

## Great Adventure—Notes on St. Matthew Chapter 28

### Review

This has been the study of the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The Gospel of St. Matthew has been a recapitulation of the life of Israel. Jesus has relived in his life the story of the Old Testament, from Genesis to the end. But he is different from Israel, in that he has been successful, as a son faithful to the Father. In addition, he has come to establish a new covenant, so that means that the old covenant has been fulfilled, but not done away with. The covenant between Israel and God could not be ended unless one of the parties had died. God came to us in human form and died so that there could be a new covenant.

Not only is Jesus' life a recapitulation of the life of Israel, it is also a reconstituting of Israel around Jesus himself. Almost everything from the Old Testament is presented in a new way in Christ. It is all centered around Christ: the new Temple, the new Moses, the new Solomon. The genealogy of Jesus in Chapter 1 shows him to be the son of Abraham and the son of David. The inclusion of the four Gentile women in the genealogy shows that God has had the Gentiles in mind for inclusion in the Kingdom from the beginning.

Chapter 2 strikes a parallel between Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, and Joseph of the Old Testament. Both had gone down into Egypt and in doing so had preserved life.

Chapter 3 draws a comparison between Elijah and Elisha, on the one hand, and John the Baptist and Jesus on the other. In 2 Kings 2-5, Elisha had gone down to the Jordan and told Elijah, I want a double portion of your anointing. Elijah is taken up but Elisha goes on to multiply loaves of bread and to raise the dead. Israel was (and still is) waiting for Elijah to return, but Jesus tells them that Elijah is John the Baptist *is* Elijah. John shows up right where Elijah had left, at the Jordan River, just north of the Dead Sea.

Chapter 4: As Moses had come up out of the Red Sea into 40 years of wandering in the desert, so too had Jesus come up out of the waters of the Jordan to 40 days in the wilderness, to be tempted three times by the devil, only to respond from the Old Testament each time. To the temptation of hunger, experienced by Israel in Ex. 16:3, Jesus responds, from Dt. 8:3, "You shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." To the second temptation, putting God to the test, in Ex. 17:3, Jesus quotes Moses from Dt. 6:16, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." The third test is the worshipping of a false god, which Israel had done in Ex. 32, and Jesus cites the words of Moses from Dt. 6:13-14: "The Lord, your God, shall you fear; him shall you serve."

In Matthew 5-7, we hear Jesus as the new Moses giving the new Law of the new Covenant in the Sermon on the Mount. Further comparisons of Jesus and Moses:

- a. When each was born, an edict was given requiring the killing of newborns;
- b. God delivers them, they live for a time in Egypt, and then come out into the wilderness;
- c. Moses chose 12 to rule the 12 tribes; Jesus selects 12 apostles to lead the new Israel;
- d. Moses selects 70 elders to rule; Jesus appoints 70 and sends them on his mission.
- e. Moses received the law in the 10 Commandments; Jesus gives the new Law in the Beatitudes.

In Chapter 6, Jesus instructs his disciples about true piety, founded on prayer, fasting and almsgiving, performed in secret.

In Chapter 7, Jesus talks about the two ways to live, the broad way and the narrow way, and about the importance of building your house on the rock.

Chapters 8 and 9 show Jesus' power over demons, sickness, nature and even death itself in the miracles that he worked. In Chapter 10 he sends his disciples out to exercise that same power, and he tells them, "Do not fear."

In Chapters 11 and 12 Jesus begins to teach that he is the new King, and his disciples are the new priests. It is the end of the old and the beginning of the new.

Jesus teaches through parables in Chapter 13 because of the corrupt leadership of the Pharisees. He tells them that in the Kingdom things will start small but end up large. We must sow the small acts that will produce great results.

In Chapters 14 and 15 Jesus will multiply loaves to demonstrate that in the Kingdom there is more than enough for the 12 tribes of Israel; he does this in Gentile country as well to show that there is enough for the whole world as well. The bread is himself, the Eucharist. He is the Paschal lamb.

In Chapter 16 Jesus asks the central question: Who is the Son of Man? This term is taken from Daniel 7, and it is the highest title of the Messiah. Simon professes, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." In response to Simon's faith, Jesus says, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." Jesus establishes the Kingdom and places Peter at its head, with the power to bind and loose.

In the Transfiguration (Chapter 17) Jesus appears with Moses and Elijah to announce his exodus in which he will lead Israel away from their bondage to sin.

Chapter 18: Jesus presents his discourse on forgiveness and the need to forgive time and time again. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, he warns us of the consequences of the failure to release others, which will cause us to have to pay the debt ourselves. If we fail to forgive others from the heart, we place ourselves into exile from God.

Chapter 19 addresses marriage and divorce.

In Chapters 20 and 21, Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly as the Paschal lamb, to be inspected and found without fault and then to be killed as the new Passover sacrifice. He is greeted with the words, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!" He goes straight to the temple and cleanses it. When we welcome him in the Mass with the same words, he enters as our lamb of sacrifice and cleanses us, the new temple of his Body.

The leaders try to trap Jesus in Chapters 22 and 23. He tells them of the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole soul and your whole strength," and he tells them that the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus tells of the signs of the end of the age in Chapters 24 and 25. He warns them to flee to the hills when they see these things. In 70 A.D. they would occur and the Jewish population of Jerusalem would be slaughtered by the Romans, but the Christians survived because they heeded the words of Jesus. The Temple would fall and there would only be one offering, the thank-offering, after the Messiah comes. That offering is the Eucharist (Eucharist=thanksgiving). The Mass is the only sacrifice that continues around the world today.

Chapter 26 contains the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden and the Betrayal of Jesus. In Chapter 27, Jesus stands before Pilate with Barabbas (literally, "son of the father"). The guilty "son of the father" is released and in his place the "Son of the Father" gives his life, taking on himself the curse of the law and the sin of Adam, paying for the broken covenant.

### **The Final Chapter**

In Chapter 28 Jesus rises from the dead, the finale to the whole story of the Gospel of Matthew. It is one big "I told you so." Jesus has shown us that we can trust the Father, even if it means our lives. The Resurrection is central to our faith, because it means that Jesus has defeated hell, death and the grave. Because he rose from the dead, he can now give us life and we can rise with him. What sort of bodies will we have in heaven? We will be raised with the bodies that we now possess, but Christ will make those bodies incorruptible and perfect as he is perfect. We will be perfected and we will have spiritual bodies, if we give ourselves to Christ while we are here on earth.

The Gospel closes with Jesus saying that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. He concludes with a single command: "Go, and make disciples of all men." Disciples do not just believe what they are taught; they believe and *do* what they have been taught. We show what we believe by what we do.