

05. The coming of God's kingdom : What it means to be a disciple
Part 1. Matthew 4:23 - 5:48



Matthew 4:23

Jesus the teacher & healer

Introduction to teaching (5-7) and 'healing'(8-9)

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Matthew 4:24 (compare Mark 1:28 and Luke 6:18)

So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them.

Matthew 4:25 (compare Mark 3:7-8)

And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the *Decapolis*, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.



Origen, early in the third century, adds some details:

‘The first gospel to be written was that according to Matthew, once a tax collector but later an apostle of Jesus Christ; he published it for those who had come to faith from Judaism, and it was composed in Hebrew.’ (quoted by Eusebius in his History VI,25,4).

Jerome, late fourth century, writes (Of Illustrious Men, 3).

‘Matthew, who is also called Levi, a former tax collector, then an apostle, first composed a gospel of Christ in Judea, for the sake of those who had come to faith from the circumcision, in Hebrew letters and words. It is not known with certainty who subsequently translated it into Greek. The Hebrew text itself is still preserved to this day in the library at Caesarea’(Not extant).

Most scholars judge that the Greek ‘Matthew’ draws on Mark’s Gospel and a document which contained sayings of Jesus. This may be Matthew’s Hebrew text.

Matthew 4:23-25

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

His fame spread through-out all Syria ... And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Matthew 5:1 – 7:27 Teaching on Discipleship

Matthew 7:28-29

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Mark 1:21

Jesus entered the synagogue and taught.

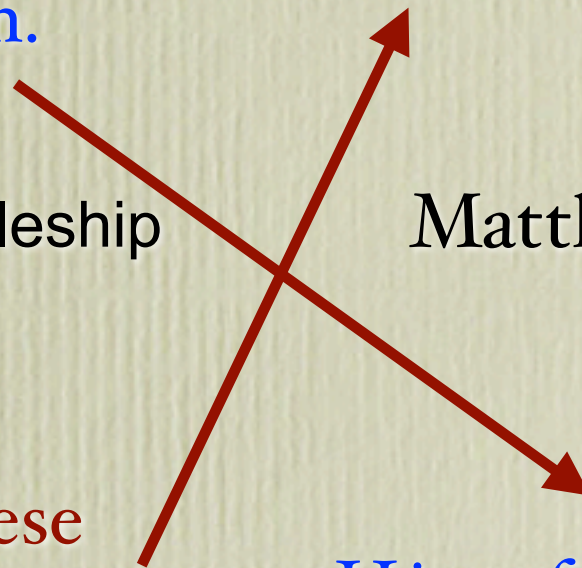
Mark 1:22

They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Matthew omits Mark 1:23-27

Mark 1:28

His fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.



Jesus' Teaching on Discipleship - Matthew 5-7

Matthew 5:1-2 (compare [Luke 6:17, 20](#))

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the [mountain](#);
and when he sat down, his [disciples](#) came to him.
He began to speak, and taught them, saying:

For Matthew the mountain is the place of prayer (14:23), of healings (15:29), of revelation (17:1; 28:16), and of teaching (24:3).

Moses' ascent of Sinai (Exodus 19:3, 12; 24:15, 18; 34:1-4)

Matthew 5:3-10 (compare Luke 6:20-23)

Blessed and happy are the poor in spirit, theirs **is** the kingdom of heaven.

[μακάριος] [אַשְׁכְּחַ]

Blessed and happy are those who mourn, they **will** be comforted.

Blessed and happy are the meek, they **will** inherit the earth.

Blessed and happy are those who
hunger and thirst for righteousness, they **will** be filled.

Blessed and happy are the merciful, they **will** receive mercy.

Blessed and happy are the pure in heart, they **will** see God.

Blessed and happy are those who make peace, they **will** be called 'sons' of God.

Blessed and happy are those who are
persecuted because of righteousness theirs **is** the kingdom of heaven

Matthew 5:3

‘Blessed and happy are the poor [1st] in spirit [1st],
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ (4:17, 23)

‘Blessed and happy (ἡ ψυχὴ/μακάριος) are those who trust in God.’
(Psalm 2:12).

‘The Lord takes delight in his people.
He crowns the poor with salvation’ (Psalm 149:4).

Matthew’s focus is on the special joy which we experience when we welcome God’s blessing. Situations that could so easily be destructive are rendered meaningful by our union with God.

Poor in spirit - see Psalm 131 - Embracing dependence

Matthew 5:4

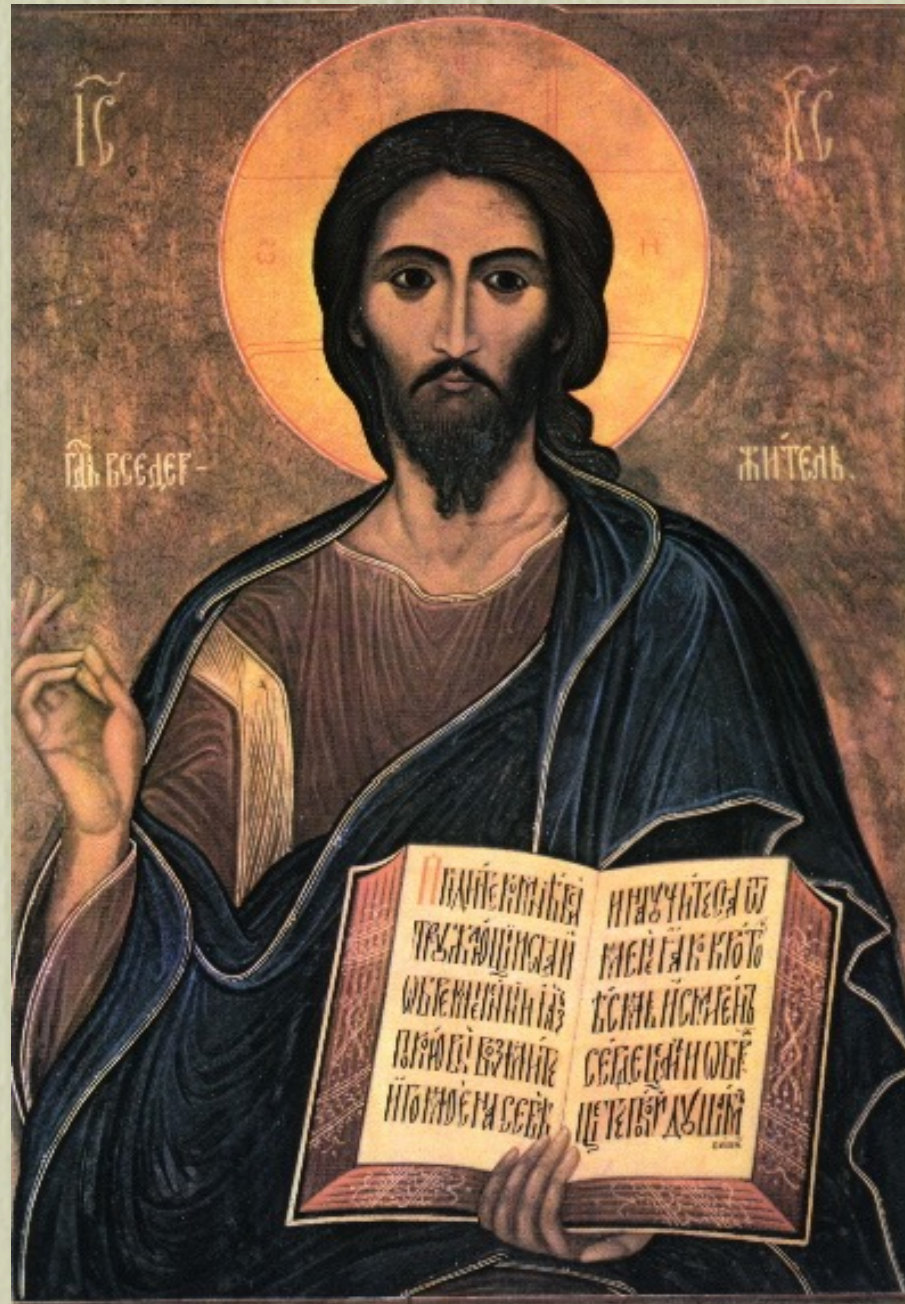
‘Blessed and happy are those who mourn, they **will** be comforted.’

Isaiah 61:1-3

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners ...
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion –
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

Matthew 5:5

‘Blessed and happy are the meek, they **will** inherit the earth.’



Matthew 11:29

Matthew 5:6

Blessed and happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
they **will** be filled.

Note Jesus' first words in Matthew's Gospel, spoken to the Baptist:
'It is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness'(3:15).
(right wise)

Obedience to the will of God

Matthew 5:7

‘Blessed and happy are the merciful, they **will** receive mercy.

‘Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’ (Matthew 9:13).

‘If you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’
you would not have condemned the guiltless’ (Matthew 12:7).

‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill,
and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law:
justice and mercy and faith’ (Matthew 23:23).

The Greek word ἐλεος is used to translate three different Hebrew words.

1. **ḥanan**, which speaks of God's gracious care and all the ways in which God looks after us:

‘**Gracious** is the Lord, and righteous’ (Psalm 116:5).

‘The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be **gracious** to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace’ (Numbers 6:24-26).

2. **rah̄am**, which speaks of the tenderness of God's love:

‘I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord, the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, because of all that the Lord has done for us, and the great favour to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his **tender mercy**, according to the abundance of his covenant love’ (Isaiah 63:7).

‘The covenant love of the Lord never ceases, his **tender mercies** never come to an end; they are new every morning’ (Lamentations 3:22-23).

3. There are innumerable texts in which ἐλεος translates **hesed** which places the focus on God's faithfulness to the commitment of love which he has made to us:

‘I will not take my **steadfast love** from David’ (2 Samuel 7:15).

‘I the Lord your God show **steadfast love** to the thousandth generation’ (Exodus 20:6).

‘With everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer ... my **steadfast love** shall not depart from you’ (Isaiah 54:8,10).

Matthew 5:8

‘Blessed and happy are the pure in heart [1st], they will see God.’

καθαρος

καρδία

horao

Psalms 24:3-6

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?

And who shall stand in his holy place?

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts ...

They will receive blessing from the Lord,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.

Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Matthew 5:9

Blessed and happy are those who make peace,
they **will** be called sons of God.

This is developed later as including loving one's enemies (5:44-48)

Matthew 5:10-12

‘Blessed and happy are those who are persecuted because of righteousness theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed and happy are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely because of me.

Keep on rejoicing [present imperative] and being glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Colossians 1:24

‘I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and I am completing what is lacking in my flesh of Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

Matthew 5:13 (Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34-35)

You are the salt of the world; but if salt has lost its taste,
how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything,
but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

[salt: season, preserve, consecrate]

Matthew 5:14-16 (compare Mark 4:21 and Luke 8:16 and 11:33-36)

You are the light (see 4:16) of the world. A city built on a mountain cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel, but on the lamp stand where it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father [first use of 17 in 'sermon', and 44 in Gospel] in heaven.

'Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge' (1 Peter 2:12).

Matthew 5:17-20

Do not think that I have come to annul the law or the prophets;
I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. (see 3:15)

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away,
not a single iota, not one stroke, will pass from the law
until all is accomplished (γένηται - come to be). (compare Luke 16:17)

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.

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes
and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom [6th] of heaven.

Getting to the heart of the commandments

1. Matthew 5:21-26 respect for others & reconciliation

Matthew 5:21-22

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times,
“You shall not **murder**.” [5th commandment - Deuteronomy 5:17]

Whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.

But I say to you: Everyone who is **angry** with a brother or sister
will be liable to judgment;

Whoever **insults** a brother or sister, will be liable to the Sanhedrin.

Whoever says “You **fool**” will be liable to the hell [Gehenna] of fire.

2 Thessalonians 1:9-10

⁹These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at on that day among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

The consequences of obstinate rejection of God's will and God's love are described in the starkest terms: 'eternal destruction' and 'separation from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might'. Paul seems to be drawing upon the refrain of Isaiah about those who 'hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty' (Isaiah 2:10,19,21).

These consequences are the exact opposite of the salvation and communion with Jesus which was the main theme of Paul's first letter (1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11).

We are reminded of the last words of the Book of Isaiah: ‘They shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh’(Isaiah 66:24).

When speaking of the ‘unquenchable fires of hell’ (Mark 9:43), where ‘soul and body are destroyed’ (Matthew 10:18), Jesus referred to ‘gehenna’. This is the valley to the south of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 7:30-33; 19:1-15; 32:35), where the fires of the enemy camps during the siege of Jerusalem, and the fires of fever suffered by those left to perish there on the field of battle, made a lasting impression on the psyche of the people of Jerusalem. Gehenna became a symbol of the fire of divine judgment on those who ‘have rebelled against me’.

Jesus speaks of hell for there is no love in failing to alert us to the consequences of rejecting God's love. It is important, however, that we note that in the same breath Jesus tells us not to be afraid of God. Hell is not a punishment inflicted upon us from the outside by God. It is what we do to ourselves when we obstinately reject God's saving love. Let us listen to Jesus:

‘Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows’ (Matthew 10:28-31).

Punishment for sin is always self-inflicted. God's judgment cannot but declare things to be the way they really are, but we are to imagine God making his judgment as Jesus did when he wept over the city that he loved so much (Luke 19:41-44).

We are exhorted to look carefully at the direction our life is taking, at the decisions we make and decline to make, and at our priorities. God's unconditional love does not take away from us the possibility of our refusing his love, nor does it remove the consequences that follow from such a refusal. We can create a hell here for others and for ourselves. There is no reason to suppose that death will automatically reverse this. It matters what we do. It matters now and it matters eternally: 'What will it profit you to gain the whole world but forfeit your life? Or what will you give in return for your life?' (Matthew 16:26).

Matthew 5:23-24

So when you are offering your gift at the altar,
if you remember that your brother or sister
has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar
and go; **first** be **reconciled** to your brother or sister,
and then come and offer your gift. [see Isaiah 1:12-17]

Matthew 5:25-26 : judgment (compare Luke 12:58-59)

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way
to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge,
and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. **Truly**
I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

2. Matthew 5:27-30 - respect for others & relationships

Matthew 5:27-28

You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery.

[6th commandment - Deuteronomy 5:18, 25]

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The commandment concerns not only action, but the human heart and the choices we make/ our decisions.

Matthew 5:29-30 (Mark 9:43, 47)

If your right eye causes you to sin,
tear it out and throw it away; (see Matthew 18:8-9)
it is better for you to lose one of your members
than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin,
cut it off and throw it away;
it is better for you to lose one of your members
than for your whole body to go into hell.

We are not to use the eye or the hand for sinful purposes

3. Matthew 5:31-32 : Divorce [see Matthew 19:3-9]

(Mark 10:11-12 and [Luke 16:18](#))

‘It was also said, ”Whoever dismisses his wife,
must give her a certificate of divorce.” [Deuteronomy 24:1-4]

But I say to you that anyone who dismisses his wife,
except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery;
and whoever marries a dismissed woman commits adultery.

‘Unchastity’ (πορνεία) = Marriages not recognised by Leviticus 18 ?

Adultery (Shammai) - marriage already destroyed

See Paul : 1 Corinthians 7:10-16

4. Matthew 5:33-37 - respect for truth

Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times,
“You shall not commit perjury,
but carry out the oaths you have made to the Lord.”

[8th commandment - Deuteronomy 5:20]

But I say to you (plural), Do not swear at all , (compare James 5:12)
neither by heaven for it ‘is God’s throne’ (concern for God’s holiness)
nor by the earth for it ‘is his footstool.’

nor toward Jerusalem, for it ‘is the city of the great king’;
nor shall you swear by your head,

for you cannot make a single hair white or black.

Let your word be “Yes, Yes” or “No, No”;
anything more than this is of evil. (see Matthew 26:63-64, Jesus’ silence)

‘Speak [do] the truth in love’ (Ephesians 4:15)

5. Matthew 5:38-42 : call to meekness, to non-violence

You have heard that it was said,

“An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” (Deuteronomy 19:21)

But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; (Luke 6:29)

and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, (Luke 6:30)

give your cloak as well; (see Exodus 22:26-27; Deuteronomy 24:12-13)

and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.

Give to everyone who begs from you,

and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

‘See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all’ (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

6. Matthew 5:43

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour (Leviticus 19:18) and hate your enemy.” (see Sirach 12)

(But see)

‘When you come upon your enemy’s ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back. When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free’ (Exodus 23:4-5).

‘If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the LORD will reward you. ’ (Proverbs 25:21-22).

6. Matthew 5:44-48 (Luke 6:27-28, 32-36)

But I say to you, Love (present imperative) [ἀγαπάω] your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be 'sons'
of your Father in heaven;

for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good,
and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing
than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect [τέλειός].

(Luke: 'compassionate: οἰκτίρων)