

VALUE FRAMEWORKS

Sections on Matthew

REALITY SEARCH

VERSION TWO



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Chapter Six

Internalise the Law

(Text 2)

The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew appears to be written from within a society largely based upon law, that is, with most of its membership coming from a Jewish background. Because of the strong Jewish influence here there is a heavy emphasis upon the sense of time. Why so?

Jews have been known as "the People of the Book" and their key book is the Torah that is, the first five books of the Bible. The Torah provides a history of how the Israelites, later to be called Jews, were singled out by God to enter into a covenant with him. The Covenant with God is based upon their observance of the Ten Commandments. If they observe the Commandments with respect for God, their parents and the life, family and property of others, then God will look after them. Much of the Old Testament provides a chronicle of how the Chosen People constantly fell away into the adoration of man-made gods. Old Testament prophets warned the people against breaking the commandments. For example, Jeremiah warned them against provoking war. Hoshiah warned them against the practice of fertility rites. Amos warned them against oppression of the poor.

The calendar of Jewish festivals celebrate those points in time when God 'broke into history' to save his people. This is especially so when God divided the waters of the Red Sea to deliver Moses and the people from Egypt.

In *Version One of Reality Search* the link between time and law is considered at some length. Natural Law such as the laws of gravity, revolve around cause and effect and this takes place within the framework of time. Causes as such, cannot necessarily be explained. For example a father of modern physics, Isaac Newton described the effects of gravity. But he could not explain it.

Given the Jewish background of the writer of Matthew's gospel it is not surprising that he structures his text and develops an argument about the sense of time rather than about the sense of place.

Discovery of Matthew's Outline

How was a structure for Matthew's gospel in *Reality Search* found? After an outline sketch of a structure for Mark's gospel had been completed, the whole of Matthew's gospel was typed out onto A4 pages. The pages for this were then spread out onto a table a couple of meters long. There was an idea here that the paragraphs of this gospel might also be grouped into sections of about 5-6 traditional chapters in length. In such case a Section A in the gospel would obviously cover the infancy narratives to be found at the start of Matthew and Luke. A final Section for the gospel would most likely start with the crucifixion segment. This left the text in between.

It was noticed that before the start of the final crucifixion Section there is a sentence to the effect "After Jesus had said these things." It was considered that this might be a closing statement for the previous Section. Working on the assumption that each possible Section was about the length of the table with some A4 sheets opened out, it was considered that this sentence may also pop up when going back about another five pages. Surprisingly this was the case. Then another exploration was made, going back a further four-five pages. Again this sentence was there. The same distance back again and yet again there was the sentence. Back again and there was the commencement of what Jesus was saying. It would be hard to consider that these repetitions were there by chance.

When one looks more closely at a text of about thirty pages long and one says "By my calculation such and such a sentence should be repeated here", it is then quite a surprise to find that the sentence is actually sitting there.

And so it was considered that the sentence "After Jesus had said these things" may well break up the bulk of the text into sub-sections. A closer look was then taken at what system of paragraphing was used. Firstly because Section A is about "the child" it was considered that this would be like other passages on this same topic and follow a different form. So it was not studied in detail.

Section B:

Push Beyond the Bare Outlines

Section B was then considered. What "hook" if any would be repeated here in order to link the paragraphs together? In retrospect it may have been logical, that the "hooks" to be used in this gospel would be verbs rather than places. Also, it would fit into the underlying structures of all the gospels if the "hooks" for Section B were exhortations. But at that time the likely connection between the text and such verb forms was not realised. Rather they simply emerged from the text as being the most obvious way that the paragraphs were connected.

Thus Section B in Matthew has the following headings:

Push beyond:

1. Sin avoidance (only)
2. Being average
3. Being literal
4. Show
5. Treasure
6. Judging
7. Refusal to ask
8. The easy

A picture of the paragraph "hooks" is as follows:

"Blessed are"	(the poor in spirit)
"Ye are"	(the salt of the earth)
"Think not"	(that I came to destroy the law)
"Heed"	(the righteousness of you)
"Do not lay up"	(treasure)
"Judge not"	(lest ye be judged)
"Ask"	(and it shall be given to you)
"Enter ye"	(through the narrow gate)

These exhortations appear to open up paragraphs which follow through with the same subject.

The exhortations are simply said. But people could consider any point on the list would take a life time to push beyond. And for Matthew this is only the beginning. There does not appear to be condemnation of human weakness here. Rather there appears to be a throwing down of a gauntlet. Do this if you want to survive. At the end of the list there is mention of a "prudent" person. It would indeed be prudent to try to follow these exhortations. Then the writer challenges the reader to develop beyond this description towards further personal growth?

Section C

Acquire Attributes to Internalise Law

In Section C Matthew goes on. He sets out personal attributes to acquire in order to internalise the law.

What does he use as his paragraph hooks here? Again Matthew relies on verbs. He does not pair paragraphs as with Mark. Rather the text grouping of paragraphs flows forward. Perhaps this is because a forward direction, as with time, is a comfortable style for Matthew. Using concentric circles as in Mark's structure may for Matthew have suggested going around in circles. In any case because his background is Jewish he would not have an interest in patterning structures c/f mathematics like a writer using structures of Greek logic. Rather he pushes forward (or inwards) towards greater personal development and for the "growing up" of the person.

Matthew does not use ordinary verbs as his hooks. Grammatically, as one verb is required for each sentence he could not link a whole paragraph together using only the one verb. Rather he uses particular types of verbs, such as, in this case, present participles. Thus verbs such as the following form 'hooks' for the paragraphs:- coming, entering, seeing, having, embarking, sleeping, turning, entering, passing, proclaiming, calling. Some of these, especially "coming" are repeated. All 21 paragraphs in this Section C relate to various ways of responding to and following Jesus. On the other hand it seems that an exception here proves the rule. In one case when the person concerned says he wants to go back and bury his father, that is, wait until his father dies, there is not a present participle used here. It appears that the man wants to go in the other direction so Matthew deliberately omits a participle in the paragraph that

presents this.

At the end of Section C the followers of Jesus have apparently moved from being described as "prudent" to being described as "little".

In this Section, there are twenty-one attributes which would help to internalise law:

1. Ask for help
2. Recognise authority
3. Accept touch
4. Accept healing
5. Be independent of the crowd
6. Be ready to move
7. Leave excuses
8. Follow
9. Trust
10. Prionitise
11. Forgive
12. Entrust
13. Renew
14. Lead
15. Touch
16. Ignore ridicule
17. Believe in own power
18. Believe
19. Teach and heal
20. Pray for harvesters
21. Reach out

It is interesting to note how an exhortation to "forgive" is again highlighted here . It is in the middle of the 21 attributes to acquire. This may not be as important a place as the middle of a concentric circle. But it is a reminder that forgiveness is important. Also the last and therefore arguably the major point mentioned in Section C is to "reach out." It is to be demonstrated in later texts that is, Luke and John, that there is a tendency towards narrowness in a society based upon law. Matthew is preparing for this line of argument here by pointing out the need for such a society to reach out into other places (and the perspectives and authenticity of other people).

Section D

Develop an Environment of Internalised Law

Section D in Matthew, presents a list of ways to develop an environment of internalised law. Virtually all teaching in the name of Christianity argues that the gospels are about the construction of viable societies. This ultimately enables the individual person to function in terms of their own power of one. Hence there is a close association between the individual Christian person and the person of Christ.

It is not enough for the individual to internalise law as such for themselves. Rather those in their social environment need to internalise the law as well. In Section D Matthew provides a list of things that could be encouraged in one's social environment

What does he use as a 'hook' to link his paragraphs together here? Again Matthew relies on words associated with time. But rather than present exhortations or present participles Matthew uses a time description or a time phrase. For example each paragraph begins with something like 'when', 'then', 'at that time', 'now' (while), 'on the day', 'when ended', 'thence', 'after six days', 'in that hour'. As with the previous Section C, some of these 'hooks' are repeated in a number of paragraphs, for example the word "then".

In Section D the connecting "hooks" or expression of time are put at the start of the paragraph. Also Matthew is talking about the creation of an environment. With a consciousness of environment it is to be expected that he would also talk in generalised terms. In fact at the end of many of the paragraphs there is a generalised statement to sum up what has gone before.

At the end of the first paragraph there is also a pivotal statement that sets the scene for what follows, that is, "Wisdom is justified by her works". In the Old Testament "Wisdom" or Sophia is referred to in the feminine. She is described as the "eldest daughter of the Most High" who "delights to be with the children of men." It seems a parallel is being drawn here. That is, construction of this environment should also be viewed as the work of Wisdom. So, on the one hand within the text immediately around the mention of Wisdom, there is talk of the lame walking, the deaf hearing the dumb speaking etc. But in a wider sense all the list of 26

points about an environment of internalised law in this Section D can be considered as the work of Wisdom.

An environment of internalised law

1. Proves
2. Excuses
3. Relieves
4. Prophecies
5. Discerns
6. Judges
7. Predicts
8. Relates c/f God's will
9. Bears fruit
10. Proclaims
11. Retrieves
12. Is affected by
13. Listens
14. Heals
15. Dismisses the petty
16. Praises
17. Feeds
18. Warns
19. Builds
20. Foresees
21. Anticipates
22. Empowers
23. Grieves
24. Pays dues
25. Is present
26. Forgives

Again note how forgiving is given special priority. It is put at the end of the list here.

At the end of this Section the follower of this way of internalising law, that is, the follower of Jesus has gone from being prudent to being 'little' and is now referred to as "brother" (and by implication "sister").

Section E

Avoid Over-stress on Law External

In Matthew's gospel, there is a list of warnings against over-stress on external law. Again Matthew uses a verb or something to do with time as his paragraph hook to hold this Section together. It has already been noted the sentence "After Jesus had said all these things." is the link or divider of the major gospel sections. Here in Section E the 'hook' being used is "Jesus said." Perhaps in the use of such a 'hook' Matthew was making it clear that Jesus is identifying with these criticisms. They are not simply criticisms in the abstract. A closer look at the criticisms show that historically speaking, it is not surprising that the Jewish leadership was after Jesus. Anyone would be wary of putting up criticisms too boldly in the face of leaders who over-stress external law. Probably over the centuries people have been able to fall back on the excuse that it was Jesus himself who voiced criticisms on these lines, that is, "Jesus said". (Don't look at me!). Historically speaking another point

here is that Jesus was born and bred a Jew. He was not talking from the basis of being a Greek-cultured Roman citizen. Rather his criticisms were coming from within the law based society itself. This makes them all the more cutting.



Avoid over-stress on Law External. Be wary of:

1. Selfish use of law
2. Belittling of children
3. Many possessions
4. Making demands
5. Condemnation
6. Ambition
7. Controls
8. Vestiges of greatness
9. Money from religion
10. False appearances
11. Reliance on rank
12. Privilege
13. Separatism
14. Anthropomorphism
15. Legalism
16. Narrowness
17. Hypocrisy
18. Temple reliance
19. False Prophets
20. Lack of watchfulness
21. Presumption
22. Lack of Development
23. Lack of Accountability

By the end of this Section the follower of Jesus is described as "the least." With regards to these closing descriptions of a follower of Jesus one could wonder if going from "prudent" to "little" to "brother" (or sister) to the "least" is in fact going up in the world or going down! What a follower is challenged to do is go further

and further into relationship with Jesus. It appears they are challenged to allow the value system of Jesus to take over their lives more and more. In such case there would be a diminishing of the self.

Section F

Lead Through a Forgiving Relationship

The final, Section F of this gospel relates to the crucifixion. In terms of the analysis, the paragraph hook of "disciple" is not as obvious as other 'hooks' used elsewhere by gospel writers. However, by following the paragraphs that this "hook" divides the text into, one can see that the theme of forgiveness is prioritised. Why? Section F shows the disciples sinking further and further into failure. As a counter to this there appears to be a leadership relationship of forgiving on the part of the risen Jesus. Despite the weakness of the disciples, Jesus continues to rely on them. He raises them to the status and role of carrying on what he has started. Just as Jesus has challenged these people to discipleship so also the disciples are commanded to go out and disciple others.

On the personal level of the follower, there is a development from being "the least" to becoming a "discipler".

In terms of the text, the use of a literal translation here is crucial. The English language does not have the one word for "discipler" So the link between this challenge

and previous challenges at the end of the Sections could be lost without the exact wording of the original text.

To run through the steps of the final Section in the Analysis, the disciples are found as follows:

1. Disciples hear passively
2. Disciples belittle sincerity (of ointment woman)
3. The disciples inquire routinely
4. The disciples follow instructions with some disinterest
5. The twelve disciples deny betrayal
6. Disciples initiated into new covenant
7. All the disciples claim on-going loyalty
8. The disciples asked for support
9. The disciples fall asleep
10. The disciples include a betrayer
11. The disciples - one betrays
12. A disciple (Aramathaea) comes forward to display respect (for body)
13. Disciples are told of new life (resurrection)
14. Announce to brothers
15. Disciples are maligned themselves
16. Eleven disciples are told to "disciple" others.

Section F does more than provide a list. There is a transformation of the disciples as the events described by these paragraphs are worked through. At the start of the Section they appear somewhat disinterested and actually despise the good will of the ointment woman. By the end they are taking on the responsibility of

carrying themselves misunderstandings and persecution that go with the promotion of the gospel.

Overall it appears that internalising the law is done through the process of a journey inwards, even if it has to be completed through a catharsis.





Biographical Note:

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