

## MATTHEW INTRODUCTION PART 13



The introduction to any book of the Bible is just as important for us to understand as what we find within its pages. As a matter of fact, it is only when we have taken the time to introduce ourselves to the book, that we have the tools necessary to correctly exegete and exposit its content. Such introductory knowledge is obtained by asking the questions of Who? When? Where? What? Why? and How? **1-5 (Who, When, Where, What and Why) – [DISCUSSED]**

### **6. (How?) should we read, study and interpret Matthew's gospel?**

There is no reading of Scripture that is not- to some degree, also an attempt at interpreting the Scripture. This becomes obvious once we realize the Bible does not provide its own commentary (or study notes). As such, the question which must be considered before endeavoring to study any of its books is, "What hermeneutical (interpretive) principles and presuppositions must be applied?" As it relates to the Matthew's gospel the following are most relevant: **6.1. – 6.3. [DISCUSSED]**

### **6.4. Knowing what is - and is not, the biblical (and saving) gospel.**

The Bible's central message is the gospel: the good news<sup>1</sup> of God's salvation or more specifically, what a person must do to be saved. Hence why the Scriptures are said to "give wisdom unto salvation (2Ti 3:15)<sup>2</sup>. This includes (then) what we find in the book or "gospel" of Matthew. Its purpose is to shed new light (i.e. revelation) on God's gospel - especially as it relates to Jesus and the New Covenant. That being said, one of the most dangerous things a person could do in endeavoring to understand its contents, is to enter into its study with an unbiblical view of the gospel. Such a study will not only help to perpetuate (even embolden) their heresy, but most assuredly damn them to Hell (Gal 1:8-9). As such, it is vital that this subject (i.e. the gospel) also receive robust examination in relation to what it is - as well as what it is not, before such a study begins<sup>3</sup>.

#### **6.4.1. What it is NOT (#1): An act of "faith only" in who Jesus is or what He has done for us.**

The gospel is not limited to simply faith in the historical facts of Who Jesus is (i.e. the Christ, the Son of God) or what He has done on our behalf (His earthly life, death and resurrection).

#### **6.4.2. What it is NOT (#2): A system requiring meritorious perfection in order to be saved (i.e. works-based salvation).**

Contrary to popular opinion, this has NEVER been the gospel/the way to be saved!

#### **6.4.3. What it is: A marriage covenant.**

The plan of salvation communicated throughout the Bible's redemptive history is always the same (e.g. Heb 8:5-6 = the "DNA" of God's redemptive plan remains the same). It involves people entering into a marriage covenant with God<sup>4</sup>.

##### 6.4.3.1. Consider:

6.4.3.1.1. God's salvation always includes a covenant (Adamic = Hos 6:7; Noahic = Gen 6:18; Abrahamic = Gen 17:2; Old = Exo 19:5; New = Luk 22:20)

6.4.3.1.2. All such covenants established between God and human beings are marriage covenants (e.g. Jer 31:31-32; Eph 5:22-32)<sup>5</sup>

##### 6.4.3.2. The following is also true in relation to the gospel (i.e. way/plan of salvation) presented in the Bible:

6.4.3.2.1. Jesus is the Husband of all the marriage (saving) covenants in the Bible - *not just the New Covenant!* (Eph 5:22-23, 32; Mat 26:26-28 = Bv est'g the NC. Jesus reveals Himself to the be specific Person w/in the Godhead assigned to this unique and important role. He is the "Lord of the Covenants"; e.g. Jud 1:5; 1Co 10:4, 9; 1Pe 3:18-20; Joh 8:56-58; Heb 7:1-3)

<sup>1</sup> The word "gospel" is actually a derivative of the Old English word, "godspell" which means, "good news or glad tidings".

<sup>2</sup> Instruction unto salvation is the predominate meaning carried by the Greek word (εὐαγγέλιον) translated as "gospel" or "good news" in the NT (Mar 1:14-15 w/Luk 3:3-14, 18, 4:48, 8:1, 16:16; Act 2:38-40, 8:12//Act 8:35 w/10:34-43// Mar 10:29-30; Act 13:26, 32, 14:15-17; Rom 1:16; 1Co 9:22-23; Gal 3:8; Eph 1:13; 2Th 1:5-8; 1Pe 1:12).

<sup>3</sup> Regular vetting of our gospel to make sure that what we possess is indeed biblical (and therefore saving) is itself biblical (see Gal 2:1-2).

<sup>4</sup> Technically, we are betrothed. However, in the Ancient East, this was considered a form of marriage. With this in mind, consider (Deu 20:7; Mat 1:18-20; 2Co 11:2).

<sup>5</sup> Though not explicit, the Adamic, Noahic and Abrahamic were also marriages. This can be seen when one considers that God speaks of such covenants in the objective (Hos 6:7 – "the covenant" v. "their covenant") and possessive voice (Gen 6:18, 17:2 – "My covenant") demonstrating them all to be the same in kind.

6.4.3.2.2. FAITH IS NECESSARY TO GAIN MARRIAGE TO JESUS AND A JUSTIFIED STATE BEFORE GOD: The baptism of faith (in Jesus Christ) is now the way to enter into (i.e. gain) a marriage covenant relationship with Jesus Christ and receive a right/justified/forgiven standing before God (Rom 3:28 w/1Pe 3:21; Joh 3:5). This sacrament was given exclusively to His church (Mat 16:18-19 w/Joh 20:22-23)

6.4.3.2.3. FAITHFULNESS IS ALSO NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN OUR JUSTIFIED/MARRIED STATUS<sup>6</sup>: Just like our human marriages, our marriage to Jesus is also conditioned upon faithful obedience. In other words, we must “maintain what we gained” (Deu 4:40. 6:1-3. 7:9-12. 8:6. 11. 28:1-2. 29:9-20: Hos 2:20: Mat 3:8-10 w/Dan 4:27; Mat 5:13, 24:42-25:46, 28:18-20; Rom 11:19-22; Gal 2:15-21; Eph 4:1; Phi 1:9-11. 2:12-16. 3:8-16; Col 1:22-23; 2Th 2:11-12. 3:11-15; Heb 3:6, 14. 10:35-39; Jam 1:25-27, 2:14-26; 1Pe 1:5-9, 14-17; 2Pe 1:5-11, 3:14-18; 2Jo 1:8-9; Jud 1:20-21; Rev 2:10, 26, 3:4-5)<sup>7</sup>

6.4.3.2.4. As such, Jesus is never the Savior of anyone unwilling to submit to Him as Lord. In other words, the Bible teaches “*Lord before Savior*” (Exo 20:5-6; Isa 48:17. 58:1-59:2; Jer 4:1-2. 14. 5:1-7. 24-25. 7:22-23, 9:12-16, 12:16-17, 26:3-6, 13, 36:3, 38:20, 44:10-11; Mat 8:1-13; Luk 3:3-18, 6:46-49; 2Pe 2:1; Jud 1:3-4)

6.4.3.2.5. The Law of God in its entirety is still in force as what we must be faithful to (Mal 4:1-6; Mat 5:17-19; e.g. Rom 13:8-10; 1Co 9:7-11; 14:34; If the Law is not in force then why does Paul appeal to it?)<sup>8</sup>. The only change may be in application (e.g. clean laws: works of the law v. faith)

6.4.3.2.6. The consequences for unfaithfulness to God’s Law is cursing – even divorce - i.e. loss of our covenant relationship, our justification and the promises of salvation. It can also mean apostasy (Deu 28:15-68, 29:18-21, 24-25; Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8. 34:15-18; Dan 9:5-16; Hos 1:1-4. 4:1. 6. 10-12. Mat 12:30-31 w/18:17 w/Joh 20:22-23; Rom 11:19-22; Gal 5:4; 1Ti 1:19-20; Jam 5:19-20; 2Pe 1:9, 2:20-22; Heb 6:4-6, 10:26) and/or loss of the covenant community (e.g. Israel – Mat 21:43; Rev 2:5)

6.4.3.2.7. The reward for faithfulness to God’s Law is the consummation of the marriage: face to face “intimacy” w/Jesus in Paradise (2Co 11:2 w/Rev 19:6-8; consider also Rev 22:4 w/Exo 28:36-38 w/Exo 19:5 and Hos 4:6 w/Isa 3:17-4:1 w/Eze 16:8-12 = the priest represented God’s priestly people and wife and therefore wore the wedding garment as the promise of coming consummation to those who remained faithful).

6.4.3.3. Understanding salvation as a marriage covenant not only means we are getting the gospel right but also:

6.4.3.3.1. Is consistent w/the Bible’s teaching on judgment according to works since it is our works which maintain the covenant (Jer 32:18-19; Rom 2:6-11; 2Co 5:9-10; Rev 20:11-15)

6.4.3.3.2. That it is about far more than just a relationship since not all relationships require a covenant – i.e. the existence of certain obligations or commitments, penalties or rewards.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Contra to men like J.G. Machen, maintenance does not imply merit. What person in a healthy marriage believes they must earn their spouse’s affection, or other benefits associated with such union? At the same time, who would be so foolish to think that their relationship is not conditioned upon the vows of faithfulness each professed on their wedding day?

<sup>7</sup> In other words, the saving covenants of the Bible are all bi-lateral: both parties are obligated to the fulfillment of certain conditions if the covenant is to remain in place/force. Evangelicals like to argue that the New covenant is unilateral (one obligated party – Jesus). Their conviction stems from an erroneous belief that God made two covenants w/Abraham (Gen 15:18 and 17:7), the former being unilateral and a foreshadowing of the New Covenant. The Bible teaches only one covenant w/Abraham, (Gen 17:7). The 15<sup>th</sup> chapter simply represents the pre-requisite work of atonement necessary to all saving covenants (Psa 50:5; Heb 9:18).

<sup>8</sup> Contra J. MacArthur. On Gal 3:2 he comments. “Paul appealed to the Galatians’ own salvation to refute the Judaizers’ false teaching that keeping the law is necessary to salvation.” (*MacArthur Study Bible*)

<sup>9</sup> “Among its 283 occurrences in 263 verses some sense of obligation typically attends the presence of covenant. For this reason, covenants are said to be kept (17x), commanded (7x), remembered (14x), confirmed (3x), and one is to be faithful to the covenant (1x), or hold fast to the covenant (1x). Also problematic for any interpretation of covenant which would reduce it to a relationship are a number of examples, such as Ezr 10:3; 2Ki 11:4; 2Chr 23:1; and Jer 34:8-10 where covenant does not appear to effect a relationship at all, but merely secures a stipulated course of action. For reasons such as these. E. Kutsch has argued that covenant never establishes a relationship. Instead, virtually everywhere it consists of an obligation, whether self-imposed, as in a promise or the undertaking of a commitment, or imposed on another, as in a law. M. Kline defines covenant as a ‘sanction-sealed commitment (or obligation) to maintain a particular relationship or follow a stipulated course of action’, or M.L. Newman, who defines covenant as a ‘formal relationship of obligation between two parties...sealed by a solemn oath or cultic rite.’ – Gordon Hugenberger (*Marriage As A Covenant*)