

BOOK OF MATTHEW

KINGDOM ENCOUNTERS

Term 1 Study Booklet

About These Studies

Our Term 1 Bible Study series based on Matthew 8-13 has nine pre-written studies. These studies are generally designed to be completed by your group after you have heard the passage preached on a Sunday. Each study consists of roughly seven to ten open-ended questions for your group to discuss.

It may help to think about these questions as 'discussion starters' rather than a set of questions to answer one after another. You should allow about 30 to 40 minutes for this discussion. The studies do not aim to guide your group in detailed exegesis of each passage. Rather, they aim to:

- Revisit the exegesis that was presented in the Sunday sermon
- Help your group address remaining questions that you have about the passage
- Provide your group with ample opportunity to consider possible passage applications



This term we have again included some Head/Heart/Hand icons throughout the studies to help signal where a question is moving into application. The HEAD symbol indicates that the question is aimed at sharpening the way we THINK. The HEART symbol indicates a question more closely tied to our DESIRES/EMOTIONS/AFFECTIONS. The HAND symbol indicates that we are getting more PRACTICAL or moving toward TAKING ACTION.

It is recommended that each group member listens to the relevant sermons before the group meeting. Members may also wish to listen to the corresponding episode of Sermon Seasonings podcast (on the weeks when these are available).

Special thanks to Ross Hansen, Leigh Cartwright and Seb Lane who were involved in writing draft studies for this term. The studies have also been reviewed and given a final edit by Seb. The study booklet has been designed by Justine Kim. The Bible verses throughout this study booklet are generally quoted from New International Version (NIV), Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica Inc.

Special Request from our Mission Team - '2 for 2'

This term in Growth Group we want to continue encouraging group leaders and members to be thinking intentionally about those friends and family you have that do not yet know Jesus. We believe that only God can change the hearts of those who are dead in their sins. So, we must bring them before God in prayer.

If you are a leader it would be fantastic if you could continue to encourage each member of your group to choose two people in their life that they would particularly like to be praying for. Then share these names across the group and pray for them. It would be fantastic to spend some time early in the term praying together as a group for each member's 2 chosen people and then determine how you will keep praying together for these people ongoingly.

For example, our group (Braydon & Merryn's GG) will split in two's to pray for these people every second week as part of our normal group's time in prayer. This is just one way to keep these people in our prayers. Our Explore course will also be running again in Term 1 and Term 3 this year and could be an awesome goal to bring along the friend you have been praying for!

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Introduction

Author and Date

The author's identity of the First Gospel is not clearly stated in the text, which makes the book technically anonymous. However, the earliest Christian traditions have been unanimous in attributing the first book in our New Testament to Matthew the former tax collector who was called by Jesus to become one of his twelve disciples (Matthew 9:9; 10:3). The exact date of writing for Matthew's Gospel is unknown, although there is good evidence to suggest a publishing date before AD 70 and likely in the sixties.¹

Recipients

We aren't told exactly who the intended first recipients for Matthew's Gospel were. However, there are many striking Jewish-emphases throughout the book's crafting, for example, the opening emphasis on Jesus' genealogy which traces his messianic lineage back to King David and Abraham and the many direct and indirect Old Testament quotations and allusions throughout the book. John Noland suggests, 'Matthew writes for Jewish Christians who are very conscious of their Jewish identity.'²

Purpose and Main Theme

In their book *An Introduction to the New Testament* Don Carson and Douglas Moo point out that Matthew doesn't include any direct statement about his purpose in writing. However, they draw attention to some widely recognised themes throughout the book including, '(1) that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Son of Man, Immanuel, the one to whom the Old Testament points; (2) that many Jews, especially Jewish leaders, sinfully failed to recognize Jesus during his ministry (and, by implication, are in great danger if they continue in that stance after the resurrection); (3) that the promised eschatological kingdom has already dawned, inaugurated by the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus; (4) that this messianic reign is continuing in the world as believers, both Jews and Gentiles, submit to Jesus' authority, overcome temptation, endure persecution, wholeheartedly embrace Jesus' teaching, and thus demonstrate that they constitute the true locus of the people of God and the true witness to the world of the "gospel of the kingdom"; and (5) that this messianic reign is not only the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes but the foretaste of the consummated kingdom that will dawn when Jesus the Messiah personally returns.'³

¹ Carson, D.A. and Moo, Douglas J. 2nd Ed. *New Testament Introduction* (Zondervan, 2005), 152-156. (Accordance). See similarly, France, R.T. *The Gospel of Matthew* (Eerdmans, 2008), 15-19.

² Noland, J. *The Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 18.

³ Carson, D.A. and Moo, Douglas J. 2nd Ed. *New Testament Introduction* (Zondervan, 2005), 157-158. (Accordance)

Structure

There are various suggestions by commentators about proposed outlines for how best to break-up the material in Matthew's Gospel without clear consensus. More recent scholarly discussions have focused on the way Matthew alternates large blocks of narrative and discourse (spoken teaching) material. Each of these discourse blocks are concluded with a similar Greek phrase (7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1 and 26:1), which serves as a literary link and helps to join the book together as a whole. ⁴

Matthew's Gospel				
Genealogy of Jesus and Infancy - Matthew 1:1-2:23				
<i>[1st Narrative / Teaching Block]</i>	<i>[2nd Narrative / Teaching Block]</i>	<i>[3rd Narrative / Teaching Block]</i>	<i>[4th Narrative / Teaching Block]</i>	<i>[5th Narrative / Teaching Block]</i>
Transition Verse Matthew 7:28	Transition Verse Matthew 11:1	Transition Verse Matthew 13:53	Transition Verse Matthew 19:1	Transition Verse Matthew 26:1
²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,	¹¹ when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.	⁵³ And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there,	¹⁹ Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan	¹ When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, Matthew 26-27 - The Plot, the Supper, the Arrest, Crucifixion, Death and Burial
Resurrection and Commissioning - Matthew 28:1-20				

⁴ France, R.T. *The Gospel of Matthew* (Eerdmans, 2008), 2-3. (Accordance)

Recommended Resources

Highly Accessible / Non - Technical

Sermon Seasonings



Apple iTunes, Spotify or, online via:
<https://anchor.fm/sermonseasonings/>

Matthew Intro Night

No Intro Night in 2025 with a shorter section of Matthew's Gospel.

(2024) Sermon on the Mount - Peter Orr -
Mon 22 Jan 2024 @ Christ Church
Livestream Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKQ5ACu649Q>

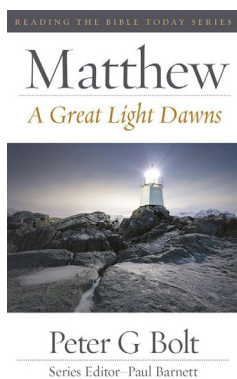
Big Picture Overview: Matthew 1-13 by the Bible Project



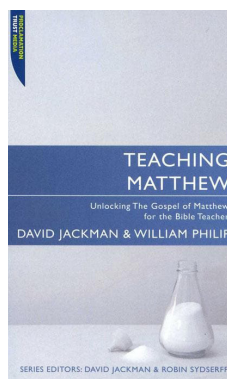
Matthew 1-13: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/matthew-1-13/>

Low/Mid-Range Accessible / Semi-Technical

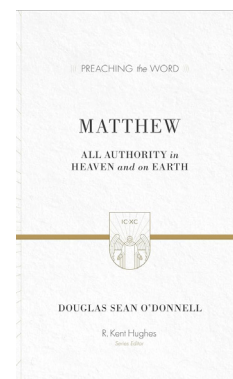
These three resources would be helpful for anyone in teaching roles at church. The first two are especially accessible for those who lead Bible Studies.



Matthew - A Great Light Dawns (RTBT)
by Peter G Bolt



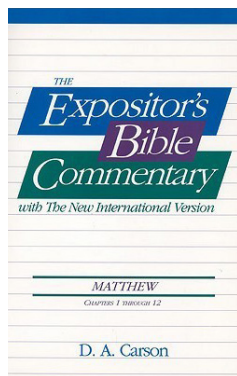
Teaching Matthew
by David Jackman & William Philip



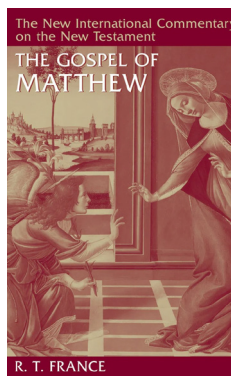
Matthew - All Authority In Heaven and on Earth
by Sean Douglas O'Donnell

Highly Technical Commentaries

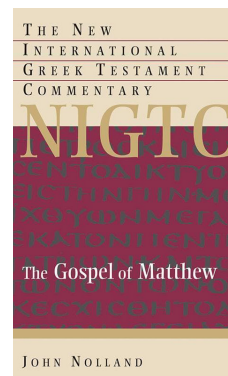
These are three of the leading commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew. All of them provide highly technical commentary, incorporating insights from the Greek text & engaging with wide scholarship.



**Matthew 1-12
(Expositor's Bible
Comm.)**
by D.A. Carson



**The Gospel of Matthew
(NICNT)**
by R.T. France



**The Gospel of Matthew
(NIGTC)**
by John Nolland

Study One | The Kingdom Authority

Matthew 8:1–9:8

Study Big Idea

Jesus' divine identity, authority and power show us the importance of following Him.

Discussion Question

What do you find amazing about Jesus?

“Matthew’s second narrative block (chs 8–10) clearly belongs in sequence with the Sermon on the Mount. Now that the ‘pause’ created by the Sermon on the Mount is over (Matthew 5–7), the action resumes with Jesus engaging in a series of healings (chs 8–9), before the next discourse, known as the ‘mission discourse’ (ch 10), arrives. Matthew has already shown how Jesus’ teaching amassed crowds, which he then healed, and how this, in turn, caused more crowds to gather, needing more teaching (4:23–5:1). This close link between teaching/healing/teaching continues into chapter 8. As we enter the chapter, great crowds were already following him as he came down from the mountain (8:1). For the reader, this continuity with the Sermon on the Mount suggests that the lessons learned on the mountain should now be taken with us as we enter the next narrative section. Jesus had called upon the crowds of Israel to become the last-days community of Zion, the true remnant of Israel, which would enable them to be the light to the nations. Matthew’s Gentile readers were already overhearing hints that God’s salvation might spill over in their direction. As we enter the next segment of Matthew’s story, it is right to be asking, how would Israel respond to Jesus’ call? And if they responded properly, how would this help the dawning light to shine more clearly for those who live in the darkness and under the shadow of death?”

Bolt, P.G. *Matthew: A Great Light Dawns* (Aquila Press, 2014), 17. (Kindle Edition).

Brief Recap

What did the crowds find amazing about Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount? Why might Jesus now have large crowds following him?

Read Matthew 8:1-17

1. a) Who are the three different people healed in this section?

b) What do you notice is similar / different between each encounter with Jesus?

2. How does the Centurion model what it looks like to trust and approach Jesus?

3. Consider the nature of the healings, and who is healed (see, Leviticus 5:2-3; 13:45-46, Isaiah 6:5, Acts 10:28, Psalm 103:2-3 if needed). What does this teach us about Jesus' ministry?

Read Matthew 8:18-22



4. a) How does Jesus respond to these two requests to follow him? Why does he respond this way?

b) What is one area of your life where you are wanting to grow more whole-hearted in your following of Jesus this year?

Read Matthew 8:23-9:8

5. Fill out the table in pairs/triplets.


	8:23-27	8:28-34	9:1-8
What is the problem Jesus comes across?			
How does Jesus demonstrate his kingdom authority?			
What responses do people give to Jesus?			
What is further revealed about Jesus' identity here?			

Share-back with the rest of your Growth Group.

6. a) Why do the disciples not realise who Jesus really is?

b) Why do you think the demons seem to know exactly who Jesus is? (Matt 8:29)

7. What does Jesus' healing of the paralytic man in 9:1-8 reveal about the priority of why Jesus came?

 8. How can trusting in Jesus' supreme kingdom authority help to calm our fears/anxieties?

9. What fills your own heart with awe towards Jesus and praise towards God from these various mini-episodes? (Matt 9:8)

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Two | Called to Follow

Matthew 9:9-34

Study Big Idea

Jesus came as Lord and Christ not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Discussion Question

Who is a writer, journalist, politician, celebrity or influencer that you follow in some way?

'Matthew was a tax collector, which may mean little to us. We may think of him as working for the Roman Empire's equivalent of the IRS, that he had a kind of respectable but slightly reviled occupation. But that certainly was not the case. To most first-century Jews, tax collectors "were easily the most hated men in Hebrew society." They were viewed as religious and political traitors, trained extortionists, and thugs among the highest criminal element. The Mishnah and the Talmud, two ancient rabbinical documents, "register scathing judgments of tax collectors, lumping them together with thieves and murderers."

So Matthew was a tax collector, officially excommunicated from the synagogue and unofficially from respectable society. But don't feel sorry for him, for he freely chose this seedy occupation, likely compelled (as I said earlier) by greed. Like today's casino boss, perhaps he accepted his somewhat socially and morally exiled (but government-approved) occupation because the paycheck was nice.

As Matthew is retelling his own story, he wants us to know that the type of person he was—a tax collector—is the type of person Jesus approached and called. The story we have here is not so much about how Matthew was converted, but who was converted. This casino boss, mobster, thug got saved!

O'Donnell, Douglas S. *Matthew: All Authority on Heaven and on Earth*
Preaching the Word Commentary, (Crossway, 2013), 243-44. (Accordance)

Brief Recap

What has Jesus been teaching his disciples through his words and works in our series so far?

Read Matthew 9:9-13

1. What stands out to you about the calling of Matthew in verse 9? (see also, Matt 8:18-22)

2. a) What do we learn about Jesus' mission in verses 10-13? (see also, 1 Timothy 1:15)



b) How might Jesus' words inform our own personal evangelism and prayers?

Read Matthew 9:14-17



3. How does Jesus answer his disciples' question in verse 14? What point is he making about himself and the times? (see also, John 3:27-30, Isaiah 54:5-6, 62:4-5, Hosea 2:16-20)

4. Throughout this section (Matt. 9:10-11, 14, 34) and the gospel generally, how have the Pharisees been misunderstanding:
 - a) Who Jesus is and how to respond rightly to him? (see also, Matt 11:18-19; 22:1-10)


 - b) True obedience to God (see also, Isaiah 58:3-7, Matthew 9:13; Matt 23:23-26,)

5. What does Jesus' clothing/wineskin illustration in verses 16-17 teach us about the nature of his ministry and kingdom? (see also, Matthew 5:17-20)

Read Matthew 9:18-34

6. Fill out the table in pairs/triplets.
Share-back with the rest of your Growth Group.

	Matthew 9:18-26	Matthew 9:27-34
Who encounters Jesus in this section?		
How is faith illustrated or exercised in each encounter?		
What different responses do people give to Jesus?		

-  7. What have you found both joyful and challenging in responding to Jesus' call to 'follow me' in your own life so far?

- 8. What comfort and encouragement can we draw from Jesus' compassion and authority as we have seen it throughout Matthew 9:9-34? (see also, Revelation 21:1-4)

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Three | Lord of the Harvest

Matthew 9:35–10:42

Study Big Idea

Jesus tells his disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest and he sends them out on mission.

Discussion Question

Share a memorable time of being sent out on mission yourself or else sending out others.

'The second great teaching section of Matthew's Gospel is the instruction Jesus gives to his disciples, as they are about to be sent out on mission. Having told them that there is a great harvest to be reaped and that they are to pray for the sending out of labourers, Jesus calls the twelve disciples together and commissions them to begin to answer their own petitions. In many ways, it is a very exciting stage in the Gospel. He delegates to these comparatively raw recruits something of his own authority over disease and evil spirits. Expansion is on the agenda. The disciples are now to experience themselves being the channels by which God will do mighty works such as they have seen the Master do. The air is alive with the opportunity of sharing the good news of the kingdom with a much wider audience. You can almost feel the adrenalin flowing. But the strange thing is that the focus of the teaching of the chapter is on the opposition which the disciples will face:

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves (10:16).'

Jackman, D. & Philip, W. *Teaching Matthew*
(Christian Focus Publications Ltd, 2021), 75.

Brief Recap

What are a few of the miracles Jesus has just done prior to this next section?

Read Matthew 9:35-10:4

1. a) What did Jesus' ministry involve according to verse 35?

b) How does he respond to the crowds around him in verse 36? What is significant about how Jesus describes them here? (See also, Ezekiel 34:1-16, 23-24)

2. How does Jesus instruct and involve his disciples in his ministry to Israel at this time? What sense of time and urgency is apparent?



3. Why should prayer, mission and partnership be important to us too who live on the other side of Jesus' death and resurrection? (See also, Matt 28:18-20, 2 Cor 5:16-6:2, Col 4:2-3)


Read Matthew 10:5-10:23


4. What limitations does Jesus put in place for the scope of this mission journey at this time? What else stands out to you about Jesus' instructions in these verses?
5. What are some of the ways Jesus indicates to his disciples that their mission won't be an easy one?
6. a) What are some ways Jesus anticipates division because of his disciples' allegiance to him?

b) Where have you also seen evidence of this in your own life, family or experience?

Read Matthew 10:24-42

7. How does Jesus instruct his disciples to respond to the opposition they encounter? What encouragements does he also give them?

 8. How might keeping God's final judgement in mind help to sharpen our own prayers, perspective and priorities?

 9. What are some ways we can partner with, encourage, pray and support our own group's global link missionary this year?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Four | Jesus, John and Judgement

Matthew 11:1-24

Study Big Idea

Jesus' deeds prove that he is God's promised Messiah who John prepared the way for.

Discussion Question

When did you have mismatched expectations about something or someone?

'When God's Word Collides with the World – Matthew 11-12


We need always to keep the big picture in mind. Fulfilment and confrontation run hand in hand. Whenever Jesus claims to be the king whose sovereign rule is breaking into the old order of Israel, he confronts the ingrained prejudices of tradition. Already we have heard the ominous note of rejection being sounded in the Gospel. That process gathers pace and intensifies in chapters 11 and 12. As Jesus teaches and preaches (instructs and proclaims) in the towns of Galilee (11:1) we discover developing opposition from the religious hierarchy, developing uncertainty among the people, but a developing understanding in the disciples.'

Jackman, D. & Philip, W. *Teaching Matthew*
(Christian Focus Publications Ltd, 2021), 99-100.

Brief Recap

What has Jesus just been saying to his disciples at the end of chapter 10?

Read Matthew 11:1-6

1. Where are Jesus and John the Baptist at the start of the chapter? What question does John send his disciples to ask Jesus? (See also, Matthew 3:11-12)
2. How does Jesus respond to John's question? Why do you think he replies in this way? (See also, Isaiah 35:4-6, and Isa. 61:1-2)
-  3. What is your favourite song, hymn or lyric that helps remind you of Jesus' character and power?


Read Matthew 11:7-19

4. What does Jesus draw attention to about John and his ministry when he speaks to the crowd in verses 7-10? (See also, Matthew 3:1-10)

5. a) How does Jesus regard John and his ministry in verses 11-15?


b) Read Malachi 3:1-5 and 4:1-5. What else might John and his disciples have been expecting from the Messiah and his arrival?

6. What did Jesus think about the response of 'this generation' to John and himself according to verses 16-19?

-  7. What reflections (if any) do you have about how different generations of people living in Sydney respond to Jesus and his message of coming judgement today?

Read Matthew 11:20-24

8. Why does Jesus rebuke these towns? How have they failed to meet Jesus' expectations?

-  9. Read Matthew 28:16-20 and 2 Peter 3:8-10. Who can we pray for in light of the times?

Pray in Response

Study Five | Lord of the Sabbath

Matthew 11:25–12:21

Study Big Idea

Jesus invites us to come to him to find true rest because he is the Lord of the Sabbath

Discussion Question

What is your idea of a perfect holiday or break?

‘Matthew goes on to tell his readers of a little prayer Jesus offered, followed by some words to his disciples. The section is in three parts. In the first Jesus expresses his thankfulness that the way he teaches is not something that is open only to the learned and intelligent; even little children may apprehend it. In the second he reflects on the relation between the Father and the Son, and then in the third he invites the world’s downtrodden ones to find rest and peace in him.’


Morris, L. *The Gospel According to Matthew*
(William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 313.
(Accordance)

Brief Recap

What have been some of the themes in chapter 11 so far?


Read Matthew 11:25-30

1. What stands out to you most in these verses?
2. How are the Father and the Son both at work in the plan of salvation?
3. What kind of rest is Jesus offering? How does it differ from alternative ideas about rest?

-  4. What are some ways you prioritize 'learning' from Jesus in your own discipleship? What comfort can we draw from his invitation, character and promise in verses 28-29?

Read Matthew 12:1-21

5. How do the Pharisees feature throughout this passage? What signs of their increasing hostility toward Jesus do you notice?

-  6. How does Jesus reply to the Pharisees' charge in verse 2? What is Jesus claiming about himself in verses 1-8? (See also, 1 Samuel 21:1-6, Numbers 28:9-10)

'And alongside these enormous claims about himself, Jesus sent them back to Hosea 6:6 again (v 7). They still hadn't learned its lessons. If they had learned what it meant, they 'would not have condemned the guiltless'. Just like David suffered under those who sought to shed his innocent blood by killing him without a cause (1 Samuel 19:5), so now Jesus' opponents had already condemned an innocent man. Because of his disciples' action, they had condemned Jesus, but—like King David, like the priests—he was innocent. He was, after all, 'the Lord of the Sabbath' (v 8). As the one who would be shown to be the Son of Man, he was the one who brought the 'rest of God' (compare 11:28), the great Sabbath expected at the end of time; the future rest that each weekly Sabbath day pointed towards. If the Sabbath day was the shadow, the kingdom of heaven was the substance, and Jesus would be the King in that kingdom.

If they had learned about mercy, they would have learned about God, and they wouldn't have condemned this innocent man in front of them. Instead, they would be begging him for the mercy that he had come to dispense to Israel—and, in fact, had already begun dispensing to the 'sick', the 'weak', the 'sinners'. The legalist condemns lawbreakers. The moralist condemns the immoral. But the one who learns about mercy meets the Messiah and cries, like the blind men, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Or, as Jesus put it previously, 'blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy' (5:7).'

Bolt, P.G. *Matthew: A Great Light Dawns* (Aquila Press, 2014), 120-121. (Kindle Edition)

7. Why does Jesus withdraw in verse 15? What does he do next? How do we understand Jesus' instruction and ministry as fulfilling what Isaiah prophesied? (vv17-21)



8. Read the final paragraph in the quote box above again. How can we avoid being 'legalists' and 'moralists' in our attitudes towards others and instead be merciful and mercy-seeking?

9. What is your relationship with work and rest like at the moment? How can we reflect our faith in Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath through how we decide to work and rest?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Six | A Kingdom Warning

Matthew 12:22-37

Study Big Idea

Jesus is the promised Spirit empowered Messiah who has come to plunder Satan's kingdom.

Discussion Question

When have you encountered someone who was very sceptical about Jesus or Christianity?

'Matthew narrates the casting out of a demon that resulted in speech and sight being given to the sufferer. But this provoked a controversy with the Pharisees; evidently they were set to oppose him whatever he did. Jesus pointed to the weakness in their argument that he was in league with the evil one, and he went on to give significant teaching about the nature of good and evil and the importance of doing what is right. Throughout this whole section Matthew is concerned with the opposition of two kingdoms strongly opposed to one another, that of Satan (v. 26) and that of God (v. 28). The length of the section is noteworthy. Matthew is usually very concise, but he evidently regards this passage as very important and he treats it more fully than is his custom.'

Morris, L. *The Gospel According to Matthew*
(William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 313.
(Accordance)

Brief Recap

How have we seen Matthew's theme of 'fulfilment' so far in chapter 12?

Read Matthew 12:22-29

1. What were the different responses to Jesus' healing of the demon-possessed man?
2. How did Jesus respond to the accusation of the Pharisees in verse 24? What is the logical flow of his counter-arguments in verses 25-28?

3. Who is the strong man in Jesus' one verse parable? (verse 29) Who is it that overcomes him? (See also, Matt 4:8-10, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:1-2, John 12:30-33)



4. Why should it matter to all Christians that Jesus is victorious in overcoming Satan throughout his life and ministry, death and resurrection, and in his return in judgement? (see also, Colossians 2:15, Ephesians 6:10-12, 1 John 3:8)

Read Matthew 12:30-37

5. a) How does Jesus divide humanity into two groups with two opposing goals in verse 30?

b) In what sense is there 'no middle ground' or neutrality when it comes to how someone responds to Jesus? How does this fit with Jesus' teaching about the two kingdoms so far?




6. What might you say to someone who was worried from this passage that they couldn't ever be forgiven?

7. How does Jesus continue to warn the Pharisees in verses 33-37? What can we learn about the mouth, the heart and the day of judgement here?

'The heart is used [in verse 34] as an inclusive term to denote "the seat of physical, spiritual and mental life . . . as center and source of the whole inner life, [with] its thinking, feeling, and volition" (BAGD, 1 and 1b). It is what the heart is full of (abundance) that determines what anyone says. People do not speak out of character.'

Morris, L. *The Gospel According to Matthew*
(William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 321.
(Accordance)

-  8. What are some different ways we can pray for our own hearts and the hearts of others? (See also, Eph 1:17-18, Col 2:2-3, 2 Thess 3:5, 2 Tim 2:22, Hebrews 3:12-13, Acts 16:14)

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Seven | Something Greater!

Matthew 12:38-50

Study Big Idea

Jesus is greater than the prophet Jonah & the wise king Solomon. His true family follow him in discipleship and do his Father's will.

Discussion Question

What do you think it would take to convince a non-Christian you know that Jesus is Lord?

'At this point we hear of some Pharisees who came to Jesus and asked for a sign (v 38). This is the first occurrence of the language of sign, although it will occur again (16:1, 3, 4; 24:3, 24, 30; 26:48). In response to their request for a sign, Jesus pointed out that they were an evil and adulterous generation (vv 38-40). We already know that the cities of Galilee had not repented, despite the fact that the deeds of the Messiah had been performed in their midst (ch 11). What more did they want? The only sign they would have would be the death and resurrection of the Messiah, which was still to come. That is, their sign would come at the end of the Servant's ministry, not during it (vv 41-42). By then it would be too late for them, if they had not already made up their minds.'

Bolt, P.G. *Matthew: A Great Light Dawns*
(Aquila Press, 2014), 128-129. (Kindle Edition)

Brief Recap

What has Jesus been teaching his disciples about himself so far in chapter 12?

Read Matthew 12:38-42

1. What is likely to be the motivation of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in asking Jesus for a sign?

2. What do you notice about the tone of Jesus' reply to them?

3. Why does Jesus call these Israelites a wicked and 'adulterous' generation? (see also, Jeremiah 3:8-10, Ezekiel 16:30-32, Hosea 4:10-12)

4. What sign is 'three days and three nights in... the earth' pointing forward to? What points of similarity and difference are there with Jonah's experience? (see also, Jonah 1:17-2:1, 10)

'As we count time, three days and three nights points inexorably to three periods of twenty-four hours each; we thus have a problem with the use of this expression for the time between Jesus' death and resurrection: the period from toward the middle of the day on Friday (when he was crucified) to early on Sunday morning (when he was seen alive) comes short of what we understand by three days and three nights. But the Jews did not reckon as we do: they counted the day on which any period began as one day, and they did the same with the day on which the period ended. Thus we have Friday, Saturday, Sunday, three days; it does not matter that neither the Friday nor the Sunday was complete.¹⁰¹ According to the method of counting in use at the time, this is the period during which Jesus would be in the heart of the earth. Matthew elsewhere speaks of Jesus as rising "on the third day" (16:21) and "after three days" (27:63); there is no reason to think that he sees any difference between these expressions¹⁰² However we understand it in detail, the expression indicates that after the crucifixion Jesus will be three days in the tomb.¹⁰³

Morris, L. *The Gospel According to Matthew*
(William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 325-26.
(Accordance)

5. How is something greater than Jonah's preaching and Solomon's wisdom now here? What are some contrasts Jesus draws attention to? (see also, Jonah 3 and 1 Kings 10:1-9).

Read Matthew 12:43-45

6. What is the final state of the demon-possessed man? How is Jesus warning the Pharisees and teachers of the law about their response to him? (See also, Matt 12:22-28; 23:25-28)



7. In groups look up a few of the following short passages. What are a few truths the Bible teaches us about demons / the devil? (Note: remember to pay attention to what we are told in the passages rather than speculate on what we're not told):

- Group 1: Genesis 3:1-5, Rev 12:9, Job 1:6-12, Mark 2:32-34, Luke 8:26-39, 1 John 3:7-8
- Group 2: John 8:42-44, Acts 10:36-38, 1 Cor 10:18-22, Ephesians 6:10-17, Hebrews 2:14-15
- Group 3: 2 Timothy 2:25-26, Romans 8:7-9, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9, Revelation 20:10

Optional: Share-back with the rest of your Growth Group.

Read Matthew 12:46-50

8. What are we told about Jesus' biological family? (see also, Matthew 13:55-56) What are we also told here about Jesus true spiritual family and their defining characteristic?



9. What is precious to you about belonging to God's family now through Christ Jesus?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Eight | The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-23

Study Big Idea

Jesus' ministry involved proclaiming the word of God's kingdom with a very dividing effect.

Discussion Question

What are you like at gardening? Do you enjoy it? Why/why not?

'LET'S PLAY A GAME I'll call "an exercise in ignorance." Sounds like fun, doesn't it? Let's pretend we all live in a remote region of the world where we have never heard any of Jesus' parables before. Let's also pretend that we have recently discovered an ancient parchment in an underground cave that contains what other less remote folks would call the Parable of the Sower. We don't yet know what to call it or what to make of it. However, we sure are curious. So we get one of our language scholars to decipher the text and read it to us. For the first time ever, with fresh eyes and open ears, we hear these words:

A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (13:3-8)

That's it. That's the entire text we have.

What would we think about it? A few of us might think it is just a story, a rather short and dull one. The majority might argue that it is part of an ancient instruction manual on gardening, for from the text itself we have a farmer scattering seed on four different surfaces, only one of which produces any kind of grain. [...] I hope you understand that we are so familiar with this parable and its interpretation that we often fail to realize that these words of Jesus hold little meaning in and of themselves and neither reflect distinct religious language nor promote any theological conceptions whatsoever. And I hope you also get why it was necessary for Jesus' disciples to gather around him and ask, "What are you talking about? Why don't you speak simply and straightforwardly?" (v. 10, my paraphrase).

In verses 11-17 Jesus tells them why he is talking that way. Parables have two primary purposes: parables conceal and reveal.'

O'Donnell, Douglas S. *Matthew: All Authority on Heaven and on Earth*
Preaching the Word Commentary, (Crossway, 2013), 355-356. (Accordance)

Brief Recap

What has happened in the previous scene at the end of Matthew 12:46-50?

Read Matthew 13:1-9

1. What are we told about the setting for Jesus' teaching at the start of the chapter? What's your understanding of what a 'parable' is?

2. What's the main contrast here, in this parable?

Read Matthew 13:10-17

3. What distinction does Jesus make between the disciples and the people in verses 10-12?



4. Why does Jesus speak in parables? How does he apply the quote from Isaiah 6:9-10 to the crowds around him?

5. How does Jesus reinforce the privileged position that his disciples are in? (verses 16-17; see also Hebrews 11:39-40, 1 Peter 1:10-12)



6. Why can we be thankful if we have heard and received God's word with faith, trusting in Jesus?

Read Matthew 13:18-23

7. What does the 'seed' in the parable actually represent? (see verse 19a; Luke 8:11)

In pairs, fill in the table below to help summarise the meaning of this parable

Where the seed is sown	How they respond to the word?	Why?/Further Explanation
(13:18-19)		
(13:20-21)		
(13:22)		
(13:23)		

Optional: share-back with the rest of your Growth Group.

8. What is your experience of engaging with God's word like at the moment?



9. How might Jesus' parable inform the way we pray for ourselves and others?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Nine | Kingdom Parables

Matthew 13:24-52

Study Big Idea

Jesus' disciples are to remember the final day, the kingdom's growth & the priceless cost.

Discussion Question

What is a riddle you can remember?

'Some describe the parables as works of art; others as 'weapons of conflict', in the sense that they are subversive, they get under the skin, and begin to make the truth bite. Jesus uses unusual examples. Here, in chapter 13, the yeast in the dough, usually a picture in Jewish thought of the penetration of evil, is actually a picture of the penetration of the kingdom. Parables make you stop and think; they demand interpretation. They point to other realities. They are not merely stories to enjoy; they hold up one reality to serve as a mirror of another, the kingdom of God. They are avenues to understanding, handles by which we can grasp the meaning of the kingdom. [...] in chapter 13, we have seven parables gathered together, in order to clarify and deepen our understanding as to what the penetration of the kingdom of heaven on earth is really all about.'

Jackman, D. & Philip, W. *Teaching Matthew*
(Christian Focus Publications Ltd, 2021), 107-8.

Brief Recap

What stood out to you in Jesus' parable of the sower?

Read Matthew 13:24-30

1. a) Who are the different characters in the parable of the weeds?

b) Why are the servants surprised (verse 27)?

c) What will happen at the harvest time?

Read Matthew 13:36-43

2. Fill in the table together to summarise Jesus' explanation of the parable of the weeds:

Parable Feature	What it represents
The Sower	
The field	
The good seed	
The weeds	
The enemy	
The harvest	
The harvesters	

3. What does Jesus say will happen in the final judgment? (verses 40-43)



4. Why do you think Jesus often taught his disciples about final judgement?

Read Matthew 13:31-35

5. a) What is similar about the mustard seed and the yeast in these two parables?

b) What does this teach us about the growth of the kingdom of heaven? (see Revelation 11:15)



6. How might this give us confidence to continue to talk about Jesus with others today?

Read Matthew 13:44-46

7. a) What do these parables of hidden treasure and pearl have in common?

b) How do they show us the appropriate response to Jesus, the Messiah? (see also, Matt 10:37-39)

'Notice the parallels between these two parables. They both begin, "The kingdom of heaven is like ..." (vv. 44a, 45a), and they both end with precisely the same action described with slightly different words. In verse 44c the man goes and sells all he has and buys the field, and in verse 46b he went and sold all he had and bought the pearl that was found. The element of joy is mentioned in the first parable and implied in the second.

So two parables make the same point. And what is the point? That God wants me to be rich? No. That it's okay to spend one's life looking for hidden treasures? No. That it's ethically valid to buy someone else's land if you know there is something valuable hidden within it? Again, no. That the wearing of fine pearls on Sunday for church is a sign of holiness? No. The point is "that the kingdom is so valuable that it is worth sacrificing anything to gain it." The gain is worth the pain.

In Philippians 3:8 Paul says, "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." Underline "gain." Put a star next to it.

I want to follow Jesus even if it means persecution or poverty because it means citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. As Jesus said concerning persecution in the Sermon on the Mount, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (5:12). Gospel gain!

To most people in the world the kingdom of heaven is hidden. But to those who recognize its value, search for it, find it, and take hold of it despite the cost, it is worth it.'

O'Donnell, Douglas S. *Matthew: All Authority on Heaven and on Earth* Preaching the Word Commentary, (Crossway, 2013), 379-80. (Accordance)

