martin:* Don't even be angry. "If you are angry with a brother or a sister you will be liable to judgment, and if you insult a brother or sister you'll be liable to the counsel. If you say, 'You fool,' you'll be liable to hell of fire." A lot of us are in trouble, a lot of us are in trouble. He's not saying I'm not—I'm getting rid of the law, murder's okay now. Keep going 5:27: "You have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery, but I say that's okay, adultery is just fine." No! He says, "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Wait, what? Well I'm gay so I'm okay about that, but a lot of guys are in a lot of trouble. He's basically saying not only is adultery not okay, even desiring her if she belongs to another man is not okay. That's not getting rid of the law.
- [24] Look at 5:38:
- [25] "You have heard that it was said an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say do not resist an evil doer. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek turn the other also, if anyone wants to sue you take your coat, give your cloak as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile go the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow anything from you."
- [26] These antitheses have been read throughout Christian history by many people as implying that Jesus is doing away with this bad, strict, legalism of the Jewish law, and he's teaching you a law of grace, instead, and forgiveness. That's not what's going on here, right? What Jesus has said, he's not doing away with the Law here, he's intensifying it. If it's hard not to commit adultery, and believe me for a lot of people it is hard not to commit adultery, it's even harder not to lust. If it's hard not to murder someone, and if you knew some of the people I have to work with around here you'd know that it is hard not to murder someone, it's even harder not to be angry with them. And if it's hard not to retaliate when someone knocks you down, it's even harder to let them knock you down again. Jesus is intensifying the Jewish Torah and making it almost impossible to keep. But he's still expecting His disciples to keep it. What Matthew presents Jesus is doing is not getting rid, at all, of the Torah, the Jewish law, he's intensifying it.
- [27] There are a couple of places where it sounds like Jesus is going again. You have a hand washing incident, let's look at that, that's in chapter 15:17—well I think I have to start reading a bit earlier. Where is it? Yeah, the very first part of the chapter:
- [28] The Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat." He answered them, but why do you break the commandment ...?
- [29] And He goes onto this sort of thing and He basically says that they're not keeping the law perfectly themselves, that they should keep it better. Verse 10,
- [30] He called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand. It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles the person.
- [31] Now in Mark's version of this story, right around here, Mark adds a little sentence. Remember when I talked about Mark, he gives you little clues that you're really supposed to pay attention. Here Mark gives a little parenthetical comment he says, "By saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean." In other words, Mark does a good little Gentile Christianity move. He takes this saying of Jesus and he says, Jesus was declaring all foods clean so we don't have to keep kosher.
- [32] Matthew doesn't do that, he saw that sentence in Mark, but you read this whole chapter, that sentence which Matthew knew was in Mark is not in Matthew. Matthew took that out. Why? Because he didn't want Jesus to declare all foods clean; because in his Gospel Jesus teaches that Christians have to continue keeping the Law. Matthew has Jesus disagree with the scribes and Pharisees, but what he says here is that it's much more important—sure, keeping kosher may be important but it's much more important what's going on in your heart and your mind, it's much more important what you say. So Jesus spiritualizes in a way or he—again he intensifies the law and he's saying, yeah it's important to wash your hands perhaps but that's not a big deal. It's important to pay attention to the kosher but that's not a big deal. He makes it a moral lesson. That's not anti-Jewish, that's not at all—you have all

kinds of Hebrew prophets in the Old Testament doing that kind of stuff all over the place saying things like, God doesn't want just your sacrifice he wants your heart. This is the way Jesus is presented in Matthew as—just like a Jewish prophet, an Israelite prophet who is intensifying the law, giving it a moral teaching, but he never teaches anything about giving it up.

### 3. *The Foundations of the Church in Matthew*

[33] Jesus, though, also besides being the one who teaches about Torah, and He's being presented as Moses, and Matthew presents Jesus more than any other Gospels as the founder of the church. In fact, if you look for the word "church" in some of the Gospels it's very hard to find it because it's anachronistic. Jesus didn't go around in his own life talking about the church, the church developed after His death; Matthew retrojects the conversation about the church, and even the foundation of the church, and sort of laws about the church into the mouth of Jesus.

[34] Look at 16:17, and this is one we already read very carefully in Mark, the same story. Remember in Mark, Jesus says to the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Peter says, "Some of them say the Elijah, or some of them say one of the prophets, or John the Baptist." Jesus said, "But who do you say that I am?" and Peter says, "You're the Messiah." Jesus tells him, "Be quiet," and then Jesus rebukes him when Peter tells him that he's not supposed to be crucified. Matthew takes that story again from Mark, but notice how Matthew changes it. Verse 13, "When Jesus came from the district of Caesarea of Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" You get the story again. When Simon Peter says, "You're the Messiah, the Son of the Living God," look what Jesus says in verse 17, now in Matthew's version. Remember in Mark's version Jesus said, okay don't tell anybody.

[35] Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever

you loose on earth on will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

[36] Between the command to silence, which came right after the confession in Mark, Matthew puts all this foundation-of-the church stuff. Now this is a very famous text that has caused all kinds of disagreement between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Roman Catholics take this text as teaching that Jesus, particularly selected Peter as the first Pope, and that when he says, I'm giving you the keys to the kingdom, it means the Pope or the Bishop of Rome is the one who has the right to bind or loose that Jesus is talking about here. Protestants rejected that interpretation and they said well no he's talking—sure he's talking to Peter in one sense but he was really talking to all the apostles, and in fact, the issue of binding and loosing is not—is given to the apostles not just to Peter. So there's a debate among—between Protestants and Roman Catholics traditionally over this passage. I think the debate kind of misses the point because I think Matthew's point is basically just to have Jesus be the one who founds the church and puts it into the hands of his disciples.

[37] That's definitely one of the things that Jesus does. And then in Chapter 18, as I've already pointed out, you have a whole chapter where Jesus gives rules to the disciples for how the church should be run, how it should be organized. The church is also this mixed group. Over and over again, Matthew—you'll have—you'll see a phrase that's only in Matthew where Jesus talks about "little ones." He also talks about people of little faith. Matthew also has a parable about a man goes out and throws a field with seed. And during the night his enemy comes and sows brambles and weeds seeds in and when it all comes up the wheat comes up but it's all mixed in with brambles and thorns, and weeds. And so the servants—the slaves of the man come to the master and they say, What should we do? Should we try to weed out all the weed stuff so we can gather the wheat? Should we try to trim it all out now? Matthew says, no don't worry about it now because if you try to pull up all the thorns and the brambles, you're bound to pull up some of the wheat too, we'll just wait until the end, until it's all ready, and then we'll harvest the whole thing and then we'll separate

it out and the wheat we will keep in storehouses, and the brambles and thorns will burn in hell! You're getting the last little hellfire and brimstone sermon at the end.

without presenting Jesus teaching a lot. Matthew not only tells you Jesus is a good teacher, he presents a lot of teaching of Jesus, and so you get a lot of that.

[38] The main part of the parable is that Matthew is saying is that the world, and possibly even the church, is a mixed bag. In other words, not everybody you see around you is truly who you think they are. There's good and there's evil mixed together but the—you're just going to have live with that. The church is an organization that has both people of little faith and people of greater faith. It has maybe even weeds and wheat in it, so these are all concerns of what kind of—there's a whole group of parables in chapter 13 that we call the "mixed group" parables of Matthew. They're particular to Matthew because Matthew seems to be making the point with these mixed group parables that the church itself is sort of a mixed group.

[41] Then you get this interesting passage in 13:51. Turn in your hymnals to 13:51 "Have you understood all this?" This is towards the end of this big long parable chapter. Remember I told you that chapter 13 in Matthew is where Matthew puts a ton of parables. So toward the end of this parable chapter Jesus asked them,

[42] "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." When Jesus had finished these parables he left that place.

[39] Another important theme of Matthew—I'm giving you several different major themes in Matthew because I'm going to ask in a moment, why are these things here? What is Matthew trying to do with these different things altogether? For example, why is Jesus the law giver and still Jewish and teaches the acceptance of the Jewish law, and yet this universalistic message at the end of the Gospel of going to all nations. Another thing that exegesis is, is finding problems in the text and then using the text itself to try to find answers to those problems. That's what exegesis does. Why I'm setting up some of themes of Matthew, because these are going to be the problems that then I, as the wonderful scholar and exegete that I am, am going to swoop in with my angels on the clouds of heaven at the end of the lecture and give you answers to all the problems of Matthew, and then you'll do that with your exegesis papers later.

[43] This is a parable that Matthew is putting in there, I think, to give a hint to his readers. This is what Jesus was, Jesus was a good scribe. That's why Jesus talks about things like, you have heard it said, but I say to you. Jesus is taking out of the Jewish scripture and taking out of the Jewish law the most important parts of it and emphasizing those, and then adding some of his own teachings. He's taking some of the old and some of the new, and that's what a good scribe is like. But Matthew also believes that he and his fellow disciples in his church should be that way too. He writes his Gospel to help people figure out how to imitate Jesus in being a good scribe. How do discern what of the old you should use and what of the new you should use.

[44] One of the last problems that I want to give is this really big problem in Matthew because Jesus is also something—well just right on the surface Jesus comes across as a big like a coward in the Gospel of Matthew. Look at 4:12 in Matthew, in the first part of this chapter 4 you get Jesus going around preaching the gospel, doing some miracles and that sort of thing. He becomes very famous so that people hear about Him. But then you get to 12, "Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he got on his white charger and He rode to the prison and he sprang his friend John the Baptist out of prison." Indiana Jesus, no that's not what it says, right? "He withdrew to Galilee," the word "withdraw" here is the Greek word for "retreat." He retreated to

#### 4. *Jesus as a Model for the Disciples*

[40] One of the things that Jesus is, also in Matthew, is a teacher. Mark had told us in his Gospel that Jesus was a great teacher, and people said, Wow, he's a great teacher, He teaches not like the scribes and the Pharisees. He teaches as one with authority. Mark didn't really tell us much of what Jesus taught. There are a few parables, a few controversies, but Mark tells you that Jesus is a great teacher

Galilee because he had heard that John had gotten arrested. “He left Nazareth, make His home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken to the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled,” and then he quotes that—verse 17 “From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” In other words, Jesus retreats in the face of danger, he doesn’t go toward it, but instead of retreating and hiding, he goes to another place and then he starts giving the message out. This is when He really starts his own preaching ministry, after John the Baptist is arrested.

[45] Notice what happens there, look again at—now look at 12:15, Matthew 12:15. Reading just a little bit above that, Jesus is disputing with the Pharisees and verse 14 says, “But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him how to destroy him,” another threat this time from the Pharisees against Jesus. Verse 15, “When Jesus became aware of this he departed,” again he withdrew, there’s that word again, “Many crowds followed Him and He cured all them, and He ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfill....” Notice again Jesus withdraws in the face of danger but the withdrawing in a sense increases the ministry in an odd paradoxical way. Then look at 14:13—well I won’t read that one, 14:13 if you can look it up, that’s another case of danger and Jesus withdrawing.

[46] Let’s do spend a little more time looking at chapter 12 because, have you noticed that the Gospel of Matthew likes to foreshadow things and fulfill things? The Gospel of Matthew likes to have Jesus do something, and then he’ll tell you something that was not in Mark. He’ll say, This was to fulfill the scripture that said—for example when Jesus and the holy family run off to Egypt he then quotes to the fact when they come back he says, “Out of Egypt I will call my Son,” the prophecy. Matthew takes an Old Testament reference, a Jewish scripture reference, because remember it’s not the Old Testament yet, it’s just Jewish scripture, and he takes a quotation in that and saying it’s fulfilled by Jesus. In the same way in Matthew 2:13-14 “After they had left,” this is after the wise men left, “An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said get up, take the child and His mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you, for

Herod is about.” They flee, there’s that word again, withdraw—even Joseph with Jesus retreats in the face of danger to Galilee. Then when he hears they come back in verse 22 of the same chapter.

[47] Now why is all this—Jesus retreating? The other thing is if you look at 10:23, we again get this same word. When you’re doing an exegesis you might want to use a concordance. You’ll learn on Thursday or Friday in your sections what a concordance is, and you’ll learn how to use it. Basically a concordance is a book that takes all the words of the Bible and shows you where they occur. If you looked up “withdraw” in an English concordance it would tell you every time in a certain English translation that the word “withdraw” occurred in Matthew, or Mark, or Luke; you can test them out. You’ll also learn how to use an analytical concordance, even if you don’t know Greek, which will kind of give you an idea, once you learn how to use it, what’s the Greek word lying behind these English words. If you did that you could find out that these different English words that I’ve been reading from translate the same Greek word “withdraw” *anakoresis*. This word is here too, and in 10:23 you have Jesus and his instructions to the disciples telling them that they also should retreat in the face of danger.

[48] What is all this going on? How do we take these different issues? Jesus is almost a new Moses, Jesus is teaching the disciples should keep the Torah, the Law, but then Jesus when he faces troubles he withdraws from trouble, and he goes off someplace. But when he withdraws he ends up preaching more. And the Gospel then is expanding, and then the disciples, Matthew believed, will be the next version of Jesus. They also will be threatened. They also will be taught to retreat. They also will then go preach, and they’ll eventually go preach to the entire world in the form of the Gentiles. All of this is Jesus functions as a model for the disciples, the apostles, and the apostles function as a model for Matthew and the members of his own church. What is all this doing here and why is it—what’s the context in which this kind of picture of Jesus would make sense?

## 5. *The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew*



- [49] We're going to spend a bit more time on one important passage, Matthew 14:22. This is the famous story called "The Stilling of the Storm." Now you will have—if you remember this you could look at Mark 6:45 and it has the same story. If you took your parallel columns, one from Mark and one from Matthew, and you did your little colored pencil exercises you did last week for your section, it's very interesting to see what does Matthew add to Mark's story? If you figure out what Matthew added to Mark's story you can really get an idea about what was Matthew's own editorial interests. Why did he take something out of Mark, tell it differently, add new stuff to it? That gives you a great clue for what Matthew wanted to say. Remember each of these writers is not just telling you stuff that happened because it happened, they each are writing a book intending to put across a theological message.
- [50] If you compare what Matthew says to what he gets from Mark, and see what he adds and what he takes out, you have a really good idea of what his editorial message is, what his editorial concerns are, and we call this Redaction Criticism. Redaction is just a fancy word for editing. Why did scholars not call it "editing criticism"? Because we like two-bit words when one-bit words would work just as well. So it's Redaction Criticism is what you'll see in the scholarship. It just means paying attention to how the Gospel writers edited their sources to get out their own message. So look at 14:22, and if you want to you can flip over to Mark 6:45 and see the change, or if you have Throckmorton you can look it up in Throckmorton sometime. I'll indicate some of it.
- [51] Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat [this is after one of the feedings of a bunch of people] and go ahead to the other side while he dismissed the crowds. After he had dismissed the crowds he went up to the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came he was there alone, but by this time the boat battered by the waves was far from the land for the wind was against them.
- [52] Notice for the wind was against them, the boat is battered, the wind is against them. Some of these details won't be in Mark, the basic story will be there, but this thing about the boat being battered by the wind, the wind is against them, I don't think that's in Mark if I remember right.
- [53] And early in the morning he came walking toward them out on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. Immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; Do not be afraid.
- [54] In Mark, Jesus then gets in the boat, stills the storm, and Mark ends it with his own clue that they didn't understand, they still didn't understand, so that's part of Mark's theme about the misunderstanding. That's not the way Matthew ends it here. Notice what he says:
- [55] Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord save me!"
- [56] "Lord save me!" Now the Greek word for "save me" can mean just "rescue me"—save me from illness, but it also can mean "save me" like I need salvation. The same Greek word means both.
- [57] Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith [that's a Matthean clue, see Matthew likes this little faith theme so that's one of the things you see he's added here] Why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."
- [58] Now if you compare this what you've got is some important different changes. First, for example, I said the boat is beaten by the waves, that's not in Mark. Why did Matthew add that? Then you have this whole verses 28-31, the whole thing with Peter and all that sort of thing, that's not in Mark. Matthew added that whole little chunk. And then in verse 33 in says, "They worshipped him," and they have this confession, "Truly You are the Son of God," which is a Christian confession.
- [59] A famous German scholar, Günther Bornkamm, whom you don't need remember, and one of his students wrote a very famous

article published in the 1950s in which they analyzed this story. And they said, if you read this carefully this story's not about Jesus walking on the water and stilling the storm and that sort of thing, this is a story Matthew intends for you to see the boat—it's almost—it's like an allegory, it's almost like an allegory. The boat represents the church, and Matthew sees the church as being persecuted, we've seen that theme throughout Matthew. Jesus prophesied the disciples would be persecuted. So the boat is persecuted and that's represented by the storm, and the winds, and the waves buffeting them, and they're afraid. Peter, who represents every Christian says, I want to be like you Jesus and I want walk on water. I want to overcome all these problems. He gets out of the boat, but he doesn't have enough faith, he has a little faith, and his doubt causes him to start sinking. When he does that, what should he do? He should cry out to Jesus and Jesus will save him. Then Jesus gets in the boat, calms the storm, and they worship him and confess him.

focusing on Jesus and worshipping him as the Son of God as they should.

[60] Bornkamm used this Redaction Criticism, he was one of the first pioneers of using this method and calling it by this term to say, compare Matthew with what he gets from Mark and what you do is you see that—what was just a miracle story, just a basic story about the power of Jesus, has now become a moral story about the church. And it's now become something that Matthew is writing to encourage his own church. They are small, lonely, people of little faith, they're a mixed group, remember, some people in the church seemed to have a lot more faith than other people in the church. Some people in the church may not even be true disciples after all. They're not yet perfect.

[61] Matthew has a saying that is different from Luke; they seem to both get it from Q. Luke's version says, "You should be merciful as Your Father in Heaven is merciful." Does anybody happen to know what that comes out in Matthew, it's in the Sermon on the Mount? "You should be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect." Matthew has perfect and Luke has merciful. Again, we see little bitty clues of how they write this. But that's Matthew telling his church I know you're not perfect now, but God—Jesus calls you to perfection. They need more faith and according to Matthew's story they do it by

[62] What I've done is walk through several different passages in Matthew. An exegesis wouldn't ask you to do all of those things together. You could write an exegesis paper on just one section of any of those things that I talked about. Notice what I've had to do. I've had to compare Matthew with Mark and Luke, I've tried to figure out why did Matthew include what he included, and why did he leave out stuff, why did he change things from Mark? I've also said he probably used Q, this hypothetical document because we find that by comparing Luke and Matthew. And I might guess at how—whether Matthew has the more original version of Q or whether Luke does, and I might try to imagine what was in Q and how Matthew may have changed that—edited that. That's all of course pure speculation because we don't have Q as a physical document to actually compare it with like we've got Mark as a physical document, but scholars still do that. But the purpose is to—all the way through to figure out what did this author want to do? It's not concerned with whether he's telling us the correct history; we'll leave that for another day. It's not to say whether it's true or not.

[63] Notice this: it's also not to come up with sappy Sunday school kinds of readings. This is the hardest thing for people to learn, and, notice, it doesn't matter whether people have grown up in churches or not. Modern people have just come to think that when you read this book you're supposed to get Sunday school type sappy answers out of it. What is the meaning of this story? Well Jesus is teaching us to love one another. Well, okay yeah maybe so, but dig deeper. Try to figure out—try to imagine a historical context in which a human author is writing the story this way in order to do something socially in his own early community. We imagine an early Christian community, and we imagine what problems they had, by reading the text, and then we see the text as being written consciously by an author to address those problems. With Matthew what you get is this: Matthew teaches that a Torah observant form of discipleship to Jesus.

[64] Now this will be very important because one of the themes of this whole course is that the

diversity of different early Christianities. It's anachronistic in the first century to even talk about "Christianity" as one thing, because as we'll show, there were different views of Jesus, there were different views of the Jewish law. And what you'll see very quickly in this course is Matthew has one—has a very different view of what Christians should do with the Jewish law than does Paul, or Luke, or Mark, or John, or several of the other writers. One of the things that makes Matthew present a peculiar kind of Christianity when judged by the standards of Paul's kind of Christianity is that Matthew teaches Jesus as teaching a Christianity that observes Jewish Torah. Even if Gentiles come in, which the Gentiles do come in, Gentiles must be expected to keep the law also. Whereas Paul spent his whole career trying to get Gentiles to understand, no you don't, you're not supposed to keep the Jewish law if you're a Gentile, Jesus absolves you from keeping the Jewish law, Matthew's not that way. He sees Gentiles coming into the church but still being Torah observant. He has a Torah observant form of Christianity, with Jesus as the recognized Messiah. Gentiles are included in Israel, they're not included as a separate church, Gentiles are brought into Israel, it looks like for Matthew, and Matthew presents a church that is in conflict with other forms of Judaism.

[65] I think Matthew was written after the year 70, certainly after the destruction of temple in Jerusalem, that seems pretty clear. Most of the scholars date it to somewhere in the 80s, maybe not earlier than the year 80, maybe not later than the year 90, we're guessing on this, but it seems to be—it has to be after 70, but he's in conflict with whoever is—there are still Pharisees around, there are still scribes, there are other who are offering a slightly different

version of what it means to be Jewish, and that's the last thing that I'll say about this, is that Matthew is not presenting a new religion. He thinks what we would call Christianity is simply the right way to be a Jew. What Matthew is presenting is a different sect within Judaism from the form of Judaism that's represented by the Pharisees or the Sadducees perhaps. A lot of people think that the Sadducees may have become extinct after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem because the Sadducees were very—they're power base was the temple, but if the Sadducees are still around Matthew is presenting a different form of Judaism than they followed. He's presenting a different form of Judaism represented by the Jewish writer Josephus, or Philo, but he is presenting a form of Judaism. In fact, scholars nowadays say, Matthew does not represent a new religion with his Gospel; he actually represents a different Jewish sect. Any questions? Yes sir?

[66] *Student:* Does Matthew believe Gentiles should be circumcised?

[67] *Professor Dale Martin:* Does Matthew believe that Gentiles should be circumcised? I think so because I can't imagine him teaching a completely law observant—when he says not one dot or tiddle, or jot of the law will pass away until heaven and earth passes away. Well, any Jew at the time pretty much would have thought that circumcision was a very important part of Jewish law not just a dot or a tiddle. So I think so, you'll find lots of scholars who disagree with me, but of course they're all wrong. Any other questions? Okay, see you on Wednesday.

[68] [end of transcript]