



Rembrandt, The Temple Incident (detail)

Session 9: April 15: Matthew; Q

Assignment:

Review: Ehrman on the Messianic Secret

Goodacre on Markan Priority [\[link\]](#)

Ehrman, ch. 9 (Apocalyptic Teachings)

Matthew ch 1-2 (M material; we'll compare Luke's versions)

Matthew ch 3-11 (primarily Q)

The Sayings Gospel Q [\[link\]](#)

Q's Internal Structure [\[link\]](#)

Optional Reading:

The Search for a No-frills Jesus (Atlantic magazine) [\[link\]](#)

After the Sermon on the Mount

Then Jesus took his disciples up on the mountain and gathered them around him. He taught them, saying (text omitted)

And Simon Peter said: "Do we have to write this down?"

And Philip said: Will this be on the test?"

And John said: Would you repeat that?"

And Andrew said, "John the Baptist's disciples didn't have to learn any of this stuff."

And Matthew said, "Huh?"

And Judas said, "What's this got to do with real life?"

Then one of the Pharisees, an expert in the law, said, “I don’t see any of this in your syllabus. Do you have a lesson plan? Is there a summary? Will there be a follow-up assignment?”

And Thomas, who had missed the sermon, came to Jesus privately, and said, “Did we do anything important today?”

Notes and Questions

Matthew was written in Greek suggesting that the audience was outside Palestine which was Aramaic-speaking. Since it was written after Mark, a common dating is about 80 CE.

The genealogy goes from Abraham to Joseph in three stages of 14 generations—7 was a very prominent number signifying perfection; twice 7 would be even better. What do we make of the fact that Joseph is not Jesus’ father? Note that Jewishness was assigned patrilineally at this time; the switch to matrilineal assignment occurred later in the first century although the timing and reasons are obscure. If you count, it turns out there are only 13 generations in the final group. Does this suggest a theological motivation rather than an historical one?

Matthew is filled with “fulfillment citations.” Should we conclude that Matthew is intent on demonstrating that Jesus was predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures? How does this relate to Mark’s insistence that Jesus was the messiah?

Note the subtle but clear implication that Jesus is a new Moses: he has a miraculous birth, escapes death, goes to Egypt, enters the water, goes to the wilderness for 40 days, and preaches from a mountaintop. Jesus insists that one should follow the Law but in a new way which he describes.

In the nativity story, Matthew quotes the LXX (Septuagint) Isaiah (“parthenos”) with the connotation of “virgin” although the Hebrew was “almah” meaning “young woman.” If the Jewish leaders knew about Bethlehem and a coming ruler, why didn’t they react? The magi (Greek for astrologers) were not Jewish; why did they pay Jesus homage?

In the baptism by John, Matthew has John reject the Pharisees and Sadducees. Why? Jesus’ insistence that his inferior should baptize him is an excellent example of “dissimilarity” since no Christian would be likely to make it up. In Matthew, the voice from heaven says “This is my son . . .” suggesting that onlookers were also being addressed; Mark has the voice say “You are my son . . .” suggesting that only Jesus could hear (in keeping with the messianic secret theme).

In the temptation scenes, have we finally arrived at “the Devil” (the personification of the second evil cosmic force)?

The Sermon on the Mount is mostly from Q; we’ll compare Luke’s Sermon on the Plain next week. In the Beatitudes, “poor in spirit” means “humble”, “those who

mourn” are the suffering righteous, “the meek” are those who do not take advantage of their positions, and “merciful” is, along with Justice, a chief attribute of God.

The Antitheses demonstrate the ways in which Jesus preaches a new understanding of the Law. In each case, he insists that following a commandment literally (his accusation against the Pharisees) is inadequate; the underlying fault addressed by a commandment should be eliminated. Thus, murder occurs from anger, so you must not become angry with another; adultery occurs as a result of desire, so you must not desire the property (wife) of another; retribution occurs as a result of permission to take an eye for an eye (but not more!), so instead of inflicting injury on another you must be willing to suffer it yourself. In this way Jesus intensifies the requirements of the law. Does this preaching advance the “new Moses” motif?

Matthew insists throughout that the Jewish leaders reject Jesus, are sinister, and to blame for his crucifixion.

Was Matthew Jewish? In favor: fulfillment citations, Jesus as a new Moses, Jesus comes to fulfill the Law, etc. If Matthew’s audience was primarily Jewish Christians, it’s likely they would have been opposed by the local Jewish leaders of the synagogue and thus sympathetic to his portrayal of the Pharisees as unworthy of the kingdom.