

## **Synthetic Bible Studies**

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible  
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and  
Bible Expositions

By

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### **LESSON ONE**

#### **MATTHEW**

About four hundred years, more or less, have elapsed since the period of Malachi with whose book we have just finished, during which time no prophet had arisen in Israel. The people had remained in their land with varying fortunes, as the world would say, but with GOD's purposes being carried out in them as foretold in their Scriptures. We left them under the dominion of the Persians, which was soon followed by that of the Grecians including the Syrian period in which Antiochus Epiphanes flourished as their chief enemy and the Maccabees as their deliverers, somewhere about one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy years before CHRIST. Then came the Roman regime in which period it was that the Messiah appeared.

At the outset let us remember that the Old Testament promised an earthly kingdom to Israel to be set up on this earth when the Messiah came, and for which the faithful were ever looking. JESUS was the Messiah though they knew Him not, and He had come to set up that kingdom. Moreover, from the beginning of His public ministry down to a certain point to be named later, He proceeds on the assumption that the kingdom has come in Him if the nation will receive Him. He is not received, however, but rejected, whereupon He changes the character of His teaching and begins to speak of the church instead of the kingdom, and to lay plans, humanly speaking, for the formation of a new body of people altogether, Gentiles as well as Jews, who shall sustain a peculiar relation to Him while the kingdom is in abeyance, and indeed forevermore.

That phrase, "*the kingdom in abeyance*" I would emphasize, as meaning that the kingdom promised in the Old Testament is yet to come, and to be set up on this earth in Israel, with

JESUS, the recognized Messiah, at its head. This will be when Israel, punished and repentant, shall receive Him by faith as all the prophets have spoken. In the meantime the church comes into view, with a unique origin, history and destiny, concerning which the New Testament treats almost exclusively. "Almost exclusively" and yet not quite exclusively.

The Gospels have something to say about the kingdom, especially Matthew, and when we reach the book of Revelation it seems to be dealing with that theme almost altogether; but throughout the epistles, especially those of Paul, scarcely any mention of the kingdom is made at all. The reason for all this will appear as we proceed, but I ask only that you note it now and so be ready to think about it further when it comes before us.

How then shall we place Matthew's Gospel which we now begin to study?

Can we do better than to speak of it as covering the transition period, i. e., the period including the rejection of the kingdom by Israel and the coming into view of the church after the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord?

Please keep in mind, therefore, that Matthew is writing distinctively for the Jewish people, and is all the time seeking, under the inspiration of the HOLY SPIRIT, to present JESUS to them as the One who fulfills the Old Testament features of the Messiah. It is for this reason that the first Gospel is sometimes called *the Gospel of the kingdom*, because more than any other of the four, it dwells upon that aspect of the truth.

This suggests that each of the four Gospels has its own distinctive viewpoint of the history and work of the blessed Saviour, to appreciate which is most important in the study of that Gospel. In the Old Testament the Coming One is described or alluded to in many different ways, but they have all been reduced to four, as for example:

- He is the King of Israel,
- He is the Servant of the Lord,
- He is the Son of Man, and
- He is the Son of GOD.

This division or classification thus reappears in the Gospels, and as we shall see, Matthew reveals Him in the first particular, Mark in the second, Luke in the third and John in the fourth.

### **I. Advent of the Messiah, 1:1-4:11**

The first division of the Gospel of Matthew covers what may be denominated the advent of the Messiah, including chapters 1-3, and the first eleven verses of chapter 4.

We shall follow Dr. Gregory's excellent analysis to a certain extent, as found in *Why Four Gospels*, and thus classify this introductory section of the Gospel into four parts;-

- His natural descent, 1:1-17
- His two-fold nature, 1:18-25
- His earthly location, 2:1-23

His official preparation, 3:1-4:11

Always remembering that Matthew is writing distinctively for the Jew, and that his particular mission is to convince the Jew that JESUS of Nazareth is the Messiah and the King of Israel promised in the Old Testament, it will add interest to the study of his Gospel if we observe how continually he quotes the Old Testament, and explains that all this was said or done by JESUS, or to JESUS, that the word of the Old Testament might be fulfilled.

In this respect Matthew differs very radically from the other Gospels, especially Mark and Luke as we shall see, and for reasons that will appear also.

For instance, take the natural descent of the Messiah:

The Jews expected Him to come in the line of Abraham, and through David, and would not have listened to any Messianic claim of one who would not qualify in that particular. Therefore Matthew takes the greatest pains to trace the genealogy of JESUS through David to Abraham, and stops there. The Jews did not care to go back of that.

The marginal references in your Bible will indicate the Old Testament passages fulfilled in the genealogy of JESUS as given by Matthew.

## **II. Ministry of the Messiah, 4:12-16:12**

Under this head notice:

(1) the place and character of its beginning (4:12-25), keeping in mind always Matthew's particular purpose to reach the Jews by proving JESUS to be the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament prophets. The place, for example, was Galilee of the Gentiles, and this Isaiah said would be the case (Isaiah 9:1, 2), the character of its beginning is well exhibited in verses 23 and 24 of the lesson, which fulfill Isaiah 51:1-3.

Notice

(2) the constitution of His kingdom, chapters 5-7 inclusive. When the Messiah came the Jews were expecting Him to set up His kingdom, and JESUS accordingly, at the very beginning of His ministry, goes about that work.

He does so by proclaiming these things:

- The character of the members of His kingdom (5:1-16).
- The laws governing in His kingdom (5:17-7:6).

### **The requirements for entering His kingdom (7:7-29)**

This division of the Gospel is sometimes called the Sermon on the Mount, and has suffered more perhaps from false exegesis, and application than any other portion of the New Testament corresponding in length, except perhaps the book of Revelation.

The cause of these mistakes is the common one frequently pointed out in these studies, of confounding the kingdom with the church, and applying indiscriminately to the latter what belongs almost exclusively to the former.

In the present instance, these sublime teachings of JESUS are often substituted for the Gospel of salvation through faith in His blood. Nothing is said on that subject in this discourse, and therefore some would have it that the only thing for one to do, in order to be saved is to "live up to the Sermon on the Mount" as the saying is, or to keep the "Golden Rule" which that sermon sets forth.

As if any unregenerated man ever did or ever could live up to that standard or keep that rule!

Others again, while steering clear of that error, fall into an opposite one. Instead of applying it to the unsaved as the way of salvation, they apply it to the saved as the rule of daily living, and hence come under what is known as legalism. I do not say that it has no reference to Christian believers at all, but only that the source and spring of their heavenly walk with their Lord is not found in any such series of commandments, holy and beautiful as they are, but in a right apprehension of what their standing and position are in Him as members of His body.

The Sermon on the Mount is distinctively Jewish, and describes, as has been said, the character of the citizens of the earthly kingdom which the Messiah came to set up.

It assumes a class of people already saved, regenerated and in fellowship with their King. This the Jews were not in CHRIST's time, and are not today, and will not be till they pass through the terrible fires of tribulation spoken of by the prophets, whence the "remnant" will come forth purified. (See the last chapter of Malachi).

It was because JESUS laid down and insisted upon such a holy standard as this that His people rejected and crucified Him.

They were looking for a political restoration of their kingdom, but refused submission to the moral restoration which must precede it. And yet the moral character of the kingdom as JESUS proclaimed it, was that of the Old Testament prophets very clearly. Matthew's Gospel is here consistent as elsewhere with its governing plan to present JESUS as the Messiah of the Jewish prophets; in proof of which consider with this division of our lesson such passages speaking of the kingdom as Psalm 72:15; Isaiah 5:18-25; 28:16,17; Jeremiah 29:10-14, and countless more.

Notice

(3) the manifestation of the Messiah's power (8-9:35).

It was quite in keeping that after the proclamation of His kingdom had been made as in the chapter preceding, He who claimed to be the King should now present His credentials to that fact, hence the three groups of miracles which follow.

And before we go further, let me at this point call attention to a peculiarity in Matthew, as seen in the way in which he groups things that have a common likeness to each other, or which may

be used to illustrate or emphasize a point without reference to the precise chronological order in which they may have occurred.

For example, an examination of the other Gospels will disclose the fact that these nine miracles did not all occur at about the same time or in the precise relation to each other, indicated here; but only that Matthew uses them at this particular time under the inspiration of the HOLY SPIRIT, in the execution of his plan to present JESUS as the promised Messiah of the Jews.

He has proclaimed His kingdom and now He establishes His rights as its King. Hence, behold His mighty works, thus gathered up and brought into one general view.

Notice

(4) the opposition shown to the Messianic power (9:36-16:12).

This opposition already begins to show itself in 8:34, indeed, where the leaders of the nation, jealous of the rising influence of JESUS seek to offset His hold upon the common people by the insinuation there mentioned; but it becomes very much increased and intensified by the occasion furnished in chapter 10 - the commission of the twelve disciples; through the power thus conferred upon them as He sent them forth to "**the lost sheep of the house of Israel**," to proclaim the kingdom in His name, He may be said to have multiplied Himself that many times.

It may be noticed in passing that this, too, the sending out of the twelve, is in part at least a fulfillment of the prophets (Ezekiel 34).

Let us observe that this commission of the twelve disciples is not the same as the "*Great Commission*" in 28:19, 20.

That concerns the proclamation of the Gospel of grace, but this the kingdom of Israel, hence the peculiarity of the instruction in this case.

- these disciples were not to go outside of Israel, their sphere was limited to the twelve tribes.
- their theme was not the Gospel, but the kingdom which we have now come to identify pretty clearly.
- they were to go without money, or change of, raiment, etc., which was quite practicable under the circumstances, but which does not rest as an obligation upon Christian missionaries in our day. This is not to say that GOD cannot or does not supply the need of some who now go forth in that way, but only that the express command does not apply to them in the same way.

This opposition to JESUS, as has been said, was intensified by this sending out of the twelve disciples, but its development is seen all along in the chapters that follow down practically, till the close of chapter 12.

It begins, indeed, in the doubts of John the Baptist (11:1-30), although it cannot be said that they were expressed in a spirit only hostile. They were representative doubts, however, and on the part of others decidedly antagonistic to the Messiah.

It is noticeable that in replying to John, the Saviour presents His credentials as the Messiah (vv. 4-6), and thereupon asserts His authority as indicated in verses 27-30. This is the peculiarity of Matthew's treatment of this whole period of the Saviour's life. He describes the opposition, then emphasizes the credentials of Him who was thus opposed, and finally records a definite assertion of His authority. These features of the story do not always appear in this order precisely, but nevertheless they are never altogether absent.

Following the doubts of John comes what Dr. Gregory describes as the unorganized opposition of the Pharisees as indicated in 12:1-13, and where again the assertion of authority is emphasized (vv. 6-9), and in connection with it the credentials on which that authority rests (vv. 10-13).

The unorganized is in turn followed by an organized opposition (12:14-45).

See the reference to the council (v. 14) and JESUS' withdrawal for a while in consequence of it as indicated in verses 15-21. Immediately, however, lest the Jews, for whom he wrote, should misconstrue this action on the part of JESUS and stumble at it, Matthew presents his credentials again as illustrated in verses 22 and 23 and records the assertion of His authority which follows in verses 24-45. For evidence of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy in all this, as throughout in Matthew, compare the marginal references.

The effect of this opposition to the Messiah's ministry is very marked in the changed character that ministry now assumes as set before us in chapter 13.

The parabolic teaching of the kingdom is now substituted for its plain teaching which had obtained hitherto. JESUS foresees His rejection and with it the rejection of the kingdom for the time being. He foresees the interregnum of this the period of the church, and begins to tell His disciples the mystery of the intervening events between His going away by and by and His returning again, when Israel shall have learned the lesson of her rejection.

Notice in this connection especially, verses 10 and 17 of this chapter.

Notice also that none of the seven parables in this group contains any intimation of a time when the Gospel shall prevail over the earth before the Son of man returns again, but all alike affirm that truth and error and good and evil will continue side by side until the end of the present age.

The parable of the leaven even, is no exception to this declaration, but rather confirmatory of it. Leaven is the Bible type of evil, and the parable teaches that so far as the human aspect of the kingdom is concerned error rather than truth will prevail in the present age.

### **What is Meant by the Kingdom of Heaven**

But some may be puzzled as to the meaning of the phrase, "**The kingdom of Heaven is like unto**" so and so. How can the kingdom of Heaven be "**like unto**" anything evil?

The explanation is found in the definition of the kingdom, and perhaps the following taken from the appendix of Dr. Tregelles' work on CHRIST's Second Coming may throw some light on the subject. According to the author of that appendix (Cecil Yates Biss, London,) the kingdom of

GOD is viewed in Scripture under five different aspects, as follows:

1. As introduced into the world in the person of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, its King and Head. See Mark 1:14, 15, where "**is at hand**" should be understood as having drawn nigh.
2. As rejected by Israel, and therefore restricted during this dispensation to a body of men whose relationship to it is invisible, and only manifested by their subjection to its laws and principles. This body of men forms what we know as the church, the body of CHRIST. Now as the Gospel brings into this relationship those who believe, it follows that "**to testify the Gospel of the grace of God**" is equivalent to "**preaching the kingdom of God**" (Acts 20:24, 25).
3. In that outward visible aspect, in which, during this dispensation, it includes all who profess to belong to the Lord JESUS CHRIST - some truly, some falsely. It is in this aspect, exactly equivalent to what is commonly described by the word "*Christendom*," (i. e., CHRIST's kingdom), that it is spoken of in Matthew 13.
4. In the future, or millennial aspect, when the government of the Lord JESUS CHRIST will be manifested in power. The kingdom will then include:
  - (a) a heavenly department, the risen "**church of the first-born**" (Hebrews 12); and
  - (b) an earthly department, consisting of Israel as a converted people, and also the converted Gentiles throughout the earth.

It is in this aspect that we pray "**Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth as in Heaven.**"

5. In the eternal aspect, as in the words, "**Then cometh the end, when He (the Son) shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father,**" etc. (I Corinthians 15:24).

This writer, it will be seen, makes the two expressions "**kingdom of God**," and "**kingdom of heaven**," equivalent, but we need not contend about that just now if what he has written makes any clearer to us the sense in which the kingdom of heaven, as used in Matthew 13, may be said to be connected with evil.

It is Christendom that CHRIST is speaking of there, that outward visible aspect in which, during this dispensation, it includes all who profess to belong to Him whether the confession be true or false.

Let us now return to the consideration of the opposition to the Messiah which begins to culminate as illustrated in 13:54 to the end of this main division (16:12).

See, for example, the opposition from JESUS' townsmen (13:54-58), and the withdrawal on His part for a while in which it resulted. Then comes opposition on the part of Herod and another withdrawal (14:1-36). Observe how Matthew again emphasizes the credentials which JESUS presented in the latter half of this chapter. The opposition of Herod is followed by that of the leaders in Judea (chap. 15), in which connection observe a further withdrawal (v. 21), and then the presentation of credentials once more (vv. 22-39).

Finally, there comes the opposition from the leaders in Galilee (16:1-12), and another withdrawal of JESUS which leads up to the next great division of the Gospel.

### **III. Formal Claim of the Messiah, 16:13-23:39**

This claim is first made privately before His disciples in a section of this division covered by 16:13-20:28.

It will be observed that no sooner is this claim made and formally acknowledged by His disciples than He follows it with the revelation of His death. This is the first time He mentions that, and presumably because His disciples were not prepared to receive it until they had come to know and recognize Him for whom He really was. And even now how ill-prepared were they and how necessary it was for their faith and hope to be reassured by the Transfiguration which takes place in this connection!

It is interesting to observe further that according to our present evangel this revelation of His death is repeated three times, each time a new feature being added until the full details are before the minds of the twelve.

For instance:

- in 16:21 His death is connected with the work of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court;
- in 17:22, the betrayer comes into view in connection with it, and
- in 20:17, the Gentiles appear.

It is interesting to observe still further, that in connection with each of the three revelations of His death our Lord supplements that revelation with an appropriate discourse or some other action confirmatory to His disciples' faith, as in the case of the Transfiguration already specified.

The claim made before the disciples, however, is soon repeated, as was necessary, before the nation (20:29-23:39).

In the first place He claimed to be the Son of David, at Jericho, as will be seen by a study of 20:29-34, and later on He claimed to be the King of Israel, as will be seen by 21:1-16. This doubly-asserted claim is further supported, if one may so say, by His formal rejection of the nation which now followed.

To illustrate this, let it be noted that JESUS' claim to be the King of Israel as set forth in His entry into Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy (21:1-16), was disputed on the part of the leaders of the nation. In fact He was formally rejected by them as indicated in that same chapter, especially at verses 15 and 23.

Whereupon He now as formally rejects the nation:

- first, in the type of the barren fig tree (21:17-19);
- secondly, in the series of three parables which follow (21:28-22:14)

- the two sons,
- the wicked husbandmen, and
- the marriage of the king's son;

and thirdly, in formal speech (23:38, 39).

Is it not stirring to our faith and hope to notice in connection with this rejection that He refers, inferentially at least, to His second coming to set up the kingdom, when Israel will be ready to receive Him as the prophets have spoken, and when at last they shall say, "**Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.**"

#### **IV. Sacrifice of the Messiah, Chapters 24-27**

This division of the Gospel begins with our Lord's discourse concerning His second coming.

His nation having rejected Him, and He having rejected His nation, at least for the time being, He now addresses Himself to His disciples, turning their faces as well as His own to the future, and, what the event has proven to be, a distant future.

The discourse on His second coming practically covers chapters 24 and 25, and while it is confessedly somewhat hard to understand in every point, yet our study of the Old Testament prophecies should enable us to grasp its main outlines.

It begins with His desire to answer the disciples' question, or questions, in the opening verses of chapter 24, after they had left the Temple with Him for the last time.

He does this in several parts:

In the first place, He apparently describes, in outline, the intervening events between His departure and His second coming, which will culminate with the end of the age (24:1-14).

In the next place, He describes in outline, the culminating events in the city of Jerusalem at the time of His coming (vv. 15-28).

Then follows a description of the actual event itself, His second coming (vv. 29-31).

Perhaps more obscurity pervades the rest of His answer than what precedes it, obscurity, that is, as to the precise place in time which it fits. And yet it may prove a fairly good "working hypothesis" for the present, if we regard it as giving us an outline exhibit of the condition of the world and of Christendom at the period of His coming.

For example, we have the condition of the world set before us very clearly in 24:36-41, and as some think, the condition of the Christian ministry in verses 42-51.

The parable of the virgins following (25:1-13), is a picture of the church perhaps, though of this I am not certain, while the parable of the talents succeeding it exhibits very clearly the principles on which rewards will be adjudicated to the faithful in that day. Whether these "rewards" are to

be regarded as applying to the faithful in Israel or the church, I cannot say with definiteness, but in either event the same principle doubtless applies.

The judgment of the nations under the figure of the sheep and the goats, which concludes the discourse (25:31-46), coincides, I believe, with the teachings of the Old Testament prophets with which we are familiar. These prophets taught us that at the close of this age Jerusalem would again be occupied by Israel though at first in an unconverted state, and that the nations of the Roman Empire would again besiege her federated under the lead of the Antichrist, and at this time the Messiah would interpose on her behalf, destroying her enemies and delivering her.

I feel persuaded that the judgment here referred to as falling on the living nations is that judgment. That it is not the judgment at the end of the world, for example, and mentioned in Revelation 20, but the judgment at the end of the present age when JESUS comes to set up His earthly kingdom with Israel as its center. The nations thus judged are not necessarily the heathen nations, but the nations of Christendom, the Roman world, which are judged, it will be perceived, not on the ground of individual belief or unbelief in the Saviour, but on their national treatment of "**these my brethren**," i. e., Israel, the brethren of CHRIST after the flesh. Israel with all her faults and blemishes is the apple of GOD's eye, and woe must befall the nation which lays a hand upon her.

Thus far we have been dwelling especially on CHRIST's discourse on His second coming, which was in a sense necessary to be revealed to His disciples before His sacrifice was really consummated. This discourse closes with chapter 25, and the offering of Himself as a sacrifice takes place in chapters 26-27.

The events of these chapters, deeply important as they are in themselves, do not call for extended notice.

They include the story of the last Passover, the agony in Gethsemane, the betrayal of Judas, the trial, the crucifixion, death and burial; but attention is particularly called to the number of instances in which Matthew, true to his distinctive mission to the Jew, emphasizes the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy at every step of the way, either in his own words or by recording those of the Saviour bearing upon the subject.

## **V. Triumph of the Messiah, Chapter 28**

The triumph of the Messiah is usually employed to describe the last great division of Matthew's Gospel.

The two great facts under this head are His resurrection from the dead and His commission to the disciples to disciple all nations.

As to the last named fact, there are those who think it was practically a commission to make a further offer of the kingdom to Israel, rather than a commission to call the church into being.

The calling of the church, they would maintain, did not take place until the beginning of Paul's ministry, to whom the revelation of the church was especially made known. They would

maintain that up until that time, or to speak more particularly, the era of the martyrdom of Stephen, Israel had another chance to receive the kingdom by receiving the King now testified to as risen from the dead, but their continued obstinacy closed the door of opportunity against them at the crisis referred to, and the new regime of the church, or the body of CHRIST, then began in earnest.

I am not prepared to endorse this teaching without qualification, and yet a reference to it should not be omitted.

~ end of Lesson 1 ~

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