

The Servant King

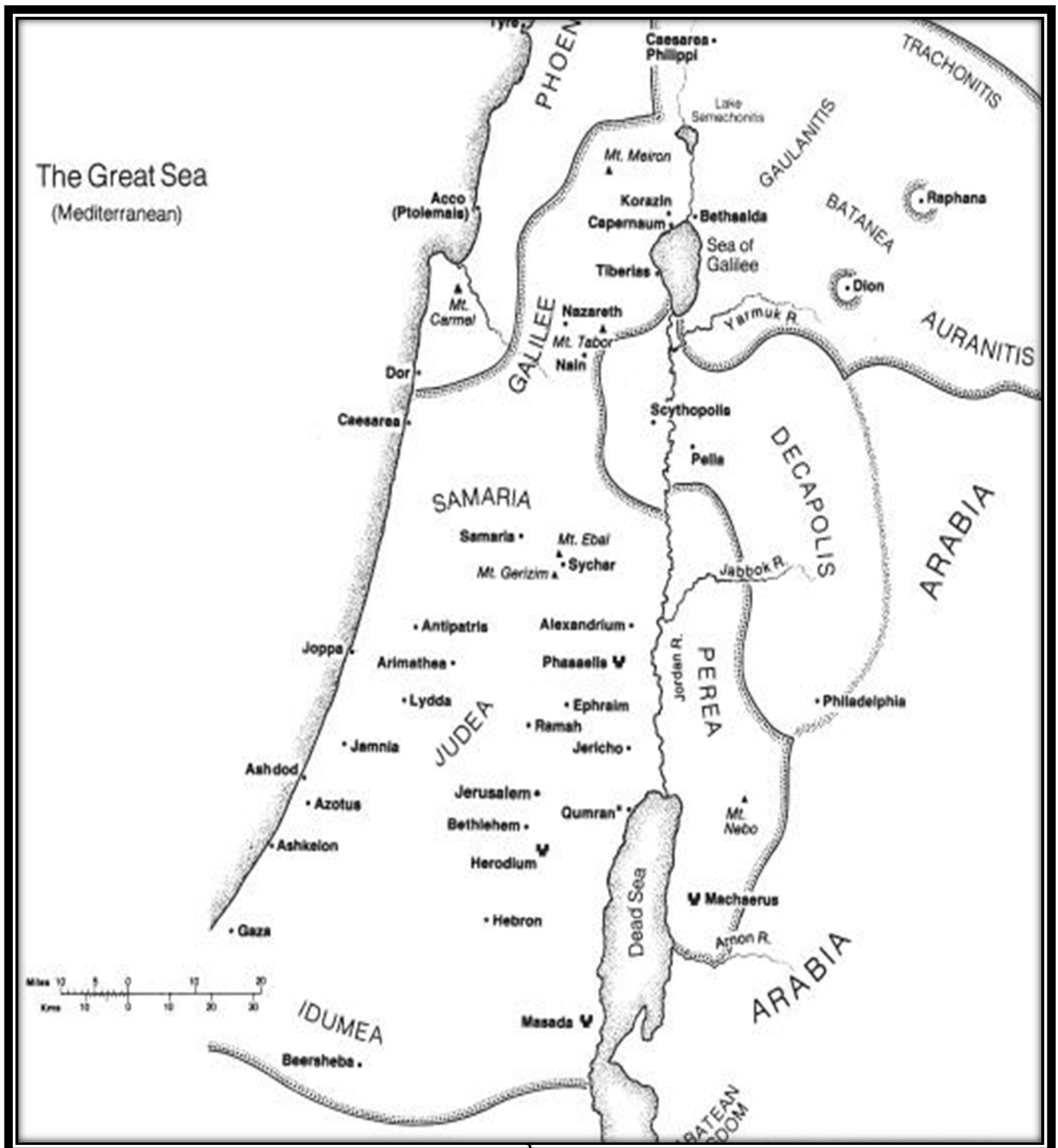


Matthew 20-28

Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church
ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au

Matthew 20:17-21:11 The Servant King

1. **Read Mt 20:17-34.** We pick up the story as Jesus begins his journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (20:17). Why was he going to Jerusalem?
2. Plot his possible route on the map below using the following verses as a guide: 19:1; 20:29; 21:1 (The Mount of Olives is less than 1km to the east of Jerusalem)



3. What did Jesus privately tell the twelve? Why might he have done this privately?

4. Back in 16:21 Jesus had warned the disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and be killed and then raised. Here in 20:19 Jesus repeats the warning and mentions crucifixion for the first time. How does this description introduce and contrast with the attitudes displayed in verses 20-28?

5. What did the mother of Zebedee's sons request of Jesus?

6. How could any of the disciples drink the cup of the Lord, or be baptised with the baptism He was about to be baptised with?

7. Why were the other ten disciples so outraged?

Were their reactions any more commendable?

8. What contrast does Jesus set up between how the Gentiles rule and how authority is exercised in God's kingdom?

How does Jesus model this new way?

9. Why are the two blind men singled out for healing?

Once healed, what do they do? Why?

How does this relate to the disciples' concern (verses 20-28)?

10. **Read Mt 21:1-11.** What thematic connections can you see between this section and Mt 20:17-34?

11. Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, not a stallion. What kind of Messiah does that portray?

12. "Hosanna!" means "Save!" What did the crowd want Jesus to save them from?

What kind of king and kingdom were they expecting?

How might this discrepancy account for the same crowd shouting later on, "Crucify him"?

13. How are the disciples blind to Jesus' true mission as Messiah, Son of David?

What about the blind men?

The crowd?

How do these understandings compare with Jesus' own understanding?

14. Jesus' mission was to serve and not be served (20:28). In what area of your life do you need to better understand this so that you can serve with a more Christ-like attitude?

PRAYER POINTS:

Matthew 21: The Tenants From Hell

CONFRONTATION IS NEVER easy. Yet there are times when the situation demands it. The religious leaders refused to acknowledge that Jesus was God's Messiah sent to rule. Skillfully, Jesus seeks to expose their hardness of heart and bring them to repentance. They respond not in repentance but by plotting a trap for him.

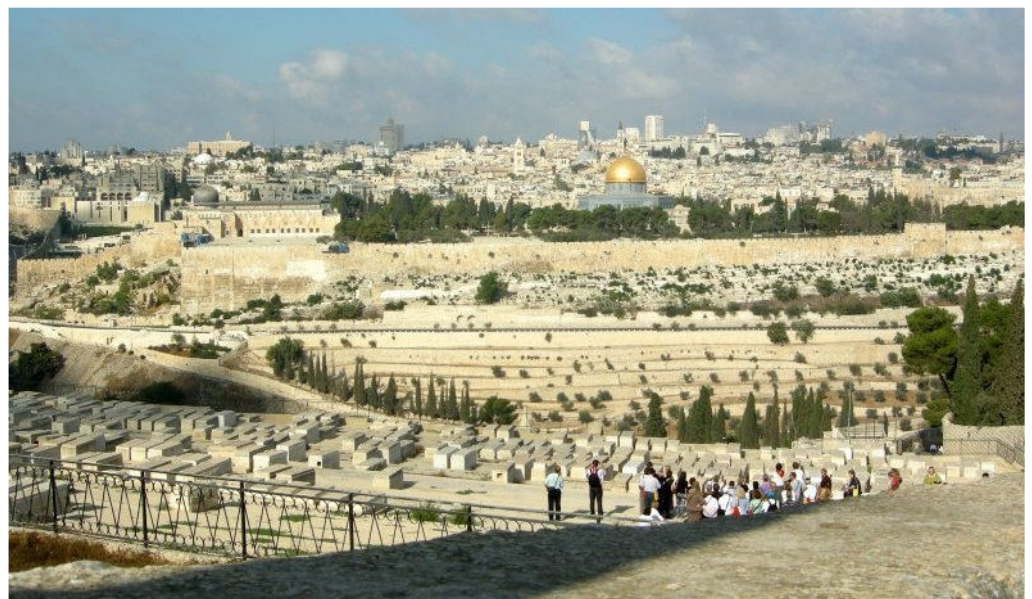
1. From time to time we all have been involved in confrontations. How do you feel in these situations?
2. **Read Matthew 21:12-22.** What upset Jesus so much about what he saw in the temple (see Isa 56:3-7)?
3. Which groups of people did and did not recognize the significance of Jesus? How do you explain that?
4. How is the fig tree incident a parable about what has happened in the temple, and what is to come (see Hos 9:10-17)?
5. What does the dramatized parable teach us about faith?

Prayer?

Judgment?

Jesus?

6. What do you think of the suggestion that “this mountain” (21) refers to the temple mount, and thus that Jesus is pronouncing judgment on the temple?



The view coming down the Mount of Olives from Bethany across the Kidron Valley to the temple mount

7. **Read Matthew 21:23-32.** With what issue is Jesus confronted? Why? What answers could Jesus have given? How would these have trapped him?
8. How did Jesus counter-question force the issue?
9. What links the parable of the two sons with Jesus' encounter with the chief priests and elders?
10. What does the parable of the two sons reveal about the chief priests and the elders (21:28-32)?
11. **Read Matthew 21:33-46.** How does the parable of the tenants illustrate the character of the Father? The Son? The religious leaders?
12. What is the main point of the parable (42-44)?
13. At whom does Jesus direct the parable?

Why don't they arrest him?

Why don't they repent and follow Jesus?
14. In what ways are the last three parables (20:1-16; 21:28-32; 33-43) similar?

PRAYER POINTS:

Matthew 22:1-14 The best sort of BBQ

1. **Read Matthew 22:1-14.** How does this parable fit with the sections that come before and after it?



2. Why is this banquet held?
3. What do you learn about those originally invited?

What is so surprising about their response?

4. Who does the king subsequently invite? Why?
5. What is the problem with one guest (11-12)?
6. What does it mean to be in the king's presence "without wedding clothes"?

Why is this ill-clad guest banished?

7. What does this parable suggest about the kingdom?
8. What is the main point of the parable?
9. What impact does this parable have on the hearers (15)?

10. **Read Rev 19:6-9.** Who is the king?

Who is the son?

Who is the bride (See also Rev 21:2, 9)?

What do her wedding garments represent?

Are there other guests?

PRAYER POINTS:

Matthew 22:15-46 Putting God in a box

The Pharisees and the Herodians make an interesting partnership. The Pharisees opposed the Roman rule, discouraged displays of Greek culture in Jewish life, and encouraged strict adherence to the law. They were the conservative religious nationalists. The Herodians supported the Roman rule of the Herods, and were relatively unconcerned with law-keeping or Greek culture. They were the politically-active liberals. Yet the Pharisees and Herodians were united in seeking the removal of a common enemy, Jesus.

1. **Read Matthew 22:15-22.** With what question did the Pharisees seek to trap Jesus?

2. How would the crowd respond if Jesus said simply, “Pay Caesar”? Why?

How would the ruling government respond if Jesus said, “Don’t pay”?

3. Why might they have sent their disciples along with the Herodians to ask their questions?

4. What do we owe Caesar?

What guidance does Jesus give for fulfilling our obligations to God and the government?



Gold coin (aureus) of Tiberias Julius Caesar Augustus (42BC to AD 37)

5. **Read Matthew 22:23-33.** In 22:23-28 the Sadducees tell Jesus a story designed to refute the resurrection. How does their question appear;

Mockery?

Serious?

Scriptural (see Deut 25:5-10)?

A trick?

6. How does the story illustrate their ignorance of Scripture and God's power (22:29-33)?
7. What aspects of their question does Jesus answer?
8. Why is there no marriage in heaven?
9. How does Exodus 3:6 prove the resurrection?
10. **Read Matthew 22:34-46.** Finally, the Pharisees themselves make an appearance. What is the greatest commandment? What are the three aspects to this?
11. What is the connection between the second greatest commandment and the first?
12. Love was the foundation of the Old Testament law (22:34-40). Why do you think we have so much trouble equating God's laws with love?
13. What does it mean that the Law and the Prophets hang on/ depend on these two commandments?
14. Jesus poses a dilemma to the Pharisees that silences them: "How can the Christ be both the son of David and his Lord?" (22:41-46). Were the Pharisees expecting the Messiah to be human or divine?

What problem with this view does Jesus point out?

What does this paradox reveal about the Lord?

15. How can these accounts of Jesus in conflict strengthen our faith in him?
16. What do they teach you about handling conflict?

PRAYER POINTS:

Matthew 23 Saying and Doing

Influence is a powerful force. Those who influence others are able to change minds and to direct actions. The religious leaders in Israel possessed the power of influence. After they decided to oppose Jesus, they tried to lead others to do the same. In Matthew 23 Jesus condemns them point-blank. They should have been the first to enter the kingdom of God because of their knowledge of Scripture and their standing in the Jewish community. Because they refused, Jesus calls them to judgment. This passage exposes the guilt of those who do not practice what they preach.

1. When have you been hurt by inconsistency in the life or teaching of an influential person you respected?

Read Matthew 23:1-12.

2. How did the "scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat"?
3. What attitude does Jesus teach the people to have toward the religious leaders, and why (vv. 1-4)?
4. Compare the motives of the religious leaders (vv. 5-7) with the motives and attitudes Jesus requires of his followers (vv. 8-12).
5. Why would it be important that the disciples not allow themselves to be called "Rabbi"? What distinction was Jesus trying to make between his followers and the Pharisees?
6. **Read Matthew 23:13-39.** How do the seven charges Jesus makes against the Pharisees and teachers relate to what Jesus says in verses 2-7?

Is there anything common to all seven charges?

How do the seven charges affect the common people?

7. Jesus condemns the religious leaders for confusing inward and outward righteousness (vv. 25-28). In what ways are we inclined to do that today?
8. How did the scribes and Pharisees "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men"?

9. Was there anything wrong in paying tithes of mint, dill and cumin (23)? What has greater priority?

10. How were the scribes and Pharisees "like whitewashed tombs" (27)?

11. What did Abel (Gen 4:8) and Zechariah, son of Berechiah (2 Chronicles 24:20-21), have in common?

12. The entire generation to whom Jesus is speaking is held accountable for the "righteous blood shed in all previous generations" (vv. 33-36). Why do you think they received such a terrible sentence?

13. In the midst of this overwhelming condemnation, how is the tender compassion of Jesus also evident (vv. 33-39)?

Why did Jesus lament over the city of Jerusalem?

What house was left desolate? What does this mean?

14. What responses do you have as you observe Jesus as a judge?

15. What practices here touch close to your own life?

How can you best avoid making it hard for others to grow spiritually?

PRAYER POINTS:

Ask God to make your Christian life consistent with your beliefs.

Matthew 24 Keep watch!

We all want to be safe and secure. Yet many things can threaten our security-losing our job, our income, our health, our loved ones. Our ability to handle these threats will depend on the source of our security. Matthew 24 focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem and the return of Christ. The true issue of Christ's return is not the "hows" or "whens" that fascinate us. Rather we must learn to live in the present in light of the future. We must learn the true source of our security.

1. What gives you a sense of security?
2. **Read Matthew 24:1-35.** Following Jesus' statement about the temple's destruction, the disciples ask two questions (v. 3). Look through chapter 24, briefly noting ways that Jesus answers these questions.

3. What might the disciples have said about the temple that prompted Jesus' response?

What did Jesus say about the temple?

4. Throughout history people have set dates for Christ's return and have been mistaken. What events might deceive the disciples into thinking the end is at hand (vv. 4-8)?
5. Before the end comes, what dangers will believers face, and how are we to handle them (vv. 9-14)?

Around 538 BC Daniel prophesied about an abomination that would cause desolation of the temple (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). In 167 BC Antiochus Epiphanes attacked Jerusalem and set up a pagan altar in the temple. Jesus spoke after this, and prophesied that the abomination that caused desolation spoken of through the prophet Daniel would stand in the holy place. Another event would come like the tragedy of 167 BC. He is probably thinking of Caesar Augustus who destroyed the temple in AD 70.

6. What occurs in the aftermath of this abomination (vv. 15-22)?
7. Who was to flee to the mountains?
8. How will we be able to distinguish false Christs from the true (vv. 23-31)?
9. When and how would "the sun be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken"?
10. How will "the coming of the Son of Man be"?
11. Will the Son of Man come at an hour we expect?
12. What generation was to see all of these things?
13. **Read Matthew 24:36-51.** What is Jesus speaking about in these verses?
14. In what ways is Noah's flood like the second coming of Christ?
15. How does the parable of the thief (vv. 42-44) emphasise the importance of living in light of Christ's return?

The parable of the wise and wicked servants (45-51)?

16. What does it mean, practically, to be ready for Jesus' return if we don't know when he will come?

17. So is Jesus primarily talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, or about his return and judgment day? Both? Why?

18. Can you summarise the attitudes and actions followers of Jesus are to have in light of this chapter?

4:

13:

14:

26-27:

44:

19. Few of us have ever faced deadly peril for our faith. What types of pressure do you face for your faith in Christ?

20. In what ways do you have need of greater watchfulness and perseverance?

PRAYER POINTS:

Praise God for giving you an unfailing source of security.

Matthew 25: Be Ready!

Accountability can be uncomfortable and inconvenient. Our desires and preferences are subject to the demands of another. Most of us would prefer to do things our own way. A rule of thumb in management is that people don't do what you expect; they do what you inspect. Jesus is coming back to inspect our lives. He holds us accountable for how we conduct ourselves in his absence. In Matthew 25 he urges us to prepare for his coming.

1. Are you someone who gets to meetings early? Right on time? Ten minutes late? How does your punctuality at Bible study today illustrate this?

2. **Read Mt 25:1-13.** How does this parable relate to Mt 24?

3. In what ways were the ten girls alike?

Different?

4. What unexpected event takes place? With what embarrassing consequence? What then is the point of this parable (see also 24:42)?

5. What resources and responsibilities has Jesus given you? How can you handle them in a good and faithful manner?

6. Why is readiness so important in regard to the second coming?

7. **Read Mt 25:14-30.** Who does the master represent?

The journey?

The talents?

The servants?

8. A talent was a vast sum of money. In the parable of the talents, what were the master's expectations of his servants (vv. 14-30)?

9. Why did the servant with one talent hide it?

10. What was Jesus saying about the two servants who doubled their investment?

Have you ever observed that the more you used a talent, the more talents God gave you?

11. Why was the master so hard on the servant who hid his talent?

12. How well are you doing at making the most of the talents Jesus has given you? What would he say to you if he returned today?

13. As a home group, how can you help each other make the most of your talents for Jesus' sake?

14. **Read Mt 25:31-46.** Identify the King,

the sheep,

the goats

the "brothers" of the King (vv. 31-46).

15. Does this seem more like a parable or a prophecy? Is it significant how we categorise it?

16. List the six actions Jesus will use as the basis of judgment.

What kinds of acts are these?

For whom are they done now and ultimately (40)?

How do they benefit the doer?

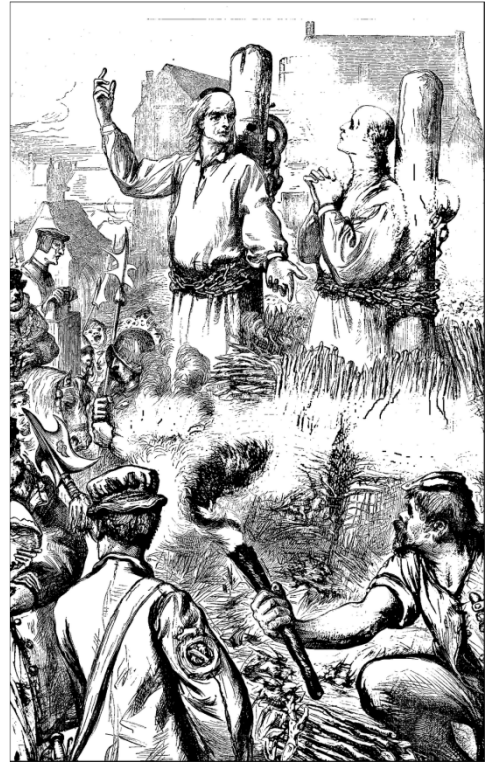
17. How are those who don't do the acts and those who do them similar? Different?

18. According to Jesus' teaching in this chapter, what should we be doing until he returns?

PRAYER POINTS:

Matthew 26 Pictures of death

On the drizzly day of October 16, 1555, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, two influential English reformers, were tied to the stake and bundles of sticks were piled at their feet. The crowd strained to hear what the two men were saying. Would they recant or would they persist in dying as heretics? As the executioner pushed a torch into the wood, Latimer said, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Suffering and temptation reveal the quality of our discipleship. Nowhere is this more evident than in Matthew 26, as we move into the climax of the book.



1. Have you ever been tempted to stop following Christ? Explain.
 2. **Read Matthew 26:1-16.** Why was Passover an appropriate time for the events of verses 1-5 to unfold?
 3. How do verses 1-16 set the stage for Jesus' betrayal and death?
 4. Why was fragrant oil poured on Jesus at the house of Simon? What is significant about the setting for the woman's gift?
 5. What would be repeated as long as the "gospel is preached in the whole world"?
- What does he mean "in memory of her"? Is the emphasis on the woman, or on Jesus?
6. Read John 12:4-6. What might Judas' motivation have been to betray Jesus (26:14-15) after the episode with the perfume?
 7. **Read Matthew 26:17-35.** In verses 17-30 Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples. What elements were used in the institution of the Lord's Supper? Why? (You may like to read about the Feast of Unleavened Bread from Exod 12:1-30).

8. Why do you think Jesus was secretive about the arrangements for the Passover meal?

9. Should Christians understand and celebrate the Passover? Why/ why not?

10. When would Christ drink of the fruit of the vine again with His disciples?

What does this mean for us today?

11. How is this occasion both ominous and hopeful? Do you think the hymn that was sung was joyful or sad?

12. **Read Matthew 26:36-75.** What insights can we gain about Jesus during his time in Gethsemane (vv. 36-45)?

13. Why was Jesus "sorrowful and troubled"?

14. What did Christ request from His Father?

Did the Father answer His prayer?

15. Why do you think Jesus remained silent during the first part of his trial (vv. 57-63)?

What action from the high priest forced Him to speak?

What can we learn from this?

16. When have you been confronted with the weakness of your commitment to the Lord?

17. Both Jesus and the disciples faced temptation in this chapter. How can Jesus' example and the disciples' failures help us withstand temptation and testing?

PRAYER POINTS:

Ask God to give you the courage to claim allegiance to Christ.

Matthew 27:1-31: Guilt & Innocence

1. When have you felt as though God were absent when you needed him?
2. **Read Matthew 27:1-31.** Where is God in these verses?
3. After the religious leaders hand Jesus over to Pilate, Judas feels remorse (vv. 1-5). How is remorse different from repentance?

What is the attitude of the Jewish leaders?

4. What did the chief priests do with the silver pieces? Why?
5. Both Peter and Judas caved in under pressure, yet history remembers them very differently. Why?
6. Why did the chief priests and elders take Christ to Pontius Pilate the governor? What power did he have that they did not?
7. Jesus stands before Pilate in verses 11-26. How and why does Pilate seek to avoid sentencing Jesus?

What is his overriding concern in this trial: identifying the Messiah? Listening to Jesus? Exchanging prisoners? Doing justice? Appeasing the crowd?

8. What advice did Pilate's wife give to him?

9. Is Pilate more concerned with satisfying the crowd, his wife, or his own conscience?

10. Why have the cheering crowds of Ch 21 turned on Jesus demanding his death?

11. Why did Pilate release Barabbas and deliver Christ to be crucified?

12. The soldiers viciously mock Jesus in verses 27-31. What does their mockery reveal about their knowledge of Jesus?

13. This chapter is filled with irony. People speak the truth even though they don't believe it, or don't realise the significance of their words. What is ironic about the comments and actions of the soldiers in v28-29?

14. What seems to be Satan's "triumph" is actually his defeat. Christ's "defeat" is actually his triumph. See Acts 2:23; 4:27-28. The reader is able to see the true situation more clearly than those in the story. God is at work despite appearances. How should this challenge our views about the way God works in our lives?

PRAYER POINTS:

Pray for protection so that you won't succumb to social pressure.

Matthew 27:32-66: Death & Life

1. What work was given to Simon of Cyrene? Why?
2. Why did the soldiers offer Christ sour wine mingled with gall to drink?

Why did Christ refuse this offering?

3. What is the official reason Jesus is crucified (37)?

What is ironic about this description?

What is the real reason (27:18)?

4. What did the soldiers do with the garments of Jesus? Why?
5. As Jesus hangs on the cross, he is repeatedly mocked and insulted (vv. 32-44). How do these insults reveal the spiritual choices these people have made?

What is ironic about their insults?

6. Where were the two thieves crucified in relation to Jesus?

The bitter cup of wine, and the location of the thieves reminds us of the request of James and John in 20:20-28. What did they request?

What event were they thinking about?

What event would REALLY begin Jesus' kingdom?

What was Jesus' answer?

How did he use it as an opportunity to teach about discipleship?

7. What caused Jesus to say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" What does his cry, and the overshadowing darkness, reveal about his relationship to the Father during this torment?

8. Jesus quotes from Psalm 22. Read it, and identify points of similarity between David's experience and that of Jesus.

9. What else happened when Jesus died (51-54)?

10. What is the significance of the temple curtain being torn in two?

What did the curtain separate?

Why mention that it was torn from top to bottom?

11. What caused the centurion to exclaim that Jesus was surely the Son of God (54)?

12. What hints are there in these verses that Jesus' death is not the end?

13. Who was Joseph of Arimathea? What did he request of Pilate?

14. What did "the chief priests and Pharisees" request of Pilate? Why?

15. How do you explain the necessity of Jesus' death to a non-believer?

16. Is investigating the circumstances of Jesus' death for you more a dispassionate historical investigation, or an emotional experience? Why?

PRAYER POINTS:

Matthew 28 Incredible news!

Victory requires proclamation! Once a battle has been won, it's time to spread the word. Matthew 28 focuses on the messengers of Jesus' resurrection—the angel tells the women, the women tell the disciples, the disciples tell the nations, even the guards tell the religious leaders. As Matthew concludes his Gospel, we are invited to join with those who throughout history have been witnesses and messengers of Jesus, the victorious resurrected Lord.

1. **Read Matthew 28.** God's control over the situation was not obvious in Ch 27. What tangible evidence is there in this chapter that God is in control?

2. The angel is the first messenger of the resurrection (vv. 2-7). What is the significance of his appearance and words?

What affect does he have on the guard?

3. Consider the mission of the women (vv. 1-9). How does it undergo a radical change?

4. How does Jesus refer to his disciples (10)?

What emotions might be behind the description?

5. The Roman guard and the Jewish leaders are confronted with a miracle. How do they respond, and why?

6. The disciples go to Galilee where they meet with Jesus. Describe the commission he gives to them and us (vv. 16-20).

7. What did they do when they saw the Lord?

8. What might the disciples have doubted about Jesus?

What keeps people today from believing that Jesus is the resurrected Lord?

9. How does Jesus equip them and future disciples to carry out his commission?

10. What is the number one priority for the disciples in Jesus' commission?

Do we need to adjust the things we do as a church in light of this emphasis?

11. As you conclude this study of Matthew, how can you be more involved in making disciples and fulfilling the Great Commission?

How can our church do this better?

12. How long will Jesus be with His disciples?

What comfort does this give you?

PRAYER POINTS:

Pray that God will help you to be faithful to this task.