

Christ the King Lutheran Church  
Book of Faith Series  
Literary Techniques in the Gospel According to Matthew  
March 1, 2023

## Scripture interpreting Scripture in the Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7)

Matthew characterizes Jesus as the new Moses:

Jesus' instruction here is associated with a 'mountain'

Compare: Matthew 5:1; 28:16 to Exodus 19:1-3

Jesus' instruction is conveyed in five major collections of sayings

Compare: the five books of the law in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis to Deuteronomy

Jesus reflects on his relationship to Israel's scripture: Matthew 5:17-20

He develops his teaching based on traditional interpretations by use of the repeated phrase

"You have heard it said...but I say to you" (Matthew 5:21,27,31,38,43)

He does not invent his teaching out of whole cloth but builds it around Hebrew Bible texts:

Matthew 5:5 – Psalm 37:11

Matthew 5:21 – Exodus 20:13

Matthew 5:27 – Exodus 20:14

Matthew 5:31 – Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Matthew 5:33 – Exodus 20:7

Matthew 5:38 – Exodus 21:24

Jesus's ethics do not disregard the law, they fulfill the law and the prophets

Matthew 5:17-18

This sets the stage for the rest of the book as Matthew will return to these themes later

On nature of the law 5:29-30; 22:40

On misleading members 5:29-30; 18:8-9

On divorce 5:31-32; 19:1-12

On loving neighbor 5:43-47; 22:34-40

On being a positive presence in the world 5:13-16; 28:16-20

Finally, a note about the concluding word of chapter 5

"Be perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48)

Compare this to Leviticus 11:45; 20:7, 26 and 1 Peter 1:15-16

Change the pronunciation from per'-fect to per-fect'

How does the change make the definition change?

The Greek word is *teleios* (tay-lay'-ohs) meaning "whole, complete"

How does the Greek make the definition change?

Finally, who does the per-fect'-ing...God or the human being?

How does that change the concept of verse 48?

## **The Sermon on the Mount in Chiastic Style**

Chiastic Construction is a literary technique that creates symmetry, much like a palindrome... A palindrome is a word that is spelled the same backward and forward, like mom, dad, wow, racecar. You'll find this literary technique in many sections of scripture. Some scholars claim that the entire gospel according to John is written in this style, with each section also written in chiastic style.

In the illustration below, you see the palindromic technique that begins with Introduction, leads the Lord's Prayer and comes back out to the Conclusion that echoes the Introduction.

5:3-16 Introduction

5:17-20 Transition

5:21-48 Main Section ("you have heard it said...")

6:1-6 Righteousness before God

6:7-15 The Lord's Prayer

6:16-18 Righteousness before God

6:19-7:11 Main section (possessions, judging, prayer)

7:12 Transition

7:13-27 Conclusion

Listen for chiastic/symmetrical/palindromic/parallel construction throughout scripture.