

The Gospel of Matthew

Session 16: Matthew 17 Transfiguration (Book 4 *Narrative*: Travels/ ministry; instructing the Twelve)

NEXT WEEK: Sir 48; 1 Cor 3:18, 2 Peter 1:6-88, 1:17-18, 4:12-13, 5:10 CCC 555

Review: Matthew's writing style similar to the first five books of Pentateuch; It is a *new beginning* for Israel as Jesus comes to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth; not a random occurrence but carefully orchestrated by God – a recapitulation of Israel's life – Jesus, this firstborn *trusts God*

NOTES AND QUOTE

1. Matthew in review:

a. Genealogy of Jesus starts as son of Abraham, son of David; **b.** Four *shady* ladies included in story indicate that Gentiles are now being included in kingdom **c.** Three sets of 14 generations (1. Abraham to David, 2. David to Babylonian deportation, 3. From deportation to Christ) = 6 sets of 7 = numbers of completion with Jesus coming
d. Infancy narratives; parallels between of Joseph life (going to Egypt) in OT and Jesus; parallel between Elijah/Elisha w/John the Baptist & Jesus – one is precursor to one who will be greater than former; location of John baptizing and Jesus baptism (Jordan River where Elijah goes up in chariot of fire); Jesus' baptism then goes into desert for 40 days = 40 yrs. of Israelites wandering); Jesus rebukes Satan's three temptations just as Israel was tempted – Jesus is successful where others were not and He *trusts God*; **e.** Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (best way to live) is equivalent to Moses 10 Commandments (rules) Moses formed 12 tribes and chose 12 leaders, Jesus chose 12 apostles; Moses appoints 70 elders, Jesus chooses 70 disciples and *breathes* on them, giving them His *spirit and His mission* along with the 12 apostles; **f.** Jesus gives Beatitudes – each flows one into another –describes Christ's life; Jesus gives six anti-thesis¹: He is raising the bar in the new kingdom; new covenant is harder; there is a *broad* way and a *narrow* way; redefines His *holiness* supersedes what the world defines as *holy*. 2. Jesus continually relates that kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed – start small but grows into something significant; demonstrates through feeding of 5,000 (Jews) and 4,000 (Gentiles); Peter walking on water (we all should strive to be *water walkers*) 3. Transfiguration: Jesus' countenance was altered; Luke 9:29 – 32 provides conversation between Jesus, Moses and Elijah who appeared in glory and discussed the exodus Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem; Moses and Elijah represent the law of Moses and represent the prophets; Holy Spirit of God is cloud and God tells them to listen to His son; they want to build three booths

¹Six Antitheses-- Matthew 5:21-48

Jesus makes six quotations or paraphrases of commands of Moses in the Bible, and then he says, "*But I say*" and makes a similar but **stronger** statement. These antitheses—or oppositional statements—form the outline of this section, with other passages that relate to Jesus' commands added to them.

1. You have heard that it was said to the ancients, "*You shall not murder and whoever murders will be guilty to judgment.*" Moses' law—"Do not murder." Some taught it meant—"As long as you don't murder, you can express other kinds of hatred. Jesus said—"Anyone who expresses even the smallest amount of hatred will be condemned by God."

2. You have heard that it was said, "*Do not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with covetousness for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*". Moses' law—"Do not have sex with someone not your spouse." Some taught it meant—"As long as you don't have sexual intercourse, you can express your desire in other ways." Jesus said—"Even the smallest expression of your illicit desire indicates that you are an adulterer."

3. And it was said, "*Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a divorce notice.*" But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on grounds of sexual unfaithfulness, makes her commit adultery and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Moses' law—"If you divorce, give your spouse a divorce notice." Some taught it meant—"You can get divorced for any reason." Jesus said—"Unless your spouse has already broken faith in the marriage, the one who enforces the divorce is the one who breaks faith in the marriage."

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4. Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, "Do not break an oath, but you shall pay back to the Lord your oaths." But I command you, do not swear at all—either by heaven (for it is God's throne), or by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet, nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King, Nor swear by your head for you are not able to make one hair white or black. But let your word be, "yes, yes; no, no." But whatever more than this is of the evil one." Moses' law—"Make all oaths in Yahweh's name." Some taught it meant—"Any oath made in someone else's name, apart from God's, need not be kept." Jesus said—"Every promise made is before God. Keep it or lose your integrity and be a liar like Satan."

5. You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you do not resist an evil person. Moses' Law—"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life." Some taught it meant—"Any authority that steals from me or oppresses me, I can rebel against." Jesus said—"Do good to those who oppress you."

6. You have heard that it was said, "You will love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and He sends rain upon the righteous and the unrighteous. Moses' Law—"Love your neighbor. Do not do good to nations who have hated you." Some taught it meant—"Destroy those who hate God. Express hatred to those who persecute you." Jesus said—"Do good to your enemies, for that is what God constantly does. If you act like God, you will be rewarded by God."

Preparation for judgment: Jesus is not only telling us how Moses' law is inadequate, He is also telling us what God expects of us. Jesus states clearly in the first antitheses the threat of judgment on the last day if we fail to obey God's real commands—the commands that control our minds. And these commands do not change, whether we are submitted to Moses' law or a law of any nation. We will not be judged according to Moses or the law of the U.S. congress. Rather, we will be judged by God's law, the obedience of which is in one's mind and desires.

The internal law: Do not express hatred for another but do good to everyone no matter what they did to you. Do nothing sexually immoral. Do not break any commitments you make. Do not rebel against any authority, even evil ones. These are not laws that we can just wake up one day and say, "Well, it's illegal to do this, so I think I'll just stop." Rather, these are laws that must begin to be obeyed in our minds. Our thoughts determine what our small, seeming insignificant actions will be. Thus, we must depend on the Spirit of God to obey in this way. Without the Spirit, we cannot obey God.

² **3 things every Christian should know about the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles** (www.premierchristianity.com) The Feast of Tabernacles started on Sunday night and lasts for seven days; final appointed festival given to ancient Israel and rich with symbolism for believers in Jesus; also called 'Sukkot' (Hebrew word for 'booths' or 'tents'). In the OT, God instructed Israelites to live in tents for seven days (Lev 23:42); tradition continues to this day; In Israel, thousands of makeshift tents or 'Sukkahs' will appear where people dine and sometimes sleep in; serves as reminder of when God led Israelites by His presence in the Sinai desert as they lived in tents and the Lord provided for their every need.

But this feast also pointed the Israelites to a time when God would again 'tabernacle' with his people, in the future. As Christians, this is something we can joyfully celebrate, and it's something the early (largely Jewish) Church understood. See for example, John 1:14 which can be translated: "The Word [Jesus] became flesh and tabernacled among us."

1. Jesus used the festival to reveal his messianic identity: Jesus not only celebrated the feast but also declared one of his most famous messianic revelations during it. During the time of Christ, Feast of Tabernacles known as 'The Feast'; celebrations pointed toward a future time of messianic hope and salvation; especially seen during the 'water libation' and 'illumination' ceremonies; the water libation ceremony the temple priests gathered a pitcher of water from the pool of Siloam and poured it out on the altar inside the Temple. The pouring out of the water expressed Israel's hope for future rains to produce an abundant harvest. However, at the time of Jesus, Israel was spiritually destitute. They were living under Roman rule. Even the Holy of Holies was empty and dry. This moment in the feast wasn't just a cry for physical rain, but a desperate cry that God would pour out his spirit - the 'living water' they longed for. It was during the height of this

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ceremony, on the final day of the feast, that Jesus chose to stand up and say in a loud voice: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:37-38). Jesus was telling them the solution to their spiritual drought is found in him, the true water of life – what a declaration! No wonder when he said this, some declared, "This is the Messiah" (John 7:41).

2. Jesus used the festival to reveal himself as "the light of the world": The 'Illumination of the temple' was another important ceremony during the feast. It involved the lighting of four golden oil-fed lamps in the Court of Women. These lamps were 75 feet high menorahs and candelabras that were lit in the temple at night to remind Israel of the pillar of fire that had led them in their wilderness journey. The light was so bright that it is said to have illuminated the entire city. This ceremony was also a reminder that God had promised to send a light to renew Israel's glory, release them from bondage, and restore their joy. This was the context for Jesus' declaration: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12). The people knew that the promise of light was intrinsically linked with the messianic hope. The light of this ceremony only lit up Jerusalem and would eventually be extinguished. But Jesus claimed to be the eternal 'Light of the world'. In this statement he was implying that he was not just a good teacher, or a prophet but the light of God - the same light that led them through the wilderness in Sinai; the shekinah glory of God that they were crying out for. The very real presence of God

3. The Feast points ahead to Christ's return: The Feast of Tabernacles is also a prophetic feast that looks to the future age. The end of Zachariah alludes to this truth by placing the Feast of Tabernacles at the center of God's future kingdom on earth where all nations will worship him (Zachariah 14:16). It points towards a time when God will again *tabernacle* on earth, when Jesus comes and restores all things. "Look! God's tabernacle is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4) Revelation goes on to describe New Jerusalem, which contains two features of the feast's theme of water and light. There is a 'river of life' and the city has no need for the sun or moon because the Glory of God is its light. The lamb (Jesus) is its lamp. What it means for us? Good time to reflect and thank God for his provision and presence in our lives, and to remember that he is the source of our security and hope, not man-made structures. It is also a time to rejoice in the present, knowing that we have access to the living water and the light of the world that tabernacles in our heart. Finally, it is a time to look forward to his return, when God restores all things, and know that our role is to invite people into this Kingdom where the light does not end and there is living water that gives eternal life.