



Lesson Seven: One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." -Jeremiah 31:31-33

What's happening in the world

- *Alexander the Great had conquered the world, died, and his empire was split between four empires.
- *The whole world learns the Greek language and culture.
- *Rome is quietly growing in power.



What's happening with Israel . . .

We have seen God make covenant after covenant with His people Israel, and we have seen Israel be unfaithful to each covenant. We have also seen how God has grown His family to encompass more and more of the world, furthering His plan of bringing salvation to all people upon the earth. At this point in our story, Israel has been exiled by other nations several time, and the 12 tribes (which had been similar to how we divide our countries into states) had been separated and scattered. They eventually are allowed to return to their land, build a Temple, and they have several kings over the years. None of the kings, however, are from the line of David. The Jewish people continue to wait for the prophecies to be fulfilled, and for the Davidic king promised by God that is supposed to fulfill them.

The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tell us of the coming of the Davidic King, how He fulfilled all the prophecies, and all about the New Covenant He established. He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and the Savior of us all – Jesus Christ.

Real Human History.....

It is important to know that the Gospels are not myths or fables. They are true and historical, consistent in the political and historical realities of this time period. The names, dates, and events all match other sources from history.



When we look at Matthew 1:1, we see that it begins with a genealogy. Likely we have skipped over that part in our reading of Scripture many times because in our time and culture it doesn't mean much to us. We must read the Bible in the context it was written however, and genealogy was incredibly important to ancient Jewish people – especially since they were waiting for a Messiah/King who was a descendant of Abraham, and a descendant of David. Saint Matthew lets them know right from the starting line, with a genealogy, that the Messiah has come.

A Plan Set in Motion...

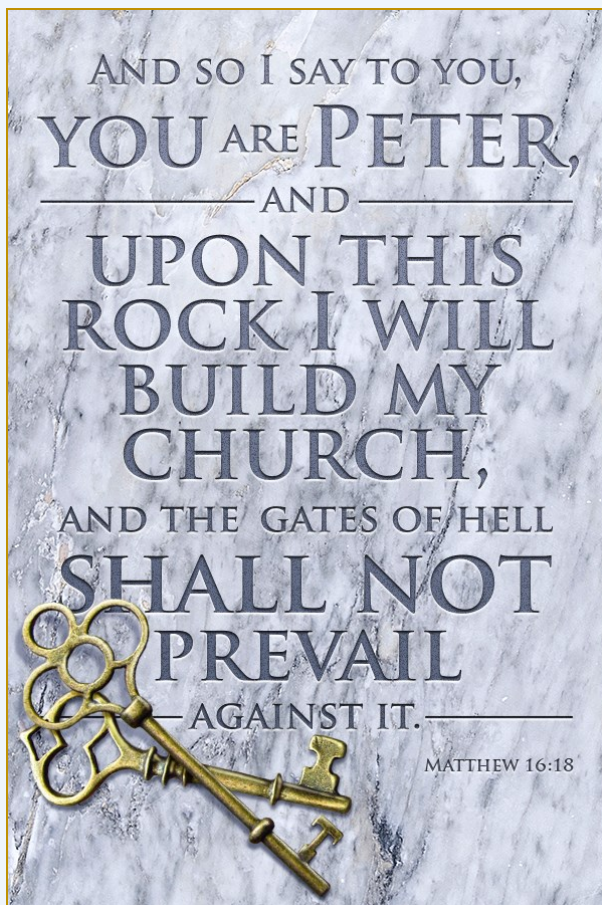
Jesus begins His public ministry with his baptism by John the Baptist and then heads to the wilderness to fast for forty days, where He is tempted by Satan. These temptations are representative of the temptations Adam faced in the garden, but unlike Adam Jesus responds perfectly and overcomes the temptations.



Jesus returns from the wilderness and calls the twelve Apostles, who are representative of the original twelve tribes of Israel. One of the things the Jews believed the Messiah would do was to re-gather the tribes that were scattered during the exile.

The New Moses..

Jesus's next move is to climb the Mount of the Beatitudes and teach the people, which is reminiscent of Moses climbing the mountain to receive teaching from God. The first part of the Sermon on the Mount, as this teaching is called, is the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11). The Beatitudes are the "do" to the Ten Commandments "do nots." They expand on the teaching the Lord gave to Moses and teach us how to live virtuously. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount He reinforces the Ten Commandments, but goes beyond them, calling not just for certain actions, but also for the changing of our hearts. This is also where Jesus teaches us how to pray at the request of His listeners, giving us the Lord's Prayer.



In Matthew 16:18 we see Jesus recognize the Lord working through Simon, whom He renames Peter, or "rock." He singles Peter out as the leader of the Apostles, and we will see Peter grow, sometimes painfully, into that role throughout Scripture. This is one of the key biblical texts in support of the papacy, which we will cover in a later lesson.

Back up the Mountain

As we go into the 9th Chapter of Luke, we again see Jesus ascending a mountain, this time taking along only His inner circle of Peter, James, and John. They reach the top of the mountain and the next thing the Apostles know, Jesus is in bright white garments, shining with the glory of God – and standing with Moses and Elijah, heroes of the Jewish people. They are speaking with Jesus about His “exodus.” This is important to note, because several of the prophets had predicted a new Exodus that would be led by the promised Messiah, the Son of David, when God would regather all of His people. This gives us a new perspective on what Jesus is setting forth to accomplish as He “sets His face toward Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51)



What do we find as we follow the narrative to Jerusalem? We find Jesus and His Apostles in the Upper Room, preparing to celebrate the Passover. We see Him take bread, bless it and break it. He then takes the cup of wine, blesses and shares it. But it's the words that He speaks after the blessing that are the most important. “This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in memory of me.” (Luke 22:19) We learned about these words during our discussion of the Passover in Lesson 6. Jesus is instructing His apostles to *make this event* present throughout the remainder of time. This is the new Passover, the New Covenant that will fulfill all the Old Testament laws and practices. This is the new law of love.



Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

