

The Gospel of Matthew

7. The Mission Resumes:

Rejection in Nazareth (13:54-58)

The Death of John (14:1-12)

Two Great Signs (14:13-36)

A Dispute with Israel; An Opening to the Gentiles (15:1-28)

Healing and Feeding the Multitudes; The Demand for a Sign (15:29—16:12)

Sunday, February 19, 2006

10 to 11 am in the Parlor.

Everyone is welcome!

St. John in the Wilderness

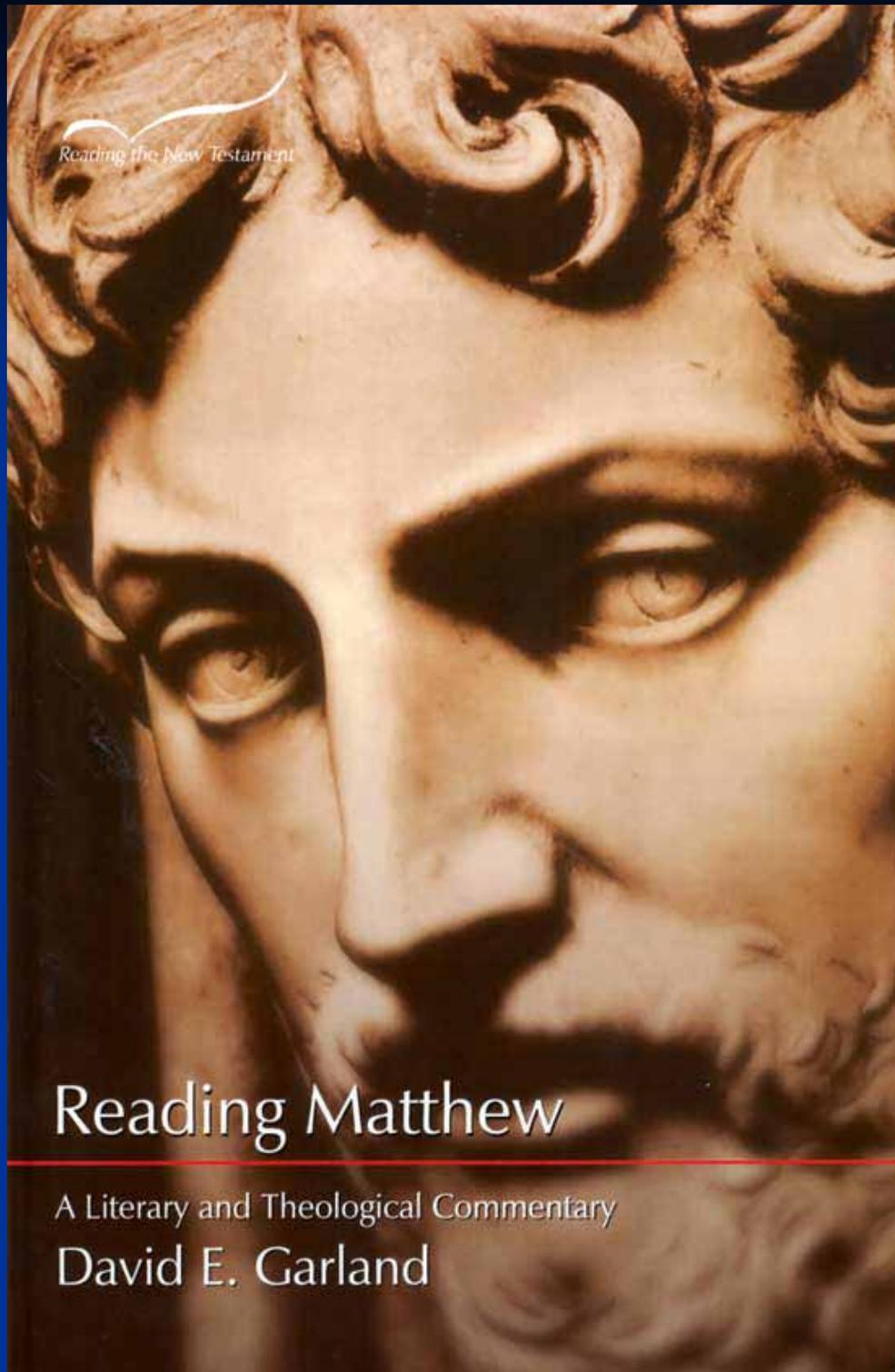
**God of all mercy,
your Son brought good news to the
despairing,
freedom to the oppressed
and joy to the sad;
fill us with your Spirit,
that the people of our day may see in us
his likeness
and glorify your name.**

INTERPRETING
I · B · T
BIBLICAL TEXTS

THE
GOSPEL
OF
MATTHEW

Donald Senior

- **The Gospel of Matthew** (**Interpreting Biblical Texts Series**), Donald Senior, Abingdon Press, 1997, ISBN 0-687-00848-4
- **Dr. Senior** is Professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.



- **Reading Matthew. A Literary and Theological Commentary**, David E. Garland, Smyth & Helwys, 2001, ISBN 1-57312-274
- **David Garland** is Professor of Christian Scriptures and Associate Dean for Academic Services at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University

- **Introducing Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 1:1—4:16)**
 - The Birth of the Messiah: The Fulfillment of God's Promises (1:1-25)
 - From Judea of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles (2:1-23)
 - Getting Ready: God's Son in the Wilderness (3:1—4:11)
 - Dispelling the Darkness in Galilee (4:12-16)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 1. Teaching, Healing, and Calling the Lost Sheep (Matthew 4:17—10:42)**
 - Jesus' Debut: Authority and Compassion. Dawn in Galilee (4:17-25)
 - The Sermon on the Mount: Magisterial Teaching, A Charter for Discipleship (5:1—8:1)
 - Restoring Life to Others: Jesus the Healer (8:2—9:35)
 - Great Harvest and Great Dangers: The Mission Discourse (9:36—10:42)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 2. Rejection and Confession (Matthew 11:2—16:20)**
 - Doubt, Indifference, and Dissent (11:2—12:45)
 - The Parable Discourse: the Mysteries of the Kingdom Revealed (12:46—13:54)
 - **The Mission Resumes (13:54—16:12)**
 - Rejection in Nazareth (13:54-58)
 - The Death of John (14:1-12)
 - Two Great Signs (14:13-36)
 - A Dispute with Israel; An Opening to the Gentiles (15:1-28)
 - Healing and Feeding the Multitudes; Demand for a Sign (15:29—16:12)
- **Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (Matthew 16:21-28:20)**
 - The Journey to Jerusalem (16:13—20:34)
 - Confession at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-28)
 - Transfiguration (17:1-21)
 - Living Together as the Family of God: Life Within the Community of the Kingdom (17:22—18:35)
 - Teachings on the Journey (19:1—20:16)
 - The Conclusion of the Journey (20:17-34)
 - In the Holy City: Conflict, Death, and Resurrection (21:1—28:15)
 - The Messiah in the Temple (21:1-17)
 - The Teacher and His Opponents (21:18—22:46)
 - False Teachers Lead Others to Ruin: Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-39)
 - The Coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment of the World (24:1—25:46)
 - The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. Finale (26:1—28:15)

The Mission Resumes

Matthew 13:54—16:12

The Mission Resumes

Introduction

- After the Parable discourse in 13:1-54 in which Jesus revealed mysteries of the Kingdom of God, he now resumes his ministry in Galilee.
- Matthew continues to highlight the different responses to the Good News (= gospel) by the leaders of Israel, the disciples, and common people.
- Matthew now follows closely the narrative found in Mark 4:35 to 8:21.

Matthew 13:54—16:12

Rejection in Nazareth

Matthew 13:54-58

Rejection in Nazareth

- Jesus returns to Nazareth to preach in “their synagogue.”
- Matthew, like Mark, calls Nazareth Jesus’ “native city” or “hometown.”
 - Jesus had left Nazareth at the beginning of his public ministry, establishing a “home base” in Capernaum.
 - Matthew refers to Capernaum as Jesus’ “own city” or “own town” (9:1).

Rejection in Nazareth

- In Nazareth, the people “took offense at him,” causing Jesus to note, “Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.” (13:57 NRSV)
 - This is the same reaction Jesus warned when John’s disciples came to him, and he said “And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.” (NRSV 11:6)

Matthew 13:54-58

The Death of John

Matthew 14:1-12

The Death of John

- After Jesus is rejected in Nazareth, we learn about the fate of John the Baptist, and we are reminded of the cost of prophetic ministry.
- Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great. After hearing of the works of Jesus, he wonders if Jesus is John the Baptist come back to life.
 - This is the first we've heard that John is dead.
 - We now get a flashback on how John died.

Matthew 14:1-12

The Death of John

- Herod was having his birthday party, and the daughter of Herodius (Herod's brother's former wife and now Herod's wife) danced before those gathered at the party. Her dancing so pleased Herod that he vowed to grant her any wish.
- She asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter, which Herod reluctantly gave her "because of his oaths and his dinner guests." (14:9 NRSV)

Matthew 14:1-12

The Death of John

- The death of John has parallels to what will soon happen to Jesus:
 - Herod had earlier been afraid to execute John for fear of popular unrest, for the people regarded John as a prophet. The Jewish leaders will have the same worries about getting rid of Jesus.
 - Jesus, like John, will be arrested, bound and imprisoned.
 - Pilate will be reluctant to execute Jesus, just as Herod was reluctant to execute John.
 - Jesus will be buried by his disciple Joseph of Arimathea, just as John was buried by his disciples.

Matthew 14:1-12

Two Great Signs

Matthew 14:13-36

Two Great Signs

Introduction

- Matthew next tells the story of two great signs that illuminate:
 - the profound authority of Jesus.
 - The growing bond of Jesus with his disciples.
- The Two Great Signs:
 - 1. The miraculous feeding of the more than Five Thousand (14:13-21)
 - 2. Jesus Walks on Water (14:22-33)

Matthew 14:13-36

Two Great Signs

Feeding of the 5000

- The story of the miraculous feeding of the more than five thousand is a story rich with biblical symbolism, and evokes other feeding stories that span the gamut of salvation history:
 - the story of Moses and the Exodus story, with the feeding of the multitudes in the desert with manna (Exodus 16).
 - the story of the prophet Elisha miraculously feeding the hungry in 2 Kings 4:42-44.
 - The story of the vision of the end time in Isaiah 25:6-10, when all will be gathered for a messianic banquet on Zion:
“On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.” (NIV)

Matthew 14:13-21

Two Great Signs

Feeding of the 5000

- It (and its twin story, the Feeding of the 4000 in 15:32-39) also foreshadows the Last Supper and the celebration of the Lord's Supper of the early Christians in Matthew's community.
 - As at the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper, the loaf of bread was taken, blessed, broken, and distributed to the disciples.
 - In the first two feeding stories (the 5000 in 14:13-21, then the 4000 in 15:32-39) Jesus provides the people their daily bread (as we pray for in the Lord's Prayer, 6:11)
 - In the last feeding story of the Last Supper, Jesus gives himself to the people with his death and resurrection.

Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39

Two Great Signs

Jesus Walks on Water

- Jesus has been praying privately on a mountain and the disciples are on their boat in the Sea of Galilee, **“already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.”** (14:24 NIV).
- In the fourth watch of the night (3 am to 6 am), the disciples see a figure walking towards them on the water in the midst of the storm, and are terrified.

Matthew 14:22-33

Two Great Signs

Jesus Walks on Water

- Matthew clearly intends this apparition of Jesus walking on the water to be a “theophany” = a vision of God in human form:
 - In the Old Testament, walking on waves and the recesses of the deep was something only God could do (Job 9:8, Job 38:16, Psalm 77:19, Isaiah 43:16, Habakkuk 3:15, Sirah 24:5-6)
 - Jesus evokes the divine name “I AM,” when he greets the disciples “Take heart, I AM; do not be afraid.”

Matthew 14:22-33

Two Great Signs

Jesus Walks on Water

- Peter requests to come to Jesus, and Jesus says “Come.” Peter begins to walk on the water towards Jesus.
 - The disciples have been entrusted the same messianic powers as Jesus (as in their commissioning in 10:1, 7-8: **Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ... “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.”** NRSV)

Matthew 14:22-33

Two Great Signs

Jesus Walks on Water

- Then the wind and waves terrify Peter, and he begins to sink, crying out to Jesus to save him, and earning Jesus' assessment "You of little faith."
 - The disciples are still human and weak and completely dependent on Jesus' power.
 - The proper response of a disciple in a time of crises is to pray "Lord, save me!" (14:30)

Matthew 14:22-33

Two Great Signs

Jesus Walks on Water

- Jesus gets into the boat and the winds abruptly cease. The significance of this theophany (= vision of God in human form) is not lost on the disciples, who “worship” (*proskuneo* = prostrate themselves in an attitude of profound reverence) Jesus, proclaiming “**Truly you are the Son of God.**” (14:33 NRSV)

Matthew 14:22-33

Two Great Signs

Jesus Walks on Water

- The truth of this confession of Jesus as the Son of God is re-enforced when Matthew attests to more of Jesus' mighty works of healing when they land on western side of the lake at Gennesaret.

Matthew 14:34-36

**A Dispute with Israel.
An Opening to the
Gentiles**

Matthew 15:1-28

A Dispute with Israel

Clash over Purity Laws

- Having just been acclaimed the Son of God by his disciples after their awesome epiphany of seeing Jesus walking on water, Jesus now clashes with the unbelieving Pharisees and scribes over the purity laws.
- The Pharisees claim Jesus' disciples are "unclean" or "impure" because they don't wash their hands before they eat.
- Jesus replies in a parable: **"It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles."**
(5:11)

Matthew 15:1-20

A Dispute with Israel

Clash over Purity Laws

- He later explains the parable to the disciples:
“what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person”
(15:18-20 NRSV)
- The dispute also illustrates that the Jewish leaders are blind guides who lead others astray.

Matthew 15:1-20

An Opening to the Gentiles

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

- After his dispute with the Pharisees, Jesus leaves Galilee and travels towards Tyre and Sidon on the Mediterranean coast, setting the stage for the remarkable story of the Jesus and Canaanite Woman.
- A Canaanite woman (= a Gentile; in Mark's gospel she is identified as a Syrophenician Greek) approaches Jesus, wanting him to cure her sick daughter.

Matthew 15:21-28

An Opening to the Gentiles

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

- She has three exchanges with Jesus before her faith is rewarded:
 - 1. She cries out **“Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.”** (15:22 NRSV). Jesus does not answer her, and tells his disciples **“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”** (15:24 NRSV)
 - This echoes the instructions Jesus had given his disciples when he commissioned his disciples: **These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”** (10:5-6 NRSV)

Matthew 15:21-28

An Opening to the Gentiles

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

- She has three exchanges with Jesus before her faith is rewarded:
 - 2. She kneels before him (*prosekunei*; same word used to describe the disciples worshiping Jesus after he walked on water; = prostrate in an attitude of profound reverence) and says **“Lord, help me.”** (15:25 NRSV). Jesus tells her **“It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.”** (15:26 NRSV)
 - 3. She replies **“Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.”** (15:27 NRSV). Jesus answers **“Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”** The daughter is healed instantly.

Matthew 15:21-28

An Opening to the Gentiles

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

- This healing of a Gentile's woman's daughter because of her great faith is another sign of the future mission to the Gentiles, also seen in:
 - The healing of the Centurion's Service (8:5-13)
 - The healing of the Gadarene Demoniacs (8:28-34)
- Matthew's careful exposition of Jesus' reluctance to extend his mission to the Gentiles, a reluctance which dissolves in the face of great faith, was perhaps intended in particular to pastorally address tensions over the issue in Matthew's early Jewish Christian community.

Matthew 15:21-28

**Healing and Feeding
the Multitudes.
A Demand for a Sign**

Matthew 15:29—16:12

Healing, Feeding the Multitudes

Mighty Works of Healing

- Jesus returns to the region of Galilee, and in a scene of epic proportions, sits upon a mountaintop.
- There, **“Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.”** (15:30-31 NRSV)

Matthew 15:29-31

Healing, Feeding the Multitudes

Miraculous Feeding of The 4000

- Then, looking with compassion upon the crowd who has not eaten in 3 days, Jesus performs another “mighty work” (= miracle) of feeding.
 - Mirrors the story of the miraculous Feeding of the 5000 in Matthew 14:13-21, and evokes again the rich biblical symbolism of feeding stories in the Old Testament, of Jesus’ Last Supper, and the Lord’s Supper celebrated by the early Christians.

Matthew 15:29-31

Demand for a Sign

Rejection by the Jewish Leaders

- The pendulum of reactions to Jesus swings back abruptly, and the disbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees confront Jesus and demand that he produce a sign from heaven to prove who he is.
- Jesus replies just as in Matthew 12:38-45, when the Pharisees demanded an irrefutable sign from Jesus, that there would be no sign except “the sign of Jonah.”
 - Matthew 12:40 (NRSV): **“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.”**

Matthew 16:1-4

Demand for a Sign

Warning About the Jewish Leaders

- Jesus then warns the disciples of **“the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”** (16:6 NRSV)
- After initial confusion, the disciples understand Jesus is warning them about the **“teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees”** (16:12 NRSV)

Next Session:

Part IV. The Passion and Resurrection

Beginning with:

The Journey to Jerusalem (16:13—18:35)