

Matthew

**BIBLE STUDY
CHAPTERS 21 THROUGH 28**



INTRODUCTION

“And behold, I am with you always!” are the last words Jesus says in the gospel of Matthew. We have come full circle: from Jesus’ birth as Immanuel, God-with-us, in chapter 1; to his glorious resurrection and great commission in chapter 28. But before the path to glory at the right hand of the Father, he passes through the suffering of the cross.

This concluding section of Matthew from chapters 21-28 deals with the last weeks of Jesus’ earthly ministry. It takes us from the Hosannas of the Triumphal Entry all the way to the mockery of the Crucifixion and beyond. At the centre of it all is Jesus and his authority. He enters the city of Jerusalem as king, and as its king, he pronounces a final and devastating judgement on the city and its rulers. The rulers, their hypocrisy exposed, make one last attempt to take power back for themselves by putting this king to death, demonstrating once and for all how little they understand of God and his purposes.

In the midst of all this confrontation, as readers, we are forced again and again to ask the question: what sort of king is this Messiah, and what does it mean for those who pledge allegiance to his kingship? This is a major theme of Jesus’ final teaching to his disciples in chapters 24 and 25, as he prepares his followers for the next phase of kingdom life, when they will be the ones sent out into the vineyard to prepare for his return, not knowing the day or the hour.

It is also a major theme of the Passion narrative itself, where Matthew makes it abundantly clear that Jesus concedes none of his authority, even in the most humiliating of circumstances. “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” was the sign above his head as he hung on that cross. The crowds and religious leaders jeered. This was no king, only a sorry excuse for a man who claimed an authority he did not have. They could not have been more wrong. He was the one to whom had been given “all authority on heaven and earth,” and it was from this position of divine authority that he sent his workers out into the world, making disciples of all nations.

May God bless you as you continue to read this magisterial gospel. He who has ears, let him hear!

SOME TIPS FOR READING

The Gospel of Matthew can be a difficult book to sketch out structurally. If you were to read five commentaries, you would encounter five different outlines. At the same time, Matthew is not a random collection of Jesus’ teachings and actions. This Gospel has been carefully composed with a purpose, and the final narrative sections of Matthew demonstrate a tight progression of action. As you continue to read through Matthew, it will be very helpful to pay attention to these developments, and the relationship between the larger narrative and the individual episodes. Two good questions to ask yourself as you read are: what point is Matthew trying to make by including this passage?; and: why is this passage here?

Pay attention to:

- Recurring phrases like “When Jesus had finished these sayings...”
- Progressions of action
- References to time
- Abrupt changes in location and audience
- Thematic connections between passages
- Repetitive catchwords and titles
- Shifts in genre (story, parable, comments from the narrator etc.)
- Old Testament quotations and fulfillments; “this was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet...”

Table of Contents

Page	Study	
4		How do I use this Bible Study?
7		Bookmark
8	1	Matthew 21:1-22
14	2	Matthew 21:23-22:14
21	3	Matthew 22:15-40
27	4	Matthew 22:41-23:12
33	5	Matthew 23:13-39
40	6	Matthew 24:1-35
47	7	Matthew 24:36-25:46
55	8	Matthew 26:1-16
61	9	Matthew 26:17-46
68	10	Matthew 26:47-75
75	11	Matthew 27:1-26
81	12	Matthew 27:27-54
87	13	Matthew 27:55-66
93	14	Matthew 28:1-20

HOW DO I USE THIS BIBLE STUDY?

These study guides have been designed for two purposes: personal and small group study.

YOUR OWN DAILY STUDY

These studies are designed to be used **for your own personal study and devotion before you gather with others**. That said – they are not homework assignments! God calls us to abide in him, and to daily receive the grace we need from him by listening to him speak through his word.

The basic, repeating questions in the study guides are designed to teach you a pattern of personal study you can do with any scripture passage. The four steps of this pattern will help you hear and respond to what God is revealing in his word. It is not always easy, and it's not meant to be! This reminds us to pray – to ask God to help us understand, and give us delight in studying his word.

Q1: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE SAY?

Mark up the text printed out for you! Notice words and phrases. Note any questions you have and anything that surprises or confuses you. Check the study notes for any definitions or historical context that might be helpful. Finish up by breaking the passage up into any natural divisions you have noticed.

Q2: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Each passage is part of a chapter, book, and larger scripture narrative. Work through the references and questions in the study notes to help clarify what this text means. Have the questions you noted earlier been answered? Finish up by summarizing in your own words what you think the big idea of the passage is and/or giving it a title.

Q3: WHAT IS GOD REVEALING ABOUT HIMSELF?

Scripture is God's revelation to us. He wants us to know the truth about himself, ourselves, and the world. He promises to do this work of revelation as we come to him and listen to him speak. He also promises that the truth he illuminates through his word has the power to transform our lives. What particular truths has God revealed in this passage? The study notes may be a help to you as you learn to attend to this bigger picture.

Q4: HOW DO I RESPOND TO WHAT GOD HAS REVEALED?

God doesn't just want to inform us through his word, he wants to transform us into those who know the goodness of a life lived with and for him. How has God been working on your heart through this passage? What does it look like to respond in joyful obedience to his call? There is a question in the study notes to help you get started on this as well.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO DO THIS EVERY DAY?

We encourage you to prioritize this daily time of prayer, bible reading, and study. Here's a couple of examples of what that could look like...

Day 1	Q1: Read and mark up the passage	Day 1	Q1 & Q2: Read the passage through
Day 2	Q1: Mark up and note structure	Day 2-3	Re-read and pray through the passage
Day 3	Q2: Study guide references & questions	Day 4	Q3 & Q4
Day 4	Q2: Study guide contd. and big idea	Day 5	Continue to think and pray through your response to the passage
Day 5	Q3: Study guide Qs Start thinking about Q4	Day 6	Review the passage and what you've noted in your study guide one more time
Day 6	Q4: Pray through Q4	Day 7	Meet with your small group
Day 7	Meet with your small group		

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

As you gather in small groups these booklets will help you to experience the joy of growing closer to God together! Each person has different gifts and experiences that shape what they see and how they communicate what God is revealing. There is a fullness to this time of study and sharing in a group that is part of God's plan for us as his people.

Throughout this booklet, there are questions to lead small groups through the passage together.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

These discussion prompts will help facilitate group conversation and sharing out of what people have discovered during their own preparation time.

May our dependency and love for God grow from week to week as we come to him, have our eyes opened, our ears unstopped, and our hearts softened – as we see him, know him, love him, and so follow him with joy.

A prayer as you begin your study:

Dear Father,

As I study your word, with the Holy Spirit as my helper, may I hear your voice and listen to what you are saying. Open my eyes and reveal yourself to me. Help me love you more, and grow my desire to respond to what you have revealed through your word. Strengthen me with your grace, to give you glory in all of my life. In Jesus name, Amen

GOSPEL NARRATIVE BOOKMARK

START WITH PRAYER

Q1: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Look carefully at:

The words and phrases:

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

The whole passage:

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

Q2: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the context:

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

WHAT'S THE MAIN IDEA OF THIS PASSAGE?

STOP TO PRAY

Q3: WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

What do we learn about:

- His identity?
- His mission?
- His relationship with the Father and the Spirit?
- His relationship with us?

Write your response to this question as a prayer.

Share with Jesus what you have learned about him.

Q4: HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through the questions asked in this section. How does your life need to change in light of who God has shown himself to be?

FINISH IN PRAYER

- 1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.
- 3 If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.”
- 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,
- 5 “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

- 6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.
- 7 They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.
- 8 Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.
- 9 And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”
- 10 And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?”
- 11 And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”
- 12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.
- 13 He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”
- 14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.

- 15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, 16 and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, “‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?’”
- 17 And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

- 18 In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry.
- 19 And seeing a fig tree by the wayside,
he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves.
And he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again!”
And the fig tree withered at once.
- 20 When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying,
“How did the fig tree wither at once?”
- 21 And Jesus answered them,
“Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt,
you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree,
but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.
- 22 And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

There are three scenes in this passage: entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple, and the cursing of the fig tree. What links them together?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

Jesus has kept a low profile for most of his ministry. Why do you think that has changed?

What does the crowd imply by calling him the “Son of David”? (see notes for help).

What was the temple for? What does Jesus do immediately after cleansing it?

The cursing of the fig tree is an object lesson. What is Jesus teaching here?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week’s passage.

So, what’s the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their “main idea.”

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you,
and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Hosanna literally means “save us” in Hebrew, and was a common expression of Israel’s hope for a messiah that would deliver them.

Another translation of 21:22 could be “and all things which you faithfully request in prayer you will receive.” Jesus is not speaking about the power of positive thinking, but about aligning our wills with the will of God.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- In Matt 20:20-28 there is a discussion among Jesus’ disciples about authority, and the issue doesn’t seem to be going away.
- It is significant that there is a healing of blind men immediately before Jesus comes to the temple, and that they call him “Son of David.”
- After this episode in vv.1-22, Jesus will enter the temple for a second time and the religious leaders will question his authority.

In Matthew:

- “Son of David” is an important title in Matthew. See Matt 1:1, 9:27, 12:23, and 15:22 for some clear examples.
- Jesus continues to have confrontations with the religious establishment. This is the first time that “chief priests” have appeared to directly engage with Jesus, and this reflects the escalation of opposition to him by the people who consider themselves pious God-fearers.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- Jesus chooses to enter Jerusalem in a particular way, and this fulfills a prophecy from Zechariah. Read Zech 9:9-17.
- When Jesus cleanses the temple of merchants, he quotes both Isaiah and Jeremiah. Read Isa 56:3-7 and Jer 7:1-14 to fill out your understanding of what is going on here.
- It’s not directly quoted, but Malachi speaks about a day “when the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.” Take note of what is happening in Mal 3:1-4 and how it might relate to this passage.
- The final quotation in this episode is from Psalm 8, which praises the Lord for His mighty works.
- It’s not a common prophetic metaphor, but Israel is occasionally spoken of as a fig tree. See Jer 8:13, 24:1-10, Hos 9:10, and especially Mic 7:1-6.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

Who is being praised in Psalm 8, and what does this say about Jesus?

In what ways does this passage give us a glimpse as to what kind of king Jesus is? How does Jesus use his authority upon entering the city?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

The crowd outside Jerusalem welcomes Jesus with desperate cries of “save us (hosanna).” Jesus enters the city as the king who comes to save and cleanse. What does that mean for you today?

Fruitfulness or lack thereof is a big concern for Jesus in this passage. Prayerfully seek the Lord to reveal areas where your faith hasn't yet borne fruit and share with your group asking for their prayers in this.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 23 And when he entered the temple,
the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching,
and said, “By what authority are you doing these things,
and who gave you this authority?”
- 24 Jesus answered them,
“I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer,
then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things.
- 25 The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?”
And they discussed it among themselves, saying,
“If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’
- 26 But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd,
for they all hold that John was a prophet.”
- 27 So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.”
And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”
- 28 “What do you think? A man had two sons.
And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’
- 29 And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went.
- 30 And he went to the other son and said the same.
And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go.
- 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.”
Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors
and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.
- 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him,
but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him.
And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.
- 33 “Hear another parable.
There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it
and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants,
and went into another country.
- 34 When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get
his fruit.
- 35 And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.
- 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them.
- 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’
- 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves,
‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’
- 39 And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.
- 40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”
- 41 They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death
and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

- 42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:
“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”
- 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you
and given to a people producing its fruits.
- 44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces;
and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”
- 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables,
they perceived that he was speaking about them.
- 46 And although they were seeking to arrest him,
they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.
- 22:1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying,
2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king
who gave a wedding feast for his son,
3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast,
but they would not come.
4 Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited,
“See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered,
and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’
5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business,
6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.
7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops
and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.
8 Then he said to his servants,
‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy.
9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’
10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found,
both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.
11 “But when the king came in to look at the guests,
he saw there a man who had no wedding garment.
12 And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’
And he was speechless.
13 Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot
and cast him into the outer darkness.
In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’
14 For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

Jesus teaches with authority, but the authorities don't immediately react. Who do the chief priests and elders fear?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

Why does Jesus tell three parables? What similarities and differences are there between them? Do you notice a progression?

The Pharisees are very keen to establish authority within this discourse. Why? and what does this indicate about their relationship with God?

The topic of fruitlessness pops up again, especially in vv.43 & 44. What more do we learn about what it means from these parables?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you,
and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Authority was a crucial component of religion in Israel, and the validity of your teaching depended upon who you represented. If you came in someone's name, you had their authority.

"Afterward he changed his mind" (21:29) could be translated as "afterward he repented." See 21:32 as well. In the rabbinic parables of the time, wedding garments typically represented obedience to the Law.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus just finished cleansing the temple in 21:12, and cursed the fig tree in 21:19. These two episodes are crucial for understanding what is happening here.
- Jesus (somewhat subtly) claims his authority in this passage. The next section of Matthew will contain a series of interrogations where the elite try to trip Jesus up with subtle reasoning in order to justify their rejection of him.

In Matthew:

- Jesus' intimate connection with the ministry of John continues in this passage, this time focusing on how the religious leaders have been responding to the coming of the kingdom of heaven.
- "Who gave you this authority?" This is not a new question in Matthew, but it is now being openly asked. See Matt 9:6 for example. Jesus taught the disciples about this in Matt 11:27.
- "Which of the two did the will of the father?" This has been a theme in Jesus' teaching from the outset, and is a prominent component of how Matthew portrays a life of obedient faith. See Matt 7:21 and 12:50.
- In Matt 12:28 Jesus replies to the challenge of the Pharisees: the casting out of demons demonstrates that "the kingdom of God has come upon you." Now this kingdom is being taken away from them in Matt 21:43.
- "given to a people producing its fruits." The metaphor of fruit has been a recurring image in Matthew (cf. 3:8, 7:16-20, 12:33), and is connected to Jesus' cursing of the fig tree in 21:19.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- "John came to you in the way of righteousness" The Old Testament is fond of speaking about two ways: the way of life/righteousness and the way of death/folly.
- The portrayal of Israel as a vineyard can be found in Psa 80.8-16 and Isa 5.1-7.
- Jesus quotes Psa 118:22 in 21:42. Focus especially on vv.19-29 of the psalm.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

One of the major themes in these parables is the kingdom of God. What do they teach about the kingdom and its inhabitants?

How seriously do these parables treat the rejection of the father/land-owner/king? Why do you think Jesus is so strong here?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

Each of the parables begins with an invitation from Jesus to each one of us, but he's looking for a particular kind of response. What would a more fruitful response to Jesus' invitation look like in your life?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words.
- 16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying,
“Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully,
and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.
- 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”
- 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?
- 19 Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius.
- 20 And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”
- 21 They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them,
“Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,
and to God the things that are God’s.”
- 22 When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.
- 23 The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection,
and they asked him a question, 24 saying, “Teacher, Moses said,
‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow
and raise up offspring for his brother.’ 25 Now there were seven brothers among us.
The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother.
- 26 So too the second and third, down to the seventh.
- 27 After them all, the woman died. 28 In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven,
whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”
- 29 But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong,
because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.
- 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage,
but are like angels in heaven.
- 31 And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you
by God:
- 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?
He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”
- 33 And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.
- 34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees,
they gathered together.
- 35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.
- 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”
- 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all
your soul and with all your mind.
- 38 This is the great and first commandment.
- 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
- 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

This passage is structured around three different questions. Who asks each question and why might that be pertinent?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

In the previous section Christ clears out the temple, curses the fig tree, and tells scathing parables. Has this affected the Pharisees and teachers of the Law at all? What are they trying to accomplish?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly, and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The Roman tax under discussion in vv.15-22 was despised by patriotic Jews. Condemning the Roman tax would have been grounds for reporting Jesus to the authorities (Luke 20:20), and affirming it would have been political suicide among the Jews in Jerusalem.

We don't really know who "the Herodians" were in this context, since Herod's sons no longer ruled over Judea by this point.

The Pharisees were the middle-class, more popular religious leaders, and the Sadducees belonged to the aristocratic elite. The Sadducees considered only the five books of Moses (the Law) legally binding, while the Pharisees (and Jesus) accepted everything that Christians would now consider the Old Testament.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus began a discussion in 21:23-27 about authority. It continues here in this passage.
- In next week's passage, when it is the Pharisees' turn to answer a question in 22:41-46, they are left speechless.
- All of this discussion is happening in the temple, the centre of Jewish authority.

In Matthew:

- v.17 "Is it lawful?" - this is a regular topic of discussion between Jesus and the religious establishment (e.g. Matt 12:10). These discussions provide grounds for Jesus to demonstrate his authority as the ultimate interpreter of the Law.
- vv.18 and 35 "to test him" - the religious have tested (Gk. *peirazō*) Jesus before (e.g. Matt 16:1), but it was the devil in the wilderness who first tested Jesus (Matt 4:1-3; often translated as "tempted" but the Greek word is the same in both cases).
- v.33 "they were astonished" - See also Matt 7:28. Jesus' mastery of Scripture is unparalleled.
- vv.39 "love your neighbour as yourself" is not a new teaching for Jesus (e.g. Matt 7:12) and Matthew 5:43-48 builds on this in a particular way.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- The principle underlying Jesus' teaching on tax in Matt 22:15-22 also appears again in Rom 13:1-7 and 1 Pet 2:13-25
- Levirate marriage is described in Deut 25:5-10
- Post-resurrection life is rather mysterious, to say the least! e.g., 1 Cor 15:35-50
- Jesus' summary in vv.37-39 of the Law draws on Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:8

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

Christ is incredibly gracious and thoughtful with his answers to the less than genuine inquiries from the Pharisees and Sadducees. What do his answers tell us about Jesus' approach to money and the authority of earthly leaders?

Does Jesus eradicate the need for the 10 commandments with his answer in vv.37-40? How do we hold these verses and Exod 20:1-17 at the same time?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

Christ commands us to “Love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind” In other words, to love Him with our whole being. Prayerfully ask the Lord to show you areas in your life that you believe belong to you, rather than to God and ask for His help to love him in this area.

Christ also commands us to “Love our neighbour as ourselves”. Again, seek the Lord’s help in identifying areas where you are not following Christ and need his help in keeping this command.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together,
Jesus asked them a question, 42 saying,
“What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?”
They said to him, “The son of David.”
- 43 He said to them,
“How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,
44 “The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet”?”
45 If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?”
46 And no one was able to answer him a word,
nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

- 23:1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples,
2 “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat,
3 so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do.
For they preach, but do not practice.
4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear,
and lay them on people’s shoulders,
but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.
5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others.
For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long,
6 and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues
7 and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.
8 But you are not to be called rabbi,
for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.
9 And call no man your father on earth,
for you have one Father, who is in heaven.
10 Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.
11 The greatest among you shall be your servant.
12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled,
and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

Who are the different audiences in this passage, and how does that help us understand what is going on?

Jesus finally gives his response to the inquisition from the Pharisees and the Sadducees. What question does he fire back with?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

The phrase Christ uses in v.12 echoes something he has already taught us Matthew. What does his use of it in this context add to our understanding of its meaning?

Having shown that the Pharisees don't understand the Scriptures, why does Christ speak to the crowds about hypocrisy in chapter 23? What does he expose as the cause of the Pharisees' spiritual blindness?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you,
and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The “seat of Moses” (23:2) is an expression highlighting the fact that the religious leaders were speaking on behalf of Moses. See also the introductory comments in the study notes for Matt 21:23-22:14.

Phylacteries, or tefillin, are small boxes containing key Old Testament texts. They are bound to the body with a leather strap (cf. Deut 6:1-6). Fringes, or tzitzit, go under the robes of every Jewish man (cf. Matt 14:36) and had been prescribed in Num 15:37-41.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus just had a discussion with different groups of the religious elite seeking to trip Jesus up with tricky questions. Now Jesus is going on the offensive.
- In 23:1-12 Jesus addresses the entire crowd to re-emphasize what he has been teaching about authority. He will shift his attention and speak directly to the scribes and Pharisees in next week’s passage, 23:13-39.
- As with last week, it is important to remember that this discussion is happening in the temple, the centre of religious life and authority in Israel.

In Matthew:

- v.42 “what do you think about the Christ?” Refer to the “In Matthew” section for the first study on 21:1-22. Here Jesus demonstrates that the Messiah must also be more than the Son of David. (cf. 12:3-4 and 12:42).
- v.3 “so do and observe what they tell you.” Jesus’ tone here is probably ironic, since we know he disagrees with a lot of what the scribes and Pharisees have been teaching the people, for example: Matt 12:1-14 (Sabbath rest), 15:1-20 (ritual purity), and 19:3-9 (divorce).
- v.4 “they tie up heavy burdens” is in contrast to Jesus’ teaching in 11:28-30.
- v.5 “they do their deeds to be seen by others” was a central charge laid against the hypocrites

in Matt 6:1-6.

- v.6 “they love the place of honour at feasts.” Religious feasts were celebrations intended to remind people of God’s covenantal love (Lev 23).
- v.11-12 “the greatest among you...” The theme of reversal in the kingdom of God continues, cf., 18:1-5, 19:30 and 20:16.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- v. 44 “the Lord said to my Lord” comes from Psa 110:1 (see also: Acts 2:34 and Heb 1:13). This psalm is about the LORD installing his king to rule the world, which is precisely what was expected of the Messiah. We find similar language in Psalm 2, also a messianic psalm. No Israelite king had ever fulfilled these psalms.
- Luke 14:7-11 contains a similar teaching to what Jesus says here.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

The section from vv.41-46 is dense. What point is Jesus seeking to establish about himself? Read Psalm 110 to get a better sense of what Jesus is saying. Refer to the study notes if need be.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

It is easy to judge the Pharisees from a distance. But this passage has yet another warning against fruitlessness and spiritual pride. What are some of the ways you are tempted to act like the Pharisees when relating to God or others?

Jesus upsets the applecart again in vv.8-12. If our role is not to be rabbis or teachers, what then is our role in the kingdom of God? What does kingdom service look like according to Jesus?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces.
For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.
[v.14 is missing due to poor manuscript support]
- 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte,
and when he becomes a proselyte,
you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.
- 16 “Woe to you, blind guides, who say,
‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing,
but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’
- 17 You blind fools! For which is greater,
the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?
- 18 And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing,
but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’
- 19 You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred?
- 20 So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it.
- 21 And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it.
- 22 And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.
- 23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you tithe mint and dill and cumin,
and have neglected the weightier matters of the law:
justice and mercy and faithfulness.
These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.
- 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!
- 25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate,
but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.
- 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate,
that the outside also may be clean.
- 27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful,
but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.
- 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others,
but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.
- 29 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of
the righteous,
- 30 saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers,
we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’
- 31 Thus you witness against yourselves
that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

- 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.
- 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers,
how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?
- 34 Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes,
some of whom you will kill and crucify,
and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town,
- 35 so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth,
from the blood of righteous Abel
to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah,
whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.
- 36 Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.
- 37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!
How often would I have gathered your children together
as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
- 38 See, your house is left to you desolate.
- 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again,
until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

The seven woes to the Pharisees are strikingly strong. Are there any that particularly stand out to you?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

This passage could be read as Jesus' final judgement of the Pharisees and scribes of Israel. Why, at this point, is Christ so upset with them?

The clash between Christ and the teachers of the Law reaches a point of high tension. What is significant about how Jesus finishes his long warning?

How does the conflict between Christ and the Pharisees fit into the bigger Old Testament story of God's people rejecting Him?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly, and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

It was common to swear by items which had touched the holiest objects in the Jewish religious system. Here Jesus is pointing out how ridiculous the logic of this system was.

The practice of whitewashing tombs involved pouring lime (calcium hydroxide) on the outer rock surfaces which held dead bodies. If the tomb had been whitewashed, then priests would know not to enter, because the space was now unclean.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- After engaging in debate with the religious leaders, Jesus warns the crowd and his followers about these leaders' hypocrisy at the start of ch.23. His attention shifts in v.13, and he delivers a stinging rebuke to the leaders themselves.
- After the rebuke in this passage, Jesus will predict the destruction of the Temple itself before transitioning into a section of teaching on the End of the Age.

In Matthew:

- v.13 "hypocrites" is a charge that Jesus has levelled against the Pharisees a few times (Matt 7:5, 15:7, 22:18), and Jesus gives a good summary of the attitude which leads to hypocrisy in Matt 6:2.
- vv.18-22 "if anyone swears..." Here Jesus is engaging with the logic of the oath system, but he has already condemned the whole practice in Matt 5:33-37.
- v.23 "justice and mercy and faithfulness" was also at the heart of Jesus' rebuke in 9:13, when he quotes Hos 6:6.
- v.25 "you clean the outside..." The topic of inner and outer purity has been discussed before in Matt 15:10-20, where Jesus also called the Pharisees "blind guides." This was a difficult lesson for Jews to learn cf. Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10.
- v.33 "brood of vipers," was a charge that John the Baptist brought against the Pharisees all the way back in Matt 3:7.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- v.35 "the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah..." takes us across the entire story of the OT – from Genesis 3 to 2 Chronicles 24 – and aligns the scribes and Pharisees with all that has ever gone wrong in the history of God's people.
- v.38 "your house is left to you desolate" is a promise fulfilling the warning God gives to Solomon in 1 Kgs 9:6-9. See also Jer 12:7-8, 22:5.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

These are the last days of Jesus' public ministry. What is on his heart?
What then is Jesus' desire for His people? (vv.37-39)

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

What are some of the woes that feel a little too close to home for you?

If the message of Christ's gospel is one of grace and mercy how seriously should we take this warning?
Do our actions matter and are we condemned by them?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 1 Jesus left the temple and was going away,
when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.
- 2 But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not?
Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another
that will not be thrown down.”
- 3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives,
the disciples came to him privately, saying,
“Tell us, when will these things be,
and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”
- 4 And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray.
- 5 For many will come in my name, saying,
‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.
- 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.
See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place,
but the end is not yet.
- 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,
and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.
- 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.
- 9 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death,
and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.
- 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.
- 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.
- 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.
- 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved.
- 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed
throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

- 15 “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel,
standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),
- 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
- 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,
- 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.
- 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in
those days!
- 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.
- 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of
the world until now, no, and never will be.
- 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved.
But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.
- 23 Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.
- 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders,
so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.
- 25 See, I have told you beforehand.

- 26 So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out.
If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.
- 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west,
so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
- 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.
- 29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days
the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
- 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man,
and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn,
and they will see the Son of Man coming
on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
- 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call,
and they will gather his elect from the four winds,
from one end of heaven to the other.
- 32 "From the fig tree learn its lesson:
as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves,
you know that summer is near.
- 33 So also, when you see all these things,
you know that he is near, at the very gates.
- 34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away
until all these things take place.
- 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

The disciples ask to know three things in their question (v.3). How does Jesus answer these three questions, and how does it help us understand the passage?

What recurring commands does Jesus give in this passage?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

Christ just finished pronouncing judgement on the Pharisees. How does this passage tie in with what he has been teaching in the last few chapters?

Why would Jesus be giving his disciples this teaching now? What is he preparing them for?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly, and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

This is a difficult passage to interpret. Here are a few guidelines:

- vv.4-14 describes the entire span of history from Christ until the end of the age; note v.14 especially
- vv.15-35 give another description of what occurs in vv.4-14; note the repetitions
 - ▶ vv.15-28 is about the destruction of Jerusalem (70AD)
 - ▶ vv.29-31 speaks about events after the destruction of Jerusalem (notice the link with “tribulation” in vv.21 and 29).
 - ▶ vv.32-35 gives a timepoint: the beginning of the end will happen during the disciples’ lifetime
- vv.36-37 gives us a helpful reminder about timelines for Jesus’ return.

There are three Greek words which disappear in the English translation “come”: *parousia* (coming), *erchomai* (to come, to go), and *hēkō* (to come, go). So:

- v.3 “the sign of your coming” (*parousia*)
- v.14 “the end will come” (*hēkō*)
- v.27 “the coming of the Son of Man” (*parousia*)
- v.30 “the Son of Man coming on the clouds” (*erchomai*)
- v.37 “thus will be the coming of the Son of Man” (*parousia*)

Therefore, vv.22, 27 and 37 probably refer to one coming of the Son of Man (his *parousia*, or return), while v.30 refers to a different coming (or going!).

Jewish expectation was that one age would end, and another would begin when the Messiah came. This is why the disciples are asking about “the end of the age” (v.3).

This passage is in a particularly mystifying style of writing called apocalyptic. The language is bewildering and magnificent because apocalyptic seeks to reveal deeper spiritual truths that we struggle to see in our daily lives. It takes a “high level” view of events on earth and we see things from God’s perspective.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus just confronted the religious leaders, and pronounced judgement upon them and the entire system they represent.
- Jesus’ Passion is about to begin, and his teaching here prepares the disciples.

In Matthew:

- The “Son of Man” is an important title that Jesus has given to himself, e.g. Matt 9:6, 10:23, 12:28, 13:41, 16:27-28, 17:9 etc.
- v.34 “This generation will not pass away...”; see a similar promise in Matt 16:24.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- v.30 “the Son of Man coming in glory” comes from Dan 7:13-14
- v.29 “the sun will be darkened...” these poetic and prophetic descriptions draw upon several of the OT prophets, including Isa 13:10 and Ezek 32:7-8
- v.30 “they will mourn...” is a fairly clear allusion to Zech 12:10-13:1

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

In this passage, Jesus gives his disciples and us a glimpse of the magnitude of his lordship. What is he trying to show them about himself and what it means for him to be the Messiah?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

While the words Jesus speaks are somewhat cryptic and potentially unsettling, the message is clear. How may we as Christians in the 21st century be ready for his coming?

What are some potential false messiahs that exist now? Do you see their effect in the world or have you ever felt their appeal?

How does remembering that Jesus is seeking to strengthen and encourage his disciples when he is gone, reframe how you think about this passage?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows,
not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.
- 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
- 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking,
marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,
- 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away,
so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
- 40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.
- 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.
- 42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.
- 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known
in what part of the night the thief was coming,
he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.
- 44 Therefore you also must be ready,
for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
- 45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant,
whom his master has set over his household,
to give them their food at the proper time?
- 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.
- 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.
- 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’
49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards,
50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an
hour he does not know
51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be
weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- 25:1 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went
to meet the bridegroom.
- 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.
- 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,
4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.
- 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.
- 6 But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’
- 7 Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.
- 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are
going out.’
- 9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go
rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’
- 10 And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready
went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.
- 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’
- 12 But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’
- 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

- 14 “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.
- 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.
- 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.
- 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.
- 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money.
- 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.
- 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’
- 21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’
- 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’
- 23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’
- 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,
- 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’
- 26 But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?
- 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.
- 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.
- 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.
- 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’
- 31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.
- 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
- 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.
- 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
- 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
- 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’
- 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’

- 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?
39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’
40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’
41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’
44 Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’
45 Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’
46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

One of the core themes in this large passage is vigilance. What are some words or phrases that demonstrate this?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

This passage continues the teaching that Jesus began in Ch 24 . How does he deepen his teaching on readiness and waiting?

These are the last three parables Jesus gives in the Gospel of Matthew, and this is his last section of teaching. How does each parable conclude? What other similarities or differences do you notice between the sections?

In these three parables, Jesus is talking again about how we wait for his return. He gave us the heavenly perspective in chapter 24, whereas here the parables are very down-to-earth. How does this help us understand the nature of the time in which we live and wait?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you,
and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

This is a long passage. Structurally it breaks down like this:

- Be ready, for you do not know when the Son of Man will come: 24:36-45
- Three parables of readiness, ending in judgement: 24:46-25:30
- Final Judgement when the Son of Man returns: 25:31-46

A talent was a very large sum of money: approximately 10 000 days wages.

The wicked servant of the final parable (25:14-30) is also called “slothful.” This is a somewhat rare English word, and describes a lack of zeal or passion. It is not just inactivity, but an interior disposition of the heart.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus just finished a rather terrifying description of human history in ch.24, now he transitions into parables describing how he will return at the end of history. “The kingdom of heaven will be like...” (25:1)
- Immediately after Jesus’ teaching on the Final Judgement, the religious leaders will conspire to kill Jesus.

In Matthew:

- “Blessed is the servant...” This is the last Beatitude in the gospel of Matthew. Most of them occur in Matt 5, but see also Matt 11:6 and 13:16.
- “...will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites” is a grim image already announced by John the Baptist in Matt 3:10, and Jesus in Matt 7:19. The phrase “hypocrites” was used to deadly effect in Matt 23.
- “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is a phrase used several times to indicate the nature of eternal punishment: Matt 13:42, 50; 22:13
- “I do not know you...depart from me” was also a pronouncement of the Lord in Matt 7:21-23.
- “The least of these” are at the heart of Jesus’ entire ministry, and also at the heart of the disciples’ mission e.g. Matt 10:42.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- 24:37 “For as in those days before the flood...” is a reference to Gen 6-10.
- 24:43 “thief in the night” is also an image that Paul uses in 1 Thess 5:1-11.
- 25:10 “the bridegroom came...” this metaphor is central to Rev 19:7-8.
- “as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” builds on the prophecy of Ezek 34:20-24.
- 25:36 “I was naked and you clothed me...” This same concern is found in Isa 58:6-12.
- 25:46 “eternal punishment...eternal life” is also the description in Dan 12:1-4.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

Jesus knows that his time on earth is getting shorter. What does this passage reveal about what Christ's concerns are for his followers?

These parables give some details to how God will judge his people. What are some of the judgements made in these parables and how do they speak of God's character?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

These parables contain clear and stern warning. Their function, however, is not to shame the listeners but to urge and equip them to live in the period between Christ's departure and Christ's return. Several times Christ warns about both the unknown timing, as well as the delay.

What are some of the practical elements of these parables that help us prepare ourselves for his coming?

What do you find most difficult about "staying awake and being ready for Christ to return?"

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 1 When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples,
- 2 “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”
- 3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas,
- 4 and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.
- 5 But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”
- 6 Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,
- 7 a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.
- 8 And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste?
- 9 For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.”
- 10 But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me.
- 11 For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.
- 12 In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.
- 13 Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”
- 14 Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests
- 15 and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.
- 16 And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

Why do you think Matthew switches between locations so many times in this short passage?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

Why do you think Matthew places the anointing scene in vv.6-13 between the two others scenes that surround it?

What do you think of the disciples' logic in v.9?

Do you think there is something about this scene in particular which led Judas to betray Jesus?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you,
and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The plot to kill Jesus is made in the palace of the high priest, which indicates that the highest levels of Jewish political power are now conspiring against him. Jesus has rejected and condemned an entire system, and now that system will give its response.

The “beautiful thing” which the woman has done could also be described as “noble,” “praiseworthy,” or “excellent,” based on the Greek word (*kalon*). Her action is not just aesthetically pleasing (how we often think of beauty), but has strong tones of virtuous propriety.

Q2 - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- The last passage was the climax for Jesus’ final teaching in the gospel of Matthew (ch.24-25). We are transitioning into a new section here.
- The next section of Matthew leads us into Jesus’ last supper, and his evening of prayer in Gethsemane.

In Matthew:

- v.1 “when Jesus had finished all these sayings...” This is the conclusion of all the teachings of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew, cf. Matt 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1.
- v.2 “to be crucified.” With each prediction of his death, Jesus adds more details (Matt 16:21, 17:22, 20:18-19). This is the first explicit connection between his death and the celebration of the Passover.
- v.5 “lest there be an uproar...” The leaders are probably thinking both of how Jesus was greeted by the crowds in Matt 21, and also of how handily he defeated them in debate in Matt 22. The only power left to them is the power of violence.
- v.13 “wherever this gospel is proclaimed” links back to Jesus’ prediction in Matt 24:14, and also anticipates the Great Commission of Matt 28:16-20.
- v.14 “whose name was Judas Iscariot.” We’ve been waiting for him to reappear since Matt 10:4. His attitude is in direct contrast to that of the unnamed woman, and he will come to regret his decision (Matt 27:3-10)

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- The Passover is described in detail in Exod 12:1-27 and 12:43-50.
- Typically oil on the head was for anointing kings or priests. See Exod 29:7 or 1 Sam 10:1 for examples of this.
- v.11 “You always have the poor with you” comes from Deut 15:11, but the verse doesn’t end there!
- v.15 “thirty pieces of silver” is a clear echo of Zech 11:4-14

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

These next few passages relate Christ's last hours on earth before his death. Jesus is deeply aware of what his departure will mean for the disciples. How does Jesus spend his precious remaining time, and what does that say about him as our Lord?

Finally, in this passage we have a beautiful living example of fruitfulness. Why do you think Christ praises the actions of this women so highly?

What does Christ explain to be the true significance of this woman's actions?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

The woman with the alabaster jar is praised for her actions because they reveal what she holds to be precious. Is there something in your life that you think Jesus would praise you for placing at his feet?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 17 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?"
- 18 He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'"
- 19 And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.
- 20 When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve.
- 21 And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."
- 22 And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?"
- 23 He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.
- 24 The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."
- 25 Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."
- 26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."
- 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,
- 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
- 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."
- 30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
- 31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'
- 32 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."
- 33 Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."
- 34 Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."
- 35 Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.
- 36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."
- 37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.
- 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."
- 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."
- 40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour?
- 41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- 42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

- 43 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.
- 44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.
- 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
- 46 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

What is the Passover? Read Exodus 12 if you need help refreshing your memory.

Do you get the sense that Jesus is an active participant, or a passive victim in everything that is currently happening?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

What is the connection between the Passover and the Crucifixion?

Who does Jesus submit to in all of this?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you,
and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gethsemane was a quiet garden on the Mount of Olives at the edge of Jerusalem. It was an ideal place for prayer, but also an ideal place to quietly arrest someone without drawing much attention.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus predicted his death would occur during the Passover, which is now taking place. Judas has made his choice (26:16), and the passage concludes with Jesus accepting this betrayal (26:46).
- After Jesus is betrayed, he will be taken to the Sanhedrin (Jewish council) for judgement and be abandoned by everyone close to him.

In Matthew:

- There are multiple predictions which Jesus makes in his last moments with the disciples which are all fulfilled:
- v.31 “You will all fall away...” Matt 26:56.
- v.32 “I will go before you to Galilee” Matt 28:7 and 16.
- v.34 “you will deny me three times” Matt 26:75
- ...and one yet to be fulfilled: v.29 “I will not drink again...until that day”
- v.37 “Peter and the two sons of Zebedee” were also the trio that accompanied Jesus to witness his transfiguration in Matt 17:1.
- v.39 “let this cup pass from me...” Jesus made reference to this cup once before in Matt 20:22-23, but it wasn’t clear at the time exactly what he meant.
- vv.39, 42 “your will be done” is a poignant echo of the Lord’s Prayer, as also his warning in v.41: “pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- v.17 “the first day of unleavened bread” is described in Exod 12:14-15
- v.28 “this is my blood of the covenant” is a profound statement from Jesus.
- Read Exod 24:3-8 for the OT background on this covenant.
- Jesus, in speaking of a new covenant, is also drawing upon the promises of Jer 31:31-34 and Zech 9:9-17.
- For an explanation and summary of the Passion, read Heb 9:10-15.
- The connection between the Eucharist and Jesus’ last supper is made explicit by Paul in 1 Cor 10:16.
- v.31 “I will strike the shepherd...” is a reference to Zech 13:7
- v.39 “let this cup pass from me...” There are two cups in this passage: a cup of covenant blessing and a cup of wrath. The cup of wrath is a prophetic image of God’s response to Israel’s sin. Jer 25:15-29 and Ezek 23:31-35 are two notable examples.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

The timing of Last Supper is not a coincidence or a whim. There is a lot of context and history behind the event. What does this chapter show about God's plan in regard to the Messiah?

What do Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane reveal about his heart?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

Despite many declarations to the opposite, all of the disciples abandon Christ even “to the death.” How does the frailty and fickleness of the disciples’ faith challenge your own faith?

Jesus is emotionally and understandably distressed when facing his coming death. What can we learn from this passage about navigating our own suffering or pain?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 47 While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.
- 48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him."
- 49 And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him.
- 50 Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.
- 51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.
- 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.
- 53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?
- 54 But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"
- 55 At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.
- 56 But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.
- 57 Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.
- 58 And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.
- 59 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death,
- 60 but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward
- 61 and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'"
- 62 And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"
- 63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."
- 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- 65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.
- 66 What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death."
- 67 Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him,
- 68 saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"
- 69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean."
- 70 But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean."
- 71 And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."
- 72 And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man."

- 73 After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.”
- 74 Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know the man.” And immediately the rooster crowed.
- 75 And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

What reasons does Jesus give for submitting to his arrest and trial?

What is the high priest's motivation for asking Jesus if he is the Christ?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

One of the false witnesses nearly gets it right in v.61. What did Jesus actually teach?

Why is his answer in v. 64 so controversial that it elicits physical reactions from the people listening?

The reactions of the Sanhedrin are visceral and violent. They claim to be motivated by defending God's name against Jesus' blasphemy. Is the only reason for their hatred of Jesus? How does the trial reveal their true motivation?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you,
and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Blasphemy (26:65) is the sin of speaking irreverently about God. It violates the third commandment.

Peter's cover is blown when those in the courtyard recognize his accent (26:73). The dialect of Galilee in the north sounded coarse and peasant-like to Judeans. We even have record of Galileans being mocked for their accent.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus has just redefined the Passover meal for his disciples, giving us the proper lens for seeing all the events of Christ's Passion.
- In the next section, the religious leadership will reveal how far their rejection of Jesus has taken them, when they approve the release of a known murderer so that they might destroy Jesus, the blameless one.

In Matthew:

- v.56 "then all the disciples left him" fulfills Jesus' prediction from 26:31, which drew upon Zech 13:7
- vv.54 and 56 "that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Jesus hasn't explicitly taught his disciples how his Passion is the fulfillment of the prophets, and they won't gain any further understanding until after Jesus' resurrection. Matthew has hinted at it (e.g. Matt 8:17, which quotes Isa 53:4), but statements like these are given for the reader's benefit, not the disciples'.
- v.63 "Tell us if you are the Christ!" This was confessed readily by Peter in Matt 16:16-17. The religious elite have been indirectly asking this question in their various interactions with Jesus (e.g. Matt 12:38, 16:1, 19:3 etc.) and it brings us to the heart of the confrontation, which led to Jesus' rejection of them in Matt 23, and will lead to Jesus' crucifixion in Matt 27.
- v.64 "coming on the clouds of heaven" is a clear repetition of Jesus' teaching in Matt 24:30, when he spoke about his fulfillment of Dan 7:13-14.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- See note above on vv.54 and 56. Jesus begins the process of teaching his followers how he fulfills all Scripture in Luke 24:26-27 on the road to Emmaus.
- v. 60 "at last two came forward." The law required the agreement of two or three good witnesses. See Deut 19:15-21.
- v.61 "This man said..." The charge brought against Jesus here more accurate, than that of the other false witnesses, perhaps reflecting the fact that Judas also acted as informant. Although Matthew doesn't specifically connect Jesus's resurrection with the rebuilding of the temple, John 2:19-22 does.
- v.63 "but Jesus remained silent" cf. Isa 53:7

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

The crowd, along with the religious leaders must feel as though they are in complete control of the situation. Who is actually in control and what does this teach us about Jesus?

There is anticipation from almost every party involved in these events, that Jesus' kingdom would enter the world with violence and fighting just like every other earthly rule. How instead does Christ say or show how his kingdom will come?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

Peter fails spectacularly at keeping his early boast of standing with Christ. It does not take much cultural/life pressure for Peter to crumble and the same can also apply to us. Have there been any challenges to your faith you've struggled to face recently?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 1 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.
- 2 And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.
- 3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,
- 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself."
- 5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.
- 6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money."
- 7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.
- 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.
- 9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,
- 10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."
- 11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so."
- 12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer.
- 13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?"
- 14 But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.
- 15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted.
- 16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.
- 17 So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"
- 18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.
- 19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream."
- 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.
- 21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas."
- 22 Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!"
- 23 And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"
- 24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."
- 25 And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"
- 26 Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

How is the innocence of Christ emphasized in this passage?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

How do the actions of the religious leaders demonstrate the accuracy of Jesus' judgement in Matt 24:13-39?

Verse 19 with Pilate's wife is a peculiar insert within the narrative of Jesus' trial. Why might Matthew have included this detail, and what does it say about God's activity during this extreme and violent situation?

Why is it significant that not only God's chosen people have rejected his chosen Messiah but now also Pilate?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

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and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The religious leaders had no authority to execute people because they were under Roman rule, so they brought Jesus to the local governor, Pontius Pilate (27:2). Because Jewish law had little relevance to Roman law, the leaders needed to modify the charges they were accusing Jesus of. Claiming that he was a political insurrectionist was a good option, especially since many expected the Messiah to be a political figure. Note the question that Pilate asks Jesus in v.11, which reflects a particular dimension of the Christ's identity.

Pilate was a shrewd man, immediately identifying the heart of the issue (27:18). According to ancient historians, his career in Judea ended shortly after this, for unknown reasons.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin in Matt 26 on the charge of blasphemy, by claiming to be God's anointed one (Christ).
- Immediately after this unjust hearing before Pilate, Jesus will be crucified, and the crowds which seemed to welcome Jesus earlier, will mock him at his death.

In Matthew:

- v.19 "today in a dream." Dreams figured prominently in the opening chapters of Matthew (1:20, 22, 2:12, 13, 19-20, 22) and were clear instances of God's revelation. Here the guilt of the leaders is underscored by the fact that a Gentile woman has realized that Jesus is a "righteous man."

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- vv.3-4 "he changed his mind" is an interesting inclusion in the story. None of the other gospel accounts mention that Judas regretted his choice, although Acts 1:18-19 offers a similar account of his demise.
- v.9 "they took thirty pieces of silver" is an interesting reference to the prophets. Matthew often compiles multiple prophecies into a single reference, and here is no exception. The image of a potter's field as a place of judgement comes from Jeremiah, while the purchase price is a clear allusion to Zechariah. See Jer 19:1-13 and Zech 11:12-13.
- v.25 "his blood be on us and on our children" is a chilling remark, reminding us that sin and guilt are not private affairs. See Exod 20:5-6. However, it is also full of irony in that Christ's blood would also be the means by which they could be forgiven for that betrayal.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

Why is the innocence of Christ so important? Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Who is he dying in place of and why does this matter? What does it reveal about Jesus?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

How does seeing the innocence of Christ in the face of tremendous injustice deepen your love for him, and your desire to follow him in discipleship?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him.
- 28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him,
- 29 and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"
- 30 And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.
- 31 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.
- 32 As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross.
- 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull),
- 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.
- 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots.
- 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there.
- 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."
- 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.
- 39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads
- 40 and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."
- 41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying,
- 42 "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.
- 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"
- 44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.
- 45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.
- 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah."
- 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.
- 49 But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."
- 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.
- 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.
- 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,
- 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.
- 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

Why do you think Matthew includes Jesus' cry of dereliction in the original Aramaic?

What are the different titles for Jesus in this passage, and how are they used?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

Psalm 22 is crucial for a deeper understanding of what is going on. How many connections do you notice between it and Matt 27:27-54?

The resurrection hasn't happened yet. Why do you think Matthew mentions it immediately after Jesus' death?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly, and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The two robbers crucified with Jesus (v.38) were probably more than thugs, since the Greek word *lēstēs* often refers to political insurrectionists. There is some reasonable speculation that these two were part of a group led by Barabbas, who was supposed to be crucified instead of Jesus (see John 18:40).

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- We just witnessed Jesus' unjust trial and judgement. The high priest specifically wanted to know if Jesus was "the Son of God" (v.63).
- The battalion of soldiers put Jesus through a mock enthronement ritual in vv.27-30, but the culmination of that enthronement will come in Matt 28:18.

In Matthew:

- This entire episode of torture, crucifixion, mockery, and death is a fulfillment of what Jesus said in Matt 20:19 (although the resurrection is yet to come).
- v.32 "to carry his cross." The disciples are painfully absent despite what Jesus has taught in Matt 16:24.
- v.38 "one on the right and one on the left." In another striking reversal, the two who are at Jesus' left and right hand are not James and John (Matt 20:20-22), but two bandits.
- v.54 "the centurion and those who were with him..." Jesus has also been correctly identified by another centurion at the start of his public ministry in Matt 8:5-13.
- v.54 "Truly this was the Son of God!" Jesus' identity as Son of God is a recurring theme in Matthew (3:17, 4:3, 11:25, 14:33, 16:16, 26:63, and 27:40, for example). The stunning thing is, it's a Gentile soldier who makes the first declaration of faith after Christ's death.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- The Suffering Servant of Isaiah is not explicitly referred to by Matthew very much, but here in the crucifixion account it is impossible to ignore the connections to Isa 52:13-53:12.
- v.45 "darkness all over the land..." is an allusion to both Exod 10:22 and Amos 8:9-10, while the earthquake is a regular symbol of God's wrath (Jer 10:10, Joel 3:16), but also a symbol of a new age (Zech 14:4-5).
- v.46 "My God, My God..." Jesus' cry here is a quotation from Psalm 22, which is worth reading in its entirety. Note especially vv.1 and 7-8.
- v.48 "filled it with sour wine" is also spoken of in Psa 69:21
- v.51 "the curtain of the temple was torn..." The significance of this action is summarized in Hebrews 9. See Exod 26:31-35 for the original pattern.
- v.54 "the centurion and those who were with him..." Deut 19:15-21 stipulates that a matter needs to be established by two or three reliable witnesses.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

Here we have the awful culmination of Jesus' trial. He is mocked, beaten and shamefully executed. We've heard this story so many times that it might not surprise us anymore, but it is a striking and humiliating death for a king, let alone God's chosen one. What does the manner of his death tell us about Jesus and the nature of his kingship?

What does the tearing of the temple curtain symbolise about our relationship with God?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

Having witnessed everything happen to Jesus, the centurion responds with a startling confession. Why do you think he says this, and how do you respond to the events you've just read?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him,
- 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.
- 57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.
- 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.
- 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud
- 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.
- 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.
- 62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate
- 63 and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’
- 64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.”
- 65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.”
- 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

Looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this

- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

What is Joseph's attitude to the body? How about the religious leaders?

Why does Matthew describe Jesus as "the body"?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

Why is this passage here? What is Matthew trying to impress upon us?

Why does Matthew include so many details about the burial? One of the many arguments against Christianity is the falsifying of Jesus' resurrection, which is precisely what the religious leaders are worried about. How might you use vv.62-66 to explain to someone the reality of the resurrection?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their "main idea."

STOP TO PRAY

Thank God for all he has already revealed to you,
and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly,
and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.

STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

“The day of Preparation” (v.62) was Friday, when all observant Jews would do the work necessary to prepare for Sabbath rest on Saturday. Jesus needed to be buried before the sun went down on Friday.

Pilate’s treatment of Joseph of Arimathea is interesting, especially in contrast to how he interacts with the religious leaders. His statement “you have a guard of soldiers” in v.65 should be taken as a rebuff to the demands of the Pharisees, not as an agreement to provide more troops.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus has just been crucified, and now the religious leaders are concerned that in death, Jesus will be more powerful than he was during his earthly ministry. His resurrection in chapter 28 will prove their fears correct, but not in the way that they expect.

In Matthew:

- v.55 “the mother of the sons of Zebedee” appears again, after her bold question in Matt 20:20.
- v.57 “a rich man...named Joseph.” Perhaps it is merely a coincidence, but it is rather interesting that Jesus’ life is bookended by two Josephs, who quietly demonstrate a life of obedient faith.
- v.63 “after three days I will rise” was promised by Jesus several times: Matt 12:40, 16:21, 17:23, 20:19.
- v.64 “made secure until the third day” is a surprising bit of knowledge from the chief priests, since Jesus only spoke about his resurrection privately (see references in note above), but perhaps Judas was providing information before his demise.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- v. 58 “...and asked for the body.” No body was allowed to remain unburied overnight according to Deut 21:22-23.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

Why is the fact that Jesus truly died so important?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how you have gotten to know Jesus better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

Imagine Matthew's gospel ended here in 27:55-66. What difference would it make for your life?

There is a strong contrast between the behaviour of the women and that of the chief priests. What does it tell us about their posture towards the work of God in their lives, and how does that convict us?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY

- 1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.
- 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.
- 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.
- 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.
- 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.
- 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.
- 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you."
- 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.
- 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.
- 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."
- 11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.
- 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers
- 13 and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'
- 14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."
- 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.
- 16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.
- 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.
- 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
- 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
- Mark any Old Testament quotes or allusions

What sorts of reactions to Jesus' resurrection do we see in this passage?

Jesus reappears twice in the passage (v.9 & 18), what similarities did you notice between the two appearances?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections

NOTE:

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- Summarize the section in your own words

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references.
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

Why do you think Jesus chooses to make his resurrection known first through several messengers, instead of announcing his resurrection in person?

What might have motivated the guards to take the ‘hush money’? How about the chief priests, why might they want to retell the incident?

Matthew opens his gospel by telling us that Jesus is Immanuel, which means “God with us” (Matt 1:23). How does Matthew bring this theme full circle with the closing of the book?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Share how the context has added to your understanding of this week’s passage.

So, what’s the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?

MAIN IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Have a few people share their “main idea.”

STOP TO PRAY

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STUDY NOTES

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

There are a lot of messengers in this passage, delivering a very particular message. Some variation of “go and tell” occurs five times.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- The remarkable hardness of heart which the religious leaders demonstrated towards Jesus in Matt 27:41-44 continues with a lie they concoct to undermine his resurrection. The lie they tell (v.13) mirrors the fears they expressed in 27:64.
- Jesus is done with Jerusalem, and will finish his time on earth in Galilee, to the north, where his ministry began.

In Matthew:

- v.6 “He is not here...” Jesus predicted his resurrection several times (Matt 12:40, 16:21, 17:23, 20:19).
- v.7 “He is going before you...” was predicted by Jesus in Gethsemane (Matt 26:32)
- v.16 “now the eleven...” is a shocking reunion, given how the disciple behaved in Matt 26:56.
- v.19 “Go therefore!” The Great Commission, as it is often called, fulfills Jesus’ prediction in Matt 24:14 and 31. It builds and expands on the first mission the disciples received in Matthew 10, which was only to the “lost sheep of Israel” (Matt 10:6), and it also explains how Jesus will build his Church (Matt 16:18).
- “...baptizing them...” The fact that Jesus gives his disciples this ministry is a striking development of John’s prophesy in Matt 3:11.
- “...in the name of...” puts an exclamation point on Jesus’ status as the divine God-Man, already suggested many times throughout the course of his ministry (e.g. Matt 3:17, 11:27, 17:5).
- v.20 “I am with you always...” is an important reminder, already mentioned once in Matt 18:20.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- v.18 “All authority on heaven and earth” is a clear allusion to Dan 7:14, which Jesus already spoke about in Matt 24:29-31. A further dimension of this ministry will be given in Acts 1:8 with the sending of the Holy Spirit.

Q3 // WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

What does the Great Commission reveal about Christ after his resurrection, about the world, and about the mission of the Church?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share how you have gotten to know Jesus
better through this passage.

Q4 // HOW WILL I RESPOND? WHAT WILL I PRAY?

What challenge does the Great Commission give to you personally? Why are the promises which Jesus gives so encouraging in facing that challenge?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:
Share how God is calling you to grow, and ask your group to pray for you!

PRAY