

*After beginning to read the Gospel of Matthew something quickly struck me as interesting. Usually when I read scripture, repeated words and phrases stand out to me. The word that seemed to be standing out to me this time was "crowd." So I did a quick search and realized that this word is used 41 times in this Gospel. To me that is amazing!*

*So I decided to sit down and read through the entire Gospel in one reading, looking specifically for information on the crowd. I was curious to see how Jesus interacted with them.*

*Below is what I found. It is possible I missed some things. Also, there were several times where I knew crowds were present (Jesus' baptism for example), but Matthew did not record it, so I did not write it down. There were other times when I could assume that a crowd was present, but since it was not clearly stated or inferred, I again did not write it down.*

*At the very bottom are just a few thoughts of mine regarding my reading.*

After Jesus began preaching and healing, large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan began to follow Him (4:23-25). Upon seeing the crowds Jesus proceeded to preach the Sermon on the Mount (5:1). It seems like He is only teaching His disciples (5:1-2), but in the end the crowds were amazed at his teaching (7:28), and large crowds continued to follow Him (8:1).

After this Jesus healed a man with leprosy and told him to tell no one else (8:3-4).

When Jesus entered Capernaum a centurion (non-Jew) asked Jesus to heal his servant. After showing great faith, Jesus turned to the crowd (most likely all Jews), and told them that this non-Jew had more faith than any Jew he had encountered.

**8:10***When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.**11** I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.**12** But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Jesus continued to heal the sick, with the result that He was surrounded by large crowds. Seeing the crowds, Jesus decided to go to the other side of the lake. In the midst of getting ready to leave the crowd, a teacher of the law and another man asked to follow Jesus. To the one He says, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." To the other who wanted to bury his father Jesus responds, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." After saying this He got in a boat and left the crowds (8:18-22).

After some time alone with His disciples, Jesus crossed the lake once again and went to His

own town. Present for what is about to happen are His disciples, teachers of the law, and a crowd. With all these people around, Jesus proclaimed forgiveness of sins to a paralyzed man. This of course upset the teachers of the law (since only God can forgive sin), so Jesus showed His authority by also healing the man. Upon witnessing this event, the crowd was “filled with awe; and they praised God” (9:1-7).

Next, with crowds still following Him, Jesus told Matthew (a tax collector) to follow Him. He then went to Matthew’s house where he spent time with and ate with other tax collectors and sinners. It is not clear if the crowds are present at the house, but the Pharisees at least witnessed Jesus eating with these people (9:9-11).

Later Jesus went into a synagogue leader’s house whose daughter had died. There was a noisy crowd there with people playing pipes. Jesus told them that the girl was not dead, just sleeping. They proceeded to laugh at Jesus (9:23-25).

After this, Jesus healed two blind men indoors and once leaving the house casted out a demon. The crowd that was present was amazed (9:28-33).

*9:35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

After Jesus sent his newly appointed apostles on their first mission, He went to the towns of Galilee to teach and preach (11:1). John, in prison, sent his disciples to ask if Jesus was the one who was to come. After answering them, Jesus turned to the crowd and told them that John was indeed Elijah who was to come. Then Jesus compared the current generation to children in the market place (11:11-19).

After answering his critics as to deeds He did on the Sabbath, a large crowd followed Jesus. He healed their sick and the crowd brought a demon-possessed man to him to be healed (12:22). The Pharisees attempted to cause trouble for Jesus, but Jesus boldly condemned them (12:24-37).

Next ,Pharisees and teachers of the law asked for a sign from Jesus. It seems that Jesus did not address the Pharisees or teachers of the law, but instead the crowd (12:46). He called their generation wicked and adulterous and that the men of Nineveh would stand up at judgment and condemn them (12:39-45).

*12:46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him.47 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."  
48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"49 Pointing*

*to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.**50** For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*

That very same day Jesus went outside and sat by the lake. The crowds were so large that he got in a boat and told the parable of the four soils. When asked by the disciples why He spoke to the crowd in parables, Jesus answered,

***12:11** "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.**12** Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.**13** This is why I speak to them in parables:*

*"Though seeing, they do not see;  
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.*

***14** In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:*

*"You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.*

***15** For this people's heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.*

*Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

***16** But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.**17** For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.*

Next Jesus told the crowd the parables of the weeds, mustard seed, yeast, the hidden treasure, the pearl and the net (13:24-50). After finishing the parables Jesus asked the crowd if they understood everything. They responded, "Yes" (13:51).

Upon hearing of John's murder, Jesus attempted to go to a solitary place, yet the crowds followed him. When Jesus saw that the crowd had followed Him, he had compassion on them and healed their sick (14:13-14).

As evening came, the disciples told Jesus that He needed to send the crowd away so that they could find some food. At this point Jesus miraculously fed the crowd (5,000 men, besides women and children) (14:15-21). This is the first time we see a number associated with the crowd. After feeding the crowd, he dismissed them and went to a mountain to pray (14:22-23), then later walked on water to meet up with the disciples in the boat (14:25-33).

They got out of the boat at Gennesaret, where the people recognized Jesus. They brought all their sick from the surrounding country to be healed by Jesus (14:34-36).

Next, Pharisees and teachers of the law (in the presence of a crowd) questioned Jesus about His disciples not following the traditions of the elders. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders and called them hypocrites. Then he turned to the crowd and explained why his disciples did not follow the traditions (washing hands before eating) (15:1-11).

Later, on a mountain by the Sea of Galilee, great crowds brought people to Jesus to be healed. After the healing, the crowd was amazed and praised God (15:29-31).

Having compassion on the crowd Jesus again miraculously fed them until they were satisfied. 4,000 men (besides women and children) ate that day. After they ate, Jesus dismissed them (15:32-39).

In the region of Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked the disciples who the people said He was. The answer was that the people (presumably the crowds) had mixed opinions. Some believed He was Elijah, others John the Baptist, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets (16:13-14).

After some time Jesus and His disciples approached a crowd. One of the men came forward and asked Jesus to heal his son since the disciples were not able to do it. Before healing the child Jesus said,

*17:17 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me."*

Later Jesus left Galilee and went to the region of Judah. Again, large crowds followed Him and He healed them (19:1-2). At this same time Pharisees approached Jesus to test Him. Jesus, as usual, skillfully answered the question (19:4-9). Jesus' teaching on the subject (marriage) was difficult for some to accept (19:11).

*19:13 Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.*

*14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." 15 When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.*

On His way to Jerusalem, while Jesus was leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. Two blind men on the side of the road called to Jesus, but the crowd rebuked them. However, Jesus had compassion on them and healed them. They immediately began to follow Jesus (20:29-34).

As they entered Jerusalem the disciples brought a donkey and colt and sat Jesus upon them.

*21:8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,*

*"Hosanna to the Son of David!"*

*"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"*

*"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

*10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"*

*11 The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

Presumably with the 'very large crowd' in tow, Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out those who were buying and selling there. The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple and He healed them (21:12-14).

The next day Jesus returned to the temple courts. The crowds again are present (21:46), along with the chief priests and elders of the people (21:23). Here Jesus told them the parable of the two sons and the parable of the tenants. After the first parable Jesus told the chief priests and elders:

*21:31 "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes (these people are probably in the crowd) are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you (chief priests and elders).32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.*

After the second parable Jesus told the chief priests and elders:

*43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.*

The chief priests and elders wanted to arrest Jesus but did not because they were afraid of the crowd who considered Jesus a prophet (21:46).

Again Jesus spoke a parable to the chief priests and elders (the Parable of the Wedding Banquet) (22:1-14).

After hearing Jesus' teaching regarding marriage in the afterlife, the crowds were astonished (22:33).

During this time the Pharisees kept trying to trap Jesus in His words, but are unable to (22:15-22, 34-40).

Then, in the presence of the crowd, Jesus asked the Pharisees whose son the Messiah would be. After Jesus corrected them, nobody could say a word in reply. The result was that nobody dared to ask Jesus any more questions (22:41-46).

Then Jesus told the crowd that they were to obey the teachers of the law and Pharisees, but not to do what they do since they did not practice what they preach (23:1-3).

In the presence of the crowd, Jesus proclaimed seven woes on the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (23:13-32).

*---There is no mention of the crowd from the end of chapter 23 until the end of chapter 26. These chapters are focused on Jesus and His disciples. Somewhere between these two points the crowd stops following Jesus. The only mention of crowds from this point on are of the crowds who arrest Jesus and demand His death.---*

After Jesus and his disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane so that Jesus could pray, a large crowd came out with swords and clubs in order to arrest Jesus (26:47).

After Jesus had been arrested He was taken to Pilate for final judgment. The crowd gathered and Pilate asked them if they wanted Jesus released, but they asked for another man instead. The crowd demanded Jesus' crucifixion (27:15-26).

### ***Personal Thoughts:***

From the beginning Jesus attracted large crowds of people; at times more than 5,000 people. Jesus taught them, healed them, fed them, rebuked them, and had compassion upon them. In their presence He broke Jewish tradition, challenged and rebuked the religious authorities, and ate with sinners. He held back no punches in His teaching when the crowds were present or when the religious leaders were around. He got tired of the crowds at times and tried to find solitude (which was often difficult to find).

Something happened towards the end of Jesus' life. Matthew does not tell us clearly what exactly took place. Yet, just days after 'very large crowds' greet Jesus riding into Jerusalem with shouts of praise, none remained. Not only were there no more crowds shouting Jesus' praise, they were shouting for His execution.

Even in His crucifixion, only a few women stood nearby. And after He was dead, only one

man was there to take Jesus' body down and bury Him.

We know from Acts that after the resurrection there were only 120 disciples left. Well over 5,000 to just 120!