

Check-in

Follow-up on last week:

- ✱ “Aha moments”
- ✱ Questions *[AMA]*
- ✱ Comments
- ✱ Reflections

What Did Jesus Really Say & Do —“According to” *Matthew*?

- * March 12 - April 16, 2019
- * 10:00am - 11:30am
- * ~4 chapters/week

How to Read the Bible (Matthew 15)

- **1** Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, **2** "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat."
- **3** He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"
- **4** For God said, "Honor your father and your mother," and, "Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die."
- **5** But you say that whoever tells father or mother, "Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God," then that person need not honor the father.
- **6** So, for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God.
- **7** You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: **8** "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; **9** in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." "
- **10** Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: **11** it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles."

How to Read the Bible (Matthew 15)

- Religious leaders: “Why do your disciples break the *tradition* of the *elders*? For they do not wash their hands before they eat.” [Authority: *tradition*]
- Jesus: “Why do you break the *commandment of God* for the sake of your tradition?”
 - For God said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.’
 - But you say that whoever tells father or mother, ‘Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,’ then that person need not honor the father.
 - So, for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God.”

How to Read the Bible (Matthew 15)

- Latin: “*Cui bono?*” (“To whose benefit?”; literally, “as a benefit to whom?”)
- Who benefits from this interpretation?
 - Rich & powerful? - solidification (or worsening) of inequality
 - “Tradition” often means *status quo*
 - Or: new hope/life for poor and marginalized?
- If you’re not at the table, you may be on the menu! (“*Nothing about us, without us!*”)

How to Read the Bible (Matthew 15)

~ Brian McLaren ~

- “Two kinds of Christianity, along with two kinds of Islam, Judaism, and every other religion and non-religion too:
- one of social control and one of social transformation ...
- one to hold people down, one to lift them up ...
- one an opiate to pacify people into compliance, the other a stimulant to empower people to imagine a better world, a better future, a better life -- giving them the courage to live in peaceful defiance of violent, corrupt, and greedy powers-that-be.
- Neither kind is perfect, and both kinds contain good and sincere people.
- But if those who use God and religion for social control are left to define faith, then the religion they define will be a false one, an ugly one, an idolatrous one.”

How to Read the Bible (Matthew 15)

- Matthew's Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13: “You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’”
- Original context: 800 years before the historical Jesus when Assyria is threatening to attack on Judah.
- Is Matthew's Jesus misreading the Bible?
- Or is “How to read the Bible?” less clear-cut than we might have thought? [polyvalent]

How to Read the Bible (Matthew 15)

- Jesus continues with his own teaching: “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” [*banned books lists, censored films, etc.*]
- Note Matthew the Editor’s choice next to challenge Jesus to “walk his talk”! [*“Physician, heal thyself!” (Luke 4:23)*]
- “Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.’
- But he did not answer her at all.” [*Good Samaritan only in Luke*]
- The disciples, in turn, exacerbate the situation, encouraging Jesus to “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.”

How to Read the Bible (Matthew 15)

- Nevertheless, she persisted: Calling Jesus “Lord” a second time, she came and knelt before him, saying, ‘Help me.’”
- Jesus: “It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.”
- Nevertheless, she persisted: calling Jesus “Lord” a third time — “Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”
- Jesus: “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”
- Matthew tells us, “her daughter was healed instantly.”
- Less: whether what other people do is defiling
- More: ways we may be defiling ourselves in the times that we choose not to act with compassion and mercy.

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built? (Matthew 16)

- 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
- 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."
- 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.
- 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built? (Matthew 16)

- 21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.
- 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."
- 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."
- 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
- 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

“You are **Peter**, and on this **rock** I will build my church.” (Matthew 16)

- “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.”
- pun: Πέτρος/rock [*Petra*]
- Cotton Patch Version: “Rocky”
- Reflects Peter’s position in *Matthew’s* branch of the emerging Christian movement more than the words of the historical Jesus.



“You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my **church**.”

(Matthew 16)

- Many scholars: historical Jesus never said “church.”
- Four times in canonical Gospels (*all in Matthew*): once in Mt 16 & three more times in Mt 18 on if someone sins against you.
- Many times in Paul - first of those letters 10 years after Jesus’ death.
- *ekklesia* (pre-Jesus, Greco-Roman political term): “duly summoned” civic assembly of citizens in Greek cities.”
- Calling a gathering of Christians an “*ekklesia*” implied that the way of Jesus is an alternative to the way of Rome.
- //: Calling Jesus “lord” was a political statement that “Caesar is *not* lord.”

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built? Looking **Backward** at Mt 1-15 (*Matthew 16*)

- **Chapter 4: First appearance of Matthew's Peter**
- Jesus has left his hometown of Nazareth, and while walking along the Sea of Galilee, he sees two fisherman brothers: Andrew and, our person of interest, Peter.
- Jesus recruits them, according to Matthew at least, with the apparently compelling one-liner, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."
- So far, Peter doesn't seem that unique: *brother recruited too*
- Next verse, Jesus recruits *two other brothers* (James and John, the sons of Zebedee), who are *also fishermen*.
- At this point, Peter seems, at best, a common rock.

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built? Looking **Backward** at Mt 1-15 (*Matthew 16*)

- **Chapter 8**: Second appearance of Matthew's Peter
 - Jesus visits the house of Peter's mother-in-law and heals her of a fever.
 - If Peter was the "first pope," then the first pope was married—the only way to get a mother-in-law!
- **Chapter 10**: Peter in a list of the twelve apostles.

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built?

Looking **Backward** at Mt 1-15 (*Matthew 16*)

- **Chapter 14**: Peter is singled out when he walks on water.
- Loses faith briefly and start to sink, causing Jesus to reach out his hand, catch Peter
- Perhaps here Peter is a bit of a *sedimentary* rock, easily chipped away.
- Matthew 14:33, “Those in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”
- Two chapters before Mt 16 in which Peter is declared a rock, all the apostles declared Jesus to be the Son of God.
- [**Matthew 15**, Peter requests that Jesus, “Explain this parable to us.” (Another instance of Peter standing out as a spokesperson of sort for the other disciples.)]

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built?

Looking **Backward** at Mt 1-15 (*Matthew 16*)

- Many interpreters: Jesus singles out Peter and calls him the rock *because* Peter speaks up to say, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”
- Other disciples: Jesus is John the Baptizer or Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets
- Jesus: Peter, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but God in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.’”
- But: as we saw in Mt 14, Peter is merely echoing what all the disciples had already said two chapters earlier after the walking on water episode that, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built? Looking **Backward** at Mt 1-15 (*Matthew 16*)

- Further Complication: immediately after being declared “*bedrock*”(?!), Peter messes up.
- Peter “took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him.”
- Jesus: substitutes a very different nickname than “Rock”—“Get behind me, *Satan*! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”
- “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?”

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built? (Matthew 16)

- Sarah Silverman: Sell the Vatican, Feed the World”
- Matthew 8:20, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built?

Looking **Forward** at Mt 17-28 (*Matthew 16*)

- **Matthew 17:** Transfiguration in which Peter is the one who speaks up for the other disciples and says to Jesus, “It is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”
- But Peter (along with other disciples) “fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.”

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built?

Looking **Forward** at Mt 17-28 (*Matthew 16*)

- Matthew 19: Peter again is the spokesperson among the disciples, asking Jesus, “If another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?”
- Jesus: “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.”
- A few verses later: excessively interested in the *quid pro quo* of what ultimate rewards he and the others are going to get for, in his case, leaving behind his fishing business to follow an impoverished, homeless rabbi
- vs: intrinsic value of Jesus way

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built?

Looking **Forward** at Mt 17-28 (*Matthew 16*)

- Matthew 26: Peter swears that he will never desert Jesus
 - only to deny Jesus three times that same night.
- Same chapter: also fails to stay awake while Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

On What Kind of Rock Is the Church Built?

(Matthew 16)

- All churches built using *human* rocks.
- Like Peter:
 - more often sinking in the water of our life as feeling like we are walking on water.
 - many times we fall to ground and are overcome by fear
 - or fall asleep when we are tasked with staying awake.

To such rocks have the keys to the kingdom of God been given

Same Scripture, Countless Interpretations (Matthew 17)

- **Mark 9:**

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." 32 But **they did not understand** what he was saying and were **afraid** to ask him.

- **Matthew 17:**

22 As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Human One is going to be betrayed into human hands, 23 and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they were **greatly distressed**.

[Matthew seems to soften possibility to make disciples less clueless]

Matthew 17: 22 As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Human One is going to be betrayed into human hands, 23 and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised.”

- Mt 16: (1) *anachronistic* “church” (2) “Rock” more about Peter in *Matthew’s community*, fifty years after historical Jesus.
- //: Most scholars argue that historical Jesus did not predict precise details about his death—and stories about crucifixion/resurrection reflect Christian theology that developed *after* Jesus’ death.
[Crossan: “*How many years was Easter Sunday?*”]
- Historical Jesus: More likely that Jesus might have talked about how actions like turning over the tables in the Temple during Passover could lead to a quick and likely fatal retaliation from the Roman Empire—but specific details more likely come from the early church and not from the historical Jesus
[*e.g., there would be no transcript of talk with Pilate*]

Matthew 17: 22 As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Human One is going to be betrayed into human hands, 23 and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised.”

1. **16:21** “From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised”
2. **Mt 17:22-23** - second of three places in Matthew in which Matthew’s Jesus is said to have predicted precise details of his own death.
3. **20:18-19**, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Human One will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised.”

Matthew 17: 22 As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “**The Human One** is going to be betrayed into human hands, 23 and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised.”

- **Common English Bible** consistently translates “Son of Man” as “The Human One.”

(See slides from Mark 8 on Walter Wink’s scholarship.)

- **CEB**: middle school reading level
- **NRSV**: high school reading level

Further comparisons:

commonenglishbible.com/explore/compare

NEW REVISED
STANDARD VERSION
FULLY REVISED & UPDATED

THE
HARPER
COLLINS
STUDY
BIBLE

INCLUDING APOCRYPHAL
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AND EXPANDED

THE JEWISH
ANNOTATED
NEW TESTAMENT



NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

For Further Study

- Paula Gooder, [Searching for Meaning: An Introduction to Interpreting the New Testament](#).
- Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, editor, [To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application](#). Revised and Expanded.
- Richard Elliott Friedman, [Who Wrote the Bible?](#)
- _____, [The Bible with Sources Revealed](#)

Keep Your Eye on the Ancient Interpreters

(Matthew 18)

- 15 “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.
- 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.
- 17 If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.
- 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

Keep Your Eye on the Ancient Interpreters

(Matthew 18)

General categories of methodologies:

1. “*behind the text*” - extrapolate the historical context
2. “*in the text*” - literary, narrative and rhetorical features
3. “*in front of the text*” - you and your community/context

None is superior or the “one, right, true meaning”

[Pluralism vs. Relativism]

["Texts don't mean, people mean with texts."]

["You are responsible."]

THE
BIBLE
AS IT WAS



James L. Kugel

HOW TO
READ
THE
BIBLE

*A Guide to Scripture,
Then and Now*

JAMES L.
KUGEL

AUTHOR OF *THE GOD OF OLD*

- orthodox Jewish heritage - “in front of the text” for today
- academic - “behind the text”

Ancient vs. Modern

Four Assumptions of Ancient Interpreters (300 BCE – 200 CE)

Modern Biblical Scholars (starting around 150 years ago)

Fundamentally **Cryptic**

Plain Sense
(unless clearly proven otherwise)

Lessons directed to **each reader** in their own day (“All”)

Not intended as eternally valid; meant for **original context**. (“Some, few”)

Perfectly Harmonious
(no contradictions or mistakes)

Contradicts itself and our current understanding (e.g., science)

Divinely Given

Trail of the Human Serpent

“Keep Your Eye on the Ancient Interpreters”

Check-out

What have *resonated* most with you: excited or disturbed?

- * “Aha moments”
- * Questions
- * Comments
- * Reflections