

# Discipleship in the company of Matthew



Kieran J. O'Mahony  
OSA



# Welcome

- Past present and future (i)
- Sermon on the Mount
- Matthew 5:17-20
- Commentary
- Later in the Gospel
- Past, present and future (ii)
- Prayer





# PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

- All religions: how much of the past do we hold on to?
- NT: an issue for Jesus.
- NT: an issue for the early churches.
- Q: when is change genuine development?



## Layout of Matthew's gospel

Prologue

1-2

Birth narratives

Book 1

3:1-7:29

3-4

Narrative

Temptation, baptism, call stories

5-7

Discourse

Sermon on the Mount

Book 2

8:1-11:1

8:1-9:34

Narrative

Authority in deeds

9:35-11:1

Discourse

Mission Discourse

Book 3

11:2-13:52

11:2-12:50

Narrative

Controversy, woes, rebukes

13:1-52

Discourse

Parables

Book 4

13:53-18:35

13:53-17:27

Narrative

Disciples, Peter, church

18:1-35

Discourse

Church Life Discourse

Book 5

19:1-23:46

19-23

Narrative

Discipleship, controversies, woes

24-25

Discourse

End Time Discourse

Climax

26-28

Death and Resurrection

# LAYOUT OF THE SERMON

Narrative introduction

1:1-2

**Beatitudes (8+1)**

1:3-12

+ an expansion on salt of the earth and light of the world

5:13-16

**Torah and Prophets**

5:17-7:12

Introduction

5:17-20

Jesus teaches and interprets the *Torah*

5:21-48

Jesus teaches the spirituality of the *Prophets*

6:1-18

Jesus teaches the doctrine of *Wisdom*

6:19-7:11

Conclusion

7:12

**Three exhortations**

7:13-23

+ an expansion on hearing and doing

7:24-27

Narrative conclusion

7:28-8:1



**Matthew 5:17** [Jesus said:]  
“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. **18** 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. **19** 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. **20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.





## APPROACH TAKEN HERE

- Introduction (vv. 17-20).
- 6 Antitheses (21-48).
- The introduction is somehow foundational or programmatic.
- The antitheses are challenging in themselves, but perhaps not quite as hard to understand as the introduction.
- The introduction opens a window on different trajectories of Christianity in the first century.
- It can be looked at *historically* and *theologically*.



# MATTHEW 5:17-20

- 4 individual sayings or *logia*.
- V. 17 is introductory and not entirely clear.
- Vv. 18 and 19 belong together.
- V. 20 is a kind of title, even though coming last.
  
- Q: how much of this goes back to Jesus?
- Q: what is the role of these verses just before the 6 antitheses?





## MATTHEW 5:17-20

- V. 20, is clearly a title, a summary of the antitheses that, according to the rabbinic model, precedes them.
- With “I say to you” it is linked to vv. 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44, and with “exceed/excess” to v. 47 (forming an inclusion, closing this section).
- In addition, v. 20 refers back to 4:10 and ahead to 6:1, 33 (“righteousness”) and 7:13, 21 (“enter the kingdom of heaven”).
- Thus v. 20 has a key position as the statement of the theme for the antitheses.
- Verses 17-19, on the other hand, are not directly connected to the antitheses. Their theme is also different, since they deal with the validity of the law rather than with the disciples’ righteousness.



## MATTHEW 5:17-20

- V. 17 Antithetical parallelism, with the second part shortened.
- V. 18 A prophecy but with two “until” clauses (making it a bit unstable).
- V. 19 Antithetical parallelism, with the second part shortened.
- V. 20 A saying about entering the kingdom, but in negative form.

**Matthew 5:17** [Jesus said:] “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. **18** 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. **19** 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. **20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

## MATTHEW 5:17-20

- V. 17 Heavily edited and not clear that goes back to Jesus himself.
- V. 18 Does it go back to Q (Luke 16:17)? Little redaction however both in Matthew and Luke and, therefore, little in common and, hence, probably not Q.
- V. 19 Jesus? Q? Jewish Christian tradition? Matthew? Oddly, both are “in”.
- V. 20 Strongly redactional, from the hand of Matthew himself and very much part of his Gospel.

**Matthew 5:17** [Jesus said:] “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. **18** 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. **19** 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. **20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.



# COMMENTARY

- Matthew speaks directly to the church in the plural.
- Abolish/fulfil: meaning to fulfil actual prophecies?
- Abolish/fulfil: meaning Jesus kept the law?
- Abolish/fulfil: meaning to bring salvation to completion?
- Abolish/fulfil: or pointing to the death and resurrection of Jesus?

**Matthew 5:17** [Jesus said:]  
“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil.”



# COMMENTARY

- **Matthew 3:15** But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.” Then he consented.
- In Matthew, “to fulfil” is always associated with Jesus’ identity. (“Christological”).
- Hence, primarily the life of Jesus as the fulfilment of the Scriptures by his obedience to God’s word.
- The teaching of Jesus is in view, but in second place to his actual living out of God’s will.

**Matthew 5:17** [Jesus said:]  
“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil.”



# COMMENTARY

- Seemingly unqualified affirmation of the Law.
- However, what about the two qualifying “until” clauses?
- Until heaven and earth pass away = never? (As in Mark 13:30-31.)
- Until all is accomplished = until Jesus is raised? Or again, meaning somehow never?
- Matthew seems to mean the Torah retains its validity.

**Matthew 5:18** 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.





# A CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATION

- For Matthew, the *ritual* Torah commandments are also valid, for example, 23:23, 26, or 24:20.
- Thus, Matthew respects the early Jewish-Christian intuition.
- For Matthew, in contrast with Judaism, it is in principle clear that **justice, mercy, and faithfulness**—for all practical purposes **the love commandment**—are the “weighty” commandments and that commandments such as to tithe (23:23) or to clean the outside of the cup (23:26) are iotas and strokes or “light” commandments.
- The love commandment is at the heart of the Torah, while the ceremonial laws are secondary. Still, they are all parts of the law that Jesus fulfils in its entirety.
- Verses 17-19 reflect the commitment of Jewish-Christians to the Mosaic Law.
- Matthew may represent a “semi-liberal” reception, given that both the least and the great are in the kingdom!
- Tension with Paul and even the Council of Jerusalem.



# COMMENTARY

- “To break” (luō) picks up “to abolish” (kataluō) from v. 17.
- The rabbis did distinguish light and weighty commandments.
- Puzzle: the least and the great seem to be both in the kingdom!?!
- Matthew does know of different “levels” in heaven (11:11; 18:1, 4; 20:21) and different rewards in the next life (10:41).
- Perhaps it comes from anti-Pauline Jewish Christians, wary of the liberalism of the apostle?
- Matthew may represent a semi-liberal reception of the narrow teaching.

**Matthew 5:19** 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.



# COMMENTARY

- This verse is also not so easy to grasp.
- Exceed: qualitatively or quantitatively?
- The community has broken away and is in some sense claiming to be the authentic successor community.
- Thus, the righteousness of the opponents is negatively assessed.
- By contrast, the disciples are called to an even greater righteousness.

**Matthew 5:20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.





# THINKING HISTORICALLY

- We seem to be witnessing a stage in the evolution of the Christian way.
- The teaching of Jesus.
- The Jewish Christian tradition (Jerusalem and Antioch).
- The Pauline Mission.
- The post-70 reception of the Jewish-Christian tradition in Matthew.
- In the antitheses, (i) the commandments are intensified and (ii) the love commandment stands at the centre.
- In the long-term, the ritual law was set aside (dietary regulations, purity laws and circumcision).
- Curiously, Matthew never mentions circumcision.



# THINKING THEOLOGICALLY

- The whole of Scripture testifies to God's will and work in history.
- The Law and the Prophets are by themselves incomplete: they point beyond themselves to the end-time, Messianic future.
- Jesus, a proclaimer of the end-time Kingdom of God, is that fulfilment. He now embodies and teaches the will of God.
- This completion or fulfilment does not annul what went before; on the contrary, it affirms the Torah.
- This fulfilment does not always mean mere repetition of what went before. In Jesus' teaching, mercy, justice and love take precedence.



## PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

- Things were not so neat at the start and different communities “evolved” at their own rates.
- There is an emphasis on the heart of the matter (mercy, justice and love).
- The past – represented by the Law and the Prophets – retains its value and validity.
- However, the definitive word of God is not a written but a lived word from Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David.
- The particular configuration of the Matthean was to value what we call the Old Testament; on the whole however, it was not how Christianity eventually evolved and became rather more uprooted from the ritual law.





# Evolution of Ministries

- Jesus' ministry: disciples, the Twelve
- Stage 1: "Charism" (c. AD 30-60) – chiefly Paul
- Stage 2: "Memory" (c. AD 60-90) – Mark and Matthew
- Stage 3: "Institution" (c. AD 90-120) – Luke-Acts, Pastor



# "Church"

- Matthew: the only Gospel to use the word "church".
- Matthew 16:18 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.
- Matthew 18:17 If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector.



**Matthew 18:15** “If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. **16** But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. **17** If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a

one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. **18** Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. **19** Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. **20** For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”





**Matthew 22:1** Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: **2** “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. **3** He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. **4** Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ **5** But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, **6** while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. **7** The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. **8** Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.

**9** Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ **10** Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad, so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

**Matthew 22:11** “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, **12** and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. **13** Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ **14** For many are called, but few are chosen.”



**Matthew 13:24** He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field, **25** but while everybody was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. **26** So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. **27** And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did

these weeds come from?’ **28** He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ **29** But he replied, ‘No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. **30** Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”





**Matthew 13:36** Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” **37** He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; **38** the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40** Just as

the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, **42** and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!





# Conversation



Designed by  
Jumsoft