

The Book of Matthew



6 Studies in Matthew's Gospel

Introduction¹

The book of Matthew has been called the "**The Teacher's Gospel**" because its material is so presented that it is very suitable for use in teaching. It was probably for this reason that this gospel was the most widely used of the four in the early church. While Mark offers a vivid, flowing narrative, Luke a sensitive study of Jesus' dealings with people, and John a more explicitly theological portrait of Jesus, Matthew collected stories and sayings of Jesus which bear particularly on the regular concerns of the life of the church and put them together in such a way that a teacher in the church could draw on them.

Most obvious are the **five great "discourses"** or collections of Jesus' teaching, which all conclude with the saying 'When Jesus had finished these sayings' or the like. These discourses comprise chapters: 5-7; 10; 13; 18 and 24.

Matthew has special interests in the following:

Jesus the Messiah: Matthew writes as a Jew who has found in Jesus the fulfillment of all that is precious in his Jewish heritage. '**Fulfilment**' is a central theme of the gospel.

The first two chapters of the gospel are devoted primarily to setting out the scriptural grounds for seeing Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. His mission was to fulfil the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17), and the rest of chapter 5 explores what that fulfilment means. A series of references to Jesus' ministry as 'greater than' key figures and institutions of the Old Testament in chapter 12 (verses 6, 41, 42) develops an argument for His fulfilment not only of specific prophecies but essential dynamics of Old Testament life and religion. In these and other ways Matthew 'claims' the whole Old Testament revelation as the basis of the mission of Jesus.

Israel and the church: Matthew's gospel is rightly seen as one of the most Jewish books of the New Testament, with its focus on Old Testament fulfilment, its frequent reference to matters of rabbinic debate, its assumption that its readers know about matters of Jewish ritual, and its use of Jewish terminology ('kingdom of Heaven' and 'Son of David') and occasional untranslated Aramaic words. It is only in Matthew's gospel that the mission of Jesus and his disciples is

¹ New Bible Commentary, Carson, France, Moyter and Wenham, page 904-907.

limited to 'the lost sheep of Israel' (Matthew 10:6; 15:24), and that the authority of Jewish teachers of the law is apparently taken seriously (Matthew 23:3, 23). Yet this same gospel is also seen by many as anti-Jewish. It denounces the Jewish leaders (especially the Pharisees) as hypocrites and blind guides and threatens that 'the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to people who will produce its fruit' (Matthew 21:43). It envisages non-Jews brought in from east and west to the Jewish Messianic banquet, while the (Jewish) 'subjects of the kingdom' are thrown out (Matthew 8:11-12; cf. 22:1-10). In it, Jesus declares that the rebellion of God's people has reached the point where judgment must fall on 'this generation', in particular, the temple in Jerusalem, the symbol of God's presence among His people, is to be destroyed so that not one stone will be left on another. It is only Matthew who records the terrible cry of 'all the people' in Matthew 27:25: "His blood on us and on our children".

It is certainly true that this most Jewish gospel contains also a sustained expectation that Gentiles (non-Jews) would be included in the people of God. The foreign Magi (Matthew 2:1-12) give more than a hint of this, and as Jesus meets with Gentiles in the course of the story (Matthew 8:5-13; 15:21-28), the wide extent of his mission becomes increasingly clear. It is therefore, no surprise when the book concludes with the risen Jesus sending His disciples out to make disciples of all nations!

Matthew's attitude in his gospel is of one who has found in Jesus, the fulfilment of the Old Testament Messiah and yet found the majority of his own people refusing to recognize that fulfilment. In Matthew's gospel we can feel particularly clearly the pain of that tension which eventually led the church, despite its Jewish roots, to see itself as the rival, rather than the sister, of continuing Judaism. For Matthew that separation was not yet complete but inevitable. To be true people of God is thus no longer a matter of nationality but of a relationship to Jesus, and that relationship is open to Gentiles as well as to Jews, as it is exemplified in the faith of the Roman centurion at Capernaum (Matthew 8:5-13). Israel as a whole had in Old Testament times constituted the assembly (*ekklesia*) of the people of God. Even in those days, however, it had often had to be through a 'faithful remnant' that God's purpose had been continued, while the nation as a whole turned away from Him. Now that remnant is focused in the *ekklesia* ('church') of Jesus (Matthew 16:18). That *ekklesia* is no longer a national body but is to consist of disciples of all nations who are baptized in the name of

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and follow all that Jesus has taught (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus the King: The gospel begins with the genealogy which focuses on Jesus as the true king of the line of David, the one in whom Israel's monarchy found its fulfilment; and explains how he came to be 'adopted' by Joseph, himself a 'son of David' (Matthew 1:18-25).

As Matthew 22:41-45 says, Jesus' role is more than a nationalistic one as 'son of David'. He came to proclaim and to effect the Kingdom of God, but He Himself has a role as the universal King. Only in Matthew's gospel do we hear of the Kingdom of the Son of Man (Matthew 13:41; 16:28; 19:28; 25:31-43).

At the start of His ministry, Jesus was offered, by the devil, the kingship of the world (Matthew 4:8-9), but he refused, and by following the way of obedience to his Father at last reached the point where He could declare 'All authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to me' (Matthew 28:18). Paradoxically Jesus is mocked as the (failed) King of the Jews.

Authorship and Date

Early Christian tradition unanimously attributed the authorship of Matthew the apostle, the former tax-collector of Capernaum, whose call is recorded in Matthew 9:9 (Mark and Luke call him Levi).

There is much debate on the date written. A date between 60 and 80AD seems most likely.

Brief Outline of Matthew's Gospel

1:1 - 4:16	Introducing Jesus
4:17 - 16:20	Public ministry in and around Galilee
16:21 - 18:35	Private ministry in Galilee; preparing the disciples
19:1 - 25:46	Ministry in Judea
26:1 - 28:20	The death and resurrection of Jesus

Confidentiality Reminder

Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP.**

Study 1 - The King's Credentials - Matthew 3:1-17 (*Sermon on 31-Jan-21*)

Read Matthew 3:1-12

1. Who is John the Baptist? Who are his parents and what is his relationship to Jesus? (cf. Luke 1:5-25)

John is the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Elizabeth is Mary's cousin. And therefore, John is second cousin to Jesus.

2. How would you define repentance?

Genuine regret or remorse for an offence against God or a human being. In the Bible (Greek metanoia) repentance means a personal, absolute and unconditional surrender to God as Lord of our life, admitting sin and rebellion against God. It involves a 180° turn away from a sinful life and towards God.

3. What prophecy is John fulfilling? (cf. Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1)?

Isaiah 40:3 - prophesied someone would be calling people to repentance: A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God"

John himself applied Isaiah 40:3 to himself in John 1:23 when he said: "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

Malachi 3:1 - prophesied that God would send His messenger: "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me..."

4. What Old Testament character is John like? (cf. 2 Kings 1:8)

John is like the Old Testament prophet Elijah. His clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. 2 Kings 1:8, describes Elijah as wearing a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist.

In personality and ministry, John was like the bold Old Testament prophet, Elijah, who fearlessly called Israel to repentance.

Also, John's father, Zechariah, said in Luke 1:17: "And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

5. Why did the people go to John in verse 6?

They came to confess their sins and to be baptized by John in the Jordan River.

6. Who else came to John in verse 7?

The Pharisees and Sadducees. Together they represented the leadership of the religion of Judaism.

The Pharisees were a social movement and school of thought that believed: a) a person was made righteous by keeping the law, and they believed themselves to be righteous in this way; b) they often misinterpreted the law; c) they held that many traditions were equal in authority to the Scriptures; d) they were often hypocrites in their practices, neglecting the core and spirit of the law for outward observances, i.e., they had hard hearts.

The Sadducees were a Jewish sect or party that a) denied the resurrection of the dead, the existence of spirits and supernatural; b) denied the obligation of traditions; and c) accepted the written Law alone.

7. What does John call them? Why? What does he say they can't rely on?

John called them a brood of vipers!

The reference to vipers is to recall the slipperiness of the serpent in the Garden who was deceitful. The message puts it this way: Brood of snakes! What do you think you're doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It's your life that must change, not your skin!

John says the Pharisees and Sadducees can't rely on being descendants of the great patriarch, Abraham, what counts is not ancestry but an obedient life towards God that bears fruit. A bit like saying my grandfather and father were Christian - therefore I am! Our faith has to be personal!

8. How would you define baptism?

A symbol of washing away one's sin and becoming part of God's family. The washing doesn't physically do this, the act is symbolic of what must go on in our hearts, as we repent of our sins, say sorry to God, and turn away from our sinful life and commit to following Jesus.

9. What is the purpose of John's baptism? Who authorized it (cf. Matthew 21:23-27)?

The purpose of John's baptism is to help people commit to turning away from their sins and preparing them to meet Jesus and be baptized by the Spirit.

Jesus says in Matthew 21, that John's baptism was authorized by the Father in Heaven.

10. How does John compare himself to the 'one' coming after him?

John considers himself so low as to not even carry Jesus' sandals. Even though normally disciples would do anything for their master, to remove and carry the master's sandals, was considered too low a task for a disciple. In saying this, John considers himself very lowly in comparison to Jesus. John is very humble here!

11. What will this 'one' baptize with? What does that mean?

He will baptize with the Spirit and Fire!

This means that the water baptism is an outward symbolic baptism.

Spirit and Fire are internal baptism and therefore spiritual, not physical

12. When does baptism by spirit and fire happen?

The baptism of the spirit first came at Pentecost (Acts 1:5). Today, when a sinner trusts Jesus, they are born again (John 3) and immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the Church (see 1 Cor 12:12-13). In contrast, the baptism of Fire refers to the future judgment, as Matthew 3:12 says: His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

See also Matthew 25:41

13. What is a winnowing fork, in verse 12? What is John's point here?

*The word translated as **winnowing fork** in the World English Bible is a tool similar to a pitchfork that would be used to lift harvested wheat up into the air into the wind. The wind would then blow away the lighter chaff allowing the edible grains to fall to the threshing floor, a large flat surface.*

John's point is there is a separation of the grain and the chaff, i.e., a separation of good and evil; that is judgment!

Read Matthew 3:13-17

14. Who comes to be baptized by John, in verse 13? Is this surprising?

Jesus comes to be baptized. On face value, it seems surprising as Jesus is sinless, so baptism is unnecessary to cleanse His sins!

15. Why is John reluctant to baptize Jesus? (cf. John 1:29, 36)

John is reluctant to baptize Jesus, because Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away sin; therefore, Jesus doesn't need to be baptized. And also, John, sees himself as unworthy and unfit to do anything for Jesus, the Son of God!

16. Why was Jesus baptized? (cf. Matthew 20:22; Luke 12:50)

Jesus was baptized for the following reasons:

- a. He showed Jesus gave approval to John's baptism of repentance; as repenting is the first step in becoming a believer!*
- b. It showed Jesus identified himself with publicans, tax collectors and "sinners"; these were the very people Jesus came to save!*
- c. Jesus' baptism is a picture of His future baptism on the cross, when all the waves of God the Father's judgment for sin would go over Him (Psalm 42:7; Jonah 2:3)*

17. What's Jesus' justification for His baptism, in verse 15?

He said it was proper to do this to fulfill all righteousness.

It wasn't that this one act in itself fulfilled all righteousness, but it was another important step in the overall mission of Jesus to identify with fallen and sinful man, a mission that would only finally be fulfilled at the cross.

18. What is the significance of the appearance of the Holy Spirit, in verse 16?

Why a dove? (cf. Genesis 8:6-11 and Matthew 12:38-40)

The Holy Spirit like a dove identified Jesus to John (see John 1:31-34 where John explains this).

It also showed that the Holy Spirit approved of Jesus' ministry and would always be with Him (see John 3:34)

The dove is a symbol of purity and peace.

In Genesis 8, the dove came back to the ark with an olive leaf, a symbol of peace. Also, Jonah, means peace and Jonah experienced a baptism! And Jesus used Jonah as a type of Himself in death, burial and resurrection (Matthew 12:38-40).

19. What is the significance of the voice from Heaven, in verse 17? (cf. Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1-3)

To fulfil Old Testament prophecy and to show that the Father approves of all that Jesus has done and will do; and to show that this is the start of Jesus' public ministry

20. Ponder: What do these verses from Matthew 3:1-17 say about the credentials of our Lord Jesus?

He is the Son of God

He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world

He fulfils prophecy

He is part of the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and therefore He is God!

He is sinless

He is the only one who can take away our sin

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 3:1-17**?

Jesus came on a mission to save people from their sins and we can't save ourselves or be good enough to save ourselves like the Pharisees and Sadducees thought they could.



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

See how much the Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Jesus and to the work of the Holy Spirit



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

Outward appearances and behaviour (like the Pharisees and Sadducees) are not enough to be right with God. There has to be an inward change of the heart, brought about by the Holy Spirit.

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V11 - "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.

Finish in prayer: Pray that non-believers would come to true repentance. Thank God for sending Jesus, the Lamb of God and saviour of the world.

Study 2 -The Testing of Jesus - Matthew 4:1-17 (Sermon on 7-Feb-21)

Read Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:1-8

1. What was the rule for Adam and Eve?

The rule was they were free to eat from any tree in the garden, but must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when they eat from it, they will certainly die.

2. How were they tempted?

The crafty serpent (Satan) sows a seed of doubt: "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" There is some truth in this but Satan twists what God says to make out God is mean saying they can't eat from any tree, when in fact, it's only one tree.

Also, Eve, is slightly confused on two points: a) she refers to the tree of knowledge of good and evil as the tree in the middle of the garden; perhaps Adam didn't communicate this rule properly to her; and b) she says they can't "touch" that tree; which is not what God said.

The serpent increases the doubt and temptation, by contradicting what God said; they won't die - rather you will be like God, knowing good and evil. This not only makes God out to be mean again by not wanting them to be like God; and it is also attractive to them to be like God. It's just too tempting.

3. Why did they give in to the temptation?

They were convinced that God was holding back on them and that God didn't want them to be like Him. Also, they wanted to please themselves not God.

Also, Adam, didn't stop Eve, when she was about to disobey the rule.

And, Satan, is a convincing con-man. Con-man are charming, believable, and give enough truth, to make it tempting!

Read Matthew 4:1-12

4. Who led Jesus into the wilderness? Why? (cf. Hebrews 2:18; 4:15)

The context is that Jesus has just been baptized by John the Baptist; this signifies the beginning of Jesus' ministry; and His ministry is endorsed by God the Father and God, the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness.

He was to be tempted by Satan - so that as Hebrews 2:18 says; he suffered during this temptation so He understands our sufferings and temptations and can help us. And as Hebrews 4:15 says: he can empathize with our weaknesses, because He too was tempted - but didn't give in, because He is sinless.

5. What did Jesus do in the wilderness? Why?

He fasted for 40 days and nights.

Why?

- a. *So, he would be tested. He would in a weakened state and ripe for tempting by Satan.*
- b. *We should be reminded that Moses (a pre-figure of Christ) fasted 40 days and 40 nights when he received the 10 commandments (in Exodus 34:28)*
- c. *We should also be reminded that Jesus represents God's people Israel. When Israel left Egypt, they were in the wilderness (40 years, not days); they were hungry and thirsty and they complained and they sinned against God. Jesus didn't complain when He was hungry and thirsty; and He didn't sin. He is showing this is the obedience God's people should have had; they should have trusted God.*
- d. *Also, Jesus represents Israel, in that back in Exodus 4:22, God said Israel was His **firstborn Son**. And here is Jesus, **God's only Son**, showing how things should be done!*

6. What does the **first temptation** in verses 3 to 4 question?

The first temptation calls into question God's love and care for His Son?

Notice the word "IF" to sow the doubt and tempt?

It's like Satan is saying - "If You are God's Beloved Son, why doesn't Your Father feed you? Why does He put You in this terrible wilderness?" It's designed to suggest that God doesn't love Him.

This temptation is also testing Jesus divine powers.

Satan is suggesting use Your divine powers to feed yourself.

Yes, Jesus could easily turn the stones into bread, but He would be exercising His powers independently of the Father; and remember Jesus came to obey and please the Father and do His will (John 5:30; 6:38)

7. How does this compare to the temptation in Genesis 3?

Very similar. The serpent is suggesting, God doesn't care about them as much as they think.

8. How did Jesus answer this temptation in verse 4? (cf. Deuteronomy 8:3; John 4:34)

*Jesus quotes God's Word from Deut 8:3 - "man does not live by bread alone"
Feeding on God's Word is more important than consuming physical food.
In fact, God's Word is our food (John 4:32-34) and He is also the "bread" of life (John 6:35)*

9. What does the **second temptation** in verses 5 to 7 question? What does the devil use in this temptation? (cf. Psalm 91:11-12)

The second temptation is even more subtle.

It's like Satan says okay, you answered the first temptation with God's Word, now I'm going to quote a verse of Scripture and see if You will obey it!

Again, He uses the IF - if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from the high point of the temple - and He quotes Psalm 91:11-12 where God promised to care for His own - It's like He's saying, "if you believe Scripture, then jump, let's see if the Father really cares"

But note: Satan doesn't quote Psalm 91 in context - God's protection is there for those who say (Ps 93:9) the Lord is my refuge and make does the Father's will.

10. How did Jesus answer this temptation in verse 7? (cf. Deuteronomy 6:16)

Jesus replies by quoting His own piece of Scripture from Deuteronomy 6:6 - Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

In saying this, Jesus is telling Satan, that we don't challenge God's will. Yes, the Father sent the Son to die, but not this way; but by the way of the cross.

Also, note, we should never quote one verse in isolation and out of context. We must also compare spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor 2:13) - i.e., let scripture interpret scripture.

We can prove almost anything by the Bible if we isolate Bible texts out of context and turn them into pretexts (a reason given in justification of a course of action that is not the real reason)

11. What does the devil offer in the **third temptation** in verses 8 to 11?

Satan offered Jesus a shortcut to His Kingdom.

Note the 2nd and 3rd temptations are more visionary than reality.

For example, there is no place on Earth, where we can see all the kingdoms.

Satan wants Jesus to bow down and worship him and then he can get all the kingdoms. Remember, Satan, is the Prince of the World (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph 2:2; 2 Cor 4:4)

But Jesus did not need Satan's offer; the Father had already promised Jesus the Kingdom (in Psalm 2:8 and Psalm 22:22-32).

Also, Jesus had been sent to die on the cross to defeat Satan's power of sin and death.

12. How did Jesus answer this temptation in verse 10? (cf. Deuteronomy 6:13)

Satan desires worship - even more than all the kingdoms of the world.

Satan had always wanted to be God (Isaiah 14:12-14).

So, Jesus answered with the 1st commandment - worship the Lord God only.

13. What did the devil do in verse 11?

He left Jesus.

However, He did not cease tempting Jesus and used others to do this (like Peter)

14. What do we learn about the devil from these verses?

He is subtle, determined, deceiving, crafty and opposed to God's will at all times.

15. What do we learn about how to handle temptations by the devil here?

We must ask if what we are tempted to do is contrary to God's Word and Will.

Read Matthew 4:12-17

16. What prompted Jesus to withdraw to Galilee? (cf. Mark 1:14)

John's imprisonment prompted Jesus to withdraw to the area that King Herod, who had imprisoned John, ruled. Evil may silence a voice but it cannot stop God's Word from being proclaimed. The Roman persecutions of Christians in 1AD-300AD, just helped the Word spread further (Isaiah 55:11)

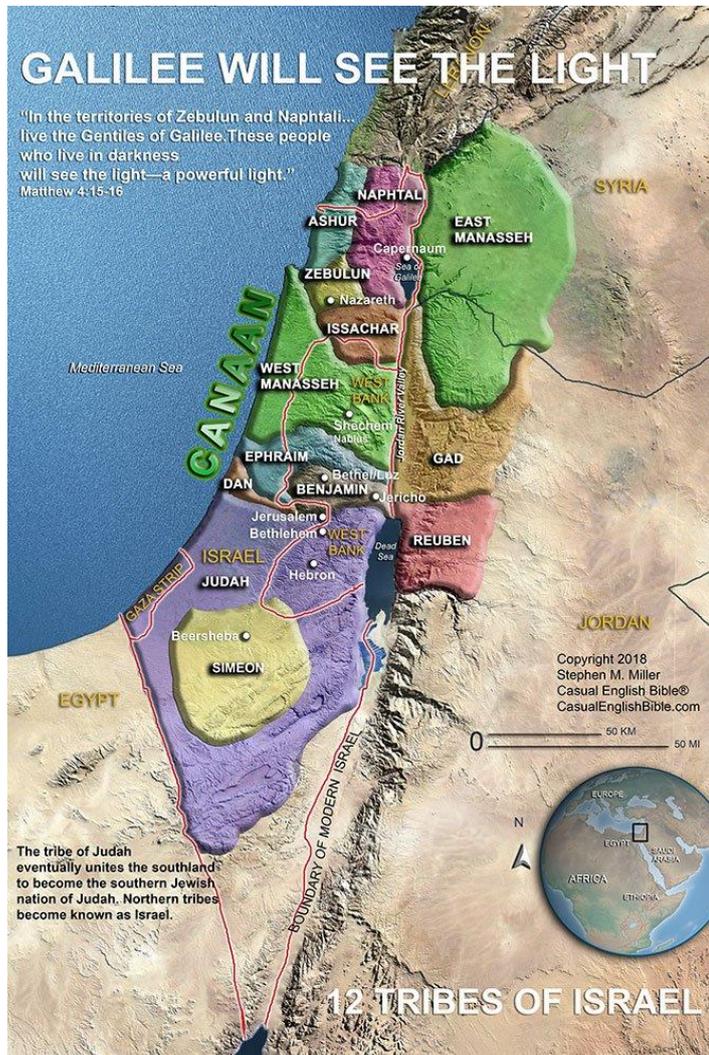
17. Why is Capernaum significant? (cf. Matthew 9:1-9; 8:14; Mark 1:29 and 2:1)

Capernaum is significant for the following reasons:

- a. Matthew was from Capernaum*
- b. Peter had a house in Capernaum*

c. *It is a mixed population, including Gentiles (i.e., Galilee of the Gentiles)*

18. What Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled here? (cf. Isaiah 9:1-2)
Isaiah prophesied that there would be a great light shining in the darkness of the region of Zebulun, Naphtali, Way of the Sea, Jordan and Galilee.



19. What does the darkness and light reference in verse 16 refer to? (cf. Luke 2:32; John 1:4, 5, 9; 8:12)

As Don Carson puts it: in despised Galilee, the place where people live in darkness (i.e., without the religious and cultic advantages of Jerusalem and Judea) ...here the light has dawned

20. How is the ministry of Jesus summarized in verse 17? What seems to be the most important thing in Jesus' ministry?

Repent. Because Jesus, God's Son, the Messiah, from Heaven to Earth, to call people out of the darkness of their sin and into His glorious light.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 4:1-17**?

God's Word (Jesus) is the answer to temptation.



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

The comparison between Jesus' obedience and Israel's disobedience.



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *Use God's Word to answer temptation*
- b. *Feed off God's Word*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V4 - Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

V17 - From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Finish in prayer: Thank God for His Holy Word which God promises will not return to Him empty but will accomplish what He desires and achieve His intended purposes (Isaiah 55:11)

Study 3 -Jesus' Ministry in Galilee - Matt 4:18-25 (*Sermon on 14-Feb-21*)

Before we begin: What is a disciple?

Dictionary says: a personal follower of Christ during his life, especially one of the twelve Apostles.

Other definitions in the dictionary:

- a. *One of the 12 personal followers of Jesus*
- b. *One of the 70 followers sent out by Jesus in Luke 10:1*
- c. *Any other professed follower of Jesus in His lifetime.*

Also:

- a. *Any follower of Jesus (which includes us)*
- b. *A person who is a pupil or an adherent of the doctrines (teachings) of another.*

Look up the following Old Testament passages. Who was called by God and what were they doing?

Judges 6:11-16

Who: Gideon son of Joash

What were they doing: He was threshing wheat in a winepress and keeping it from the enemy, the Midianites. Gideon is not a very willing follower; he complains that God has abandoned the Israelites (v13) and says he is too weak for God to send him against the Midianites (v15)

Exodus 3:1-10

Who: Moses

What were they doing: He was tending His father in-law, Jethro's, flock. Again, Moses was hesitant. See v11 (not read) - who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Who: David son of Jesse

What were they doing: He was tending his father's sheep.

Amos 7:14-15

Who: Amos the prophet

What were they doing: He was a shepherd and also took care of sycamore trees.

Isaiah 6:1-8

Who: Isaiah

What were they doing: We're not told what Isaiah was doing; but he was shown of vision of the Lord, seated on His throne. And he was willing to be sent.

Read Matthew 4:18-22

1. Who does Jesus call in verses 18?

Simon (called Peter) and his brother Andrew; they were fishermen. They were casting their net into Lake Galilee.

2. What does Jesus tell them to do?

Come follow me (v19)

3. What does Jesus mean by "fishing for people"?

As the MSG version says: I will show you how to catch men and women (for Jesus) instead of catching bass or perch!

The term "fishers of men" was not new. For centuries, Greek and Roman philosophers had used it to describe the work of men who seek to "catch" others (into their philosophy) by teaching and persuasion.

4. What is their response in verse 20? Is that surprising?

Response? V20, at once, they left their nets and followed Jesus. Mark's Gospel (1:18) says: 'at once they left their nets'. Luke's Gospel (5:11) says: 'So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him'.

Is it surprising? At first glance it might seem surprising.

But we need to consider the following:

- a. Jesus had a presence about Him that was charismatic.*
- b. It seems they had met Jesus before - see John 1:29-42*
- c. In Luke's Gospel (5:2-11); the calling is preceded by a miracle, which would certainly motivate them to follow Jesus.*

5. Who does Jesus call in verse 21?

James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were preparing their nets.

6. How would Zebedee feel about this?

We're not told; but he has suddenly lost his workforce! He's not going to be able to stop them following Jesus.

7. What's the response of the sons of Zebedee?

They left their father and followed Jesus, immediately!

8. **Ponder:** Why did Jesus call fishermen?

- a. *Fishermen were **busy** people; they didn't sit around doing nothing. If they were not out in the boat fishing, they were sorting their catch, preparing for a catch, mending their equipment. The Lord needs busy people who are not afraid of hard work!*
- b. *Fishermen have to be **courageous**. They face many trials and storms. Catching people for Jesus, requires courage.*
- c. *Fishermen have to be **patient**. It certainly takes patience sometimes to lead a person to Jesus.*
- d. *Fishermen must be **prepared and have skill**; they learn how best to catch fish. Catching people for Jesus, requires preparation and skill too; praying for opportunities and the words to say.*
- e. *Fishermen must work as a **team**. **Teamwork** is needed to catch people for Jesus (like Jaffa, Xcelerate, SRE, street evangelism, Sunday School)*
- f. *Most importantly fishermen need **faith**. Fishermen cannot see the fish and are not sure if their nets will enclose the fish. They cast their nets out in faith. As we reach out to people to share the Gospel; we need to step out in faith.*

9. **Ponder:** What do we learn about being a disciple of Jesus from the calling of Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John? (cf. Matthew 9:9-13)

*It requires an immediate **response**.*

Same too with Matthew, the tax-collector.

*It also requires **leaving something behind** - letting go of something.*

Read Matthew 4:23-25

10. Where did Jesus teach? Why is this an ideal location for his teaching?

Jesus taught in the synagogue.

This is an ideal location because he had a many people listening to the Good News at the same time. It's a great opportunity to gain more followers.

11. What is the "good news" referred to in verse 23?

The Greek word used is eu-angellion (good-message). It's where we get our English word, evangelism, from.

It's the good news that the Promised Messiah has come. He is Jesus Himself, and He has come to save sinners from the punishment of their sins, which is death. He came to die on a cross, for the forgiveness of sins. Then He rose again, so that people can have eternal life.

The Good News (Gospel) can be summarized by John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

12. What else do we learn about Jesus' ministry in verse 23b?

He also healed every disease and sickness among the people.

13. Where does Jesus' fame spread? Why is that significant?

Jesus' fame spread to Syria; Syria is not Jewish territory, but non-Jewish (Gentile) territory.

14. Why were Jesus' miracles, healings and casting out of demons important?

The miracles, healings and casting out demons, would attract a great multitude of people to come and see Him. This enabled Him to teach many more people. The miracles helped supplement their faith too. Some people won't believe unless, they 'see'. (like Thomas)

15. What do these verses tell us about Jesus' identity?

He is not only God's Son. He is God and has the power and authority of God in His teaching and His miracles.

Remember miracles, by definition, cannot be performed by human beings and defy natural or scientific laws and can therefore only be attributed to God!

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 4:18-25**?

Jesus calls - we follow!

As we follow, we must be committed.

As we follow, we must share the Gospel (i.e., be fishers of men)

Jesus is fully God!



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

- ➔ How does this passage **apply to your life?**
- When Jesus calls - we need to respond.
 - When Jesus calls - we need to let go of something
 - We are fisher of men too - not just the disciples
 - We can learn how to be fisher of men - by modelling the work of fishermen.

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V19 - ¹⁹ *"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."*

Finish in prayer: Thank God for the Good News that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the World. Ask God to help us to respond to Jesus, like the first disciples.

Study 4 -What True Righteousness is - Matt 5:1-16 (*Sermon on 21-Feb-21*)

Before we begin: What is a righteousness?

Dictionary definition: the quality of being morally right or justifiable.

A.

B. *Integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling and acting*

Righteousness is one of the chief attributes of God. Its chief meaning concerns ethical conduct.

Read Isaiah 55:1-13

1. What is the invitation in verses 1 to 2?

Those who are thirsty are invited to the waters.

Those who have no money are invited come and eat what they want; wine and milk for free.

They are invited to not waste their money on what really isn't food and why work for something that doesn't satisfy.

God invites them to listen carefully to Him, and they will enjoy the best foods.

2. What is the invitation in verses 3 to 5?

They are invited to come to God and listen, so that they might live.

God offers to make an everlasting covenant (promise), the same faithful loving promise God made to King David.

God made David a leader and witness to the surrounding nations; and He promises the same to Israel in Isaiah's day and beyond.

They will summon nations they don't even know and they will come because of the Holiness of the Lord God, because God has honoured them.

3. What is the invitation in verses 6 to 7?

They are invited to turn to the Lord whilst He still can be found.

They are invited to call out to God; He is near.

They are invited to give up their wicked ways and their unrighteous thoughts.

They are invited to turn to the Lord and He will show mercy on them and He will freely pardon them.

Basically, an invitation to repent and be forgiven.

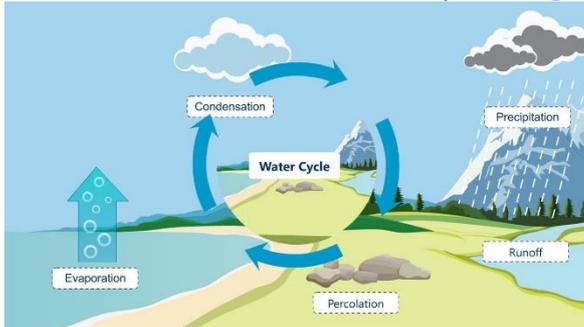
4. What differences are there between God and humans, in verses 8 to 9?

God's thoughts are not like human thoughts.

God's ways are not like human ways.

5. What do we learn about God's Word in verses 10 to 11? What might that have to do with righteousness?

God's word is a like the hydrological cycle



God's Word is a bit like the watering of the land.

God's Word goes out and rains on people - they are watered and grow spiritually - and so God's Word achieves what God intended/planned.

Just like the rain isn't wasted - God's Word is not wasted - in waters people - and they believe in Jesus - and become right with God - righteousness!

6. What are the benefits of restoration in verses 12 to 13?

Restoration will be an occasion of joy, celebration and peace.

This joy is so great that even the mountains and hills and the trees will join in the celebration!

Instead of thorns there will be cypress and myrtle trees. This is a picture of what God provides: blessings (juniper/myrtles) rather than curses (thorns and weeds).

This will be a lasting witness to the glory of God.

Read Matthew 5:1-2

7. Why did Jesus go up the mountain?

When he saw that His ministry was drawing crowds, he climbed the mountainside, in order to speak and teach.

A Jewish rabbi usually sat to teach

8. Who is Jesus speaking to? (cf. Matthew 5:1 & 7:28)

Initially His disciples, but this opens up to a wider audience by the end of His sermon, as it says in Matthew 7:28, it says the crowds were amazed at his teaching; so, we can assume, Jesus is ultimately speaking to the crowds who want to listen to His teaching; and disciples, in general terms, as we said last week, are followers of Jesus and His teaching.

Read Matthew 5:3-16

9. These verses are often called "The Beatitudes", why?

The first portion of this Sermon on the Mount is known as the Beatitudes.

*The word **beatitude** comes from the Latin word **beatitudo** meaning blessedness.*

The phrase "blessed are" in each beatitude implies a current state of happiness or well-being.

*The word **beatitude** can also be seen as a person's "be-attitudes"*

10. What does "poor in spirit" mean, in verse 3?

It means being honest about ourselves.

It means we have no "spiritual assets". We are spiritually bankrupt without a relationship with God. It is an admission of our sin and rebellion and without moral virtues to be commended by God. As Romans 3:23 puts it - all have sinned and fall short of God's glory.

11. What do the "poor in spirit" receive?

They will receive the Kingdom of Heaven because they have admitted they sin and have given an honest assessment of themselves.

12. What are people "mourning" in verse 4? (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10)

The Greek word for mourning is the strongest word for mourning.

The people are actually mourning their sin.

As 2 Corinthians 7:10 puts it: Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation

To a lesser extent it could be mourning the death of someone - and at such times a person can be comforted by fellow human beings and by God.

And to an extent it can mean mourning the suffering of this broken world we live in.

13. What do those who mourn receive?

They are comforted.

14. What does it mean to be meek in verse 5?

Although the dictionary says meek means: quiet, gentle, and easily imposed on; or submissive.

However, the Greek word is praus.

The word is used to describe a horse that had been broken. It refers to power under control.

Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. In the OT, the meek are those wholly relying on God rather than their own strength to defend against injustice. Thus, meekness toward evil people means knowing God is permitting the injuries they inflict, that He is using them to purify His elect, and that He will deliver His elect in His time Isaiah 41:17; Luke 18:1-8. Gentleness or meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest. It stems from trust in God's goodness and control over the situation. The gentle person is not occupied with self at all. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, not of the human will Galatians 5:23.

15. What does it mean that the meek will inherit the earth, in verse 5?

We can only be meek, willing to control our desire for our rights and privileges because we are confident God watches out for us, that He will protect our cause. The promise "they shall inherit the earth" proves that God will not allow His meek ones to end up on the short end of the deal.

"It looks as if they would be pushed out of the world but they shall not be, 'for they shall inherit the earth.' The wolves devour the sheep, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves, and the sheep, continue to multiply, and to feed in green pastures." (Spurgeon)

16. What are people hungering and thirsting for, in verse 6?

They are hungering (like someone longs for food) and thirsting (like someone longs for water) for righteousness, i.e., right with God.

So, people are wanting to no longer be sinful - but to be like God (and His Son).

17. What does Jesus promise to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Jesus promises to fill those hungering for righteousness. God is not going to turn away someone who wants to be righteous like Him.

18. Verses 7 to 9 talk about a person's attitude to others. What happens to:

a. The merciful?

They will be shown mercy.

Some people wonder why God showed such remarkable mercy to King David, especially in the terrible ways in which he sinned. One reason God gave him such mercy was because David was notably merciful to King Saul, and on several occasions was kind to a very unworthy Saul. In David, the merciful

Obtained mercy.

Ultimately as Christians, we are shown God's mercy, in Him sending Jesus.

b. The pure in heart?

Pure in heart has the idea of straightness, honesty and clarity.

Firstly, inner moral purity. Motives are pure.

Secondly, an undivided heart. A person who is utterly sincere and undivided in their devotion and commitment to the Lord.

The pure in heart receive the most wonderful reward. They will enjoy greater intimacy with God. The pure-hearted person can see God in nature; God in Scripture and God in their church family. As well as seeing God face to face one day!

c. Peacemakers?

Peacemakers are not those who live in peace but those who bring about peace; overcoming evil with good. One way of bringing about peace is spreading the Gospel, because God has given us a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). In evangelism we offer people peace with God, whom they have previously rejected or rebelled against.

Peacemakers are not only people who stand between two fighting parties. Peacemakers are also those who are in conflict but try to end this conflict in a peaceful way.

Peacemakers, because they are like-minded with God, wanting peace between humans and God, they are seen as God children.

19. Verses 10 to 16 talk about a person's attitude towards living in this world.

a. What happens to the persecuted?

Those persecuted for being a Christian and doing what is right in God's eyes, need not be worried; they will be part of God's Kingdom of Heaven.

b. What happens to those insulted, persecuted and falsely accused of evil?

They will receive their reward in Heaven.

c. What does it mean for a person to be "salt of the earth"?

By adding Christian "flavour" to another person. We must not lose our saltiness.

d. What does it mean for a person to be a "light of the world"?

It means a great compliment and a great responsibility.

Jesus said "He is the Light of the Word" (John 8:12; 9:5). Jesus shines His light on the darkness of this world; and overcomes the darkness of sin. But we are also lights of the world. So, we are light givers and light receivers.

20. Having read Matthew 5:1-16; how would you describe true righteousness?

We become like Jesus and like God.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21)

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 5:1-16**?

What true righteousness is.



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

➔ How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *Living out the Be-Attitudes - repenting of our sin; grieving of our sin; having a meek heart that trust God in all things; hungering and thirsting to be like God; being merciful to others; having pure motives and a pure heart towards God; bring about peace between humans and humans, and more importantly between humans and God; being prepare to suffer and be persecuted for Jesus' sake.*
- b. *Adding "salt" to people's lives. Adding Christian flavour to people lives and preserving their lives.*
- c. *Shining the light and love of Jesus into other people's lives.*
- d. *Bring glory to God.*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Isaiah 55:11 - so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

*In Matthew 5:16: the same way, **let your light shine before others**, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Finish in prayer: Thanking God for Jesus (The Word) and His teaching. Ask God to help us withstand persecution and insult. Ask God to help us be "salt of the earth" and "lights to the world".

Study 5 -How True Righteousness Comes - Matthew 5:17-20

(Sermon on 28-Feb-21)

Before we begin: How would you describe true righteousness from the last study?

True righteousness is being right with God and approved by God!

1. Is this kind of righteousness attainable?

Because we all sin and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), in our sinful nature, it is not possible for us to reach true righteousness.

But praise God, in His grace and mercy, He sent Jesus and according to 2 Cor 5:21 - God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.

Therefore, when God looks at us as a Christian, He sees the righteousness of Jesus!

Having heard Matthew 5:1-16, the people would most likely have several questions running through their heads: how can we have this righteousness? Where does it come from? How does Jesus' teaching relate to the Law of Moses?

2. They might even have thought, perhaps the Law of Moses is null and void. How does Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8 and Isaiah 55:11 show that this is not the case?

*Psalm 119:89 - Your word, LORD, is **eternal**; it stands firm in the heavens.*

*Isaiah 40:8 - The grass withers and the flowers fall, but **the word of our God endures forever.***

*Isaiah 55:11 - so is my word that goes out from my mouth: **It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.***

Read Matthew 5:17-20

3. In verse 17a, how does Jesus reassure His listeners that what has gone before in the Old Testament in regards to the Law and the Prophets, is safe?

*He says He has **NOT** come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.*

4. In verse 17b, what does Jesus say He has come to do instead?

He has come to fulfill the Law instead

5. How did Jesus fulfil the law?

a. In His birth?

His birth was foretold (Genesis 12:3b; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 31:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2; Hosea 11:1)

Jesus' birth from the virgin Mary, meant Jesus was born without sin and they able to fulfil the requirements of the Law, and grow up to be the perfect sacrifice for sin.

b. In His youth?

Every prescribed ritual for a Jewish boy was performed on Him by His parents: circumcised on 8th day (Luke 2:21) and presented at the temple (Luke 2:22-40); ever year His parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of Passover (Luke 2:41-42); at age 12 He was discussing God's Word with the teachers in the temple courts (Luke 2:46-47) and in His Father's house (Luke 2:49)

c. In His teaching?

He always did the Father's will and His Father was "well pleased" with His Son (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).

He taught with authority (Matthew 7:29)

Jesus opened God's Word in a new and living way, as we saw in Matthew 5:1-16 (the beatitudes), the people (because of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law) were accustomed to the 'letter' of the law and not the inner 'kernel' of life.

d. In His death?

In His death, Jesus became the once and for all sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:10) and He became the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).

He tore the curtain of the temple in two and opened access to God directly (Heb 10:10), with no more intermediaries or sacrifices for sin needed. We no longer need temples made from human hands (Acts 7:48ff) or religious rites (Colossians 2:10-13).

e. In His resurrection?

In His resurrection, He removed the punishment for sin (that is death) - see Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:55 and Acts 2:34.

6. **Ponder:** How can we fulfil the law? (cf. Romans 8:1-3 and Galatians 2:20)

By yielding to the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to work in our lives.

The Holy Spirit enables us to experience the "righteousness of the law" in our daily lives. This does not mean we live sinlessly perfect lives, but it does mean that Christ lives in us. As Galatians 2:20 says: I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

~~7. What do we learn about God's Word in verses 10 to 11? What might that have to do with righteousness~~

Question accidentally leftover from last study!

8. What promise is there in verse 18? (cf. Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; 55:11; Matthew 24:35 and Mark 13:31)

Not one thing in God's Law will pass away. God's Law stands for eternity!

Matthew 24:35 and Mark 13:31 - Heaven and Earth will pass away, but Jesus' Words will not pass away.

9. What does verse 19 say about God's commands?

God's commands are so important and necessary and must be taught and not set aside!

There are two options available to us: a) we can set aside or relax God's commands and teach others to do the same; and be called the LEAST in the Kingdom of Heaven; OR b) we can practice God's commands and teach others to do the same; and be called GREAT in the Kingdom of Heaven.

10. **Ponder:** If Jesus has fixed our sin and made us righteous; why do we need to bother keeping God's commands? (cf. Matthew 5:19 and Romans 6:1-14)

Because:

- a. *God's Law and commands still stand according to Matthew 5:19*
- b. *In Romans 6:1-14 - Paul's argument is we shouldn't go on sinning because of the grace of God in sending Jesus to die for our sins to be forgiven. On the contrary, Paul says as Christians we have died to sin, and be baptized and raised into a new life with Jesus. We are united with Jesus in this new life as a Christian, and we should offer every part of ourselves as an instrument of righteousness (Romans 6:13) as a thanks to God - because He has allowed us not be under the punishment of breaking the law (which is death) but has put us under the grace of Jesus (which is eternal life)*

11. What does Jesus mean in verse 20 that a person's righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees? Why would that be a huge surprise to His listeners? *In the Law of Moses, God certainly revealed His standards for holy living. The Pharisees defended the Law and sought to obey it. But Jesus said that true righteousness that pleases God must **exceed** that of the scribes and Pharisees. To the rest of the people listening, the scribes and the Pharisees were the "holiest" in the community. If they had not attained true righteousness, what hope was there for anyone else in the community?*

The trouble was the Pharisees were operating under the "letter" of the law and not the "spirit" of the law. For example, the Pharisees kept rules and traditions about what you could do and not do on the Sabbath day; so, when Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath, they saw he was "working" on the Sabbath and therefore breaking the law. But for Jesus, compassion trumped their rules and traditions every time!

Jesus accused the Pharisees of not practicing what they preach (Matthew 23:3) and He said their teaching and traditions shut ordinary folk out of the kingdom of God (Matthew 23:13) and that they were like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside and inside dead (Matthew 23:17).

The basic problem with the Pharisees was they concentrated on looking good - not having good hearts. At the same time as they accused Jesus of working when healing on the Sabbath, in their hearts they were plotting how they can kill Jesus. So according to them, it's not okay to do good on the Sabbath (heal) but it's okay to do bad/evil on the Sabbath (plot to kill). That's why Jesus called them hypocrites.

See these places too:

And he said: *“Truly I tell you, unless you change and **become like little children**, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3)*

Jesus answered, *“Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are **born of water and the Spirit**. (John 3:5)*

For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is **by faith from first to last, just as it is written**: *“The righteous will live by faith.”* (Romans 1:17)

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 5:17-20**?

True righteousness comes through Jesus.

Believers today do not obey an external law but an internal law; they no longer live by fear of the law; but live because of love. We now live by the Spirit which helps us to obey God's Word; recognizing that we cannot fully do this; which is why we need Jesus. Nevertheless, we should strive to be like our Lord and Saviour.



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

➔ How does this passage **apply to your life**?

We now live life according to the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-17)

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Matthew 5:20 - *For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven*

Galatians 5:20 - *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Finish in prayer: Thanking God the Father for Jesus, the Son, and for the Holy Spirit working to make us right with God. Help us to respond in love and obedience to God and love towards others.

Study 6 -How Righteousness Works in Daily Life - Matt 5:21-48

(Sermon on 21-Mar-21)

In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus took six important Old Testament laws and interpreted them for His people in the light of the new life He came to give.

Read Exodus 20:13 and Matthew 5:21-26

1. What does the Old Testament Law in Exodus 20:13 teach?

Exodus 20:13 says: You shall not murder.

Murder is: the unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another.

2. How does Jesus intensify that teaching?

Jesus intensifies the teaching by saying that even being angry is like murdering the person in your heart. The point is being angry and murdering someone both start with the heart being full of hatred.

3. What advice does Jesus give on reconciliation? (cf. Matthew 18:15-20)

Jesus advises:

- a. If someone has something against you, go and sort it out before making your offering at the altar and worship. Don't leave things to fester and be unresolved.*
- b. If someone is taking you to court - settle the matter quickly. Make the first move. There are no winners with legal battles (except for the lawyers)*
- c. It is a matter of examining our hearts and not just point the finger at the other person.*

Read Exodus 20:14 and Matthew 5:27-30

4. What does the Old Testament Law in Exodus 20:14 teach?

Exodus 20:14 says: You shall not commit adultery

Adultery: voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not their spouse.

5. How does Jesus intensify that teaching?

Jesus intensifies the teaching by saying that even looking at someone in lust has committed adultery in their heart. The point is being lustful and committing adultery both start with the heart.

6. What does Jesus mean by gouging out our eye and cutting off our hands? Is this literal?

Jesus is not being literal. It is a figure of speech; a hyperbole. The fact is even if you gouged out your eye; you still have another eye to sin with. Even if you gouge out both eyes; you still have your mind, imagination and heart to deal with.

Jesus' point is that we need to be willing to sacrifice to be obedient to God. If a part of our life is prone to sin; then we must be willing for that part of our life to "die" rather than sin. It's a matter of walking away from temptations to disobey God; rather than acting on them. We need to go further than a vague idea of wanting to be more obedient.

Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Matthew 5:31-32

7. What does the Old Testament teach?

In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Moses only gives one commandment: The divorced wife could not return to her first husband if she was put away by a second husband. Moses did not command divorce; he permitted it.

This was a wise law. To begin with, the husband would think twice before hastily putting away his wife, since he got not get her back again. Also. It would take some time to find a scribe (not everyone could write a legal document) and during this time, the two estranged people might have been reconciled.

The Pharisees in Jesus' time interpreted Moses' law as though it was a commandment. But in Matthew 19, Jesus makes it clear that Moses was only giving permission for divorce.

But what does it mean in Duet 24 when it says "becomes displeasing to him" and "finds something indecent about her"? There were two schools of thought. Famous 1st century Rabbis - Hillel and Shammai. Hillel took a lax view and said a husband could divorce his wife for almost any reason (burning breakfast!), whereas Shammai took a stricter view, saying Moses was talking about sexual sin only. When Jesus was asked about divorce in Matthew 19, whatever side he took, he would offend somebody!

8. What does Jesus teach about divorce? (cf. Matthew 19:1-12)

In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus restricts divorce to only sexual immorality.

And in Matthew 19, Jesus refers back to creation - and that marriage was meant to be a life-long commitment between man and woman.

Jesus said Moses' instruction to permit divorce was a concession on God's part because of people's hard hearts. And He again confirms that divorce should be only where there is sexual immorality.

Read Deuteronomy 23:23, Leviticus 19:12 and Matthew 5:33-37

9. What does the Old Testament teach about swearing and oaths? (cf. Proverbs 10:19; Ecclesiastes 5:4-6)

Swearing here is not "cursing" but making an oath, like "swearing on my mother's life".

Deuteronomy 23:23 says: Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth. Your words are before God, so you should do what you said you were going to do.

Deuteronomy 19:12 says: Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

Again, because we are saying things before God - if we don't do what we say, we are profaning God's Holy Name. This verse seems to suggest that we can make an oath by God's name, but we'd better keep it!

Proverbs 10:19 says: Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

Sometimes the more words a person says to convince us, the more suspicious we should be! "The lady doth protest too much" {Hamlet: Shakespeare}

And Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 - ⁴When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. ⁵It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it. ⁶Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?

10. What does Jesus teach about this? (cf. James 5:12; Matthew 23:20-22)

Jesus taught that our conversation should be so honest, and our character so true, that we would not need "crutches" to get people to believe us. Words depend on character and oaths cannot compensate for a poor character.

James 5:12 - all you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No"...

Matthew 23:20-22 - the point is - a promise is a promise. What difference does it make if you make your promise inside or outside a house of worship? A promise is a promise. God is present, watching and holding you to account regardless (MSG)

Read Leviticus 24:19-22 and Matthew 5:38-42

11. What does the Old Testament teach about retaliation?

Leviticus 24:19-22 teaches that the offender is to pay back like for like.

It was a fair law in that it didn't force the offender to pay a greater price than the offense deserved.

12. What does Jesus teach about this?

Jesus replaced the law with an attitude: be willing to suffer loss yourself rather than cause another to suffer. Of course, this is for "personal" offences/insults - not groups or nations. The person who retaliates only makes themselves and the offender feel worse, and the result is a fight rather than peace.

13. What does Jesus mean by 'turn the other cheek'?

In order to turn the other cheek, we must stay where we are and not run away.

This demands both faith and love. It also means that we will be hurt; but it is better to be hurt on the outside rather than be harmed on the inside. It also means we should try to help the offender/sinner. We are vulnerable, because the offender may attack us anew; but we are also victorious, because Jesus is on our side, helping us and building our characters. Psychologists tell us violence is born of weakness, not strength. It is the strong person who can love and suffer hurt; it is the weak person who thinks only of themselves and hurts to protect themselves. They hurt others and then run away.

By turning the other cheek, we are showing the offender a better way.

Read Exodus 23:4-5, Leviticus 19:17-18 Deuteronomy 23:6, Psalm 139:21-22 and Matthew 5:43-48

14. Does the Old Testament Law say to hate your enemies?

Exodus 23:4-5 says - to help your enemy when they are in trouble.

Leviticus 19:17-18 says - not to hate your fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke them frankly; don't seek revenge or bear a grudge, but love your neighbour as yourself

Psalm 139:21-22 - David says: ²¹ *Do I not hate those who hate you, LORD, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?* ²² *I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.*

Spurgeon says this: He was a good hater, for he hated only those who hated good. Of this hatred he is not ashamed, but he sets it forth as a virtue to which he would have the Lord bear testimony. To love all men with benevolence is our duty; but to love any wicked man with complacency would be a crime. To hate a man for his own sake, or for any evil done to us, would be wrong; but to hate a man because he is the foe of all goodness and the enemy of all righteousness, is nothing more nor less than an obligation. The more we love God the more indignant shall we grow with those who refuse him their affection. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." Truly, "jealousy is cruel as the grave." The loyal subject must not be friendly to the traitor. "And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?" He appeals to heaven that he took no pleasure in those who rebelled against the Lord; but, on the contrary, he was made to mourn by a sight of their ill behaviour. Since God is everywhere, he knows our feelings towards the profane and ungodly, and he knows that so far from approving such characters the very sight of them is grievous to our eyes.

15. What does Jesus teach people should do with their enemies?

Jesus teaches:

- a. *Love your enemy*
- b. *Pray for those who persecute you*

16. List the reasons Jesus gives for treating "enemies" this way?

- a. *It is a sign of maturity that we are "sons" (literally) of God, the Father, and not just little children.*
- b. *It is Godlike. The Father shares His good things [sun and rain] with those who oppose Him.*
- c. *Loving our enemies creates a "climate" of blessings that makes it easy to win our enemies and make them our friends.*
- d. *It is testimony to others, when we show love to enemies. God expects us to live on a higher plane than the people lost from God. The latter return good for good and evil for evil. As Christians we must return good for evil; this is an investment of love - and shows them the love of Christ.*

17. What does verse 48 teach? (cf. Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16).

Perfect in v48 - does not mean sinless but complete and mature. The Father loves His enemies and seeks to make them His children; and we should imitate that.

As Leviticus 19:2 says: Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

And 1 Peter 1:16 says the same thing.

God expects us to be holy like Him.

18. **Ponder:** The Pharisees strived to keep God's Law meticulously; what is it that Jesus is addressing here, that the Pharisees are not doing?

Jesus is addressing the heart problem that the Pharisees had.

In Matthew 19:8 - Jesus told them they had hard hearts.

They followed the letter of the law, not the spirit and heart of the law.

*As Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 9:13 - **But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'** For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

19. **Discuss:** Living by the "Sermon on the Mount" is more difficult to keep than the original Ten Commandments?

It seems more difficult.

But 2 things to note:

We are not saved by the "good stuff" we do. Jesus saves us!

We have Jesus to help us - and we have the Holy Spirit - to teach us and remind us what Jesus taught.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 5:21-48**?

Identifying a heart problem



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

➔ How does this passage **apply to your life**?

Examine our hearts

Model ourselves on Jesus and His teaching

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V44-45

Finish in prayer: Thanking God for Jesus' teaching in the Sermon of the Mount. Ask God to help us to have the attitude of the heart that produces righteousness in our lives.

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Resources:

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible (G. Campbell Morgan)

The Message of Matthew (Michael Green)

Focus on the Bible: Matthew (Charles Price)

Matthew Volume 1 (Barclay)

Be Loyal Following the King of Kings NT Commentary on Matthew (Warren W. Wiersbe)

Notes/Prayer Points