

Sessions 15 and 16

Jesus' Opponents in the Holy City: Mt 19-23

Context

From the earliest chapters of the Gospel, Jesus has been surrounded with opposition—Herod Antipas in Mt 1-2, resistance from the authorities (Mt 11-18). Now, with Jesus in the Holy City, his opponents become more clearly defined. This prepares the Gospel's audience for his passion and death.

In these three teaching videos for Sessions 15 & 16

In these videos, we see how:

- Matthew's Jesus redefines status and holiness;
- A key saying which comes from the historical Jesus and absorbed into Matthew's narrative is "The first will be last; the last, first";
- This saying gets played out in the characters of the religious leaders and those without status (divorced, eunuchs, children);
- Privilege, status and entitlement becomes seriously critiqued.



Children playing ball games, detail. Marble, Roman artwork of the second quarter of the 2nd century CE. Provenance unknown. Probably fragment of a Roman sarcophagus. (Attribution: Louvre Museum, creativecommons.org/ via Wikimedia Commons)

Mt 19-23: Jesus Redefines Status

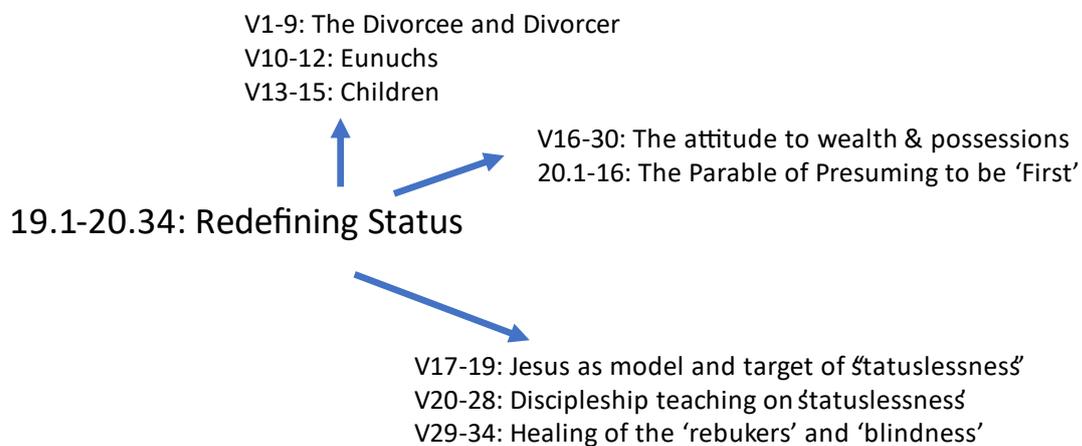
Mt 19-23 falls into two parts:

Part I: 19-20 redefines status

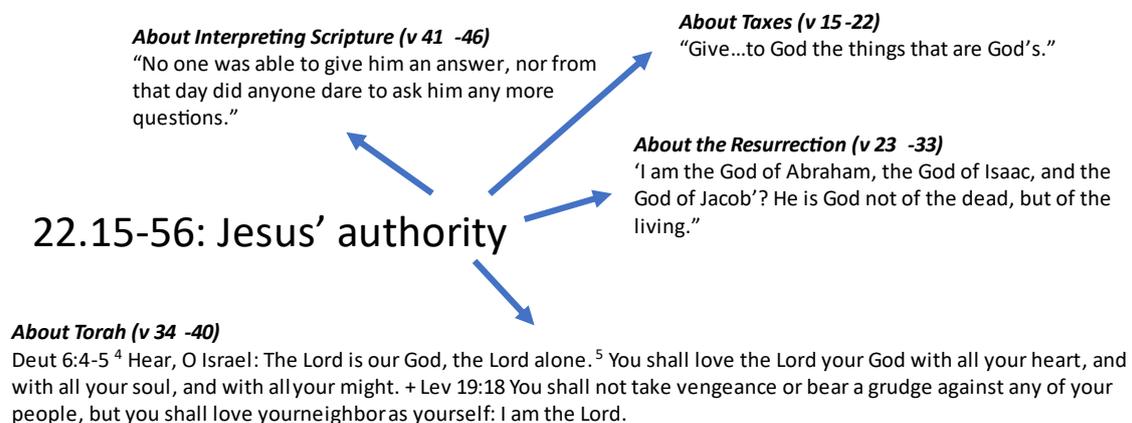
Part II: 21-23 redefines holiness and authority

The following two diagrams summarise the manner by which Matthew constructs these two sections of the Gospel in which Jesus redefines status, holiness and privilege.

Part I: Mt 19-20 Redefined Status



Part II: Mt 21-23 Redefined Holiness and Authority



Watch

If you wish to glean further insight into Matthew's divorce teaching, watch Michael Trainor's video sessions specifically focused on this important topic.

Read

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 194-98.

Don Senior, "Teachings on the Journey" and "Conclusion of the Journey", *The Gospel of Matthew* (Abingdon Press, 1997), 145-50.

Barbara Reid, "The Gospel According to Matthew," *New Collegeville Bible Commentary : New Testament*, edited by Daniel Durken (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 61-74.

Watch

Don Senior's Youtube lecture relevant for this session.

Michael Trainor's video recording for this session.

Summary

Several features emerge in Mt 19-23:

- Jesus encourages Matthew's audience to relinquish status and wealth. The principle that shapes this encouragement is, "Many that are first will be last, and the last, first" (19.30).
- Jesus' parable (20.1-16) reinforces God's unexpected generosity and subverts social determination.
- Disciples are challenged to let go of status-seeking. They, too, need *metanoia*—a change of heart. The presence of the child which Jesus places in their midst becomes the symbol and image of the truly receptive one open to God's presence and God's reign.
- Membership in the Gospel "household" also becomes redefined. Rather than the morally or socially acceptable ones, it is the divorced, eunuchs and children who are especially welcomed.

For Reflection

- What are the difficult or challenging teachings and insights that emerge from these chapters of Matthew's Gospel?
- What kind of vision of the Church would Jesus' teaching and actions in these chapters of the Gospel suggest to us today?