



Thy Kingdom Come

Studies in Matthew 8-28

Thy Kingdom Come—Studies in Matthew 8-28

This time last year our church looked at the opening chapters of Matthew (1-7) at Sunday services and in our Home Groups.

We finished our studies last year at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus presents a manifesto of what it means to live in his kingdom, acknowledging him as king. In Matthew 8-28 we will see this Kingdom 'coming' through the life and work of Jesus and ultimately through his death and resurrection.

Each of the Gospel accounts has a different flavour where different things that are emphasised. We have seen some of the distinctives of Matthew:

- Strong Messianic Focus
- Emphasis on fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy
- Stress on the Kingdom of Heaven

Chapters 8-10 introduce some of the big themes that we will see in the rest of Matthew:

- The coming of the Kingdom with authority & power
- The nature & difficulties of being disciples
- Gentiles responding with faith
- Israel's hard-heartedness to their Messiah

Jesus the Messiah has come. He is still establishing his kingdom and he calls us not simply to be a part of it, but to work with him in bringing it into the lives of others.

As we look at Matthew's gospel together, might we learn from Jesus as we help each other to wrestle with what it means for us to live for his kingdom today.

Study 1—The Kingdom Comes

Matthew 8-10

Before starting to look at Matthew 8 it helps to remember what has gone before. Give a brief summary of what has happened in these sections:

Matthew 1-2

Matthew 3-4

Matthew 5-7

Following the long block of teaching from Jesus, Matthew describes a series of miracles. What do each of these miracles show us?

The man with leprosy (8:1-4)

The Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)

Other healings (8:14-17)

Find the verses in this section that show opposition to Jesus and his ministry. What is surprising about the source of the opposition?

Jesus says the harvest is plentiful, and that his disciples should pray for God to send more workers in the fields. How does that fit with what do we see happening in chapter 10?

What 'job' are the disciples to do?

List some of the things Jesus says they can expect to encounter?

What surprising statement does Jesus make about the authority his disciples will have? (Matt 10:40)

What do you think we can learn from how Jesus used his disciples even then for 'kingdom' work?

We should be praying for more 'workers'... but how can you be the worker Jesus has called you to be? What things can you do? What things can your home group do? What things can our church do?

Study 2—Jesus and Hollow Religion

Matthew 11-12

Read Chapter 11

When John sends his disciples to ask Jesus about who he is, Jesus directs them to the things he's been doing 11:4-5 (see also Isaiah 61:1 and 35:5-6). What is he saying about himself?

Read Chapter 12

What do each of the exchanges with the Pharisees the start of chapter 12 teach us about the danger of 'religion' (see also 1:18-19, 25-26)?

What is frustrating (and perhaps comical) about the demand from the Pharisees in 12:38?

Make a list of all of the things Jesus says (or implies) about himself in these chapters (see especially 11:25-30). What do you notice?

How does Jesus contrast what he offers people with what the Pharisees (and others like them) are dishing up?

Why do so many of His 'generation' reject Jesus?

What might this help us understand about why so many people reject him still?

What do think are the traps of 'hollow religion' for us today? Is it a problem just for 'other' churches, or for us too?

"Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me". How have these chapters encouraged you to stick with Jesus?

Study 3—The Kingdom the Grows

Matthew 13:1-14:21

Everyone loves a good story and Jesus told a stack of them, mostly in the form of a parable. In this section alone he speaks eight of them, all of varying length and some more confusing than others.

Parables have been around since Plato was a boy and continue to be used today. But what how did Jesus use them and what do they really mean?

Let's look at Jesus' parables of the kingdom.

Can you identify a main idea for each parable? What is the point Jesus is making? Are there similarities between them?

Sower 13:1

Weeds 13:24

Mustard seed 13:31

Yeast 13:33

Hidden treasure 13:44

Pearl of great price 13:45

Nets 13:47

New treasure 13:52

Only two of the eight parables are explained. The others are left open to the reader's interpretation. Why didn't Jesus explain each one? Why leave them open to misinterpretation?

Do you think Jesus' parables make his message elusive or accessible?

Why the reference to Isaiah 6:9-10 in 13:14? How does this fit in with Jesus' rejection in his hometown 13:57?

How does John's beheading fit in with Jesus' teaching about the kingdom 14:11?

What does the miracle at the end of these parables show us about who Jesus is?

Study 4—Worshipping in Vain

Matthew 14:22-15:39

People bring to God all sorts of questions, but God has questions he wants to ask of us. In this section Jesus walks on water, heals hundreds, feeds thousands and asks “You of little faith. Why do you doubt?” It’s a great question to remind us that the kingdom has come and that the king reigns.

This section begins and ends with Jesus sending the crowds away 14:23, 15:39. Why does he do this?

US Episcopalian Bishop John Shelby Spong writes “The ability of anyone to walk on water exists in our world – not in reality but only in very bad golf jokes.” What would you say to the Bishop in light of Matthew’s account of Jesus walking on water?

Why do you think Jesus walked on water 14:25? Why did Peter sink? Would you have tried what Peter did?

How does Jesus deal with people who approach him in faith 14:34-36; 15:29-31? How does he handle those who have none 15:1-12?

How do verses 15:17-20 revolutionise religion? What does it show about what Jesus' kingdom is built upon?

If Jesus said "I have been sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" in 15:24 why did he heal a foreign woman's daughter?

Jesus walks on water, heals hundreds and feeds thousands yet why do we, like Peter, doubt? What does doubting look like for you...and how

Study 5 – Reading the Signs

Matthew 16-17

Chapter 16 begins with a warning about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who are continuing to demand miraculous signs. The nature of the kingdom Jesus has come to bring, shown through his ministry, is offending some and confusing others. As it does in the other gospels, Peter's confession about Jesus marks a turning point in the gospel. His coming death and resurrection become central, as does talk of his church which will follow.

Read Chapter 16:13-28

Peter's confession is like an oasis of faith in a desert of opposition and confusion. What do you make of Jesus' response to Peter?

What is Jesus saying about the role Peter will have in the coming kingdom/church (16:17-19)?

From the highs to the lows...Why do you think Jesus is so harsh in his counter-rebuke of Peter in verse 22? What is at stake?

Jesus goes on to explain what being a 'follower' of his will look like (16:24-28). What will it cost you? What will it gain you? How does this affect the way you view following Jesus?

Read Chapter 17

Assuming Moses and Elijah are representative of 'the Law' and 'the Prophets', what is the significance of Elijah and Moses appearing on the mountain with Jesus, and the Father's declaration 'This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him?'

What do you think is the reason for 'the transfiguration'?

- a. To encourage the disciples after Jesus has grieved them with talk of his impending death.
- b. A picture and foretaste of the future 'glory' promised by Jesus (16:27).
- c. To mark the transition between the Old covenant (law and prophets) and the New.
- d. Some combination of the above, or something else?

Could you describe your life as 'cross-carrying, self-denying, Jesus-following' Christian?

What does that look like in everyday life for a 'normal' person like you?

Study 6—Jesus on Forgiveness

Matthew 18

Acting like children and forgiving without limit don't exactly sound like strong principles on which to build a great kingdom, but that's exactly what Jesus tells his disciples to do in Chapter 18.

What are the attributes our world might associate with 'greatness'?

Read Chapter 18

What key characteristic does Jesus associate with greatness in his kingdom?

Why does Jesus describe it the way he does (see also 12:25)?

What does Jesus teach us here about sin (v5-9)?

How does Jesus say we should handle a legitimate personal grievance in the church (v15-19)?

In this context, how do you think we should we understand what Jesus means by binding/loosing on earth/heaven?

This all prompts a question from Peter about forgiveness. What does the story of the servant (v21-35) teach us about;
God's forgiveness

How we should deal with each other

How does Jesus' reply to Peter's suggested figure of 7 times, challenge the way Peter (and we) should think about forgiveness?

When do you find obeying Jesus in this area most difficult? Can it even be done?

What does this chapter show us about the virtues Jesus values in the lives of his followers?

Can you think of practical examples of what this might look like as we relate to each other in our church?

Study 7—Kingdom Demands

Matthew 19-20

At the centre of this passage is the incident of the Rich Young Man ... and a parable that seems to explain it.

What stands at the heart of the Rich Man's question? Do you think Jesus is really saying that all he needs to do is obey the commandments?

Why was Jesus' additional request (19:21) the 'deal breaker'?

How do the disciples respond to Jesus' suggestion that it is "hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"?

What do you think Jesus means by verse 26, what is he saying is "impossible" with man?

What stands at the heart of Peter's question? (19:27)

How do you explain the seeming injustice in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (20:1-16), where those who worked for 1 hour get be paid the same as the others. What is Jesus teaching us about the nature of his kingdom?

How might this parable tie together the Rich Young Man's question (19:16), Peter's question (19:27) and Jesus statement (19:26).

How is Jesus' point in this parable still important in the life of our church today?

Study 8—The woeful state of Israel

Matthew 21-23

In this section Jesus is seen as prophet, priest and king. He foretells the fall of Jerusalem; cleanses the temple and triumphantly rides into town. Those who accept him celebrate, whilst those who reject him are appalled. Jesus demands that we figure out which side we are on. And if Jesus is our king, how should we live?

The crowds are shouting “Hosanna” on this day, but will shouting “Crucify him” in a few short days. How can we make sense of this?

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild” goes the hymn. How does that fit in with him overturning the tables in the Temple, telling off the religious leaders and cursing the fig tree? Should it read “Jesus meek and wild”?

Jesus cursed the fig tree as a sign that Israel and it’s religious leaders were rotten **21:19**. Why weren’t they bearing fruit?

How does giving to 'Caesar what is Caesar's' help us understand what it means for us to be living for God's kingdom **22:21**?

What kinds of hypocrisy are Israel's religious leaders guilty of?

In what ways does Jesus say things should be different for his followers?

How might we be at risk of turning our relationship with God into a hollow (and even hypocritical) religion—(try to think of some real examples) – either at a personal and Church-wide level?

Study 9—Be Prepared

Matthew 24-25

Matthew 24 is almost certainly the hardest chapter of Matthew's Gospel to understand. It is written in apocalyptic style which makes the passage colourful and dramatic ... but more difficult to understand. It has been suggested that Jesus is talking about:

His own death on the cross

The destruction of the temple (which would take place in 70AD)

His return (second coming)

The practical application of the passage is found in 24:42-51. What is Jesus wanting to impress on the disciples?

The parables that follow in Matthew 25 fit in with chapter 24 ... and each parable offers a slightly different nuance.

Parable 1 – The Ten Virgins (25:1-13)

What were the virgins waiting for? Can you think of where this image is used elsewhere in the Bible?

What was the consequence for the five virgins who were unprepared?

How would you summarise the point of this parable?

Parable 2 – The Talents (25:14-30)

Who do you think is the master in the parable? Who do you think the servants are?

What does the master commend the first 2 servants for? What is the third servant criticised for? Is Jesus advocating salvation by works? And how does it fit with the parable that follows (25:31-46)?

Parable 3 – The Sheep & Goats (25:31-46)

What do we need to understand from Jesus telling us that there will only be 2 different groups at the judgment, sheep and goats?

What does Jesus say is the critical difference between them?

What is the fate for each group?

What would you say are the common elements between these 3 parables?

Can you think of are some ways we should respond to what these parables teach and warn us about?

Study 10—The Death of the King

Matthew 26-27

Again, there is a lot of text to cover in this study. You might want to focus on one chapter or the other.

Matthew 26

How do verses 1-16 set the stage for Jesus' betrayal and death?

In verses 17-35, we read about Jesus sharing the Passover meal with his disciples. How would you describe the atmosphere? How does Jesus' re-interpretation of the Passover meal help us understand what is about to happen through his death.

What stands out to you about Jesus from the time he spends in the garden of Gethsemane (v36-45)? What do we learn from his prayer?

Jesus and the disciples each faced temptations that evening. How can Jesus' example (and even the disciples failures), help us to endure in times of testing?

Matthew 27

Jesus is quite passive through this entire ordeal, yet he is the centre of everything that happens. Read through the chapter noting all the different ways that people are responding to him.

How does Matthew present the death of Jesus as a great injustice?

As Jesus is crucified, he is repeatedly mocked and insulted (v27-44). What does Matthew want us to see through the irony of these taunts?

What might the unusual events which occur at the end of Jesus' life (v45-56) help us appreciate about what is taking place on the cross.

Jesus' humiliating defeat is actually his great triumph. How might this truth challenge the way we often expect (or perceive) God to be working in our lives?

Study 11—The Resurrection of the King

Matthew 28

What was the most life-changing news you have ever received, and how did it affect you?

The angel is the first one to bear witness to the resurrection (v2-7). Who else do we see take on the role of a 'messenger' in this chapter?

When they learn that the body is missing, the Jewish leaders decide to circulate a rumour that the disciples stole it (v11-15). What do you think keeps people today from believing that Jesus is the resurrected Lord?

Before he departs, Jesus gives his disciples these instruction which we now call the Great Commission (v16-20). What exactly is Jesus telling his disciples to do? Is this a special job for them, or for us too?

How are you involved in fulfilling the great commission, and how might you do this better?

What have you been encouraged by as you've read Matthew's gospel?