

THE KING TAKES HIS THRONE

JESUS IN JERUSALEM • MATTHEW 21-28

Bible Study Guide
Term 1 2021



Study 1: Matthew 21:28 - 22:14

Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem with a splash. As he entered the city, a crowd praised him as the Messiah (21:9) and a prophet (21:11). He strode into the temple as if he owned the place and upended the status quo. In the temple courts he healed the blind and lame (21:14) and continued his captivating public preaching (21:23). Of course the establishment figures feel threatened and they demand to know where he gets his authority – a question he refuses to answer just yet (21:23-27). In today’s study we look at three parables Jesus speaks in response to the religious leaders who were opposing him.

Read Matthew 21:28-32. This parable is found only in Matthew’s gospel.

1. How would you summarise the two sons in a single sentence?
2. What is the main difference between the two sons?
3. Unlike earlier in the discussion (verses 25-27), the priests and elders are happy to answer the question Jesus asks. How does Jesus use their answer against them?

In verse 32 Jesus refers to the teaching of John the Baptist. **Read** this extract from Matthew 3 to get the background:

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” [...] People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. [...] I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Matthew 3:1-2, 5–8, 11)

4. In what way have the tax collectors and prostitutes been “entering the kingdom of God ahead of” the self-righteous priests and elders?
(Consider John’s message above)

5. What would it look like for us to make the same mistake as the priests and elders?

Read Matthew 21:33-46

6. Who is this parable about?

7. There was a long history of speaking of Israel as God’s vineyard (eg. Isaiah 5:1-7). Can you think of old testament events represented by the servants’ visits in verses 35-36?

8. What does the vineyard owner expect from the tenants? And what does that say about what God expects from his people?

9. The religious leaders agree with the principle of the parable – that the tenants’ behaviour is not to be tolerated. How do they apply this principle to their own behaviour?

10. What would it look like for us to make the same mistake as the religious leaders?

Read Matthew 22:1-10. *The kingdom of God was often pictured as a banquet. Here, Jesus presents it as a wedding banquet thrown by the king for his son.*

11. Why do the original invitees miss out on the banquet?

12. Who gets to attend the banquet in the end?

13. How does this relate to the message of the previous parable?

Read Matthew 22:11-14

14. Do you feel that the harsh message of this section undermines the message of the previous section? How?

15. What would it look like for us to make the same mistake as the original invitees?

16. What would it look like for us to make the same mistake as the man ejected from the wedding?

Pray and thank God for the way he calls underserving outsiders like us into his kingdom. Ask for his help in living transformed lives that reflect our new status.

Notes & Prayer Points

c. What 3 things stand out in Jesus' response to this question?

d. What can we learn from this conversation between Jesus and his opponents?

Read Matthew 22:23-33 - The Second Controversy: about life after death

Background: The Sadducees probably originated during the Hasmonean period (166-163BC). They were the aristocratic, priestly families of Israel. They considered only the books of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy) to have authority in proving doctrine, were exacting in Levitical purity, attributed everything to free will, argued that there was no resurrection or future life and rejected the idea of a spiritual world including belief in angels and demons.

3. How is the hypocrisy of the Sadducees demonstrated in this question in verses 19-22?

4. Jesus tells them they are wrong. Identify the errors of which he accuses them.

5. Contrast and discuss the response of the crowd, verse 33, and the response of the Sadducees, verse 34, to the words of Jesus.

Read Matthew 22:34-40 - The Third Controversy: about priorities

6. a. The Pharisees heard that the Sadducees had been silenced. Why would they now decide to again try to “trap Jesus in his words” as mentioned in v.15

b. In what area did they now feel confident to test Jesus?

c. Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Why would Jesus put these statements together?

Read Matthew 22:41-46 - Postscript

Jesus now turns from being questioned to asking questions. He tests their understanding of the identity of the Messiah. His questions show that Jesus understood that they believed the Messiah would be the ‘Son of David’ but knew that their belief was inadequate.

7. Jesus asks the Pharisees to identify the parentage of the Messiah.
 - a. What is their immediate response?

 - b. What does this link show about their understanding of the work of the Messiah?

 - c. How does Jesus use Psalm 110:1-3 to challenge their response?

 - d. Discuss the Pharisees' response to the words of Jesus. v.46

Reflect together on all these challenges to Jesus and his responses.

8. How is the experience of first century Israel when their Messiah came among them repeated when the gospel is taken to the rest of the world from that time onwards?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 3: Matthew 23:1-39

Opening Question

1. Have you ever come across a person whose words and actions were inconsistent? What was the ultimate effect of this inconsistency?

Read Matthew 23:1-12

2. On the surface the Pharisee seemed to be extremely religious. What does Jesus indicate was wrong with their type of religion?
3. What motivated the Pharisees to be so outwardly religious?
4. How did Jesus want us to be different from the Pharisees?

Read Matthew 23:13-32

In this section Jesus pronounces 7 woes or judgements against the Pharisees.

5. Break up into smaller group (say of 2 or 3 people) and allocate a few woes to each group. For each woe answer the following questions:
 - a. What does Jesus call the pharisees?
 - b. What have they been doing that Jesus apposes?
 - c. Summarise the principle have they neglected to follow.

Get back together to compare and discuss your answers.

Woe	Verses	Answer
1	13-14	a. b. c.
2	15	a. b. c.
3	16-22	a. b. c.
4	23-24	a. b. c.
5	25-26	a. b. c.
6	27-28	a. b. c.
7	29-32	a. b. c.

Read Matthew 23:33-36

6. Jesus pronounces that all the guilt of all the murders of all the righteous people will fall on “this generation”. This is a stunning accusation. How does this occur? (also consider John 11:45-54)

Discussion

It's ironic that in in the case of the Pharisees, the most outwardly pious and religious people would fail to recognise Jesus as the messiah and be condemned!

7. What is the ultimate problem with the religion of the Pharisees (consider *(Luke 11:39)*)?
8. How can we fall into the same trap as the Pharisees today?
9. What does God desire from us?

Prayer

Confess to each other, if you feel you have got caught up in appearances rather than living by genuine faith. Pray that God will strengthen our faith so we live in a way that pleases him.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 4: Matthew 24:1-35

Today's passage, and its parallel in Mark 13, are some of the trickiest passages in the New Testament. Strap yourself in! Experts disagree about how to interpret some details of this passage, so be prepared for some differences of opinion in your group, and for some unresolved questions at the end. For some context, we'll start by reading the end of Jesus' speech in the previous chapter.

Pray then read Matthew 23:37 – 24.3

1. What does Jesus predict for the Jerusalem temple?
2. What do the disciples ask in response? How many questions are they actually asking? How do you think the questions relate to each other?

Historical note: *In AD70, about 37 years after Jesus spoke these words, in response to a Jewish revolt against their occupation, the Roman army laid siege to Jerusalem. For five months the Roman army surrounded the city, leading to great suffering within. Eventually the Romans breached the city walls and burned and destroyed the temple and much of the city. The [Arch of Titus](#), celebrating the Roman victory, still stands in Rome today.*

Read Matthew 24:4-28

3. In a sentence, summarise the kinds of things Jesus predicts will happen
4. In a sentence, summarise what Jesus urges the disciples to (not) do

destruction will also be the time when it will become clear that the Son of Man, rejected by the leaders of his people, has been vindicated and enthroned at the right hand of God, and that it is he who is now to exercise the universal kingship which is his destiny” (France 2007 p. 924).

However it remains a difficult passage, and this interpretation doesn't convince everyone. We probably need to leave this section as a bit of a question mark.

Reflect on the whole chapter so far

8. Jesus gives several warnings in this chapter. To what extent are they relevant to us, who live a long time after the fall of Jerusalem in AD70?

9. Can you think of examples of false messiahs and false prophets in recent history?

10. How can we make sure we follow Jesus' warning not to be deceived?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 5: Matthew 24:36-25:13

Begin with these introductory questions

1. Have you ever been caught out or unprepared for something? What happened?
2. If you discovered that Jesus was going to return tomorrow, how would you feel? Why?

At the beginning of chapter 24, the disciples asked Jesus about the destruction of the temple and the end of the age. They assumed they were one and the same thing, but Jesus warns them not to be deceived by false messiahs during the fall of Jerusalem. From verse 36 onwards Jesus does teach them about his return at the end of the age.

Pray, then read **Matthew 24:36-25:13**

3. According to the passage, when will Jesus come back?
4. What are the 6 illustrations Jesus gives to explain what it will be like? Fill in the table below to summarise what the illustrations teach us.

	What's used to illustrate	What does it teach us about what Jesus' return will be like? (just a few words)
a		
b		
c		
d		
e		
f		

5. What instruction(s) does Jesus give his listeners?

6. Contrast what happens if you're ready with what happens if you're not (particularly in the last 2 parables).

7. How can we be ready? What should we actually do?

8. Are you doing any of these things? What do you think you should commit to doing more?

9. Can you think of a concrete step you can commit to doing? Is there a way our group can help/encourage you to do this?

Pray for readiness!

Notes & Prayer Points

b) List the areas in which the third servant had misunderstood his master and the instructions given to him.

c) How does the master respond to this servant's excuses?

4. Consider the application of this parable to

a) The disciples to whom Jesus was speaking on the Mount of Olives (24:1-3)

b) Israel as represented by the Pharisees and Sadducees

c) Christians today – us!

Read Matthew 25:31-46 - The Sheep and the Goats

Jesus now speaks more directly about the reality of the separation which was hinted at in the final sentence of the parable of the talents/bags of gold. The shepherd separating the sheep from the goats is a simile for the separation of the people.

5. a. Describe in your own words the image of judgement given by Jesus in verses 31-33.

b. Jesus has previously spoken about the separation which began inside of Israel with Jesus' mission to the lost sheep (10:5-10) and which would take place for the world at the end of the age (13:24-30). Referring to the passages given, answer the questions in the table.

Matthew 10:5-10	Matthew 13:24-30	Matthew 25:31-46
When did the separation occur?	When will the separation occur?	Where will the separation occur?
How did the separation occur?	How will the separation occur?	How will the separation occur?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 7: Matthew 26

This chapter describes the events leading to Jesus' crucifixion. The events could be seen as tragic and out of control if it were not for the fact that Jesus repeatedly foretells what would happen. It is clear from Jesus' predictions that everything that happens is part of God's plan and death is his destiny.

Read Matthew 26:1-13 - Jesus Predicts His Death

1. Describe in detail what Jesus predicts will happen
2. What do the chief priests and teachers of the law conspire to do?
3. A woman poured perfume over Jesus feet. What does Jesus say is the purpose of this?
4. What were the disciples concerned about when it came to women's use of the perfume?

Read Matthew 26:14-35 – The last supper

5. Describe in detail what Jesus predicts will happen

6. What does Judas conspire to do?

7. What does Jesus see as the purpose and significance of his death as represented by the bread and the wine of the Passover meal?

Read Matthew 26:36-56 - The Garden of Gethsemane

8. How does Jesus feel about what is about to happen to him?

9. What power does Jesus have to alter the course of events?

10. Why doesn't Jesus use this power?

11. How do the disciples respond to the situation?

Read Mathew 26:57- 75 - Jesus before the Sanhedrin

12. What is Jesus ultimately convicted of?

13. How does Peter respond to the people who suspect he is a disciple of Jesus?

Discussion

14. Why was it so hard for the disciples to grasp what was happening even though Jesus predicted it?

15. How might we also struggle to grasp what Jesus has done for us?

Prayer

Thank God for sending Jesus into the world to die for us so that our sins can be forgiven. Praise God for his love and generosity in sending Jesus. Pray that you and those in your group will be able to grow in faith, and live a life of faith, trusting in Jesus.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 8: Matthew 27

Chapter 27 brings us to the climax of Matthew's account of the life and ministry of Jesus by bringing us to his death. Our annual Easter celebration brings this part of the biography to us with very familiar tones. We are constantly reminded of the foundational events of our salvation (Romans 5:6-12). As we read this chapter, let us wonder afresh at the life changing gift freely given to us (Romans 5:9-11).

Read Matthew 27:1-2 - The decision is made

1. a. Who made the decision to put Jesus to death?

- b. Why was Jesus bound and led away?

Read Matthew 27:3-10 - The death of Judas

2. What actions indicate Judas' remorse on hearing that Jesus was condemned?

3. What conflict do you notice in the actions of the chief priests and elders?

4. How does Matthew indicate that these events are within God's purpose?

Read Matthew 27:11-26 - Jesus before Pilate.

5. Note the words with which Jesus acknowledged the question of the governor in v.11. (*NIV 2011 translates his response as “Yes, it is as you say” and ESV as “You have said so”.*) Why would Jesus refuse to answer any other charge? See also Isaiah 53:7

6. How did Pilate show his unwillingness to condemn Jesus?

7. How did the chief priests and elders show their determination to condemn Jesus?

8. Ultimately, who willingly accepted responsibility for condemning Jesus?

Read Matthew 27:27-44 - Mockery and Crucifixion

9. What form does the mockery of Jesus take? Compare Psalm 89:50-51 & Isaiah 50:4-7.

10. God's plan cannot be thwarted. It was recorded from the beginning. Read the following cross references and link the prophecies to the events at the crucifixion.

a) Psalm 69:21

b) Psalm 22:6-8, 12-13, 16-18

Read Matthew 27:45-56: The death of Jesus

11. A. What remarkable occurrences suggested this was a great day of judgement and resurrection?

- Verse 45 (cf. Job 5:14 & Amos 8:9-10)
- Verse 46 (cf. Psalm 22:1 & 27:9)
- Verses 47-49 (cf. Malachi 4:5-6)
- Verses 51-53 (cf. Daniel 12:2)

b. Who was the only person to recognise the meaning of these signs? Why was this significant?

Read Matthew 27:57-66: The burial and the guard.

12. How does Joseph, a disciple, now care for Jesus?

13. How did the chief priests and the Pharisees show their insecurity?

Finale!

14. What has impacted you most as you have read again the events surrounding the death of Jesus?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 9: Matthew 28

Jesus' death had been a great moment of despair for his followers. Yet, this was not the end! Matthew 28 recount the events of that Sunday morning when the disciples are confronted by an empty tomb, a glorious angel and the news that Jesus has risen from the dead!

Pray, then read Matthew 28:1-10

1. Explain the events that led to the opening of Jesus' tomb.
2. What news did the Angel give the women as they arrived at the tomb?
3. What emotions did the women feel after encountering the angel and hearing the news Why do you think they felt this way?
4. How did the women respond to encountering the risen Jesus?
5. How did the chief priests respond to the news given by the guards? Why do you think they responded in this way?

Read Matthew 28:16-20

6. How did the disciples respond to encountering the risen Jesus? Why do you think they responded in this way?

7. What authority has been given to Jesus? What difference does this make?

8. Based on this authority what are the disciples commissioned to do?

9. What does Jesus promise he will do? What does this imply?

Discussion

10. How do you think that the event of Jesus resurrection changes things?

11. What can we do to better follow Jesus considering his great commission?

Pray

Praise and worship the risen Lord Jesus! Ask him to help us to better serve him in light of who he is and his great commission.