

Matthew

**BIBLE STUDY
CHAPTERS 16 THROUGH 20**



INTRODUCTION

Shocking and impossible! This was Peter's response to the news that Jesus, the Son of God, would suffer and die. Imagine how he felt when he learned that everyone who wanted to follow Christ must walk that same path. A life of true self-sacrifice and denial was as alien in Peter's world as it is today. Today's messiahs tell us to "save our lives" through self-affirmation, self-acceptance, and self-improvement. As we encounter the revelation of Jesus and his promised Kingdom, what we read in Matthew 16-20 will disrupt these normal priorities we often hold.

Matthew's gospel began by revealing that the man Jesus is the promised God-with-us: Immanuel! And Jesus began his ministry proclaiming "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" But what did it mean to say that God was with us? And what did people expect his kingdom to be? Especially given all the miraculous signs and wonders he was doing! Here in this next section of Matthew, Jesus takes his disciples deeper into the reality of his identity as King and Saviour, and what this means for those who would seek to follow him.

This upside-down life of discipleship – of gaining our life by losing it – is a prominent theme in the latter half of Matthew. Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. Even as opposition to his ministry grows, he invests more time shepherding his disciples. There is less emphasis on public healing, and more on teaching. He wants them to understand who he is, why he came, and what this means for them. He wants them to trust that their identity is grounded in his identity. It is also here that we first encounter the word "church," whose very existence springs into being with the confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). On this truth – and through his suffering, death, and resurrection – this Church will be built. And it is this Church which will be given the privilege of joining in the radical work of life together in the Kingdom of God.

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. As you continue to read through Matthew, it will be very helpful to pay attention to these larger overarching themes and developments. Two good questions to ask yourself as you read are: What point is Matthew trying to make by including this passage? 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, comment from the narrator etc.)
- Old Testament quotations and fulfillments; "this was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet..."

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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 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 signs 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? Do you not yet perceive?
- 9 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.
- 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.

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 Pharisees and Sadducees had substantial theological disagreements with each other. Why are they united here?

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**. What do you notice?

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?

Do you see a progression in the three short episodes (vv.1-4, 5-12, 13-20)?

Why does Jesus tell his disciples not to share what they have learned about 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.

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?

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?"

What is the result of confessing that Jesus is the Christ?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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?

Leaven is everywhere (literally and figuratively)! The teachings which we hold to be true produce consequences in us and our behaviour.

Who do people say that Jesus is?

Who do you say that Jesus is?

Pray to grow in your understanding of who Jesus is.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

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

PRAY

- 21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.
- 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."
- 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."
- 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
- 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?
- 27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.
- 28 Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his 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?
- 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**. What do you notice?

What is the connection between this passage and the previous passage in vv.13-20?

What has Peter failed to understand about Jesus being the Christ?

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?

Jesus diagnoses Peter's failure as thinking about things from man's perspective rather than God's. Who is Jesus and what kind of King is he? What does discipleship mean?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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 has thinking about Jesus and his will for you as a disciple been coloured by your own point of view?

How would your life change if you took Christ's call to discipleship more wholeheartedly?

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

PRAY

- 1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.
- 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.
- 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.
- 4 And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."
- 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."
- 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified.
- 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."
- 8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

- 9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."
- 10 And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?"
- 11 He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things.
- 12 But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands."
- 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

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.

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
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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**. What do you notice?

The “after six days” in v.1 tightly connects this scene to the one that has just preceded this. What came before this scene and how does it shape how we read this passage?

In Matt 3:17 God speaks at Jesus’ baptism, declaring his love for and affirmation of Jesus and the direction of his ministry. What does Matthew 17:5 add to 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.

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

This passage helps us see Jesus from God's point of view! What do we learn?

Why would the Father be reaffirming his love for his Son and the authority of his Son?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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 this passage with its double vision of the glorified yet suffering Son of God help you take up your cross and follow him?

What do you struggle with when it comes to obeying God's command to listen to his Son?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

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

PRAY

- 14 And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him,
and kneeling before him, said,
- 15 “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly.
For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water.
- 16 And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.”
- 17 And Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation,
how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?
Bring him here to me.”
- 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon,
and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.
- 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said,
“Why could we not cast it out?”
- 20 He said to them, “Because of your little faith.
For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed,
you will say to this mountain,
‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move,
and nothing will be impossible for you.” [Note that v.21 is missing due to limited
manuscript support]
- 22 As they were gathering in Galilee,
Jesus said to them,
“The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men,
23 and they will kill him,
and he will be raised on the third day.”
And they were greatly distressed.
- 24 When they came to Capernaum,
the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said,
“Does your teacher not pay the tax?”
- 25 He said, “Yes.”
And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying,
“What do you think, Simon?
From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax?
From their sons or from others?”
- 26 And when he said, “From others,” Jesus said to him,
“Then the sons are free.
- 27 However, not to give offense to them,
go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up,
and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel.
Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
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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 connections do you see between these three episodes in vv.14-21, 22-23, and 24-26?

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**. What do you notice?

What does Jesus' discussion with Peter in vv.25-27 reveal?

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 are we to make of Jesus' frustration with the people of his generation, including his disciples?

How are we rescued from our faithless and twisted attitudes towards God?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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?

Jesus is deeply concerned about the nature of his disciples' faith. If they had grown in their faith in him and his Father, their discipleship would be very different.

What would change in your prayers, habits, and relationships with others, if you trusted Christ even a tiny amount more?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

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

PRAY

- 1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying,
“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”
- 2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said,
3 “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children,
you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
5 Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me,
6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,
it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck
and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
- 7 Woe to the world for temptations to sin!
For it is necessary that temptations come,
but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!
- 8 And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin,
cut it off and throw it away.
It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame
than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.
- 9 And if your eye causes you to sin,
tear it out and throw it away.
It is better for you to enter life with one eye
than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.
- 10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones.
For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father
who is in heaven. [Note that v.11 is missing due to limited manuscript support]
- 12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep,
and one of them has gone astray,
does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains
and go in search of the one that went astray?
- 13 And if he finds it, truly, I say to you,
he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.
- 14 So it is not the will of my Father
who is in heaven
that one of these little ones should perish.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
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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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- Summarize the section in your own words

In v.3 Jesus says “unless you turn and become...” What do these two verbs communicate about entering into the kingdom of heaven?

Why do you think Jesus uses such exaggerated language to speak about the temptation to sin?

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**. What do you notice?

Do you think there are any recent events that provokes the disciple's question in v.1?

Why does Jesus focus on children in answering the disciples' question?

Jesus tells his disciples v.14 that it is "not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." What do you know from the whole Bible story that confirms Jesus' statement 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.

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

What do we learn about Jesus attitude towards:

- our struggles with sin?
- the world and the difficulties it will bring us?
- our responsibility for the spiritual well being of others?
- his concern for his disciples?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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?

Jesus words to us are very searching.

How will you obey his words regarding your own temptations to sin?

What is your responsibility for others spiritually?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

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

PRAY

- 15 “If your brother sins against you,
go and tell him his fault,
between you and him alone.
If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.
- 16 But if he does not listen,
take one or two others along with you,
that every charge may be established
by the evidence of two or three witnesses.
- 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.
And if he refuses to listen even to the church,
let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.
- 18 Truly, I say to you,
whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- 19 Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask,
it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.
- 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name,
there am I among them.”

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 effect does the term “brother” have on what Jesus is teaching here?

How many times does the pronoun “you” or “your” occur 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**. What do you notice?

Jesus' teaching in vv.19-20 is often quoted to apply in one particular circumstance (group prayer) but this is only one dimension of what Jesus is saying. How does the larger context help us understand these verses?

How does Jesus' teaching before and after this passage guard against a misuse of spiritual authority?

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?

Why does Jesus care about our conduct amongst each other?

What does v.20 reveal about spiritual authority to loose and bind? Who is at the root of it all?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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 think about what others have done or need to do, or to defer pastoral care to official leadership, but Jesus is speaking about **OUR** relationships and responsibilities.

“If **your** brother sins against **you**, go and tell him his fault, between **you** and him alone. If he listens to **you**, **you** have gained **your** brother”.

What are the steps we must take when we have been sinned against?

Take time to reflect on whether there is some action you need to take in response to what Jesus has been teaching about your relationship with other believers.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

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

PRAY

- 21 Then Peter came up and said to him,
“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me,
and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”
- 22 Jesus said to him,
“I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.
- 23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king
who wished to settle accounts with his servants.
- 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him
who owed him ten thousand talents.
- 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold,
with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.
- 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him,
‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’
- 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant
released him and forgave him the debt.
- 28 But when that same servant went out,
he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,
and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying,
‘Pay what you owe.’
- 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him,
‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’
- 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.
- 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed,
and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.
- 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him,
‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt
because you pleaded with me.
- 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant,
as I had mercy on you?’
- 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,
until he should pay all his debt.
- 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you,
if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

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

Throughout this chapter, Jesus has often used the terms “child,” “little one,” “brother,” and “Father.” In contrast, in this parable Jesus uses less familial language: “king,” “master,” and “servant.” Any thoughts as to why Jesus might be doing 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**. What do you notice?

How does this passage complement the rest of the teaching in Matt 18 concerning taking responsibility for others spiritually?

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 debt is the king forgiving? How is this being done?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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?

Our debt to God is impossible to pay. How should this change your capacity to forgive others' debt to you?

“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.”
Pray to your Father in Heaven about your relationships with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Are there any outstanding debts that need to be forgiven?

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

PRAY

- 1 Now when Jesus had finished these sayings,
he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.
- 2 And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

- 3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking,
“Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”
- 4 He answered,
“Have you not read that he who created them
from the beginning made them male and female,
5 and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother
and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?
6 So they are no longer two but one flesh.
What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”
- 7 They said to him,
“Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce
and to send her away?”
- 8 He said to them,
“Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives,
but from the beginning it was not so.
9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality,
and marries another, commits adultery.”

- 10 The disciples said to him,
“If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”
- 11 But he said to them,
“Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given.
12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth,
and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men,
and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the
kingdom of heaven.
Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”

- 13 Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray.
The disciples rebuked the people,
14 but Jesus said,
“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them,
for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”
- 15 And he laid his hands on them and went away.

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

What does Jesus mean when he says “not everyone can receive this saying?”

What labels are given to people in this passage? How is this significant?

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**. What do you notice?

Just before Jesus engages with the Pharisees, he takes time to heal the people. Why is this an important and ongoing theme of Jesus' ministry?

Do you think there is a connection between the debate on divorce, the case of eunuchs, and the blessing of the children?

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?

There is a great deal of discussion on human relationships in this passage, and in particular on how our human relationships relate to God and His kingdom. What does this reveal about Jesus' mission and his relationship to us?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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 do you think [or how do you feel?] about Jesus' teaching on marriage and celibacy? Where do you struggle to serve him in this area?

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

PRAY

- 16 And behold, a man came up to him, saying,
“Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”
- 17 And he said to him,
“Why do you ask me about what is good?
There is only one who is good.
If you would enter life, keep the commandments.”
- 18 He said to him, “Which ones?”
And Jesus said,
“You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery,
you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness,
19 honor your father and mother, and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
- 20 The young man said to him,
“All these I have kept. What do I still lack?”
- 21 Jesus said to him,
“If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven;
and come, follow me.”
- 22 When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful,
for he had great possessions.
- 23 And Jesus said to his disciples,
“Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom
of heaven.
- 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle
than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”
- 25 When the disciples heard this,
they were greatly astonished, saying,
“Who then can be saved?”
- 26 But Jesus looked at them and said,
“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
- 27 Then Peter said in reply,
“See, we have left everything and followed you.
What then will we have?”
- 28 Jesus said to them,
“Truly, I say to you, in the new world,
when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne,
you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones,
judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
- 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or
children or lands, for my name’s sake,
will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.
- 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
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- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?
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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:

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 verbs are used in this passage to speak about eternal life/the kingdom of heaven?

What is the attitude of the young man in the passage? Where is his focus?

Why do you think the disciples are surprised in v.25?

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**. What do you notice?

We get a similar story in Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30. Where is Matthew's focus in this story?

Jesus' teaching here is clearly a struggle for the disciples. He spoke on it already in Matt 18:1-6, and will give a parable to further explain himself in 20:1-16. Then he must teach on it again in 20:20-28. Why do you think this is so difficult for them to learn?

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?

Jesus is not dismissing wealth, he is merely putting it in its place; “many that are first will be last, and the last first.” What does this say about Jesus?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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?

Both the young man and the disciples need to be challenged on how they think about their possessions and eternity. How does the eternal Kingdom of Heaven transform your relationship to your wealth?

What needs to change in your life in this area?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

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

PRAY

- 1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house
who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.
- 2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day,
he sent them into his vineyard.
- 3 And going out about the third hour,
he saw others standing idle in the marketplace,
4 and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too,
and whatever is right I will give you.’
- 5 So they went.
Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same.
- 6 And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing.
And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’
- 7 They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’
He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’
- 8 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman,
‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages,
beginning with the last, up to the first.’
- 9 And when those hired about the eleventh hour came,
each of them received a denarius.
- 10 Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more,
but each of them also received a denarius.
- 11 And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying,
12 ‘These last worked only one hour,
and you have made them equal to us
who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’
- 13 But he replied to one of them,
‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong.
Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’
- 14 Take what belongs to you and go.
I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.
- 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?
Or do you begrudge my generosity?’
- 16 So the last will be first, and the first last.”

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

PRAY

Look carefully at

The **words and phrases**

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
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- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
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Share something you noticed.

The **whole passage**

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- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
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NOTE:

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

Why do you think the master of the house keeps hiring more workers throughout the day?

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**. What do you notice?

What is Jesus saying about those who object to the conduct of the master of the house?

Paying attention to the context which precedes this parable, what is Jesus driving at?

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?

God's generosity explodes the systems which we are so used to living our lives by. What is Jesus saying about the relationship he has with his disciples in this parable?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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?

Does this parable seem fair to you? Why or why not?

When do you feel like God has not rewarded you justly?

How does the Gospel up-end this thinking and enable you to serve Christ and others with joy?

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

PRAY

- 17 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem,
he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,
- 18 “See, we are going up to Jerusalem.
And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes,
and they will condemn him to death
- 19 and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified,
and he will be raised on the third day.”
- 20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons,
and kneeling before him she asked him for something.
- 21 And he said to her, “What do you want?”
She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit,
one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”
- 22 Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking.
Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?”
They said to him, “We are able.”
- 23 He said to them, “You will drink my cup,
but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant,
but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”
- 24 And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.
- 25 But Jesus called them to him and said,
“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,
and their great ones exercise authority over them.
- 26 It shall not be so among you.
But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,
- 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,
28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- 29 And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.
- 30 And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside,
and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out,
“Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”
- 31 The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent,
but they cried out all the more, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”
- 32 And stopping, Jesus called them and said,
“What do you want me to do for you?”
- 33 They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.”
- 34 And Jesus in pity touched their eyes,
and immediately they recovered their sight and followed 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

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

How many words or titles associated with authority can you find in this passage?

What is so crucial about the fact that this passage ends with Jesus being called the Son of David? (“Son of David” is an important title in Matthew. See Matt 1:1, 9:27, 12:23, and 15:22 for some clear examples. What are the expectations of the Son of David?)

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**. What do you notice?

Do you think it is significant that Matthew splits the parable in 20:1-16 and the teaching in 20:20-28 with a prophecy of his death and resurrection?

What is the cup that Jesus must drink?

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?

Where does Jesus' authority come from and what does he do with it?

What is so remarkable about what Jesus says in v.28?

Write your responses to these questions as a prayer...

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?

Power dynamics are an inevitable part of life, and require great wisdom to wield well. How does the example of Christ comfort and confront you as you think about your relationship to power?

Together in prayer, seek God's help in living out Jesus' teaching within our church, small groups, families and workplaces.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

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

PRAY

STUDY NOTES

MATTHEW 16:1-20

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

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.
- Immediately after this though, Peter and the disciples will also demonstrate they still have very little understanding of what it means that Jesus is the Christ.

In Matthew:

- v.4 “An evil and adulterous generation,” or some variation of this occurs in Matt 11:16, 12:39-45, and 17:17.
- v.4 “the sign of Jonah.” Jesus referred to the sign of Jonah in Matt 12:29 as well, with a few differences.
- v.6 “beware of the leaven...” Jesus also spoke about leaven in Matt 13:33.
- v.8 “O you of little faith” also appears in Matt 6:30, 8:26, and 14:31.
- v.16 “revealed...by my Father” is also found in Jesus’ prayer in Matt 11:25, when he thanks the Father that “little children” have been able to receive his revelation.
- v.20 “...tell no one that he was the Christ.” This dynamic has been observed before in Matthew (e.g. 8:4, 9:30).

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- “We wish to see a sign from you.” See Paul’s comments in 1 Corinthians 1:22
- “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).
- “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.”
- “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, who foretold the destruction of the Temple. Maybe some people are thinking about Jeremiah 31:31.

MATTHEW 16:21-28

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

In v.21 the verb “must” coordinates with several others:

He must go to Jerusalem

...and [must] suffer many things

...and [must] be killed

...and [must] be raised on the third day

What is Jesus talking about in v.27? Several suggestions have been made:

1. The transfiguration
2. The crucifixion and resurrection
3. The ascension
4. Christ's return

It is perhaps best to think of the whole sequence of salvation events – Christ's death, resurrection and ascension – as fulfilling this promise he makes to his disciples.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate Context:

- Peter just had a profound moment of insight in vv.13-20 on Jesus' identity, and three of the disciples will witness the Transfiguration immediately after this teaching.
- v.21 "From that time" indicates that we have begun a new phase in Jesus' ministry. For another example of this phrase see Matt:4:17.
- Jesus' main focus now is on the instruction of his disciples, impressing on them the nature of his kingship and the pathway for those who follow him.
- Throughout this large section Jesus brings together the astounding truth that he is the Son of Man in both his terrible suffering and in his coming exalted glory.

In Matthew:

- v.21 "he began to show his disciples..." Jesus has spoken about his death before, but referred to it somewhat cryptically as the "sign of Jonah" e.g. Matt 12:38-40.
- vv.24-26 "...let him deny himself..." Jesus has already begun to call his disciples to radical, sacrificial discipleship; cf. the Sermon on the Mount or Matt 10:26-42. Here he starts to connect this path with his own death and resurrection.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- v.21 "...he must go to Jerusalem..." Each part of what Christ speaks about here has been planned by God and promised throughout the Old Testament. Although neither Jesus nor Matthew refer to any particular prophecies, Isaiah 52-53 and Zechariah 12-14 are some good starting points.
- v.27 "For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father." See Daniel 7:13-14.

MATTHEW 17:1-13

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

In v.2, the word "transfigured" is linked to the Greek word "metamorphosis," which we often use to describe stages of development in insects. The disciples are not, however, seeing Jesus becoming something else; they are being shown a new aspect of who he truly is.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In Matthew:

- v.1 "Jesus took with him..." Because Jesus brings Peter, James and John with him for this special occasion they are sometimes called his "inner circle." See Matthew 26:36 for another example of this.
- v.8 "rise and have no fear" is similar to a command Jesus has given before in Matt 14:27, when the disciples behold some of Jesus' glory.
- v.10-13 "first Elijah must come." See Matt 3:4 and 11:10-14 regarding John the Baptist being the new Elijah.

Elsewhere in Scripture

- This passage is full of allusions that call to mind people, events, and promises from the Old Testament. See Exod 24:15-18 and 34:29-35, Deut 18:15-19, Psa 2:7, Isa 42:1 and Mal 4:1-5.
- See 2 Peter 1:16-21 for an interesting memory from Peter on the Transfiguration. He, along with John and James, became prominent leaders in the early church and provided unique witness about these events.

MATTHEW 17:14-27

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Jesus makes two comments about “this generation.” “Faithless” indicates they have the wrong attitude towards God and a lack of trust in Him. “Twisted” is a Hebrew image for a perverse distortion in thinking and spiritual attitude, like a plant growing in the wrong direction.

The temple tax (vv.24-27) was paid annually by most adult Jewish males for the upkeep of the temple. However, its payment was controversial amongst Jewish leadership. The Sadducees disapproved of its payment, while others like the Pharisees saw it as a patriotic duty.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- “About to be delivered into the hands of men.” Here in v.22 Jesus speaks about his death again (cf. Matt 16:21-28), but this time it seems like he might be hinting at his betrayal by Judas.

In Matthew:

- This is the last time Matthew records Jesus casting out a demon, which has been a prominent feature of his ministry.
- v.17 “O faithless and twisted generation”; see also Matt 11:16 and 12:39-42.
- v.20 “because of your little faith” is also a topic of conversation in Matt 6:30 and 14:30.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- To understand how significant and serious Jesus’ warning is in v.17, read the Song of Moses in Deut 32 (esp. vv.1-5). Just before Moses’ dies he recounts how merciful and patient God has been with Israel, urging them to take his words to heart.

MATTHEW 18:1-14

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

- In Jesus’ day, children had little or no status in society.
- Millstones in Jesus’ time could weigh as much as 3,300 lbs.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Matt 18:1-35 is the fourth major section of Jesus’s teaching in Matthew. This section focuses on Jesus’ will for relationships between his disciples.

In Matthew:

- In vv.8-9 Jesus uses strong language to emphasize the drastic sacrifices that must be made to avoid sin. This is a technique he has used before, e.g., Matt 5:27-30.
- Jesus has spoken of “little ones” before in Matt 10:42 and 11:25.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- The theme of God as shepherd is a familiar and beloved one in the Old Testament (Psa 23, 95, Jer 23), but Ezekiel 34:11-24 is probably what Jesus is thinking about as he gives this parable.
-

MATTHEW 18:15-20

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Binding and loosing (v.18) is rabbinic language from Jesus' period. "To bind" is to forbid, and "to loose" is to permit. Jesus is speaking about the spiritual responsibility and authority he gives to his church that will impact the eternal future of others! They will not so much make decisions on what is permitted and forbidden, but will pass on what God has forbidden and permitted. That is, the church's task will be to carry on the ministry of Christ by calling people to repentance for sin and bringing the gospel of forgiveness through Christ.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- This passage continues Jesus' instructions on how we are to live together as Christians, which began at the start of Matt 18.
- This discussion will continue into next week's passage, when Peter asks Jesus a question about forgiveness.

In Matthew

- The language of "binding" and "loosing" has been used already in Matt 16:19, where the connection between the Church's authority and Jesus' identity is made very strongly.
- v.17 "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." This is an interesting statement from Jesus, since we know that he associated with these sorts of people (e.g. the centurion in Matt 8:5-13, the Canaanite woman in 15:21-28, or Matthew the tax collector in 9:9-13).

Elsewhere in scripture:

- In Genesis 4, Cain asks God "Am I my brother's keeper?", expecting the answer to be "no."
- Although the teaching is not identical to what Jesus says here in Matthew, Lev 19:17 expresses a similar brotherly ethic.
- The presence of multiple witnesses, and a proportional escalation of conflict resolution (vv.16-17) had already been stipulated by Deut 19:15-21.

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?

MATTHEW 18:21-35

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Jewish rabbis discussed the question of how many times forgiveness should be given and recommended three times. Peter's seven times is therefore generous, and Jesus' answer does away with all limits.

The first servant owes ten thousand talents. One talent was 20 years' wages for a labourer. 20 x 10.000 is an impossible amount of debt to repay. Two hundred thousand years of labour!

The second servant owed one hundred denarii. One denarius was one day's wages for a labourer. So the servant owed his fellow servant the equivalent of a 100 days of labour.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus' previous teaching was on how to respond to being sinned against, particularly when the offender did not repent. This block of teaching here in vv.21-35 expands on this issue.
- Matt 19 marks the beginning of a new section ("now when Jesus had finished these sayings), but there are still some thematic connections; e.g. 18:3 and 19:14

In Matthew:

- The proper framework for understanding our debt is also given by the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6:12-15.

Elsewhere in scripture:

- The parable Jesus tells here is functionally quite similar to what Nathan will do in 2 Sam 12:1-7, the listener should be outraged at the injustice.
- Sin is also spoken of as debt in Romans 3:23.

MATTHEW 19:1-15

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

vv.4, 8 "From the beginning"; in rabbinic discussions there was an interpretive principle that more original commandments were weightier, or more significant, than those which came later.

Jesus is being drawn into what was an ongoing discussion in his day about the correct grounds for divorce. One major rabbinic school favoured divorce on any grounds, while the other major school thought that only adultery was grounds for divorce. Both were debating what was meant in Deut 24:1 by finding an "indecent" in the wife.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate Context:

- We've just entered into a new section of Matthew, which will lead up into the Passion narrative. Geographically, Jesus has moved out of his home region of Galilee, into Judea.

In Matthew:

- v.1 “when Jesus finished these saying,” or a variation of it, occurs five times in Matthew: 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1 and 26:1. There is debate about whether or not Matthew intentionally did this in order to pattern after the Five Books of Moses.
- v.3 “is it lawful?” is a question which the religious leaders have used before to engage with Jesus cf. Matt 12:2-12.
- Jesus has taught before on sexual ethics and marriage (Matt 5:27-32), now the discussion is being broadened.
- v.14 “to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” was just taught in Matt 18:1-6.

Elsewhere in scripture:

- v.5 “the two shall become one flesh” is a quotation from the Greek translation of Genesis 2:24.
- v. 6 “what God has joined let no man separate” says something very profound about sexual ethics, which Paul will also draw upon in 1 Corinthians 6:16.
- v.7 “a certificate of divorce” refers to Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

MATTHEW 19:16-30

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The Greek word for “perfect” in v.21 implies completion. Jesus is saying “if you want to become that which God made you to be, go, sell what you possess...”

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- The previous section of Matthew focused heavily on human relationships, which is also the focus of the commandments Jesus reminds the young man of.
- Just a few verses ago, the disciples tried to send the little ones away. Here, they are surprised at Jesus’ reaction to a “great one,” who appears to have his life together.
- The next section of Matthew is a parable which Jesus will use to explain what he is teaching the disciples here in vv.23-30.
- Jesus finishes this passage by speaking about his “glorious throne,” which he will follow with a teaching about his flogging and crucifixion in 20:17-19.

In Matthew:

- v.16 “life” and “eternal life” are uncommon phrases in Matthew (although much more common in John). Usually Jesus speaks about the “kingdom of heaven,” as he does here in vv.23-24.
- v.29 Suffering “for my name’s sake” was also a theme of Jesus’ teaching to the disciples in Matt 10:22 and 16:24-27

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- Blessing in the Old Testament was often very practical: wealth, children, property, etc. This is probably why the disciples are so impressed with the rich young ruler: he looks successful.

MATTHEW 20:1-16

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

A denarius was a standard living wage for labourers.

The day began at 6:00 am, so “the third hour” would be 9:00 am and so forth.

In v.4 the master of the house says that he will pay “whatever is right.” Another translation could be “whatever is fair” or “whatever is just.”

There is an interesting play on words near the end of the parable. More literally, we could translate “do you begrudge my generosity?” as “has your eye become evil because I am good?”

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- v. 16 “So the last will be first, and the first last.” The conclusion of this parable immediately draws us back into Jesus’ previous teaching in 19:16-30. It would be helpful to quickly review your notes from last week.
- In the next passage, the disciples will still be struggling with the issue of wealth, power, rewards, and the “upside-down” economy of the kingdom of heaven.

In Matthew:

- v.1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like”: the main block of parables in Matthew came in chapter 13, which all dealt with the kingdom of heaven.
- v.1 “Labourers for his vineyard”: Jesus has not used this particular image before, but it will come up again in two parables in Matt 21:28-46.
- v.15 “Do you begrudge my generosity?” See the comment above on an alternative translation. In the Greek, this evil eye is the exact same phrase we find in Matt 6:23.

MATTHEW 20:17-34

Q1 // WHAT DOES IT SAY?

“Scribes” were the lawyers of Jesus’ time. It is the religious and legal authorities of the day who will condemn him to death.

Q2 // WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Immediate context:

- Jesus has been teaching for some time now on authority and power, beginning at Matt 18:1-4.
- vv.26-27 are really an expansion of Matt 19:30 and 20:16.
- Immediately after this episode we will witness the Triumphal Entry, as Jesus comes into his Temple with authority.

In Matthew:

- v.20 “the sons of Zebedee” were James and John, according to Matt 10:2, where the Twelve are first listed.

Elsewhere in Scripture:

- v.22 “are you able to drink the cup?” Cups are often a sign of blessing in the OT, but here clearly not, cf. Isa 51:17-23.
- v.26 “servant” or “slave” is a title given to many of the Christians in the early Church, e.g., 1 Corinthians 3:5, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:7.
- v.28 “even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” is a stark statement of Jesus’ mission, also drawn upon by Paul in Philippians 2:6-8.
- ...”as a ransom for many” is rare and very specific phrase that speaks about a core theme of Jesus’ identity and ministry we haven’t encountered yet in Matthew. The exact same verse can be found at Mark 10:45. The word “ransom” refers to a payment offered in exchange for the release of another person. The “for” here is “in the place of.” The atoning nature of Jesus’ sacrifice is a central strand in the rest of the New Testament thinking on Christ’s death, cf. Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Timothy 2:6, 2 Peter 2:1, or 1 John 3:16-18.

