

Miscellaneous Gospel Discussion Posts

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Matthew - Outline

OUTLINE. Matt. 4:23, "Jesus went about all Galilee, [TEACHING:] teaching in their synagogues, and [PREACHING:] preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and [HEALING:] healing all manner of sickness." And Matt. 9:35, "Jesus went about all the cities, ... [TEACHING:] teaching in their synagogues, and [PREACHING:] preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and [HEALING:] healing every sickness."

BEFORE THE REJECTION. Matthew 1-4, PREACHING the Gospel of the Kingdom: "From that time Jesus began to preach, ... Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. 4:17. Preaching, εὐαγγέλιον, means to proclaim an announcement. Matthew 5-7, TEACHING in Their Synagogues. You can only teach the Law in synagogues. "Thou shalt not kill. ... Thou shalt not commit adultery," Matt. 5:21, 27. Matthew 8-10, HEALING All: "[He] healed all ... that it might be fulfilled," Matt. 8:16-17.

THE REJECTION. In Matthew 11-12, all three parts of Jesus' ministry were rejected. Matt. 11, PREACHING. "They repented

not,” Matt. 11:20. Matt. 12:1-21, TEACHING. “They asked him, ... Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him,” Matt. 12:10. Matt. 12:22-37, HEALING. “This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub,” Matt. 12:24. Matt: 12:38-50, Summary. “[HEALING] An evil ... generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given. ... [PREACHING:] Nineveh ... repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. ... [TEACHING:] The queen of the south ... came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here,” Matt. 12:39-42.

AFTER THE REJECTION. And in Matthew 13ff. Jesus stopped TEACHING plainly and started hiding the truth via parables, “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not,” Matt. 13:13. He stopped HEALING “all” and publicly and started healing only some based on faith, and in remote places or apart in private, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief,” Matt. 13:58. And he stopped PREACHING the gospel of the kingdom and started announcing the gospel of Messiah, “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must ... be killed and be raised again the third day,” Matt. 16:31.

Matthew - If Jesus is the Messiah, why didn't the kingdom come?

I think Jesus didn't set up the kingdom because he couldn't. God can't do anything that is illogical or that violates his own nature or will. So, being a non-Calvinist, I don't think it's logically possible for God to cause someone else to genuinely, authentically, and non-coercively make any particular choice, regardless of the technical double-talk that says as long as he makes you willing, it's not forcing. And his will is that he won't set up the kingdom until the Jewish people ask him to, “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” Matt. 23:29.

John and Jesus both stipulated Israel had to meet one condition before the kingdom could be set up: an organized national repentance like in Nineveh. “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching, ... Repent ye: for the kingdom of

heaven is at hand,” Matt. 3:1-2. “From that time Jesus began to preach, ... Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” Matt. 4:17. This is “the gospel [good news] of the kingdom,” Matt. 4:23. Though some individual Israelites repented, Israel did not. That’s why the focus on Jesus’ rebuke for his rejection is on cities, not individuals. “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!” Matt. 11:20-21.

Israel was supposed to repent like Nineveh did. “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here,” Matt. 12:41. “The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands,” Jonah 3:5-8. I’m sure there were lots of people in Nineveh that were personally insincere, but the city as a whole was sincere, and God accepted their repentance and spared the city.

Someday, Israel will perform the same kind of organized, national repentance as Nineveh, and then Messiah will return. “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son. ... In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, ... and the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart [etc.]. ... In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. ... Behold, the day of the Lord cometh. ... For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be

taken. ... Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those [Gentile] nations [Jesus is a Jew], as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. ... And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints [us] with thee. ... And the Lord shall be king over all the earth," Zech. 12:10-13:1; 14:1-9.

So, is God at the mercy of Israel's will to accomplish his will? No, but I don't think he will accomplish it by causing Jewish people to choose to believe, but rather by providentially controlling the time and place of each person's birth (like he does to make sure "even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace," Rom. 11:5). He will allow 2/3's of the Jewish people to die, unfortunately, so the remainder will be mostly believers that proclaim the national repentance. "It shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein," Zech. 13:8. For any remaining Jewish unbelievers "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels. ... I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and [but] they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye [the whole nation] shall know that I am the Lord," Ez. 20:37-38.

Matthew - Why were there so many demons in Israel during Jesus' time?

Rev. 12:4-5, "There appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman, ... and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, ... being with child. ... And ... behold a great red dragon, ... and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." Why were there so many demon possessed people in Israel when Messiah came? How many do we run into today? Satan dispersed his forces just before Messiah's birth to try to destroy him and his work. Everywhere Jesus went, he ran into them. But Satan had prepared a secret weapon by concentrating a whole legion of

his forces in one man. Jesus would be expecting another normal exorcism, not realizing he had walked into a Satanic fortress. Satan's plan didn't work at all. "When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him," Mark 5:9. :) Praise the Lord!

Mark – About the Author

I think Mark is quite sensitive about suffering and what other people are feeling. I don't have one favorite passage to mention, besides the one I mentioned in Discussion 1, but in most of Mark's passages, he adds details the other writers omit, which is interesting since it's a shorter book. He seems to be horrified by peoples' suffering, and also afraid to suffer himself. Thus, the emphasis in his gospel about being or not being afraid, and the story about the man fleeing away naked (and obviously in fear) when Jesus was arrested.

Some examples: I think only Mark mentions the man possessed with a legion of demons was "always, night and day, ... in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones" (5:5). Horrible, right? Also, it was about 2000 (5:13) swine that ran violently down and drowned. Wow! Horrific!

While both Mark and Luke said the woman with the flow of blood had spent all her money, only Mark adds she "had suffered many things of many physicians" (5:25), and that she "felt in her body that she was healed" (5:29).

He describes the intimacy with which Jesus healed the deaf and dumb man. "He took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said ...," 7:34. Wow, germs! For the blind man that saw men as trees walking, Jesus "took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him" (8:22) etc.

Mark's the only one who mentioned about Peter during the transfiguration, "for he wist not what to say, for they were sore afraid" (9:6). He mentioned when the disciples couldn't heal the man's son during the transfiguration, that there were

scribes there questioning (stone the false prophets?), and when the people saw him return they “running to him, saluted him” (9:15). “Hi Jesus! Look at this!” He gave a little more description of the boy’s suffering, than the other writers. “He teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away. ... The spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. ... Ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. ... The father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief! ... He was as one dead, insomuch that many said, He is dead,” Mark 9:14-26. Mark was terrified.

When Jesus told them he would be killed, Mark adds they not only didn’t understand, but also “were afraid to ask him” (9:32). When Jesus asked what they disputed in the way, only Mark says, “but they held their peace” (9:34), like guilty children, because they had disputed who would be greatest. So, it would be fitting if this gospel ended with the women at the tomb not telling anyone “for they were afraid” (16:8).

When Jesus said to allow the little children to come to him, only Mark mentions “he took them up in his arms” (10:16). When the rich ruler asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life, only Mark mentions “came one running, and kneeled to him” (10:17), and more importantly, after he said he had kept all the commandments, before Jesus told him to sell everything, only Mark says, “then Jesus beholding him loved him” (10:21).

Pink says God doesn’t love the non-elect. “One of the most popular beliefs of the day is that God loves everybody, and the very fact that it is so popular with all classes ought to be enough to arouse the suspicions. ... With the exception of John 3:16 [“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son”], not once in the four Gospels do we read of the Lord Jesus, the perfect teacher, telling sinners that God loves them! ... Proverbs 8:17: “I love them that love me.” [Pink, Does God Love Everyone, Kindle 11-38]. But it certainly doesn’t look like this rich guy was one of the elect, and yet “Jesus beholding him, loved him” (Mark 10:21).

When Jesus assures the disciples that everyone who left houses or family for him will receive a hundredfold, only Mark adds the details they'll receive "houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands" and he adds "with persecutions" (10:30). Only Mark says that as they followed Jesus up to Jerusalem, "Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid" (10:32). And when Jesus healed the blind men near Jericho, only Mark mentions Jesus said "Go thy way" and so they apparently decided to make his way their way when they "followed Jesus in the way" (10:52).

The amazing thing, if Mark received his information from Peter, as some 'church fathers' maintained, does Peter, the brash apostle that would jump on the water to walk with Jesus, or jump in the water to pull the net to shore, sound like someone who would pass on all the info about being afraid, or the woman feeling healed within herself, or Jesus picking up the children in his arms? It's not impossible. Jesus had good reasons to choose Peter to lead the early church, so he had to be a complex man of both strength and tenderness. But on the other hand, God only preserves his Word "to all generations" (Ps. 100). It's Satan and the Roman Catholic church who determined what history and church father documents survived to our time. Mark's account sounds like he was there, as one of the apostles (there were 12, what did the rest do?). I guess Mark could have asked Peter, and drawn out more detail on the parts he was interested in. Wow, Peter! The poor swine! How many were there, do you think? But God recorded the gospels anonymously, and we can't depend on church history for the missing gospel details, any more than the Jews can depend on the oral law to know God's will.

Mark - My Favorite Verse

One of my favorite verses is, "He ... commanded that something should be given her to eat," Mark 5:43, because it shows Jesus' loving concern for the young girl he just restored to life.

Luke - The Pharisee and the Publican: Self-righteousness vs. Trusting in Messiah

Luke 18:9-14. "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹²I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

It says the Pharisee "prayed thus with himself," because he wasn't actually praying to God, or at least not a prayer God would hear. He may actually have sinned less and done more good deeds than the Publican, but I like to fill two glasses with water, one mostly full and one mostly empty as an illustration of the two men. One has a lot of righteousness and only a little sin, but it's only the one whose sins are forgiven who is counted as completely righteous, regardless of few sins or many. Messiah suffered in our places to bear the penalties of our sins so we don't have to ever be judged for them, but it only counts for us if we accept him as our representative, or we can go through the judgment based on our own merits. But if our sins are not forgiven, few or many, we will be condemned as guilty, instead of justified as innocent. The Pharisee "stood [right up front, apparently] and prayed," whereas the publican stood afar off and wouldn't even look up, but smote his breast, saying "God be merciful to me a sinner." That's the humility required for a person to trust in Messiah vs. having the pride of self-righteousness to think they're good enough to go to heaven.

Responding to a comment on the above:

You're right we can all be humbler than we are. But like Paul said fairly often, I want to be sure "you know" (1 Cor. 11:3) something, simply and clearly. Not everything is black and white, but some foundation things are. This passage can be

applied many ways, but it's interpretation and main message seems to be about justification by faith. Jesus said, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Luke 18:4).

What is often not clearly taught in churches today is the message of John and Paul that there are some things all Christians (born-again believers) and only Christians walk in; and there are some things all non-Christians and only non-Christians walk in. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. 1:9.

The issue of self-righteousness regarding justification is an easy one to classify, because every person who trusts in their own self-righteousness for salvation is not a Christian, because they haven't received "the righteousness of God," (Rom. 3:21ff). And every person who doesn't trust in their own righteousness either is, or immediately becomes, a Christian. And once they become a Christian, they can't stop being a Christian, so they can never trust in their own self-righteousness for salvation again.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," 1 John 1:8. Of course, no unbeliever says exactly those words. They say "Sure, I'm a sinner. Everyone is. I'm not as bad as some people. I do a lot of good things." Just like the Pharisee, they don't realize how significant their sins are. (Of course, the message of 1 John, which is about the simple black and white truth of Christian vs. non-Christian has lost almost all usefulness to the church today because of the predominant, murky in-fellowship vs. out-of-fellowship Christian interpretation.)

Like 1 John's message of joy, "these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4), knowing that all and only non-Christians are self-righteous regarding justification, means we know all Christians will continue to have faith in

God's righteousness provided in Messiah, which means we know our eternal security is guaranteed! Joy!

I know you were sharing the practical application out of the passage for our benefit as Christians, not to be self-righteous like the Pharisee, just so we don't forget, interpretation-wise, the Pharisee in the parable is an unbeliever, and the publican is a newly saved believer who "went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Luke 18:4).

I guess being self-righteous regarding salvation might be an example of a broader principle that "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14), which would apply to Christians and non-Christians. But the point I'm trying to make is it's impossible for us, as born-again, regenerate, believers, in union with Messiah and God, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, to commit the exact sin the Pharisee committed in this parable, thank God! That's what the perseverance of the saints is all about. We can never stop trusting in God's righteousness once we have done so.

John 9, the man born blind, is colorful because it narrates everyone's thoughts.

When the neighbors asked, "Isn't this he that sat and begged," there's the classic, "Some said, This is he. Others said, He is like him. But he said, I am he!" And when he was surrounded by more educated and politically powerful men who tried to intimidate him into agreeing with their theology that would slander Jesus, he gave the classic, "This one thing I know," statement.

But this passage is mainly about judgment. What kind of men would work so hard to try to find a way to condemn Jesus for doing such good things? When they asked the healed man the second time how Jesus healed him, he said, "Ye did not hear." Do you need your healed from deafness? "Herein is a marvelous thing." Your trying to discount my healing is more amazing than my healing.

Jesus said he came so blind men like that man could see; and so men that saw and rejected the light could be pronounced blind. He said he, the Messiah, is the good shepherd that nurtures the sheep, and the Pharisees and priests are thieves and robbers, false shepherds and hirelings in it for the money. They are men who want to kill, and soon will kill, the one who is one with the Father and through whom the Father does beautiful works.

But the reason for their response was explained a few chapters earlier. "The world ... hateth [me] because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil," John 7:7. "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world," John 8:23. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him," John 8:44.

Response to another post.

Yep. "Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. ... I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things, ... for I do always those things that please him. ... If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John 8:15-16, 28-32. It might seem constraining to do and say nothing except what God says to do and say, but that's true freedom, and the only life worth living.

"Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Messiah, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me," John 10:24-25.

"You want me to tell you if I'm the Messiah? I already told you. But how about this: I give [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and

my Father are one," John 10:27-31. "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him," John 10:32.

Messiah Is the Bridge

"No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John 1:18. In his life we saw "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man," John 1:51. He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," John 6:51. "He said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. ... If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God," John 8:23-42. "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father," John 16:27-28. When his work of redemption was accomplished through his death and resurrection he could say, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God," John 20:17.