

MATTHEW'S USE OF THE PENTATEUCH IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: ESTABLISHING THE FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING THROUGH THE EXAMPLE AND INSTRUCTION OF CHRIST

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ABSTRACT. Matthew's use of the Pentateuch in the Sermon on the Mount establishes the foundation for how Christians are to live their lives by modeling the example of Jesus Christ. This paper works through the Pentateuch in order of appearance in the Christian Canon addressing the respective Pentateuch uses throughout the Sermon on the Mount rather than in order of appearance in the sermon. The implications of the Pentateuch quotations by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as recorded by the Apostle Matthew details not only the foundation of Christian living but also addresses the completion of the Messianic prophecy as the Old Testament Law being fulfilled by Christ Jesus. Upon examination of Matthew's Gospel and comparing the Pentateuch quotations in context and how Christ uses them in the sermon discourse not only enhances understanding of the Pentateuch in the overall theme of God's revelatory redemptive work in Scripture, but it also enhances the understanding of the Sermon on the Mount in the same manner. Jesus' use of the Pentateuch in the sermon discourse additionally simplifies and provides clarity to the Law, establishing what true righteousness looks like. Therefore, exemplifying the need for the imitation of Christ in daily life.

KEY WORDS: Pentateuch, Sermon on the Mount, Pentateuch quotation, Christian living, modeling Jesus

Introduction

The first five books of the Bible, or the Pentateuch, are prevalent in Matthew's Gospel. Some references are explicit, others implicit requiring a working knowledge of the Old Testament to take notice of them. Matthew has over fifty explicit general Old Testament quotations, Pentateuch included (Pao 2013: 570). Of these, thirty-one are explicit references to the Pentateuch, totaling sixty-four explicit Old Testament quotations (see the Appendix).

When it comes to the numerical value of the quotations, be it explicit or implicit, the final tally can vary between researchers. For example, Patrick Schreiner holds the position that "On some countings, Matthew uses some

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sixty-one quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures. According to the NA, forty of these are explicit citations, and twenty-one are quotations without explicit mention of the source. When allusions (which are harder to quantify) are taken into account, the number soars to about three hundred (Schreiner 2019: 31). Therefore, it is up to the individual to make the determination based on their ability to understand their own respective native tongue translation or Koine Greek to develop an accurate accounting of the quotations of the Pentateuch by Matthew.

The Pentateuch is the authoritative embodiment of the written word of God, the very foundation to the entire religions of Judaism and Christianity. However, one must not make a distinction between the two when looking analytically at the evidentiary nature of the writings. If the Pentateuch serves as the foundation of the rules for Jewish living and Christianity being the final form of Judaism, how much more does The Sermon on the Mount become the rules for Christian life with its core being its correlation with the Pentateuch?

It is simple to aver the necessity for relation between Jesus Christ as not only the foretold Messiah but the underpinning primacy of Him being God in flesh. This is supported by F.F. Bruce in that “Matthew, written for Jewish Christians, focuses on who Jesus is, why he came, and how he fits into God’s bigger purposes, showing he is the long-expected Messiah, the bringer of God’s kingdom” (Bruce 2014). This understanding greatly assists both Jews and Christian alike to connect the dots of God’s redemptive work since time immemorial, with His final redemptive work finished with the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son.

Considering the structure of Matthew, “a number of proposals are suggested for Matthew’s structure, not because of a lack of structural clues but because of the abundance of such indicators” (Pao 2013: 570). Regardless of which structure view one holds, the discourse of Jesus is always viewed totaling five; the first clue towards Matthew’s use of the Pentateuch, even though it is not a quotation, rather it is a mirror of its structure. Significance in Pentateuch quotation is given to the fivefold discourse in The Sermon on the Mount as twelve of the Pentateuch quotations come in The Sermon on the Mount which is approximately one third. While an argument can be made that one third is an equal distribution of the Pentateuch in Matthew’s Gospel, other factors such as location and the theology of the discourse weigh in on its primacy. On the structure of Matthew, Craig Blomberg has to say, “Above all, Matthew thus wants to demonstrate God’s work in Jesus to bring the fulfillment of his promises to his chosen people, the Jews, and, through (or even in spite of) their reaction, to offer identical blessings and judgments to all humanity” (Blomberg 1992b: 25-26).

Who Is Matthew?

While the goal of this paper is to establish that Matthew's use of the Pentateuch in The Sermon on the Mount is the example of Christ establishing the foundation of Christian living, I thought it necessary to provide a brief overview of who Matthew was.

While there is a plethora of information available today arguing for the authorship of Matthew's Gospel, it has long been attributed to the Apostle Matthew who was listed as Matthew the tax collector in Matthew 9:9 and Levi in the parallel accounts of Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27. F.F. Bruce in his commentary on Matthew states "Since the days of the early church it has been believed that this Gospel was written by the tax collector who appears in 9:9. This is supported by other evidence. Matthew is the only Gospel writer who identifies this tax collector as "Matthew". Furthermore, his writing shows both the interest in numbers and the local knowledge that you would expect of a tax collector living in that place at that time. This Matthew was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus (10:2-4)" (Bruce 2014). Considering the information available that argues for or against the authorship of Matthew, the point is moot. As Blomberg states "Neither inspiration nor apostolic authority depends on apostolic authorship (cf. Mark and Luke), and the church was capable of preserving accurate information outside of apostolic circles (Luke 1:1-4). Indeed, few of the conclusions offered in this introduction "bias" the subsequent commentary. Different assessments concerning audience, sources, date, or author should not prevent one from benefiting from our analysis of the meaning and significance of the text itself" (Blomberg 1992b: 44-46).

In summary, who Matthew was is not detrimental to the argument of this paper, nor is it detrimental to the authoritative nature of Matthew's Gospel as Scripture. The fact that it was attributed and accepted by many early patristic sources in the church and has thus far stood the test of time as being considered authored by the Apostle Matthew leaves little reason to doubt its validity. However, it is up to the individual reader to assess the evidence and decide for themselves.

Genesis

Genesis, the first Book of The Pentateuch, is explicitly quoted by Matthew three times (vv. 19:4-5). It is interesting to note that Genesis means creation and is the first Book of the Pentateuch that is quoted by Matthew as he begins his Gospel account with the genealogy of Jesus. While it could be argued that there are only two quotations as verse 19:4 can reference either: Genesis 1:27 or 5:2, both stating the same information. Depending upon the position one adheres to on this matter it would potentially alter the total count of quotations but is a moot point when considering the broad use of the quotations

by Matthew. While Matthew does not quote Genesis in The Sermon on the Mount, the fundamental understanding of marriage, which is the implied topic in Matthew 5:27-32, is assumed based on the establishment of the role of a man and woman in Genesis.

The summary use of Genesis quotations by Matthew is his establishment of the authority of Jesus. Ironically, a statement of authority is found at the end of The Sermon on the Mount in v. 7:29 “for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.” This follows and flows from God’s overarching establishment of His authority in the creation account and beyond in Genesis. Further, Matthew sets the scene establishing the birth of Jesus and the chronologically detailing major events leading up to Jesus’ first major ministry moment.

Exodus

Exodus, which means “a way out, or departure” is the second Book of The Pentateuch and is explicitly quoted by Matthew eight times. Three of the quotations are found in The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21, 27, 38). All these quotations are dealing with commandments, which is the overarching theme and a prominent figure in Exodus as this was the time when God revealed the commandments.

An interesting correlation between the quotations is Jesus’ teaching about the Ten Commandments and the Law. These take place immediately after Jesus states in verse 5:18 that: “He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them”. Matthew is clearly making the connection between the foretold Messiah and Jesus being same. Here, Schreiner concludes, “Like Jesus, Matthew clarifies the balance between the new and the old because he has been trained in the ways of the kingdom of heaven. He confirms the continuation of the old, when rightly understood, while also uncovering how the new clarifies the old. He does not discard the past and simply cling to the new, but he employs the new to interpret the old” (Schreiner 2019: 29).

Two of the quotations in Matthew 15:4; 22:32 specifically reference to Exodus 20:12; 21:17; 3:6, 15-16. These quotations specifically tie to the theme of Exodus with Moses leading “his people” to safety from Egypt. During that time, the Jewish people often did not follow God’s commandments and subsequently that generation was condemned to death without entering the promised land. Jesus’ corollary use of Exodus here is showing that again, God’s people are not following commandments and are needing to be led to safety which will happen with the culmination of Christ’s death and resurrection at the end of Matthew’s Gospel. This position may further be enhanced by suggesting that with the prescription in the sermon discourse, Jesus is already leading His people to ‘safety’.

However, an accurate understanding of Matthew 5:17 cannot be overstated. While the connotation can be made of Jesus as a “new Moses” the primary understanding from the plain language of the text is that Jesus is more concerned with obedience to the Law and its correct interpretation. Blomberg says that “Matthew’s insistence that Jesus is “greater than” all three major Old Testament categories of national leaders—prophet, priest, and king (12:1–8, 39–42). He is thus no new Moses but one far greater than Moses. He does not promulgate a new law but the Gospel, which far transcends the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20), even at their best moments of well-motivated, genuine obedience to the Torah (Blomberg 1992b: 31). The summary use of Exodus clearly establishes the primary focus of the Law which creates the bedrock on which the rest of The Sermon on the Mount is built upon. Further, one could postulate that it sets up the rest of Matthew’s Gospel in that it clears the path leading toward Jesus giving up His body as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind as obedience to the Law. The Apostle Paul confirms this in Philippians 2:8 “And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Leviticus

Leviticus, the third Book of The Pentateuch, is explicitly quoted six times by Matthew. Of these, three are in The Sermon on the Mount in 5:33, 38, 43. However, according to Yang Seung, the quotation of Matthew 5:43 “is not found anywhere in the Old Testament...and seem to reflect some popular oral traditions in first-century AD Jewish society in Palestine” (Yang 2013: 849). Thus, potentially altering the count of quotations by Matthew to five and two respectively. However, addressing Matthew 5:43 and the fact that it is not a direct verbatim quotation from Leviticus 19:18 leaves room to speculate that the broad scope of the quotation in the verse is Jesus calling followers to Holiness just as the Levitical priests were called to Holiness.

When looking at the language of the text it is reasonable to aver that the use of Leviticus 19:18 in Matthew 5:43 is more of a generalized explanation of the command rather than a literal verbatim quotation. Jesus did not seem to be altering Leviticus 19:18, rather He affirmed it and explicated it in such a way that His audience understood it. Thus, positioning it as remaining as an inclusion of the original tally of Pentateuch quotations by Matthew in The Sermon on the Mount.

Leviticus is the instructions for the Levite priests concerning all things Holy. D. Jeffrey Mooney provides the following information about Leviticus. “The Jewish convention for naming biblical books after their opening word makes the Hebrew name for Leviticus וַיִּקְרָא (*wayyiqra'*, “and He called”). The English title, Leviticus, derives from the Greek term ΛΕΥΙΤΙΚΟΝ

(*LEUITIKON*). Though the book does not focus on the Levites, Christian tradition holds that the Levitical priests were the rightful recipients of the material (Hebrews 7:11)” (Mooney 2016). Utilizing this information from Mooney offers clarity to the reason for Jesus to use the quotations from Leviticus in the sermon discourse as recorded by Matthew.

The remaining two quotations of Leviticus in the sermon discourse, Matthew 5:33 and 38 offers a further portrayal of the call to be Holy. In 5:33, Matthew records Jesus speaking to the swearing of oaths, citing Leviticus 19:12 “You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.”. The implication here is the issue of profaning the name of God which would deductively render one, unholy. Similarly, in 5:38 Jesus quotes Leviticus 24:20 and offers clarity to the Law in that the call to be Holy is to take precedence over retaliation. In summary, it is at this point of the sermon discourse that Matthew records Jesus establishing the model for discipleship and what the life of His followers is to exemplify, namely the character of Christ. Schreiner states succinctly that “The wisdom Matthew learns concerns the mysteries of the kingdom revealed in Jesus himself (the new) and predicted in Jewish tradition (the old). Jesus causes the old era of expectation to burst forth to the new era of realization” (Schreiner 2019: 30).

Numbers

The fourth Book of The Pentateuch, is Numbers. It is the least referenced book of the Pentateuch by Matthew. Containing only one reference it is found in The Sermon on the Mount in verse 5:33 and cites Numbers 30:2. One must perform the task of exegesis to determine what Jesus is talking about with His use of Numbers 30:2 as the corresponding verse in Numbers 30:2 is not a verbatim quote by Him. Rather, it seems to be a combination of a commandment from another part of Scripture with a quasi-reference to Numbers.

The likely point of Jesus’ teaching by use of Numbers 30:2 during His sermon discourse is partly in reference to the Hebrew title of Numbers “In the Wilderness”. It was titled so, for the people refused to take possession of the land which broke their end of the Covenant by not performing to the Lord what they had sworn. Thus, God made them wander in the wilderness for forty years. This can also be extrapolated as an understanding of Jesus’ forty days in the wilderness while being tempted by the devil where Jesus obediently upheld one of His roles that was given to Him by God: to model obedience. In summary, we find throughout Numbers God’s faithfulness and Holiness and this correlates with the ‘issue’ of oaths in that Jesus affirms that you must acknowledge that you will or will not do something, simplifying the matter. For if we were to swear falsely by God, the consequences would be dire for us in as much that God cannot circumvent His promises, regardless

of the situation. He is faithful. Therefore, the implication is made that if we choose Christ as our Savior and model Him as instructed using The Sermon on the Mount as the blueprint of this model that we find in Christ Jesus, then we are to make our “yes or no” decision and stick to it.

While it may be difficult, the reward is worth the work. This quotation of Numbers 30:2 in Matthew 5:33, if viewed alone can be argued to potentially summarize the entire message of The Sermon on the Mount as a call to the Gospel of Christ and affirming yes or no as a response to same. Andre du Toit says regarding The Sermon on the Mount “It is a direct onslaught on the selfishness, the self-indulgence, the hypocrisy of people, societies and nations; it challenges our lethargy, our timid hesitancy to break out of our comfort zones and to fully accept the cost of discipleship” (Du Toit Andreas 2016: 60).

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is the fifth and final Book in the Pentateuch. It has the largest number of explicit quotations by Matthew of any other Book in The Pentateuch. Thirteen in total; five coming from The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38. Four of these five quotations are repeated in either, Exodus or Leviticus. To avoid redundancy, I will only detail Matthew 5:31 in relation to the quotation of the Pentateuch by Matthew in The Sermon on the Mount. I will, however, provide information about a few of the other quotations in that they offer beneficial information that is relevant to the topic of establishing the foundation of Christian living through Christ, even though they are outside of the sermon discourse.

Deuteronomy loosely translated means “second law” and is the retelling of the events of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, which comprises what is called the Torah, meaning Law. However, many sources offer elaborate detailing for the title of Deuteronomy. One example is from Walter Kaiser Jr. who says, “The English title for the book of Deuteronomy is taken from the Greek translation of Deut 17:18, which spoke of the king having “a copy of the law.” However, both the Greek *Δευτερονόμιον* (*Deuteronomion*) and its rendering into English meant a “second law,” hence the English name of “Deuteronomy.” But it would be more accurate to say—based on the original Hebrew text—that it was a renewal or a copy of the covenant made at Mount Sinai/Horeb with Moses. The Hebrew name for this book, following the ancient Jewish practice of naming a book by its opening line, is Debarim, the “Words,” for the book began with “These are the words ...” (אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים, *elleh haddevarim*)” (Kaiser Jr. 2016).

In summary, with the understanding that Deuteronomy is a “copy” or “second telling” it is reasonable to understand that there are repetitious quotations found here. There are, however, seven additional quotations that are

not repeated in the previous Book uses. These additional seven are exceptionally interesting.

The first of the quotations that is not repeated if ordering them in order of appearance in the Gospel, is Matthew 4:4. This quotation is of Deuteronomy 8:3 concerning the Israelites forty years in the wilderness. It is symbolically quoted concerning Jesus' forty-day temptation in the wilderness after His baptism by John the Baptist. An apparent affinity with Jesus as the greater 'second' Moses comes to fruition in this quotation in that Moses led the people of Israel in the wilderness for forty years and they were fed manna from God in Exodus 16:4. Another interesting correlation with Exodus 16:4 and the temptation of Jesus is that Jesus was hungry when He was in the wilderness. The tempter came to Him to cause Him to sin, however He persevered against it. Additionally, two of the seven quotations following 4:4 that are not in the sermon are Matthew 4:7 and 10 and relate to the following profound statement regarding the use of Deuteronomy by Walter Kaiser Jr. "When Jesus was tempted by the evil one, He three times appealed to the words of Deuteronomy as His authoritative response (8:3; 6:16; 6:13)" (Kaiser Jr. 2016). There is significance in these quotations in that they establish the power of Scripture in that Jesus used it to counter the devil while being tempted. Further modeling how the follower of Christ can root into God's Word as a means of dealing with spiritual warfare in which the life of the believer is often plagued by.

The culmination of the non-repeated quotations is found in Matthew 22:37. This is arguably the most profound teaching of Jesus. In that He summarized the Ten Commandments into two, at the same time synthesizing the entirety of His teaching into this twofold commandment set. This is not to imply that He negated the importance of the Ten Commandments, rather, He succinctly stated that they are all important. Therefore, while Deuteronomy is the most quoted Book of the Pentateuch the statement is misleading in the sense that often, the quotations mirror those in Exodus or Leviticus since Deuteronomy is the retelling of the Law which is encompassed in Exodus and Leviticus. The implication of this repetitious nature of quotation thereby enhances the importance of the Law and the fact that it was not abolished, rather, fulfilled, in Christ.

Conclusions

The evidentiary status of Matthew's emphasis on The Sermon on the Mount in his quotation of The Pentateuch, is extensive. The Sermon on the Mount is arguably the most quoted text from the New Testament (Yang 2013: 845). Upon reading Matthew's Gospel, one will take notice of the prominent location of The Sermon on the Mount. While there is debate on when the Sermon took place and the potential ordering of Matthew's Gospel, the issue is moot.

Matthew, under guidance of the Holy Spirit determined its location in the written documentation of Jesus' earthly ministry. It is prominently located immediately after the details of the first four chapters in Matthew which establishes the Kingship in relation to David, the Messianic implication and authority of Jesus.

In a condensed description, The Sermon on the Mount can be considered a manifesto of how the follower of Christ is to live their life. By following this established declaration, the believer can ultimately be led by the second Moses (Jesus) to safety in the promised land, eternal life. This position is fully articulated by Augustine's *De sermon domini in monte* ('The Lord's Sermon on the Mount') in which Augustine says "If a person will devoutly and calmly consider the sermon which our Lord Jesus Christ spoke on the mount, as we read it in the Gospel according to Matthew, I think he will find in it, as measured by the highest norms of morality, the perfect pattern of the Christian life. We dare to promise this not without warrant: it is a conclusion based on the spoken words of the Lord Himself. For the conclusion of the sermon is so phrased as to make it apparent that it embraces all the directives we need for life" (Augustine 1948: 11).

What is discovered when comparing the Pentateuch and Matthew's account of The Sermon on the Mount is a foundation that in the Old Testament established the criteria for the behavior of the people. Correspondingly, when dissecting The Sermon on the Mount the same prescriptive information is given. The primary difference is that Jesus provides clarity to the former with the latter.

Further, when looking at Matthew's Gospel account of The Sermon on the Mount in relation to Luke's account in his respective Gospel one may seem to wonder why the significant differences? A conclusion may be made that Matthew being a disciple was potentially present for the sermon even though his own Gospel does not present him as being called until 9:9 does not necessarily exclude him from being present. Nowhere in Matthew's Gospel is it offered that the events are in a chronological order. One could surmise that the sermon was listed where it was for reasons I have previously mentioned. Of course, this is not possible to prove, but makes for an interesting thought when considering the implications of structure outside of the sayings source Q, the double and triple traditions, etc.

While some of the quotations by Matthew come after his placement of The Sermon on the Mount, it is of little detriment to the broad use of The Pentateuch. The entirety of the other quotations can effectively be summarized as further reinforcement of the primary focal point being The Sermon on the Mount. This is outside of the Passion narrative in the end of Matthew as it is of greater primacy since it is the Passion of Christ that offers salvation and not the sermon.

The Sermon on the Mount is prescriptive in that it provides the model, and the Passion is the full enactment of that model that could only be completed by Jesus Christ as God in flesh. That is to say that only However, this matter of the final quotations being a summary of further reinforcement of the Pentateuch use in the sermon is best left to individual interpretation and understanding of the Gospel of Matthew in its entirety, a matter of opinion rather than fact.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1

Use of Pentateuch in Matthew Corresponding Quotations

Gospel of Matthew	Pentateuch
4:4	Deut 8:3
4:7	Deut 6:16
4:10	Deut 6:13
5:21	Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17
5:27	Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18
5:31	Deut 24:1
5:33	Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:21
5:38	Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21
5:43	Lev 19:18
15:4	Exod 20:12, 17; Lev 20:9; Deut 5:16
18:16	Deut 19:15
19:4	Gen 1:27, 5:2
19:5	Gen 2:24
19:18-19	Exod 20:12-16; Lev 19:18; Deut 5:16-20
22:24	Deut 25:5
22:32	Exod 3:6, 15-16
22:37	Deut 6:5
22:39	Lev 19:18

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