

MATTHEW INTERPRETED DISPENSATIONALLY

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This author has engaged in, as a profitable and exciting portion of his hermeneutical method, the practice of searching for Bible definitions for Bible terms, i.e. specific verses that define a theological term (or concept). One such pair of definitions concerns the titles, "Kingdom of God," and "Kingdom of Heaven." For the former, I Chronicles 29:11 is cited, demonstrating that God rules over, and is glorified in, all He has created. That does not demand that His perfect will is done in it all, for His Word reveals His plan, which includes His allowance of evil, for a time. This is contrary to the philosophical idea of Ying and Yang, found in Oriental religion. That latter term, found in Matthew 6:10 (interpreted in light of Isaiah 40:1-5 and Matthew 3:2), reveals a coming time when evil shall be deposed (if temporarily), and earth shall become like heaven. Evil once reared its head in the kingdom above, but was cast out. Sinister forces now have earth as their theatre of operations. When the Kingdom of God extends its will to earth, and the Sovereign Son rules over all, it will be clear that the Kingdom of Heaven has come to earth.

"Kingdom of Heaven," is used 32 times in 31 verses by Matthew. "Kingdom of God," is used 5 times. The word "kingdom" is used 17 other times without "of heaven" or "of God," utilizing words and phrases, as, "his," "gospel of," etc. "Kingdom of Heaven" is never used in the other three gospels, nor anywhere else in the whole Bible; only by Matthew. This is both significant support for, and a part of the foundation of, the view that Matthew wrote for the purpose of presenting Christ as King. He specifically is thinking of the earthly kingdom promised to David, in the Davidic Covenant (II Samuel 7). The kingdom that will bring the fulfillment of our Lord's petition in His model prayer, and impose His sovereignty upon a curse relieved earth.

The dispensational method of interpreting the scriptures is justified, and its validity demonstrated, very effectively in Matthew's gospel record—more so than by the other gospel writers' records. Vivid is the steady, transitional movement of Christ's ministry from Israel alone, to gentile inclusion; from His message of an imminent kingdom, to worldwide evangelism; from national repentance, to the individual's redemption; from the anticipated crowning, to the incited cross; from reclaiming a peculiar people, to redeeming a purchased body, from the desire for a king, to the decree for a killing; and from promise to postponement, with the new promise of a new program.

The dispensational method is further established in two other areas. One, by the clear distinction drawn in Matthew's emphasis on the earthly establishment of the kingdom, as opposed to the other gospel writer's lack of kingdom specificities. Secondly, is in his precise prophetic language concerning the return of Christ, clearly delineating between that event, and the yet unrevealed rapture of the church. Luke 21 so diffuses that doctrine that as it stretches from 70 A. D., to the Son of Man's return to earth, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish which event is referenced. Matthew 24, on the other hand, clearly progresses from 70 A. D., to the beginning of the Great Tribulation, revealing the events of Christ's return in terms that are clearly distinguished from the events of the rapture. Matthew 13 does the same. Even though the former publican knew nothing of the church age, and its terminus, yet, the Holy Spirit, through this writer, has engraved a clear distinction between the two events, and that without ever mentioning the rapture. There is no excuse for confusing the two, the rapture and the return, in Matthew's Gospel.

In short, Matthew, interpreted in dispensational framework, consistently abides by the threefold division clearly taught in I Corinthians 10:32. All of Matthew is not for all. When Christ speaks, he speaks to the Jews. He said so in 15:24, which statement is the very context of our present assertion. Our Lord speaks of sheep, a kingdom, a king, and of Israel. When He purposely digresses to deal with gentiles, He says so. The church is conspicuous in its absence, and the revelation thereof (16:18). Matthew is kingdom truth, with a smattering of insights into gentile conversion, and the church's creation. The kingdom is declared in the ministry of His forerunner, and the early ministry of Himself and His called preachers. Indeed, they are sent; initially, only to Israel. The laws by which the prophesied kingdom shall be established and successfully operate, are set forth by Christ. The undeniable proofs of His qualification as King are clearly published. His declarations of Kingdom intent are not couched, except as parables are used to hide them from those set in unbelief. Gentiles are addressed only as they relate to Israel. The church, not yet in existence, is mentioned only prophetically.

One who denies Biblical dispensationalism is hard pressed to exegetically preach passages, such as 3:11,12; Chapters 5-7; 10:5,6, and 7-14, and verse 22, and others, which are addressed more specifically in the text below.

It is as though the Holy Spirit, through Matthew's mind and manuscripts, chose to lay out the plan of God for the ages, clearly delineating His specific purposes for the Jew, the Gentile, and His Church. It is illustrated by the faces on Mount Rushmore, in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Four president's facial images are engraved there. They "represent, respectively, the nation's founding, philosophy, unity, and expansion" (Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia). One history of the United States is outlined (to that present era, in 1941), but with four different leaders representing different perspectives and programs within that plan. God has one plan for the ages, but it includes different peoples, involved in different plans, accomplishing diverse objectives. No book sets it forth any better than the Gospel of Matthew.

I. The King's Arrival (1-3)

A. His Lineage Established (1:1-17) See lessons 22, 23 in Stevens.

Joseph's Line...

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matthew 1:1)

"And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;" (Matthew 1:6)

"And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;" (Matthew 1:7)

"And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;" (Matthew 1:12)

"And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;" (Matthew 1:15)

"And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." (Matthew 1:16)

vs. Mary's Line

"And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli," (Luke 3:23)

"Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David," (Luke 3:31)

"Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson," (Luke 3:32)

Consider taint of Joseph's heritage: (Jeremiah 33:17 w/ Jeremiah 22:28-30)

"Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?" (Jeremiah 22:28)

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." (Jeremiah 22:29). "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." (Jeremiah 22:30)

B. His Birth Recorded (1:18-25).

It was of necessity a virgin birth, due to the double curse: Adam and Coniah.

C. His Early Days Related (2:1-23)

D. His Manifestation Accomplished (3:1-17)

John the Baptist (3:2) came preaching a specific message, with a specific two-fold requirement:

1. Repent, with evidence (8), and;
2. Be baptized, confessing sins (6). Else, the fruitless tree (10) would be felled and cast into the fire. However, the fruit bearing tree would be blessed (12b).

What is the fire? (10-12). It is judgment in verses 10 and 12. Why not in verse 11? Verse eleven is not Pentecostal Holy Spirit baptism with tongues of fire. It is dispensational. The true repentance of the nation would usher in the kingdom (viz. wheat gathered in). Disobedience would bring national judgment. However, it is presented on an individual basis, "trees," and "every." The individuals, who receive messiah, would be gathered in; those who reject would be judged. But note, the beginning of fiery judgment precedes the gathering (12a). Wheat cannot be gathered until the chaff is winnowed away. Then the wheat is gathered, and the chaff burned. First it is separated from the wheat, the wheat gathered, and then the chaff burned. Note Ezekiel 20:33-38.

II. The King's Preparation (4) Tempted in All Points:

A. The Lust of the Flesh (1-4)

B. The Lust of the Eyes (8-10)

C. The Pride of Life (5-7)

The tested and validated King now begins His earthly ministry in the flesh (I Pt 4:1). He declares the same message as John preached (no difference in the greek text--"ye," it is same word form, just translated differently).

"Near." It either was or wasn't, meaning "to approach" "be at hand" or "come nigh." If He didn't mean it, then why did He say it? and what did He mean?

Matthew 4:23 speaks of the "gospel of the kingdom." With 3:2 and 4:17, that gospel is clearly defined, and demonstrated to be a different from the gospel which the church today declares (I Corinthians 15:1-4) (as is the baptism, which will be considered later).

III. The King's Laws (5-7)

The kingdom is announced, and is now said to be structured by definite principles of conduct. It is the righteousness of the nature of the kingdom, of which the Old Testament prophets profusely testified (eg. Isaiah 11:4). The passage "...transfers the offence from the overt act to the motive..."(Scofield notes, p.1000). Matthew 5:20 convincingly says so, being decisively expounded on in the succeeding verses.

Matthew 5:31,32 w/ 19:3-12 is a demonstrative case of dispensationally interpreting the scriptures.
Note Dueteronomy 22:13-19.

IV. The King's Credentials (8-12)

Consider:

A. Power as Proof in 8 and 9, based on scripture (8:17; 9:6)

B. The Commission in Matthew 10

The command given (apostello) to go, but no baptism commanded, as in 28:18-20. The baptism was already being practiced in Chapter 10, as the going was in already in progress in Chapter 28. A command to baptize is given the revised, as it is a new baptism for a new mission field.

C. The Dispensational John the Baptist (11:14). Note 17:11-13.

D. The New Call for Individual Repentance (11:20-30).

E. Binding of Satan (12:29).

F. Blasphemy (12:31,32). Hebrews "na'ats" to scorn, abhor, contemn; first usage in Numbers 11:14, to "provoke"; "barak" to kneel, bless God (first usage in Genesis 1:22, "blessed"--used sparingly as a euphemism, to curse (I Kings 21:10,13, ("blaspheme")); "naqab", to puncture. strike through, perforate with more or less violence, pierce.

Greek, "blasphemia" vilification (make vicious, a defamatory statement), evil speaking, railing (bitter, hard criticism, abusive language).

See attached list of verses using "blaspheme."

Earliest use of "blaspheme" is:

"And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed (naqab) the name of the LORD, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:)...And he that blasphemeth (naqab) the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth (naqab) the name of the LORD, shall be put to death" (Leviticus 24:11,16).

Key verses:

"And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me" (Isaiah 37:6). The words are words of reproach against the Name of the Lord, ridicule of the power of the Lord, and purporting to do the work of the Lord (see context).

"O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme (na'ats) thy name for ever?" (Psalms 74:10) "Reproach" and "blaspheme" seem to be synonymous in meaning.

Blasphemy, then, seems to be a serious attack on the honor, work, or person of God, or things/persons peculiar to Him.

In Matthew 9:3, the Scribes accused Jesus of blasphemy.

In Matthew 12, the Pharisees commit blasphemy. They had watched him violate (according to their beliefs), the Sabbath Day two times (vs. 1-8 and 9-13), and then exorcise a demon (v. 22). They accused him of doing this work by the power of Beelzebub (the dung god, a name of Satan). This is commonly used to define blasphemy, i.e. attributing the work of God to Satan. However, the usage of the word throughout scripture does not support such a definition. They are simply dishonoring God, fighting against the work of God, and libeling His holy name. There are many ways to do this. Israel did it on the hills of Palestine in their idolatry (Isaiah 65:7).

David gave occasion to God's enemies to do it, as they ridiculed God because of his sin with Bathsheba (II Samuel 12:14. Note I Tim 6:1 and Tit. 2:5 for New Testament examples). John 10:33 gives a clear example of an alleged act of blasphemy.

Jesus said (Matthew 12) that all manner of sin (ἁμαρτία) and blasphemy is forgivable, except if committed against the Holy Spirit. Against God (The Father) in the O.T., the Son, in the pre-Calvary lifetime, and against the Holy Spirit, both in that present age, and the one coming. The Spirit's testimony of Christ through the miracles (Acts 10:38), His raising of Christ from the dead (Rom 8:11), the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and His continuing ministry in witnessing the gospel (I Corinthians 2:9-12)--scorn, contempt, or disrespect toward His work is deadly.

G. Serious Condemnations (12:33-45)

1. Evil Speech (33-37)

The "idle" (v.36 "ἄργος" inactive, barren, useless, etc.) words stem from a heart made of the same substance.

2. Evil Unbelief (38-42)

No sign given in the future, to this generation, except one long established. There will be future signs to the generation alive when Christ returns (Matthew 24:30).

3. Evil Reformation (43-45)

This reformation occurred under the ministry of John the Baptist, and during Christ's own ministry, but was not real, for it was outward, not from within. Now, in their rejection, approaching its fullness, their final state is worse than their first.

H. New Individualized Relationship (46-50)

His ministry to the nation is drawing to a close. He begins to speak to the individual, in preparation for the new order of things to be introduced in Chapter 13.

V. The King's Great Plan (13)

Three entities are involved in these parables--Israel, the Church, and the world. The time element extends from Calvary, the beginning of the plan (though it doesn't actively begin until Pentecost, the old order is nevertheless ended), until the Return of Christ to the earth (v.40).

"Kingdom of Heaven" occurs c.30 times in Matthew, and nowhere else in the Bible. "Kingdom of God" is prevalent elsewhere, but occurs only 5 times in Matthew.

The Kingdom has been preached, and will be presented to them

(Chapter 21). Knowing full rejection lies ahead, Christ lays out the course of the age to come.

A. The Good Seed Sown on Varied Ground (3-8, 18-23)
The Sole Activity of the Age

B. The Good Seed Infiltrated with Tares (24-30, 36-40)
The Sinister Character of the Age

Scofield note on p. 1017, Matthew 13:41: Dr. Scofield wants to make v. 41 refer to the end of the millennium, and the establishing of the eternal state. Matthew 6:10 with Zechariah 14:9 show that the phrase, "kingdom of the Father" (v.43) does not have to refer to the eternal state. The name of the LORD is one, and it is "Thy (the Father's) kingdom" that is to come.

Dr. Scofield would have it that the angels will gather out at the end of the millenium, and the wicked would be cast into the Lake of Fire. He mentions "death," as he is relating it to the time when "death and hell shall be cast into the Lake of Fire" (Revelation 20:14, 15), as though there could only be one time when all who are to be cast therein, are.

But, Matthew 24:40 is identical in time with Matthew 13:40, "the end of this age," and is the beginning of the millenium So, the wicked of the church program and the Tribulation, still alive at His return, will be cast into Hell, on the spot. The unsaved dead, at the end of the millenium, will be cast into the Lake of Fire, as "death and hell" (death for the body, hell for the soul) are cast therein.

Nothing in these parables elsewhere speaks of the millenium kingdom, except to mention the beginning thereof (viz. 13:30 "barn"). There is no reason why this one should be so interpreted.

C. The Grain of Mustard Seed Sown (31,32)
The Super Growth of the Age

Two reasons for corruption vs. advancement:

1. Consistent Usage: Birds, note 4,19
2. Context. All the parables in Chapter 13 dealing with kingdom growth, concern corruption.

D. The Leaven Concealed in the Meal (33)
The Slow Corruption of the Age

It is the kingdom in mystery (v.11) form, for these things had never been revealed to anyone before. The mysteries' elements are identified in verses 44-50:

E. The Treasure Hidden and Purchased (44)
The Subtle Plan for this Age

Israel is buried in the field of the world, which is then purchased. This speaks of the coming dispersion, addressed also in Ezekiel 37, and Christ's redemption of the world (the field).

F. The Pearl Prized and Purchased (45, 46).
The Sacrificial Work of the Age

An example, from the Biblical Illustrator of a non-dispensational approach to interpreting Scripture:

The Bible says the kingdom of God is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of real worth, hw sells everything he has and buys that pearl. Of course, according to traditional thinking, man is the pearl of great price and Jesus the merchant who sells everything to make the purchase. Now I understand that He is the pearl of great price and man the merchant.

So, there are three positions:

1. Man is the Pearl, and Christ sells all to purchase him.
Problem: In no sense could man be counted worthy of being purchased by Christ. This is contrary to grace.

2. Christ is the Pearl, and man must sell all to purchase Him.
So when man finds Jesus, it costs him everything. Jesus has happiness, joy, peace, healing, security, eternity. Man marvels at such a pearl and says,
"I want this pearl. How much does it cost?"
The seller says, "It's too dear, too costly."
"But how much?"
"Well, it's very expensive."
"Do you think I could buy it?"
"Oh, of course. Anybody can."
"But you say it's too expensive.
How much is it?"
"It costs everything you have -- no more, no less -- so anybody can buy it."
"I'll buy it."
"What do you have? Let's write it down."
"I have \$10,000 in the bank."
"Good, \$10,000. What else?"
"I have nothing more. That's all I have."
"Have you nothing more?"
"Well, I have some dollars here in my pocket."
"How many?"
"I'll see: 30, 40, 50, 80, 100, 120 -- 120 dollars."
"That's fine. What else do you have?"
"I have nothing else. That's all."
"Where do you live?"
"I live in my house."
"The house too."
"Then you mean I must live in the garage?"
"Have you a garage, too? That too. What else?"
"Do you mean that I must live in my car, then?"
"Have you a car?"
"I have two."
"Both become mine. Both cars. What else?"
"I have nothing else."
"Are you alone in the world?"
"No, I have a wife, two children.... "
"Your wife and your children too. What else?"
"I have nothing else, I am left alone now."
"Oh, you too. Everything. Everything becomes mine: wife, children, house, garage, cars, money, clothing, everything. And you too. Now you can use all those things here but don't forget they are mine, as you are. When I need any of the things you are using you must give them to me because now I am the owner."
-- The Call To Discipleship, by Juan Carlos Ortiz, p. 42-43

Problem: We were never seeking Christ, and have nothing to bring to Him. The preceding illustration is good for discipleship, but not for salvation. The latter is not based on what we do, but what Christ did for us.

But the true view is:

3. The Church is the pearl, and Christ sells all to buy her.
- G. The Aquatic Drag Net (47,50)
The Sure End of this Age
To understand these parables is to be a wise steward, but on par with the head of the house (52)

The Thirteenth Chapter of Matthew, as it is hoped you can now see, is perhaps the most important portion of Scripture in the Bible, for understanding God's Plan for the Ages—the Dispensations.

VI. The King's Further Testimony (14-20)

VII. The King's Presentation (21)

VIII. The King's Prophetic Discourse (24, 25)

IX. The King's Crucifixion and Resurrection (26-28)