

Last year we looked at the opening chapters of Matthew (1-7) in church and in our Home Groups. We finished our studies with the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus outlined Kingdom values for those who accept him as King. In Matthew 8-28 we will see the Kingdom coming through the work of Jesus and ultimately through his death on the cross.

Each of the Gospels have a different flavour...different things that are emphasised. We have seen these distinctive aspects of Matthew:

Strong Messianic focus
Emphasis on fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy
Stress on the Kingdom of Heaven

Chapters 8-10 introduce some of the big themes that we will see in the rest of Matthew:

The coming of the Kingdom with authority and power
The nature and difficulties of disciples
Gentiles responding with faith
Israel's hard-heartedness to the Messiah

Jesus the Messiah has come. He is establishing his kingdom and calls us not simply to be a part of the kingdom but to work with him in bringing it in.

THY
KINGDOM
COME

MATTHEW 8-27

The fields are white for harvest

study 1

Matthew 8:1 to 10:42

Before starting to look at Matthew 8 we need to understand where we are up to in Matthew. Give a summary of what has happened in these sections:

Matthew 1-2

Matthew 3-4

Matthew 5-7

Following the long block of teaching from Jesus Matthew presents 3 miracles. What do each of these miracles show us?

The man with leprosy (8:1-4)

The Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)

Other healings (8:14-17)

Find the verses in this section that show opposition to Jesus and his ministry. What is surprising about the source of the opposition?

Jesus says the fields are “white for harvest” and that they should pray for God to send labourers. What do we see happening in chapter 10?

What are the labourers to do?

List some of the things Jesus says they can expect?

What surprising statement does Jesus make about the authority his disciples will have? (Matt 10:40)

We should be praying for labourers ... but how can we work more this year at being the labourers Jesus wants us to be? What things can you do? What things can your Home Group do? What things can our Church do?

Jesus and the death of religion

study 2

Matthew 11 and 12

Read Chapter 11

When John sends his disciples to ask Jesus about who he is, Jesus directs them to the things he's been doing 11:4-5 (see also Isaiah 61:1 and 35:5-6). What is he saying about himself?

In the next chapter, Jesus is critical of those who ask for a miraculous sign to prove who he is (12:38-39). Does that seem inconsistent? What's the difference?

Read Chapter 12

What do each of the exchanges with the Pharisees in Chapter 12 teach us about 'religion' (see also 1:18-19, 25-26)?

What is frustrating and comical about the demand from the Pharisees in 12:38?

Make a list of all of the things Jesus says (or implies) about himself in these chapters (see especially 11:25-30). What do you notice?

What does Jesus say are the consequences of rejecting him?

Why do so many of His 'generation' reject Jesus? Why do people reject him still?

What are the dangers of 'religion' for us today?

"Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me". How have these chapters encouraged you to stick with Jesus?

Snapshots of the kingdom

study 3

Matthew 13:1 to 14:21

Everyone loves a good story and Jesus told plenty of them, mostly in the form of a parable. They have been around since Plato and continue to be used today. In this section of Matthew Jesus speaks eight of them, all of varying length and some more confusing than others. It raises the question what is their purpose and what do they really say.

So let us look at Jesus' parables of the kingdom.

What do you make of the following definition of a parable:

*Deep, theological, practical, sometimes confusing but always worth the effort needed to unlock their mysteries **carm.org***

Do Jesus' parables make his message elusive or accessible? If they are unclear why didn't he just do more miracles?

What are the main ideas of each parable? Are there any similarities between them?

Sower 13:1

Weeds 13:24

Mustard seed 13:31

Yeast 13:33

Hidden treasure 13:44

Pearl of great price 13:45

Nets 13:47

New treasure 13:52

Only two of the eight parables are explained. Why didn't Jesus explain them all? Why leave himself open to misinterpretation?

Why the reference to Isaiah 6:9, 10 in 13:14? How does this fit in with Jesus' rejection in his hometown **13:57**?

How does John's beheading relate to Jesus' teaching about the kingdom **14:11**?

What does the miracle at the end of these parables show us about who Jesus is and his kingdom?

O come all ye faithful

study 4

Matthew 14:22 to 15:39

People come to God with all sorts of questions. However we also need to listen to the questions God asks us. In this section Jesus walks on water, heals hundreds, feeds thousands and asks “You of little faith. Why do you doubt?”

It’s a great question to remind us that the kingdom has come and that the king reigns.

This section begins and ends with Jesus sending the crowds away **14:23;15:39**. Why does he do this?

Here’s a quote for you...

The ability of anyone to walk on water exists in our world – not in reality but only in very bad golf jokes **US Bishop John Shelby Spong**

What would you say to the Bishop in light of Matthew’s account of Jesus walking on water?

Why did Jesus walk on water **14:25**? Why did Peter sink? Would you have tried what Peter did?

How does Jesus deal with people who approach him in faith **14:34-36; 15:29-31**? How does he handle those who have none **15:1-12**?

How do verses **15:17-20** revolutionise religion? What does it show about what Jesus’ kingdom is built upon?

If Jesus said “I have been sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” **15:24** why did he heal a foreign woman’s daughter?

Jesus walks on water, heals hundreds and feeds thousands yet why do we, like Peter, doubt?

Reading the signs

Matthew 16 and 17

Chapter 16 begins with a warning about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who are continuing to demand miraculous signs. The nature of the kingdom Jesus has come to bring, shown through his ministry, is offending some and confusing others. As it does in the other gospels, Peter's confession about Jesus marks a turning point in the gospel. His coming death and resurrection become central, as does talk of his church which will follow.

Read Chapter 16:13-28

Peter's confession is like an oasis of faith in a desert of opposition and confusion. What is significant about Jesus' response to Peter?

What is Jesus saying about the role Peter will have in the coming kingdom/church (16:17-19)?

From the highs to the lows...Why do you think Jesus is so harsh in his counter-rebuke of Peter in verse 22? What is at stake?

Jesus goes on to explain what being a 'follower' of his will look like (16:24-28). What will it cost you? What will it gain you? How does this affect the way you view following Jesus?

study 5

Read Chapter 17

Assuming Moses and Elijah are representative of 'the Law' and 'the Prophets', what is the significance of Elijah and Moses appearing on the mountain with Jesus, and the Father's declaration 'This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him?'

What is the point of the transfiguration?

- A. To encourage the disciples after Jesus has grieved them with talk of his impending death*
- B. A picture and foretaste of the future 'glory' promised by Jesus (16:27)*
- C. To mark the transition between the Old covenant (law & prophets) and the New*
- D. Some combination of the above, or something else?*

Could you describe your life as 'cross-carrying, self-denying, Jesus-following' Christian?

What does that look like in everyday life for a 'normal' person like you?

Jesus on forgiveness

study 6

Matthew 18

Acting like children and forgiving without limit don't exactly sound like strong principles on which to build a great kingdom, but that's exactly what Jesus tells his disciples to do in Chapter 18.

What are the attributes our world might associate with 'greatness'?

Read Chapter 18

What key characteristic does Jesus associate with greatness in his kingdom?

Why does Jesus describe it the way he does (see also 12:25)?

What does Jesus teach us here about sin (v5-9)?

How does Jesus say we should handle a legitimate personal grievance in the church (v15-19)?

In this context, how should we understand what Jesus means by binding/loosing on earth/heaven?

This all prompts a question from Peter about forgiveness. What does the story of the servant (v21-35) teach us about:

God's forgiveness

How we should deal with each other

How does Jesus' reply to Peter's suggested figure of 7 times, challenge the way Peter (and we) should think about forgiveness?

When do you find obeying Jesus in this area most difficult? Can it be done?

What does this chapter show us about the virtues Jesus values in the lives of his followers?

Can you think of practical examples of what this might look like as we relate to each other in our Church?

Kingdom demands and rewards

Matthew 19 and 20

At the centre of this passage is the incident of the Rich Young Man ... and a parable that seems to explain it.

What stands at the heart of the Rich Man's question? Do you think Jesus is really saying that all he needs to do is obey the commandments?

Why was Jesus' additional request (19:21) the deal breaker?

How do the disciples respond to Jesus' suggestion that it is "hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"?

What do you think Jesus means by verse 26 ... that it is "impossible" for man to be saved?

study 7

What stands at the heart of Peter's question? (9:27)

The parable could be summarised in 2 sentences:

The men worked

The men were given

How does this parable tie together the Rich Young Man's question (19:16), Peter's question (19:27) and Jesus' statement (19:26).

How is Jesus' point in this parable still important in the life of our Church today?

History should never repeat

study 8

Matthew 21 and 23

In this section Jesus comes as prophet, priest and king. He foretells the fall of Jerusalem; cleanses the temple and triumphantly rides into town. To those who accept him are amazed whilst those who reject him are appalled.

So let's see how we live for Jesus—prophet, priest and king.

Discuss the following “Christianity is not a religion but a relationship”.

The crowds that shout “Hosanna” will cry “Crucify him” in a few short days. Why the change of heart?

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild” goes the hymn. How does that fit in with him overturning the tables in the Temple, telling off the religious leaders and cursing the fig tree? Should the song say “Jesus meek and wild”?

Jesus cursed the fig tree as a sign that the religious hierarchy were no good **21:19**. Why weren't they bearing fruit? Was Jesus too harsh with them **23:1ff**?

How is giving to Caesar what is Caesar's in line with living for God's kingdom **22:21**?

How is **23:37** an apt one sentence description of Israel's entire history? How can the Church avoid repeating history?

How do we ensure that we do not turn our relationship with God into a religion – both at a personal and Church level? How do we make certain that we practice what we preach **21:3**?

Be prepared

study 9

Matthew 24 and 25

Matthew 24 is without a doubt the hardest chapter of Matthew's Gospel to understand. It is written in apocalyptic style which makes the passage colourful and dramatic ... but perhaps even more difficult to understand. It has been suggested that Jesus is talking about:

His death on the cross

The destruction of the temple (which took place in 70AD)

The second coming of Jesus

The practical application of the passage is found in 21:42-51. What is Jesus wanting to stress for his disciples?

The parables that follow in Matthew 25 fit in with chapter 24 ... and each parable offers a slightly different nuance.

Parable 1 – The Ten Virgins (25:1-13)

What were the virgins waiting for? How does this image come up elsewhere in the Bible?

What was the consequence for the five virgins who were unprepared?

How would you summarise the point of this parable?

Parable 2 – The Talents (25:14-30)

Who do you think is the master in the parable? Who do you think the servants are?

What does the master commend the first two servants for and criticise the third? Is Jesus advocating salvation by works? How does this parable fit with Matthew 20:1-16 and with the parable that follows (25:31-46)?

Parable 3 – The Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46)

What do you think it means that there will only be 2 groups at the judgment ... sheep and goats?

How does Jesus say you could identify the sheep and goats?

What is the fate for each group?

What are the common elements of these 3 parables?

What are some practical things we could be doing as a result of these parables?

**TAKE UP YOUR
CROSS AND
FOLLOW ME**

MATTHEW 16:24