

# The Synoptic Gospels

Weeks 7 – 8

Patrick Reeder

December 24, 2017

# Outline

---

## Jesus' Ethical Teaching

- Eschatology

- The Law

- The Heart

- The Woes

## Olivet Discourse

- What We Don't Know

- What We Do Know

- What Should We Take Away

# Outline

---

## Jesus' Ethical Teaching

- Eschatology

- The Law

- The Heart

- The Woes

## Olivet Discourse

- What We Don't Know

- What We Do Know

- What Should We Take Away

# The Beatitudes and the Future

---

A theme in Jesus' teaching is the "backwards wisdom of God": last will be first; lost life will be saved, humble will be exalted. The beatitudes likewise have a short pithy formula, many of which exhibit this same irony.

1. To the poor in spirit belong the kingdom of heaven.
2. Those who mourn will be comforted
3. The meek will inherit the earth
4. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled
5. The merciful will receive mercy
6. The pure in heart will see God
7. Peacemakers will be called children of God
8. To the persecuted (for righteousness) belong the kingdom of heaven

The phrase "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" forms an inclusio signaling the nature of included contents. They all point to eternity.

# Investments

---

The world thinks in terms of being first, exalting oneself, saving oneself; ultimately, storing treasures on earth. The problem with these is that they don't last!

*If we are like this, then either we do not really believe in the future life, or we are fools for laying up all our money in a bank that can be plundered. Death will strip us of all the material possessions we leave upon this earth. Death is a thief. Five minutes after we die, our most treasured possessions which are invested in this life are absolutely robbed from us. (Schaeffer, 231)*

Note: From an exegetical standpoint, Jesus is probably talking specifically about material wealth, but the temporary element applies to any worldly pursuit.

# On Wealth

---

What do you think Jesus means by, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”?

- People tend to invest into things (treasure) that they value (the heart).
- People tend to value things that they invest in.
- The phrasing could be deliberately ambiguous, so as to encourage both of the above.
- Given the strength of the claim that you cannot serve both God and money, it implies that money and God (as treasures) do not “share a border” where you can cozily settle your heart between both.

If Jesus was worried about this issue in 1st C Palestine, how much more should we worry in the wealth-drenched 21st C United States!

# The Present and the Future

---

Paradoxically, in the very next section Jesus says, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious about itself.” It sounds like he’s saying about treasure in heaven, *Worry about tomorrow not today*, but here, *Worry about today not tomorrow*.

How would you reconcile these sections?

- What makes treasures in heaven valuable is not that they are in the future, but their intrinsic value.
- Anxiety increases in proportion to our valuation of earthly treasures; anxiety decreases in proportion to our pursuit of heavenly wealth (Mt 6:33)
- Whether now or later, Jesus is teaching us to trust in God and his ways and not our own enterprises

# Anxiety

---

Jesus uses two *a fortiori* arguments against anxiety:

1. *Life > Food; Body > Clothing* . . . Huh?

God gave us life and our bodies. These are wholly out of our control and received as gifts. If he gives us the most important thing, will he not supply the rest?

2. *Sparrows [Food] < Human; Grass [Clothing] < Human*— In parallel, Jesus argues that if he feeds the birds and clothes the grass who are worth very little, will he not feed/clothe those made in his image?

He also argues against anxiety from a purely practical standpoint: anxiety never accomplishes a thing! (In fact, as far as we know from modern medicine, anxiety can kill you!)

# Outline

---

## Jesus' Ethical Teaching

Eschatology

**The Law**

The Heart

The Woes

## Olivet Discourse

What We Don't Know

What We Do Know

What Should We Take Away

## Fulfillment of the Law

---

Since Matthew is most sensitive to a Jewish audience, Jesus' relationship to the law is an urgent one, especially given his adversarial relationship with those purported "keepers" of the law.

What do you think Jesus means that he fulfills the Law and Prophets?

- He directly fulfills prophecies from the law: Gen 3:15, 12:3, 49:10.
- As we've seen he fulfills a number of types from the law: Israel from Egypt into the Wilderness; in his death, the sacrificial system.
- He also fulfills direct prophecies from the books of the Prophets: Psalm 16, 22, 110; Isaiah 9, 53, Daniel 9:24ff.

## Legal Upgrades

---

Through a large chunk of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus massively upgrades the law. In many places where a legalist could attempt to circumnavigate the law, Jesus plunges the dagger straight into the *heart* of the issue and turns!

1. Murder—Any lack of love for our brother is a serious offense to God; be reconciled even before presenting at the altar!
2. Adultery—Lust in your heart is essentially adultery!
3. Divorce—To sever a marriage relationship over anything but adultery but is itself adultery! (Cf. “fundy” interpretation)
4. False Oaths—Don’t make oaths at all!
5. Eye-for-eye—Turn the other cheek; lend him coat and tunic; a second mile; lend money freely!
6. Love your neighbor, hate your enemy (where do you think he got this latter bit?) —Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute

## Legal Upgrades

---

If that wasn't enough, Jesus starts and ends this section with these:

*Mt 5:20—“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

*Mt 5:48—Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

You might feel like the disciples when they say later, “Who then can be saved?” (Mt 19:25) **EXACTLY!**

Plan A: You can approach God in your own righteousness (impossible) or Plan B: Imputed righteousness through Christ's ransom (Cf. II Cor 5:21)

# Outline

---

## Jesus' Ethical Teaching

Eschatology

The Law

**The Heart**

The Woes

## Olivet Discourse

What We Don't Know

What We Do Know

What Should We Take Away

# Externals

---

As with the legal upgrades, Jesus is eager to draw attention to the heart and away from the externals:

- Give to the poor without even letting your left hand know
- Pray in the inner room to the Father who is in secret (How can we reconcile this with corporate prayer?)
- Fast with a fresh, clean look, healthy so as to appear as if you were not fasting

Where does modeling fit in?

- Jesus is not saying that there can never be outward displays. The issue is at least a matter of motive.
- There also seems to be reason to worry when someone behaves in a godly manner *only* in front of others.
- In Ch. 7, Jesus also makes fruit and doing “the father’s will,” the ultimate measure of where one’s heart is.

# Outline

---

## Jesus' Ethical Teaching

Eschatology

The Law

The Heart

**The Woes**

## Olivet Discourse

What We Don't Know

What We Do Know

What Should We Take Away

## Rebuke of Pharisees

---

Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees and other religious leaders (Matt 23, Luke 11) provides us with a number of ethical lessons:

1. *Prioritized Ethics* Tithing spices while neglecting “weightier portions” of love, justice and mercy; presumably this is behind “swearing” commentary
2. *Internal Precedes External* “first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also” (e.g. judging vs. gossiping)
3. *Ugliness of Hypocrisy* honoring the prophets when Jesus knows they'll kill the Prophet, “heavy burdens” presumably also the Pharisee's emphasis on externals
4. *Ugliness of Self-Glorification* Special seats and greetings, proselyte as “son of hell”—is this a reference to Satan's pride...?

# Outline

---

## Jesus' Ethical Teaching

Eschatology

The Law

The Heart

The Woes

## Olivet Discourse

What We Don't Know

What We Do Know

What Should We Take Away

# The Date

---

There is an unfortunately long list of Christian leaders who have embarrassed themselves by trying to predict when Christ would return (Martin Luther! John Wesley! Chuck Smith!)

This is in direct opposition to one of the clearest statements of the Olivet Discourse:

*Mark 13:32,33—But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.*

Why do you think people keep trying?

## 2nd or 3rd Temple?

---

Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple, but he proceeds to a much broader discussion. This creates some ambiguity throughout. Some verses are obviously about one time period or another, others are not.

Here are some that are more obvious:

- Mark 13:9—You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.  
[This most likely concerns the apostles (Cf. Luke 21:12)]
- Mark 13:26,27—Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.  
[Unless Jesus was just wrong, this is not about the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70AD.]

## 2nd or 3rd Temple?

---

Here are some portions that are more ambiguous between the historical destruction of Jerusalem and a future event:

- Luke 21:20, 24— But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near . . . and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.  
[Verse 21 is parallel to Mk and Mt's "abomination that causes desolation," a phrase with strong eschatological overtones. Furthermore, Luke concludes this paragraph describing events that describe the present.]
- Luke 21:32,33—Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. (Σ)  
[If he's describing the disciples' generation, does he merely mean the temple? Or, does he mean something unusual with 'generation'? Or, using a conventional interpretation of 'generation,' does 'this generation' mean those alive at the end indicating that it will all occur in one generation?]

## 2nd or 3rd Temple?

---

On these thorny interpretive matters:

*There are already hints, early in the discourse (esp. in Matt), that the reader is to bear in mind that there are at least two topics under discussion, not one: the Fall of Jerusalem and the Second Advent . . . Thus since the reader is already primed to expect mention of the Second Advent, it would be difficult for him to take vv. 29–31 in any other way. (Carson, 494)*

*There is a problem for the student in that sometimes what Jesus says refers to the coming judgment on Jerusalem, and sometimes what he is saying refers to the judgment at the end of the age. We may well argue that there is a theological unity between the two judgments, and that some of what Jesus says could apply equally well to both. The first of these is a judgment that followed the rejection of Jesus in his earthly ministry, and the second is the judgment that will follow the preaching of the gospel throughout the world. But we should not approach these chapters with the conviction that everything in them applies to only one of these judgments. (Morris, 593)*

# Outline

---

## Jesus' Ethical Teaching

Eschatology

The Law

The Heart

The Woes

## Olivet Discourse

What We Don't Know

**What We Do Know**

What Should We Take Away

## Certain Events that Must Precede The End

---

Here are some things Jesus mentions that must occur first:

- The Abomination that Causes Desolation (Mk 13:14; Mt 24:15)
- The Gospel will be preached to all nations (Mt 24:14)
- Cosmic Signs: earthquakes, famines, celestial events ( $\Sigma$ ) roaring of the sea and the waves (Lk 21:25)
- Humanity will approach total self-destruction (Mt 24:22, Mk 13:20)
- The appearance of False Christs and people saying that Jesus has come (Mt 24:23-26, Mk 13:21-23)

## Jesus' Return Will Be Obvious

---

In contrast to the supposition that Jesus' Second Advent will be quiet or localized (as in the First Advent), Jesus will return with a very vivid display:

- Be like lightening flashing in the east is seen in the west (indicates a global awareness)
- Celestial signs (sun and moon darkened, stars falling → total darkness)
- “*Sign of the Son of Man will appear*” (Mt 24:31; not sure if this different than the next or simply a parallelism)
- Jesus will appear with power and glory

There are no circumstances where you will miss this event!

# Outline

---

## Jesus' Ethical Teaching

Eschatology

The Law

The Heart

The Woes

## Olivet Discourse

What We Don't Know

What We Do Know

What Should We Take Away

## Store Up Treasures in Heaven

---

Jesus' initial and startling remarks (on the temple) show that even our most prized possessions and accomplishments are terminal.

Peter's words are instructive:

*II Peter 3:10-13— But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.*

*Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

## Be Ready

---

The kingdom parables (next week) discuss readiness. Let's remark on a few things now since they are offered during the Olivet discourse:

- Whether the end comes first or our own death, the value system from the previous slide should form in us a sense of urgency.
- This certainly applies to people who say things like, *I'll investigate "religion" when I'm older. I want to have fun now.* This presupposes they will have that freedom later. Ultimately dishonest—they don't behave as one will be called to give an answer for how they've lived.
- Christians can just as easily distract themselves with money, jobs, children, hobbies or simply "**worries of this life**" (Luke 21:34).

Let us be among those who hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

## References

---

1. Carson, D.A. *Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 8: Matthew*, edited by Frank Gaebelin. Zondervan, 1984.
2. France, R.T. *Tyndale New Testament Commentary: Matthew*. IVP Academic, 2008.
3. Morris, Leon. *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992.
4. ———— *Tyndale New Testament Commentary: Luke*. IVP Academic, 2008.