

Sent: Wednesday, May 13, 2020 6:12 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's Final MOB Study on Matthew

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons!" (Galatians 4:4-5)

The time had come!

Matthew, a disciple of Jesus, begins his gospel account with the "record of the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham"! He was a Jew, writing to the Jews, about their long-awaited Messiah--and they could relate to his writing! The Greek phrase translated "record (or "book") of the genealogy" is the exact same phrase as used in Genesis 5, concerning the lineage of Adam! "Son of David" was the most common messianic title in usage in Jesus day, while "son of Abraham" takes His royal lineage all the way back to the nation's inception, and the "Abrahamic Covenant"! It was through the line of Abraham that "all the families of the earth would be blessed"!

And so, although unstated, Matthew's purpose was clearly to demonstrate that Jesus had all the "credentials" and that His life and ministry supported the conclusion that He was not only the promised Messiah and "King" of the Jews--but the very "Son of God"!

Matthew "bridges the gap" between the Old and New Testaments! It leads us out of the "old" and into the "new"! The great theologian Matthew Henry (another Matthew!) once wrote that "while the Old Testament begins with the book of the origins and generations of the world, the beauty of the New Testament is that it begins with the One who made the world"! Someone else noted correctly that while the Old Testament begins with man made in God's image, the New Testament begins with God made in man's image! Dr. Constable says that the Gospels, beginning with Matthew, represent the most important part of the Holy Scriptures because "all that preceded them led to them, while all that follows them emerges from them"! Shepherd's Notes states that the book of Matthew "has likely influenced more people than any other book of the Bible (owing perhaps to its place as the first book of the New Testament)!"

So why would Jesus call a man like Matthew, a tax-collector, to be one of His disciples--and the one chosen to write (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) the first book of the New Testament? Interestingly, Matthew doesn't write about himself until well into his book--in Matthew 9--and when he does, he "downplays" his role and response to his calling, compared to that recorded of him by his contemporaries, Mark and Luke! Matthew simply reports "the facts"--that when Jesus saw him sitting in the tax collector's booth, He called him to "follow Him," and he (Matthew) "got up and followed Him"! And "then it happened" that Jesus came to "dine" with him and his tax collector friends--much to the chagrin of the Pharisees! Luke, on the other hand, calls him "Levi" (his name before his conversion) and reports not only that he left everything behind and "began to follow Jesus" but that he threw "a big reception for Him (Jesus) in his house and that "there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people" joining him for the celebration! And when the Pharisees "grumbled" about it, Jesus answered that He "had not

come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance"! Clarifying His purpose for coming into the world--and suggesting why He would call into His service a man like Matthew (and us!)

How about Matthew's account of the birth of Christ! Quoting from the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name, Immanuel, which translated means, "God with us"! David Platt, pastor of McLain Bible, calls it "the most extraordinary miracle in the whole Bible, and the most remarkable "mystery" in the whole universe"--speaking of the "Incarnation"! That God would become "flesh"! The Wilmington Guide to the Bible put it this way: "He (Jesus) was not only completely God as though He had never been man; but He was completely man as though He had never been God!"

Matthew 3 gives us the abrupt entrance on the scene of John the Baptist--a "type" of Elijah, in fulfillment of prophecy, as a "forerunner" of Christ--calling for people to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"! And later, at the baptism of Jesus, seeing the "heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him, with a voice out of the heavens declaring: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased"! Affirming His messiahship (and Sonship!), and picturing His coming death, burial, and resurrection, as well as prefiguring the significance, in our day, of Christian baptism! (He identified with us when He was baptized, just as we identify with Him when we are baptized!)

And, in Matthew 4, that same Holy Spirit who descended upon Him at His baptism "led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil," to identify again with us and, as J. Vernon McGee once said, "to demonstrate that He was exactly who He claimed to be!" Hebrew 4:15-16 says: For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin! Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may find help in time of need!"

And so, with His baptism and time of temptation behind Him, Jesus begins His public ministry--and word gets out quickly and crowds of people begin following Him, anticipating the advent of the kingdom of heaven, and Jesus as their likely Messiah, and King!

Matthew 5-7 record the so-called "Sermon on the Mount"--an exposition of the true meaning and demands of the Old Testament Law. Dr. Constable describes it as "ethical instructions" exhorting people to live a righteous life in anticipation of the kingdom of heaven! Harry Ironside, the great theologian, described it as Jesus "presenting a standard of righteousness even higher than the Law of Moses (and by so doing), exposing the hopelessness of the sinner to attain it!"

Galatians 3:24 says: "The Law was our schoolmaster (or tutor) to lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith"!

And so, what should we come away with, having studied the Sermon on the Mount? Is it that we should "love our enemies," and "keep the golden rule," and "endure hardship and persecution," and "be peacemakers," and "be pure in heart," etc. in order to be accepted by God (for salvation) and enter His kingdom? Or that all these kinds of things should increasingly characterize our lives, not to "earn" salvation, but "because" we have experienced God's grace and salvation? It's

the later, of course! II Corinthians 5:21 says: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law (since we couldn't possible fulfill them!), but through faith in Christ!" Add Ephesians 2:8-9--"For by grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast!"

Matthew 7:28-29 notes that when Jesus "had finished the Sermon on the Mount, the crowds were amazed at His teaching, for He was teaching them as One having authority, and not as the scribes! (Demonstrating again that He was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God!)

Jesus continued to demonstrate that kind of authority through the rest of His earthly ministry--through the many amazing miracles He performed! Miracles that not only showed His great compassion for all kinds of people (Jews and Gentiles alike) but His divine power over creation and nature itself! Healing the sick, raising the dead, rebuking the winds, calming the storms, walking on water, feeding the 5,000, as well as "driving out demons," and claiming the authority to "forgive sin"! What kind of "man" is this, the disciples, and others, wondered? The "Son of God," as Matthew would eventually establish beyond doubt!

And speaking of "authority," Matthew would end his gospel on this very note! Matthew 28:18-20 says "...All authority is given to Me in heaven and earth! Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! And Lo, I am with always, even to the end of the age!" And so, the great point for us (at this point!), is to know that the One who has all the authority, is the One who will be with us--always! In all circumstances! (If we belong to Him!)

Well, we're not done with Matthew--and he's not done with us! And the best is yet to come!

Think of all the opposition Jesus faced more and more as we made our way through Matthew! Primarily with the Pharisees and the other religious leaders! Beginning in Matthew 6:1 where He warned: "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them!" And then "when you pray...and when you give...and when you fast...and when you judge...and whatever you do, don't be like the hypocrites! All of which hits a crescendo when we reach Matthew 23, where Jesus again reflects on the concerns He had with the Pharisee's way of living! Verse 28 says, "Outwardly they appear righteous to men, but inwardly they are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness!" Again, not something new, even going back to the Old Testament! God is concerned about "the heart"!

And so, about midway through Matthew, Jesus turns toward the cross, and speaking in parables, which He called "mysteries" of the kingdom of heaven, which were granted to be known by the disciples (although even to them they needed to be explained!), but not granted to the crowds of people--fulfilling the words of Isaiah, the prophet, in how the people would "keep on listening but not understand, and keep on seeing but not perceive...because of the dullness of their hearts"! (Have a favorite parable? There're 20 of them in Matthew, if you want to go back and check them out! I like the one about the "wise man who builds his house on the rock"!)

Then Matthew includes some prayers of Jesus--including the model prayer, the so-called "Lord's Prayer" in Matthew 6:9-13. (Martyn-Lloyd Jones wrote that "the sum of it all is that there's

nothing in the whole realm of Scripture which so plainly shows our entire dependence upon God!) But Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane "moves" me the most, personally! Seeing the human side of Jesus, as He faces the cross and the realization that He must bear the full wrath of God for sin, poured out on Him--for us! The "fullness of time" had come--for Him to fulfill what He came to the world to accomplish!

And speaking of the cross, that's where Jesus is heading, as we get into Matthew 19! Leaving Galilee and heading for Jerusalem! And, in Matthew 21, His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem! It's Passover Week and Jerusalem is "surging" with Jews from all over Israel, and the known world at that time, for a national celebration, to remember again how God rescued their fathers from bondage in Egypt and brought deliverance ("salvation") through the "blood of a lamb"! This is the week planned by God Himself "before the foundation of the world"! The most climatic week in history! Jesus, "the King," was coming, not to be crowned but to be crucified, and to "give His life as a ransom for many"! Among other things, Jesus "cleanses the temple;" and "curses the barren fig tree;" has more confrontations with the Pharisees and scribes; and "laments over Jerusalem"!

Then, in Matthew 24, Jesus and His disciples meet together in one of their favorite places, in the Mount of Olives, which lies east of Jerusalem and on the eastern side of the Kidron Valley (overlooking the temple)--and Jesus gives His final discourse, known as the "Olivet Discourse"! It addresses questions His disciples asked about the "signs of His second coming," and of the "end of the age"(surprising questions, since they didn't even realize, at that point, that Jesus would be crucified and leaving them)! And yet Jesus provided direct revelation of "things" that would happen in a period which would become known to Christians as the "Tribulation Period"--followed "after those days" by His "second coming (including things that are "still to come" and which, in many ways, are still mysteries for us living in the "church age")!

Skipping to Matthew 26, we read of Mary anointing Jesus "for His burial;" Judas preparing to betray Him; the Passover supper prepared and celebrated (in the "upper room"), and Jesus instituting the "Lord's Supper"--transforming the last Passover (for Christians!) into the first observance of the Lord's Supper! Then we find Jesus praying that astounding prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane; being betrayed with a kiss by Judas; and brought before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin--then, in Matthew 27, before Pilate--and led away to be crucified!

And on the cross, Jesus' words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing!" And with that, all creation impacted and "crying out" as Jesus dies on the cross! The darkness suddenly covering the land, from noon to 3 p.m., perhaps reflecting God's judgment upon those who rejected His Son, as Jesus "cries out with a loud voice and yields up His spirit"! And then, the veil the temple "rent in two;" the earth shaken; tombs opened; and bodies of saints rising and roaming! And we again, and will always, remember the words of the song, written by Charles Wesley, and recited by Luckson, as part of his closing prayer: "Amazing love! How can it be, that Thou, My God, shouldst die for me!"

But there's more! Much more! Matthew 28 says that "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week..." Well, you know the rest of the story, how an earthquake occurred, and an angel

appeared and "rolled away the stone," and announced to Mary Magdalene those unforgettable words: "He is not here, for He is risen, just as He said!"

And Jesus appears to His disciples, and others, and gives them (and us!) the Great Commission! And later, we learn, from Acts 1, that as He meets again with His disciples, at where else? The Mount of Olives! Where "He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight...and as they were gazing intently into the sky, behold two men in white clothing stood beside them and said: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven!" Wow!

And so, Matthew leaves us with great hope! Because He rose, we too shall rise! I Corinthians 15 says it all! "...If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our preaching is vain, and our faith is vain! If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied! But now! Christ has been raised from the dead...For as in Adam all did, so also in Christ all will be made alive...Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we will also bear the image of the heavenly...Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord!"

And so, ends our study of Matthew! In the "fullness of time"! May God be with you all!

Lowell