



Christ Unveiled

Matthew 14:1-18:14

TERM 1 STUDY BOOKLET

About These Studies

Our Term 1 Bible Study series based on Matthew 14:1-18:14 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, Michelle Lim and Theresa Ong 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> Transition Verse Matthew 7:28 ²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,	<i>[2nd Narrative / Teaching Block]</i> Transition Verse Matthew 11:1 ¹¹ when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.	<i>[3rd Narrative / Teaching Block]</i> Transition Verse Matthew 13:53 ⁵³ And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there,	<i>[4th Narrative / Teaching Block]</i> Transition Verse Matthew 19:1 ¹⁹ Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan	<i>[5th Narrative / Teaching Block]</i> Transition Verse Matthew 26:1 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 2026 with a shorter section of Matthew's Gospel.

Consider a brief refresh with our Intro Night from the Sermon on the Mount, with a brief overview of Matthew by Peter Orr - Monday 22 Jan 2024 @ Christ Church

Livestream Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKQ5ACu649Q>

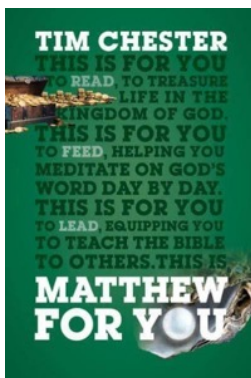
Big Picture Overview: Matthew 14-28 by the Bible Project



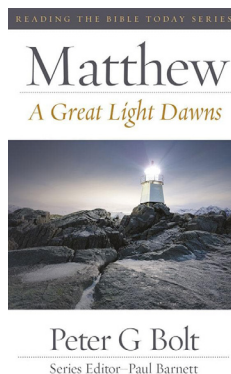
Matthew 14-28: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/matthew-14-28/>

Low/Mid-Range Accessible / Semi-Technical

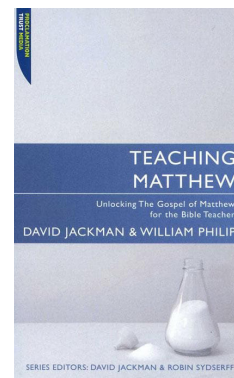
These three resources would be helpful for anyone in teaching roles at church. The first two are especially accessible for those who lead Bible Studies.



Matthew For You (TGBC)
by Tim Chester



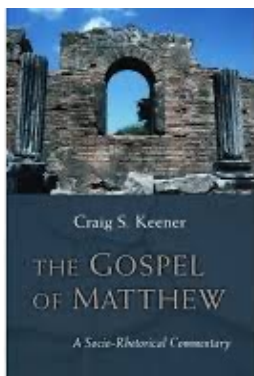
Matthew - A Great Light Dawns (RTBT)
by Peter G. Bolt



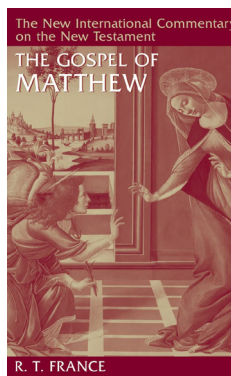
Teaching Matthew
by David Jackman & William Philip

Highly Technical Commentaries

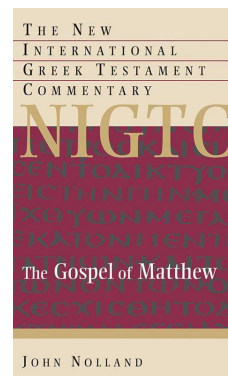
These are three of the leading commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew. All of them provide highly technical commentary, incorporating insights from the Greek text & engaging with wide scholarship.



The Gospel of Matthew (A Socio-Rhetorical Comm.)
by Craig S. Keener



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



The Gospel of Matthew (NIGTC)
by John Nolland

Study One | Jesus' Compassion and Power

Matthew 14:1-36

Study Big Idea

Jesus is full of compassion and able to abundantly meet all our needs including saving us from danger, because he truly is the Son of God and worthy of our worship.

Discussion Question

Who is one person you want to talk to more about Jesus this year? (it could be a friend, a family member or a context where you think there may be more opportunity to do so)

'Spoiler alert: this section of Matthew's Gospel climaxes with Jesus being acclaimed as "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16). As we move towards that moment, we see examples of faith and unbelief. This began at the end of Matthew 13 with Jesus being rejected in his home town (13:53-58). That unbelief extends to the centres of power in 14:1-12. In 14:13-36 the disciples waver, while 15:1-39 provides two unexpected and contrasting examples: deep antagonism from religious leaders and persevering faith from a pagan woman. Then the focus switches back to the disciples as Jesus feeds a large crowd for a second time because the disciples still haven't grasped the truth (15:29 – 16:12). Then the disciples finally recognise Jesus as the Messiah in 16:13-20. Even at this point, though, they are only halfway to a proper understanding of Jesus, and so Jesus must begin to explain what being the Messiah actually involves (16:21-28). Therefore, the key questions in this section are: who is Jesus? How will you respond to him?'

Chester, T. *Matthew For You: God with Us*
(The Good Book Company, 2025), 130-140. Kindle Edition.

Brief Recap

How did people react to Jesus at the end of Matthew 13:53-58?

Read Matthew 14:1-12

1. a) Why was Herod troubled by reports of Jesus?

- b) What had been John the Baptist's mission and message? (see, Matt 3:1-2; 11-12)


2. What do we learn about Herod's character throughout this section?
3. Why might John's disciples have gone to tell Jesus about his death? (see, Matt 11:2-6, 10-12)

Read Matthew 14:13-21

4. a) What are some details that stand out to you about this miracle episode?

b) (Optional) What are some possible Old Testament allusions or echoes in the background? (see also, Exodus 16:1-11; 2 Kings 4:42-44)

-  5. What is revealed about Jesus' character and power through this miracle?

-  6. What are some ways you are looking to grow in your own daily dependence on Jesus? (see also, John 6:35; Matthew 4:4, 6:11)

Read Matthew 14:22-36

7. a) What are some details that stand out to you about this miracle episode?

b) (Optional) What are some possible Old Testament allusions or echoes in the background? (see also, Ex 3:14; Job 9:8; Ps 77:16-20; Isaiah 43:1-2)

8. What can we learn about faith and doubt from Peter's experience? What encourages you about Jesus' own role throughout the whole encounter?



9. In verse 23, Jesus made prayer a priority in his devotional life. What are some practical ways you can prioritise depending on God in prayer this year yourself?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Two | The Problem at Heart

Matthew 15:1–20

Study Big Idea

Jesus exposes how a religious approach to cleanliness never works because it puts human tradition over God's word and doesn't deal with the problem of our sinful hearts.

Discussion Question

Do you have a family tradition that has stuck around for a long time?

'Matthew proceeds to a controversy that arose between Jesus and some Pharisees who had evidently come to provoke an argument. The discussion turned on the failure of Jesus' disciples to keep the tradition of the elders in that they ate food without first engaging in a ceremonial washing of their hands. Jesus began by making it clear that the tradition that meant so much to the Pharisees was not to be accorded uncritical acceptance, for it could and sometimes did lead people to disobey the commandments of God. Having made this point, he turned to the question of unwashed hands and pointed out that defilement comes not from overlooking some physical regulation about ceremonial cleanliness but from the evils that people conjure up in their innermost being. In this passage Jesus addresses three distinct groups: the legal visitors (vv. 1–9), the people (vv. 10–11), and the disciples (vv. 12–20).

Morris, L. *The Gospel According to Matthew*
(William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 389.
(Accordance)


Brief Recap

How did people respond to Jesus at the end of Matthew 14:34-36?

Read Matthew 15:1-9

1. a) Why do the religious leaders come all the way from Jerusalem to speak with Jesus?

b) What additional context does Mark 7:3-4 provide?
2. How does Jesus initially turn their question back on them?

3. What principle does Jesus teach about God's word with his example in verses 4 to 6?
4. Why does Jesus so strongly apply Isaiah 29:13 to these religious experts? (see also, Matthew 23:23-28)
-  5. What are some ways Christians or churches today might elevate religious traditions over God's word?

Read Matthew 15:10-20

6. How does Jesus challenge the crowd to understand what actually "defiles" a person?
7. How do Jesus and the disciples differ in their attitude to the Pharisees?
(See also, John 2:23-25)
8. What similarities are there between Jesus' earlier teaching in Matthew 12:33-35 and this section?



9. In what ways is true Christianity a 'heart-religion'? What are some ways the Bible teaches us about the heart? (See also, Deut. 6:5-6, 1 Sam 16:7, Prov 4:23, Jer 17:9, Ezek. 36:26, Rom 10:9-10)



10. When have you found yourself going through the motions as a Christian? What are some ways we can guard against hypocrisy and worship God from the heart?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Three | Surprising Faith

Matthew 15:21-31

Study Big Idea

Trust in the Lord Jesus, because he is powerful, merciful and his compassion extends beyond Israel to include even the most unlikely people who put their faith in him.

Discussion Question

When have you been surprised to hear about someone's conversion to Christianity?

'With the disciples reeling from the news that religious leaders can't be trusted (15:14), they then meet someone who, they know for sure, can't be trusted: a Canaanite woman. Moreover, alert readers still have in mind John's defeat at the hands of Herodias, a new Jezebel. Jezebel was a princess from Sidon (1 Kings 16:31)—and here we meet another woman from Sidon. It doesn't bode well. But in fact we're in for a big surprise, for this Canaanite woman confesses that Jesus is "the Son of David" (Matthew 15:22). This pagan woman acknowledges Jesus as the promised Davidic Messiah before the disciples. In 12:23 the crowd asked, "Could this be the Son of David?", but the only other people to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of David have been two blind men (9:27; see also 20:30-31). The irony is that it's the blind who recognise Jesus and Gentiles who acknowledge him as Israel's King.'

Chester, T. *Matthew For You: God with Us*
(The Good Book Company, 2025), 149-50. Kindle Edition.

Brief Recap

What has Jesus just been teaching his disciples about so far?

Read Matthew 15:21-28

1. What stands out to you about this account?
2. What is significant about this woman's cultural heritage? (see Genesis 10:15-19; Exodus 33:1-2; Deut. 7:1-2; Matthew 11:22)

3. a) What is the disciples' attitude toward this woman?

b) How does Jesus respond to her? Is Jesus being rude to her, calling her a "dog"? Why/why not?

4. How does this woman's faith (verse 28) compare to Peter's in the previous chapter (14:29-31)? What can we learn from her?



5. Have you been challenged recently to exercise your faith in Jesus? Do you naturally trust him to help you in difficult times? What have been some obstacles to faith in hard times?

'Let's review. Jesus is in Tyre and Sidon (Gentile cities), and he encounters and accepts a Gentile woman. When our Lord leaves this region, he returns to somewhere (v. 29) "beside the Sea of Galilee," somewhere where he would feed 4,000 people. Now, who were these people? Jews or Gentiles or some mix of both? I think they were mostly Gentiles. [...]

First, I say this because in Mark's version of the story he tells us where the feeding of the 4,000 took place—"the region of the Decapolis" (Mark 7:31); that is, ten cities that were known for being inhabited by mostly Gentiles. Second, I say this because of how these people responded to the healings. At the end of verse 31 we read, "And they glorified the God of Israel." "God of Israel" is a unique response in the Gospels. It is used in Isaiah 45:15 in the context of the one, true God's dealing with the nations. So maybe their reply is what a Gentile would say. Not just, "And they glorified God," but "And they glorified the God of Israel."

O'Donnell, D. Matthew – *All Authority on Heaven and Earth*
(Crossway, 2013), 430. Accordance.

Read Matthew 15:29-31

6. How does verse 30 fulfil Isaiah 35:5-6? What is significant about the way the onlookers respond to these healings?

7. How does Jesus' ministry to these needy people, including Gentiles, relate to the parable of the great banquet in Luke 14:15-23?



8. What have been some ways we've already seen a Gentile theme thread running throughout Matthew's Gospel so far? (see also, Matthew 1:1-17; 2:1-5; 8:5) Why is this theme significant?



9. How can we take the gospel to our society's outcasts? How are we going with this, as a church and as individuals?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Four | Signs and Understanding

Matthew 15:32–16:12

Study Big Idea

Jesus alone is able to satisfy all of our needs and more. We should trust his compassion and daily provision and be wary of the influence of those who point away from him.

Discussion Question

Can you think of a time when you felt deeply satisfied for one reason or another?

‘When Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee, he sat on a mountain and great crowds came to him and he healed them (vv 29–31). The time of healing promised by Isaiah must have arrived (Isaiah 35:5–6) and the crowds glorified the God of Israel. The presence of the crowd then evoked Jesus’ God-like compassion, and once again he fed them (vv 32–39). Thus Jesus continued to act as the good shepherd (Ezekiel 34–36), feeding the lost sheep, when Israel’s leadership had let them down so badly.’

Bolt, P.G. *Matthew: A Great Light Dawns* (Aquila Press, 2014), 157-58. Kindle Edition.

Brief Recap

How has the theme of bread appeared already in the first half of chapter 15?

Read Matthew 15:32-39

1. What concerns Jesus about the crowd at the beginning of this passage? What motivates his concern?
2. What are some parallels between this feeding miracle and the one earlier in Matthew 14:13-21? Any differences?
3. Why do you think these two miracles are so similar? How might the geography and context of this passage be significant? (See also, Matthew 15:29, 4:15 and 15:22-28, 30-31)



4. What are some needs in our life that Jesus promises to meet abundantly? (See also, John 7:37-38, Matthew 11:28-30, Luke 19:10, John 11:25-26, Philippians 4:19)

Read Matthew 16:1-12

5. How does Matthew develop our understanding of the following people in this section:

- The Pharisees and the Sadducees
- The disciples
- Jesus

6. What warning does Jesus repeat to his disciples in verses 6 to 12? Why do you think his warning is necessary? (See also, Matthew 22:23-32, 23:13-14)



7. Why do we need to be discerning about the voices we listen to in our lives as Christians?



8. What's one practical way you are wanting to deepen your faith in Jesus across this year?

Pray in Response

Study Five | Who is Jesus?

Matthew 16:13–20

Study Big Idea

People have different opinions about who Jesus is, but God the Father reveals him to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God who has promised to build his church.

Discussion Question

What are some different views and opinions about Jesus that you've heard people express?

'Matthew has made no secret of his own view that in Jesus the purposes of God declared in the OT have now come to their fulfillment. This has been demonstrated throughout the opening four chapters of the gospel. Matthew has used the actual term "Messiah" sparingly (but decisively in 1:1, 16–18), but the idea underlying it has been richly elaborated. But Jesus has not used that title, leaving both crowds and disciples to draw their own conclusions from the unique "authority" which has so often evoked their "amazement" (4:24–25; 7:28–29; 9:8, 26, 31, 33; 13:54; 15:31). These have included the tentative identification of Jesus as "the son of David" in 12:23, and such popular speculation may well underlie the authorities' demand for a sign in 12:38; 16:1. The disciples have gone even further on the basis of their special experiences of Jesus' power, resulting on one occasion in the spontaneous use of the phrase "the son of God." (8:27; 14:33) We have also heard the outlandish speculation of Antipas (14:1–2) and the more perceptive but still tentative assessment by John the Baptist (11:2–6). So now it is time for this central issue of the Galilean story to be clarified: who is Jesus?'

France, R.T. *The Gospel of Matthew*
(William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 612. Accordance.

Brief Recap

What are some ways Jesus' disciples have been getting things right and some things wrong throughout Matthew's gospel so far?

Read Matthew 16:13-16

1. a) What question does Jesus ask his disciples in verse 13? How do they reply to him?

b) Why do you think people have some of these views in verse 14?

2. What is significant about Simon Peter's answer to Jesus' follow-up question in the bigger picture of Matthew's Gospel up to this point?



3. What have been some ways Matthew has been building a case about the identity of Jesus for us as readers throughout chapters 1-16?



4. (Optional): If someone were to ask you, 'Who do you think Jesus is?' What would you say?

Read Matthew 16:17-20

5. What does Jesus make of Simon Peter's declaration? In what ways does he indicate a spiritual dimension to his confession? (See also, John 6:44-45, 2 Corinthians 4:6)
6. What promise does Jesus make in verse 18? What questions, if any, do verses 18-19 raise for you?
7. Why do you think Jesus orders his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah in verse 20?

'Jesus changes Peter's name from Simon to Peter, which means "rock". It's a name-change with a promise attached: "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). Since the Reformation, Roman Catholics have said that the rock is Peter and his successors (thus justifying the authority of the papacy, for according to church tradition, Peter was the first bishop of Rome). In contrast, Protestants have sometimes said the rock is Peter's confession. It's more likely that Peter himself is the rock. First, Peter speaks on behalf of the other apostles, whose collective testimony will be the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14). Second, Peter speaks on behalf of all believers; he's the first disciple to confess Jesus and therefore a model for future disciples (without any implication of papal succession). This fits Matthew 16:19, where "the keys of the kingdom" refer to the preaching of the gospel, which opens the door of heaven to those who respond with faith while confirming the judgment of those who reject it (see Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 8, p. 370-373).' ⁴

Chester, T. *Matthew For You: God with Us*
(The Good Book Company, 2025), 155. Kindle Edition.



8. How significant is church in your own priorities and ways of thinking? (Eph 2:19-22)



9. Who are you praying would come to know and follow Jesus? What question could you ask them?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Six | Following Jesus (Leaders Writing Study)

Matthew 16:21-28

NOTE : This study has been left blank deliberately so that Growth Group Leaders can continue to practice their skills in writing a Bible study (without a pre-written study aid), following some Leader training on this topic late-last year.

Study Big Idea

Jesus was sent by God on a mission to suffer, die and rise again and whoever wants to be his disciple must be willing to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him.

Study Seven | A Glimpse of His Glory

Matthew 17:1-13

Study Big Idea

God gives us a glimpse of Jesus' glory at his transfiguration. He reveals Jesus to be His beloved Son who is even greater than Moses and Elijah and calls us to listen to him.

Discussion Question

Have you ever had trouble recognizing someone that you should know? How did that make you feel?

'The stories told in Matthew 14 – 16 have led us to Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. In Matthew 17 we continue the theme of Jesus' identity as we see his divine glory revealed and are reminded of his divine sonship.'

Chester, T. *Matthew For You: God with Us*
(The Good Book Company, 2025), 159. Kindle Edition.

Brief Recap

From last week's study, what is Jesus' mission as he heads to Jerusalem, and how does he challenge his disciples?

Read Matthew 17:1-8

1. What do you notice about Matthew's scene setting in verse 1? How is Jesus' appearance described in verse 2?
2. Why do you think the Old Testament figures, Moses and Elijah appear at this time?



3. Explore some of the following Old Testament passages to consider how they might serve as helpful biblical background to the transfiguration scene:

Old Testament Passages to Look Up	Any helpful points of connection/ background?
Exodus 24:15-18	
Exodus 34:29-35	
Deuteronomy 18:15-18	
1 Kings 19:9-13	
Malachi 4:4-6	

4. a) What does the voice from heaven say about Jesus' relationship to His Heavenly Father? (See also, Psalm 2:7, Isa. 42:1)

b) What are the disciples called to do? (See also, Matthew 3:17; 7:24-27)



5. What are some ways you aim to prioritise listening to Jesus in your life?

Read Matthew 17:9-13

6. When are Jesus' disciples allowed to tell others about what they have seen? (See also, 2 Peter 1:16-18)
7. What point of insight do the disciples come to understand? How does this continue to point us forward to Jesus' ultimate mission? (See also, Matt. 10:12-14)

'How terrible! True to the prophetic word, God sent his 'Elijah' to Israel and the Israelites failed to recognise him, and so they did to him whatever they pleased. As readers of Matthew's Gospel, we know that Jesus was talking about John the Baptist, and, as Matthew tells us here (v 13), the three disciples now understood this as well. John was the Elijah figure who came to get things ready, as Israel's last days began to dawn. For sure, some responded and prepared themselves for the arrival of the long-awaited time of forgiveness. But in the end, this prophet of God died in a horrible way, violently (11:12), at the hands of one of Israel's beast-like rulers. The last-days prophet was murdered as dinner party entertainment (14:1-12). What had God's ancient people, Israel, come to? How the mighty had fallen.

But the logic was now clear. If Elijah had already come, then nothing stood in the way of the arrival of the kingdom of heaven. God's last-days timetable was almost complete. Jesus then added a further sobering prediction. If Israel did not recognise Elijah and so badly mistreated him, then the same fate awaited the glorious Son of Man.

Bolt, P.G. *Matthew: A Great Light Dawns*
(Aquila Press, 2014), 166. Kindle Edition.



8. Why is it helpful for our Christian faith and hope to remember that Jesus truly is glorious? (See also, John 1:14, 2 Cor 3:18, Rev 1:16-18)

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Eight | Faith, Suffering and Sonship

Matthew 17:14-27

Study Big Idea

Jesus wants us to depend on him for even what looks impossible to do, because he is the Lord of all and he came on a mission knowing that he would die and rise again.

Discussion Question

When have you had a feeling of ‘coming back down to earth’ after a high point experience of some kind (spiritually or otherwise)?

‘Ever since Peter’s declaration that Jesus is the Messiah the story has focused not on the present situation of Jesus and the disciples but on what is to come, as Jesus has talked about what awaits him in Jerusalem (and about what it will mean for those who choose to follow him there) and about his vindication and glory which is to follow, while the vision on the mountain has also lifted the disciples out of the present situation and shown them a foretaste of that future glory. Now as they come back down from the mountain they are brought rudely back to the present as they find their fellow-disciples in severe difficulties with an attempted exorcism which has gone wrong.’

France, R.T. *The Gospel of Matthew*
(William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 655. Accordance.

Brief Recap

What was something you learnt or that stood out to you from the transfiguration passage?

Read Matthew 17:14-20

1. What patterns are similar or different in this healing (and exorcism) account compared to previous healings in Matthew’s gospel? (See also, Matthew 10:1, 8)
2. How does Jesus respond to the boy’s father and his disciples? What can we learn about Jesus’ character and expectations from this?

3. What reason does Jesus give for His disciples' failure to heal the demon possessed man?



4. What is true faith and why is it so important? (Verse 20)



5. How does Jesus' teaching here challenge or encourage you to exercise your faith?

'Perhaps the disciples had been treating their power to cast out devils as a new possession of their own — a kind of magic — they would go through their routine and the devil would come out! But that is not the way it was. There was nothing in the disciples themselves that overcame demons. It was God who in every case gave the power, and it was necessary for them to look to him and to act in humble faith. Jesus speaks of faith like a mustard seed [...], an expression that clearly had become proverbial for the smallest thing. Jesus is saying that even a little faith would enable the disciples to do what they had just proved they could not do. It is not necessary to have great faith; even a small faith is enough, as long as it is faith in the great God.

Jesus illustrates. He envisages a disciple telling a mountain to move and says that it will happen. The moving of mountains was proverbial among the Jews for accomplishing something of very great difficulty [...]. The expression should, of course, be understood metaphorically. Through the centuries pious souls have never been conspicuous for transferring physical objects such as literal mountains, but there are many instances on record where mountainous difficulties have been removed by the exercise of faith. Then Jesus makes a staggering promise: "nothing will be impossible for you." This is comprehensive; Jesus sets no limit to what can be done by the person of faith. We should perhaps reflect that if there is no limit to the power the person of faith can exercise, Jesus says nothing about that person's knowledge. It is possible to misunderstand the will of God and to try to move a mountain that should not be moved. In that case the believer will be disappointed. Jesus is not dealing with such cases. He is not trying to cover every eventuality. He is saying that there are infinite resources open to the believer, and he is calling on those who follow him to exercise the faith they have.'

Morris, L. *The Gospel According to Matthew*
(William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 448-449. Accordance.

Read Matthew 17:22-23

6. What prediction does Jesus make? Why do you think he keeps repeating this? (See also, Matthew 16:21 and 17:9)

Read Matthew 17:24-27

7. a) What is the tax collector's question to Peter? How do you understand Jesus' response in his interaction with Peter?

b) (Optional): Does this passage raise any other questions for you?



8. What do all three of these episodes teach us about Jesus' identity and authority?



9. How has today's study helped you to see more clearly who Jesus is and what He has come to do? How does this encourage you to depend on him even more by faith?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Nine | Who is the Greatest?

Matthew 18:1-14

Study Big Idea

Jesus calls his followers to live out kingdom values in how we relate to one another by being humble, caring, vigilant and shepherd-like in love.

Discussion Question

What is a question you might ask Jesus about the kingdom of heaven, if you had the opportunity?

Living as Christ's Little Ones

'Chapters 14 – 17 have invited us to consider how we're going to respond to Jesus as he's revealed to be the Son of God. The teaching of chapter 18 explores how we're to treat the people who belong to Jesus—people who share his sonship. Jesus alone is the Son of God by nature, sharing one divine being with the Father and the Spirit. But his people become children of God through their connection to the Son (a move Paul describes as "adoption to sonship" in Galatians 4:4-6). 18:1-5 sets the framework for this. The disciples ask who the greatest in the kingdom is. It's a reasonable question if you're thinking of earthly political structures. Who's going to be the finance minister, the justice secretary, the secretary of state? But this is "the kingdom of heaven": a kingdom of grace in which earthly hierarchies become irrelevant. Jesus doesn't even begin with who the greatest is; he begins with who gets in.'

Chester, T. *Matthew For You: God with Us*
(The Good Book Company, 2025), 166. Kindle Edition.

Brief Recap

What have been some of your impressions about Jesus' disciples in recent chapters?

Read Matthew 18:1-5

1. What motivation might sit behind the question the disciples asked Jesus? If so, how could their question show a misunderstanding of what it means to follow Jesus? (see also, Luke 22:24-27)

2. How does Jesus answer their question? What does it mean to “become like little children” (v.3-5)?



3. What are some ways we can be in danger of elevating ourselves or chasing greatness as Christians? (see also, Luke 14:7-11, Philip. 2:3-11, James 2:1-5)



4. Who might be considered ‘little ones’ in our wider church context? What are some practical ways we can show Christ’s welcome and love in our attitudes towards them?

Read Matthew 18:6-9

5. How does Jesus emphasize the seriousness of his warning in verses 6-7? What does this reflect about his own attitude and heart toward these little ones? (see also, Matt 19:13-15)

6. What is the principle behind Jesus’ teaching in verses 8-9?

'... Christian, if you think your little sins are not a big deal to Christ and his church, you couldn't be farther from the mind of Christ. To our Savior, personal holiness is a matter of life and death, Heaven and Hell for you and others. [...]

Christian, wake up. Shape up. Grow up. Your personal holiness matters. Christian, "be killing sin or it will be killing you" (John Owen) and potentially killing others, these "little ones" in the Lord. [...] The action here is immediate, decisive, and absolute, and it's going hurt (have you ever broken a sinful habit?). "If your hand ... causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away" (18:8; cf. 5:30). Ouch!

Jesus has talked this way about sexual sin in the Sermon on the Mount (5:29, 30). But here he expands it to every imaginable sin. Do you grasp for worldly power? Do you rush to judgment? Do you easily lose your temper? Do you overstuff your stomach? Do you gossip? Do you hoard money? Do you overlook the unimportant? Do you think yourself so very important? Cut it off and cut it out. Cut off pride. Cut off lust. Cut off sloth. Cut off anger. Cut off greed. Cut off envy. Cut off gluttony. Cut off those seven deadly sins and seventy more because they will kill you—"It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire" (v. 9b)—and because they endanger the lives of the "little ones," some of your dear brothers and sisters in Christ. This is serious stuff. So take it seriously.'

O'Donnell, D. *Matthew – All Authority on Heaven and Earth*
(Crossway, 2013), 503-4. Accordance.



7. Write down a brief self-reflection about your attitude to personal holiness, or an action item you want to take this week with regards to fighting sin in your own life. Who could you talk to more about this?

Read Matthew 18:10-14



8. (Optional): What do you think verse 10 does and doesn't mean? (See also, Heb 1:14)

9. What does Jesus' parable teach us about God's heart for His people? (See also, Luke 15:1-7)

10. What has been one key learning, takeaway or personal reflection from our series in Matthew's gospel this term?

Pray in response



Extra Notes



Extra Notes

