

# Matthew

CHAPTERS 12 THROUGH 16



# Table of Contents

Page	Study	
4		How do I use this Bible Study?
6		The Structure of Matthew 12-16
8		Bookmark
10	1	Matthew 12:1-14
16	2	Matthew 12:15-21
22	3	Matthew 12:22-37
28	4	Matthew 12:38-45
34	5	Matthew 12:46-50
40	6	Matthew 13:1-23
46	7	Matthew 13:24-43
52	8	Matthew 13:44-52
58	9	Matthew 13:53-14:12
64	10	Matthew 14:13-36
70	11	Matthew 15:1-20
76	12	Matthew 15:21-39
82	13	Matthew 16:1-12
88	14	Matthew 16:13-20

# HOW DO I USE THIS BIBLE STUDY?

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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?

Let scripture interpret scripture! 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*

# THE STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW 12-16

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Matthew has written this gospel with careful structure, form, and rhythm. Sometimes he writes around a particular theme, sometimes according to chronology, sometimes it's a catchword, genre, or Old Testament (OT) idea. As he goes along, Matthew leaves us a number of "clues" to help us see this structure and understand the intent that lies behind it.

Look out particularly for:

- Matthew *deja vu!* – The reoccurrence of key phrases, taglines, or themes.
- OT quotations (direct or indirect)
- A change in Jesus' location or audience
- A change in Jesus' style or genre of teaching (narrative, teaching, parable, quotation)

Noticing these markers helps us to follow along with Matthew's intent for the book. The structure below, which is based upon these observations, may be a help in guiding you through the text and finding these "clues" for yourself!

## I. Rising Opposition

1. Sabbath conflict (12:1-14)
2. Jesus the Prophesied Servant (12:15-21)
3. Confrontation with the Pharisees (12:22-37)
4. Jesus' verdict (12:38-45)
5. Jesus' true family (12:46-50)

## II. The Sermon of Parables (13:1-53)

1. The Setting (13:1-3a)
2. To the crowds (13:3b-33)
  - The Parable of the soils (vv. 3b-9)
  - Interlude #1 (vv. 10-23)
    - On understanding parables
    - Interpreting the parable of the soils
  - Three Parables of growth: weeds, mustard seed, yeast (vv. 24-32)
3. Pause (13:34-43)
  - The Purpose of Parables (vv. 34-35)
  - Interpretation of the parable of the weeds (vv. 36-43)
4. To the Disciples (13:44-52)
  - Three further parables: the treasure, the pearl and the net (vv. 47-48)
  - Interlude #2 (vv. 49-52)
    - Interpretation of the parables of the net
    - On understanding parables
  - The parable of the teacher of the law (vv. 52)
5. Transitional summary: moving towards more opposition (13:53)

## III. Responses to Jesus' ministry

1. Nazareth rejects Jesus (13:54-58)
2. Herod and Jesus (14:1-12)
3. Feeding 5000 (14:3-21)
4. The walk on the water (14:22-33)
5. Transitional summary – Jesus the Popular Healer (14:34-36)
6. Dispute with Pharisees and Scribes (15:1-20)
7. A Gentile women's faith (15:21-28)
8. Healing ministry among the Gentiles (15:29-31)
9. Feeding the 4000 (15:32-39)
10. Jesus rejects the Pharisees & Sadducees (16:1-12)
11. Jesus the Messiah (16:13-20)

# PARABLES IN MATTHEW 13

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There has been much discussion through history about how to interpret parables – and much confusion and misunderstanding as well! Here are a few clear principles that we hope will be helpful as you seek to listen carefully and faithfully to what Jesus is teaching through this “Sermon of Parables.”

- 1. Most parables are extended metaphor or simile, not allegory.** There will not always be a 1:1 meaning for every object or idea. Focus on what is clear, rather than trying to puzzle through more obscure details. That said...
- 2. Jesus uses everyday objects and life experiences from his time and place.** This shows us Jesus’ priority in revealing himself to the poor and powerless “ordinary” people of his day, not just the well studied religious and social elite. It also means that additional background info can be very helpful for us now! Knowing about a particular practice or custom from the time of Jesus’ teaching can bring clarity to us in the same way it would have for Jesus’ original audience. Tares and leaven are examples of this.
- 3. Parables tend to be teaching a particular truth in response to a particular question or issue.** There will often be more than one thing to learn from a parable, but the various pieces work together to push towards a certain point. Make sure you are seeking to hear and interpret with that greater question or issue in mind. The structure of the book may help you figure this out.

Listen carefully to these parables – letting the whole story speak, within the context we find them – and ask God to help you understand. May we receive the treasure that these stories hold for us today!

# GOSPEL NARRATIVE BOOKMARK

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## 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.

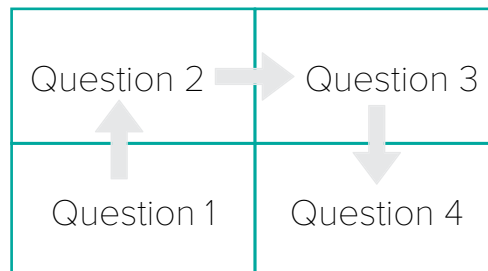
Share with Jesus what you have learned about him.

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

Choose one thing in particular that God has revealed to you in this passage. Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?
- What will it look like to respond? How is God calling you to grow?
- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

## FINISH IN PRAYER



- 1 At that time, Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath.  
His disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.
- 2 But when the Pharisees saw it they said to him  
“Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.”
- 3 He said to them “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry,  
and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God  
and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat,  
nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?
- 5 Or have you not read in the Law: how on the Sabbath  
the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?
- 6 I tell you, something greater than the temple is here  
7 and if you had known what this means ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice’  
you would not have condemned the guiltless.
- 8 For the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath.”
- 9 He went on from there and entered their synagogue.
- 10 And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him  
“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” (so that they might accuse him).
- 11 He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep,  
if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath will not take hold of it and lift it out?
- 12 Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!  
So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” 13 Then he said to the man  
“Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out  
and it was restored, healthy like the other.
- 14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him how to destroy him.

# STUDY NOTES

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## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Much of the discussion in this passage hinges on what is lawful. In a Jewish context, “law” would refer to the Torah – the five books of Moses – as well as to the traditional interpretations of the Torah. So, for example, serving in the Temple was not considered “work” by Jewish commentators, which is what Jesus refers to in v. 5.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- In chapter 11 Jesus invited the crowds to come to him, promising them rest and an easy yoke. What sort of yoke do the Pharisees offer in this passage?

In Matthew:

- “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.” Jesus has referred to himself as the Son of Man already in Matt 9:6, 10:23, and 11:19. What do you think it means?
- “Something greater than the temple.” Jesus continues to offer comparisons in Matt 12:41-42. To what is the temple being compared?

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- “What is not lawful on the Sabbath” – Read Exod 31:12-18 or 35:1-3. How specific were God’s commandments regarding the Sabbath?
- “What David and his companions did” refers to 1 Sam 21. Why does Jesus mention this story?
- “I desire mercy not sacrifice” – Jesus already quoted Hos 6:6 before in Matt 9:13. What was the context there?
- “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” Read Mark 3:1-6 for a second perspective on this healing. What is at the heart of this discussion?

What is the purpose of Sabbath, or any part of God’s law for that matter? (e.g. Exod 31:13)

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

In vv. 6-8 Jesus makes a claim that would have been very startling to Jewish ears. What is revealed about Jesus in this claim?

Why does Jesus choose to heal this man on the Sabbath? What does this reveal about Jesus’ heart for people?

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

What does Sabbath mean for you today? How is Jesus lord of the Sabbath?

# 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

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

# Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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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 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.

# 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 – sharing with Jesus what you have learned about him.

**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?

---

Choose one thing in particular that God has revealed to you in this passage.

Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

- What will it look like to respond? How is God calling you to grow?

- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 15 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there.  
And many followed him, and he healed them all
- 16 and ordered them not to make him known.
- 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:
- 18 “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen  
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.  
I will put my Spirit upon him  
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
- 19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets
- 20 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench  
until he brings justice to victory
- 21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope



# STUDY NOTES

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## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The Hebrew word for justice in v. 20 from the Isaiah quotation is *mishpat*. It describes both legal and social order, and is closely linked to the word *shalom*, or peace/flourishing. God's justice brings about human flourishing.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The Chosen Servant

There is a sharp break in the book of Isaiah between chs. 39 and 40. In this new section of Isaiah starting at ch. 40, the reader is suddenly introduced to the Servant of the Lord, by whom God will redeem his people.

What specifically does the Lord say his servant will be like in Isaiah 42?

Immediate context:

- What is Jesus withdrawing from? What happens after this passage?

In Matthew:

- "He warned them not to tell others about him." This is a recurring theme in Jesus' ministry; see Matt 8:4, 9:30, and 16:20. Why is Jesus doing this?
- "My beloved with whom my soul is well pleased." Remember, the Father uttered a similar sentence in Matt 3:17, when Jesus was baptized.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- "Here is my servant..." is a full quotation of Isaiah 42:1-4, and is the longest Old Testament quotation in Matthew's gospel. Matthew is trying to draw our attention to something. What is it?

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

Matthew has now referred to two of the Servant Songs in Isaiah: Isaiah 42:1-9 and 53:1-12. What does this highlight about Jesus' character (particularly in contrast with the religious rulers)?

How does Jesus' order not to "make him known" fulfill Isaiah 42? Focus specifically on the relationship between vv. 19-20 and v. 21. When is Jesus fully known during his ministry? When does Jesus bring "justice to victory"?

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

Our view of servants (think service industry...) is not much different than the ancient perspective: it is a lowly position. What does it mean to serve a God who is a Servant? How do we follow him in this way?

# 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

**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 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.

# 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 – sharing with Jesus what you have learned about him.

**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?

---

Choose one thing in particular that God has revealed to you in this passage.

Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

- What will it look like to respond? How is God calling you to grow?

- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 22 Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.
- 23 And all the people were amazed and said “Can this be the Son of David?”
- 24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said  
“It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”
- 25 Knowing their thoughts, he said to them  
“Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste  
and no city or house divided against itself will stand.
- 26 And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself.  
How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul  
by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.
- 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons  
then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
- 29 Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods  
unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.
- 30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.
- 31 Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people  
but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.
- 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven  
but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven  
either in this age or in the age to come.
- 33 Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad  
for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers!  
How can you speak good, when you are evil?  
For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
- 35 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good,  
and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.
- 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word  
they speak,
- 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

# STUDY NOTES

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## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

In this passage Jesus discusses the deeper spiritual realities of the growing opposition to his kingdom. Who is the “strong man” of v. 29 in this parable?

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus briefly withdrew from the Pharisees in vv. 15-21, but here he is confronting them again on their hard-heartedness. After this passage, in spite of everything they have seen, the Pharisees will demand a sign of Jesus’ authority.

In Matthew:

- “Can this be the Son of David?” Son of David is regular title for Jesus: Matt 9:27, 15:22, 20:30, 21:9, 22:42. Why is this important?
- “It is only by Beelzebul...that this man casts out demons.” The Pharisees used this argument before in Matt 9:34. What is the logic of his response in vv. 26-28?
- “The kingdom of God has come upon you.” This is a new phrase in Jesus’ teaching. Earlier, he was preaching that the “kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Why is Jesus getting more confrontational?
- “You brood of vipers!” is the same jab that John the Baptist made. What similarities and differences do you notice between John’s speech in ch. 3 and Jesus’ speech in this passage?
- “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good...” Jesus spoke about recognizing fruit in Matt 7:15-20. Why does Jesus speak this parable here in Matt 12?

Elsewhere in Scripture

- Galatians 5:22 is another passage where the fruit of the Spirit is central. How does Paul’s language there help us understand what Jesus is driving at? How can a tree be made good?

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit:

Historically there has been a great deal of (often unhelpful) debate about what Jesus means by blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In context however, it seems reasonably clear: God will not forgive those who forever reject the blessing of his presence.

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

Jesus is not only defending his authority in this passage (eg. the binding of the strong man) but also speaks about his humility. How is it that the Son of Man can forgive a word spoken against him? (It is perhaps helpful to go back to the previous study here.)

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

How is it a comfort to know that Jesus has power over evil? How does it challenge us to grow?

# 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

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



# Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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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 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.

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

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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 – sharing with Jesus what you have learned about him.

**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?

---

Choose one thing in particular that God has revealed to you in this passage.

Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

- What will it look like to respond? How is God calling you to grow?

- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him saying  
“Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.”
- 39 But he answered them  
“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign,  
but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.
- 40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish,  
so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
- 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it  
for they repented at the preaching of Jonah.  
And behold, something greater than Jonah is here.
- 42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and  
condemn it,  
for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.  
And behold, something greater than Solomon is here.
- 43 When an unclean spirit has gone out of a person,  
it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none.
- 44 Then it says ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’  
And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order.
- 45 Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself  
and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than  
the first.  
So also will it be with this evil generation.

# STUDY NOTES

---

## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The unclean spirit wanders through arid places because in ancient Semitic thinking the wilderness was a symbol of chaos or non-being.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus just rebuked the Pharisees in the previous passage for calling his work satanic. That is why the scribes and Pharisees are “answering him” v. 38. What do you think motivates their request?

In Matthew:

- “The sign of the prophet Jonah” is mentioned again in Matt 16:4, in a very similar context. Who was Jonah?
- “Something greater than Jonah...something greater than Solomon.” Jesus made a similar comparison in Matt 12:6. Why is Jesus making all these comparisons with the Pharisees? What did all of these things point to?
- “The wisdom of Solomon...” Jesus made another statement about wisdom in Matt 11:19. What is the purpose of wisdom? What is the purpose of prophecy?
- “This evil generation” or some variation of the phrase occurs multiple times in Matthew. What frightening possibility is Jesus referring to in v. 45? What is the connection between vv. 39-42 and vv. 43-45?

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- “A evil and adulterous generation.” Adultery is a frequent image used by God to speak of unfaithful Israel in the Old Testament (eg. the book of Hosea). How does the image of adultery underscore the severity of Jesus’ rebuke?
- To which group did the Ninevites (Jonah 3) and the Queen of the South (1 Kgs 10:1-14) belong? How is this relevant to Jesus’ comparisons? What is he saying about Israel?
- “We wish to see a sign from you” is surely what Paul was thinking of when he wrote 1 Cor 1:22. What are the themes of that passage? Does it help shed some light on why Jesus is answering the Pharisees the way he is?

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

Jesus has made some striking comparisons. What is he asking of “this wicked generation”? What is the danger of rejecting an authority greater than Solomon?

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

How does it challenge and comfort us to confess that Jesus is true wisdom? What is the ultimate sign of his wisdom and authority (the sign of Jonah)?

# 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

**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
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**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.

# 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 – sharing with Jesus what you have learned about him.

**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?

---

Choose one thing in particular that God has revealed to you in this passage.  
Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

- What will it look like to respond? How is God calling you to grow?

- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 46 While he was still speaking to the people  
Behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside asking to speak to him.
- 48 But he replied to the man who told him  
“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”
- 49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples  
he said “Here are my mother and my brothers!
- 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister  
and mother.”

# STUDY NOTES

---

## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Ancient Semitic cultures had a much stronger focus on the place and value of family than our contemporary Western cultures. What Jesus is saying here would have been profoundly shocking to his original audience.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- This passage marks the end of a section in Matthew, where Jesus has been speaking about authority. Why does Matthew choose this to be the concluding story for the section?
- Jesus begins a series of teachings on the kingdom of heaven in chapter thirteen. Why might this lesson on family precede these parables?

In Matthew:

- “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven” is a phrase Jesus also used in Matt 7:21. What is the point of Jesus’ teaching in that passage?
- Jesus has spoken on the topic of family allegiance before in Matt 8:21-22 and 10:37. He’ll speak about it again in 15:1-6. What is at the heart of the issue?

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- In Deut 5:16, God commands Israel to “honour your mother and father.” Is Jesus breaking this commandment? Why or why not?

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

Our tendency in reading this passage might be to focus on the apparent negative perspective which Jesus has on family, while passing over the positive. What is so remarkable and encouraging about what Jesus is saying here?

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

God calls us to love our families, but not to idolize them. By loving him, we learn to love those he has put in our lives better than we ever could. Are there some ways that you put your family before God? Are there ways in which you could love your family better?

# Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

---

## PRAY

Look carefully at

### The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
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**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?

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Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

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- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea  
2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down  
And the whole crowd stood on the beach  
3 And he told them many things in parables saying  
“A sower went out to sow.  
4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and  
devoured them.  
5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil  
and immediately they sprang up, since they had not depth of soil  
6 but when the sun rose they were scorched.  
And since they had not root, they withered away.  
7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.  
8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty,  
some thirty.  
9 He who has ears, let him hear.”  
10 Then the disciples came and said to him “Why do you speak to them in parables?”  
11 And he answered them, “To you it has been given  
to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.  
12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance  
but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.  
13 This is why I speak to them in parables,  
because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they  
understand.  
14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says  
‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never  
perceive  
15 For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed  
Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’  
16 But blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear.  
17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you  
see  
and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.  
18 Hear then the parable of the sower:  
19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it  
the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.  
This is what was sown along the path.  
20 As for what was sown on the rocky ground  
this is the one who hears the words and immediately receives it with joy.  
21 Yet he has no root in himself but endures for a while  
and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word  
immediately he falls away.



- 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and it proves unfruitful.
- 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it.  
He indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

## STUDY NOTES

---

### Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The parables of chapter 13, of which this is the first, offer commentary on the spiritual reality we have seen at work as people respond to Jesus ministry.

Note how frequently words related to hearing, seeing, and understanding appear throughout this passage. What is the same in each of the four part of the soil parable? What is different?

The crop spoken of in verse 23 is actually quite small – nothing out of the ordinary.

### Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- This chapter of parables follows Jesus judgement on those who have seen and heard but not repented in 11:20-24, and his confrontation and judgement of the Pharisees for their hard hearts towards his teaching in chapter 12. How does their prior lack of receptivity to his teaching help us understand what Jesus says in vv. 11-17?

In Matthew

- How does Jesus' teaching In Matthew 7:24-27 help us to grasp the difference between hearing and understanding?

Elsewhere in scripture:

- Isaiah 6:9-10 is quoted indirectly and directly in vv. 13-15. Isaiah goes on in v. 13 to to speak about the remnant that will be preserved. What were the circumstances that led to this prophecy? Why does Jesus quote it here?

Jesus' interpretation of the parable of the sower in vv. 18-23 shows us that all may hear but not all will understand.

- What are the possible responses to hearing the word of the Kingdom that Jesus highlights for the disciples?
- What reason is given for lack of understanding and fruit bearing amongst some?
- Jesus says that his disciples have been "given the secret of heaven"? What is this secret? How do they receive it?

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

What does it tell us about Jesus' identity and mission – and the hearts of people – that the same seed (Jesus' revelatory teaching of the Kingdom) can be responded to so differently? Why is this surprising?

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

How does this challenge, comfort, or convict you in how you listen to what Jesus has to say through "the word of the kingdom."

# 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?
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**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**  
Share something you noticed.

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- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
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Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

# Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

---

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**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

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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.

# 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 – sharing with Jesus what you have learned about him.

**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?

---

Choose one thing in particular that God has revealed to you in this passage.  
Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

- What will it look like to respond? How is God calling you to grow?

- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

## IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

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

PRAY

- 24 He put another parable before them saying  
“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field,  
25 but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came  
and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.  
26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.  
27 And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him  
‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’  
28 He said to them ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him  
‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’  
29 But he said ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.  
30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time  
I will tell the reapers ‘Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned,  
but gather the wheat into my barn.’”  
31 He put another parable before them, saying  
“The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed  
that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all the seeds,  
but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree  
so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”  
33 He told them another parable  
“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three  
measures of flour,  
till it was all leavened.”  
34 All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables  
indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.  
35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:  
“I will open my mouth in parables,  
I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”  
36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house.  
And his disciples came to him, saying  
“Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”  
37 He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.  
38 The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom.  
The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the  
devil.  
The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels.  
40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the  
age.  
41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom  
all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace.  
In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.  
43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.  
He who has ears let him hear.

# STUDY NOTES

---

## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Leaven is not just any yeast. It is similar to a sourdough starter and was to be removed from the home before passover as it could be ritually impure. Jesus' comparison of leaven to the Kingdom of God was actually very shocking, but right in line with Jesus' pattern of mission to those who were seen as the lowest and most despised.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

What question (raised by the parable of the sower) might each of these short parables be seeking to answer?

Immediate context:

- Throughout Matthew's gospel a change in location often signifies a change in Jesus' audience and the focus of his teaching. Notice here that Jesus is talking to the crowds in verses 24-33, after which he explains things to his disciples in vv. 36-43.
- Verses 34-35 continue Jesus' teaching on parables that he began in vv. 10-17.

In Matthew:

- Judgment: Jesus also speaks about judgement in Matthew 13:49-50, and he'll return to this theme again in 25:31-46. How does this help us better understand our present age, and God's activity in it?

Elsewhere in scripture:

- What does it mean to have ears to hear? See Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9.

Birds and the Tree: In Daniel 4:10-12, and 20-22, Daniel receives a vision of the Babylonian empire, where the birds represent all the nations gathered under Nebuchadnezzar's rule. What is the difference between Daniel's vision and Jesus' parable?

To fulfill: Matthew quotes a portion of Psalm 78, a psalm which tells the "glorious deeds of the LORD" and his faithfulness to Israel despite their sin. How does this psalm end?

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

What role does Jesus – as the Son of Man – play in the vision of the Kingdom we are given in verses 37 to 43?

What do these parables lead us to expect now? What is the final outcome of Jesus' ministry?

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

What is HEARD reveals the significance of what is SEEN. What have you heard in this week's passage that helps you to understand something of what you have seen of Jesus' work in the world?

# Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

---

## PRAY

Look carefully at

### The **words and phrases**

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Share something you noticed.

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# Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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## STOP TO PRAY

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

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What do we learn about

- His identity?
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Write your response to this question as a prayer – sharing with Jesus what you have learned about him.

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

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

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- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field  
which a man found and covered up.  
Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
- 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,  
46 Who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and  
bought it.
- 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea  
And gathered fish of every kind. 48 When it was full, men drew it ashore  
And sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.
- 49 So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out  
and separate the evil from the righteous, 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace.  
In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- 51 Have you understood all these things?”  
They said to him “Yes.”
- 52 And he said to them  
“Therefore, every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven  
is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what  
is old.

# STUDY NOTES

---

## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

“These things” in v. 51 refers to the sequence of parables Jesus has told in response to the disciples question in v. 36 (re: the parable of the weeds).

The title “scribe” given in verse 52 typically referred to a professional teacher of the Jewish law. In this passage it is instead referring to Jesus’ disciples (who had no formal training) as the scribes of the Kingdom of Heaven. What does Jesus go on to say these scribes will do?

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate Context:

- This first trio of parables follow after the “key” parable of the soils.

In Matthew:

- Vv. 49-50 repeat almost exactly what Jesus said in vv. 40-42. What main teaching point is Jesus reinforcing?

Elsewhere in scripture:

- Psalm 78:1-4 is quoted in verse 35. What are the hidden things spoken about in this Psalm? How were they made known?

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

What does it say about who Jesus is, that discovering his kingdom would inspire a response of such complete devotion?

What does Jesus teach here about his final judgement? (when? how? who?)

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

Why is the Kingdom of heaven worth giving up everything else for? Why does Jesus require such total devotion? How does this convict, comfort, or challenge you?

Where are you at in your “training” for the Kingdom of heaven? Bring your questions, struggles, fears, and joys about this to Jesus in prayer.

# Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

---

## PRAY

Look carefully at

### The **words and phrases**

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

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**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 53 And when Jesus has finished these parables  
he went away from there 54 and coming to his hometown he taught them  
in their synagogue so that they were astonished and said  
“Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?  
55 Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary?  
And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?  
56 And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”  
57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them  
“A prophet is not without honour except in his hometown and in his own  
household.”  
58 And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.  
14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus  
2 and he said to his servants “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from  
the dead  
that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.”  
3 For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison  
for the sake of Herodias his brother Philip’s wife,  
4 because John had been saying to him  
“It is not lawful for you to have her.” 5 And though he wanted to put him to death,  
he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet.  
6 But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before  
the company  
and pleased Herod, 7 so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she  
might ask.  
8 Prompted by her mother, she said  
“Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.”  
9 And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests  
he commanded it to be given. 10 He sent and had John beheaded in the prison,  
11 and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl and she brought it to  
her mother.  
12 And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and  
told Jesus.

# STUDY NOTES

---

## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Once again, a change in location and audience highlights a change in response to Jesus' teaching. Who is responding to Jesus in this section? How do they respond?

"Took offence" in verse 57 is the same root word used in 11:6 (offended) and 13:21 (falls away). It is the opposite of responding positively with faith. This is made even clearer here by Jesus' words in 58.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus has just finished using parables to teach about the spiritual reality that lies beneath the polarizing effect of his teaching ministry. What additional insights do the parables add to what unfolds here in Jesus' hometown, and with Herod?

How does Jesus respond to the news of John's death in 14:13? In light of his comments about his family in chapter 12 and 13, and the rejection he faces here in his hometown, why is that particularly significant?

In Matthew:

- Jesus refers to his wisdom being "greater than Solomon's" in 12:42. "Something greater" than Solomon is here! What question do the people of Jesus' hometown ask (twice!) in response to catching a glimpse of this greatness? How is this reaction similar to the Pharisees' in 9:34 and 12:24?

Verses 1-12 follow up on 11:2-10, continuing Matthew's theme of Jesus' ministry following on from and fulfilling John's.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- Verse 57 references Jeremiah 11:18-12:6 where the prophet is praying to God. Jeremiah asks for truth and justice to prevail as the people of his own hometown are trying to kill him because of the words God has given him to speak.

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

What do the responses here (both Jesus' neighbours, Herod's and Jesus in response to them) reveal to us about who Jesus is??

What is amazing about Jesus' response?

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

# 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?)
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**NOTE:**

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Have a couple of people share how they divided up the passage and why.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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Look at the **context**

- Read the passage immediately before and after
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MAIN IDEA

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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.

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

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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 – sharing with Jesus what you have learned about him.

**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?

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Choose one thing in particular that God has revealed to you in this passage.

Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

- What will it look like to respond? How is God calling you to grow?

- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 13 Now when Jesus heard this he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself.  
But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.
- 14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd,  
and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.
- 15 Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said  
“This is a desolate place, and the day is now over,  
send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”
- 16 But Jesus said “They need not go away, you give them something to eat.”
- 17 They said to him “We have only five loaves here and two fish.”
- 18 And he said “Bring them here to me.” 19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass  
and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing.  
Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples,  
and the disciples gave them to the crowds, 20 and they all ate and were satisfied.  
And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.
- 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.
- 22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat  
and go before him to the other side while he dismissed the crowds.
- 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.  
When evening came he was there alone, 24 but the boat by this time  
was a long way from the land beaten by the waves for the wind was against them.
- 25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking on the sea.
- 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified  
and said “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear.
- 27 But immediately, Jesus spoke to them saying  
“Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid.”
- 28 And Peter answered him “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”
- 29 He said “Come” So Peter got out of the boat  
and walked on the water and came to Jesus.
- 30 But when he saw the wind he was afraid  
and beginning to sink he cried out “Lord save me!”
- 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him,  
saying to him “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”
- 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.
- 33 And those in the boat worshiped him saying  
“Truly you are the Son of God.”
- 34 And when they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret.
- 35 And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region



and brought to him all who were sick 36 and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many touched it were made well.

## STUDY NOTES

---

### Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

“He had compassion on them...” This is the second of four times this word is used to describe Jesus’ intense response to seeing the great need of the crowds. See also 9:36, 15:32, and 20:34.

- What are the three responses to Jesus in this passage? What is surprising about how these particular groups of people respond?
- What different words are used here to describe Jesus’ initiating and authoritative action?

### Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus continues to make known who he is, and people continue to reveal the state of their hearts towards him by how they respond.

In Matthew:

- Using the imagery Jesus’ gives us in the parable of the sower (13:1-9, 18-23), which types of “soil” lead to responses we see to Jesus in this passage?

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- Jesus is once again showing himself to be “something greater.” How is what Jesus does here in verses 13-21 even greater than the feeding of God’s people in Exodus 16 and 2 Kings 4:42-44 it would have called to mind?

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

How does this passage expand our faith and trust in Jesus’ deep love and care for us in the midst of our daily lives? Why is his power, authority, and perfect judgement a vital part of our being able to trust him?

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

How has this beautiful revelation of who Jesus is – and the flawed responses we have seen to that revelation – convicted, challenged, or comforted you?

# Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

---

## PRAY

Look carefully at

### The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
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# Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

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- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 1 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said  
2 “Why do you disciples break the tradition of the elders?”  
For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” 3 He answered them  
“And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?  
4 For God commanded ‘Honour your father and your mother’  
and ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’  
5 But you say ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother  
“What you would have gained from me is given to God”  
6 he need not honour his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition  
you have made void the word of God. 7 You hypocrites!  
Well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said:  
8 ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me  
9 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’“  
10 And he called the people to him and said the them  
“Hear and understand: 11 it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person,  
but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.”  
12 Then the disciples came and said to him “Do you know  
that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”  
13 He answered “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be  
rooted up.  
14 Let them alone, they are blind guides.  
And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”  
15 But Peter said to him “Explain the parable to us.”  
16 And he said “Are you also still without understanding?  
17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and  
is expelled?  
18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart,  
and this defiles a person.  
19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery,  
sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person.  
But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.

# STUDY NOTES

---

## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Purity, understood as cleanliness, is a major component of the regulations which God gives to Israel in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It was one of the ways in which Israel set itself apart from other nations. It is also important to note that nowhere in the Old Testament did God command the Israelites to wash their hands before eating.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- After this exchange with the Pharisees, Jesus is going to travel into the Gentile-occupied region of Tyre and Sidon. In Jewish thinking at the time, Gentiles were unclean people.

In Matthew:

- “The Pharisees and scribes came...” This is not the first (nor the last) confrontation Jesus will have with the Pharisees. However, this is the first time Matthew mentions that these Pharisees are specifically “from Jerusalem.” Why might this be an important detail?
- “for the sake of your tradition.” Jesus does not directly address the issue of handwashing at the start of his argument, but instead focuses on another tradition of the Jewish leaders, where property could be given to the temple instead of to one’s own family. How is this tradition opposed to what God desires?
- “Hear and understand” is a command Jesus gives when he wants people to pay particular attention (e.g. Matt 11:15, 13:51). What does he teach the crowd?
- “the Pharisees were offended.” See Matt 11:6. What is so offensive to them about Jesus’ teaching? How is their self-understanding being challenged?
- “Let them alone; they are blind guides.” Jesus will level this accusation again in Matt 23:16 and 24.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- “Honor your father and mother...” The two commandments which Jesus quotes here in v. 4 come from Exod 20:12 and 21:17.
- “This people honors me with their lips...” comes from Isaiah 29:13, which speaks about the danger of superficial worship. What is the connection between superficial worship and a misplaced sense of purity?

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

What does Jesus desire from people in this passage? What does this reveal about how he sees people?

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

# Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

---

## PRAY

Look carefully at

### The **words and phrases**

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- His mission?
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- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 21 And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.
- 22 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying “Have mercy on me O Lord, Son of David, my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”
- 23 But he did not answer her a word.  
And his disciples came and begged him saying,  
“Send her away, for she is crying out after us.”
- 24 He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
- 25 But she came and knelt before him saying “Lord, help me.”
- 26 And he answered “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”
- 27 She said “Yes Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”
- 28 Then Jesus answered her “O woman, great is your faith!  
Be it done for you as you desire,” and her daughter was healed instantly.
- 29 Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee.  
And he went up on the mountain and sat down there.
- 30 And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them,
- 31 so that the crowd wondered when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy,  
the lame walking, and the blind seeing.  
And they glorified the God of Israel.
- 32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said  
“I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” 33 And the disciples said to him  
“Where are we going to get enough bread  
in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?”
- 34 And Jesus said to them “How many loaves do you have?”  
They said “Seven, and a few fish.”
- 35 And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground,
- 36 he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks  
he broke them and gave them to the disciples,  
and the disciples gave them to the crowds.
- 37 And they all ate and were satisfied.  
And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over.
- 38 Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.
- 39 And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

# STUDY NOTES

---

## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Tyre and Sidon are near Galilee but belong to the Gentile-inhabited Phoenicia. Jesus is in foreign territory which is why the woman is called a Canaanite. In first-century Palestine, it would have been extremely rude for the woman to approach Jesus in this way.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus was just teaching his disciples about purity in vv. 1-20, before this passage began. How is that relevant? What did the Jews think about the Gentiles?
- There has already been a feeding miracle in Matt 14:13-21. Why the repetition?

In Matthew:

- “Son of David.” We’ve encountered this title many times in the gospel of Matthew. What is so unique about this woman calling Jesus by that title?
- “The lost sheep of Israel” was also the focus of the disciples’ mission in ch. 10.
- “O woman, great is your faith!” Jesus said something similar to the centurion in Matt 8:10. Why do you think outsiders have “great faith” while insiders have “little faith”?
- “They glorified the God of Israel.” What does this tell us about the crowds Jesus is feeding? Are these Jews or Gentiles?
- “I have compassion for these people” is an interesting phrase. In the Greek, the word “compassion” has a connection to the guts. Jesus is reacting viscerally. Who did Jesus have compassion on in Matt 9:36? Why does Matthew mention compassion in our passage?

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- Jesus is fulfilling Isaiah 35 by healing “the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute,” except Isaiah’s prophecy was given to whom?
- Feeding in the wilderness immediately reminds us of the manna in Exodus 16, as Israel began their wandering towards the Promised Land.
- Read Psalm 107:1-9 for a beautiful poetic expression of what Jesus is doing here.

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

Why do you think Jesus was so hard on the Canaanite woman in vv. 24-26?

Who did Jesus come for? Who does Jesus heal?

Who does Jesus have compassion for?

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

It is human nature to be tribal, and it is easy to see the world in terms of “insiders” and “outsiders.” How does Jesus’ behaviour here challenge or comfort us?

# Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

---

## PRAY

Look carefully at

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**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 1 And the Pharisees and Sadducees came  
and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.
- 2 He answered them “When it is evening you say  
‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’
- 3 And in the morning ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’  
You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky  
but you cannot interpret the sign of the times.
- 4 An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign  
but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”  
So he left them and departed.
- 5 When the disciples reached the other side they had forgotten to bring any bread.
- 6 Jesus said to them “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees  
and Sadducees.”
- 7 And they began discussing it among themselves, saying “We brought no bread.”
- 8 But Jesus, aware of this said “O you of little faith,  
why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?
- 9 Do you not yet perceive?  
Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand and how many baskets  
you gathered?
- 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand and how many baskets you gathered?
- 11 How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread?  
Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
- 12 Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread,  
but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

# STUDY NOTES

---

## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The Greek word for “sky” and “heaven” is identical in v. 3. Another way to translate would be “you know how to interpret the surface of heaven...”

The Pharisees and Sadducees had substantial theological disagreements with each other, but here they are united in their opposition to Jesus.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus just finished a stretch of miraculous deeds in chs. 14-15, much like chs. 8-9.
- While the religious authorities are hardening their hearts, the disciples are being drawn more deeply into relationship with Jesus. What follows immediately after this passage? How does this help us understand what Jesus is warning about?

In Matthew:

- “An evil and adulterous generation” or some variation of this occurs in Matt 11:16, 12:39-45, and 17:17. Who belongs to “this generation”?
- Jesus referred to the sign of Jonah in Matt 12:39. What is the main difference between these two confrontations?
- Jesus also spoke about leaven in Matt 13:33. What is the underlying similarity being communicated in these two different images? What is the difference between the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of the kingdom of heaven?
- “O you of little faith” also appears in Matt 6:30, 8:26, and 14:31. Is the term one of endearment or condemnation?
- “Do you still not understand?...” Why does Jesus talk about the feeding miracles even though that’s not directly the point of what he was saying about the Pharisees and Sadducees?

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- “We wish to see a sign from you.” See the comments in Study #4 on 1 Corinthians 1:22.

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

The elite of Israel are only able to see the surface of things (the appearance of the sky). What do Jesus’ followers need to understand the kingdom of heaven?

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

Leaven is everywhere (literally and figuratively)! The teachings which we hold to be true produce consequences in us and our behaviour. How does Jesus’ teaching here convict and comfort us? What is the result of his good leaven in our lives?

# Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

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- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
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- 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

**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 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.

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

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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 – sharing with Jesus what you have learned about him.

**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?

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Choose one thing in particular that God has revealed to you in this passage.

Spend some time throughout your week thinking and praying through these questions:

- How has God convicted, challenged, or comforted you through this truth?

- What will it look like to respond? How is God calling you to grow?

- As you seek to follow Jesus in the light of this truth, what do you need to be praying for?

**IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

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

PRAY

- 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi,  
he asked his disciples “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”
- 14 And they said “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah,  
and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
- 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
- 16 Simon Peter replied “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- 17 And Jesus answered him “Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah  
for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you  
but my Father who is in heaven.
- 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church  
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven  
and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven  
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
- 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.



# STUDY NOTES

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## Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The titles “Christ” and “Messiah” are Greek and Hebrew for “anointed one. The Anointed One is the one whom God chose to deliver Israel.

## Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Previously, Jesus spoke about the “sign of Jonah.” He will speak about his death again immediately after this passage but more directly. What changed?

In Matthew:

- “The Son of Man” is a title Jesus uses of himself on many occasions in Matthew. Although there is a connection to Daniel 7, the title is somewhat opaque since every person is a “son of man.” Why do you think Jesus uses this title so frequently to speak about himself?
- “Some say John the Baptist...” This is also Herod’s opinion in Matt 14:2, but this is the first mention of the prophet Jeremiah. Any guess as to why people are making this association between Jesus and Jeremiah?
- “You are the Christ” is a new title for Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. What are some of the other titles? What is the difference between what Peter is saying here, for example, and what the disciples declare in Matt 14:33?
- “Revealed...by my Father” is also found in Jesus’ prayer in Matt 11:25. To whom was the Son revealed there? How do people come to know Jesus?
- “...tell no one that he was the Christ.” This dynamic has been observed before in Matthew (e.g. 8:4, 9:30). Why does Jesus do this? Shouldn’t the disciples be spreading the good news that Jesus is the Messiah?

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- Compare and contrast this passage with Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-22. Why do you think Matthew records more of Jesus’ conversation with Peter?
- “the living God” is an Old Testament phrase which emphasizes God’s powerful presence in human history (e.g. Josh 3:10, Hos 1:10). Why do you think Peter uses it here?

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

Jesus asks his followers a very pointed question: “Who do you say that I am?” What does it mean to say that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God?”

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

Who do people say that Jesus is? Who do you say that Jesus is? Do you pray to grow in your understanding of who Jesus is?

# Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

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## 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?
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PRAY