



12 Bible studies in

Matthew

“the Jewish Messiah?”



'the Jewish Messiah?'

Matthew is a big book. It's the biggest of the Gospel accounts of Jesus life—twice as big as any of the others. There's a lot of material to get through. But how amazing is that material!

Matthew very much had a Jewish audience in mind when he put it all together. There is a lot of Jewish culture and religion imbedded in the detail. There are lots of references back to the Old Testament or the Bible for the Jews. But that doesn't mean you should put the book down if you're not circumcised or don't know what 'shalom' means.

This Gospel has so much to help us understand and love Jesus. Jesus certainly was the Jewish Messiah or savior. But that inherently means he can be our Messiah or savior too. "...whoever humbles himself like (a) child" has a place in God's Kingdom (Matthew 18:4). The Jewish flavor to Matthew's Gospel helps us get the Old Testament better as well, which helps us get Jesus better since the whole Old Testament points us to Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20 "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'yes' in Christ").

The studies will reflect the way Matthew has put his Gospel together. There are 5 distinct extended talks or discourses recorded by Matthew of Jesus, with the end of each marked by the phrase "When Jesus had finished saying these things..." (7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, 26:1) Matthew fills in between these with some of the great things Jesus said or did to back up what he was saying. This could have been to reflect the foundational first 5 books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch or key 5 books of the Law), how Jesus is greater than that or fulfills what Moses had laid out. So it really is about more than Israel or Judea.



Hints for these studies – with each question, sometimes there's a follow up question or two included at the same number. This is to just help draw it out a bit more. You may get it with the first one so don't panic if you end up saying the same thing in thinking about the follow up question—so just move on. Also, don't panic if you can't quite see what a question might be driving at. These questions are not the Bible. Feel free to move onto the next one. The questions are just an attempt to help us get into the passage/issue. Let the passage drive things at the end of the day. The questions are of course still meant to be a lead in to what could be very important with what God has in front of us here. So at least think about it before moving on. It's good to dwell for a bit and often, it then becomes a little more obvious.

why read this book?



kick off

What kind of books do you like reading? Why?



key verse

Matthew 3:17...

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."



big idea

Matthew has recorded incredible things that have happened, fulfilling God's plans.

take a quick look at Matthew 1:1-17



1. Any familiar names? Any significant names? *See Genesis 12:1-3, 2 Samuel 7:16.*



think & apply

2. Why would this genealogy light up a Jewish audience? Why should a non Jewish audience also get excited?

read Matthew 1:18-2:23



3. What things has Matthew noted surrounding Jesus' birth that also flag God is doing something really big here? (1:22-23, 2:6, 2:15, 2:23)

4. *See Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2, Hosea 11:1, Jeremiah 31:15.* Why would Matthew think these were significant?

5. What about the last noted prophecy fulfilment in 2:23? Can you find that one in the Old Testament? Has Matthew made a mistake? *See Isaiah 52:13-53:12 bearing in mind Nazareth was a despised place.*



think & apply

6. Can these amazing prophetic fulfilments be explained away? Why try to?

read Matthew 3:1-4:25



7. How does Jesus stand out as different from everyone else that day on the Jordan river? (3:1-17)

8. What about in the desert (4:1-11)

9. How did Jesus straightaway show that "the kingdom of heaven is near"? (4:12-25)



think & apply

10. Why wouldn't we want to read on, or be a part of this kind of Kingdom?



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk

Matthew 5-7
(1st big talk)

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *



kick off

Why is the word 'hypocrite' such a put down?



key verse

Matthew 5:20... "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees... you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."



big idea

Comfort can only come to our lives when we face up to our problems before God.

read Matthew 5:1-20



investigate

1. In Jesus' introduction to the first of the 5 major talks Matthew records, he mentions "*blessed*" quite a lot (hence the name 'beatitudes' - Latin for blessing). But what does it mean? (v 1-11)
2. How can we be blessed when most of these scenarios are about suffering? Pick one to explain.
3. Is there a logical progression or linking with all of these aspects of blessing?
4. *See Isaiah 40 and think about the mournful historical situation envisaged for Israel at that time.* How does Jesus' talk about "*comfort*" in Matthew fulfil Isaiah's prophecy?



think & apply

5. What should we be mourning in our life? How will we be blessed if we see our true needs in all of these kinds of ways? (given verses 17-20 help us to get our predicament right)

read Matthew 6:1-15



investigate

6. How does Jesus' teaching about true prayer, one of many examples Jesus went onto give in this talk, amplify our need for forgiveness?

7. How does this teaching benefit us now, as well as leading us to a place in Heaven?



think & apply

8. If even the people who try really hard fall short, what hope is there for us ordinary folk? Should we just give up?

9. On the other hand, how reassuring is it that God's standards are perfection? Does it make Heaven a mouth watering prospect?

10. Why are we tempted to pretend God's standards are less than perfection?

Pray in response to this chapter...



prayer points



through wk



Matthew 8-9

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

signs and wonders



kick off

What is a miracle? Do they still happen?

key **verse**

Matthew 8:27... "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

big **idea**

Jesus miracles most importantly show us who he is, who we need to know.

read Matthew 8:1-34



investigate

1. Spend some time looking at these miracles. What makes you think they really happened?
2. Why are they more than just a power thing? (think about why Jesus touched the man with a skin disease, why he kind of poured water on some of the hype in v 4 – compare v 18, why he helps another 'untouchable' in v 8)
3. What's the role of "faith" in these miracles? (eg how the man stepped out in faith in v 2, and Jesus' subsequent words in v 10, 26, 34)
4. See *Isaiah 53:1-6, particularly v4...* "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." (given Matthew notes this for us in v 17) How does this help us see what Jesus is ultimately doing here, given we normally associate healing with physical healing, and yet Isaiah primarily has in mind the cross? (eg v 5 'by his wounds we have been healed')
5. Why did the Gadarenes "*plead*" with Jesus to leave? (v 34) What miracle did they need?
6. Does much of what is considered to be signs and wonders today match with what Jesus was doing? Were his miracles unique?
7. Why were the Apostles miracles also unique? See *Acts 4:8-12*.
8. Why is there the temptation to exaggerate when it comes to the miraculous?
9. Why is there also the opposite temptation – to downplay or rule out the miraculous?
10. Why is it more important to know the one who can do the truly miraculous than having some temporary need miraculously met?



think & apply

Pray in response to this chapter...



prayer points



through wk



Matthew 10
(2nd big talk)

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

optional extra?



kick off

Why do we call missionaries 'missionaries'?



key verse

Matthew 10:32... "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."



big idea

We all have a part to play in God's mission.

read Matthew 10:1-42



investigate

1. What is unique to the short term mission Jesus gave the 12 disciples in v 1-16?
2. How do the instructions in v 5 about sticking just to the Jewish people fit with *Genesis 12:2-3*?
3. What about the "*shaking the dust off your feet*" of v 14 with "*turning the other cheek*" in 5:39, "*loving your enemies*" (5:44)?
4. Is there a change from v 17? Does the mission on view broaden out from this point in time and target?
5. What about by v 32? Does the "*Whoever*", and "*anyone*" (v 37) have all of us in mind?
6. How does "*taking up (our) cross*" (v 38) fit with facing the challenges of mission? What needs to be died to? What did Jesus say that helps accept all of this? (v 24-42)
7. Should we expect to be able to "*heal the sick, raise the dead...drive out demons*" today? How was that important in validating the Apostolic role? (think about how the Apostles went onto do those things in the book of Acts)
8. What do we share in common mission with the Apostles? (think about in Acts how not just the Apostles experienced what Jesus was talking about from v 17)
9. Do these sober warnings about difficulties for any Christian mission explain why we can sometimes treat witnessing as an optional extra, something to leave for others?
10. Think of examples today of everyday things we can all witness in (by word and deed) that non-Christians sometimes take the wrong way?



think & apply



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk

Matthew
11-12

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

keep the faith



kick off

Are you a '1/2 glass full' person or a '1/2 glass empty' person?



key verse

Matthew 11:4...

"Go back and report to John what you hear and see..."



big idea

We already know more than enough to keep believing.

read Matthew 11:1-30



investigate

1. Why do you think John has some doubts in v 2-3? *Compare Matthew 3:17 with 4:12, 14:3-5.*
2. How could Jesus' answer give fuel for John's faith? (v 4-6) *See Isaiah 35:5-6.*
3. How can Jesus say with force (*"I tell you the truth"*) that there has been none *"greater than John"* (v 11) even though John was also like *"a reed swaying in the wind"* and his clothing was hardly high fashion? (v 7-8) Think about why Jesus linked John to Elijah.
4. And yet, how can anyone of us be greater than John? (v 11)
5. How did the crowds totally miss the point with John and Jesus? (v 16-19)
6. Why are we without excuse if we don't see what the evidence is pointing to? (v 20-24) What do we need to happen to be able to see and thereby have true rest? (v 25-30, especially v 25)
7. What kind of things make us question God? How is it a mixed bag for us as Christians today?
8. What's the difference between blind faith and the faith Jesus is talking about?
9. Think about a person suffering chronic illness. How can that potentially either weaken or strengthen their faith?
10. What are we forgetting when we demand God do certain things for us in order for us to believe in Him?



think & apply



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk

Matthew 13
(3rd big talk)

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

going the distance



kick off

What makes you feel like giving up on something?



key verse

Mathew 13:9... "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."



big idea

We need to persevere with Jesus to the end.

read Matthew 13:1-23



investigate

1. What had happened on *"That same day"* (v 1) in the previous chapter that might have discouraged Jesus?
2. On the other hand, there were still many others interested in Jesus (v 2). Do you think it strange that he took this opportunity to speak in unexplained parables? (v 3-9)
3. Is his response to queries about this (v 10) a fair one? (v 11-17)
4. How does the context for the 2 Old Testament quotes of Jesus help us out here? *See Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 6:9-10*. Have these crowds been like that? Were they seeking explanation?
5. How does the explanation of the parable explain what's going on here? (v 18-23)
6. *See Psalm 78:1-8*. Any further light to what's going on when someone gives up on God?
7. Do you know people who haven't persevered in Jesus? What led them to this?
8. Jesus talks about producing a crop here. How could that be misinterpreted to mean 'salvation by works'? Any safe guard in how the amount isn't the issue?
9. What would you say to a fellow Christian who shares how they are struggling in their faith? Can the awareness of a struggle be a good thing?
10. How can we help each other to keep the spiritual moisture flowing and not let "weeds" suffocate our faith? Given the central role of God's Word in the parable, how should this be crucial in our perseverance with Jesus?



think & apply



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk

Matthew
14-17

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

joining the dots



kick off

Should we applaud a politician who does a back flip?



key verse

Matthew 16:16... "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."



big idea

We need God to help us see the obvious about Jesus.

read Matthew 16:1-28



investigate

1. If you've been able to read the chapters leading up to this passage (14-15), why is the question of v 1 both surprising and unsurprising? Why is Jesus so harsh in reply? (v 4)
2. How did the disciples reveal the potential to make the same mistake? (v 5-12, bearing in mind the amazing catering arrangements in chapters 14 and 15)
3. Why such a range of opinions as to who Jesus is? (v 13-16) Who is crucial to joining the dots here? (v 17-20)
4. How did Peter dramatically show he still had a few more dots to join? (v 21-23) Was Jesus a bit harsh here? (v 23)
5. What does Jesus mean here saying again how we've got to *"take up (our) cross"*? (v 24-28—compare 10:38)
6. Look ahead to the next chapter. How would those events have helped Peter and the other disciples to join even more dots, or be reassured about their opinions of Jesus?
7. Was Jesus setting up Peter to be the Pope? What are *"the rock"* and *"keys"* really about?
8. Share how you joined the dots in coming to faith in Jesus as *"the Christ, the Son of the living God"*?
9. Give an example of how you have learnt more about Jesus even after becoming a Christian?
10. How do people today miss the obvious about Jesus? Should we care about that? How can we help them?



think & apply



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk

**Matthew 18
(4th big talk)**

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

knowing where you've come from



kick off

What makes it easier for us to forgive others?



key verse

Matthew 18:7... "Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!"



big idea

The way we treat others shows whether the Gospel is real to us.

read Matthew 18:1-35



investigate

1. What does the disciples question of Jesus in v 1 reveal about them? Maybe blurry eyed from the transfiguration spotlight of the previous chapter?
2. How does Jesus give them a reality check with the little child? (v 2-9) How strongly does he feel about this?
3. What's God's take on all of this? (v 10-14)
4. Does that help us to see what Jesus is meaning in v 17? What does it mean to treat someone as a "*pagan*"?
5. How high are the stakes here? (v 18-20)
6. Does Peter's search for a legal loophole reveal why Jesus told the subsequent parable about the unmerciful servant? (v 21-35)



think & apply

7. How is Jesus and God's attitude towards the lost here - those who recognise their great need for salvation, such a massive encouragement to us as Christians?
8. Explain how that impacts how we should view fellow believers?
9. What about when it's hard, when one of us seems to be straying? Can we be too soft or too hard?
10. Any implications from this about our attitude towards unbelievers?



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk

Matthew 19-23

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *



kick off

Why does our society tend to tolerate religious figures like Buddha far more than Jesus?



key verse

Matthew 20:28... "the Son of Man did not come to be served... (but) to give his life as a ransom for many."



big idea

Jesus is someone you can't ignore — we have to react one way or another to him.

read Matthew 20:17-21:17



investigate

1. Why shouldn't the disciples have been too surprised by Jesus' sober predictions for this last trip to Jerusalem in 20:17-19? *See Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23.*
2. Do the disciples finally get what this means - third time around with more detail? (20:20-28)
3. Do they really understand what it means to "*drink the cup*" that Jesus was talking about? (20:22) *See Psalm 75:8.*
4. Any irony in the blind being able to "*see*" Jesus better than the crowds? (20:29-34)
5. Do you think they came around as they got closer to Jerusalem by 21:9? Certainly the hype was escalating given the next verse. Do you think they picked up on the huge clue with Jesus entering the city on a donkey? (21:1-11) *See Zechariah 9:9.*
6. Is there another ironic contrast with the way the religious were missing the point in the temple while the children were spot on? (21:12-17)



think & apply

7. Why do people react negatively to Jesus today?
8. What's the big stumbling block?
9. Why is this non-negotiable? What can only Jesus deal with?
10. Does avoidance of these issues or indifference or delay actually constitute an answer or reaction?



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk

Matthew 24-25
(5th big talk)

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

people get ready



kick off

Why are we so fascinated by the future?



key verse

Matthew 24:44... "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come... when you do not expect him."



big idea

We need to be ready to meet Jesus when our world ends.

read Matthew 24:1-51



investigate

1. Why were the disciples so interested when Jesus talked about it being knocked down? (v 1-3) *If keen, glance through Ezekiel 40-47 with the extended vision of a new temple.*
2. What sort of things does Jesus warn are not to be taken as signs that the end is necessarily near? (v 4-25)
3. How does Jesus provide important new information about the temple or "*holy place*" so we don't get the wrong idea about when it would be destroyed? (v 15-25, especially v 23 bearing in mind that in AD70, the temple was destroyed by the Romans)
4. Is Jesus talking about something different in v 29-31? (Apocalyptic language is now used by Jesus which transcends history, normal physical laws)
5. What is the main point Jesus really wants to hit home with the "*fig tree lesson*" from v 32? Note the "*all these things*" in v 2 and 34. Did they happen in the disciples "generation"?
6. How does the rest of the chapter and the parables in the rest of the talk into chapter 25 emphasise the same main point?
7. What are some of the dangers of thinking about how the future will unfold?
8. What are some of the dangers of not thinking about how the future will unfold?
9. There are various interpretations amongst Christians on this passage and issue—some quite extreme, whether in denying the reality of the end or trying to read too much into it. Many are just trying to make sense of it. Why shouldn't we get too anxious about details that are not so clear? Do any of these change anything in the end?
10. *See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11.* Is Paul's emphasis similar to Jesus'?



think & apply



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk
Matthew 26-27

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

oh, the power and the passion



kick off

Why do some feel comfortable ignoring the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice?



key verse

Matthew 27:54... "Surely he was the Son of God!"



big idea

Jesus' sacrifice for us should always amaze us.

read Matthew 26:1-16



investigate

1. Was this plot to get rid of Jesus anything new? (v 3-5) *Scan Matthew 12 if got time.*
2. Why would they succeed now? (v 1-2)
3. Why did Jesus praise the woman's actions in v 10-13?



think & apply

4. What impresses you about this resolve and passion of Jesus to go to the cross even though he clearly could have avoided it all?

read Matthew 26:57-68



investigate

5. How did Jesus finally give what his opponents had been after? (v 57-68)
6. Why was this such a problem for the Jewish establishment? *See Daniel 7:13-14.*



think & apply

7. How do people in principle use the same thing today to condemn or ignore Jesus? What do they want to see before they will believe?
8. What are they failing to see that is so powerful with Jesus' use of his power on that night?

read Matthew 27:45-54



investigate

9. Why was Jesus ultimately crying out on that fateful excruciating day? (v 45-46) The physical pain of crucifixion? The darkness? *See Amos 8:9.* Or something even worse? *Remember Matthew 11:27.*



think & apply

10. Why does Jesus' death demand a personal passionate response in us? (think about the curtain being torn in 2 and the reaction of the centurion)

Pray in response to this chapter...



prayer points



w/e reading

Matthew 28

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *

standing on solid ground



kick off

From a worldly point of view, by good Friday, had Jesus bitten off more than he could chew?



key verse

Matthew 28:6... "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."



big idea

The resurrection changes everything—it's the best news we could ever get.

read Matthew 28:1-20



investigate

1. Were the women gullible on that first Easter Sunday morning? (v 1) See **Mark 16:1**.
2. How does the guards' response reveal our real problem? (v 2-5)
3. Do the angel's words to the women reveal our real problem as well? (v 6-7)
4. What is so comforting about Jesus when he met/ran into the women? (v 8-10)
5. What's motivating the chief priests and the elders in their response to the guards' report? (v 11-15)
6. What's Jesus' emphasis to his disciples after the resurrection? What is it he is with us "*to the very end of the age*" in doing? (v 16-20)
7. Why is it such a deal breaker if Jesus didn't rise from the dead? See **1 Corinthians 15:17**.
8. Why does the resurrection separate Christianity from all other religions? What is really delivered?
9. Why do some people try their hardest to not believe it? Do they ironically require more faith?
10. What should be our motivation as Christians to get out there with the message? How does the emphasis on discipleship help?



think & apply



prayer points

Pray in response to this chapter...



through wk

your favourite part of Matthew

* * * Ordinary people following an extraordinary God * * *