

PART 01

MATTHEW

*Follow Jesus
No Matter The Cost*

A STUDY THROUGH MATTHEW

This book belongs to

GOSPEL CITY CHURCH

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OVERVIEW

THE GOAL OF GOSPEL CITY BIBLE STUDIES

The goal of everything we do at Gospel City is to make disciples of Christ in the context of the local church for the glory of God. But how can we (sinners saved by grace) become like Jesus (the perfect, sinless God-man)? No amount of effort, good works, or law keeping could possibly enable a fallen sinner to become like Jesus. However, through the gospel, God has promised to recreate sinners into the image of Christ, not through our works, but through faith in Christ's work. This faith is fed and nurtured by hearing/studying the Word of God, as Paul says in Romans 10:17, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

That is where these Bible studies come in. If disciples of Christ are made by hearing and believing the Word of Christ, then we at Gospel City must be lifelong learners, lovers, and obeyers of the Word of God! The goal of these Bible studies is to equip you to do just that. As you are better equipped to study, love, and obey the Word, you will grow in your personal discipleship, and you will also be better equipped to make disciples of all nations by teaching others to obey all that Christ has commanded.

PARTICIPANT USER GUIDE

UNDERSTANDING HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

With this goal in mind, we have divided each week's personal study time into three steps: (Step 01) *Observe*, (Step 02) *Interpret*, and (Step 03) *Respond in Prayer*. Each of the three steps will include guidance on how to pray over what you will study and how to respond to what you have studied. Here are some tips for how to approach each step:

STEP 01 / OBSERVE

The goal of the observation questions is not to get you to answer the questions; the goal is to act as a diving board that helps get you thinking about the text. Use the questions to help you ask more questions. Circle, underline, and highlight in your Bible. Look for repeating words and phrases. Consider how what the author is saying is connected to what he just said. And most importantly, pray, pray, pray, and pray some more. Ask the Lord to open your eyes that you may see wondrous things out of his law (Psalm 119:18).

STEP 02 / INTERPRET

After thinking deeply about the text, we will begin to try to interpret it. To guide you in this, we will provide *zoom out* and *zoom in* questions. Zoom out to see how the author is drawing upon themes and doctrines in the broader, unified story of Scripture. Just as climbing mountains provides one with epic views, each zoom out section will provide “observation decks” that overlook the grand narrative of the epic story of the Bible. Then zoom back in to see how what the author is saying fits in the immediate context and develops the overall argument.

Each question in Step 02 has corresponding cross-references and/or commentary in the back of the workbook. The goal of Step 02 is to properly interpret the passage. So lean on the resource in the back as much as you need to, but don’t lean on it so much that it keeps you from doing the work. The goal is not simply to “know” the right answer, but to *understand* it and *believe* it.

At the end of each zoom out or zoom in is a reflection question or two. Once you have prayerfully interpreted the text, the next step is to prayerfully consider how what you have learned from Scripture has practical implications for your everyday life. Once we have read and interpreted the Word, we need to consider how the living and active Word is “reading” us. The goal of Bible study is not merely to know some facts about the Bible. The goal is to know God, and as we come to know and behold Him through the Word, we will be conformed into the image of His Son. So take time each week to hold your heart and life up to the mirror that is the Word and respond in repentant faith. Don’t rush past this step.

STEP 03 / RESPOND IN PRAYER

The prayer section of each week follows the same pattern: praise, confession, request, and thanksgiving. From the specific text for the week, you will be prompted to praise God, confess the sin He has revealed in your heart, ask for His help to live and love as He calls you, and express your gratitude and give thanks for His many blessings.

This is responsive prayer, both reflective and applicational. The prompts are intended for journaling responses, but that is not the only way to interact in prayerful response. You might also want to review what you are praying over and take a walk as you talk to God about what you are learning and how it is challenging and growing you.

INTRO TO THE STUDY OF MATTHEW



INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

Who do you say that Jesus is? Many people are willing to acknowledge that He was a good man who died an unjust death. Many more admire His teachings. Some even believe Him to be a prophet or a miracle-worker, and millions believe He is worth giving one hour of their attention to on Sunday mornings and scattering statues of Him around their homes. While some of these cultural perceptions of Jesus are true, they fall woefully short. Like someone who doesn't know the difference between a candle and the sun, both give off light and heat, but they are far from being the same.

In this study, we will discover that Jesus is so much more than a mere historical figure to be admired. He is the Christ, the Son of David, Son of Abraham, Son of God, and Son of Man. We will marvel at the fact that He is the fully human King of kings and the fully divine Immanuel who has come to usher in the universal and eternal Kingdom of Heaven. We will learn to see Him as the New Moses who has come to free His people from slavery to sin, inaugurate the New Covenant, and usher them into the new and better promised land. We will also see that He is the Daniel 7 Son of Man who has the authority to forgive sins, and the Isaiah 53 Suffering Servant who has the ability to pay for them.

As we behold our King in His glory and worship Him as Lord, we will see that the Gospel according to Matthew is calling all who believe to die to themselves, forsake this world, and follow Jesus no matter the cost—for He is worthy! And for all who are willing to follow Him to the cross, He will lead them to the Kingdom. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously said, “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.” And the reason our death-defeating Savior bids us come and die is so that we may live. So join us in our study of Matthew, so that we can better learn how to follow our crucified King as He leads us to the Kingdom of Heaven.

**TIPS FOR
STUDYING
THE BOOK
OF MATTHEW**

In general, each section of Matthew will focus on (1) who Jesus is (His identity), (2) what He came to do (His mission), and (3) the response He demands and deserves (discipleship, obedience, worship, etc.).

Matthew will plunge us into the depths of the Old Testament background, and he will bring us soaring into the heights as we behold the many facets of the glory of the King of heaven. But as you try to hold on and enjoy the ride, don’t lose the forest for the trees. Every genealogy, prophecy, miracle, exorcism, healing, teaching, and passage Matthew includes is meant to reveal the (1) identity and (2) mission of Jesus in order to (3) prompt a response.

So for each week of the study, be asking yourself: What does this passage reveal about Jesus? What is it teaching me about what He came to accomplish? And how should I respond?



WEEK 01

JESUS IS THE SON OF DAVID & SON OF GOD

WEEK 01

READ

MATTHEW 1:1-2:23

In our Bibles, Malachi 4:6 (the last verse in the Old Testament) and Matthew 1:1 are separated by a mere turn of the page. But what is represented in those few inches is 400 years of silence. 400 years! For centuries, God had been consistently speaking to His people through prophets like Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. He had been warning them about coming judgment, and He had been reminding them of His gospel promises that one day a Messianic King would come to make all things new, reestablish David's throne, and rule over an Eden-like Kingdom forever. The prophets who preached these promises never revoked them, but they did grow silent for a season that dragged on 150 years longer than the existence of our country.

Fast forward 400 years, and we come to a time when Israel was being ruled by God-hating pagans,

the Davidic dynasty was nowhere to be found, Israel was essentially in exile while living in their own land, and the gospel promises of an eternal Eden-like Kingdom were starting to fade into the trash bins of history. But then, all of a sudden, the silence is broken. Matthew begins his gospel like a rollercoaster that goes from 0 to 100 mph in a split second. There are genealogies, fulfilled prophecies, angelic appearances, Old Testament allusions, and God sightings that come at readers left and right. And the exciting pace is meant to communicate loud and clear: the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world, the one we have been waiting for for thousands of years—He is here! He is finally here! Now let's turn to Matthew and let him share his Holy Spirit-inspired perspective on the best story ever told.

MEDITATE ON
Matthew 1:21

PRAY
Psalm 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 1:1-2:23

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 1:1-17

- 01 | As you read through the genealogy, what stands out as surprising or unexpected?

- 02 | Consider how Matthew begins and ends the genealogy. Which ancestors of Jesus does Matthew seem to be highlighting? What do these highlights imply about Jesus' identity?

- 03 | Consider the five women mentioned in the genealogy. What implications does their inclusion have for Jesus' mission and identity? (*Hint: consider their ethnicity, morality, marital status, etc.*)

- 04 | Ponder: of all the ways to start a Gospel, why a genealogy? What does it communicate about the identity and mission of Jesus?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

- 05 | Consider the different characters mentioned in this passage. What does each character's relationship to Jesus imply about His identity (e.g., Mary being Jesus' birth mom implies He is fully human)?
- 06 | What does the meaning of Jesus' name reveal about who He is?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 2:1-12

- 07 | Compare and contrast how the religious leaders, Herod, and the wise men responded to Jesus. What stands out about their responses?
- 08 | What does this passage reveal about who Jesus is and how we should respond to Him?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 2:13-23

- 09 | According to this passage, what type of man was King Herod? What would it have been like to be ruled by that type of ruler?
- 10 | Why does Matthew keep emphasizing that events in Jesus' life fulfill Old Testament prophecies? What do these fulfillments imply about His identity?

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 1:21

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 1:1-2:23

Jesus' identity is like a diamond—it is multifaceted and beautiful. In the first two chapters of his Gospel, Matthew turns the diamond from side to side so that his readers can begin to fathom all that Jesus is and has come to accomplish. Here in Step

02, we will gaze at a few different facets of the diamond with the goal of having the same response to Him as the wise men did, which was fully surrendered worship. Then we will consider to whom this good news about Jesus applies.

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM OUT 01 / Jesus is the Messianic Son of David

ZOOM OUT 02 / Jesus is the Son of God Incarnate

ZOOM OUT 03 / Who did Jesus come to save?

CONSIDER THE CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 128-129

- 01 | Go through the genealogy (Matthew 1:1-17) and circle every occurrence of David's name. How does the genealogy highlight Jesus' identity as the son of David?
- 02 | Now consider Matthew 2:1-12. What clues do you see in the text that point to Jesus being a king from the line of David?
- 03 | Read 2 Samuel 7:13-14 and Isaiah 9:6-7. Why is it significant that Jesus is the promised son of David?

REFLECT

Genealogies in the Bible are tempting to skip over with all the difficult-to-pronounce names and hard-to-trace family connections, but each name in Jesus' genealogy holds great significance, points us to Jesus' identity as the promised Messiah, and can lead us to worship. Which parts or names of the genealogy of Jesus stood out to you, surprised you, and drew you to worship the promised Savior and King?

In the previous *zoom out*, we considered the many ways Matthew 1-2 shouts that Jesus is the long-awaited son of David. He is the Savior that was promised all the way back in the beginning, and He has come to establish a universal and eternal kingdom characterized by peace, righteousness, flourishing, and the presence of God. This indeed is very good news.

In this *zoom out*, we are going to consider how the news just keeps getting better and better. Ever since the first messianic prophecy back in Genesis 3:15,

the expectation was that the Messiah would be a human. He would be a seed of the woman and offspring of Abraham and David. Matthew's account of Jesus' birth does confirm that Jesus was indeed fully human, as He was born of Mary.

However, Matthew includes many clues for his readers that point to Jesus being fully human *and* fully God. Let's consider the evidence of the incarnation together so that we can marvel at the greatest miracle in the history of the world.

CONSIDER THE CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 129-130

04 | Matthew gives multiple indicators that point readers to consider the *deity* of Jesus. Find as many as you can and write them down (primarily focus on 1:18-2:12).

05 | According to Matthew, how should readers respond to Jesus?

REFLECT

The Christmas story is so familiar to us and can be challenging to read with fresh eyes. The tangibility of “Immanuel—God with us” leaps out at us. God Himself takes on human form, not only to be among us, but to save us for an eternity with him.

What stands out to you as you read this story again? Imagine what it would have been like for Jesus to become like us. Meditate on how Paul reflects on this incredible truth from Philippians 2:5-8.

In the previous *zoom outs*, we have seen that Jesus is the fully human Messiah, the long-awaited son of David, *and* the fully divine incarnation of Yahweh who is worthy of our worship. In *Zoom Out 03*, we will consider one of the most beautiful verses in the Gospel of Matthew, if not the whole Bible. Matthew reports the angel's words to Joseph in 1:21, saying, "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

We have already considered the good news that Jesus' name means "Yahweh saves."

Later in this study, we will consider what it means to be saved from our "sins." But for now, we need to ask: Who are "his people"? What does the angel mean when he says Jesus will save *his people* from their sins? The answer to this very important question will develop throughout the Gospel, but there are clues from the very beginning. Let's consider some of them now.

CONSIDER THE CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGE 130

- 06 | **Did Jesus come to save Jews only, or Jews and Gentiles? Look for clues in the first two chapters that give hints to the answer to this very important question. Consider Genesis 12:1-3 / Matthew 1:1-17 / Galatians 3:7-9 as you look for your answer.**
- 07 | **Read Matthew 3:7-10, 12:46-50, 28:18-20. Based on clues from these passages, who are "his people" whom Jesus came to save?**

REFLECT

Reflect on the personal and intricate way God designed to save His people. Throughout the entire story of mankind, God has been weaving a path to come to us in the flesh to save and bless any who put their faith in the Son.

Jesus' promise to be "with you always, to the end of the age" is more than words in our text. How do this promise and Jesus' mission to save people from all nations cause you to worship and follow Him?

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. The paper is white and features evenly spaced, light blue or grey horizontal lines running across its entire width. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. The paper is white and features evenly spaced, light blue or grey horizontal lines running across its entire width. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

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REFLECT 02

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

REFLECT 03

[illegible]

STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 1:1-2:23

- PRAISE** Give praise to the King of kings! Worship Jesus and rejoice exceedingly with great joy that He has come to save you from your sins, to dwell among us, and to rule as the great King and good Shepherd of His people.
- ADMIT** Confess where your heart may feel more like Herod's or the religious leaders' than that of the wise men. Is there any hostility or indifference toward Jesus? Jesus invites you to bring those dark places into the light. Tell Him the state of your heart today.
- ASK** Ask the Spirit to continue to soften your heart and illuminate the Word to you. Pray that you grow in knowledge and understanding.
- THANK** Thank God for His timing. As we see in the plan to send Jesus, it wasn't a quick fix but a beautifully intricate plan to save His people. Thank Him for His love for you to send Jesus, and for the ways He works all things to completion.



WEEK 02

JESUS IS THE KING OF HEAVEN

WEEK 02

READ

MATTHEW 3:1-4:25

Last week we considered the epic beginning to Matthew's Gospel. As we saw, God breaks His 400-year silence with a barrage of fulfilled prophecies, angelic activity, and miracles performed. As a perfect bridge from the Old Testament to the New, the lengthy genealogy makes loud and clear that the long-awaited Messiah and Savior of the world has finally come to bless all the nations of the earth.

And yet, the news is even better than most people anticipated. Jesus is not only the long-awaited son of David and son of Abraham, but He is also Yahweh in the flesh. In other words, God did not merely send the long-awaited Savior—He is the Savior who has come. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. And the news keeps getting better.

He has not merely come to establish an earthly kingdom by conquering Israel's human enemies. The salvation He brings is infinitely and eternally better than that, for He has come to save His people from their sins.

This is a lot of good news, and Matthew is just getting started. In this week's text, Matthew continues to unpack Jesus' identity as the long-awaited King and the perfect Son of God. He also introduces a very important new theme, which is the kingdom. Kings have kingdoms, and Jesus is no different. This should cause readers to ask: what type of kingdom does Jesus rule over? What is it like, and who are His citizens? With these very important questions in mind, let's dive in and find out.

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 3:2

PRAY

Psalms 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 3:1-4:25

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 3:1-12

- 01 | What does this passage reveal about John the Baptist? Note details about his identity, his ministry, the content of his preaching, etc.
- 02 | Circle the words *repent/repentance*. According to John, why should people repent, and what is the evidence of repentance?
- 03 | With the details about repentance from sin in mind, what does John's baptism symbolize, and how does it help "prepare the way" for the coming of King Jesus?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 3:13-17

- 04 | Jesus does not have any sin to confess or repent of, so why does He get baptized by John? *(First consider Jesus' stated reason in 3:15, then consider the different aspects of John's ministry that Jesus would want to affirm by being baptized by him.)*
- 05 | Note the three significant and amazing things that happen immediately after Jesus is baptized. What does Jesus' baptism reveal about His identity and mission?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 4:1-11

- 06 | Consider each of the three temptations. How does Satan try to tempt Jesus, and how does Jesus respond?
- 07 | What does Jesus' victory over Satan reveal about His identity and mission?
- 08 | Ponder 4:4 specifically. Jesus is saying that obeying God's word is more essential for survival than physical food. Do you believe this is true? Why or why not?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 4:12-25

- 09 | Matthew 4:17 marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry. According to 4:17-25, what did Jesus come to do?
- 10 | Note the word kingdom in verses 17 and 23. What connections do you see between Jesus' ministry (*such as preaching repentance, calling disciples, healing people and casting out demons*) and the coming of the kingdom? What do these different facets of Jesus' ministry imply about the type of kingdom He is ushering in?

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 3:2

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 3:1-4:25

Last week, we saw that Jesus is the son of David and God the Son incarnate who has come to save His people from their sins. This very specific mission is the lens by which we must view everything that Matthew writes and Jesus does. “Yahweh saves” has come to save His people from sin and death.

In chapter 3, seemingly out of nowhere, a crazy man with questionable style, creative

insults, and a diet that will never be trendy bursts onto the scene. As he does, readers should be asking: Who is this guy? Why is he baptizing people in the wilderness? Why is his ministry so wildly popular? And most importantly, what does his ministry have to do with Jesus’ mission to save His people from their sins?

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM OUT 01 / Who is John the Baptist and what does he have to do with Jesus?

ZOOM OUT 02 / What does it mean for Jesus to be the Son of God?

ZOOM OUT 03 / What is the Kingdom of Heaven?

ZOOM OUT 01 / WHO IS JOHN THE BAPTIST AND WHAT DOES HE HAVE TO DO WITH JESUS?

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 131-132

- 01 | Read Isaiah 40:3 / Malachi 4:5-6 / 2 Kings 1:8 (*all of which are alluded to in this text in Matthew*). According to 3:5, “all Judea and all the region were going out to him”? Why do you think his ministry message was drawing such a crowd?
- 02 | Consider 3:1-12 and note the multiple references to repentance and sin. Why is John telling people (including Jews) to repent and be baptized (see 3:9)? How does this ministry help prepare the way for the Messiah (see 3:11-12) (*Hint: Recall the Messiah’s mission as stated in Matthew 1:21.*)?

This passage has so much to say about the glory of Jesus! According to Matthew 3:3, John the Baptist is the one preparing the way for the Lord, and the Lord in Isaiah 40:3 refers to Yahweh. It is clear John is preparing the way for Jesus, which means Jesus is Yahweh.

- 03 | Read Ezekiel 36:25-28 / Psalm 2:7 / Isaiah 42:1. Look for how these Old Testament texts are quoted and echoed in Matthew 3:11-17. How does John the Baptist’s ministry help readers understand who Jesus is?

REFLECT

John the Baptist’s baptism was unique and a bold statement in acknowledging sin and need. He called Jew and Gentile alike to repent and prepare for the coming and long-awaited Savior—a savior who would both save and bring justice. John’s ministry was a proclamation that Jesus is who they have been waiting for, and so we should be prepared!

Our response to Jesus should be no different. We should also bear fruit in keeping with repentance, meaning we should live a life acknowledging our sin and need and turn to the Savior. Do you recall the first time you repented of your sins and believed in Jesus? Take time to recall that time in your life.

Matthew 4:1-11 records Jesus' victory over Satan's temptations in the wilderness. This passage is often used as a paradigm regarding how Christians can also have victory over temptation. Jesus resisted the devil by knowing His Bible and quoting Scripture. Therefore, we should follow His lead and fend off temptation with the Sword of the Spirit.

This principle is certainly a true implication of the passage, but it is not the main point. The main point of every single verse of Matthew up to this point is to reveal Jesus' identity and mission, and the temptation narrative is no different. Therefore, the first question we should ask

is what the temptation narrative reveals to us about Jesus. With this question in mind, readers should take note of the fact that upon Jesus' baptism, the Father's voice booms from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son." Then immediately the narrative shifts to Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, and each temptation begins with Satan's mocking jab saying "if you are the Son of God..."

This is the point of the passage—to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. This should cause us to ask: what does it mean for Jesus to be God's Son, and how does He prove it in the wilderness? With these questions in mind, let's dive in.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 132-133

04 | Consider the details recorded in Matthew 4:1-4. What famous Old Testament stories do these details recall?

05 | Why does Satan mockingly tempt Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God (see 4:3, 6)? What is meant by the title "Son of God"?

Adam, Israel, and David all famously failed to image God (think the fall, the golden calf, Bathsheba, etc.). None of them was worthy of the title "son of God." None of them lived and ruled in a way that imaged God's righteous and holy character to the world.

06 | How does Jesus' victory over Satan prove that He is the Son of God? How does He succeed where others failed?

REFLECT

We are all image bearers—made in the image of God. But none of us is capable of imaging our Father perfectly. As we have already discovered, we all need to repent and acknowledge that we need a capable representative. As Satan attempts to trip Jesus up, Jesus proves that He is indeed the perfect human representative we need.

You can probably think of plenty of times that you have misrepresented God through your own failures. And yet in Christ, we have His power in us to resist temptations, too. We can be thankful that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, and we can look to him for help and as an example. What can you learn from Jesus' resistance to temptation that encourages you in your own struggles?

ZOOM OUT 03 / WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

In these opening chapters, Matthew has thoroughly established that Jesus is the long-awaited Son of David and Son of God, the one who will conquer God's enemies and rule over God's kingdom with justice and righteousness in a way that images God to the world. Up to this point, we have focused on the king, His identity, and His mission. In *Zoom Out 03*, we are going to focus on the kingdom that Jesus will rule over.

In Matthew 3:2 and 4:17, the entire ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus

are summarized in the exact same way: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Considering that the kingdom is central to Jesus' ministry, readers should be asking what it refers to. Matthew will continue to unpack the theme of the kingdom, as the term is used 53 times in his Gospel. But for now, let's seek to discern what we can about the kingdom from Matthew 4:12-25.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY ON PAGES 133-134

07 | With Matthew 4:14-17 in mind, read Isaiah 9:1-7. How does Jesus fulfill this prophecy in Matthew 4? Focusing on Isaiah 9:6-7, what will this kingdom be like?

08 | Now focus on Matthew 4:23-25 and think about the ultimate source of things like disease, affliction, pains, and demonic oppression. What is the relationship between Jesus' healing people of these things and His preaching about the kingdom?

09 | With your answers to the two previous questions in mind, why is it called the kingdom of heaven? What does the name tell us about the nature of Jesus' kingdom?

REFLECT

Take a moment to imagine a world without sin or the effects of sin. Jesus' kingdom is a kingdom with no more illness, no more pain, no more demonic oppression and no more death. What excites you about this kingdom of heaven? Does this message of Jesus' kingdom compel you to listen to more of what He has to say?

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire surface, typical of notebook or legal stationery. The paper is otherwise completely empty, with no text, markings, or illustrations.

REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

[illegible]

REFLECT 02

[illegible]

REFLECT 03

[illegible]

STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 3:1-4:25

- PRAISE** Pause and worship Jesus! As John the Baptist recognized himself not worthy to even carry Christ's sandals, we too should bow to the one who has come to take away our sins and usher in a New Kingdom. Take some time to meditate and express your awe to the King!
- ADMIT** Repentance is a key to receiving the kingdom. When you read the words "repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," does it bring to mind any area of conviction? Confess this to God—he is calling for you to lay it aside and follow His Son.
- ASK** The Spirit who descended on Jesus at His baptism and led Him into the wilderness is the same Spirit that indwells every one of His disciples. Ask God to give you a greater awareness of His Spirit and a deeper desire to follow His ways.
- THANK** How does this week's text stoke gratitude in your life? Is it knowing that Jesus is the true Son of God? The authority He proved over sin and Satan's schemes? That He would call you to follow him? The compassion you see in Him as He begins His ministry? Tell Him why you are thankful for Him today!



WEEK 03

JESUS IS THE NEW MOSES

WEEK 03

READ MATTHEW 5:1-48

In Matthew 1-4, the Gospel writer has a lot to say about the identity and mission of Jesus. He is the son of David and the offspring of Abraham. He is “God with us” in the flesh. He is fully man, fully God, and fully worthy of all our worship. He is the perfectly righteous Son of God who has come to fulfill all righteousness by paying for His people’s unrighteousness and saving them from their sins. In summary, He is the fulfillment of everything the Old Testament promised.

Out of all the glorious themes covered in the first few chapters, the twin themes of kingship and kingdom stand above the rest. After establishing that Jesus is the promised King, Matthew transitions to show that the coming of the King means the coming of the kingdom is imminent. “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” is the thesis of John’s and Jesus’ ministry (3:2, 4:17). When Jesus teaches, He teaches about the

kingdom, and when He ministers to others, He is showing them what the kingdom will be like (4:17-25).

It is with these two themes of kingship and kingdom in mind that we must approach the beloved Sermon on the Mount. The word kingdom is used seven times in the sermon. Jesus begins and ends with references to who will and will not enter the kingdom (5:3, 19-20 / 7:21-23). The climactic petition of the Lord’s Prayer is “your kingdom come” (6:10). Thus, the topic of the sermon is indeed the kingdom, and the good news of the coming of the kingdom ought to prompt readers to ask: Who are the citizens of this heavenly kingdom? And what does it look like to live under the rule and reign of King Jesus? With these important questions in mind, let’s dive into one of the greatest sermons ever preached.

MEDITATE ON
Matthew 5:20

PRAY
Psalm 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 5:1-48

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 5:1-12

- 01 | Go through 5:1-12 and circle the phrase “Blessed are.” According to Jesus, what type of people are blessed? How do these characteristics differ from how the world defines blessing?

- 02 | Now go through each verse and circle the word “for.” What type of blessings are awaiting these people (who might not seem very blessed in this life) in the future kingdom?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 5:13-16

- 03 | The phrase “you are” is used twice in these few verses. With 5:1-12 in mind, who are the “you”? To whom is Jesus talking?

- 04 | As kingdom citizens/disciples of the King, Jesus compares us to salt and light. What are these two metaphors meant to illustrate?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 5:17-20

05 | What has Jesus come to do? What has He *not* come to do?

06 | With what Jesus has come to accomplish in mind, what are the implications for His disciples?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 5:21-48

In 5:20, Jesus makes a shocking statement. Then, in 5:21-48, He gives six examples of how His disciples must have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.

07 | Go through each of the six examples one at a time.

→ Which law does Jesus reference?

→ How does He explain the heart behind the law?

→ What reason does He give for why it is important to follow the heart of the law and not just the letter of it?

08 | Consider these six examples as a whole. How would obeying the heart behind God's commands demonstrate a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees and scribes?

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 5:20

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 5:1-48

To anyone familiar with the Old Testament's teaching on the depravity of man, the Sermon on the Mount contains some shocking and perplexing teachings. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." But the Old Testament makes clear that no one seeks after God, and no one thirsts for righteousness, not even one (Psalm 53:1-3). Jesus goes on to say, "Blessed are the pure in heart." And yet the Old Testament also says that every heart is desperately sick, and no heart is pure (Jeremiah 17:9). From there, Jesus goes on to teach that the type of people who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven are those who "conquer sinful anger and lust, keep their marriage vows, live with integrity, refrain from seeking revenge, love their enemies as well as their neighbors, and exhibit the character of their heavenly Father (Matthew 5:21-48)" (Quarles 93).

The standard of righteousness that Jesus teaches in this sermon should prompt us to ask an obvious question. How does Jesus expect anyone to live up to this standard? Are these statements just hyperbole meant to drive disciples to despair and remind them they could never earn their way to heaven? Or is this sermon realistic instruction for disciples, teaching them about the righteousness that can and should characterize the life of a regenerate believer?

Answering this question is essential for properly interpreting the Sermon on the Mount, and in order to do so, we must look for clues in the surrounding context to determine how Jesus could realistically expect His disciples to have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM OUT 01 / Is Jesus' standard of righteousness realistic or impossible?

ZOOM IN 01 / What type of character will Jesus' disciples have in this life?

ZOOM IN 02 / What type of righteousness is necessary to enter the kingdom?

ZOOM OUT 01 / IS JESUS' STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS REALISTIC OR IMPOSSIBLE?

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 134-135

In Deuteronomy 18:15-18, the great prophet Moses prophesied that one day another prophet like him would arise.

- 01 | Read Deuteronomy 18:15-18. This passage came to be understood as a Messianic prophecy. According to this passage, what will the Messiah be like?**

If you are unfamiliar with the story of Moses or don't know what to look for, it is easy to miss the parallels between Jesus and Moses. Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as the "New Moses" is found throughout his Gospel. Matthew wants his readers to pick up on these connections by the way he begins the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus "went up on the mountain" just as Moses did to receive revelation from God (see Exodus 19:3, 24:18, 34:4). But this time, the New and Greater Moses ascends the mountain to deliver God's revelation straight from His mouth.

- 02 | Scan through Matthew 2-4 (or browse the section headings) and write down events in Jesus' life that are reminiscent of events in Moses' life. What are some ways Matthew is communicating that Jesus is the New Moses?**
- 03 | Read Deuteronomy 30:6, 10 / Jeremiah 31:31-34 / Ezekiel 36:26-27. These passages are prophecies about the New Covenant. According to these prophecies, will God's New Covenant people have hearts that are able to love Him and be righteous? If so, how?**
- 04 | Matthew is portraying Jesus as the New Moses who is inaugurating the New Covenant. With this in mind, is the standard of righteousness taught in the Sermon on the Mount hyperbole or realistic for Jesus' disciples? Explain.**

REFLECT

It may seem like a lofty expectation to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect (v48), but God's promise is that He will put within His children a new heart and His Spirit to empower obedience and righteousness. Why is it important to first understand what God has done before we focus on what Jesus asks His disciples to do?

ZOOM IN 01 / WHAT TYPE OF CHARACTER WILL JESUS' DISCIPLES HAVE IN THIS LIFE?

In *Zoom Out 01*, we asked big questions about how we ought to even approach the Sermon on the Mount. It could be easy to read the high standard Jesus calls us to in these chapters and conclude “Jesus must be trying to set the bar for entrance into the kingdom so high to discourage anyone from trying to earn their way in so that we all read the sermon and conclude that only those who trust in His righteousness will be saved.” Of course, it is true that no one can earn their way to heaven, but that is not the point of the sermon. It is not evangelistic or hyperbolic. Jesus actually expects His disciples to be righteous and godly and salt and light in this world—not through their own effort and works, but through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who regenerates our hearts and helps us love God and love others and thus fulfill the law.

This is what Jesus has come to do, as the New Moses inaugurating the New Covenant—He is not coming to merely purchase a license to sin so that His people can sin as much as they want without any consequences. Jesus has come to pay for sin, deliver His people from all the effects of sin, and recreate a new people (the Church) who are able to be holy as our heavenly Father is holy. This is all that is meant by Jesus coming to “save His people from their sins.”

With this framework established, it is now time to dive into the body of the sermon to see how King Jesus instructs His disciples about how they ought to live in this world as they await the coming of the kingdom.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 135-136

- 05 |** Go through each Beatitude. How do they describe someone whose heart has been changed by the gospel? Is the corresponding future blessing earned or graciously gifted?

According to the Beatitudes, Jesus' disciples are to be dependent on God, mournful of sin, meek, hungry for righteousness, merciful, pure, peaceful, and to live for Jesus no matter the cost. With this radically transformed lifestyle in mind, read Matthew 5:11-16.

- 06 | Scan through Matthew 2-4 (or browse the section headings) and write down events in Jesus' life that are reminiscent of events in Moses' life. What are some ways Matthew is communicating that Jesus is the New Moses?**
- 07 | How are salt and light metaphors for describing the effect that the righteous character of Jesus' disciples ought to have on the world?**

REFLECT

Blessing and persecution don't tend to go hand in hand. And yet, as Jesus begins His teaching with a picture that defines a true disciple, He both calls them blessed and warns of the reality of opposition. Jesus does not seem to share this to scare anyone off, but rather to show them their character can have a great impact on the world around them.

Consider the Beatitudes carefully. Is your life marked by these characteristics? Do you shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father?

ZOOM IN 02 / WHAT TYPE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NECESSARY TO ENTER THE KINGDOM?

Jesus goes on to unpack what this gospel transformation looks like in detail in order to communicate this transformation is not optional for entrance into the kingdom. This is how Jesus begins and ends the body of the sermon, by saying "not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father in heaven" (7:21, compare with 5:20). Everything in between is meant to explain

the holiness, without which we will not see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

Here in *Zoom In 02*, we will begin to consider how Jesus' disciples must have a righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Next week, we will pick up where we left off at the beginning of chapter 6.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGE 136

08 | In 5:17-18, Jesus declares He has come to fulfill every iota of the Old Testament. According to 5:19-20, what implications does Jesus' fulfillment of the Law and Prophets have for His disciples?

In 5:21-48, Jesus provides six examples of what true obedience to the Law looks like. His examples include: anger, lust, divorce/marriage, honesty, retaliation/mercy, and love for enemies.

09 | Which one of these areas of obedience do you struggle with the most and why?

With your answer to *Question 09* in mind, study what Jesus has to say about it (e.g., if you struggle with anger, study 5:21-26—if lust, then study 5:27-30, etc).

10 | As you study, reflect on these questions:

→ What do I need to repent of?

→ How do my actions expose my heart?

→ What does submission to King Jesus and true obedience look like in this area?

REFLECT

The word “perfect” in Matthew 5:48 can feel unattainable. It is an echo of God’s law to the Israelites found in Leviticus that His people should be *holy* as He is holy. But a better understanding of “perfect” or “holy” in this context would be *whole, complete, or singularly devoted*. Jesus is not calling us to be righteous with the expectation that we will never sin again. Only Jesus was sinless, and by His sinless life, He grants us righteousness before God—this is a gift. But Jesus does expect His followers to be fully devoted to Him.

Consider what it means to be wholly devoted to Christ and His Kingdom, allowing God to define what is right. How has a new heart shaped your desires and caused you to desire to do His will?

[illegible]

REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

[illegible]

REFLECT 02

[illegible]

REFLECT 03

[illegible]

STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 5:1-48

- PRAISE** The Sermon on the Mount is such a gift to the believers—the longest sermon from the mouth of our Lord! Imagine yourself on the hillside of the Greatest Teacher and King, and marvel at the wisdom He lovingly imparts to us.
- ADMIT** The six examples of true obedience offer many soul-searching opportunities. If you haven't submitted any of these things to the King, bring them to Him in prayer today. If your heart is willing and ready to confess, express that to God! (And if there is anything heavy on your heart, seek out your small group leader or a trusted believer to walk through that confession Biblically).
- ASK** For the true disciple, we are made salt and light! How should we shine before others? Ask God to show you how He wants to use you to bring Him glory.
- THANK** Reading through the Beatitudes, we are reminded that the blessings we receive are a gift—they are not earned. What a good and gracious king He is! Thank Him for His kindness to you!



WEEK 04

JESUS IS THE END TIMES JUDGE

WEEK 04

READ MATTHEW 6:1-7:29

Matthew 1-4 heralds the good news that the king of heaven and earth has come to defeat sin, demons, and death and usher in His eternal heavenly kingdom. As the Messiah who is the Son of David and Son of God, Jesus is also the new and better Moses who has come to inaugurate the New Covenant, free His people from slavery to sin, baptize them with the Spirit, and lead them to the new and better promised land.

The Sermon on the Mount is a message that makes clear who will enter the kingdom and who will not. It is true that we are saved by faith alone, but as the saying goes, faith that saves is never alone. Faith without works is dead (James 2:14-17). Jesus did not come to merely pay for sin, He “gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). He died for our sins so that we too “might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24). The unrighteous will

not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9 / Revelation 21:8, 27). Only those who are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God will enter (1 Corinthians 6:11). Therefore, as the New Moses, Jesus is teaching His disciples about the Spirit-empowered righteousness that is necessary to enter the kingdom, the new and better promised land.

Last week, we learned that kingdom citizens will have their lives completely transformed by the gospel. This will cause some to hate them and others to give glory to God for their good works. But Jesus assures them, no matter how they feel in this life, they will be blessed in the Kingdom (5:2-16). Then Jesus transitions to the body of the sermon (5:17-7:13) to show how true disciples will have a righteousness that surpasses the scribes and Pharisees. Let’s pick up where we left off and continue to study the marks of a true Kingdom citizen.

MEDITATE ON
Matthew 7:21

PRAY
Psalm 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 6:1-7:28

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 6:1-18

- 01 | Go through 6:1-18 and circle every reference to hypocrisy, reward, and God as “your Father.” How many occurrences are there of each?
- 02 | A hypocrite is like an actor who pretends to be someone they are not in order to perform for an audience. According to Jesus, what motivates religious hypocrites to perform religious acts? What motivates true disciples?
- 03 | Notice how Jesus says to His disciples “when you give to the needy” (6:2), “when you pray” (6:7), and “when you fast” (6:16). Why does Jesus assume His disciples will do these things? What does this imply for those who claim to be His disciples today?
- 04 | Focus on 6:5-15 specifically. Which principles can we learn from this passage about how we should and should not pray?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 6:19-34

In 6:19-24, Jesus contrasts two treasures, two eyes, and two masters. Each section deals with the topic of materialism. In the Old Testament, a healthy eye is a metaphor for someone who is generous, and a bad eye for someone who is greedy (e.g., Proverbs 23:6).

- 05 | According to 6:19-24, what do kingdom citizens love and treasure? How does this differ from the way religious hypocrites view material wealth?

- 06 | According to 6:25-34, why should kingdom citizens not be anxious? Rather than being anxious, what should true disciples do instead?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 7:1-29

- 07 | Consider 7:1-6. How should true disciples respond to brothers who sin against them? How should they respond to those who are hostile to the gospel?

- 08 | 7:7-11 comes in the context of who will and will not enter the kingdom. According to this passage, is entrance into the kingdom earned through works or a gift from a loving heavenly father?

In 7:13-27, Jesus contrasts two paths, two gates, two trees, two types of people who confess Jesus is Lord, and two foundations for a house. Each section is meant to make clear who will be able to enter the kingdom and who will not.

- 09 | According to 7:13-27, what are some defining characteristics of true disciples versus false disciples? Go through each section and write down the differences.

- 10 | What is the destiny of true disciples of King Jesus? What is the destiny of religious hypocrites?

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 7:21

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 6:1-7:29

The Sermon on the Mount is a masterpiece. It has a gripping introduction (5:3-16), a cohesive body (5:17-7:13), and a thunderous conclusion (7:14-27). As Master Teacher, Jesus hooks His audience with eight beautiful Beatitudes. He states His thesis by declaring that being righteous is a prerequisite for kingdom citizenship because kingdom citizens actually submit to the teaching of the king (5:17-20). He then unpacks how true disciples live in relation to the law (5:21-48), religious acts

(6:1-18), material wealth (6:19-34), and relationships (7:1-13). He bookends the body of His sermon with statements that His disciples actually obey God's Word (compare 5:19 and 7:13). And He concludes the sermon by repeating Himself in four different ways that those who do not do His Word will not enter the kingdom, plain and simple (7:13-27). Anyone with ears to hear will certainly be struck speechless by Jesus' words (7:28).

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM IN 01 / What does Jesus teach His disciples about prayer?

ZOOM IN 02 / What does Jesus teach His disciples about material wealth?

ZOOM IN 03 / What does Jesus teach His disciples about Judgment Day?

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY ON PAGES 136-137

- 01 | Consider 6:5-8. What do the hypocrites and Gentiles get wrong about prayer? Specifically note how Jesus connects their wrong practices in prayer to their wrong views of God.
- 02 | Since prayer is to God, Jesus wants His disciples to know some things about the one to whom they are praying. What does 6:5-14 teach us about God?

In 6:9, Jesus says, “Pray then *like* this.” He does not say “Pray this.” This means the Lord’s Prayer provides principles and guidelines for how we should pray, not a template for us to mindlessly rehearse.

- 03 | According to 6:9-13, what types of things should disciples spend their time praying about? What does this model prayer reveal about the priorities of a true disciple?

REFLECT

Prayer is often defined as a lifeline to God, but many believers tend to neglect this privilege to come before our heavenly Father. In doing so, we miss out on the joys and rewards of seeking His presence and His kingdom.

How does your prayer life need to be refreshed? Take inventory of your prayer life and jot down some things you might change. Is it how often you come before our Heavenly Father? Is it what you pray for, revealing anything about your priorities? Is how you pray consistent with seeking God and not man’s approval?

In *Zoom In 01*, we considered what the Lord has to say to His disciples about prayer. Prayer is central to the Christian life. Likewise, it is central to the Sermon on the Mount. In *Zoom In 02*, we are going to consider how chapter 6 fits together in context. It is important to remember Jesus is not just spouting off random comments and sayings. This is all one sermon where He unpacks one coherent message.

So what do giving to the poor, prayer, fasting, treasure, money, and anxiety all have in common? And what is the main message Jesus wants His disciples to take away from these seemingly unrelated topics? Let's dive in and find out.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 137-138

In 6:1-18, Jesus uses the word reward seven times. Then in 6:19-24, He talks about treasures in heaven and money.

- 04 | **Circle the word “reward” in 6:1-18. What type of reward should motivate people to be generous, pray, and fast? (*Ponder: How might Jesus’ comments on reward be connected to the exhortation to lay up treasures in heaven?*)**

- 05 | **Consider 6:19-24 specifically. What is the relationship between one’s view of God and one’s view of earthly treasures/money?**

- 06 | **Consider 6:25-34. What is the relationship between one’s view of God and one’s worrying about not having enough earthly treasures/money?**

- 07 | **Recall that this is a sermon about who will and will not enter the kingdom. With this in mind, what seems to be Jesus’ main point in chapter 6?**

REFLECT

Jesus is clear in His teaching—what you treasure is what you will live for. He beckons us to treasure the Kingdom and to seek it first. Doing so aligns our desires, our motives, and our values. He also helps us see it's the most secure and joyful way to live.

What do you treasure? A simple practice to help identify what you treasure is to examine where your time, money, and resources go. What fears crop up often? Do they reveal a heart clinging to this world above the Kingdom of Heaven?

ZOOM IN 03 / WHAT DOES JESUS TEACH HIS DISCIPLES ABOUT JUDGMENT DAY?

In chapters 5-6, Jesus makes clear that kingdom citizens actually believe the kingdom is coming, and therefore, they actually live like it. And this indeed changes everything about them so that they act as salt and light in the world.

In this final zoom in, we will consider the conclusion to the sermon where Jesus

makes clear that in between the coming of the kingdom and the passing away of this world, there will be the great and terrible Judgment Day. On this day, the true disciples will be separated from the false ones, and people's eternal destinies will be revealed. Let's dive in and see what Jesus has to say about the awesome Day of the Lord.

CONSIDER THE CROSS REFERENCES AND COMMENTARY ON PAGES 138-139

- 08 | According to Jesus' sermon conclusion, who will get into the kingdom and who will not? Go through 7:7-27 and write down what separates true disciples from false disciples.**
- 09 | In 7:13-27, Jesus makes some vivid claims about Judgment Day. What will Judgment Day be like for false disciples? What will it be like for kingdom citizens?**
- 10 | In 7:21-27, Jesus makes some substantial claims about Himself. What is His role on Judgment Day? What does His role imply about His identity?**

REFLECT

In Jesus' teachings, He gives both a warning and an invitation—it is only by believing and obeying His word that we can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus is who we seek, and He is the only door. Matthew 7:22 should lead us to a solemn and reverent response—build your house on the rock.

Do you feel as if you are on solid ground today? If the answer is not a clear yes for you, consider ways you are being a hearer and not a doer of the Word. What needs to change for you to live wholly devoted and obedient?

[illegible]

REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

[illegible]

REFLECT 02

[illegible]

REFLECT 03

[illegible]

STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 6:1-7:29

- PRAISE** The Father's reward and blessings to those who long for His kingdom to come far outweigh that of earthly recognition, wealth, or possessions. Consider the good things He gives through His Kingdom, and marvel at the many blessings offered. What brings you to your knees in worship about His generosity toward you?
- ADMIT** Is there any hypocrisy in your life? How have you sought the lesser things over the kingdom's blessings? Confess any area(s) in which you are not living wholly devoted to the King.
- ASK** The Lord's Prayer (6:9-15) is truly a prayer of dependence. Recite this passage in prayer and admit the areas you need the Father, His will, His guidance, His provision, and His forgiveness. Jesus promises that if we ask sincerely for the kingdom, it shall be given generously. Make your request to see His kingdom come.
- THANK** The Kingdom of Heaven is often referred to as an upside-down kingdom—live a quiet, selfless, and fully devoted life to the King, and your reward will indeed be great. It seems odd to receive such a reward for such a quiet, “secret” devotion, yet that is the generosity of our good Father. How has he given you good things? Express your gratitude to him.



WEEK 05

JESUS IS THE SON OF MAN & SUFFERING SERVANT

WEEK 05

READ

MATTHEW 8:1-9:38

In Matthew 1-4, Jesus is presented as the long-awaited Messianic King who has come to save His people from their sins and usher in His eternal, heavenly kingdom. As Americans who live in a democracy, we are somewhat unfamiliar with the unrivaled authority that earthly kings are able to wield. In a monarchy, the king is the supreme sovereign. His authority is unchallenged and unmatched. Since Jesus is the king of kings and supreme ruler of heaven and earth, we should expect Him to exercise an authority that is unrivaled even by the most powerful earthly kings. And this is exactly how Matthew presents Him.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes clear who will and will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

And as the king of the kingdom, Jesus reveals that He has the authority to grant entrance into the kingdom, and He has the authority to banish people to the eternal fires of hell (Matthew 7:14-27). And as Jesus concludes His sermon, declaring that He is the Eschatological Judge who will judge the living and the dead, the crowds respond with a level of astonishment that makes them speechless. Why? Because King Jesus taught them with a level of authority fitting for the king of kings (7:29).

This week we see Jesus' authority in action as the King of creation demonstrates that there is not one square inch of creation that is not subject to Him. Let's dive in and marvel together at the authority of our king.

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 9:5-6

PRAY

Psalms 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 8:1-9:38

Matthew 8-9 has a distinct pattern to its structure. Matthew records Jesus performing three miracles, then a statement about discipleship to Jesus. And this pattern repeats itself three times. We will consider each iteration of the pattern one at a time.

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 8:1-22

- 01 | Which miracles does Jesus perform in this section? What do these miracles reveal about His identity and authority?
- 02 | What do these interactions with these needy people reveal about Jesus' character?
- 03 | Note the different responses to Jesus in this section. Which type of responses to Him does Jesus affirm?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 8:23-9:17

Note how the pattern repeats itself in this section—three miracles followed by a statement about discipleship.

- 04 | Which miracles does Jesus perform in this section? What do these miracles reveal about His identity and authority?

05 | What do these interactions with these needy people reveal about Jesus' character?

06 | Note the different responses to Jesus in this section, both positive and negative.

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 9:18-38

07 | Which miracles does Jesus perform in this section? What do these miracles reveal about His identity and authority?

08 | What do these interactions with these needy people reveal about Jesus' character?

09 | Note the different responses to Jesus in this section, both positive and negative.

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 9:5-6

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 8:1-9:38

In Matthew 1-7, the Gospel writer has a lot to say about Jesus' identity and mission. He is the son of David, who has come to usher in His universal kingdom. He is the offspring of Abraham who has come to bless all the nations of the earth. He is the New Moses who has come to free His people and lead them into the new and better promised land. He is the Messiah who has come to baptize His people with the Spirit. He is God with us who has come to save His people from their sins. And He is the Master Teacher whose word is equivalent in authority to God's word. By the end of chapter 7, readers could be wondering what more Matthew could possibly have to say about Jesus' identity and mission.

Well, as it turns out, there is a lot more. Just a surface-level reading of Matthew 8-9 makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is extremely powerful and extremely kind. However, as we dig a little deeper, we see that Matthew is very intentional about how he is presenting Jesus in this section. Matthew is not merely stringing miracle after miracle together haphazardly. As we will see, he is purposefully drawing upon Old Testament background in order to add to his Gospel witness about the identity and mission of Jesus. And the further revelation of who Jesus is and what He has come to do continues to build the case regarding how one ought to respond to Him.

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM OUT 01 / How does this passage prove that Jesus is the Son of Man?

ZOOM OUT 02 / How does this passage prove that Jesus is the Son of God?

ZOOM IN 01 / Based on who Jesus is, how should we respond?

ZOOM OUT 01 / HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE PROVE THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF MAN?

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 139-140

01 | Read Daniel 7:13-14. What does this prophecy say about the Son of Man (specifically the extent of his dominion and authority)? With Matthew 8:20 and 9:6 in mind, what is the significance of Jesus claiming to be the Son of Man?

02 | With Matthew 8:17 in mind, read Isaiah 53:4-6. Why is it significant that Matthew is presenting Jesus as the fulfillment of the Suffering Servant prophecy from Isaiah 53? (Also ponder: how is Jesus casting out demons and healing the sick connected to Him being the promised Suffering Servant?)

Daniel 7 and Isaiah 53 belong on the Mount Rushmore of Messianic prophecies. Daniel 7 emphasizes the universal dominion and eternal authority of the Son of Man. Isaiah 53 presents the Suffering Servant as the all-sufficient solution to the problem of sin. And Matthew 8-9 presents Jesus as the fulfillment of both!

03 | How does Matthew 8-9 demonstrate Jesus' authority, specifically His authority over sin?

04 | Ponder: Why is it amazing that Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant? In other words, why is it significant that the one who has come to usher in an eternal kingdom is also the one who has come to pay for sin?

REFLECT

Remarkably, Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant. It is profound that Jesus is the heavenly King who will reign forever and ever *and* the one who has come to die as the solution to the curse of sin and death. The contradiction of a forever King coming to a cursed and dying kingdom is found in the resurrection!

Why is Christ's fulfillment of both Son of Man and Suffering Servant good news for the believer?

In *Zoom Out 01*, we saw that Jesus is the promised Son of Man and Suffering Servant. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him—there is nothing outside the realm of His dominion and authority, including the ability to forgive sin. As the Suffering Servant, Jesus has come to pay for sin and overcome all of its deadly effects, and as the Son of Man, He has come to usher in His eternal kingdom so that whoever believes in Him will be counted righteous as He is righteous and will reign with Him forever and ever.

In this zoom out, we will see that the good news just keeps getting better.

In Matthew 1-4, there are many claims about Jesus' deity. Matthew records He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and He is the Immanuel/God with us. The Wise Men worship Him, and the Father speaks from heaven, declaring Jesus is His beloved Son. But it is one thing to claim Jesus is God in the flesh—it is another thing to prove it. That is exactly what Matthew 8-9 does.

Let's dive in and see how the Old Testament background helps make it clear that Jesus is God the Son incarnate.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 140-141

Scan through Matthew 8-9 looking for the two things listed below.

05 | Read 2 Kings 5:6-7 / Psalm 107:28-29 / Isaiah 35:4-6. According to these passages, what are some things only God can do?

06 | With these passages in mind, note some of the things Jesus does in Matthew 8-9 that only God can do.

REFLECT

Jesus exercises ultimate authority over disease, storms, demons, and even death, proving His power is not just God-like—it is because He *is God*. Imagine yourself in the stories as a bystander or even one who is in desperate need of Jesus' healing touch. Perhaps you can relate more to one of these stories than others.

As Jesus' identity as "Son of God" is revealed and confirmed in these stories, how do they give you hope for the things you face today?

ZOOM IN 01 / BASED ON WHO JESUS IS, HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

In *Zoom Out 01 + 02*, we saw that Matthew has a lot to say in these chapters about Jesus' identity and mission. He is the Suffering Servant who has come to pay for sin, overcome all the effects of sin, and purchase for Himself a purified people who are righteous in God's sight. He is the Son of Man who will reign forever over His heavenly kingdom, where sin and death will be no more. The saints will be able to be citizens of this eternal kingdom with Him because of His role as the Suffering Servant and Son of Man. And as if this is

not enough, Jesus is also Immanuel, who has authority over all diseases, demons, natural disasters, and death because He is God in the flesh—the great I AM.

What we will see in this zoom in is that Matthew records all of these amazing things about Jesus for a specific purpose. His purpose is to elicit a response from us, the readers. So let's dive in and consider the different responses to Jesus in this narrative so that we can discern how we ought to respond.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY ON PAGES 141-142

07 | Consider Matthew 8:15, 8:27, 9:7, 9:26, 9:31, 9:33. What are the positive responses to Jesus that these verses record?

- 08 | Consider Matthew 8:34, 9:4, 9:24, 9:34. What are the negative responses to Jesus that these verses record? Why do some respond so positively and some so negatively?
- 09 | Consider Matthew 8:10, 8:13, 9:2, 9:11-13, 9:22, 9:28-29. According to these verses, what is Jesus looking for in those whom He chooses to save?
- 10 | Consider Matthew 8:19-22, 9:9-17, 9:37-38. What are the costs, benefits, and expectations of those who believe in Jesus?

REFLECT

It's safe to say you would not likely follow someone you don't have faith in. To give your life and attention to something is evidence that you believe that it is worth pursuing. There is a strong theme of faith and following in these verses, those who believe in Jesus give up everything to follow Him, and those who reject him grow more cynical and hostile.

Why do you think it is so important to have faith in who or what you follow? Which aspects and characteristics of Christ's identity compel you to give up everything to follow Him?

[illegible]

REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

[illegible]

REFLECT 02

[illegible]

REFLECT 03

[illegible]

STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 3:1-4:25

PRAISE

When encountering Jesus' power and authority, there is only one right response—worship. In our text this week, we have seen a few true worshipers who served, marveled, and shared this good news of Jesus with others. Express your awe of Jesus' power and compassion as you reflect on His character and authority in the stories you've read. Then take some time to identify His power and compassion in your life and worship Him!

ADMIT

Fear can either draw us near or drive us away. Some who encountered Jesus' power were afraid and begged Him to leave, recognizing His power but not compelled by His character. Whereas others, like the disciples, walked with Jesus, and as they experienced His power, it caused them to marvel and draw closer. Does Christ's ultimate authority give you a fear that draws you close? Confess ways you have either doubted God, lacked faith, or shrunk away from His authority.

ASK

Jesus encourages those who follow Him to pray that the Lord would send out laborers into the harvest—giving a foretaste of the Great Commission He would leave us with as He ascended back to heaven. As you consider the cost of discipleship, what do you need to ask God to help you with?

THANK

Reflect on what it means that Jesus has ultimate authority over all things! Give thanks to Him that this means everything you walk through is in His capable hands.



WEEK 06

JESUS IS GENTLE,
LOWLY, & PERSECUTED

WEEK 06

READ MATTHEW 10:1-11:30

Last week, we studied Matthew 8-9, where Jesus demonstrated His authority over disease, demons, deadly storms, and death itself. We saw that Jesus is not just the Daniel 7 Son of Man whose authority will be universal and eternal, but He is also the Isaiah 53 Suffering Servant who has come to save His people from their sins and all their consequences. Because Jesus is both the Suffering Servant and Son of Man, He has the authority to forgive sin so that whoever believes in Him will not perish in their sins but will live with Him and reign with Him in His eternal heavenly kingdom.

At the end of chapter 9, the Suffering Servant prays for laborers to send out to preach this gospel to the sheep who have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6). As we will see in chapter 10, this prayer is answered. Jesus

calls 12 disciples, He sends them out to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of Israel, and He gives them authority to perform all the miracles He has performed in order to give people a taste of the coming heavenly kingdom that is completely free of the deadly effects of sin.

With all of this glorious good news about who Jesus is, the heavenly kingdom He is ushering in, and the authority He has given His apostles, one would expect the response to their mission to be overwhelmingly positive, right? Let's dive in and see how Jesus prepares His disciples for their first missionary journey.

MEDITATE ON
Matthew 10:39

PRAY
Psalm 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 10:1-11:30

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 10:1-25

01 | What does Jesus send His disciples out to do? (*Note the who, what, where, when, and why of their mission.*)

02 | According to Jesus, which types of responses should they expect?

03 | How does Jesus instruct His disciples to respond when they are faced with persecution? What help or encouragement does He provide?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 10:26-42

04 | Circle every time Jesus tells His disciples not to be anxious or afraid. According to Jesus, what are the many reasons why disciples do not need to be afraid when persecution comes?

05 | According to 10:34-39, who is not worthy of Jesus?

06 | If following Jesus brings potential persecution, family strife, and even death, why should anyone follow Jesus? What are the rewards for following Him?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 11:1-19

07 | According to this section, how did people respond to John the Baptist and his ministry?

08 | According to Jesus, why should the negative response to John not discourage people from following Jesus?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 11:20-30

09 | What will happen to those who do not repent and come to Jesus?

10 | Consider 11:25-30 specifically. How does someone “come” to Jesus? What blessings does one receive when they come to Jesus?

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 10:39

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 10:1-11:30

The theme of Jesus' unrivaled authority is woven throughout these last few sections of Matthew. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, the people are marveling at the authority with which Jesus taught them (7:29). In chapters 8-9, Jesus demonstrates His authority to forgive sin and save people from all of its deadly effects. Chapter 10 begins by declaring, "And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction" (10:1). Jesus delegated His authority to His apostles so that they too could demonstrate that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and therefore call people to repent.

The repeated theme of authority is significant because the Old Testament

frequently pointed to a day when the Messiah would come and demonstrate authority and power to save God's people, crush God's enemies, and usher in a universal heavenly kingdom. With these expectations in mind, readers should find chapters 10-11 to be very surprising. In chapter 10, the Son of Man warns His disciples they will be persecuted, rejected, and martyred. In chapter 11, John the Baptist, one of Jesus' most faithful followers, is in prison! How does this add up? If Jesus is the promised Son of Man who has come to bring the kingdom, why does it seem like His followers are still "losing" and the bad guys are still "winning"?

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM IN 01 / How will Jesus' disciples be received by the world?

ZOOM OUT 01 / If Jesus is the Messiah, why are His followers still being persecuted?

ZOOM OUT 02 / Why do some people come to Jesus while others reject Him?

ZOOM IN 01 / HOW WILL JESUS' DISCIPLES BE RECEIVED BY THE WORLD?

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 142-143

Jesus sends His disciples out to do a lot of good things (such as preach the gospel, heal people, raise people from the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons). And yet, Jesus warns them that the response to them will be overwhelmingly negative.

- 01 | Consider 10:14-25 and write down all of the negative responses to Jesus' disciples and their message.

- 02 | According to 10:16-42, why will most people respond so violently to the disciples who are simply trying to help them?

- 03 | How can Jesus expect His disciples to continue to follow Him amongst such intense persecution? Write down the different reasons for motivation and comfort that Jesus provides in this passage.

REFLECT

Following Jesus comes at a great cost. Jesus lays this out for the Disciples so they may not only know what to expect, but also to give them courage and hope. Whoever loses his life for His sake finds true life and eternal reward.

What does it mean to “lose” your life to gain it? What has discipleship to Christ cost you? Why do you think this trade-off is worth a life committed to Him?

ZOOM OUT 01 / IF JESUS IS THE MESSIAH, WHY ARE HIS FOLLOWERS STILL BEING PERSECUTED?

Matthew 10 records an extended teaching from Jesus to His apostles as He prepares them for gospel ministry. What He prepares them for is somewhat surprising. The first nine chapters of Matthew herald Jesus as the long-awaited Messianic King and the authoritative Son of Man who has come to usher in God's universal Kingdom of heavenly righteousness and peace. Yet, Jesus warns His disciples that victory, flourishing, and co-reigning with the King of kings are

not what is in their near future. Instead, they should expect persecution, rejection, and death.

How does this add up? If Jesus truly is the Christ, then why should His followers expect persecution? As it turns out, even John the Baptist was asking this question. And Jesus provides a profound and glorious answer.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 143-144

Helpful Tip: As you read each Old Testament reference in the cross references, look for clues in the context regarding who the passage is talking about.

- 04 | With Matthew 11:2-5 in mind, read Isaiah 61:1-2. Why was John the Baptist second-guessing Jesus' identity as the Messiah?
- 05 | Read Isaiah 35:4-6. How does Jesus alleviate John's doubts about His identity as the Messiah?
- 06 | Read Malachi 3:1 and Malachi 4:5. According to Matthew 11:7-14, how do Jesus and John fulfill these prophecies? Is there anything in these prophecies that is not yet fulfilled with the coming of John and Jesus?
- 07 | How does Jesus' explanation of these prophecies in 11:11-14 help readers understand why persecution is still the norm for Christ followers?

REFLECT

Have you ever had a John the Baptist moment, questioning Jesus' claims and how He goes about fulfilling His purpose? How has this week's passage deepened your trust in the ways Jesus moves in your life? How has it strengthened your resolve to spend your life in hopeful anticipation of His return?

ZOOM OUT 02 / WHY DO SOME PEOPLE COME TO JESUS WHILE OTHERS REJECT HIM?

In *Zoom Out 01*, we considered why the persecution and imprisonment of Jesus' followers do not mean He is not the Christ. As Jesus clarified, a proper understanding of Old Testament prophecy helps readers see there is a gap between the first coming of Christ and Judgment Day. The New Testament helps make it clear this gap is not just a few days or weeks, but rather the difference between the first and second comings of Christ. Nevertheless, Jesus assures His followers that despite their current circumstances as exiles, there will certainly be a day when the wicked will be judged and the righteous will be saved.

With that thought in mind, Jesus turns in 11:20-24 to give a preview of Judgment Day.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares that some will be saved, but the overwhelming majority of people will reject Him (7:13-14). Chapters 10-11 prove this to be true. There are some who do receive Jesus, but many reject Him and His followers.

All of this rejection of Jesus should cause readers to ask a few questions. Why do some people reject Jesus while others receive Him? And what happens to those who reject Him? With these questions in mind, let's dive in.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 144-145

08 | Consider Matthew 11:20-24. What does this passage reveal about what will happen to those who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ?

09 | According to Matthew 11:25-30, why do some people receive Jesus while others reject Him?

10 | According to 11:25-30, what does Jesus think/feel about God's role in salvation? How does His response inform how readers should respond?

REFLECT

What makes Jesus' yoke easy and His burden light is the message of the Gospel. He chooses, He reveals, and He saves. We have one of two options: reject and be judged as we read in 11:20-24, or receive Christ and find rest. Jesus is gentle and lowly—other versions describe him as “humble in heart”—kind and loving to the point of coming to us in our form.

Where do you fall? Are you rejecting Jesus and His message to repent and believe? Or are you carrying unnecessary burdens, relying on your own wisdom and understanding? What do you need to lay down to take up Jesus' easy yoke?

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REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

[illegible]

REFLECT 02

[illegible]

REFLECT 03

[illegible]

STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 10:1-11:30

- PRAISE** Jesus ensures His disciples He will send His Spirit with them, He empowers them, He values them, and He is to be rightly feared. Praise God for this assurance we have through Jesus. As we go obediently, we can go boldly.
- ADMIT** Have you found yourself holding on to your life? Confess to God the ways you recognize clinging to things of this world.
- ASK** Open up to your loving Father the ways you have doubted Jesus and His word. God welcomes your questions and offers you answers through Scripture. If you have found yourself echoing John the Baptist's question, ask God to help you understand that His ways are not often what we expect.
- THANK** Just as Jesus thanks the Father for His plan to reveal Himself to the least of these through Him, thank the Father for sending Jesus to share with you in your humanity and to give His life so that you could know Father and Son to the fullest. He is offering rest—enjoy resting in His goodness today.



WEEK 07

**JESUS IS THE GREATEST
PROPHET, PRIEST, & KING**

WEEK 07

READ MATTHEW 12:1-50

Put yourself in the shoes of the Jews who encountered Jesus. They had all been taught the story of the Bible since their youth. They all knew that God commanded Adam and Eve to fill the earth with His image so that He could rule over His universal kingdom through humanity, yet they also knew and suffered through the tragedy of Adam's sin because ever since the fall, the world has not been filled with the heavenly kingdom of God ruled by God-fearing image bearers. Instead, it has been ruled by Satan and filled with violence, wickedness, and death. And in their day, they were feeling the very real consequences of this as they suffered under the evil, pagan Roman empire. But many Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7 / Daniel 7:13-14) encouraged them to hope and long for a day when a new Adam—one like a Son of Man—would come to crush the rebellion, reestablish David's throne, and usher in a universal Eden-like Kingdom of eternal righteousness and peace. This is the hope of the Messiah that was alive and well in Jesus' day.

Matthew 1-9 records Jesus fulfilling prophecy after prophecy to prove He is this long-awaited King. The fact that Jesus is the Son of David and Son of Man could lead readers to expect victory and glory to be right around the corner for Christ and all His followers. However, chapter 10 takes a surprising twist. Jesus warns His disciples that it is actually persecution and martyrdom that are in their near future. In chapter 11, Jesus assures everyone the gap between His coming and the coming of the Kingdom in all its fullness has always been part of God's plan. Judgment Day is coming, but in the meantime, disciples need to pick up their cross and follow Christ no matter the cost.

This week, we will see the conflict Jesus promised begin to erupt. First-time readers might expect the Son of Man—who has the authority to calm a deadly storm with a word—to perhaps crush His opponents like a boot crushes an ant. Let's dive in and see how our gentle and lowly Savior responds.

MEDITATE ON
Matthew 7:21

PRAY
Psalm 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 12:1-50

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 12:1-21

This passage records two different controversies that take place on the Sabbath.

01 | Describe the two controversies over the Sabbath. What are Jesus' opponents accusing Him of, and how are they trying to oppose Him?

02 | How does Jesus defend Himself? Why are the Pharisees so wrong?
(Hint: there are lots of reasons.)

03 | What do these two controversies reveal about Jesus' identity? How does a proper understanding of Jesus' identity prove that Jesus is right and His opponents are wrong?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 12:22-37

04 | How do the Pharisees oppose Jesus in this passage? What are they accusing Him of and why?

05 | How does Jesus defend Himself? Why are the Pharisees wrong?

06 | What does this passage reveal about Jesus' identity?

07 | One could argue that speaking blasphemy is just words and not a serious offense. According to 12:33-36, why is speaking evil words (especially something as evil as blaspheming the Holy Spirit) such a big deal?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 12:38-50

08 | Circle the word *generation* (used four times). According to Jesus, why will this generation be condemned? When will they be condemned?

09 | What are some ways Jesus is similar to Jonah and Solomon? In which ways is He greater?

Note: In this chapter, Jesus makes some condemning statements to some Jews (such as the Pharisees) and some favorable comments about Gentiles (such as the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South).

10 | Consider 12:46-50. Who are Jesus' true family members? What does this passage imply about who the true people of God are?

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 12:6

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 12:1-50

The Old Testament promises the Messiah would be a majestic king and conquering warrior, but it also prophesied that He would be rejected and despised. Isaiah 53 says this plainly. Speaking about the coming Messiah, Isaiah writes, “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (53:3).

Here in Matthew 12, we see this opposition to the Messiah Jesus begin to escalate. The

Pharisees accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath and being in league with Satan, which were both capital crimes at the time. They plot to trap Him and destroy Him. Yet, what the enemy meant for evil, God uses for good. The Pharisees’ attempts to oppose Jesus allow the gentle, wise, brilliant, miracle-working, mind-reading Messiah to perform some incredible miracles, reveal some profound truths about His identity, and teach important realities about the coming day of judgment.

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM OUT 01 / What does the Sabbath controversy reveal about Jesus?

ZOOM IN 01 / What does the demon exorcism controversy reveal about Jesus?

ZOOM OUT 02 / What does the sign controversy reveal about Jesus?

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 145-146

Note: The Rabbis invented numerous rules to help keep people from breaking their interpretation of the 4th commandment to rest from work and keep the Sabbath Day holy. Jesus and His disciples did not sin by breaking any biblical laws about the Sabbath—they merely broke the extrabiblical rabbinic laws. In order to prove their innocence, Jesus refers to three different Old Testament case studies. Let's consider them one at a time.

- 01 | **Consider 12:3-4. How does the example of what David and his men did on the Sabbath prove that Jesus and His disciples are innocent? What does Jesus imply by comparing Himself to David?**
- 02 | **Consider Matthew 12:5-6. How does this example prove Jesus is innocent? What does Jesus mean when He says “something greater than the temple is here”?**
- 03 | **Consider 12:7-8. Why are the Pharisees so wrong about the Sabbath? Who does Jesus think He is that He can tell the religious leaders that they are wrong?**

REFLECT

Jesus demonstrates Himself as Lord of the Sabbath, and therefore the one who knows the purpose of the true Sabbath. In which ways have you taken God's good things (like the Sabbath) and imposed your own purposes? What flaws do you see in taking God's designs and shaping them to your preference?

Jesus also displays Himself as to where *true rest* is found. As He beckons His disciples to “come to me, all who are laden and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest,” how does your heart respond? What are some ways you can rest in Jesus' (Immanuel, God with us) presence today?

ZOOM IN 01 / WHAT DOES THE DEMON EXORCISM CONTROVERSY REVEAL ABOUT JESUS?

In *Zoom Out 01*, we considered the first of three controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees that are recorded in this chapter. The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus under their man-made, burdensome Sabbath regulations, but Jesus dismantles the arguments of the so-called experts in the law by showing them they do not know the Scriptures or the identity of the One they are accusing. Jesus is the new David, the true temple in whom the fullness of God is pleased to dwell, and the Lord of the Sabbath.

In this next zoom out, we will see that Jesus' opponents do not repent and bow before their Maker. Instead, they harden their hearts, double down on their opposition, and escalate the conflict to a whole new level. Let's dive in and consider what this next controversy reveals about our Lord.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 146-147

- 04 | **Matthew 12:22-32 is about a clash of kings and kingdoms. Who are the kings, what kingdoms do they represent, and how are the kingdoms clashing?**

- 05 | **With these two kings and their respective kingdoms in mind, how do you know which side you are on? Consider what Jesus says in 12:30.**

- 06 | **Now consider 12:31-32. What are the consequences of being against King Jesus?**

REFLECT

When it comes to following God, neutrality is not an option. You are either with Him, or you are against Him. You are either on God's side or the Devil's side. So, take time to reflect. Are you with Jesus or against Him? The answer may feel obvious, but as you search your heart for ways you are divided within yourself, write down anything that comes to mind. What needs to be cast out of your life so you can be fully devoted to the King?

ZOOM OUT 02 / WHAT DOES THE SIGN CONTROVERSY REVEAL ABOUT JESUS?

In Matthew 12:38-42, readers encounter the third and final controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees in this chapter. We have considered how the “Lords” of religious rules try to confront the Lord of heaven and earth. We have seen how the Pharisees attempt to accuse Jesus of being an agent of Satan and his kingdom, only to have their accusation turned right back at them as Jesus proves that whoever opposes the King of the Kingdom of God is a servant of the kingdom of Satan by implication.

In this third clash, the Pharisees ask Jesus to perform a sign for them. As if healing the sick, raising the dead, calming the sea, and casting out demons is not enough proof that Jesus is who He says He is. Jesus does not play their games, but instead calls them out for their wicked, unbelieving hearts and warns them of the judgment that is to come. In the process, He makes a few more amazing claims about his identity.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 147-148

07 | Read Jonah 3:5 and 1 Kings 10:1, 9-10. How does Nineveh respond to Jonah's preaching? How does the Queen of Sheba respond to Solomon's wisdom?

08 | With Mathew 12:39-41 in mind, read Jonah 1:17, 2:2, 2:5-7. What are the parallels between Jonah and Jesus? How is Jesus greater?

09 | Consider what you know about Solomon. What are the parallels between Solomon and Jesus? How is Jesus greater?

10 | Consider Matthew 12:41-42. Why does Jesus warn the people that something greater than Jonah and Solomon is here?

REFLECT

A greater judgment and a greater way of life are all presented in Christ Jesus through this passage. The following text leaves us with a sage warning (Matthew 12:43-45). Those who reject Jesus' warning and refuse to listen to His wisdom will find themselves worse off than the wicked Gentiles of the Old Testament. Spiritual vacancy is as dangerous as devotion to the Prince of Darkness. How have you responded with complacency to Jesus' message and to His Word? What is the danger of living with spiritual complacency?

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REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

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REFLECT 02

[illegible]

REFLECT 03

[illegible]

STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 12:1-50

- PRAISE** Jesus is greater than the temple, greater than Jonah, and greater than Solomon. He is the greatest prophet, priest, and king! Take a moment to reflect on all the ways Jesus is presented in Matthew 12 and worship the Messiah!
- ADMIT** As you have studied this week, have you recognized in your heart any division or complacency toward Jesus and His message? Confess what the Spirit has revealed to you. Jesus invites you to repent and to turn wholeheartedly toward Him.
- ASK** We are all susceptible to lesser things, and in today's day and age, complacency is often masked as rest through entertainment (smartphones, streaming services, etc.) and conveniences. But Jesus has come to offer us a better rest and a better way. Ask God to give you clarity on the ways you have grown stagnant. Ask Him to reveal if there is anything specific you need to do to increase your devotion.
- THANK** Thank Jesus for His Word that brings us a message of judgment, but also a message of hope to all who turn to Him! Tell Him of any hope and devotion renewed in you, and thank Him for showing you how you should go.



WEEK 08

JESUS IS MASTER TEACHER OF THE SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

WEEK 08

READ MATTHEW 13:1-58

The Gospel according to Matthew is structured around five major sermons from Jesus. The first is the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus' teaching causes the crowds to marvel at the authority with which He taught (7:28-29). Matthew 8-9 records Jesus' authority in action as He demonstrates His authority over every disease, powerful demons, and even death. The second discourse is recorded in chapter 10, where Jesus prepares His disciples for the persecution and rejection they will experience on account of His name. Right after Jesus warns about the impending persecution and opposition, Matthew 11-12 records Jesus' words coming true as John the Baptist is in prison and the religious leaders attempt to trap Jesus so that they can "destroy" Him (12:14). From here, a pattern begins to emerge as Matthew sets out to prove Jesus' words by recording His works. It is

one thing for Jesus to claim to be the authoritative Son of Man—it is another to prove it by raising the dead, calming the storm, etc.

Here in chapter 13, readers come to the third extended teaching section. The central thrust of Jesus' ministry is the Kingdom of Heaven. He is the King of Heaven, and heaven's King has come to urge people to repent and prepare for the arrival of heaven's kingdom. So far, Matthew has recorded Jesus demonstrating what the kingdom will be like through His works. Jesus is constantly healing the sick, casting out demons, and even raising the dead because His heavenly kingdom will be free of sin and all its deadly effects. Now, Matthew turns to help readers learn about the kingdom through Jesus' words. Let's dive in and learn from the King of Heaven what the Kingdom of Heaven is like.

MEDITATE ON
Matthew 13:11

PRAY
Psalm 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 13:1-58

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 13:1-23

In 13:1-9, Jesus gives the Parable of the Sower, then He explains it in 13:18-23.

- 01 | **Consider 13:18-23 and describe the Parable of the Sower in your own words. Who is the sower, and what is he sowing? What do the different types of soil represent?**

- 02 | **Consider 13:10-17. Why is Jesus speaking to them in parables?**

- 03 | **With 13:16 in mind, why do some people have eyes to see and ears to hear while others do not? Or to ask it another way, why do some people have “good soil” and others do not?**

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 13:24-43

- 04 | **Consider 13:36-43 and describe the Parable of the Weeds in your own words. What do the different elements in the parable represent?**

05 | In 13:43, Jesus says, “He who has ears, let him hear.” How would a person who has spiritual ears to hear respond to the Parable of the Weeds? How would a person who is spiritually deaf respond?

06 | Consider 13:31-33. How do mustard seeds and leaven help illustrate what the Kingdom of Heaven is like?

07 | Consider 13:34-35. Why is Jesus teaching in parables?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 13:44-58

08 | Consider 13:44-50. According to these parables, what is the Kingdom like?

09 | Consider 13:44-58 and note the positive and negative responses to the Kingdom and its King.

10 | Ponder with chapter 13 as a whole in mind: Why do some people respond so positively to the Kingdom and its King, while others respond so negatively?

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 13:11

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 13:1-58

Matthew has written an account of Jesus' words and works so that His readers would believe Jesus is the Son of David and the Son of God. And yet, as we have already seen, not everyone believes Jesus is who He says He is. Not everyone responds to His message by repenting of their sins, fleeing from the wrath to come, and clinging to Christ as their only hope for salvation. In fact, the varying responses to Jesus are quite extreme. In Matthew 2:1-12, we see King Herod trying to kill Jesus, religious leaders so indifferent to Him that they don't bother to walk down the street and meet Him, and wise men traversing the globe to offer Him treasures and fervent worship. And these varying responses

continue throughout the whole Gospel. By the end, we will see the crowds wanting to crucify Jesus, Pilate so indifferent to Him that he chooses political gain over saving His life, and the disciples bowing down and worshiping Him.

As thoughtful students of the Bible, we should all be asking why. Why do some people respond to the King of Heaven and His message about the coming Kingdom with worship and faith, while others respond with murderous opposition? Matthew 13 records a series of kingdom parables where Jesus explains the reasons for the extreme responses.

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM IN 01 / What is the Kingdom of Heaven like?

ZOOM OUT 01 / Why are there different responses to the message of the kingdom?

ZOOM IN 02 / What happens to those who receive (or reject) the message of the kingdom?

ZOOM IN 01 / WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN LIKE?

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGE 149

Jesus says “the Kingdom of Heaven is like” six times in this chapter.

01 | Consider 13:31-33. What do these two parables teach about the size and influence of the Kingdom of Heaven? (*Ponder what the kingdom was like when Jesus said these words versus what it will be like at the end of the age.*)

02 | Consider 13:44-46. What do these two parables teach about the value of the Kingdom of Heaven?

03 | Consider 13:47-52. What do these two parables teach about the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven?

REFLECT

How would you describe the Kingdom of Heaven? There is much unsaid about our future heavenly home, but Jesus’ message is that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and He then goes on to help disciples see the magnitude and treasure of this kingdom and the character of its citizens.

How do you live with the worth and weight of the Kingdom of Heaven in mind? How are you treasuring it for the value that it is? Are you cherishing it and being trained for it through careful study of God’s Word and obedience to His will? Take some inventory and jot down your thoughts.

ZOOM OUT 01 / WHY ARE THERE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO THE MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM?

In *Zoom In 01*, we considered what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. According to King Jesus, the Kingdom might seem small and unimpressive now. However, a day is soon coming when the entire universe will be under the sovereign dominion of the Son of Man. This means being a citizen of the Kingdom is worth more than anything this world could give, or death could take, because one day the rebels against the King will be seized by mighty angels and thrown into hell. In the meantime, citizens of the Kingdom are experts in their future home as they study Scripture and treasure what they find as it proclaims the glory of King Jesus

and His coming Kingdom from Genesis to Revelation.

With that said, if being a citizen of the Kingdom is so valuable, and being in rebellion against the King so eternally devastating, it is worth asking why anyone would oppose the King and reject His gracious invitation to become a citizen of His Kingdom. As we will see, answering this question helps highlight one of the main points Jesus is trying to make through His series of kingdom parables.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 149-151

- 04 | **Consider 13:10-23. According to Jesus, there are technically two types of people when it comes to their response to the word of the Kingdom. How does Jesus describe these two different groups?**

- 05 | **Compare Matthew 13:11, 16 with 1 Corinthians 2:10-16. According to these passages, why do some people understand and believe the word, while others reject it in unbelief?**

- 06 | **The reality that God opens some people's eyes and leaves others in their blindness is a weighty truth. Read Psalm 119:18 / Romans 9:14-24 / Ephesians 2:8-10 and write down how we should respond to these weighty truths.**

REFLECT

Scripture tells us that God's thoughts and His ways are not the same as our thoughts and our ways. God is ultimately sovereign, but what we often miss is that He is more merciful and more compassionate than we are. His ways are higher, and God's character is more kind, more just, and more patient than ours.

Jesus is clear that there are those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. He came to reveal the things that were hidden—and the depths of these mysteries are never-ending. Where do you still need eyes to see? Spend some time praying Psalm 119:18, *“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”*

ZOOM IN 02 / WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE (OR REJECT) THE MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM?

In *Zoom Out 01*, we considered the purpose of the parables. Jesus is not teaching about the Kingdom in parables merely to show off His storytelling skills. They have a specific, spiritual purpose. As one commentator put it, the parables reveal truth to those who have eyes to see, and they conceal the truth from those who are blind. As we already saw in Matthew 11, people whose hearts are hard and eyes are blind would not repent and believe even if Jesus Himself walked into their village, preached the gospel, and raised a dead person to life. Blind is blind and dead is dead. Therefore, in this regard, Jesus' teaching blind people in parables is gracious in the long run, because the more revelation one receives, the more they will be held

accountable on Judgment Day for how they responded to it (Matthew 11:20-24). God's ways are higher than our ways, and all of His ways are holy, holy, holy. Therefore, the appropriate response to these weighty truths is worship!

In this last zoom in, we will consider the results of rejecting or receiving the message of the Kingdom. As we have already seen, how one responds to the message of the King and the coming of the Kingdom separates humanity into two distinct groups. These distinctions have ramifications for this life and the life to come. Let's dive in and consider what they are.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGE 151

Scan through chapter 13 with the two groups (those who understand the word and those who do not) in mind.

07 | What are the blessings that come to people who understand and believe the word of the Kingdom? Consider how Jesus describes their blessings both in this life and when the Kingdom comes (e.g., belief produces fruit).

08 | What are the consequences for people who reject the word of the Kingdom? Consider both present and future consequences (e.g., unbelievers will be thrown into the fiery furnace).

REFLECT

Our ability to understand the mysteries of the gospel is a gift—only God opens ears and eyes to understand it. And so, there are two ways to respond—faith or rebellion.

If you have responded in faith to the gospel, you are indeed blessed. But that doesn't mean you don't continue to seek understanding. Matthew calls us "scribes" in 13:52. In other words, a student of the Scripture. What treasures from Scripture have you discovered recently? Jot them down, and thank God for giving you eyes to see!

[illegible]

REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

[illegible]

REFLECT 02

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

REFLECT 03

[illegible]

STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 13:1-58

- PRAISE** Praise God for revealing Himself to you through Jesus Christ! Take some time and be specific in the ways He has revealed His character to you, and worship the King of kings!
- ADMIT** Do you treasure and cherish Christ and His words? Confess where you have fallen short or lacked diligence and joy in the things Christ has revealed.
- ASK** Pray Psalm 118:19 again, asking the Lord to open your eyes to reveal wondrous things from His Word. Ask that He continue to open your ears and eyes, and ask that He work to keep your soil ready for the Sower's seeds.
- THANK** Do your eyes see? Do your ears hear? Thank God! You are indeed blessed! Tell Him how your understanding grows your love for Him, and thank Him for his kind, compassionate, patient love for you.



WEEK 09

JESUS IS
GOD WITH US

WEEK 09

READ MATTHEW 14:1-15:39

The Gospel of Matthew is beating a drum with a two-beat rhythm. (1) Jesus is the fully human Messiah, and (2) He is the fully divine Son of God. This week's text is going to beat the same drum, and we need to acknowledge that it could be tempting to respond with a cold, unbelieving heart. Our thought process might go something like this: "More evidence that Jesus is the Messiah? I already know that and agree with it. Yawn. Jesus walks on water? That's cool. But of course, He can do that—He is God. Why does Matthew keep saying the same thing in different ways? Can't he move on already to something new?"

To respond this way is understandable, but it misses Matthew's intent. Matthew is not presenting the evidence that Jesus is the promised king merely to get people to agree with some historical facts. He is heralding Jesus as king so

that we deny ourselves, forsake this world, and bow the knee in humble submission to His lordship as we obey His every word. Likewise, Matthew is revealing Jesus as Immanuel, not so that we would agree with the fact, but so that we would worship Him! The angels in heaven never cease to worship God because every moment He is giving them new reasons to cry out "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty!" In the same way, every section of Matthew gives readers new reasons to bow before Jesus in worship.

As sinners who daily fail to obey Jesus' every word, we need to be reminded afresh that Jesus is Lord. As worshipers who are still tempted to give glory to our phones, ourselves, our homes, and our careers, we need to be confronted again with the blazing glory of God the Son incarnate. So let's dive in and have our hearts stoked for worship!

MEDITATE ON
Matthew 14:33

PRAY
Psalm 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 14:1-15:39

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 14:1-12

Note: The Herod in this passage was the son of Herod the Great, who tried to kill baby Jesus in Matthew 2.

01 | Consider all the details in this passage that point to Herod being a coward and a reprobate.

02 | Consider 14:1-2 and ponder: Why did Herod assume Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 14:13-36

03 | Consider what Jesus does in these verses. What do Jesus' actions reveal about His character and identity?

04 | What does Jesus do for others in these verses? How does He bless those who follow Him and cry out to Him for help?

05 | Consider 14:33. Based on who Jesus is and what He does, how should we respond to Him?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 15:1-20

- 06 | With 15:1-9 in mind, consider verse 6. Which traditions were the Pharisees and scribes prioritizing? Which aspects of God's word were they breaking?
- 07 | Consider 15:10-11 and explain what Jesus means in your own words. *(Note that this comment is prompted by the accusation from 15:2, and Jesus explains it in 15:17-20.)*
- 08 | Circle the word "heart" (used three times in 15:1-20) and hands (used twice). According to this section, why is a clean heart more important than clean hands?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 15:21-39

- 09 | In 15:21-39, Jesus is in a Gentile region. How does He treat these people who were traditionally enemies of God and God's people?
- 10 | How do these traditional enemies of God treat God and His Son? Note the positive responses.

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 14:33

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 14:1-15:39

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Matthew has written a masterpiece. As we have seen, this Gospel is a work of art that weaves together different themes that all come together to create the portrait of Jesus as fully God and fully man who has come to save His people from their sins. To shift the analogy, Matthew treats these twin themes of Jesus' identity and mission like diamonds. Each week, we are looking at the same diamonds, as every chapter in the Gospel of Matthew is focused on who Jesus is and what He came to do, but Matthew continues to turn the diamonds so that we can appreciate their beauty from every angle and every side.

Here in Matthew 14-15, Matthew turns the diamonds again. He is not haphazardly stitching together different events from Jesus' life at random. He is writing with a theological agenda to prove Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God so that his readers will trust in Christ as their Savior and worship Him as Lord. Regarding the “diamond” of Jesus' identity, Matthew has helped us see He is the son of David, son of Abraham, Son of Man, and Son of God. In this week's text, he focuses on Jesus being the New Moses who has come to perform greater miracles, give greater teaching, and accomplish a greater salvation.

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM OUT 01 / What do Jesus' miracles reveal about His identity?

ZOOM OUT 02 / How does this passage reinforce Jesus' teaching?

ZOOM OUT 03 / Who did Jesus come to save?

ZOOM OUT 01 / WHAT DO JESUS' MIRACLES REVEAL ABOUT HIS IDENTITY?

CONSIDER THE CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 151-153

Note: Back in week 3, we considered how Matthew is portraying Jesus as the New Moses, the greater prophet that was promised in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 (see *Zoom Out 01* in week 3). Here in chapter 14, Matthew focuses on this theme again.

- 01 | With the famous stories of Moses and the exodus in mind, read Matthew 14:13-33. Which events and details remind you of Moses?

- 02 | According to this passage, in which ways is Jesus greater than Moses?

- 03 | Consider the different responses to Jesus in this passage. How should people respond to the New and Greater Moses?

REFLECT

In the Old Testament, no one performed greater miracles or had greater access to God than Moses. For Matthew to draw our attention to the parallels of Jesus to the exodus story and present Him as the *greater Moses* is important for us to see. Moses ultimately failed, but Jesus once again shows He is indeed the perfect human representative we need because He is also God in the flesh.

Jesus tells His disciples in Matthew 14:27, “Take heart; *it is I*.” This echoes the booming voice from the burning bush, “I AM who I AM.” In which ways do you need to be reminded that Jesus from the Gospels is also an all-powerful and sovereign Lord over all? How does this truth help you to “take heart?”

ZOOM OUT 02 / HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE REINFORCE JESUS' TEACHING?

Back in week 3, we considered all the connections between Moses and Jesus in Matthew 1-4. Let's briefly recall the connections. The Gospel writer presents Jesus as surviving an evil king's attempt to kill Him as a baby, fleeing to Egypt, passing through the waters of baptism, fasting in the wilderness for 40 days, calling 12 disciples, and going up a mountain to announce to all who have eyes to see: Jesus is the New Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15-18! And as we considered, the fact that Jesus is the New Moses helps readers understand the Sermon on the Mount. As the New Moses, Jesus is bringing a greater exodus (slavery to sin is greater than slavery in Egypt). He is inaugurating a new covenant where His people will receive new hearts that can actually obey God's word, so that they can actually enter the new and better promised land (Kingdom of Heaven greater than land of Israel). The wilderness

generation was unable to enter the promised land because their hearts were wicked, but Jesus' disciples will be able to enter the Kingdom through the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13-14) because they have been made pure in heart (5:8) through the blood of Jesus.

This is deep stuff, but it is a good reminder that the Bible is a bottomless ocean proclaiming the glory of Jesus from beginning to end. What a privilege we have to study it together and help each other see all the reasons Jesus is worthy of our worship.

Here in this zoom out, we will see the many ways these two chapters echo and reinforce Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. This will help prepare us for *Zoom Out 03*, where we will consider who Jesus' people are and who are not.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 153-154

Recall that Matthew 5:21-48 records Jesus teaching on murder, lust, adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and loving your enemies.

04 | Consider Matthew 14:1-12. What are some of the many ways Herod and his family violate Jesus' teaching from Matthew 5:21-48?

In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus gives three examples of hypocritical religion. A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be someone they are not for the sake of an audience. Their outward actions are not consistent with their inward beliefs.

05 | According to Matthew 15:1-20, why are the Pharisees and scribes hypocrites? How do they have lips that honor God, while their hearts are far from Him?

06 | Are there any positive examples from Matthew 14-15 that help reinforce Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount?

REFLECT

There are very contrasting lifestyles in our text this week. We see Herod living out a kingdom of self that results in death. Then we see Jesus living out the Kingdom of Heaven, and inviting and empowering His disciples to do the same. Kingdom living results in provision, security, and restoration.

How does examining Jesus' teachings and His actions give you confidence to follow Him? Name some specific ways from your own life and discipleship that have grown your confidence in Jesus.

ZOOM OUT 03 / WHO DID JESUS COME TO SAVE?

Here at Gospel City Church, the majority of us are Americans and Gentiles. At this point in redemptive history, it can be easy for us to take it for granted that the Jewish Messiah, the offspring of Abraham (the father of the Jews) and the son of David (the great king of the Jews), came to save you and me. At the time Matthew wrote, this amazing truth was not taken for granted. This is why Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy, in order to show that Jesus is the promised offspring of Abraham who has come to bless all the nations of the earth. It is also why Matthew

records story after story to make it clear who "His people" are, the people He came to save (Matthew 1:21).

Here in Matthew 14-15, the narrative adds more clarity about who Jesus came to save. We have already seen how these chapters reinforce the identity and teachings of Jesus as the New and Greater Moses. Now let's consider whom the New Moses has come to save from slavery to sin and deliver into the promised land of the Kingdom of Heaven.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 154-155

The Pharisees and scribes were Jews. As Jews and zealous keepers of the Jewish tradition, they would have assumed that citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven was their birthright (see Matthew 3:8).

07 | Consider Matthew 15:13-14. According to Jesus, are the Pharisees and all who follow them destined for the Kingdom of Heaven? Why or why not?

In the Old Testament, the Canaanites are archenemies of the people of God. Tyre and Sidon were the Las Vegas of Canaanite cities. The location change is important to note. Jesus' previous miracles were done in Jewish regions. He is now performing these miracles in Gentile regions.

08 | Consider Matthew 15:21-28. Why does the Jewish Messiah have mercy on a classic enemy of the Jews? What does that say about Jesus' mission and ministry?

REFLECT

Jesus came to save *His people* from their sins (Matthew 1:21). The Pharisees assumed that meant them because they were devoted to their laws—rules that had been skewed and strayed away from what God intended. Jesus doesn't mince words when the disciples ask—it is the state of the heart that matters, not what you do with your hands. It is those who believe in their heart and confess that Jesus is Lord who are His people.

Have you found yourself falling into assumptions of being one of Jesus' disciples because you do the right things or maybe because you grew up in the traditions of the faith? Jesus is clear—it's not what you do that saves you, it is faith in what He has done. And as your heart is made new in faith, it then changes what you do. What is coming out of your mouth? What do your words and actions reveal about the state of your heart?

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 28 horizontal blue or grey lines spaced evenly apart, typical of standard notebook paper. The lines extend across the entire width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical lines, text, or other markings present.

REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

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REFLECT 02

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REFLECT 03

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STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 14:1-15:39

- PRAISE** We follow a King who lived and loved perfectly. A King who is sovereign over storms, can multiply little to feed many, and who heals with compassion. A King who came to save His people and does so by sacrificing Himself. We can see the character of Jesus in this week's text, and it is lovely. All glory to Him! List some ways this week's homework caused you to praise Him—then praise Him!
- ADMIT** Are there areas in your life that resemble those of Herod's kingdom or those of the Pharisees' traditions? Confess to God the parts of your heart that might be defiling you.
- ASK** Ask God to grow your faith like Peter, who had faith that Jesus was the great I AM, or the Canaanite woman who was bold enough to approach Jesus because of her faith. Is there a step of faith you need to take? Ask Him to lead you.
- THANK** Thank Jesus that He came to save both Jew and Gentile! Through God's intricate plan, Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world!



WEEK 10

**WHO DO YOU SAY
THAT JESUS IS?**

WEEK 10

READ
MATTHEW 16:1-28

We have made it to the final week of our study and the literary climax of the Gospel of Matthew. Everything we have been studying in chapters 1-15 has been building to this moment. All the prophecies, miracles, teachings, and mic-drop statements from Jesus have been preparing us to answer this question: “Who do you say that I am?” Not “Who does your grandma say Jesus is?”, or your parents or your pastor or the culture. Who do you say that Jesus is? This is the question of all questions. It is a matter of eternal life or eternal death. How you answer it changes everything about your life and impacts everything beyond this life. And as we will see, if we truly believe Jesus is who He says He is, we will follow Him no matter the cost.

MEDITATE ON
Matthew 16:18

PRAY
Psalm 119:18

STEP 01

OBSERVE

MATTHEW 16:1-28

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 16:1-12

- 01 | What are the Pharisees and Sadducees able to interpret? What are they not able to interpret?
- 02 | Why do they ask for a “sign from heaven”? What “sign” will be given to them?
- 03 | What does Jesus mean when He warns the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 16:13-20

- 04 | Consider 16:13-16. Who is Jesus? Describe the wrong interpretations of who He is and the correct one.
- 05 | Consider 16:17. How did Peter know who Jesus is?

06 | Consider 16:18-20. What does Jesus say He is going to do? What does Jesus say He is going to do through Peter (and the other apostles)?

PRAYERFULLY READ MATTHEW 16:21-28

07 | Compare 16:21-23 with what just happened in 16:16-20. What is surprising about Jesus' words? What is surprising about Peter's words and actions?

08 | According to 16:24-25, what is the cost of following Jesus?

09 | Consider 16:24-28. What are the many reasons the reward for following Jesus is worth the cost?

MEDITATE ON

Matthew 16:18

STEP 02

INTERPRET

MATTHEW 16:1-28

The Gospel according to John ends with this very clear and epic purpose statement. John wrote that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). In a way, this acts as a purpose statement for all four Gospels combined. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have compiled eyewitness testimonies so that the world may know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. They have not written to accumulate fans or mere emotionally indifferent assenters to the facts. They have written so that sinners would be confronted with the reality of who Jesus is and what He has done, and that they would respond in repentant faith and worship.

What all four Gospels have written to prove, Matthew 16 presents as an arresting question to the reader. Matthew is not letting his readers off the hook, nor is he leaving them on their own to infer why he wrote. He is not even going to wait until the end of the book. Here at the literary center of the Gospel, the apostle forces us to pause and consider who we say Jesus is—then he spells out the implications of what His identity entails. Let’s dive in and consider how Peter answers the question of all questions and the personal implications that his answer has for everyone under the sun.

WE WILL SEEK TO DISCOVER

ZOOM OUT 01 / What does it mean for Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God?

ZOOM OUT 02 / What is the Church, and how is Jesus building it?

ZOOM IN 01 / Why is following Jesus worth more than all the world’s treasures combined?

ZOOM OUT 01 / WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR JESUS TO BE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD?

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 155-156

Matthew 1-16 is written so that readers would believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Allow the richness of what we have studied from passages like Matthew 1:1, 1:21-23, 3:16-17, 9:6, etc. to inform the depth of how you answer question 01.

- 01 | **What does it mean for Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God? Explain what each of these titles communicates and emphasizes about Jesus' identity.**

- 02 | **Read Matthew 11:25-27, 13:10-17, and 16:17. According to Jesus, why do some people (like Peter) believe in Him, while others reject Him?**

- 03 | **Compare Matthew 16:21-23 with Mark 8:22-33. Does Peter believe in/understand Jesus' identity or not? How is Peter like the blind man in Mark 8:22-25?**

REFLECT

Have you ever had a moment like the Pharisees', demanding that Jesus prove Himself to you? The Pharisees pressed Jesus for a sign, while Peter and the disciples recognized that the signs were already there. Peter's eyes had been opened by God to see that Jesus is the Christ, but similar to the Pharisees, he still had expectations of how the Messiah would reign.

Jesus' question to the disciples is one we are also presented with: "Who do you say I am?" Like the blind man from Mark 8, we may see clearly enough to believe Jesus is the long-awaited Savior, but there are still things that are not fully in focus. As you have studied Matthew, what has the Father revealed to you from His Word that is coming into focus? Who do you say Jesus is?

In *Zoom Out 01*, we focused on Peter's understanding of Jesus' identity. Because of God's grace alone, Peter (and the rest of the disciples by implication) believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. As we have learned throughout the course of this study, the identity of Jesus is rich, deep, multi-faceted, glorious, and awe-inspiring. But as we also saw, Peter's understanding of Jesus' identity is not yet complete. How can the Messiah, who is supposed to save others and rule forever in glory, be rejected, crucified, and killed? How can He save anyone if He cannot save Himself? How can He rule forever if He is dead?

The second half of Matthew seeks to answer these very important questions as Jesus turns his face toward Calvary (So be sure to join us for *Part 02* of our study!). In the meantime, in this zoom out, we will focus on Jesus' response to Peter in Matthew 16:18-20. This is one of the most debated passages in the history of the Church, as Roman Catholics have pointed to Jesus' words as their defense of the papacy. Therefore, as evangelical Protestants, it is important to understand what this passage means. Let's dive in and consider what Jesus is building and how He is building it.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 156-158

The word *Church* literally means "called out ones." The word refers to people, not a building or an event. Therefore, technically, we don't "go to church" on Sunday mornings—we gather with the Church.

- 04 | **Focus on every single word in Jesus' statement "I will build my church." If the Church is a people who are the "called-out ones," then how is the Church "built"? (Also ponder: What is the purpose of gates? And how does Jesus' statement that the gates of Hades will not prevail help illuminate what He means?)**
- 05 | **Read Ephesians 2:20, 4:11-12 and Matthew 16:18. What is the "rock" that Jesus is building His Church on? Is it Peter's confession, Peter himself, or the ministry of Peter and the apostles?**
- 06 | **Compare Matthew 23:13 with 16:19. As the foundation of Christ's Church, what authority does Jesus give to His apostles? What exactly is meant by "keys of the kingdom"?**

REFLECT

What does it mean to be one of the “called out ones?” To be a member of the Church means we are laying our lives on the foundation of Christ Jesus, our cornerstone. We are a part of what Jesus is building. Peter and the apostles were the first stones laid, and so the task to see that the Church was built started with them.

Just as the first disciples had the responsibility to see that the gospel would be proclaimed, swinging wide the gates of heaven to all who believed, we too are handed the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. If we have the knowledge and understanding of the gospel, we are also commissioned and empowered to share it! What are some ways you can become an active participant in holding the keys of the good news? Who needs to hear this good news from you?

ZOOM IN 01 / WHY IS FOLLOWING JESUS WORTH MORE THAN ALL THE WORLD'S TREASURES COMBINED?

In *Zoom Out 01 + 02*, we have seen Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And as the Son of the living God, He is calling His people out from the realm of the dead, raising them to life, and building them up into His image through His apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors who preach the life-creating Word. This is how Christ is building His Church, on the foundation of the apostles and their teaching (the New Testament), through

the preaching of the gospel, which is the only way that spiritually dead sinners can enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

All of that brings us to a very fitting conclusion to *Part 01* of our study through Matthew. We have spent 10 rich weeks studying who Jesus is and what He came to do. Now it is time to consider how we ought to respond.

CONSIDER THE COMMENTARY AND CROSS REFERENCES ON PAGES 158-159

07 | Consider 16:24. What are the three things Jesus asks His disciples to do? Explain what each command entails.

08 | Circle the word *for* in 16:25-28. What are the three reasons Jesus gives for why His disciples should pay the cost and follow Him?

09 | Is following Jesus worth the cost? Can you get the reward without paying the cost? Explain.

REFLECT

The call to abundant life is to deny and die to self. This is the key to Jesus' upside-down kingdom, and it comes with a promise. You will receive life if you give it up—the reward outweighs the sacrifice, and Jesus Himself will ensure you see this abundance.

What does it look like to deny yourself? For each of us, it might look a little different. Good questions to ask are: “What are you pursuing other than Christ? What things do you chase after that are for personal gain, temporary glory, and self-preservation?” Jesus calls you to lay yourself down to gain everything. Are you willing? Take some time to journal the specific implications of following Jesus, no matter the cost.

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REFLECT & APPLY

REFLECT 01

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REFLECT 02

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REFLECT 03

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STEP 03

RESPOND IN PRAYER

MATTHEW 16:1-28

- PRAISE** Who do you say that Jesus is? How has your study of Matthew 1-16 deepened your understanding and fueled your worship? Take time to praise God for who Jesus is and what He has done.
- ADMIT** What do you need to lay down in pursuit of Christ? Confess the things you are tempted to run after rather than Jesus and His kingdom. Tell God how these things distract you, and lay them at His feet. In a sign of surrender, sit with your hands open to Him, releasing them as you desire to deny yourself and follow Him.
- ASK** Jesus has given the Church the keys to the Kingdom! How is He asking you to share the good news of the gospel? Ask God to reveal to you who and how He would want you to see the gates of heaven swung wide open. How can you be a part of building the Church?
- THANK** As we conclude Part 1 of our study through Matthew, do you agree that Jesus is worth following no matter the cost? Cry out to God and tell Him why He is worthy.

APPENDIX A

WEEK 01

Q / 01 | REFERENCING MATTHEW 1:1-17

- The overarching point of the genealogy is that Jesus is the long-awaited son of David. Matthew communicates this in multiple ways. For starters, consider how it begins. Of all the people Jesus descends from, David is listed first, and he is even listed before Abraham, who lived 1,000 years before David.
- In addition to beginning with David, Matthew ends the genealogy with David as well, making a David bookend.
- David's name is mentioned more than any other name (6x in chapter 1). Of all the ancestors Joseph descends from, the angel refers to him as "Joseph, son of David" (1:20), thus linking Jesus' legal father with David.
- Last but not least, it is worth noting how the genealogy is structured as a whole. In verse 17, Matthew highlights the fact that he has broken up the genealogy into 3 sets of 14. Why the emphasis on the number 14? In Matthew's day, it was common practice to use the numerical value of letters to communicate a message (using the English alphabet, A would equal 1, B would equal 2, etc.), and as many scholars have pointed out, the numerical value of David's name in Hebrew is indeed 14. One commentator puts it this way: "By arranging Jesus' genealogy into three sets of 14 generations, Matthew shows that the genealogy shouts, 'David! David! David!' It highlights Jesus' identity as the promised son of David who would fulfill God's covenant with David by reigning over his people forever and ever."

Q / 02 | REFERENCING MATTHEW 2:1-12

- The clues in 2:1-12 that point to Jesus' identity as the son of David are a bit more subtle but still very important. The little town of Bethlehem is mentioned four times in this passage. Bethlehem was known as "the city of David," and every student of the Old Testament knew that the promised son of David would be born in Bethlehem as well. As quoted in Matthew 2:6, Micah 5:2 promises the Messiah will be a great shepherd over God's people, just like his father David.
- The wise men refer to Jesus as "king of the Jews," and Herod (the current king of the Jews) immediately recognizes the Messiah baby as a threat to his throne. David was

a king, and the promised Messiah (which means anointed one) would be a king as well. Therefore, to refer to Jesus as the king implies that He is the promised son of David.

- Another detail from this passage that should jump out at readers is the peculiar nature of the star. What is so significant about this star that it would cause these grown men to go on a multi-month journey so that they could worship a baby born to peasants and give him their greatest treasures? Every detail about this situation should stand out as shocking.
- Matthew does not give an explicit answer. However, it is very possible that these wise men would have had access to the Hebrew scriptures (being from the east, it is likely they were from Babylon or Persia, which were both well populated with Jews). One very important Messianic prophecy in the Hebrew scriptures comes from Numbers 24:17.

Numbers 24:17 / I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab.

- Back in Genesis 15, God promised that he would bless Abraham with more offspring than there are stars in the sky. And here in Numbers 24, it is prophesied that one of these stars (an offspring of Abraham and Jacob) would distinguish himself above the rest. This star will be a king (consider the word scepter) who will crush all of God's enemies. The rest of the context of this prophecy implies that this star/king will be the promised seed of the woman (see Genesis 3:15), the promised offspring of Abraham, the lion of Judah (see Genesis 49:8-10).
- The rest of the Old Testament makes abundantly clear that the family tree of the Messiah goes from Eve to Abraham to Judah to *David*!
- If all of this sounds too good to be true, consider Jesus' last recorded statement in the entire Bible.

Revelation 22:16 / "I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

- Therefore, why did the wise men uproot their lives to come worship a foreign baby? Because the star told them that Jesus is the

long-awaited king, the promised son of David, the savior of the world.

Q / 03

REFERENCING MATTHEW 1:1

- To prove that Jesus is the promised son of David is a concise way of saying that He is the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of everything the Old Testament promised and anticipated.
- In Genesis 3:15, God promises that one day an offspring of Eve would come and crush the serpent and all who align with him and reverse the curse of sin and death.
- The Genesis narrative traces this Messianic hope from Adam to Noah to Abraham.
- And in Genesis 12, God promises that through Abraham's offspring all the nations of the earth will be blessed (See Genesis 12:1-3).
- This is why the genealogy in Matthew also includes Abraham in a prominent position. And it is why it includes multiple Gentiles (such as Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah). Their inclusion is a nod back to the promise in Genesis 12 that the promised offspring would one day bless all the nations of the earth.
- This expectation is developed throughout the Old Testament that the promised Messiah would not merely rule Israel, but rather His saving rule would be universal.
- As the Old Testament traces the lineage of the Messiah from Abraham to Judah (see Genesis 49:8-10), and from Judah to David, and from David to Jesus, it becomes more and more clear that this promised son of David will be the one who was promised all the way back in Genesis 3:15.
- Here are a few passages that help create the expectation of an eternal and universal Davidic kingdom.

2 Samuel 7:13 / He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Isaiah 9:7 / Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

- This is what it means for Jesus to be the son of David. He is the long-awaited Messiah who has come to reverse the curse and usher in God's universal Eden-like Kingdom.

Q / 04

REFERENCING MATTHEW 1:18-2:12

- The first major indicator of the deity of Christ is the fact that He "was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary" as the

Apostles' Creed states. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew records this detail in 1:18. He then repeats the detail in 1:20 as he records the angel (who is a messenger sent from God) informing Joseph of the same miraculous news. Of course, this is beyond unbelievable, but it was in fact prophesied by Isaiah, as Matthew cites in 1:23.

- The next piece of evidence can be seen in the meaning of Jesus' name, which literally means "Yahweh saves." And Matthew includes the beautiful specification that Yahweh has come in the flesh to save His people from their sins.
- Matthew also adds that the child born to the virgin will be called "Immanuel" and, in case anyone misses the point, he spells it out by saying "which means God with us" (wink wink).
- And just in case any readers missed all the evidence of Jesus' deity in His birth account, Matthew decides to put the account of the visit from the wise men right after to illustrate the point.
- What jumps off the page in 2:1-12 is the word *worship*. The word is used three times. Worshiping baby Jesus is the stated reason why the wise men traveled all this way. And worshiping Him is what they do. In fact, they "fall down and worship him" (2:11).
- And as a Jewish Monotheist, Matthew does not indicate that what they are doing is idolatrous.
- But just a few chapters later, Matthew records Satan tempting Jesus to "fall down and worship" him. Note how Jesus responds.

Matthew 4:10 / Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

- One of the most foundational elements of all biblical religion is that God and God alone is worthy of worship. And yet, according to Matthew, the fully human baby Jesus is worthy of wealthy, grown men falling down to worship Him! How? Because He is Immanuel.

Q / 05

REFERENCING MATTHEW 1:18-2:12

- Matthew records two important (but related) responses to Jesus in 2:11. The wise men (1) leave everything and give Jesus their greatest treasure, and (2) they fall down and worship Him.
- Matthew repeats these two responses throughout his Gospel in order to communicate that everyone should indeed respond to Jesus the way these wise men did.

Matthew 6:19-21 / "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth →

and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”

Matthew 13:44 / The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matthew 16:24-26 / Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”

- As these passages make clear, Jesus is worth more than anything this life can give or death can take. What we treasure reveals what our hearts love. If we understand who Jesus is, we will treasure knowing Him more than any of the Monopoly money treasures of this world that are worthless by comparison.

- The Gospel of Matthew also makes clear that worship (which is very related to what your heart treasures) is the appropriate response to Jesus, as well.
- At the center of the gospel, Jesus feeds the five thousand and then walks on water. Consider how the disciples responded.

Matthew 14:33 / And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

- At the end of the Gospel, Jesus rises from the dead, and here is how the disciples respond when they see Him and touch Him.

Matthew 28:9 / And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

Matthew 28:17 / And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

- At the beginning, middle, and end of his Gospel, Matthew records people not merely respecting or admiring Jesus, but worshipping Jesus. Therefore, we too should respond to Jesus as the wise men did. We should treasure Him above all else and worship Him as God incarnate.

Q / 06

REFERENCING MATTHEW 1:21

- Matthew 1:1 tells readers that Jesus is an offspring of Abraham. As Matthew's Jewish audience would have known, one of the most foundational gospel promises in the Old Testament is the promise that one day God

will bless all the nations of the earth through one of Abraham's offspring.

- This promise is first made in Genesis 12:1-3, and it is repeated many times. Consider what God promised Abraham after he was willing to sacrifice his one and only son.

Genesis 22:18 / “In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

- Therefore, from the very beginning of the Bible, it is clear that the long-awaited Jewish Messiah would one day come as the Savior of the world, not just Israel.

- This reading is confirmed through the details of the genealogy, as multiple Gentiles are mentioned, including Rahab the Canaanite, Ruth the Moabite, and Uriah the Hittite.

- It is further demonstrated by the gentile wise men who come and worship the Jewish baby boy. Clearly, the good news of Jesus' lordship goes beyond the boundaries of Israel. Even foreign powerful men have come to worship Him.

Q / 07

REFERENCING MATTHEW 1:21

- The rest of Matthew goes on to make crystal clear that the people who are “his people”—the people He has come to save—are not merely those who share the same ethnicity as Him. Rather, Jesus has come to save those who believe in Him, worship Him, and forsake everything in this world to follow Him, regardless of their ethnicity.
- Matthew makes this clear in chapter 3 when he records John the Baptist telling the religious leaders not to trust in their biological relationship to Abraham as the means of their salvation. Rather, they need to repent and believe like everyone else (see Matthew 3:7-10).
- In chapter 12, Jesus makes a shocking statement that His own blood relatives aren't even necessarily “his people.” Jesus' family is not distinguished by blood or ethnicity, but rather by obedience to Father God through faith in Christ.
- And of course, Matthew ends with the famous Great Commission where Jesus commands the apostles to make disciples of “all nations.” Therefore, Matthew ends the way it begins, by showing that Jesus has come to save His people who are from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

WEEK 02

Q / 01

REFERENCING MATTHEW 3:1-12

- The reason John the Baptist's ministry was causing such a frenzy is that his ministry was fulfilling prophecies that indicated that the Messiah was right around the corner.
- First, consider how Matthew 3:3 quotes Isaiah 40:3. Isaiah 40:3 helped create the expectation that there would be a forerunner to the Messiah who would come right before Him to prepare the way. And this forerunner would be a voice crying in the wilderness. And note that John was a voice preaching in the wilderness.
- Also consider the last two verses of the Old Testament.

Malachi 4:5-6 / “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ‘And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children...”

- According to this prophecy, there will be a big indicator that the day of the Lord (i.e., the day of salvation and judgment/the coming of the Messiah) is right around the corner. And that indicator is the coming of the prophet Elijah, whose ministry will bring revival among God's people.
- With this in mind, now consider how Elijah dressed and compare it to how John the Baptist dressed.

2 Kings 1:8 / They answered him, “He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.”

Matthew 3:4 / Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist.

- Therefore, according to these two prophecies, when there is a voice crying out in the wilderness, and when Elijah comes and brings revival, the Messiah will be right around the corner. And here in Matthew 3, John is preaching a message in the wilderness, preparing the way for the Messiah—he is dressed like Elijah, and his ministry is bringing revival!
- (In Matthew 17:12-13, Jesus confirms that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy about the coming of Elijah. Elijah was a great prophet who was immediately followed by an even greater prophet who did more miracles and had a greater ministry than Elijah. Likewise, John the Baptist was a great prophet who was followed by an even greater prophet. This is what connects him

to Elijah—both were followed by greater prophets.)

Q / 02

REFERENCING MATTHEW 3:1-12

- The mission of the Messiah is to save His people from their sins, and in order to prepare the way for this mission, John the Baptist is preaching a message trying to convince people that they are sinners who need to be saved from their sins!
- First, note the many references to repentance and sin.
- The summary of John's message is one word: repent (see 3:2). The result of his ministry was repentance and confession of sin (see 3:6). He urged the religious leaders to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (3:8).
- Also note the references to coming salvation and wrath. The message of repentance is so urgent because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (3:2). Those who are not eligible to enter the kingdom will bear the wrath of God (3:7) and the eternal fires of judgment (3:12).
- Now we need to consider who John is preaching to—those coming to see him were Jews. Most Jews at this time would have assumed that entering the kingdom/going to heaven was their birthright because they were physical descendants of Abraham. But John strongly challenges this assumption, even calling them a brood of vipers (which implies they are aligned with the serpent, not God—see Genesis 3:15).
- Therefore, John's message is this: don't assume that because you are Jews you will be saved. Both Jews and Gentiles need to repent of their sins. Your ethnicity can't save you.
- And all of this explains why John was baptizing people. At that time, baptism was something that Gentiles would do when they wanted to convert to Judaism and become part of the covenant community. Baptism communicated that they were dying to their pagan past, being cleansed from their uncleanness, and rising to a new way of life.
- Therefore, for Jews to be baptized means they were acknowledging that they too needed to be saved, cleansed from their sin, and brought into God's covenant community. And that happens, not through birthright, but through repentance, confession of sin, and faith in the coming Messiah.

Q / 03

REFERENCING MATTHEW 3:1-17

- First, compare Matthew 3:11-12 with Ezekiel 36:25-27.

Ezekiel 36:25-27 / I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from →

all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

- Water baptism can merely represent externally what needs to happen internally. Water can cleanse the body of uncleanness, but it cannot cleanse the heart. But Ezekiel promises a day when God will give His people regenerated hearts that can actually love Him and obey Him, and He will indwell them with His Spirit so that they can be cleansed from the inside out.
- Now consider what John says in 3:11-12 about the one who is coming after him. In other words, Jesus is greater than John because His ministry won't just tell people what needs to happen (repent and be cleansed)—it will actually be able to accomplish what needs to happen! And this is because He will baptize with the Holy Spirit, give us new hearts, and cleanse us from the inside out.
- Also notice how those whom the Messiah does not baptize with the Spirit, He will instead baptize with fire. Which is another way of saying He will send them to hell.
- And all of that prepares us to understand what happens at Jesus' baptism. Jesus is baptized, not because He needs to be cleansed from sin, but because He is identifying with John's ministry. He is the one for whom John is preparing the way. He is Yahweh who has come to cleanse His people from their sins.
- To "fulfill all righteousness" is a short way of saying that Jesus has come to fulfill everything the Old Testament promised, to pay for His people's unrighteousness, and to purchase righteousness for them so that they can dwell with Him in the kingdom of righteousness.
- The Spirit visibly descends on Jesus to make it clear to all that He is the one who has come to baptize people with the Spirit.
- Then the Father from heaven (note how all three members of the Trinity are present in this passage) quotes two significant Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

Psalm 2:7 / I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son."

Isaiah 42:1 / Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

- Psalm 2 is a prophecy about the promised

son of David who would rule over God's universal kingdom forever and ever. Isaiah 42 is a prophecy about the Spirit-empowered Messiah who will bring justice to the nations. And Isaiah 53 later reveals that this servant will bring justice and righteousness by dying a substitutionary death. Therefore, the Father confirms at Jesus' baptism that Jesus is the promised King and the Spirit-anointed Suffering Servant.

Q / 04

REFERENCING MATTHEW 4:1-4

- There are two famous Old Testament stories that this passage brings to mind. The most obvious is the Israelite's wilderness wanderings.
- Jesus is in the wilderness fasting for 40 days and 40 nights. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, and Moses fasted in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. The Israelites were hungry in the wilderness, and Jesus was hungry in the wilderness. The Israelites had bread provided for them miraculously, and Jesus is tempted to provide bread for Himself miraculously.
- It is also worth pointing out that the three passages that Jesus quotes are all from Deuteronomy, which clearly recalls the wilderness generation.
- Jesus being tempted in the wilderness by the devil should also recall Genesis 3, when the devil tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden. In Genesis 3, Satan twists God's Word and tempts Adam with food. In Matthew 4, Satan twists God's Word and tempts the new Adam with food.

Q / 05

REFERENCING MATTHEW 4:3-6

- In the Old Testament, Adam, Israel, and David and his sons were all called sons of God. This is made clear by what God tells Moses to tell Pharaoh.

Exodus 4:22-23 / Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, ²³and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son."

- And note what God tells David and his sons.

2 Samuel 7:14 / I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.

- For Adam being a son of God, see Genesis 5:1-3 and Luke 3:38.

- Now, as Christians, when we hear the title "Son of God," we automatically think that it refers to Jesus as the eternal Son, the second

person of the Trinity. And it certainly does mean that, but the verses above show that it has multiple layers of meaning.

- When the title was applied to Adam, Israel, and David, it was not a statement about their deity—it was a statement about their role as God’s human representatives. Each was given the task to image God’s character the way a son physically images his father. Adam, Israel, and David were all supposed to rule and live the way God would, with holiness, justice, and righteousness, so that the world could look at them and know what God is like.
- And yet we know that Adam, Israel, David, and his sons all failed to image God. None of them was worthy of the title “Son of God.” So “Son of God” became a messianic title that created the expectation that one day a Messiah would come who would rule and live in a way that images God the way a son images his father.
- So when Satan mocks Jesus by tempting Him to prove that He is the Son of God, he is not trying to get Him to prove His deity per se. Satan is trying to tempt Jesus to prove that He is the Messiah. And this is a diabolical trick because if Jesus falls for it and does what Satan is tempting Him to do, He will actually prove that he is not the Son of God! Because if Jesus sins, it would disqualify Him from being a righteous image of the Father who has come to lead his people into righteousness. But praise the Lord that Jesus is indeed the Son of God in the divine and messianic sense of the term.

Q / 06 **REFERENCING MATTHEW 4:1-11**

- Adam, Israel, and David’s sons all miserably failed to image God. None of them lived in a way that made them worthy of the title “Son of God.” But immediately after Jesus is baptized, the Father declares from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” He is the righteous Son who has come to fulfill all righteousness. And then the Spirit immediately leads Him into the wilderness so that He can prove it.
- Consider how Jesus’ victories correspond to Israel’s failures.
- Israel consistently failed to trust God to provide food and water for them. They desired food so much that they were willing to grumble against God and break God’s commandments just to gather food. But Jesus, as the Son worthy of the name, demonstrates that He believes that obeying God’s Word is more essential for survival than eating food.
- Secondly, Israel constantly put God to the

test. Consider how God describes the wilderness generation.

Psalm 95:8-10 / Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, ⁹when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. ¹⁰For forty years I loathed that generation.

- But Jesus, the true Son of God, refused to test God.

Matthew 4:7 / Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

- And lastly, Israel’s most memorable failure is recorded in Exodus 32 when they worshiped the golden calf. Likewise, Satan tempts Jesus to commit idolatry. But once again, Jesus is victorious where Israel failed.

Matthew 4:10 / Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”

- Therefore, unlike Israel, Jesus trusts the Father, He does not test the Father, and He does not commit idolatry against the Father. He is victorious over sin and the Devil in the wilderness where Israel failed, proving He is the Son of God who lives in a way that reflects the holy character of Father God.
- And all of this is so important because, as the Son of God, Jesus is ushering in the kingdom of God. But to do that, He must first topple the current regime, i.e., the kingdom of Satan. And the fact that Jesus can cast out demons and resist the Devil proves that He is the one who has the power to overthrow the kingdom of this world and bring the Kingdom of Heaven.

Q / 07 **REFERENCING MATTHEW 4:12-17**

- Isaiah 9:1-7 prophesies that the Messianic son of David will be like the dawning light over people who have dwelled in perpetual darkness. It predicts that the saving light will come to specific people in specific lands, and this promised king will usher in an eternal kingdom of light. And just as the prophecy predicted, Jesus, the promised child who has grown into a man, is walking about the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, etc., preaching the coming of this kingdom.
- And as we see from Isaiah 9:6-7, this kingdom will be ruled by a heavenly ruler. The domain of His reign will be universal, the length of His reign will be eternal, and the quality of His reign will be just, righteous, and perfect. This is the kingdom that Jesus is bringing.

Q /
08-09

REFERENCING MATTHEW 4:23-25

- Everything Jesus heals in these verses is ultimately caused by sin. When sin came into the world, it brought disease, distress, demons, death, and the reign of the Devil along with it.
- But Jesus, as the king who has come to save His people from their sins, is not just coming to pay for sin. He is coming to eradicate all of the effects of sin. For Jesus to preach the gospel of the kingdom while He heals people of diseases, afflictions and demons is to say, “In my kingdom there will be no more illness, no more pain, no more demonic oppression, and no more death because I have come to save my people from their sins and all of their deadly effects.”
- The activity of Jesus’ ministry is meant to communicate what His kingdom will be like. And in a word, it will be *heavenly*!

WEEK 03

Q / 01 REFERENCING DEUTERONOMY 18:15-18

- This prophecy from Deuteronomy makes clear that God would raise up a Messiah who reminds people of Moses. Moses was a prophet, teaching God’s people His word and giving them the law. And just like Moses, the Messiah will be a prophet, speaking God’s words to God’s people. Moses spoke on behalf of God—therefore, to obey Him was to obey God. The same will be true for the Messiah.
- Moses was a deliverer, delivering God’s people from slavery in Egypt. Likewise, the Messiah will be a deliverer, delivering God’s people from bondage.
- Moses was a mediator between God and His people, and the Messiah will be a mediator.
- It was clear the expectation that the Messiah would be a New Moses was alive in Jesus’ day. Consider what the crowds say after Jesus feeds the five thousand.

John 6:14 / When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

Q / 02 REFERENCING MATTHEW 2-4

- Matthew records so many parallels between Moses and Jesus that it is beyond the possibility of coincidence. Matthew is very intentionally portraying Jesus as the New and Greater Moses.
- Both Moses and Jesus were born at a time when an evil king was anxiously killing Hebrew

baby boys just to try to preserve their power (compare Exodus 1:8-10 with Matthew 2:16).

- In order to preserve his life, the Lord instructs Moses to flee from Egypt. Jesus and His family are instructed to flee to Egypt. Both are told it is safe to return with the same message “the ones who sought your life are dead” (compare Exodus 4:19 with Matthew 2:19).
- As Moses begins his ministry, he passes through the waters (the Red Sea), spends 40 years in the wilderness, regularly fasts in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, receives revelation and Old Covenant laws from God on a mountain, and ultimately attempts to deliver the 12 tribes of Israel from slavery in Egypt to the promised land.
- Likewise, as Jesus begins His ministry He passes through the waters (of baptism), fasts for 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, calls 12 disciples who will help Him form the new people of God, ascends the mountain to deliver God’s revelation and New Covenant laws, and ultimately accomplishes a new and greater exodus by freeing God’s people from slavery to sin and delivering them into the kingdom of heaven.

- It is clear that Matthew wants his readers to pick up on these connections to Moses by the way he begins the Sermon on the Mount.
- Matthew 5:1 says that Jesus “went up on the mountain.” This phrase is used over and over in Exodus to describe Moses going up the mountain to receive revelation from God (see Exodus 19:3, 24:18, 34:4).
- This time, the New and Greater Moses ascends the mountain to deliver God’s revelation straight from His mouth. Recall what God says in the prophecy about the New Moses.

Deuteronomy 18:18 / I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth.

Matthew 5:2 / And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying...

- And it is worth pointing out that the Sermon on the Mount is the first of five major sermons from Jesus that are recorded in the book of Matthew. Many scholars have argued that this is meant to echo the five books of Moses.

Q /
03-04

REFERENCING MATTHEW 2-4

The prophecies about the New Covenant reveal a few glorious realities that will be true for God’s New Covenant people. (1) Their sins will be forgiven. (2) They will be given new hearts that are actually capable of loving God and being righteous. (3) They will be indwelt by the Holy

Spirit, who will help lead them to love God and love others.

- Just as Moses inaugurated the Old Covenant, it was expected that the New Moses would be the one who would come to inaugurate the New Covenant. This is exactly what Matthew records.
- Matthew 1:21 announces Jesus has come to “save his people from their sins.” This is the fulfillment of the New Covenant hope promised in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36.

Jeremiah 31:34 / “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

- In Matthew 3, John the Baptist preaches that the one who comes after him will baptize people with the Holy Spirit. This is an unmistakable connection to the coming of the New Covenant.

Ezekiel 36:27 / And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

- Now, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is talking specifically to His disciples (5:1). He refers to God as “your” Father at least 18 times in the sermon. In other words, Jesus is talking to believers, teaching them about the standard of righteousness that is expected and made possible through the New Covenant (which Jesus will inaugurate through His death, as He says in Matthew 26:26-28).
- For believers who have regenerated hearts and are indwelt by the Spirit, it is actually possible to be (imperfectly) what the Beatitudes describe. It is actually possible to obey the heart of God’s laws and not just the letter (Matthew 5:21-48), etc.
- Therefore, the righteousness described by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is not just hyperbolic or unrealistic or an evangelistic message meant to drive self-righteous people to despair. It is the standard that Jesus calls all of His disciples to. We don’t earn our way to heaven, but if we are indwelt by God’s Spirit, He will help us walk in His ways by grace through faith.

Q / 05

REFERENCING MATTHEW 5:3-10

- Unbelievers assume they are good enough to earn their way to God, but the believer is poor in spirit. They realize they are spiritually destitute, with nothing in themselves that is inherently good. And yet, the good news of the gospel is that those who are repentant and humble and completely dependent on God will receive the greatest gift imaginable.

The poor in spirit in this life will be eternally rich rulers of heaven in the next life. This is so certain: “theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” is stated in the present tense.

- Unbelievers might mourn the consequences of sin, but they do not mourn sin itself. Only believers who have a new heart see their sin and the sin of this world the way God sees it. But if we mourn the sinfulness and evil brokenness of this world, we will be comforted in the kingdom when—

Revelation 21:4 / “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

- Unbelievers have no desire for righteousness—they crave unrighteousness. We all know this by personal experience. But one of the first signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit is new desires, a desire for righteousness that is foreign to the unconverted. And for those who hunger for righteousness, in the kingdom, the Lord will graciously make them perfectly righteous.
- Sin blinds, numbs, and separates us from seeing and experiencing God. But those who have been made pure in heart have the hope of seeing God when sin’s barriers will be finally and fully removed (Revelation 21:3).

Q /
06-07

REFERENCING MATTHEW 5:11-14

- Jesus warns His disciples that if they live for His name, they might not feel very blessed all the time. In fact, you might feel the opposite. Unbelievers love the darkness and hate the light. They hate God and love their sin, and they hate anyone who would threaten their love of their sin or dare make them feel judged by it and remind them of the conscience they have seared. Therefore, people who desire to be righteous in the world should expect to be hated by the world, which loves unrighteousness.
- After assuring persecution, Jesus offers two words of comfort. (1) The reward will be great in heaven. Even if Jesus’ disciples are treated like the scum of the earth now, they will be kings and queens in the Kingdom of Heaven. (2) Some people will “see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Not everyone will persecute believers who live for Christ. Some will be amazed by their transformed lives and give glory to God.
- Salt is a purifying substance. Jesus is sending His disciples who are pure in heart out into the world to make more disciples whose hearts are purified. However, as Jesus warns, if those who are supposed to do the purifying →

are themselves impure, then their witness is destroyed, and their saltiness is good for nothing.

- Likewise, the world is full of darkness. Therefore, if Jesus' disciples are pursuing righteousness, they will stand out like a light in a dark room or a city on a hill. When the world notices their light, some will recognize that their righteous character can only be a result of God's power to transform, and they will give Him glory.

Q / 08 REFERENCING MATTHEW 5:17-20

- Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, He fulfilled every last detail of the Old Testament. He came to fulfill every prophecy and obey every law. As gospel-believing Christians who believe (rightly) that we are saved by grace and not by works, it could be easy to misunderstand the implications of the gospel by assuming it doesn't matter how we live because Jesus fulfilled the law in our place.
- But this is the opposite of what Jesus says in 5:19-20. Consider the connecting word *therefore* in v19.
- Jesus says, "I have come to fulfill the law, therefore, my true disciples will seek to actually obey God's word as well." In other words, one of the ways Jesus has come to fulfill the law is by helping empower His people to obey the law!

- This is a non-negotiable for entrance into the kingdom because citizens of the kingdom don't just call Jesus "Lord", they actually submit to the Lordship of the King (7:21).
- Submission to King Jesus looks like obeying His interpretation of God's word.
- This prompts Jesus to give six examples of Old Testament laws in 5:21-48. In each example, Jesus responds to how the law was taught and interpreted by the teachers of the day. In each case, they were missing the heart behind the law, and therefore not obeying it altogether. Then Jesus provides the right interpretation according to God's intent.
- The point behind each of the six examples is to communicate that true disciples of Jesus will obey the heart of God's commandments because they will have a heart that is actually capable of obedience (because of the New Covenant), and thus their righteousness will exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, who seemed righteous on the outside but on the inside were dead and wicked.

Q / 09-10 REFERENCING MATTHEW 5:21-48

- It is true that this is technically the "interpret" step and not the "reflect" step. But it is not

difficult to properly interpret what Jesus means when He says, "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (5:28-29). What is difficult is submitting to the words of King Jesus and obeying.

- If we properly "interpret" Jesus' words but fail to obey them, have we really properly interpreted them? Here is how Jesus Himself answers the question at the end of this very sermon.

Matthew 7:24, 26 / "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock...²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand."

- Therefore, let us be like the wise man. Reflect on Jesus' words and do them. Be encouraged by the fact that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, and He is eager and able to help us obey so that the world may see our good works and give glory to the Father who is in heaven.

WEEK 04

Q / 01 REFERENCING MATTHEW 6:5-14

- Religious hypocrites love to pray to be seen by others and to feel good about themselves. Their motivation is the fleeting praise of men rather than communion with God.
- Gentiles who pray to their pagan gods think they can manipulate their gods to answer their prayers based on the length and quality of their prayers. They think answered prayer is determined by their performance in prayer rather than the character of their god.
- As Jesus points out, both of these examples are rooted in a wrong view of God. What we believe and how we live are always related. One flows from the other.
- The hypocrites are not even thinking about God when they pray. They are thinking about how they can be "seen by others" (6:5), rather than being seen by the Father (5:6). Their small view of God leads them to forget that God is omnipresent (everywhere) and omniscient (all-knowing).
- What's worse is they forfeit all of the amazing rewards of prayer. Praying to be seen by others is such a futile reward compared to spending time with the God of the universe, who is our heavenly Father.

- The Gentiles also have a small view of God. They fail to realize He already knows what we need before we do. Therefore, having our prayers answered is dependent on our Father's nature and character, not our performance.

Q / 02

REFERENCING MATTHEW 6:5-14

- Jesus refers to God as "your Father" six times in these short verses. We are not praying to a distant, indifferent monarch who is annoyed to give us the time of day. We are praying to our Father, who loves us and created us and is personally responsible for providing for and protecting His children. Just as little children crave time with their daddy, prayer is the opportunity for children of God to spend time with Him. The fact that God is our Father has an infinite number of implications for prayer.
- Our Father is not just any father, He is the heavenly Father. He is the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful, infinitely good, and eternally gracious Creator of the universe. If He is for us, who can be against us? If we know who we are praying to, we will not merely pray to be seen by others. We will not feel like we have to perform to get a favorable outcome. We will simply cry out to our Father who is in heaven because we know He sees us and hears us and loves us, and that He has the ability to provide for all of our needs abundantly.
- This section reveals a lot of other things about God that are relevant for prayer. Still, the emphasis seems to be the fact that disciples of Jesus and citizens of the kingdom have the privilege of calling upon the heavenly Father in prayer.

Q / 03

REFERENCING MATTHEW 6:9-14

- The number one priority of every kingdom citizen is that God's reputation of being righteous, pure, glorious, good, and completely other would be defended and established. God's holy name has been rebelled against ever since the fall, and it will not be properly hallowed until every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord. This naturally leads to the next petition.
- Kingdom citizens realize this world is not their home. They are sojourners longing for their home. They hate sin, suffering, and death, and they long for the day when God will crush the rebellion once and for all and establish His righteous reign through the eternal dominion of King Jesus. It seems far off now, but there will be a day when Jesus sits on His glorious throne and the kingdom is ushered in in its fullness, and sin will be no more. Kingdom citizens regularly pray with John, "Come, Lord Jesus, come."

- In the meantime, kingdom citizens do still need provisions for survival in this world. Therefore, we pray for daily provision because our dependence on God is a daily need.
- The primary focus of our needs is spiritual, not physical. Those who believe the gospel will realize they need daily forgiveness for their sins, they will show others the mercy they have been shown, and ultimately, they will desire to be holy as He is holy.

Q / 04

REFERENCING MATTHEW 6:1-24

- Kingdom citizens actually believe this world is passing away and that they will dwell with God in a heavenly kingdom forever and ever. Therefore, they actually live like it by investing in eternity rather than the temporal.
- Kingdom citizens give to the poor, not for the praise of men, but because they know this world and everything in it is passing away anyway. They love the poor because their Father loves the poor, and they know that this type of faith pleases their Father, and that He will reward them in heaven.
- This kingdom perspective influences what they focus on in prayer. Their primary focus in prayer is the world to come, not the one that is passing away.
- This leads them to fast. Fasting is a way of communicating that one desires communion with God even more than physical food. Kingdom citizens desire the spiritual realities of the kingdom more than the fleeting realities of this world. Fasting is a way of sharpening these desires, heightening the awareness of constant dependence on God, and declaring the supremacy of God over all the good gifts He gives.
- Lastly, it is worth pointing out that Jesus expects His disciples to give to the poor, pray a lot, and fast. Not for empty self-righteous motivations, but because they actually believe that the kingdom is coming and therefore they devote their lives to laying up treasures in heaven rather than on earth.

Q / 05

REFERENCING MATTHEW 6:19-24

- How one views generosity, prayer, fasting, material possessions, and money reveals whether or not they actually believe an eternal kingdom is coming. It also reveals what they think about God. Consider what Jesus says in this section that gets at the heart.

Matthew 6:21 / For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:24 / "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one →

and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

- In other words, you will either live for the world, or you will live for the kingdom. You will either store up treasures in heaven or treasures on earth. You will either love, serve, and worship God, or you will love and serve this world. You cannot live for both. The way one spends or saves their money reveals a lot about what they worship, their view of God, and their functional belief in the coming kingdom.

Q /
06-07

REFERENCING MATTHEW 6:25-34

- Without verse numbers and subheadings, it reads “You cannot serve God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life” (6:24-25). The word “therefore” very clearly connects these two thoughts. An indicator that one is serving money is that they are anxious about things money can buy. But if a person serves God, they have nothing to worry about in this life. Why?
- Because God is the Creator and sustainer of every square inch of the universe. He bountifully provides for things like sparrows and lilies. Will He not provide for His image-bearing, blood-bought children?
- As Jesus says in 6:30, being anxious about material things reveals a lack of faith in God, who is more than capable of providing for His children. Being anxious doesn’t actually accomplish anything productive anyway. So why spend any time worrying about today or tomorrow? Instead, kingdom citizens should think about eternity in the kingdom and trust their Father to provide for them in this life until they get there.
- v33 really seems to sum up what Jesus is getting at in the whole chapter.

Matthew 6:33 / But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- Kingdom citizens don’t seek, love, or worry about the things of this world. They give to the poor, pray, and fast with the kingdom in mind. They think about earthly treasure and money and bodily needs with the kingdom in mind.
- In summary, kingdom citizens actually believe the kingdom is coming, and therefore they actually live as if this earth is temporary and the heavenly kingdom is eternal. And as kingdom citizens, they actually believe that God is their Father. Which leads them to long to be with Him and trust Him to provide for them in the meantime.
- Throughout this whole chapter, Jesus is helping His disciples get their eyes off the temporal and the physical and onto the spiritual and the eternal.

Q / 08

REFERENCING MATTHEW 7:7-27

- In context, 7:7-11 is not a statement about prayer in general as much as it is a statement about entrance into the kingdom. Those who seek the narrow gate will find it, and those who knock on the gate will have it opened to them by the heavenly Gatekeeper. Those who ask will be allowed to enter.
- Why? Not because anyone can earn their way to the kingdom, but rather because of the gracious character of the heavenly Father. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.
- Likewise, Jesus’ disciples treat others as they would like to be treated because true disciples actually keep the law and the prophets (5:17-20; 7:13).
- 7:13-14 seems to echo Psalm 1 and other Old Testament passages that contrast the way of the wicked with the way of the righteous. False disciples take the easy and populated route. But the way of the righteous is hard, narrow, and the way of the minority.
- 7:15-23 makes clear that true disciples actually do the will of the Father, which causes them to bear good fruit (such as the fruit of the Spirit) in their lives. False teachers and false disciples might talk the talk and appear to have a mighty ministry with lots on their religious resume, but if the conduct of their lives does not line up with what they profess with their mouths, then they are fakes.
- 7:23 adds the vivid statement that true disciples don’t just claim to know Jesus—they are known by Jesus. While false disciples are not known because they do not know Him.
- 7:24-27 makes it clear that true disciples actually obey Jesus’ words. Those who do will be saved, and those who do not will not be saved. Plain and simple.
- In summary, “Thus you will recognize them by their fruits” (7:20). It is not enough to merely say that Jesus is Lord. Those who believe He is Lord will submit to His Lordship by obeying His words.

Q / 09

REFERENCING MATTHEW 7:13-27

- Judgment Day is the day when false disciples will enter a gate that leads to eternal destruction, while true disciples will enter a gate that leads to eternal life (7:13-14).
- Judgement Day is the day when unbelievers will be thrown into the fires of hell (7:19).
- Judgment Day will be a day when every person who ever lived will appear before the Judgment seat, and they will give an account for every thought, word, and deed. Then, based on the judgment of the Judge, they will be cast

away from God's presence or welcomed into His presence.

- 7:24-27 reveals that Judgment Day will be like a sudden, powerful storm where God pours out His eternal wrath on all wickedness. Only those who belong to Christ will be saved.

Q / 10

REFERENCING MATTHEW 7:21-27

- It could be easy to focus on the shocking statements that Jesus makes about Judgment Day and miss the shocking statements He makes about Himself.

Matthew 7:21 / “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

- *Lord* is the primary name for God in the Old Testament. The repeated “Lord, Lord” makes it explicitly clear that the title is being used in the divine sense of the word, and salvation on the last day is dependent on “calling upon the name of the Lord.”
- Therefore, for Jesus to say people will call upon Him as Lord in the context of Judgment Day is an explicit claim to deity. He is saying He is the Lord of heaven and Judge of all the earth who will sit on the great judgment seat.
- The next statement makes this clear as well—Jesus is the Judge who will determine who does and does not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Likewise, Jesus refers to God as “my Father” to communicate that He is the one and only begotten Son of God.

- In 7:24-27, Jesus makes quite a claim about Himself, as well. Throughout the sermon, Jesus declares entrance into the kingdom is dependent on actually obeying God's word. He refers to God's word as the Law and Prophets (5:17, 7:13) and the will of the Father who is in heaven (7:21).

- In the last section, Jesus makes a subtle shift. He says:

Matthew 7:24 / “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

Matthew 7:26 / “And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.”

- According to this section, eternal salvation is dependent on believing and obeying Jesus' words. To claim His words are on par with God's words is to claim He is God the Son incarnate.

WEEK 05

Q / 01

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8:20, 9:6

- Jesus is referred to as the Son of Man 31 times in Matthew. And 8:20 is the first. It is a very significant messianic title taken from Daniel 7.

Daniel 7:13-14 / “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

- The prophecy reveals that a human being (one like a son of man) will be given a universal and eternal kingdom. It will be universal in the sense that all people will live under his authority, and it will be eternal in the sense that the Son of Man's rule and reign will never, ever end.
- The repeated use of the word *dominion* specifically emphasizes the authority this promised human king will possess.
- Therefore, for Jesus to claim that He is the Son of Man is to make a very significant claim about His identity and authority.

Q / 02

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8:17

Matthew 8:17 / This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”

Isaiah 53:4 / Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

- After Matthew records Jesus casting out demons and healing the sick, he records that these actions are a fulfillment of Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53 is a prophecy about a Suffering Servant who will die a substitutionary death, and therefore, pay for the sins of God's people. So why is Matthew connecting exorcism and healing with a prophecy about sin?
- The reality is that all suffering, disease, death, and demonic activity are the results of sin. Sometimes personal sins, but oftentimes they are merely a result of Adam's sin at the Fall.
- As the name “Jesus” reveals, He has come to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). This is His mission. This mission includes salvation from all the effects of sin, which certainly includes disease and demonic oppression.
- Therefore, for Jesus to cast out demons and heal diseases is absolutely connected to Isaiah 53 because Jesus is the Suffering →

Servant who has come to save His people from their sins and all their devastating effects.

Q / 03

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8:1-9:38

- Matthew 8-9 does not merely claim Jesus is the Son of Man with universal and eternal authority and dominion—it proves it. Marvel at how every element of creation is subjected to King Jesus.
- Jesus' sovereign will is so powerful that He can instantaneously heal leprosy with the touch of His finger, and He has the priestly authority to declare the leper "clean" (8:1-4).
- He can heal a man He has never met who is paralyzed and suffering terribly from a distance (8:5-13).
- He can heal any disease with a touch, and He can cast out any demon with a word (8:14-17).
- His authority is not limited to diseases and demons, for even the wind and waves obey Him (8:27).
- His authority is superior to that of a father over a son (8:21-22). In fact, His authority reigns supreme over one's entire life and livelihood (9:9).
- His authority is so comprehensive that He has the authority to forgive sins (9:1-8), and so powerful that He is able to raise the dead and heal the blind (8:18-26).
- Surely this is the one who is worthy of all dominion and glory and worship (Daniel 7:13-14).
- Matthew 8-9 clearly establishes Jesus is the Son of Man whose authority is infinite and majestic, but it specifically emphasizes Jesus' authority over sin.
- As we have said, leprous skin, broken legs, demonic oppression, dangerous fevers, deadly storms, incurable diseases, and deceased daughters are all effects of the fall. Whether directly or indirectly, they are all the result of sin. Jesus can heal all of it.
- But in a more specific sense, Jesus' authority over sin is so astounding that He can touch the leper and make the leper clean, rather than being made unclean Himself. He can be touched by the ritually unclean woman who has been bleeding for years and make her clean as a result. He can reverse the wages of sin (which is death) by raising the dead. He can even declare the sinner "forgiven" (9:1-8).
- Jesus' authority as the Son of Man to forgive sin, pay for sin, and reverse the effects of sin is really good news for sinners like you and me.

Q / 04

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8:1-9:38

- The answer to this question ties it all together, and its implications are profound!
- As we saw, Daniel 7 promises the Son of Man

will reign over a heavenly kingdom forever and ever. The end of the prophecy (Daniel 7:27) reveals God's people will reign with Him forever and ever, as well.

- This begs a really obvious and important question: what about the curse of sin and death? How can mortal sinners who *die* live in a kingdom forever and ever?
- This is why it is so profound that Jesus is the Son of Man *and* the Suffering Servant. Isaiah 53 is the solution to the curse of sin and death. As the prophecy reveals, the Suffering Servant will be pierced for our transgressions *so that* transgressors will be "accounted righteous" (53:11).
- The fact that Jesus is the Suffering Servant who has come to save His people from their sins by dying a substitutionary death in their place is what enables His people to have the hope of one day dwelling in the everlasting kingdom of the Son of Man. The fact that Jesus is both is really good news.
- But all this good news should cause us to ponder one more question. How can Jesus be the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant at the same time? The Son of Man will reign forever, but the Suffering Servant dies a brutal death. So how can Jesus die *and* live forever?
- The answer? Because of the resurrection! Jesus died to pay for our sins, and He rose again, defeating death and sin so that whoever believes in Him will be raised with Him to reign forever and ever. Of course, this resurrection hope is hinted at in 9:25 when Jesus demonstrates He has the power and authority to even raise the dead. Jesus is the Son of Man because He is also the Suffering Servant!

Q / 05-06

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8-9

- Matthew 8-9 records Jesus doing many things only God can do. Here are a few examples.
- As 2 Kings 5:7 affirms, only God can heal leprosy, and yet, Jesus doesn't pray to God to heal the leper. He doesn't send him to wash in the Jordan River seven times. He heals him with a touch because He is Yahweh. A priest can merely declare people clean, but Jesus can make them clean. There is a big difference.
- All humans have to cry out to God for healing, but the Old Testament reveals that God can heal people with a word. Matthew 8-9 repeatedly reveals Jesus can heal people with His word.

Psalm 107:19-20 / Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ²⁰He sent out his word and healed them.

Matthew 8:16 / He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.

- From Creation to the flood to the exodus to the praise of the Psalmists, the Old Testament consistently declares God and God alone is Lord of creation, including the wind and the weather.
- And yet, Matthew 8:23-27 proves that Jesus controls the wind and the waves.
- The cry of the disciples directed at Jesus, “Lord, save us,” is a prayer only God can answer. As one commentator points out, “Jesus was a carpenter, not a sailor...they were begging for supernatural intervention” (Quarles 227).

Psalm 107:28-29 / Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ²⁹He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.

- The Old Testament affirms that God and God alone reads the minds and knows the inward thoughts of every man. God and God alone has the authority to forgive sin.

Psalm 94:11 / The Lord—knows the thoughts of man.

Daniel 9:9 / To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness.

Psalm 103:3 / Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases.

- And yet, Matthew 9:1-8 records Jesus forgiving sin, reading minds, and healing ailments. The scribes respond in their heart by accusing Jesus of blasphemy for claiming to forgive sins. For “who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Luke 5:21). Of course, they would be right if it were not for the fact that Jesus is God.
- In the Old Testament, it is clear that God and God alone has the power over life and death. He is the one who gives life, and He is the one who takes it away. Some prophets raised people from the dead, but only through praying to God (1 Kings 17:21). Jesus is able to raise the dead with a mere touch of her hand (Matthew 9:25).
- Isaiah 35 prophesies a day when people will see the glory of the Lord and the majesty of God. How? Because God Himself will come and open the eyes of the blind, and the lame will leap, and the mute will speak.

Isaiah 35:4-6 / “Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶then shall the

lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

- And Matthew 9:27-34 records Jesus opening the eyes of the blind and the mouth of the mute, clearly alluding to Isaiah 35—therefore proving this is the promised day of Yahweh’s coming.
- Likewise, recall what God said to Moses when Moses complained about his inability to speak well.

Exodus 3:11 / Then the Lord said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?”

- By opening the mouth of the mute, Jesus is proving that He is I AM.
- Jesus is referred to as “Lord” seven times in these two chapters, which is a title in the Old Testament reserved only for Yahweh. People cry out to Him, “Lord, save us!” (8:25) and “Lord, have mercy on us!” (9:27), which are prayers only God can answer. All in all, Matthew 8-9 proves Jesus is the Lord of heaven and earth and the eternal Son of God in the flesh.

Q / 07

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8:15, 8:27, 9:7, 9:26, 9:31, 9:33

- Some respond to Jesus by serving Him, marveling at Him, glorifying God because of Him, and telling others about Him.

Q / 08

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8:34, 9:4, 9:24, 9:34

- Others respond by telling Him to leave, accusing Him of blasphemy, laughing at Him and doubting His ability, and accusing Him of being in league with the devil and his demons.
- These responses vary drastically, and it goes to show there are very extreme responses to Jesus. Some love, worship, and follow Him no matter the cost—others hate, slander, and ultimately crucify Him. But one thing is for sure, a neutral and lukewarm response is impossible for someone who truly understands His true identity.

Q / 09

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8:10, 8:13, 9:2, 9:11-13, 9:22, 9:28-29

- It is clear Jesus saves those who believe in Him. Faith is what He responds to; faith in His ability and willingness to save.
- Matthew 9:11-13 is very revealing about what type of faith Jesus is looking for. In summary, Jesus came to save those who know they need a savior. Jesus is not saying that the Pharisees are righteous and therefore don’t need to be saved. Jesus is saying they are so self-righteous →

that they think they can save themselves, and therefore don't need a savior. These types of people will not be saved.

- Tax collectors and gentiles and the dirtiest, sickest, sinning sinners in society? He came to save them if they would simply cry out "Lord, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner who needs a savior."

Q / 10

REFERENCING MATTHEW 8:19-22, 9:9-17, 9:37-38

- There are costs to following Jesus. This world is not our home, for even the king is homeless in this world (8:20).
- Disciples have to pay the cost of leaving former priorities and a former way of life behind (8:22, 9:9).
- Jesus has expectations for those who believe in Him.
- Disciples of Jesus are expected to have no loyalties above Jesus, even to our own family members (8:22).
- They are expected to actually follow Him and not just passively affirm Him (8:22, 9:9).
- They are expected to fast, and they long for His return in order to communicate that they desire to be with Him more than they desire food itself (9:15).
- They are expected to labor for the Lord in His mission of gathering disciples to Himself (9:38).
- But the benefits infinitely outweigh the costs. Take Matthew, for example—he was a despicable, hated, family-betraying, money-loving, religious reprobate, lying thief of a tax collector. All tax collectors were these things by definition. And yet, Jesus calls Him to follow Him and be His disciple. As a disciple of Jesus, Matthew is transformed so much that he ends up writing one of the most important books in all the Bible! That is an amazing transformation.
- Not to mention, the benefits of being saved from hell and saved for an eternal heavenly kingdom where Matthew will reign with King Jesus forever and ever.
- The benefits certainly outweigh the cost, which is actually the whole point of the cost! Paying the "cost" of following Jesus proves you actually believe that He is who He says He is. The only person who wouldn't trade Monopoly money for a billion dollars is the person who does not believe the offer is genuine. The same is true for following Jesus.
- Matthew's overall point in chapters 8-9 is that if you actually believe that Jesus is the Son of

Man, Son of God, and Suffering Servant, then you will follow Him no matter the cost.

WEEK 06

Q / 01

REFERENCING MATTHEW 10:14-25

- 10:14 warns that some will not receive them or listen to their words (even though their words are the words of eternal life!).
- 10:17 warns that some will arrest and flog them. Flogging was a punishment so cruel that it would often leave people on the brink of death.
- 10:18 warns that the disciples will be dragged before political officials and interrogated.
- 10:21-25 warns of family betrayal and strife, martyrdom, and other forms of persecution and slander.

Q / 02

REFERENCING MATTHEW 10:16-42

- Jesus makes it clear over and over that the disciples will be hated, persecuted, and rejected because the world hates and rejects Jesus.

Matthew 10:18 / You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake.

Matthew 10:22 / You will be hated by all for my name's sake.

Matthew 10:24-25 / "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master."

²⁵It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household."

Matthew 10:37-38 / Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:40 / "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."

- All of these verses make it clear that rejection of the gospel and gospel messengers is a personal and specific rejection of Jesus.

Q / 03

REFERENCING MATTHEW 10:16-42

- In 10:19, Jesus assures His disciples that they do not need to be afraid of the times when they will be tortured and interrogated because in that very hour the Spirit of the

Father will be with them and empower them and speak through them.

- Jesus motivates the disciples to endure because perseverance is necessary for salvation (10:22).
- 10:24-25 encourages the disciples to know they will not be persecuted as a result of doing anything wrong. If the teacher is hated, the students should expect to be hated as well.
- In 10:26-33, Jesus repeatedly tells the disciples to have no fear (even those who can kill them). Why? Because fear will silence their gospel witness. Because wicked rulers can merely kill the body, which only brings temporary pain. Therefore, the disciples should fear God and not men because God has the power to punish people in hell for eternity. But on the other hand, God is the gracious, loving, and all-sovereign heavenly Father of the disciples. He does not allow a sparrow worth two pennies to die apart from His will. How much more will He providentially orchestrate the lives of His image-bearing children? Therefore, the disciples need no fear because the Father has everything perfectly under control.
- 10:32-33 adds the motivation that those who truly confess Jesus is Lord will be willing to confess His Lordship before a world that hates Him, no matter the cost. If someone is not willing to confess Christ to men, then they do not truly confess Christ as Lord.
- In 10:37-38, Jesus provides a profound contrast. On the one hand, if a disciple is not willing to die for Him, then He is not worthy to follow Him and be called His disciple. But on the other hand, those who are willing to die for Christ will actually (paradoxically) find true, everlasting life. Those who do not follow Christ for the purpose of self-preservation will lose everything in the end.
- As John Calvin said, “I gave up all for Christ. And what have I found? Everything in Christ.”
- 10:42 adds that those who follow Christ, even unto death, will enjoy eternal, heavenly reward!

Q /
04-05

REFERENCING MATTHEW 11:2-5

Isaiah 61:1-2 / The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

Matthew 11:2-3 / Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

- Isaiah 61 is clearly a prophecy about the Christ (which means *anointed one*), and it clearly says that when Christ comes, He will proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. And yet, Matthew 11 records that John is *in prison*! There is certainly a spiritual element to the meaning of Isaiah 61:1, as the Messiah would come to deliver His people who are captive to sin, which is even worse than a physical prison. However, 61:2 says the day of God's vengeance on His enemies will follow the coming of the Messiah, yet God's enemies have John in prison. Therefore, it is understandable that John was confused.
- Jesus has multiple layers in His answer to John's response. We will consider the first layer of his answer here, and the next layers in the following questions.

Matthew 11:4-5 / And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: “the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.””

Isaiah 35:4-6 / Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; “then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.”

- The first layer of Jesus' answer to John is to prove He is, in fact, the Messiah. Notice all the things that are happening that Isaiah said would happen.
- Also notice the context: Isaiah 35 is a prophecy about God! It talks about a day when God Himself would come and save His people. Therefore, by saying He is fulfilling Isaiah 35, Jesus is claiming to be Yahweh in the flesh.
- His answer also includes an allusion to Isaiah 61 when He says “and the poor have good news preached to them.” This means that in Jesus' answer, He is claiming to be both God and Christ, which is consistent with what Isaiah prophesied (see Isaiah 9:6-7).
- The first part of the answer affirms Jesus is the Messiah, but the question remains why His followers are experiencing persecution. →

It is with that question in mind that Jesus addresses it next.

Q / 06

REFERENCING MATTHEW 11:7-14

- Jesus is continuing to address the confusion about why His followers should expect persecution in the near future if He is, in fact, the Messiah.
- In 11:7-10, Jesus reminds the crowds of the fantastic ministry that John had before he was arrested. In v10, Jesus declares that John's ministry was the fulfillment of Malachi 3:1, which promised God would send a messenger before His coming in order to prepare the way.

Malachi 3:1 / “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.”

- Malachi goes on to clarify the identity of the messenger.

Malachi 4:5 / “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.”

- In Matthew 11:14, Jesus declares John the Baptist fulfills this prophecy (for connections between Elijah and John go back to our study on Matthew 3).

Matthew 11:14 / And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

- Thus, by alluding to these two prophecies from Malachi, Jesus is declaring John is the one who has come to prepare the way for the Messiah, which further confirms Jesus is both Yahweh and the Messiah.
- However, there is a really important detail in Malachi 4:5 that helps readers unlock what Jesus is getting at. According to Malachi 4:5, the promised messenger would come *before* the “great and awesome day of the Lord.”
- In other words, the final judgment, when God will crush all His enemies for good, is not said to happen at the same time as the coming of John the Baptist. It will come after.

Q / 07

REFERENCING MATTHEW 11:11-14

- Jesus has affirmed He is in fact the Messiah, and that John the Baptist is the promised messenger. Yet, as Malachi 4:5 says, the coming of the Messiah and the coming of the Day of the Lord will not necessarily happen at the same time. One comes *before* the other.
- In 11:11-14, Jesus is helping people understand there is a big difference between the present reality and the future reality for kingdom citizens/followers of the King.

- Right now, the kingdoms of this world are in rebellion against the Kingdom of Heaven and all its citizens.
- This means that followers of Jesus will suffer violence, persecution, and hatred as long as the world is allowed to rebel against God and His followers.

- The fact that John the Baptist and the Messiah have come should give people confidence and hope that the great and awesome day of the Lord will, in fact, come too. And on that day, all of God's enemies will be crushed, and all of God's people will be eternally blessed.
- As Jesus says in 11:11, the most blessed person to ever live is John the Baptist, because preparing the way for Yahweh's coming is the greatest privilege imaginable in this life. Yet, the blessed state of kingdom citizens when the kingdom comes in all its fullness will be so great that the least blessed person in the Kingdom of Heaven will be more blessed than the most blessed person in this world (John the Baptist).
- All of that to say, Jesus' followers were expecting His first advent to accomplish what would happen during His second advent. In response, Jesus clarifies their misunderstandings, encourages them to persevere, and gives them hope that if they endure, there will be great reward for them in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Q / 08

REFERENCING MATTHEW 11:20-24

- This passage is very sobering. And it reveals a few important realities about Judgement Day.
- (1) Jesus reveals there will be different levels of judgment handed down on Judgment Day.
- In other words, some people will receive harsher punishment in hell than others. This is what it means when Jesus says “it will be more bearable on the day of judgment” (11:21, 24). Jesus said something similar back in chapter 10.

Matthew 10:15 / Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

- (2) The levels of judgment handed down will take into account how much access to the gospel a person had. And the more access is given, the more of a response is expected.
- This is why Jesus is denouncing these cities that reject Him. It is true that Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty of heinous sins. Tyre and Sidon were wicked, arrogant cities as well, but they did not have nearly as much

access to the gospel as the cities Jesus visited.

- The Son of God Himself walked through these cities, preached the gospel of the kingdom, healed the sick, and cast out demons—and they still rejected Him! According to Jesus, this is worthy of greater judgment than the sins of Sodom.
- This is sobering because we live in a day and age where we have more access to the Bible than any other generation in history. And on Judgment Day, to whom much is given, much will be expected.

Q / 09

REFERENCING MATTHEW 11:25-30

- According to 11:25-27, responding to Jesus has nothing to do with a person's intelligence, status, or natural abilities. It is first and foremost 100% a gift of grace.
- Some people have their eyes opened to who Jesus is, and some people do not. The difference is His "gracious will" (11:26) and whom He chooses (11:27).
- *And yet this is so very important!* Matthew 11:28 comes right after verse 27, and in verse 28, Jesus says, "Come to me." Who is Jesus inviting to come to Him? Only those who are chosen? No. "Come to me...all who labor and are heavy laden."
- In other words, those who receive Jesus are those who come to Him. To receive Jesus, you have to repent and believe and take up your cross and follow Him. Discipleship to Jesus is not passive—it is active.
- What Jesus is saying regarding God's sovereignty being compatible with human responsibility is not unique to this passage. It is all over Scripture.
- For example, Romans 9 declares God's sovereignty over all things, including the very hardening of Pharaoh's heart. And then the same author in the same book says one chapter later, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (10:13).
- The biblical authors do not attempt to explain how both of these things can be true at the same time—they simply proclaim that they are.

Q / 10

REFERENCING MATTHEW 11:25-30

- Jesus makes some profound and thought-provoking statements in these few verses. But it is important to note Jesus is not frustrated, confused, or apologetic about God's role in salvation. Instead, He begins by saying "thank you" to the Father, and rather than calling God unjust, He calls Him "gracious" (11:26).
- Therefore, anyone who thinks God's sovereignty in salvation is unfair or unbiblical

is not thinking about God and salvation the way Jesus does. The appropriate response is the same as Paul's, who said: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who...chose us before the foundation of the world...and in love, predestined us for adoption" (Ephesians 1:3-5).

- 11:28-30 makes clear that God's role in salvation does not discount human responsibility to respond.
- Therefore, readers should not respond to Jesus' words about God's role in salvation by concluding that sharing the gospel is pointless. Instead, it gives confidence that some will, in fact, respond and come to Jesus. This confidence to persevere is needed in a world full of people who hate Jesus and reject all who follow Him.
- And lastly, readers should respond by marveling at the goodness of Jesus. The world-conquering Son of Man is also gentle and lowly, and He invites those who are weary and burdened by a constant futile effort to save themselves. He invites them to come to Him, rest from their works, trust in His work, and therefore find rest for their souls. As they come to Him, learn from Him, and marvel at His gentle and lowly heart, they will be free of any feelings of conceit or superiority because they know that their salvation is by grace through faith, and not a result of their works.

Ephesians 2:8-9 / For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- This is the beauty of the gospel, and it is all to the praise of His glorious grace alone.

WEEK 07

Q / 01

REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:1-4

- There is a general biblical principle that there are some matters of the law that are weightier than others. For example, telling the truth is certainly commanded in Scripture. However, the midwives in Exodus 1 are commended for lying to Pharaoh to preserve the Hebrew baby boys because fearing God and saving lives is weightier than telling the truth in a situation like that. The same is true for Rahab when she hid the spies. This principle also applies to David and his men. They indeed ate the bread of the Presence that was reserved for priests to eat (Leviticus 24:5-9), but saving human lives, especially King David's life, was weightier than a Sabbath regulation. Therefore, David and his men were innocent.
- Likewise, Jesus and His men are innocent because Jesus is the new and better son of →

David. If David can break Jewish custom to feed his men, so can the Son of David. And neither is breaking the Sabbath because the Sabbath is about resting and devoting an entire day to the Lord, which simply eating does not violate.

Q / 02 REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:5-6

- Resting from work on the Sabbath day was obviously very important, as it was the 4th commandment. However, some things were so important that they were even more important than keeping the Sabbath. The temple and the priestly work are one of those things. In fact, the priests would offer more sacrifices on the Sabbath day than they would on any other day of the week.
- This is why Jesus says, “On the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are innocent.” Of course, the priests are violating what the rabbis considered to be “work,” but no one condemned them for it because they all acknowledged the greatness and importance of temple work.
- The reason the temple was so great and important is that it was the dwelling place of God. It was the place where man was able to meet with His maker, worship Him, and offer sacrifices to Him. The temple is where heaven and earth meet. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the temple to the Jewish religion.
- And yet, Jesus makes this astounding, incredible, epic statement: “Something greater than the temple is here.” Jesus is greater than the temple because the temple, as great and important as it was, was merely a building where God’s Spirit dwelled. But Jesus is greater because He is God the Son incarnate.

Q / 03 REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:7-8

- In Matthew 12:7, Jesus highlights what the Pharisees get so wrong about the Sabbath. They do not understand that God desires mercy, love, and compassion more than mere religious ritual. Keeping traditions invented by men is not more important than feeding the hungry and helping the vulnerable, as Jesus goes on to demonstrate by healing the man with the withered hand (12:9-14). In fact, the Pharisees are so wrong about the Sabbath that they have taken a day that was meant to be a day full of resting and blessing, and they have turned it into a day of burdensome work by adding all of their silly rules.
- This is why Jesus says they are wrong. They are condemning the guiltless. And who does He think He is to declare the experts in the law to be so wrong? None other than “The Lord of the Sabbath.”

- In the Old Testament, God makes it clear that He is the Lord of the Sabbath.

Exodus 31:13 / “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.’”

Leviticus 19:3 / You shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.

Ezekiel 20:20 / ‘Keep my Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.’

- Yahweh can say the Sabbaths are “my Sabbaths” because He is the one who instituted them, and they exist for Him. God instituted the Sabbath so that His people would rest from their works, come to Him, enjoy Him, and find rest for their souls by trusting in Him rather than their own efforts.
- Therefore, for Jesus to say He is the Lord of the Sabbath is to say “I am Yahweh. I am the one who invented the Sabbath, and therefore I know its purpose. You Pharisees are so wrong about the Sabbath that you think the Lord of the Sabbath does not understand the purpose of His own Sabbath.”
- This is why Jesus can say in Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” As the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus invites His disciples to come to Him for rest, the way Old Testament Jews were commanded to come to Yahweh for rest on the Sabbath.
- If we consider everything Jesus implies about His identity in these few short verses, it is quite astounding. He is greater than David, greater than the temple, and He is Lord of the Sabbath. As one commentator puts it, this passage is “one of the most important and highest christological statements in both the Gospel of Matthew and all of Scripture” (Quarles 286).

Q / 04 REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:22-32

- This passage has kingship and kingdom language all over it.
- On the one side, there is Satan (also called Beelzebul in this passage). Jesus refers to him as the prince/king of demons in 12:24, and in 12:26 he refers to Satan’s kingdom.
- Satan is the prince of demons, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). And his kingdom is a kingdom of darkness (Colossians 1:13), demonic oppression (Matthew 12:22), disobedience, and death (Ephesians 2:1-3).

- Satan's kingdom of sin and death has reigned ever since the fall (see Romans 5:12-21).
- The other king in this passage is King Jesus. He is the long-awaited "Son of David" (12:24).
- He is the Spirit-anointed Messiah who is ushering in the Kingdom of God (12:28).
- In order to usher in the Kingdom of God, He must first defeat the current king and his evil regime (12:29), which is exactly what Jesus is doing by healing the demon-oppressed man (12:22). If He is the long-awaited king who has come to bring the Kingdom of Heaven, He must first overthrow the current kingdom of darkness. That means binding Satan and his minions.
- And lastly, Jesus is the Daniel 7 Son of Man whose kingdom will be eternal and universal (12:32). What Satan stole in the Garden of Eden from the first Adam, the new and better Adam has come to reclaim. He will reign forever and ever.

Q / 05 **REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:30**

- In 12:22-29, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus first responds to this by showing what a ridiculous accusation this is. Satan is evil, but he is not dumb. Satan's kingdom is about inflicting as much pain, misery and demonic oppression as possible. Why would he oppose his own efforts by empowering Jesus to cast out demons?
- But then Jesus draws out the wicked implications of the Pharisees' accusation. The logic of what Jesus says goes like this: (1) I am not casting out demons by the power of Satan because Satan would not oppose himself. (2) If my power is not demonic, then it must be from God (because there are only two sources of power: dark or light, good or evil). (3) If God is on my side, and you are against me, then you are against God!
- Jesus takes it a step further in 12:30. The Pharisees are actively opposing Jesus, but in 12:30, Jesus makes clear that passive neutrality is not an option either. The kingdom of God is such a polar opposite from the kingdom of Satan that if you are not for King Jesus and with Jesus, then it means you are against Him. Everyone is for one kingdom or the other—there is no such thing as a neutral third party.

Q / 06 **REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:31-32**

- The meaning of this passage is debated and difficult. But understanding the context of the clash between opposing kings and kingdoms

makes the meaning a little easier to discern.

- It should first be pointed out that Jesus reveals an incredible amount of grace and forgiveness in this passage. We cannot take it for granted that sin, including sin as serious as blaspheming the Son of Man, can be forgiven. A biblical example that comes to mind is the apostle Paul.

1 Timothy 1:12-13 / I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief.

- In this passage, Paul admits he was formerly a blasphemer, but by God's amazing grace he was forgiven. The one who formerly opposed King Jesus as a servant of Satan was transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. This is amazing grace indeed.

- However, even though our God is merciful and gracious, He is also just. As Jesus warns, there is a blasphemy that will not be forgiven, specifically the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Many people have wondered why the blasphemy of the Son of Man is forgivable, but blaspheming the Holy Spirit is not.
- Here is one possible explanation. The title "Son of Man" emphasizes Jesus' humanity. It is possible (and forgivable) to not recognize right away that Jesus of Nazareth was also the eternal Son of God. As Paul said, he was blaspheming Jesus out of ignorant unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13).
- However, to blaspheme, reject, insult, and oppose what is clearly a work of the Spirit of God (as the Pharisees do in this passage) is a whole other level of hardness and evil. The miracles Jesus was performing could only be explained by the fact that the Spirit of God was upon Him. The Pharisees' rejection of Jesus had crossed the line from ignorant unbelief into the territory of willful, hateful rejection of God.
- This level of rejection of God is unforgivable, in this age and in the age to come. In other words, those who are so blatantly opposed to the King and the Kingdom of God will not live in the Kingdom when it ultimately comes in all its fullness.

Q / 07 **REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:41-42**

Jonah 3:5 / And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. →

1 Kings 10:9-10 / “Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness.”¹⁰ Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came such an abundance of spices as those that the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

Q / 08

REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:39-41

- The story of Jonah being swallowed by a fish is one of the most famous stories in the Bible. What might be less familiar is the fact that Jonah's experience acts as a foreshadowing of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Consider what Jonah prays from the belly of the fish.

Jonah 2:2 / Out of the belly of Sheol I cried.

- Sheol is an Old Testament word that refers to the realm of the dead.

Jonah 2:5 / The waters closed in over me to take my life.

Jonah 2:6-7 / Yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. “When my life was fainting away.

- The language of Jonah's prayers portrays his experience as essentially being raised from the dead. He was as good as dead when he was in the belly of the fish 100s of miles away from dry land, and when God preserved his life and caused the fish to vomit him up on dry land, it was as if God raised him from the dead.
- There is one more detail that is not a coincidence.

Jonah 1:17 / And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

- The word *sign* is another word for miracle. Jesus references the miracle of Jonah as a way to explain the miracle He will perform in the near future.
- But Jesus is so much greater than Jonah. Unlike Jonah, Jesus actually died and literally rose from the dead. Jonah ran from the will of God, but Jesus willingly submitted to the will of the Father, even unto death. Jonah was a prophet who spoke the words of God, but Jesus is a greater prophet who is the Word of God incarnate.

Q / 09

REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:42

- Solomon was a son of David and a king with a lot of wisdom and a lot of riches. He was also the ruler of the united kingdom of Israel,

and Israel flourished under his rule more than under any other king.

- But Jesus is *the* son of David, He is wisdom incarnate and ruler of the universe. As great as Solomon's kingdom was, it was still a kingdom that was ultimately under the curse of sin and death—and it eventually split—but Jesus will rule a heavenly kingdom free of sin and death, and His kingdom will not be shaken for all of eternity.

Q / 10

REFERENCING MATTHEW 12:41-42

- This is the point of Jesus comparing Himself to Jonah and Solomon. Jesus is trying to point out how hard, wicked, and unbelieving the hearts of His opponents are.
- The Ninevites were wicked, rebellious Gentiles! However, they heard a few sermons from a prophet who smelled like fish, and they repented in sackcloth and ashes!
- Yet Jesus is the new and greater Moses. He is the fulfillment of the law and the Word of God incarnate. He is preaching and teaching and performing miracles among His own people—the Jews who know the Scriptures—and He is showing them over and over again how He is the long-awaited Messiah, yet His own people still reject Him!
- If the Ninevites repented at Jonah's preaching, how much more should the Jews repent at the preaching of the Son of David.
- On the day of judgment, when everyone is raised from the dead and summoned to the throne of judgment to give an account for their lives, the repentance of Nineveh will be used against Jesus' generation to highlight how hard their hearts were.
- The same is true with the Queen of Sheba. She was another Gentile and a queen herself, yet she recognized the wisdom, authority, and majesty of King Solomon. How much more should Jesus' generation have recognized the wisdom of God the Son incarnate and the majesty of the king of kings.

WEEK 08

Q / 01

REFERENCING MATTHEW 13:31-33

- The parable about the mustard seed and leaven makes the same point.
- A mustard seed is so small that if you dropped it, you would have a hard time finding it. However, as one commentator points out, the mustard seed could grow as high as 15 feet tall in a single season. This means that the tiny, nearly imperceptible seed could quickly transform into a plant that towered over all other garden plants.
- The same is true of Jesus' Kingdom. At the time, He was teaching that His kingdom was so small it was nearly invisible. Jesus' kingdom had no throne, no palace, no army, and no land. Its citizens consisted of a few dozen Galilean Jews who were currently being oppressed by the "mighty" Roman Empire.
- However, Jesus' Kingdom will grow and grow until His citizens include every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, and His domain will cover every square inch of the universe, just as these Old Testament prophecies promise.

Psalm 2:8 / Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

Daniel 7:14 / And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion.

- The parable about the leaven illustrates the same point using a different metaphor.
- Leaven starts small, and it is imperceptible when it is initially mixed in with the dough. But a small amount of leaven can impact a massive amount of dough. (According to the ESV Study Bible, three measures of flour plus a little bit of leaven would have made enough bread to feed a whole village.)
- Likewise, the Kingdom started small in an insignificant corner of the globe, but its influence will eventually reach every square inch of the planet.

Q / 02

REFERENCING MATTHEW 13:44-46

- These two parables illustrate the extreme value of the Kingdom.
- According to both parables, if you put everything you own on one side of a scale, and the Kingdom on the other, the Kingdom will far outweigh anything you could possibly weigh against it.
- Jesus says something similar in chapter 16.

Q / 03

REFERENCING MATTHEW 13:47-52

- These two parables highlight the drastic differences between those who belong to the Kingdom and those who do not. In other words, the Kingdom is exclusive. Not every citizen on earth will be a citizen in the new heavens and the new earth.
- The Kingdom of Heaven came to earth in mustard seed form 2,000 years ago when its King was born in Bethlehem. Ever since then, Kingdom citizens have lived alongside citizens of the kingdom of this world. But at the end of the age, the Son of Man will send His angels to purge every evil doer from His Kingdom and throw them into the fires of hell. At this point in history, the citizens of the Kingdom coexist with the evildoers who are citizens of the world, but that will not always be the case.
- Matthew 13:51-52 illustrates how Kingdom citizens live in the meantime. Kingdom citizens who have had their eyes opened to the value of the Kingdom of Heaven treasure it, study, and long to learn about their eternal home.
- The old and new in this passage represent the Old and New Testaments. The Kingdom is a major theme in the Old Testament, and Jesus and His apostles teach a lot about it in the New Testament as well. The Kingdom citizen is a diligent student of the Kingdom, treasuring all that he or she learns.

Q / 04

REFERENCING MATTHEW 13:10-23

- In this passage, Jesus uses a few different phrases to describe the same thing. He refers to the word of the Kingdom (13:19), the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven (13:11), and the seed sown by the sowers/the word taught by Jesus (the parable of the sower). All of these simply refer to what the Word of God teaches about the identity of the King of heaven and the nature of His coming Kingdom.
- Now, it could appear as if Jesus is talking about four different groups of people in their response to the Word, as there are four different types of ground that the seed of the word falls on. However, a closer look reveals that there are really just two. There are those who (1) see, hear, understand, believe, and obey the word of the Kingdom and (2) those who do not.
- Matthew 13:10-17 makes this distinction most clear. Some have been given the ability to →

know the secrets of the Kingdom, and some who have not (13:11).

- Some have been blessed with (spiritual) eyes to see and (spiritual) ears to hear the word of the Kingdom so that they can respond in faith (13:16).
- Some are spiritually blind and spiritually deaf and respond with hard, unbelieving hearts to the word of God (13:13-15).
- As for the Parable of the Sower, the good soil represents those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Their faith in the Word is not disingenuous, self-serving, or superficial. As James 2 would say, their faith is not a dead faith. It is a faith that bears fruit.
- The seed that falls among the path, rocky ground, or the thorns represents those who are blind, deaf, and hardened. Their responses might vary initially, as some appear more receptive than others, but in the end, they all end up the same in unrepentant unbelief.

Q / 05

REFERENCING MATTHEW 13:11, 16

- The reality is everyone is born spiritually deaf, spiritually blind, and spiritually dead because of sin. Blind people cannot make themselves see, deaf people cannot make themselves hear, and dead people cannot make themselves live. There has to be divine intervention. This is true spiritually as much as it is physically.
- In Matthew 13:11-17, Jesus plainly says the reason some people understand and believe the gospel of the Kingdom is because God has opened their eyes and ears and given them hearts that have the capacity to believe.
- To some, it “has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom” (13:11). The giver is God, and in 13:16, Jesus says, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see.” The blesser is God.
- The implication is that those who are blind, deaf, and dead to spiritual things are those whom God has not given the spiritual capacity to respond. They reject the word because of sinful unbelief. And God gives them over to what they want and does not intervene.
- These realities are all over Scripture. Paul says something similar in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 2:10 / These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:14 / The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to

understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

- These passages reveal some weighty truths that force us to acknowledge God’s ways are higher than our ways. He does not fit in a nice little domesticated box that we would like to put Him in. He is infinite in wisdom and knowledge and love and goodness, while we are finite and corrupted in all of these things.

Q / 06

REFERENCING MATTHEW 13:11-17

- The Bible gives us lots of direction on how to respond to these weighty truths. The passages referenced in Question 06 give just a few of them.
- To begin with, it is important to recognize our complete and utter dependence on the Lord to reveal Himself to us. We cannot perceive, know, or understand Him through our own wisdom or intelligence. He must come to us, reveal Himself, and open our eyes. This is why we pray Psalm 119:18 every time we open our Bibles. This verse is not an empty phrase to mindlessly rehearse—it is an acknowledgement that divine grace is our only hope to see and believe and respond to God’s revelation of Himself.
- Paul prays something similar for the Ephesians in 1:15-19.
- Ephesians 2:8-10 instructs us in how to respond when our eyes are opened and sight is given. We recognize it is by grace and grace alone. And Jesus makes clear in Matthew 13:16, He does not congratulate the disciples for understanding the truths He is teaching. Instead, He tells them to consider themselves blessed. Jesus says the same thing a few chapters later when Peter confesses that He is the Christ.

Matthew 16:15-17 / He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”

- Romans 9 helps us respond in reverent humility to these truths when we are tempted to object to their apparent (from our limited human perspective) injustice. Paul reminds us that God is the sovereign Lord of creation and, as the Creator, has the unquestionable right to do with His creation whatever He pleases. Paul assures us that there is no injustice on God’s part (Romans 9:14), and he puts us in our place by reminding us that we are mere creatures (9:20).

- In Revelation 4, John explains that God's throne in heaven is surrounded by four living creatures who are full of eyes around, behind, and within. The fact that these creatures are on each side of the throne and each of them is full of eyes is a symbolic way of saying that they see everything regarding how God rules and governs the universe. They know all the facts and have eternal perspective, and their response to how God rules His creation?

Revelation 4:8 / Day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty."

- If we had all the facts, we would respond in the exact same way. But even without all the facts, God has revealed enough to us for us to agree in faith that He is indeed holy in all of His ways.

Q / 07

REFERENCING MATTHEW 13

- Those who understand and believe the secrets of the Kingdom will receive more and more insight into the glories that are to come (13:12). This is true in this life, as those who love King Jesus will study Scripture seeking to know Him more and more. As they seek Him, they will find Him, and their eyes will be opened more and more to His glory. It is also ultimately true in the next life when we will finally see Him face to face.
- Those who have eyes to see and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ get to behold with clarity what Old Testament prophets longed to see, but could only see dimly (compare 13:16-17 with 1 Peter 1:10-12).
- Those who believe the word bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. in their lives, and thus are blessed and are a blessing to others (13:23).
- 13:43 reveals some incredible blessings that are coming. Those who believe the good news of the Kingdom will eventually be glorified with resurrection bodies and sanctified hearts that are fit for inhabiting the heavenly kingdom as children of God and coheirs with Christ.
- 13:44 shows the heart transformation that happens in a believer. To treasure the Kingdom and joyfully forsake this world to pursue it implies more than a mere acknowledgement of gospel facts. This person has new desires and new affections because of his response to the Word.
- 13:47-50 implies a major, eternal blessing for those who believe the message about the Kingdom, as they will get to live in the Kingdom with their heavenly King forever and ever.

Q / 08

REFERENCING MATTHEW 13

- The Parable of the Sower makes clear that those who reject the Word live fruitless lives that are vulnerable to satanic attack and worldly enslavement.
- Those who reject the Word, like hard ground rejects a seed, leave themselves vulnerable to the devil coming and snatching the seed the way a bird might eat seed off a path (13:12). In other words, hardness leads to more hardness. "I will live it up now and get serious about my faith later" is a dangerous gamble.

- The Parable of the Weeds teaches that those who reject the Word of the Kingdom will be treated like weeds that are thrown into the fire at the end of the age. The Parable of the Net says something similar.

Matthew 13:49-50 / So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Ultimately, those who reject the Word of the Kingdom do so because they reject the King. They are offended by Him (13:57). And to reject Jesus is to reject the true source of all blessings in this life and the life to come.

WEEK 09

Q / 01

REFERENCING MATTHEW 14:13-33

- Matthew begins the Sermon on the Mount by saying Jesus "went up on the mountain." As we saw in week 3, this phrase is used over and over in Exodus to describe Moses going up the mountain to spend time alone with God (see Exodus 19:3, 24:18, 34:4). Here in Matthew 14, the phrase is used again (and it is repeated a second time in 15:29).

Matthew 14:23 / He went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

- This repeated phrase should alert careful readers that Matthew is connecting Jesus with Moses. Let's look for other connections.
- In Matthew 14:13-15, readers learn there are a large number of very hungry people in a desolate place with no access to food. The word "desolate" is used twice. Likewise, Exodus records the great crowds of hungry Israelites in the desolate wilderness with no access to food.
- In Exodus, God does not send His people back to shop in the markets of Egypt. Instead, He rained down bread (manna) and →

meat (quail) from heaven. Likewise, Jesus does not send the hungry people to find food. Instead, He looked up to heaven, said a blessing, and miraculously provided bread and meat.

- Through God's miraculous provision, the 12 tribes of Israel were abundantly provided for. And through Jesus' miraculous provision, the crowds were so abundantly provided for that there were 12 baskets of food left over.
- Matthew includes the detail about Jesus going up on the mountain by Himself in 14:23 to alert readers that the connections between Jesus and Moses continue in 14:22-33.
- In Exodus, the Lord helps the Israelites miraculously cross a large body of water by parting the Red Sea. He saved the Israelites from the raging waters, but He drowned the Egyptians. Likewise, Jesus miraculously crosses a large body of water by walking on the water, and He saves His disciples from the deadly storm by causing the wind to cease (Matthew includes details to show the disciples got in the boat before evening, and they were stuck in the middle of the lake in the fourth watch of the night, which was 3-6 am. That is an intense storm).
- One more connection. In Exodus 3, God reveals Himself to Moses in the burning bush as the great I AM. Likewise, Jesus reveals Himself to the disciples by walking on water and responding to their fear saying, "Take heart; it is I (AM)" (Matthew 14:27).
- It is worth pointing out that the other gospel writers also use Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 and walking on water to portray Jesus as the New Moses. John makes this most explicit by recording that the people responded to Jesus feeding the 5,000 and walking on water by concluding He is the promised prophet like Moses (see John 6:14).

Q / 02 **REFERENCING MATTHEW 14:13-33**

- The events and details in this passage are meant to remind readers of events and details that happened in Moses' life. But the comparisons are also meant to invite readers to notice the contrasts. As this passage makes it clear, Jesus is not *just* a new Moses, He is much greater than Moses.
- It is true that God used Moses to part the Red Sea and provide food for His people in the wilderness, etc., but in all of those cases, it was God doing the miracles, not Moses.
- In Matthew 14, Jesus does not pray and ask God to provide food. He prays and blesses the food that *He* miraculously provides.
- Jesus does not pray and ask God to help Him walk on the water. He simply and effortlessly

bends the laws of nature at His will because He is the one who created the laws of gravity—He is the one who sustains them (Hebrews 1:3), and He is the one who can manipulate them at His will. According to Job 9:8, only God can walk on water.

Job 9:8 / Who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea.

- And yet Jesus can walk on water because He is greater than Moses. He is God with us.
- As Immanuel, Jesus did not need to pray to God to help Peter walk on water. Peter cried out to Jesus to help him walk on water, and the creator of water answered his request.
- Likewise, in Exodus, God is the one who parted the Red Sea, and God is the one who put it back in its place. Here in Matthew 14, Jesus effortlessly calms the raging storm as He gets into the boat (14:32).
- In Exodus, it was God revealing Himself to Moses as the great I AM, but in Matthew 14:27, it is the New and Greater Moses revealing Himself as the great I AM.

Q / 03 **REFERENCING MATTHEW 14:13-33**

- The fact that the crowds pursued Jesus to a desolate place implies that Jesus is beautiful, captivating, and interesting enough that we should pursue Him no matter the cost.
- The fact that they went to Him for healing proves their faith in His ability and trust in His character. The New Moses is a compassionate, loving, generous, and powerful God. Therefore, people should go to Him to provide for their physical needs, such as hunger and sickness. He is both willing and able to help.
- Jesus took the little food the Disciples did have and multiplied it into an abundance because His power is made perfect through our weakness. He does not need people to accomplish anything, but He uses us so that we get to help and He gets the glory. This shows that we should bring our inadequacies, insecurities, and insufficiencies to Him and trust He can do a lot with a little for His glory and our good.
- To "walk on water" is a proverbial statement in our culture for doing the impossible. This passage shows that a little faith in Jesus can move mountains. It also shows that any lack of faith in Jesus, no matter the situation (even a situation as extreme as walking on water amidst a deadly storm), is ultimately irrational. Our God sprang the universe into existence with a word. What can He not do?

- Ultimately, this passage invites the prostrate worship of God the Son incarnate. This is how the monotheistic Jews responded to the I AM walking on water and calming the storm, and it is how we should respond, too.

Matthew 14:33 / And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Q / 04

REFERENCING MATTHEW 14:1-12

- 14:3 records that Herod the Tetrarch stole his brother's wife, Herodias, and married her. This obviously violated Jesus' teaching about lust, adultery, and divorce. To make it worse, Herodias was also Herod's niece, which made the relationship incestuous as well.

- Speaking about oaths in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said this:

Matthew 5:37 / Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

- One of the reasons Jesus teaches against oaths is because it is arrogant. As finite human beings who can control very little and know even less about the future, it is arrogant to guarantee anything. But Herod was arrogant, and pride comes before the fall.

Matthew 14:6-7 / But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, ⁷so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.

Matthew 14:9 / And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given.

- To add to Herod's sins, the fact that his niece's daughter danced for him in such a way that “pleased” him implies that lust is what motivated the rash oath.
- Herod is not the only guilty party in this passage. In 5:38-42, Jesus teaches against retaliation. Instead, His disciples should turn the other cheek, but 14:8 records that Herodias, motivated by murderous anger in her heart, wanted retaliation against the preacher who exposed her heinous character.
- Likewise, Jesus teaches His disciples to love their enemies (5:44). But Herod and Herodias murder their “enemy” instead of thanking him for having the boldness to call them to repentance.

Q / 05

REFERENCING MATTHEW 15:1-20

- At a general level, Jesus is condemning the Pharisees for having a religion that is

merely concerned with outward ritual that completely disregards inward transformation. In 15:10-20, Jesus essentially says your religion is worthless if it causes you to obsess over having clean hands while your hearts remain wicked and filthy.

- In this passage, Jesus is calling them out for a specific example of their hypocrisy. The fifth of the 10 Commandments is to honor your father and mother. Later passages in Exodus (such as Exodus 21:17, which Jesus quotes in Matthew 15:4) give examples of what it looks like to obey the fifth commandment. The specific words used imply that the honor of your parents includes financially providing for their needs in their old age. In a day when there were no social security checks or nursing homes, one way to consider your parents honorable enough not to leave them to die was to provide for their basic physical needs.
- However, the Pharisees and scribes elevated their tradition so highly that in some cases they viewed it as on par with Scripture. Their tradition (some random teaching from a random rabbi) taught that God is worthy of the most honor, even more than parents, and therefore Pharisees and scribes were applauded for giving the money they would have used to support their parents to the temple instead.
- But Jesus takes a sledgehammer to their tradition and their religion. Jesus makes clear that by obeying their tradition, they are disobeying God.

Matthew 15:3-4 / “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ‘For God commanded...’”

Matthew 15:6 / So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.

- He adds to the point by saying that the punishment for breaking the commandment of God that they are breaking is the death penalty.

Matthew 15:4 / For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’

- He adds to the condemnation further by saying that while you think you are choosing to honor God instead of your parents, you are actually failing at both. Because by failing to honor your parents and breaking God's commandments, your financial “gift” to God is actually worthless. You pretend to honor God with your money while you rebel against Him in your heart.
- No wonder Jesus “offended” them (15:12). He has exposed their worship to be worthless, their religion to be hypocritical, their tradition to be contradictory to God's word, their hearts to →

be in rebellion against God, and their actions to be worthy of the death penalty.

- On the contrary, according to the Sermon on the Mount, true disciples actually obey God's word—they love God and people more than money, and they are generous with their money because they love God, not because they love human praise.

Q / 06

REFERENCING MATTHEW 14-15

- In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus encourages His disciples to pray for God to provide their basic physical needs.

Matthew 6:11 / Give us this day our daily bread.

- Later in Matthew 6, Jesus encourages His disciples not to worry about what they will eat, because God is willing and able to provide abundantly.
- In Matthew 14, Jesus proves His words to be true as He abundantly provides for the physical needs of those who were seeking Him, and He does it again in Matthew 15.
- Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 ought to encourage readers of Matthew who are also needy to trust Jesus' words when He says:

Matthew 6:31-33 / Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?'... But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- The Sermon on the Mount also commends praying often in secret because true disciples love spending time with their heavenly Father.
- Jesus models this in this passage as He withdraws to be by Himself to pray.

Matthew 14:22 / He went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

- The faith of the Canaanite woman in 15:21-28 is a good example of how God responds when those who have faith in Him ask, seek, and knock (Matthew 7:7-11).
- Jesus' teaching on what defiles a person in Matthew 15:10-20 also echoes what He taught in 7:15-20 about a tree and its fruit.

Matthew 7:19 / Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Matthew 15:13 / He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up."

Q / 07

REFERENCING MATTHEW 15:13-14

- The "pit" in this passage is a euphemism for hell. Jesus is saying the Pharisees are spiritually blind. They cannot see the truth, nor do they believe it, and in their blindness and hardness, they are on their way to hell. In addition, as the supposed teachers of Israel, they are leading those who follow them into hell.
- In Matthew 13, Jesus warns in the Parable of the Weeds that on Judgment Day, the weeds that were not planted by the sower will be uprooted and thrown into the fire.
- Jesus repeats that sentiment here.

Matthew 15:13 / "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up."

- In other words, just because you are Jewish does not guarantee you are wheat that was planted by the Father. It is possible to be a physical offspring of Abraham and a weed planted by the evil one.

Q / 08

REFERENCING MATTHEW 15:21-28

- It cannot be lost on us as readers how amazing it is that in a passage where Jesus says Jewish scribes are destined for hell, He immediately goes on to heal a woman who came from a city that all Jews would have considered to be an embassy of hell!
- The reason Jesus saves her is because of her faith.
- The woman has faith in Jesus' identity as the Messiah, the son of David.
- She has faith in His character, that He would be willing to have mercy on her, a Gentile Canaanite.
- She has faith in His power, believing He could cast a demon out of a girl He had never met.
- And she has a persistent faith that is willing to ask, seek, and knock.

- In Romans 1:16, Paul says the gospel is:

Romans 1:16 / The power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

- There is an order of priority of gospel witnesses, but the gospel is for everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus models this same priority, but Jesus' slowness to heal her is not a reluctance as much as it is a test. This passage shows loud and clear that Jesus has come to save all who have faith in Him—Jew or Gentile!
- It is worth pointing out that Matthew 15:29-39 records Jesus performing similar miracles as He did in chapter 14.

- However, there is one major difference. In chapter 14, Jesus is healing many and feeding the crowds in a Jewish region. But in 15:29-39, Jesus is healing many and feeding the crowds in a gentile region.
- Matthew records these miracles right after Jesus heals the Canaanite woman's daughter to show that Jesus is the Savior of the world who has come to save all who put their faith in Him.
- All of this is leading up to the climactic conclusion of Matthew, where the Resurrected Lord will commission His disciples to go make disciples of all nations.

Q / 02

WEEK 10

Q / 01

REFERENCING MATTHEW 16:16

- The titles *Christ* and *Son of God* have a lot of overlap in meaning. Both point to Jesus being the promised King—not just a king, the King of kings. But each title emphasizes a different aspect of Jesus' identity.
- For Jesus to be the Christ means He is the long-awaited human king.
- The word *Christ* means "anointed one." The Old Testament prophecies pointed toward the coming savior that He would be a king "anointed" with the Spirit. He would be a seed of the woman who crushes the serpent, an offspring of Abraham who brings blessing to the nations, the lion of the tribe of Judah, a son of David who ushers in the Eden-like kingdom, and the one like a son of man who rules as a new Adam. In summary, for Jesus to be the Christ means that He is the Savior King that has been promised ever since Genesis 3:15.
- For Jesus to be the Son of God emphasizes the divine nature of Jesus' identity. As we learned all the way back in Matthew 1-2, Jesus is both the Son of David and the Son of God. He is the king of the Jews and the king of heaven. He was born of the Virgin Mary and conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is fully human and fully God, Immanuel/God with us.
- For a more detailed explanation, see Appendix B, the Nicene Creed, or the Athanasian Creed.
- As Matthew 16:14 implies, many believed Jesus was some kind of miracle-working prophet who spoke for God. Some acknowledged His power and influence so much that they guessed He was a prophet who lived multiple centuries earlier, risen from the dead. That is a lot of faith, but it is not saving faith. To believe Jesus is a prophet who has the power to rise from the dead is technically correct, but it still falls short of who He is.

- There are parallels in our culture, too. Many people are quick to acknowledge Jesus was a great teacher, a moral man, and an honorable martyr. They might even acknowledge His miracles. They might even go so far as to believe that who He is and what He has done are important enough to construct a religion around, but none of these things is the same thing as believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

REFERENCING MATTHEW 16:17

- This truth is uncomfortable enough that it could be tempting to ignore and rush past, but Jesus keeps repeating it so frequently that it is impossible to ignore. Before we consider what Jesus says, let's consider what He does not say.
- When Peter expresses faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus does *not* say "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because you have had the privilege of sitting under the teaching of the best teacher in the history of the world. Your knowledge is clearly a result of his quality teaching." While it is true that Jesus is the greatest teacher to ever live, it was not enough for Judas to believe.
- Jesus also does *not* say "Wow, Peter, you are so smart. Surely your intelligence, your disciplined study, and your attentive listening skills have helped you grasp these truths."
- Nor does He say "Peter, because of your good works and sincere intentions, you have earned the privilege of having your eyes opened to this little secret about my identity."
- Jesus does not say any of those things because no matter how educated, smart, moral, religious, or privileged you are, no one can open their own blind eyes to who Jesus is. The infinite and eternal God has to stoop down and reveal Himself to us through His Son by His Spirit.

Matthew 11:27 / No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

John 1:12-13 / But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 / But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence →

of God. ³⁰And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Q / 03

REFERENCING MATTHEW 16:21-23

- It is very surprising and ironic that Peter would genuinely believe Jesus is the (perfect, infallible, all-knowing) Son of God, and then turn right around and rebuke Jesus for being terribly mistaken about His identity, mission, and purpose. “You are wrong, Lord” (16:22) are words that should never go together.
- Mark records the same surprising and ironic events in the same order. Right before these events, he records another surprising and somewhat confusing event where Jesus heals a blind man, but his vision is still blurry, then He touches him again, and his sight is fully restored. As some have sarcastically asked before, was Jesus having a bad day? Why does He not heal the blind man fully the first time? Well, as it turns out, the two seemingly unrelated events interpret each other.
- As Matthew 16:16-17 records, Peter has had his eyes opened by the Father to see that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This spiritual sight is a divine gift, not a human achievement. What Peter sees and confesses about Jesus is true.
- However, as Matthew 16:21-21 reveals, Peter does not yet fully understand who Jesus is. Peter is like the blind man who has a fuzzy idea of who Jesus is, but it is not crystal clear yet.

Mark 8:23-24 / When he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” ²⁴And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.”

- Peter can see that Jesus is the Messiah, but he cannot yet perceive Jesus is the suffering Messiah. He believes that Jesus is destined for a glorious throne, but he does not yet understand that the path to the crown is through the cross. He believes that Jesus has come to save, but he does not yet realize that to save people for eternal life, Jesus will need to die a sinner's death. He believes Jesus will be glorified but can't fathom that, to be glorified, He must be crucified. He believes the Son of Man will reign forever, but he has forgotten that to live forever, sin and death must be defeated.
- As Jesus makes clear, this is no small thing to overlook. Back in 4:9, Satan tempts Jesus to take the easy way out, skip the cross, and try to earn the Kingdom without suffering and

dying. Here in 16:23, Jesus rebukes Peter's rebuke by saying he is acting as a spokesman for Satan and that his thinking is demonic. The only path to the Kingdom is through the cross. This is true for Jesus, and it is true for all who would follow Him (16:24-26).

Q / 04

REFERENCING MATTHEW 16:18

- Every word in Jesus' statement is loaded with significance. First off, understanding what Jesus means by “I will build my church” will help bring clarity to what He is communicating to Peter in the surrounding statements.
- As has been said, the Church is a people, but people who are part of the Church are not simply members of a church the way you become a member of Costco or a country club. The Church is a new people, that is, a new humanity. There are the people of this world who are born under Adam, enslaved to sin and death, and serve the kingdom of Satan. To become part of the Church, you have to be born again, united to Christ, raised from the spiritual dead, and transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Colossians 1:13).
- Understanding what the Church is helps us understand how it is built. Only God can raise the dead and create life out of nothing. Only God can free people from the dominion of the devil and adopt them into His family. Only God can cause someone to be born again. Men can build buildings and gather crowds (and call it a church), but only Christ can build His Church in the true sense of the word.
- Note the *I*, not *we*. The apostles could not build the Church, and neither can pastors—only Christ can.
- Note the *I will* as a promise guaranteed from the mouth of the Son of God.
- And note the *my* as the people of God are purchased by the blood of the Son of God and personally belong to Him.
- The phrase “gates of hell/hades shall not prevail against it” supports this interpretation that the Church is the resurrected people of the called-out ones.
- The New Testament has two different words that can be translated as *hell*. There are the eternal fires of judgment and torment, hell, and there is the more generic realm of the dead that is sometimes translated as Hades in the New Testament or Sheol in the Old Testament.
- 16:18 uses the word *hell* in the second sense of the term, not the first. No one escapes the eternal fires of hell. But the realm of the dead?

- When Jesus, the resurrected Lord who stole the keys to death and Hades, summons one of His own, He has the power to raise him or her from the dead, and the gates of Hades cannot keep them dead because Jesus has the keys! The gates of Hades are meant to keep the dead inside and away from the realm of the living. But Christ will build His Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Revelation 1:18 / “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”

Q / 05

REFERENCING MATTHEW 16:18

- In this passage, Jesus changes Peter’s name from Simon to Peter. The Greek word for *rock* sounds like the Greek word for Peter.
- Some have concluded that in this moment Jesus established Peter as the foundation of His Church. The statements about the keys of the kingdom and the authority to bind and loose evolved into the modern understanding of the Pope. Tradition says Peter was a bishop in Rome, and after he died, the office he had as supreme leader of the church and representative of Christ on earth has been passed down through the ages from one bishop of Rome to another.
- However, as the very next passage proves, Peter was far from infallible. Jesus calls him Satan right after he establishes him as the rock. Paul also rebuked Peter publicly, as recorded in Galatians 2:11-14. The other apostles clearly did not understand Jesus’ words to imply unrivaled superiority for Peter, as the Gospels record multiple times that they argued over who would get to sit next to Jesus in His Kingdom.
- In order to avoid the Catholic understanding, others have argued that “the rock” Jesus promises to build His church on is Peter’s confession, not Peter himself. Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and Jesus promises to build His Church through others confessing the same.
- While it is true people are saved by confession that Jesus is the Christ, it does not seem to be what Jesus is saying in this passage.
- So what does it mean?
- Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11-12 help clarify what Jesus meant. Jesus is speaking to Peter specifically as a representative of all the apostles. And on Peter and his fellow apostles, Jesus is going to build His church.

Q / 06

- If the Church is built by people being raised from the spiritual dead through faith in the gospel, then the apostles are the foundation through their taking the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, and through their writing of the New Testament.
- Peter and the apostles do have a privileged position in the building of the Church, as they are the rock or the foundation, but Jesus alone is supreme, as He is the cornerstone and chief architect. Their role is not passed down from one man to another, but rather to all evangelists and pastors who preach the Word as they did. Christ uses their proclamation of the Word to “build up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12), that is, to build His Church.

REFERENCING MATTHEW 16:19

- Keys are used to open something that would otherwise be locked. Therefore, in order to understand what Jesus means by the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, we must consider how someone enters the Kingdom.
- Counter to common cultural perception, this passage does not teach that Peter is standing at the pearly gates acting as heaven’s bouncer.
- What opens the gates of heaven to people is the gospel, not Peter. Therefore, for Jesus to give the keys of the Kingdom to Peter and the apostles means He is giving them the knowledge and authority to go out and preach the gospel, which they will use to call His people from the realm of the dead, burst through Hades’ gates, and summon them into the realm of life where heaven’s gates are open to receive them.
- The “ministry” of the Pharisees was Christless, gospel-less, and hopeless works-based righteousness. Therefore, they kept people from entering the Kingdom. But the apostles’ gospel ministry opened the gates of heaven for all who believed.
- The keys of the Kingdom are not passed down from one man to another. Rather, it is the Church, led by elders and deacons, consisting of baptized believers, with Christ as the head, that has the commission to preach the gospel to the dying world.
- When Jesus says “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,” further clarifies the authority that Jesus is delegating to the Church. As we will see in Matthew 18 and many of the New Testament epistles, the Church has a very real authority to decide doctrinal disputes, exercise church discipline, and →

acknowledge who is and is not a member of the true church (i.e., church membership). The Church does not decide these things as much as it recognizes what heaven has already decided. But the delegated authority is still an authority nonetheless.

Q / 07

REFERENCING MATTHEW 16:24

- To deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Christ are three related things—you cannot do one without doing the other two, but they are still worth considering one at a time.
- To deny yourself means you die to this world and all your fleshly, materialistic, worldly desires. Jesus is either Lord or He is not—He does not share His throne with anyone or anything.
- Denying yourself emphasizes dying to your sinful desires and pursuits. Taking up your cross highlights a literal willingness to physically die. “Take up your cross” is not a metaphor for being willing to suffer. Everyone in the Roman world who took up their cross did not just experience metaphorical suffering, they literally died. Jesus does not ask all of His disciples to die for Him, but He does ask all of them to love Him enough to be *willing* to die for Him.
- “Following me” includes both learning and doing. To be a disciple of Christ is to be a learner of Christ. We learn what Christ teaches, thinks, believes, and loves so that we can love and live the way Christ lived. “Follow me” is a call to be like Christ. And the way Christ lived in this dying world got Him crucified.

Q / 08-09

REFERENCING MATTHEW 16:25-28

- The first reason disciples should deny themselves and take up their cross is in v25. It could be tempting to refuse to follow Christ in order to preserve your life. Some people might forsake Christ in order to find “life” through pursuing money, sex, drugs, the American dream, or any other false gods that promise “life.” Or, someone might try to preserve their lives by literally denying Christ in order to avoid persecution or martyrdom. In either case, both will lose their lives in the end because the only way to live is to die.

Romans 6:5-6 / For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

- This is the paradox of Christianity. Christ died so that we could live, and if we want to live

with Him, we too must die with Him. The only path to the Kingdom is through the cross.

- The second reason is in 16:26. Jesus' words are clear enough. They are much easier to understand than they are to functionally believe on a daily basis. This life is short, and eternity is long. Naked we came into this world, and naked we will leave. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world? Beyond the grave, the answer is literally nothing.
- Following Jesus costs a lot in this life. If He is not risen, then we are of all people most to be pitied, but He is risen, and there is life beyond the grave. We live somewhere forever. Therefore, where you spend eternity is infinitely more important than anything you can accumulate in this life.
- Being the richest, most successful, intelligent, and powerful person in the history of the world and going to hell when you die is *far less* than being the scum of the earth and spending eternity with Jesus in heaven.
- Lord, we believe. Help our unbelief.
- The third reason Jesus gives is in 16:27-28. Why should we deny ourselves and follow Jesus? Consider how Revelation 1 unpacks what Jesus says in Matthew 16:27-28.

Revelation 1:7 / Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Revelation 1:13-17 / In the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

- This is just a vision of the Son of Man. Later in Revelation, it describes what it will be like when He returns with myriads and myriads of mighty angel warriors at His side. And what will the Son of Man do when He returns?

Matthew 16:27 / For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

- If this is not a reason to deny ourselves, pick up our crosses, and follow Jesus, I do

not know what is. Behold, He is coming soon—very soon—to save all those who are eagerly waiting for Him and to judge those who are not. Even so, come. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

APPENDIX B

NAMES + TITLES FOR JESUS IN MATTHEW

SON OF MAN

- **Old Testament Background**
Genesis 1:26-28, 3:15 / Daniel 7:13-14
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is the New Adam, the promised human king.
- **Overview**
God created human beings in His image, gave them dominion over His creation, and told them to fill the earth with His image so that He could rule the world through them. When Adam sinned, he forfeited his dominion over to the Serpent (i.e., Satan). But in Genesis 3:15, God promised a human Savior—an offspring of the woman, who would crush the snake and take back the Kingdom. Daniel 7:13-14 records Daniel's vision of this New Adam, one like a son of man, who regains what Adam lost and reigns over an eternal, universal Kingdom.
- **Matthew Usage**
Son of Man is Jesus' favorite title for Himself in Matthew (used 31 times) (see Matthew 9:6, 16:27-28).

OFFSPRING OF ABRAHAM

- **Old Testament Background**
Genesis 3:15, 12:1-3, 22:17-18
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is the Savior of the world.
- **Overview**
The world was cursed because of Adam's sin, but God promised to reverse the curse and bless all the nations of the earth through one of Abraham's offspring. The Old Testament traces this line of promise from Adam and Eve to Abraham, to Judah, to David, all the way down to Jesus. The fact that Jesus is the offspring of Abraham means that He is the Savior of the world, not just the Jewish Messiah.
- **Matthew Usage**
Throughout Matthew it is made clear that Jesus came to save Jews and Gentiles (see Matthew 1:1, 28:18-20).

SON OF DAVID

- **Old Testament Background**
Genesis 49:8-10 / 2 Samuel 7:12-16 / Psalm 2:1-12 / Isaiah 9:6-7
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is the promised King from the line of David.
- **Overview**
In 2 Samuel 7, God reveals to David that the promised Messiah from the line of Eve, Abraham, and Judah would go through Him. The Serpent-Crushing King the world has been waiting for ever since the fall was going to be a son of David. And the fact that this Son of David was to rule forever and ever (2 Samuel 7:13) implies that He is the one who would reverse the curse of sin and death.
- **Matthew Usage**
See Matthew 1:1, 21:9, 22:42. David is mentioned 15 times in Matthew, including six times in chapter 1 alone.

KING OF THE KINGDOM

- **Old Testament Background**
Genesis 1:26-28, 49:8-10 / Psalm 2:1-12 / Isaiah 9:6-7 / Daniel 7:13-14
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is restoring what was lost at the Fall.
- **Overview**
Kings have kingdoms, and the hope of the Messiah was closely tied with the hope of the entire world becoming what Eden was. Ever since the Fall, Satan had ruled over the kingdoms of the world, with sin and death reigning with him. But the Messiah would come and crush Satan, reverse the curse, and usher in a heavenly, universal Eden-like Kingdom of righteousness, justice, and flourishing, free from sin and all its deadly effects.
- **Matthew Usage**
The coming of the Kingdom of Heaven is the thesis of John the Baptist's and Jesus' ministry. Jesus is not just paying for sin, He is making all things new (see Matthew 3:2, 4:17).

MESSIAH/CHRIST

- **Old Testament Background**
Psalm 2:2 / Isaiah 42:1, 61:1-3
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is the promised King.
- **Overview**
The term *Messiah* comes from a Hebrew word and *Christ* comes from a Greek word that both mean “anointed one” or “chosen one.” In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil in order to indicate that God was setting them apart/choosing them for a specific task. While many men were anointed in the Old Testament, the Scriptures pointed forward to *the* Anointed One who would be anointed with God’s Spirit. This Messiah would be God’s chosen Savior who would come to redeem His people. In the New Testament, the term *Christ* is most closely associated with the office of king. Thus, for Jesus to be the Christ means that He is the long awaited, Spirit-anointed King.
- **Matthew Usage**
The term *Christ* is an umbrella term that all of these other titles fall under. The goal of Matthew and all four gospels is to testify that Jesus is the Christ (see Matthew 1:1, 16:16).

SON OF GOD

- **Old Testament Background**
Exodus 4:19 / 2 Samuel 7:14 / Psalm 2:7 / Isaiah 9:6-7
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is God’s Son and God’s King.
- **Overview**
The term *son of God* is used in a few different ways in the Bible. There are sons of God who spiritually image the character of their heavenly father the way a son physically images the appearance of their earthly father (e.g. Matthew 5:8). This responsibility to reflect the character of God is closely related to kingship. Adam was expected to image God in the way he exercised dominion, Israel was to be a kingdom of priests, and David and his sons were to image God in the way they ruled.

Son of God has a second meaning, as it also refers to the only begotten Son of God who is fully divine and equal with the Father. Jesus is the Son of God in both senses of the term. He is the perfect representation of God’s holy character whose rule is a flawless extension of God’s rule, and He is the eternal Son of God in the divine sense of the term. Thus, for Jesus to be the Son of God means that He is the long awaited King who has come to rule the world on God’s behalf (and thus succeed where Adam, Israel, and David failed), and He is able to do this perfectly because He is God the Son incarnate.
- **Matthew Usage**
From the very first chapter, Matthew sets out to prove Jesus is both the fully human king and the fully divine Son of God (see Matthew 3:17, 4:3, 16:16).

LORD

- **Old Testament Background**
Exodus 3:14 / Psalm 24:10, 110:1 / Isaiah 9:6
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is Yahweh.
- **Overview**
In Exodus 3, God reveals Himself to Moses as the LORD. He is Yahweh, the great I AM, the one who was, and is, and always will be. The Old Testament makes clear that there is only one God and Lord of heaven and earth (Deuteronomy 6:4), and yet it also reveals the promised Messiah will be more than a mere human. As we see in Psalm 110:1, the Christ will be David’s son, but He will also be David’s Lord. The term Lord is used 52 times in Matthew, and when it is used in reference to Jesus it is meant to emphasize the fact that He is Yahweh, the great I AM. For example, Isaiah 40:3 promises a forerunner who will prepare the way for Yahweh’s coming. Matthew 3:1-12 affirms John the Baptist is the promised forerunner who is preparing the way for Jesus, who is the Lord.
- **Matthew Usage**
Over and over again Matthew records Jesus citing passages from the Old Testament that are about Yahweh and applying them to Himself. Likewise, people regularly come to Jesus and ask Him to do what only the Lord can do (see Matthew 3:3, 7:21-22, 8:25, 12:8, 14:30).

IMMANUEL

- **Old Testament Background**
Isaiah 7:14
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is God in the flesh.
- **Overview**
Through the Garden of Eden, the tabernacle, and the temple, the Old Testament portrays the ultimate hope of a flourishing life to be grounded in the presence of God, who is the fountain of life. To be with God is to have life, to be separated from God is to be banished to the realm of the dead. In Isaiah 7, it is prophesied to a sinful and hopeless people that a virgin will give birth to a son whose name will be *Immanuel*, which means “God with us.” A few chapters later, Isaiah 9 promises a child that will be born whose name is “Mighty God.” In the context of Isaiah, this child will bring light into the darkness, life into the realm of the dead. Matthew 1 affirms Jesus is the promised Immanuel, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He is fully God and fully man, “God with us” who promises to be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20) until the apex of salvation is reached and the dwelling place of God is with man (Revelation 21:3).
- **Matthew Usage**
Matthew regularly highlights the incredible reality that Jesus is not merely a Savior sent by God. Rather, God Himself has come to save His people through the incarnation of Jesus (see Matthew 1:18-25, 28:20).

NEW MOSES

- **Old Testament Background**
Deuteronomy 18:15-18 / Isaiah 11:1-12:2
- **Emphasis**
Jesus is the Prophet like Moses, inaugurating a New Covenant and New Exodus.
- **Overview**
In the Old Testament, Moses was the ultimate deliverer of God's people. Moses was a prophet who delivered God's Word to His people. He acted as a priest who interceded to God on behalf of the sinful people, and he was like a king who governed God's people. As Israel's de facto prophet, priest, and king, God used Moses to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness to the promised land. In Deuteronomy 18, Moses prophesied that God would raise up a prophet like him. This came to be understood as a Messianic prophecy. The Psalms and Prophets point to the coming of a New Moses who would perform a new and greater Exodus. Matthew portrays Jesus as this New Moses who has come to save His people from slavery to sin, inaugurate a new and greater covenant, lead them through the wilderness of this world, and deliver them into the Kingdom of Heaven, the new and better promised land.
- **Matthew Usage**
In Matthew 1-4, the events of Jesus' life are remarkably similar to famous events from Moses' life. This prepares readers to see Jesus as the New Moses ascending the mountain to deliver God's word through the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 1-4, 5:1, 14-15).

the dead, and feeding the hungry is all meant to show that He not only has the power to pay for sin, He has the power to reverse all of sin's deadly effects, and He will do this by defeating sin and death on the cross. This is the good news of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven (see Matthew 4:17-25, 8:17).

SUFFERING SERVANT

- **Old Testament Background**
Genesis 3:15 / Psalm 22 / Isaiah 53
- **Emphasis**
Jesus has come to save His people from their sins by dying a sinner's death.
- **Overview**
The wages of sin is death. Ever since Adam ate the fruit, all men have died because all men are born in sin and continue in sin. And yet, the Old Testament contains prophecy after prophecy of a Messiah coming to usher in an eternal, everlasting Kingdom (e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7 / Daniel 7:13-14). How does this add up? An eternal Kingdom with citizens who live forever makes one really big assumption: somehow, some way, the undefeated juggernauts of sin and death will be defeated. Genesis 3:15 hints at the Messiah's victory coming at a personal cost to Himself. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 confirm the reality of a suffering Messiah who will die a substitutionary death. Matthew affirms the way that sin and death are ultimately defeated is through the death and resurrection of Jesus, who is both the Suffering Servant and the King of the everlasting, heavenly Kingdom.
- **Matthew Usage**
Jesus' mission is to save His people from their sins. Jesus' ministry of healing the sick, exorcisms, raising

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