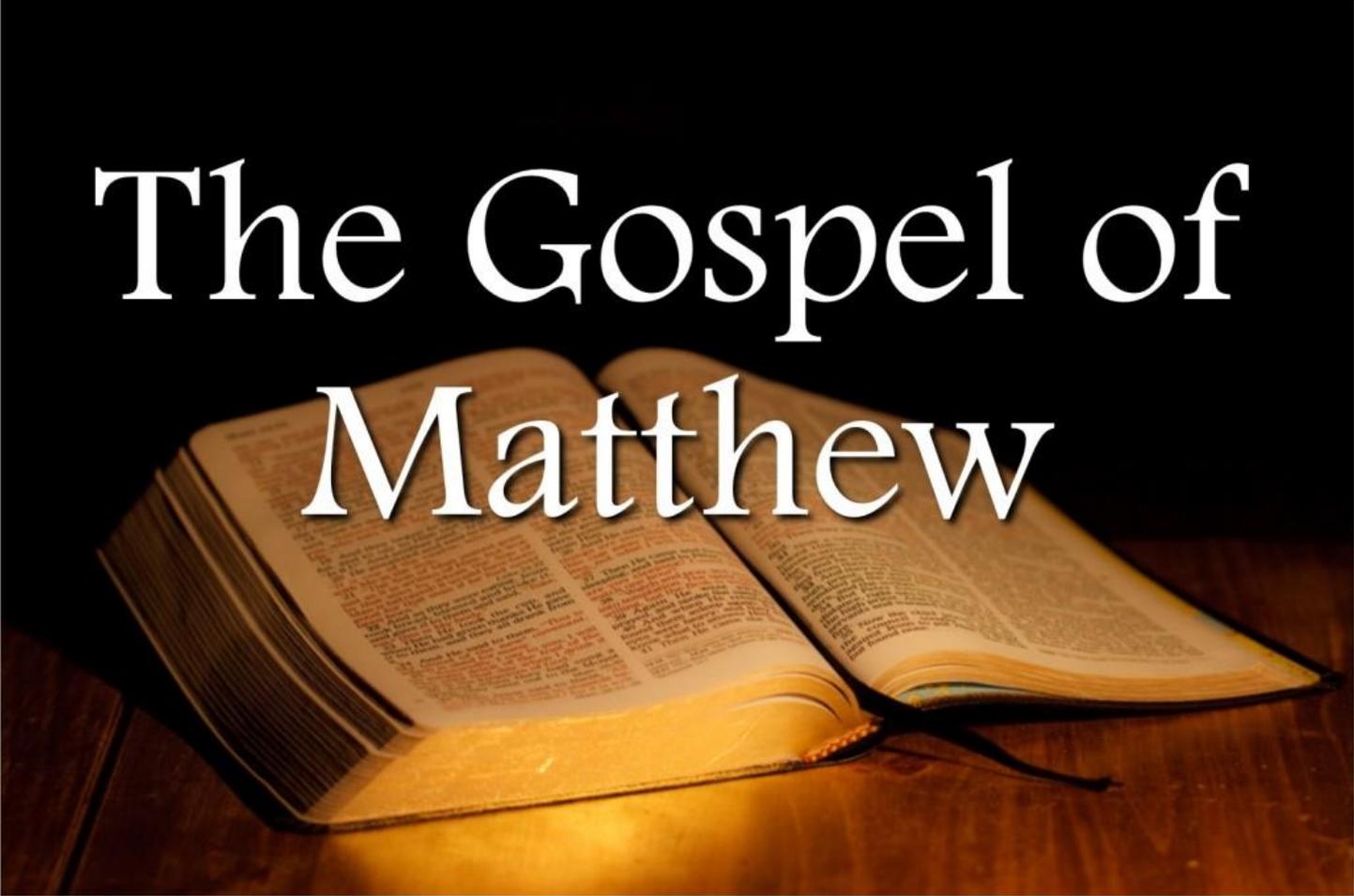


# The Book of Matthew

An open Bible is shown from a high angle, resting on a wooden surface. The pages are illuminated from below, creating a warm, golden glow. The text on the pages is visible but slightly blurred. Overlaid on the image is the title 'The Gospel of Matthew' in a large, white, serif font.

## The Gospel of Matthew

**2023 – Part 1**

**6 studies in Matthew's Gospel**

**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

**Please Note the following:**

1. It is helpful, but not mandatory, to prepare your answers before meeting with your group.
2. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
3. 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 Demand for a sign – Matthew 16:1-12

*(Sermon on 05-February-23)*

**Before we begin:** Do we need signs and miracles to believe in Jesus? Yes/No/Maybe?

*Signs and miracles are not necessary to believe in Jesus. However, they are a great encouragement to our faith and a confirmation of God's promises.*

*However, Jesus gave signs and miracles: a) to reveal who He is (Son of God); b) to reveal He had the power of God; c) to help people believe and d) because He had compassion on people; and d) to fulfil prophecy from the Old Testament.*

*Besides, signs and miracles don't necessarily convince people of their sin or give a desire to be saved! Jesus' miracles were sometimes met with disbelief and rejection. Miracles will give confirmation where there is faith, but not where there is willful unbelief!*

*Also, we have the complete revelation of the Bible now; and as Paul tells Timothy: Scripture makes us wise for salvation; and is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:15-16).*

### Read Matthew 16:1-4

1. What did the Pharisees and Sadducees ask Jesus for in verse 1 and what is their motive?

*They came to ask Him to show them a sign from Heaven! Their motive was to test Him and for Jesus to prove who He was as they were skeptical.*

*Jesus had done many signs and they remained unconvinced. They looked for a sign from heaven such as calling down fire from heaven, preferably against the Romans!*

*Jesus had already been asked for a sign in Matthew 12:38, and in response He had already pointed them to the sign of Jonah. Tradition held that a sign done on earth could be a counterfeit from Satan, but signs done from heaven (coming in or from the sky) were assumed to be from God.*

2. Research who the Pharisees and Sadducees are and is it surprising that they come together to ask Jesus for a sign?

*The **Pharisees** were an influential religious sect within Judaism in the time of Christ and the early church. They were known for their emphasis on personal piety (the word Pharisee comes from a Hebrew word meaning "separated"), their acceptance of oral tradition in addition to the written Law, and their teaching that all Jews should observe all 600-plus laws in the Torah, including the rituals concerning ceremonial purification.*

*The Pharisees were mostly middle-class businessmen and leaders of the synagogues. Though they were a minority in the Sanhedrin (Jewish Council) and held a minority number of positions as priests, they seemed to control the decision-making of the Sanhedrin because they had popular support among the people.*

*Among the Pharisees were two schools of thought, based on the teachings of two rabbis, Shammai and Hillel. Shammai called for a strict, unbending interpretation of the Law on almost every issue, but Hillel taught a looser, more liberal application. Followers of Shammai fostered a hatred for anything Roman, including taxation—Jews who served as tax collectors*

were *persona non grata*. The Shammaites wanted to outlaw all communication and commerce between Jews and Gentiles. The Hillelites took a more gracious approach and opposed such extreme exclusiveness. Eventually, the two schools within Pharisaism grew so hostile to each other that they refused to worship together.

The Pharisees accepted the written Word as inspired by God. At the time of Christ's earthly ministry, this would have been what we now call the Old Testament. Unfortunately, the Pharisees gave equal authority to oral tradition, saying the traditions went all the way back to Moses. Evolving over the centuries, the Pharisaic traditions had the effect of adding to God's Word, which is forbidden (Deuteronomy 4:2). The Gospels abound with examples of the Pharisees treating their traditions as equal to God's Word (Matthew 9:14; 15:1–9; 23:5; 23:16, 23; Luke 11:42). Jesus applied the condemnation of Isaiah 29:13 to the Pharisees, saying, "Their teachings are merely human rules" (Mark 7:7).

The Pharisees taught the following doctrines:

1. God controls all things, but decisions made by individuals also affect life's course.
2. There will be a resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6).
3. There is an afterlife, with appropriate reward and punishment on an individual basis. The Messiah will set up His kingdom on earth.
4. The spiritual realm, including the existence of angels and demons, is real (Acts 23:8).

Many of the Pharisees' doctrines put them at odds with the Sadducees; however, the two groups managed to set aside their differences on one occasion—the trial of Jesus Christ. To accomplish the demise of Jesus, the Sadducees and Pharisees united (Mark 14:53; 15:1; John 11:48–50).

The Pharisees were responsible for the compilation of the Mishnah, an important document with reference to the continuation of Judaism beyond the destruction of the temple. Rabbinical Judaism and modern-day synagogues owe their existence to the Pharisees' work.

([Who were the Pharisees? | GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org/Who_were_the_Pharisees.html))

During the time of Christ and the New Testament era, the **Sadducees** were a religiopolitical group that held a great deal of power among the Jews in Israel. The Sadducees confronted Jesus on occasion, attempting to trip Him up (Matthew 16:1; Mark 12:18), and they later opposed the preaching of the apostles (Acts 4:1–2).

The Sadducees, sometimes historically called "Zadokites" or "Tzedukim," are thought by some to have been founded by a man named Zadok (or Tsadok) in the second century BC. Another school of thought is that the word Sadducee is related to the Hebrew word *sadaq* ("to be righteous"). The Sadducees were an aristocratic class connected with everything going on in the temple in Jerusalem. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including that of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin.

The Sadducees worked hard to keep the peace by agreeing with the decisions of Rome (Israel at the time was under Roman control), and they seemed to be more concerned with politics than religion. Because they were accommodating to Rome and were the wealthy upper class, they did not relate well to the common man, nor did the common man hold them in high

*opinion. The commoners related better to those who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. Though the Sadducees held the majority of seats in the Sanhedrin, history indicates that much of the time they had to go along with the ideas of the Pharisaic minority, because the Pharisees were more popular with the masses.*

*Not all priests were Sadducees, but many of them were. The Sadducees preserved the authority of the written Word of God, especially the books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). While they could be commended for this, they definitely were not perfect in their doctrinal views. The following is a brief list of Sadducean beliefs that contradict Scripture:*

- 1. The Sadducees were extremely self-sufficient to the point of denying God's involvement in everyday life.*
- 2. They denied any resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:23; Mark 12:18–27; Acts 23:8). Due to this belief, the Sadducees strongly resisted the apostles' preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead.*
- 3. They denied the afterlife, holding that the soul perished at death and therefore denying any penalty or reward after the earthly life.*
- 4. They denied the existence of a spiritual world, i.e., angels and demons (Acts 23:8).*

*Because the Sadducees were basically a political party rather than a religious sect, they were unconcerned with Jesus until they became afraid, He might bring unwanted Roman attention. At that point the Sadducees joined with the Pharisees and conspired to put Christ to death (John 11:48–50; Mark 14:53; 15:1). Other mentions of the Sadducees are found in Acts 4:1 and Acts 5:17, and the Sadducees are implicated in the death of James the brother of John in Acts 12:1–2. The historian Josephus also connects the Sadducees to the death of James, the half-brother of Jesus.*

*Since the Sadducees left no written description of themselves, all we know about what they believed or what they did is what is found in the Bible and secondhand sources. According to most historical records, including those of Josephus, the Sadducees were rude, arrogant, power-hungry, and quick to dispute with those who disagreed with them.*

*The Sadducees ceased to exist as a group in AD 70, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Romans.*

*[\(Who were the Sadducees? | GotQuestions.org\)](#)*

*It is surprising that the two groups came together to test Jesus; but they had a common cause, to get rid of Jesus; as He was threatening their power and status. As Barclay puts it: "It is an extraordinary phenomenon to find a combination of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They stood for both beliefs and policies which were diametrically opposed."*

- 3. What meteorological example does Jesus use in his reply in verses 2 and 3; and what is his point?**

*Jesus uses the sky as an example. When the sky is red – it will be fair weather; when the sky is red and overcast, it will be stormy.*

*Jesus condemned their wickedness. They felt confident about predicting the weather from the signs they saw around them, but were blind to the signs regarding Jesus' Messianic credentials right before their eyes.*

4. How does Jesus describe the Pharisees and Sadducees? Why does Jesus describe them as “adulterous”?

*Jesus describes them as wicked and adulterous. Wicked because they were testing Him, the Son of God. Adulterous suggests they are cheating on God by following man-made rules and traditions and by making themselves more important than God.*

5. What **sign** does Jesus refer to in verse 4? (cf. Jonah 1:17-2:10; Matthew 12:38-45)

*The sign Jesus refers to is the “sign of Jonah”*

*Just as Jonah preached repentance to the Ninevites; and just as Jonah spent 3 days and nights in the belly of the fish, Jesus will spend 3 days in the tomb before His resurrection.*

*Jesus wants to highlight the most important sign of His – His call for repentance and His resurrection; a sign that would have power to bring people to faith.*

*Jesus had previously mentioned the sign of Jonah in Matthew 12:38-45.*

*Some similarities between Jonah and Jesus:*

- *Jonah preached repentance.*
- *Jonah sacrificed himself that others would be saved.*
- *Jonah disappeared from all human view in doing this.*
- *Jonah was sustained the days when he could not be seen.*
- *Jonah came back after three days, as back from the dead.*

### **Read Matthew 16:5-12**

6. Why do you think Jesus went across the lake? (cf. Matthew 16:1-4)

*To perhaps get away from the harassment from the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

7. What had the disciples forgotten in verse 5?

*They had forgotten bread (food). It seems they left in a hurry to go across the lake!*

8. What does Jesus warn them of, in verse 6? What is yeast/leaven a symbol of, especially in the Passover narrative? (cf. Exodus 12:8, 15-20)

*Jesus warns them against the yeast (leaven) of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

*As noted previously in the parable of the leaven (Matthew 13:33), leaven is consistently used as a picture of sin and corruption (especially in the Passover narrative of Exodus 12:8, 12:15-20).*

*“It was the Jewish metaphorical expression for an **evil influence**. To the Jewish mind leaven was always symbolic of evil...leaven stood for an **evil influence liable to spread through life and to corrupt it.**” (Barclay) “False doctrine; which is fitly called leaven, because it soureth, swelleth, spreadeth, corrupteth the whole lump, and all this secretly.” (Trapp)*

9. How do the disciples misunderstand Jesus in verse 7?

*They think Jesus is referring to the fact that they forgot to bring bread (food) or even that Jesus was warning them not to buy unclean bread; rather than Him referring to what bad influence the Pharisees and Sadducees can be, through their false teaching and rejection of God's Messiah.*

10. What is Jesus' point in bringing up the feeding of 5000 and 4000, in verses 8 to 10?

*Jesus reminds them of the miraculous feeding of 5000 and 4000 and that there was plenty of leftovers. Jesus' point is; if they needed food; wouldn't He be able to simply conjure up food as before; and that they just simply need to trust Him. Besides, Jesus is referring to a spiritual matter of sin (using the metaphor of leaven/yeast).*

11. In verse 11, Jesus is making a spiritual point, not a material point, which the disciples have misunderstood. Has this type of thing happened before? See John 2:19; 3:4; 4:11; 6:52-63. *Jesus is making the spiritual point that the leaven/yeast which permeates a whole batch of bread dough is LIKE sin in our lives, which permeates our whole being. Jesus wants His disciples to understand the evil influence of the Pharisees and Sadducees which contradicts His teaching and can do the disciples and others a lot of damage.*

*Jesus has made spiritual points from physical examples before:*

*John 2:19 – Jesus mentions destroying the Temple but He's talking about the Temple of His body*

*John 3:4 – When Jesus is talking about being born again; Nicodemus takes it as a person being born from the womb a second time; when in fact Jesus is talking about spiritual rebirth and being born of the Holy Spirit, as a person comes to believe in Jesus.*

*John 4:11 – Jesus talks to the Samaritan woman at the well – she thinks Jesus is talking about physical water; but Jesus is talking about spiritual living water, from Him, which leads to eternal life.*

*John 6:52-53 – After the feeding of 5000; Jesus says that He is the Bread of Life; again, the people think He is talking about physical bread; but He's talking about Himself; and that to follow Him, we eat of His body (represented by bread) and drink His blood (represented by wine) as we commune with Him spiritually at the Lord's Supper; and this leads us to salvation (forgiveness of our sins and eternal life). We are basically eating and drinking Jesus in a spiritual sense as we have a personal relationship with Him.*

12. **Ponder:** What general lesson can we learn about looking for spiritual meanings when reading God's Word?

*It's good practice for us regularly read the Bible and meditate upon it; to see the deeper spiritual meaning of God's Word as we read it. John's Gospel, especially, is full of physical to spiritual connections. Remember scripture interprets scripture.*

13. What are the disciples to really guard against in verse 12? What might that mean for us today?

*The disciples are to guard themselves against the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Both the Pharisees and Sadducees had infected the religious beliefs of Israel with false doctrine. The Pharisees were legalists who taught only outward [not heartfelt] obedience to the law [at the expense sometimes of compassion to others] and following handed-down traditions would please God and usher in His Kingdom. Whereas the Sadducees were more liberal in their thinking and denied such a Kingdom could exist on Earth (denying even the resurrection from the dead). Both groups ran often independent of God and relied on self. Legalism on the part of the Pharisees and rationalism on the part of the Sadducees replaced God. Jesus did not want His disciples infected by His opponents' skepticism. We are to be diligent and vigilant against the false teaching of our day. We are to reject anything that contradicts God's Word and Jesus' teaching. We should always be checking what is taught and said lines up with the Bible.*

### **Read Exodus 17:1-7**

14. How does this passage relate to Matthew 16:1-12?

*In Exodus 17, the ancient Israelites are in the wilderness, having been rescued by God from slavery at the hands of the Egyptians. But rather than being grateful to God for rescuing them and rather than trusting God will provide for all their needs. They complained that they had nothing to drink and quarreled with their leader, Moses.*

*Their problem was not with Moses; it's easy to blame the wrong person.*

*Their problem was with God; but they didn't take a spiritual approach to this!*

*When we have a problem, it is much easier to blame someone than to think through the problem carefully and spiritually. In this situation Israel could have thought, "We are in a desert; it's not surprising there isn't much water here. We need to look to God to meet this need." Instead, they blamed Moses and did nothing to help the problem.*

*Moses (v2b) accuses them of putting the Lord to the test; in other words – just like the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16:1-12 didn't see/acknowledge/appreciate the signs Jesus had already given them; similarly, the Israelites didn't see/acknowledge/appreciate what God had already done for them [Plagues, rescue from slavery in Egypt; Red Sea; manna and quail] and that He is a God to be trusted and He knows what they need and will provide it for them.*

*In His grace and mercy, God miraculously provided water by commanding Moses to strike a rock at Horeb (v6)*

### **Read John 20:24-29 – especially verse 29.**

15. How does this passage relate to Matthew 16:1-12?

*Thomas would not believe Jesus had risen from the dead unless He saw Jesus with His own eyes. The risen Jesus graciously appears to Thomas to prove His resurrection is true! Jesus tells Thomas: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

*Rather than demanding proof (like the Pharisees, Sadducees and Thomas) Jesus says it's a blessing to us, to believe without seeing and without proof. That is true faith!*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 16:1-12**?

*Have faith rather than demanding signs*



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

- ➔ How does this passage **apply to your life**?
- a. *We may wrongly TEST God by asking for a sign or doing a deal with Him.*
  - b. *We can sometimes be like the Pharisees and Sadducees and demand a sign and miracle instead of just having faith.*
  - c. *We can miss the "signs" Jesus has left us in His Holy Word. We need to believe the signs Jesus has already left us in His Word.*
  - d. *When we sin, it corrupts us and can corrupt others; and lead to further sin (just like leaven/yeast permeating the whole batch of dough).*
  - e. *Pray we would not be affected by others skepticism about Jesus.*
  - f. *As we read God's Word, look for spiritual connections and insights. Dig deep!*
  - g. *Sometimes we forget what God has done for us (like the Israelites forgot what God had done for them and like the disciples forgot what Jesus had said and done). Ask God to help us retain and recall what He has done for us and what His Word says.*
  - h. *Ask God to give us discernment when we hear teaching and prophecies; We are to be diligent and vigilant against the false teaching of our day. We are to reject anything that contradicts God's Word and Jesus' teaching [i.e.; guard against leaven/yeast]*
  - i. *Don't limit what God can do THIS time; we know what He did LAST time and what He did for people in the Bible!*
  - j. *Don't get angry with God when we face a difficult situation; trust Him!*
  - k. *Sometimes we doubt God and look for Him to prove Himself; instead of having faith without seeing! Walk by faith, not by sight.*
  - l. *Ask God to help our "little faith" to become "great faith".*

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

**Matthew 16:4 - A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.**

**John 20:29 - Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

**Finish in prayer:** Ask God to help us not doubt Him and not test Him; but simply have faith in Him and believe in Jesus' death for the forgiveness of our sins and believe in Jesus' resurrection for the certain hope of eternal life.

## Study 2 – Confessing Christ – Matthew 16:13-20

*(Sermon on 12-Feburay-23)*

### Before we begin: Who is Jesus?

*Almost every major religion teaches that Jesus was a prophet or a good teacher or a godly man. But the Bible teaches us that Jesus is infinitely more than a prophet, a good teacher, or a godly man.*

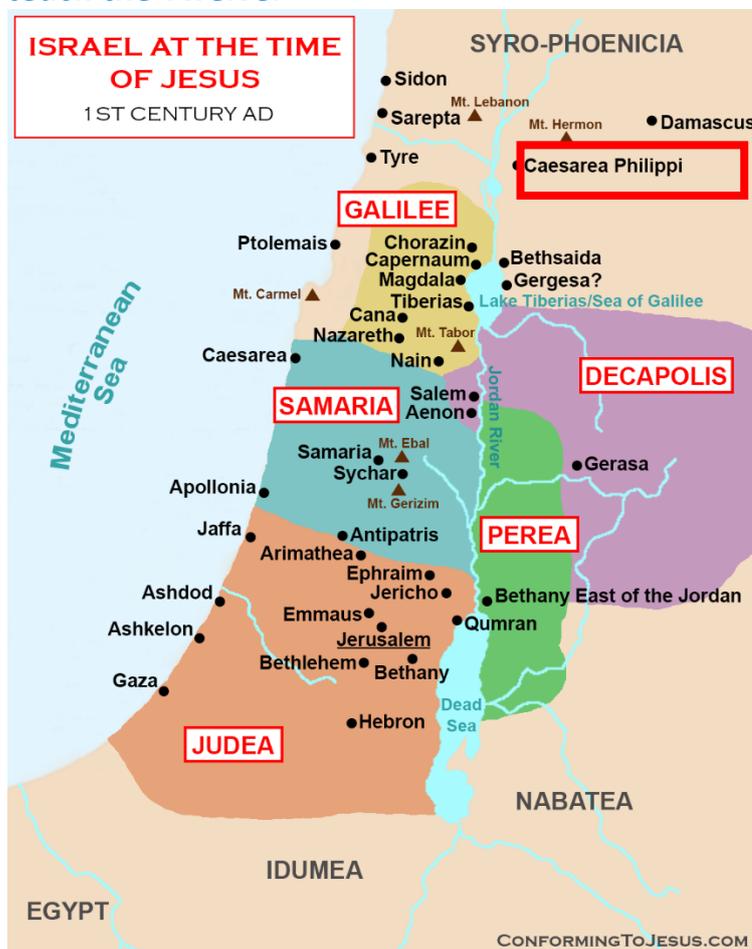
*The Bible says Jesus is: God in flesh (John 10:30, 33); He pre-existed (John 8:58-59); He is the IAM of Exodus 3:14; He is the Word of God (John 1:1); and became flesh (John 1:14); Our Saviour (Titus 2:13); our God and Saviour (2 Peter 1:1); our Lord and God (John 20:28); God's Son (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Hebrews 1:8; Isaiah 9:6) and the only way to the Father (John 14:6).*

*Therefore, Jesus is fully man and fully God; and the person of the Son in the Trinity.*

### Read Matthew 16:13-20 and parallel passages from Mark 8:27-29 and Luke 9:18-20

#### 1. What's significant about the region of Caesarea Philippi in verse 13?

*Caesarea Philippi (aka Baniyas) is north-east of Galilee. A place mainly, at the foot of Mount Hermon, populated by non-Jews (Gentiles). It is about 25 miles (46Km) north-east of the Sea of Galilee. The city was established by Herod's son, Philip in 3BC. According to Barclay, it is likely, by travelling there, Jesus and His disciples would **have some peace** and **Jesus would be able to teach the Twelve**.*



*The region was strongly identified with various religions: Baal worship; the Greek God Pan had shrines there; and Herod the Great had built a temple there to honour Augustus Caesar.*

2. What pointed question does Jesus ask His disciples in verse 13? Why would He ask this?

*He did not ask this question because He didn't know who He was!*

*He did not ask this question so He could feel good.*

*He asked this question to gauge how His ministry has been received thus far; and whether people have got a sense of who He really is; knowing that there would be confusion in the general public about His identity.*

*He asked this question to introduce His follow up question in verse 15.*

3. List each response in verse 14 and why people might have given that response?

*The responses were:*

*John the Baptist – those who thought Jesus was John the Baptist; either didn't know John had been beheaded in chapter 14; or they saw Jesus' ministry in calling people to repent and turn back to God, as the same ministry as John. Perhaps some thought John had come back from the dead (Herod did in Mark 6:16)*

*Elijah – Jesus performed miracles like the Old Testament prophet Elijah and also Malachi had prophesied that Elijah would return (Malachi 4:5) but this prophecy was actually about the new Elijah, John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-17; Matthew 17:12-13). Also, Jesus stood up to the authorities and seem to be a national reformer, like both Elijah and Jeremiah.*

*Jeremiah –as well as being a national reformer, another similarity between Jeremiah and Jesus was their suffering. Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet and Jesus is described as the man of sorrows. However, at the time of Jesus asking the question to His disciples; Jesus' suffering is not front and centre. So, it's more likely they thought Jesus was Jeremiah because He was a prominent prophet like Jeremiah.*

*One of the Prophets – Like all the prophets, people saw Jesus as someone who always spoke the Words of God.*

*In general terms, as people had these ideas about Jesus, there was a hope that Jesus would be a political messiah who would overthrow the ruling and domineering Romans, who were oppressing Israel.*

*Sadly, some even though Jesus was demon-possessed (John 10:19-21) and attributed His power to Satan (Matthew 9:34; 12:24).*

4. What's important to Jesus in verse 15?

*It's more important to Jesus, that His disciples, whom He is training, know and believe who He is.*

5. Who does Simon Peter say Jesus is in verse 16? What do we also learn about God here? (See Psalm 42:2; Jeremiah 10:10; Acts 14:15; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Thes 1:9; 1 Timothy 3:15; Heb 10:31, 12:22)

*Simon Peter says Jesus is much more than Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets; he says Jesus is the Messiah. In Greek=Christ; in Hebrew=Messiah.*

*Simon Peter also identifies Jesus as God's Son – and that God is a “living” God. He is active in people's lives; He doesn't just create everything and walk away and leave us to our own devices.*

*Psalm 42:2 - My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*

*Jeremiah 10:10 - But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.*

*Acts 14:15 – “Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them.*

*2 Corinthians 6:16 – What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”*

*1 Thessalonians 1:9 – for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,*

*1 Timothy 3:15 – if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

*Hebrews 10:31 – It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”.*

*Hebrews 12:22 - But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly”*

6. What does The Messiah (Hebrew) and The Christ (Greek) mean?

*Christ/Messiah means = God's anointed (chosen) one – to be the Saviour.*

7. According to verse v17, how did Simon Peter know this about Jesus? Is that encouraging for us?

*Peter knew this truth; not from another human, but by divine inspiration, even if Peter did know that at the time. Peter is blessed to a) know this truth and b) by the way he received this truth.*

*It's encouraging for us that God the Father, through His Spirit and Word can reveal truths and insights to us too!*

8. In verses 18 and 19; Jesus gives a most remarkable statement to Peter about “my” (Jesus’) church. There are some interesting terms used; what do each of these terms mean, especially the words underlined:

*This is the first place in the Gospels that Jesus uses the word, church (ekklesia).*

***“You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church”***

*“Rock” was a familiar symbol of God (Deut 32:4; Psalm 18:2, 31)*

*Peter’s name in Greek is “petros” and rock in Greek is “petra” – so Jesus makes a play on words – you are a Rock and, on this rock, I will build my church.*

*Church is ekklesia as we learnt in our series in January 2023. Ekklesia means the “called our ones” – people called out to worship God and follow Jesus together. Jesus is establishing **HIS church** and He will build it on the foundation of Peter and the other disciples; who will spread the Good News and grow Jesus’ church. Something that doesn’t start properly until the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.*

*We are not to forget it is JESUS’ CHURCH!*

*And notice HE will build HIS Church.*

*The Roman Catholic’s claim this verse – means Peter is the first Pope – and that Peter then passes on the authority of the church to the next Pope – down the line – known as Apostolic succession. Also, the Roman Catholic’s teach that whilst in office the Pope is infallible. Both these teachings are unbiblical. Peter will later write in 1 Peter 2:4-6 – that we are like living stones attached to Jesus the cornerstone. So, Jesus is the Head of the Church, not Peter, or any other pope!*

*Some teach that when Jesus says “on this rock I will build my church” – means that Jesus is building His church on Peter’s “rock-solid” statement “You are the Christ”. Again, I think this is an over-correction to counter the claims of the Roman Catholics. By the time we get to the Book of Acts, we see that Peter is a central figure in establishing the early church; one of the “rocks” of the church, as is the Apostle Paul in expanding the church to the Gentiles.*

*Alternative explanation: Jesus says “you are Peter (pun on the word rock) and upon this rock (pointing to Himself), I will build my church”. So, the rock is not Peter, not his confession but Jesus Himself, The Messiah/The Christ. This is entirely consistent with other statements in the New Testament. 1 Cor 3:11 – When Paul talks about the Church, he says: For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. And in Ephesians 2:20-21 Paul speaks of the church of both Jews and Gentiles as <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord*

*This is consistent with how Peter himself describes the church in 1 Peter 2:4-7: <sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” <sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”*

***“The gates of Hades will not overcome it”***

*Hades is literally the abode of the wicked – see Luke 16:23 and Revelation 20:13,14.*

*Hades later became used as the word for the grave, death and hell.*

*So, Jesus is saying that the forces of death and darkness can’t prevail against or conquer His Church. His Church keeps marching on – and it a sense is on the offensive, rather than on the defensive; because gates keep people out, so the church is driving back the gates of Hades! This is of great encouragement in dark and discouraging times. When the Romans tried persecuted the early church; it grew. Martyrs were replaced by more martyrs. Similarly in China, even when authorities close down churches, they grow with underground churches!*

*Also, if we think of Hades as the realm of the dead. Jesus’ resurrection meant that death could not hold him down. As Acts 2:24, 27 - <sup>24</sup> But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him... <sup>27</sup> because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead [hades in Greek] you will not let your holy one see decay.*

*It's like Jesus is saying to Peter “you have discovered that I am the Son of the living God; the time will come when I will be crucified, and the gates of Hades will be closed behind me, but they are powerless to shut me in; the gates of Hades have no power against the Son of the living God”*

*This phrase is triumphantly expressing the indestructibility of Christ and His Church!*

***“I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven”*** (Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 3:7)

*This idea of Peter holding the keys of the kingdom of heaven has captured the imagination (and theology) of many Christians throughout the centuries. In artistic representation, Peter is almost always shown with keys.*

*i. Some people think that this means that Peter has the authority to admit people to heaven, or to keep people out of heaven. This is the basis for the popular image of Peter at the Pearly Gates of Heaven, allowing people to enter or turning them away.*

ii. Some people think that it also means that Peter was the first Pope, and that his supposed successors have the keys that were first given to Peter. Indeed, the Papal insignia of the Roman Catholic Church is made up of two prominent keys crossed together.

iii. There is no doubt that Peter had a special place among all the disciples, and that he had some special privileges:

*He is always listed first in the listings of the disciples.*

*He opened doors of the kingdom to the Jews in Acts 2:38-39.*

*He opened doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles in Acts 10:34-44.*

iv. Yet there is no Biblical argument whatsoever that Peter's privilege or authority was passed on. To put it one way; one might say that Jesus gave Peter the keys, but didn't give him the authority to pass them on to further generations, and there is not a whisper in the Scriptures that Peter's authority was to be passed on.

v. The idea that apostolic authority comes from Jesus, who gave it to Peter, who set his hands on the heads of approved and ordained men, who in turn set their hands on the heads of approved and ordained men, and so on and so on through the generations until today is nonsense. **It is exactly what Spurgeon said it was: the laying of empty hands on empty heads.**

Note: Isaiah 22:22 foretells of someone having the key to the house of David (which is an everlasting Kingdom remember) and what He opens, no one can shut, and what He shuts, no one can close. Then in Revelation 3:7, we read, ultimately, the one who holds this key of David, is actually Jesus.

**“Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven”** (Matthew 18:18; John 20:23)

*As a foundational leader of Jesus' church, Peter along with the other Apostles (since this statement is repeated in Matthew 18:18 and “YOU PLURAL” is used) will have authority in this new Church to decide what is permissible and not permissible in Jesus' church (a role that Jewish Rabbis had in Judaism. We see this play out in the book of Acts and how Peter along with the other Apostles fulfilled this role. The first Church Council meeting in Acts 15 is a good example of this. Jesus is saying here, whatever they decide is bound or loosed in His Church on Earth is considered bound or loosed in Heaven. Quite remarkable authority given to them!*

*Matthew 18:18 – “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”. The “you” is plural here. And the next verse – v19 - Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven suggests prayer is a big factor in what is bound and loosed!*

*John 20:23 - If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.". The "you" is plural here*

9. Why did Jesus command His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah, in verse 20?
- Because it was not the proper time yet. This had to be revealed in God's timing.*
  - They still needed to learn more about what it meant for Jesus to be the Messiah/Christ.*
  - They were to wait until Jesus' resurrection (the sign of Jonah) and ascension; and then the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost. Then Peter was to give his powerful message about God's Anointed One, The Messiah/The Christ in Acts 2.*

### **Read Psalm 2**

10. How does this passage relate to Matthew 16:13-20?

*The Psalm relates to Matthew 16:13-20 because firstly it speaks of God's anointed one (Hebrew word is: māšîaḥ)*

*In the Psalm, verses 1 to 3, the Kings of the Earth rebel against God's anointed one (Messiah). Which is pretty much what people did in Jesus' time and what many do today.*

*In verses 4 to 5; God sees this rebellion as laughable! Because, He sits in the Heavens and He has installed His King on the Holy Mountain in Jerusalem, namely Zion. Zion is literally the site of the Davidic King and speaks of the promise made to King David that his kingdom would be an everlasting Kingdom with someone seated on His throne forever (2 Samuel 7); namely King Jesus! All Davidic Kings were seen as "sons of God", with Jesus being the ultimate Son (Luke 1:21-33). This Psalm may well have been used to greet each succeeding Davidic King.*

*Then in verses 7 to 9, the anointed one, the Son of God (remember Peter said Jesus was "**Son of the living God**" in Matthew 16:16) speaks of His relationship with the Father and of His inheritance from the Father and the promise that He will rule the whole Earth.*

*And so, bearing in mind that God has installed His anointed one; verses 10 to 12 call all kings and rulers of the Earth to be wise (v10) and serve the Lord with fear, celebration and trembling (v11). As always, we are all left with a choice in v12 – Kiss the Son (Jesus) and take refuge in Him otherwise face His anger/wrath and face destruction.*

*The people at the time of Psalm 2 had to show allegiance to God and God's anointed King. When Jesus asked the disciples who He was? He wanted them to realize He is the ultimate fulfilment of Psalm 2 and God's ultimate Anointed One and Son of the living God. It's important that Peter and the disciples know who Jesus really is – AND – that they believe in Him. We must do the same!*

### **Read Isaiah 9:1-7**

### 11. How does this passage relate to Matthew 16:13-20?

*The context is from Isaiah 8 – and the land is in gloom because Isaiah has just told them of the impending invasion by the Assyrians. This invasion will be particularly damaging for the people of the northern regions of Israel, the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (v1) both in the region of Galilee. Even though things are very dark for Galilee right now; Isaiah promises Galilee will be honoured when people walking in darkness will see a great light (v2). This was fulfilled when God’s Anointed One (Messiah), Jesus, preached in the region of Galilee (Matthew 4:12-17). Isaiah in verses 3 to 5, says there will be joy in the Messiah’s deliverance and victory.*

*Then verse 6, the glory of the Messiah is described: A child is born (Luke 2:11); a Son is given (John 3:16); government on His shoulders (Matthew 28:18; He is a Wonderful Counsellor (John 13:7; Phil 4:13); Mighty God (John 20:28); Everlasting Father (John 14:9-10); Prince of Peace (Luke 2:14)*

*And verse 7, the Messiah’s glorious reign is described: A Kingdom without end (Luke 1:33; John 12:34); reign on David’s throne (1 Cor 15:25) with justice as the appointed Judge (Acts 10:42) and with righteousness (1 Cor 1:30).*

*This passage from Isaiah 9 relates to Matthew 16:13-20 in that the Messiah is promised and described in Isaiah 9 and revealed to the disciples in Matthew 16; and His identity confirmed by Peter in Matthew 16:16.*

### 12. **Ponder:** What does it mean that Jesus is the **Messiah** (The Christ)?

- a. *It means God kept His promises in sending a Messiah.*
- b. *Jesus fulfils prophecy.*
- c. *He is an everlasting King of Heaven and Earth*
- d. *He is completely righteous – right with God and approved by God*
- e. *He is God’s Anointed One and the Son of the living God.*
- f. *He is able to fix the punishment of sin – by dying as an atonement.*
- g. *He is able to forgive us of our sins to all who believe in Him*
- h. *He is eternal and able to defeat death!*
- i. *He is able to offer eternal life to all who believe in Him.*
- j. *He is able to bring peace between God and humankind.*
- k. *He is the appointed Judge and He will return one day to judge all people (Acts 1:11 and 10:42)*
- l. *He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6) and the only name by which we can be saved for Heaven (Acts 4:12).*

### What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 16:13-20**?

The confession that Jesus is God’s Anointed One (The Messiah/The Christ)



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?  
We have a **LIVING** God!

- ➔ How does this passage **apply to your life**?
- a. *A right confession of who Jesus is is basic to salvation (Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 2:18-24; 4:1-3).*
  - b. *Our confession must include personal faith – it's not just a statement about who Jesus is – but a statement about what Jesus means to me.*
  - c. *Jesus doesn't give the option for people to sit on the fence.*
  - d. *We receive revelation from the Father and Son (see Matthew 11:25-27) as Peter did.*
  - e. *Having confessed our faith – what next? What is the function of Jesus' Church?*
    - i. *Go and make disciples (Matthew 28:16-20)*
    - ii. *How can people be saved if no one is sent (Romans 10:13-15)*
    - iii. *We are to bind and loose – that is to defend and uphold the truth in God's Word*
    - iv. *To be both salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14)*
  - f. *This passage says: Christ and Christ's Church are indestructible – let's not underestimate that we believe in a Christ – the son of the LIVING God*

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

**Matthew 16:16:** *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking the living God for sending His Son, Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ to establish His Church and to bring salvation to all who believe His death and resurrection.

### Study 3 – Following Christ – Matthew 16:21-28

*(Sermon on 19-February-23)*

**Before we begin:** Remind yourself what we discovered about Jesus in the last study?

*In the last study we discovered that Jesus was/is the Messiah (Hebrew) – aka the Christ (Greek) which means God’s Anointed One. The One God promised in the Old Testament would come and redeem/deliver Israel. We also learnt that Jesus was/is the Son of the Living God. Jesus is now going to open their eyes as to what being the Messiah really means...*

**Read Matthew 16:21-28 and parallel passages from Mark 8:31-9:1 and Luke 9:22-27**

1. What does Jesus reveal about the extent of His mission in verse 21?

*Jesus reveals that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law and be killed and on the third day be raised to life (in other words Jesus will be rejected and mistreated by the religious leaders of Israel).*

2. How does Peter react to Jesus’ revelation, in verse 22? How is this relevant to Peter’s earlier statement of Matthew 16:16?

*Peter took Jesus aside privately to rebuke him. Peter told Jesus that Jesus should never die; it just can’t happen to Jesus!*

*This is poignant, especially when last study Peter made this amazing statement about how Jesus was/is the Messiah and Jesus commended Peter for His confession; and informed Peter that He only knew this because God revealed this fact to Peter. Now Peter thinks his latest statement is perhaps God inspired; but Peter is in for a rude awakening.*

*Peter goes from being the “rock” to being the “stumbling block”. The chisel hits the rock, so to speak!*

*Satan used Peter’s ego from last week, so that Peter got all inflated and forgot his place and who was talking to!*

*Peter had a different expectation about the Messiah. The hero cannot die. But this is an upside-down kingdom.*

3. What does Jesus mean by the following phrases in verse 23:

#### **Get behind me Satan**

*Jesus likens Peter’s thinking to the way the world thinks. And Satan is the prince of this world. Jesus is saying to Peter “you’re thinking like Satan (literally thinking like one of my adversaries); you’re thinking worldly and not heavenly/godly”. Remember how Satan had tempted Jesus with the world; Peter has the same worldly thinking.*

*Jesus is saying Peter’s statement this time is NOT God inspired but world-inspired. Peter is not aware that God’s plan is for Jesus to die for the sin of the world and then to raise Him to life after 3 days. Peter is unaware that God’s plan is for Jesus to be a spiritual saviour, not a military saviour.*

*By saying “get behind me”, Jesus is telling Peter to resume his proper place; by being “behind” Jesus and “following” Him; not thinking he can “lead” Jesus!  
Remember Satan can twist words and twist people’s thinking.*

### **You are a stumbling block**

*Peter’s idea to prevent Jesus going to His death would prevent Jesus from doing the Father’s will that He must go to the cross. This is a stumbling block to God’s plan for Jesus and to Jesus’ mission! It’s like Peter is unwittingly trying to scupper God’s plans!*

### **You do not have in mind the concerns of God, merely human concerns**

*Peter perhaps had the idea that Jesus’ Messiah identity meant He was to be a successful military leader of the people, who would defeat all of Israel’s surrounding enemies; and particularly the Romans. He was not mindful of the fact that God’s plan is for Jesus to die for the sin of the world. In fairness, we can forgive Peter for wanting to protect Jesus. Peter only saw Jesus as the Messiah who is the embodiment of power and strength, instead of seeing Jesus as the suffering servant. Because Peter couldn’t handle the concept of a suffering Messiah, he rebuked Jesus!*

#### 4. What expectations does Jesus have for His disciples in verse 24?

*Jesus is NOT a false recruiter!*

*Jesus’ expectation is that His disciples must:*

- a. *Deny themselves.* It was bad enough for the disciples to hear that Jesus would suffer, be rejected, and die on a cross. Now Jesus told them that they must do the same thing. **In Greek, deny means to “forget one’s self, lose sight of one’s self and one’s own interest”. A classic example of denying oneself is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane – “your will, Father; not my will”**
- b. *Take up their cross and follow Jesus.* Everybody knew what Jesus meant when He said this. People saw many arrested and convicted, carrying their cross to the place of crucifixion. Everyone knew that the cross was an unrelenting instrument of death. The cross had no other purpose but for people to be executed. Cross bearing does not refer to some irritation in life. Rather, it involves the way of the cross. The picture is of a man, already condemned, required to carry his cross on the way to the place of execution, as Jesus was required to do. *Martin Luther said: “Every Christian must be a Crucian and do somewhat more than those monks that made themselves wooden crosses, and carried them on their back continually.  
Jesus made “deny himself” equal with “take up his cross”. The two phrases express the same idea.  
“Denying self is not the same as self-denial. We practice self-denial when, for a good purpose, we occasionally give up things or activities. But we deny self when we surrender ourselves to Christ and determine to obey His will.” (Wiersbe, commentary on Mark)  
Denying self means to live as an others-centered person. Jesus was the only person to do this perfectly, but we are to follow in His steps (and follow Me). This is following Jesus at*

*its simplest: He carried a cross; He walked down death row; so, must those who follow Him.*

*Our basic human nature wants to indulge self, not deny self. Death to self is always terrible, and if we expect it to be a pleasant or mild experience, we will often be disillusioned. Death to self is the radical command of the Christian life. To take up your cross meant one thing: you were going to a certain death, and your only hope was in resurrection power.*

5. What paradox does Jesus give in verse 25? What does He mean by this?

*A paradox is a statement which seems absurd or contradictory, but when investigated may prove to be true. Examples: “you have to be cruel to be kind”; “you save money, by spending it”; “deep down you’re really shallow”.*

*In v25, Jesus says: “Whoever wants to save their life, will lose it; but whoever loses their life for me, will find it”*

*It sounds strange to say, “You will never live until you first walk to your death with Jesus,” but that is the idea. You can’t gain resurrection life without dying first.*

*Our old life has to die with Jesus on the cross, so that our new life with Jesus can begin.*

*You don’t lose a seed when you plant it, though it seems dead and buried. Instead, you set the seed free to be what it was always intended to be.*

*What Peter wanted was to save Jesus’ life – but Jesus had to lose His life for us to be free.*

6. What danger does Jesus alert the disciples to in verse 26?

*Jesus warns the disciples about the danger of losing their soul.*

*The soul is the part/essence of a human being which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death. It’s the part of us that is designed for eternity.*

*Jesus is saying that avoiding the walk to death with Jesus and following the world’s temptations means that we may gain the whole world but lose are very soul to Hell; and so, lose everything*

*When Satan tempted Jesus (Luke 4:5-8); Satan offered Jesus the whole world if Jesus would only worship Satan; but Jesus chose obedience and allegiance to the Father; that’s what Jesus wants His disciples to do!*

*It’s a difference between temporal (this world) and eternity (heaven).*

*What would have happened if Jesus had given into Satan’s temptation or listened to Peter’s rebuke! Where would be then?*

7. What promise does Jesus make in verse 27?

*When Jesus returns with His angels, He will reward each person according to the choice they made to either deny/take up their cross or follow/gain the whole world. As Carson puts it; the judgment that Jesus will exercise is an incentive to take up one’s cross and follow Him.*

8. What promise does Jesus make in verse 28?

*Jesus promises that following Him is not just a life of denying self, death and cross; His followers will also see the glory and power of Jesus' Kingdom. For some of the disciples, they saw the glory of Jesus' Kingdom in the transfiguration in the next chapter. Other disciples, some saw the glory and power of His Kingdom as the early Church was established at Pentecost (the outpouring of the Spirit) and grew to have both Jews and Gentiles in the Church. The Book of Acts has some remarkable examples of Jesus' glory and power. And it's the same for us, we see examples of Jesus' glory and power, as our Church at Toukley operates and grows.*

### **Read Isaiah 53:1-12**

9. How does this passage relate to Matthew 16:21-28?

*In Matthew 16:21, Jesus tells the disciples that He must suffer many things.*

*He goes on to say that His disciples must imitate His suffering by denying themselves and taking up their cross.*

*Here in Isaiah 53:1-12, we have a telling picture of that suffering.*

- *Jesus will be despised and rejected by humankind*
- *He will suffer and be familiar with pain*
- *People will turn their faces away from Him, like someone of low esteem*
- *He will take up OUR pain and bear OUR suffering*
- *It will seem like it's God's plan for Jesus to be punished, stricken and afflicted*
- *He will be pierced (hands and feet on a cross) for our sins (iniquities)*
- *His punishment will bring peace with God (for us) because by His wounds our relationship with God is healed*
- *He had to be punished because we are like lost sheep who have gone astray and gone our own way; and we need a Shepherd*
- *Even when He was oppressed and afflicted; He didn't open His mouth to defend Himself, He just went like a lamb to the slaughter*
- *And when He did suffer, none of His countrymen protested; they all went along with it*
- *He was crucified which was a curse – "anyone who dies on a tree, is cursed" (Deut 21:23) but was given a burial with the rich (a tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42)*
- *He never showed any violence or deceit, despite His suffering*
- *It was God's will that Jesus suffers, so that His offspring will live*
- *His death and suffering will justify (make people right with God, just as if they had never sinned)*

10. **Ponder:** Why did Jesus have to die?

*Because humankind cannot stop sinning and are destined to die and be separated from God forever. Someone perfect had to obey God perfectly and be the ultimate sacrifice for sin and take the punishment for sin off people and on to Himself. The Old Testament sacrifices didn't cut it; they just covered over sin; because they were offered by imperfect people and sacrifices*

were done by priests, who themselves were sinful. But Jesus is perfect, so His sacrifice is completely acceptable.

By Jesus' dying on that cross, all who follow Him, are forgiven of their sins and have eternal life (John 3:16). All His followers' souls are destined for Heaven; and when Jesus returns, they will receive a resurrected body. Without bloodshed, there is no forgiveness (see Leviticus 17:11 and Hebrews 9:22)

11. **Ponder:** Do you think most Christians are **"losing their lives"** for Jesus? Why? Why not? Our basic sinful human nature is to think of "self" rather than "deny self". We may understand what Jesus means by "losing our lives" but there is always a "pull" from this world, to think "worldly" and do "what the world does". To be successful in "losing our lives", we need to follow Jesus daily, deny self and take up our cross daily (it is a present continuous). Much prayer is needed.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 16:21-28**?

- a. Following Jesus costs something!
- b. Think/act heavenly, not worldly!
- c. Submit to God's plan



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



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

- a. We sometimes think humanly and understandably don't want to suffer and die
- b. Sometimes Satan can use people closest to us, people who love us (like Peter), to unwittingly tempt us away from doing God's will. We need to be alert to that! We are in a constant spiritual battle.
- c. Are we guilty sometimes of "telling God what to do", like Peter did.
- d. Like Peter, sometimes we ARGUE with God's Word.
- e. Our confession of who Jesus is, has to be more than "head" knowledge (You are the Christ); it has to be "heart" knowledge (Your will, Lord, not my will)
- f. How did Jesus answer Satan's temptation? (Which is what Peter was doing when saying Jesus wouldn't die) Jesus answered with God's Word.
- g. If we want to think like God and know the mind of God, we need to go to the Scriptures and hear/obey what God and His Son say.
- h. The Cross is seen today as a symbol of love and sacrifice but in Jesus' day, it was seen as a cruel torturing device used by the Romans as a means of capital punishment.

- i. *To deny ourselves means we have to give ourselves “wholly” to Jesus and join in His suffering and shame, perhaps even His death, if called to. Luke’s version says deny “daily”.*
- j. *We must stop self-centeredness and become Christ-centred. This will require crucifying our old self and becoming Christ-like.*
- k. *Suffering also leads to glory – to the glory of Jesus’ Church and Kingdom and ultimately to the glory of eternal life in Heaven*
- l. *Jesus suffered all of Isaiah 53 in our place; don’t we owe a response of gratitude, and an attitude of denial, taking up our cross and following Him!*

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

**Matthew 16:24** *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”*

**Isaiah 53:5b** *by his wounds we are healed.*

**Finish in prayer:** Asking God to help us deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. Thanking God, that His Son is not only our Saviour but also our Judge.

## Study 4 – The King in His Glory – Matthew 17:1-13

*(Sermon on 26-February-23)*

**Before we begin:** What does transfiguration mean?

*Dictionary definition: a complete change of form or appearance into something more beautiful or spiritual*

The Greek word used in the Bible is where we get **metamorphosis** – which literally means “a higher form”

**Read Matthew 17:1-13 - and parallel passages from Luke 9:28-36 and Mark 9:2-13**

1. Who did Jesus take up the mountain and why?

*Jesus took Peter, James and John the brother of James.*

*We're not told why, but suggestions are:*

1. *If only a few of the disciples know of this event, then there's less chance of this miraculous event being told before the time is right. See v9 where Jesus tells them not to tell anyone what they have seen.*
2. *Perhaps to parallel when Moses went up the mountain in Exodus 24 with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu – but note: 70 elders came too; so that that similar?*
3. *Peter, James and John are sometimes referred to as Jesus' **inner circle**. They had been with him the longest, a long with Andrew (see Luke 5:4-11). These three witnessed the transfiguration; raising of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:49-56) and in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus prayed (Matthew 26:26-38). Perhaps Jesus prepared them for leadership – Peter the rock of the church – he would be happy after last week's rebuke, to be included; James and John (the sons of thunder) – also became prominent leaders of the church and both send they would be prepared to be martyred (Matthew 20:22) – James first of the twelve to be martyred (Acts 12:1-2) and John last to die in exile (Rev 1:9).*

2. What happened to Jesus in verse 2?

*He was transfigured. Don Carson describes this as 'a change of inmost nature that may be outwardly visible'.*

*The suggestion is that the miracle here is that Jesus' divine glory, which he normally kept, hidden, was revealed. That's why John can write in John 1:14 'we beheld his glory' and Peter can write in 2 Peter 1:16 – 'we were eye witnesses of his majesty'.*

*Some suggest (probably correct) that this is a fulfilment of last week's promise in Matthew 16:28 – that some standing there will see the glory of His Kingdom.*

*His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light.*

3. What's the significance of Moses and Elijah appearing and talking to Jesus in verse 3?

Remarkably, these two Old Testament persons appeared and spoke with the transfigured Jesus. Moses had lived some 1400 years before; Elijah some 900 years before; yet they were alive and in some sort of resurrected, glorified state.

**Moses** represents the Old Testament **Law** and **Elijah** represents the Old Testament **prophets**. So basically, the whole of the Old Testament came to meet Jesus on the Mountain.

Remember **Jesus** said that he **came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets** (Matthew 5:17) – this event is confirming that. They are the link between the Old and the New Testament

Moses and Elijah also met God on a Mountain (Exodus 3 and 1 Kings 19) – both were there because they fled. Both were sent back. Both experienced river crossings (Exodus 14:21-22 and 2 Kings 8). They were the last men mentioned in the Old Testament (Malachi 4:4-6).

We can also say that Moses and Elijah represent those who are caught up to God (Moses at Jude 9 and Elijah at 2 Kings 2:11). More specifically, Moses represents those who die and go to glory, and Elijah represents those who are caught up to heaven without death (as in the rapture described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

*Personal comment: It's kind of neat that Moses – does get to see the Promised Land after all!*

4. In Luke's version of the Transfiguration, in Luke 9:31, he tells us that Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus about His "**exodus**" (departure) to Jerusalem. In what way is Jesus' death an **exodus**? And how does that relate to us, as Christians, today?

*For Jesus – He was going to Jerusalem – where He would leave (exodus) this world and go into the glory of Heaven (the ultimate Promised Land)*

*For us as believers – our death is not a one-way street to oblivion. It is an exodus – a release – from the bondage of this sinful/broken world – into the glorious liberty of Heaven (our Promised Land)*

5. What off-the-cuff comment does Peter make in verse 4?

*Poor old Peter – is at it again! Peter suggests making three shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah.*

6. Who rebukes Peter in verse 5 and why?

*Although well-meaning and although as Mark 9:6 and Luke 9:33 say, Peter didn't know what he was saying; the gist of Peter's suggestion is that he put Jesus on an equal level with Moses and Elijah.*

*The shelters should also remind us of the Feast of the Tabernacles (shelters/booths) in Leviticus 23:33-43.*

*God the Father speaks from a bright cloud (shekinah glory) that covered them and declares that Jesus is His Son, whom He loves, and is well pleased with; and they are to listen Him. This implies a rebuke; it's like God is saying "don't put Moses and Elijah on the same level as my Son, Jesus!"*

7. What do we learn about Jesus in verse 5?

*He is God's Son. He is loved by the Father. We are to listen to everything Jesus says, because He has the authority of God!*

8. How did the disciples react in verse 6?

*They didn't fall on their faces when they saw Jesus transfigured; not when His face shone like the sun; not when His clothes became as white as the light; not when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him; not when Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus; and not even when the cloud of glory appeared and overshadowed them. But when the disciples **heard the voice from heaven**, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.*

*"They were in the immediate presence of God, and listening to their Father's voice: well might they lie and prostrate and tremble. Too clear a manifestation of God, even though it related to Jesus, would rather overpower than empower us." (Spurgeon)*

9. How does Jesus reassure the disciples in verse 7?

*Jesus touched them and told them not to be afraid.*

10. **Ponder:** What do you think the purpose of the transfiguration was?

*The disciples were once again uniquely in awe of Jesus. This helps explain the purpose of the Transfiguration: **to reassure the disciples that Jesus was the Messiah**, even if He would indeed be crucified as He had so surprisingly revealed.*

*Note the context: Jesus just revealed His humiliation and sufferings to them in Matthew 16:21. It makes sense that they receive **another divine testimony to Jesus' status as the Son of God at this time; to reassure them of His deity and that He is eternal.***

11. What happened in verse 8?

*When they looked up (from bowing facedown) – they only saw Jesus. The cloud, the voice of God, Elijah and Moses, had all disappeared. The focus is on Jesus alone!*

*"Though the apostles saw 'Jesus only,' they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by...O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias should alarm you, yet 'Jesus only' shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you." (Spurgeon)*

*"At this day, my brethren, we have no Master but Christ; we submit ourselves to no vicar of God; we bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield. 'One is our Master,' and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only." (Spurgeon)*

12. Why did Jesus say "**don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead**" in verse 9?

*Wisely, Jesus told the disciples to not speak of the transfiguration until after His resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus was the final confirmation of His ministry and glory; until then, reports of the transfiguration would be more likely to test the faith of those who did not see it rather than strengthen their faith.*

13. **Ponder:** How do you think this event would have affected Peter, especially given Matthew 16:16; 16:23; 17:4.

*In Matthew 16:16 – Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God*

*In Matthew 16:23 – Peter received a severe rebuke from Jesus because he tried to prevent Jesus from going ahead with His mission to die.*

*In Matthew 17:4 – Peter naively suggested he built 3 shelters/tabernacles for Moses, Elijah and Jesus; which suggested wrongly that Moses and Elijah were equal to Jesus!*

*Peter would be feeling somewhat of a failure after being rebuked and making a silly naïve suggestion. The transfiguration experience would have encouraged Peter; that Jesus valued him enough to include him in this miraculous experience.*

14. As they came down the mountain, what are the disciples puzzled about in verse 10? Why?

*They are puzzled that if Jesus is the Messiah – which the transfiguration surely proves; then shouldn't Elijah have come first, before the Messiah; just as the prophet Malachi – in Malachi 4:5 – prophesied? But they have just seen Elijah and it seems Elijah came after Jesus, the Messiah, not before?*

15. What explanation does Jesus give about Elijah in verses 11 & 12?

*Jesus explains that indeed Elijah will come and has in fact already come.*

16. According to verse 13, who is the Elijah “who has already come”? And what does he have in common with Jesus in verse 12?

*This Elijah is actually John the Baptist; who came before Jesus, the Messiah. We know that John the Baptist came in the Spirit of Elijah (Luke 1:17) and that Jesus already identified John as the Elijah to come (Matthew 11:14).*

*V12 tells us John and Jesus shared something in common – they both suffered terribly.*

### **Read Exodus 34:29-35**

17. How does this passage relate to Matthew 17:1-13?

*Again, we have a mountain top experience in the presence of God Himself.*

*Moses is a type of Christ.*

*Moses' appearance is changed (radiant)*

***Both Moses and Jesus' face shone in the glory of God – but there is a difference – Moses' glory was reflected glory; it did not originate in Himself but in God, and it faded in time. [a bit like the moon reflects the light of the sun]. Whereas Jesus' face shone like the sun.***

*The radiance of Moses' shining face was a reflected radiance, a received glory. The source was the face of God, and as Moses communicated so directly with God his face received some of this shining glory. “The face of Moses shone because he had long looked upon the face of God.” (Spurgeon)*

*In the presence of God (presumably at his own tent, which had become the tabernacle of meeting according to Exodus 33:7), Moses took the veil off. Yet among the people, he put a veil on his face.*

*It is easy to think that Moses wore the veil so the people would not be afraid to come near him (Exodus 34:30), or that the purpose of the veil was to protect others from the glorious radiance of Moses' face. Yet the Apostle Paul explained the real purpose of the veil: not to hide the shining face of Moses, but so that the diminishing glory of his face would not be observed because the glory was fading.*

*Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away (2 Corinthians 3:13). The Old Covenant had a glory, but it was a fading glory. God didn't want people to see the fading glory of the Old Covenant and lose confidence in Moses.*

### **Read 2 Peter 1:16-18**

18. How does this passage relate to Matthew 17:1-13?

*This is an eye witness account of what Peter experienced on the mountain with Jesus. Peter records the exact words spoken by God the Father, about His Son Jesus.*

### **What's the BIG IDEA of Matthew 17:1-13?**

*Confirmation of the heavenly glory of Jesus*



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

- ➔ How does this passage **apply to your life?**
- a. We have eye witness accounts in the Bible – as evidence/proof of who Jesus is. This should strengthen our faith
  - b. When we surrender ourselves to God, He will “transfigure” our minds (see Romans 12:2) – same Greek word used. And the Apostle Paul says we are being “transfigured” into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18)
  - c. The three occasions that the “inner circle “ apostles witness – the transfiguration, the raising of Jairus and the time in the Garden of Gethsemane – are all to do with death – teaching them – that Jesus has the “power” and “victory” even over death.
  - d. All of the Law and Prophets point to Jesus. See Luke 24:27 and Hebrews 1:1
  - e. We are to “listen” to God’s Son.
  - f. The disciples and us need to learn that suffering and glory go together. Peter wanted to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem; but they had to learn that without Jesus’ suffering and death; there would be no glory.
  - g. Surrendering our lives to Jesus, taking up our cross and following Him, always leads to glory. First the cross and then the crown.

- h. Being in the presence of God is enough – we don't need to be “doing” anything – just experiencing and listening
- i. It's in Christ Alone our hope is found...

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

*Matthew 17:5 - While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"*

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking God: for the glory of the person of Jesus; for the glory of Jesus' Kingdom and for the glory of the Jesus' Cross!

## Study 5 – The King in His Power – Matthew 17:14-21

*(Sermon on 05-March-23)*

**Before we begin:** What have we learnt about Jesus in chapters 16 and 17 so far?

*We have learnt*

- *that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:16)*
- *that Jesus will have the disciples build His church and it will be unstoppable*
- *that Jesus must die and will rise after 3 days*
- *we have seen a glimpse of the glory of His kingdom – through the transfiguration – and that Peter, James and John are eye-witnesses*
- *we don't need to worry about dying*

**Read Matthew 17:14-21 - and parallel passages from Mark 9:14-28 and Luke 9:37-42**

1. What is the scene that Jesus and His three companions encounter in verse 14?

*They came to a crowd and a man knelt before Jesus.*

2. What problem does the man describe in verse 15?

*The man brought his son to Jesus. His son is suffering seizures, which cause him to fall into the fire frequently.*

3. What were the disciples unable to do in verse 16?

*We learn from verse 17 that the boy's seizures are demonic in origin. That would not be the case for all seizures/epilepsy either then or today! Mark's version said the boy was made deaf and dumb by the demon.*

*The man had asked the [other] disciples to heal him the boy, but they could not.*

*On previous occasions, the disciples did cast out demons (Luke 10:17). Yet here they could not cure him. This is because there are ranks of demonic powers (Ephesians 6:12), and evidently some demons are stronger (more stubborn, resistant) than others. Since the disciples had been given the authority to cast out demons before (Matthew 10:8), apparently this demon was more difficult than most.*

*Their failure was in fact good for them. Their failure taught them.*

- *It taught them not to get into a rut of mechanical ministry.*
- *It taught them the great superiority of Jesus.*
- *It taught them to wish for the presence of Jesus.*
- *It taught them to come to Jesus with the problem.*

4. What is Jesus first response to this scene in verse 17? Who is Jesus addressing? And why?

*Jesus says they are unbelieving and perverse; He's addressing His disciples.*

*There is a sense that Jesus is frustrated with His disciples. His season of ministry before the cross was coming to an end, and perhaps He felt frustration that the disciples did not have more faith.*

5. How did Jesus cast out the demon from the boy in verse 18? Is this significant?

*Jesus delivered the demon-possessed boy instantly. What was too hard for the disciples was not too hard for Jesus.*

6. What are the disciples puzzled about in verse 19?

*They were puzzled that they couldn't drive out the demon.*

7. What reasons does Jesus give to the disciples for being unable to cast out the demon in verses 20 and 21? (cf. Matthew 10:1, 8; Mark 9:29)

*Jesus laid the inability of the disciples to cast out the demon on their little faith. To be successful in a battle against demons, there must be trust in the Lord GOD who has complete authority over the demons. Remember in Matthew 10:1, 8 he gave them authority to cast out demons amongst other things. And in Mark 9:29 tells us they didn't pray!*

8. What is Jesus' point in using the example of a "**mustard seed**" in verse 20?

*The faith that we must have has more to do with what kind/quality of faith it is than with how much/quantity of faith there is. A small amount of faith, as small as a mustard seed (a very small seed), can accomplish great things if that small amount of faith is placed in the quality of the great and mighty God.*

*It's not the SUBJECT (the disciples) of faith but the OBJECT (God Himself) of faith that is important.*

*Example: To place faith in an aircraft does not predetermine the direction of the aircraft. To place faith in an aircraft is to trust it to fly you to wherever it is going. To place faith in God is to be caught up with what God is doing, not getting God involved in what we are doing.*

### **Read Judges 16:1-22**

9. How does this passage (especially verses 19 and 20) relate to Matthew 17:14-21

*The disciples should have been able to cast out the demon from the boy; they had authority (Matthew 10:1, 8). But somehow they had lost their power. Jesus said it was because of their lack of faith (Matthew 17:20); their lack of prayer (Mark 9:29) and their lack of discipline Matthew 17:21 (though this verse is not in most manuscripts)*

*The nine disciples were perhaps jealous because they were not involved in the mountain top experience with Peter, James and John. During the Lord's absence, they may have become self-indulgent – they certainly neglected prayer (Mark 9:29) – and when the crisis came they were unprepared. Like Samson, they went out to battle (remember it's a spiritual battle we're in) without realizing that their power was gone (Judges 16:20). From their example, we see the importance of staying spiritual healthy.*

**Read Revelation 20:1-6**

10. In what way is Matthew 17:14-21 a picture of what Jesus will do one day?

*The picture in Matthew 17:14-21 is a glimpse of what Jesus ultimately does to Satan – Satan is defeated and bound.*

**Read 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3**

11. What do the disciples and us need?

*1 Thessalonians 3:10 - Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. And 2 Thessalonians 1:3 - We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 17:14-21**?

*The Power of King Jesus – even over demons*



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



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

- a. *We need to see the importance of being spiritually healthy.*
- b. *The faith like a mustard seed suggests not only size (God will honour even a little faith) but also life and growth. Faith like a mustard seed is LIVING faith that is nurtured and caused to GROW. Faith must be cultivated so that it grows and does even greater exploits for God.*
- c. *It's not the SUBJECT (the disciples) of faith but the OBJECT (God Himself) of faith that is important.*
- d. *Unlike the disciples, we must be praying, disciplining ourselves and meditating on God's Word.*

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

**Matthew 17:18** - Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment. {instant healing]

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking God that Jesus has the power over Satan, demons and evil. Ask God to help us to increase our faith in quantity and quality.

## Study 6 – The King in His Humility – Matthew 17:22-27

*(Sermon on 12-March-23)*

**Before we begin:** Remind yourself what happened when Jesus mentioned His death and resurrection the first time, in Matthew 16:21-28.

*When Jesus told the disciples about His death and resurrection the first time; Peter said “this shall never happen to you” (16:22) and he was severely rebuked by Jesus (16:23).*

*He then told them they would have to deny themselves, take up their cross (suffer and perhaps even die) and follow Him (16:24) and basically their old life had to die and they had a new life in/with Jesus (16:25-26)*

### Read Matthew 17:22-27

1. What does Jesus tell the disciples in verse 22? What word is added from the previous time? *He will be “delivered” into the hands of men. Here we have the first hint of betrayal.*

2. How do they react this time, in verse 23? What are they focusing on? *They are filled with grief. They seem to focus on His death.*

3. What question was Peter faced with in verse 24? What does their question imply? How does he answer?

*Peter was asked if his master paid the temple tax? It implies Jesus wasn’t going to pay or hadn’t paid. Peter replied that “Yes, He (Jesus) does”*

4. What is the temple tax? What was its purpose? (cf. Exodus 30:11-16; 38:25-27)

*According to Exodus 30, each Israelite had to pay a ransom for his life. It was referred to as atonement money (30:16) and used for the service of the tent (tabernacle). Exodus 38:25-27 shows what the money was used for. By the time of Jesus, the money is now used to maintain the temple, rather than the mobile tent/tabernacle.*

5. Prompted by the tax collectors’ question, what question does Jesus pose to Peter in verse 25? What is Jesus’ point?

*Jesus asked do Kings on Earth collect taxes from their own children or someone else.*

*His point is – He is free from paying this tax because He is the Son of the King, the Son of God and in fact He is King of Kings.*

*What a paradox: King Jesus is too poverty stricken to pay the temple tax of 2 drachmas.*

6. How does Peter respond in verse 26 and what does Jesus mean by “**then the children are exempt**”?

*Peter replied that Kings don’t collect [from their children] but from other [citizens].*

*So, Jesus was saying, He was exempt from paying – as King and as the Son of the King [God]*

7. Why does Jesus then agree to pay the temple tax in verse 27?

*Jesus chose His battles and didn't want to cause offence.*

8. How does Jesus obtain the money to pay for His and Peter's temple tax?

*He tells people to go and get the money from a fish's mouth. Showing He has dominion over the animals and fish in the sea, as Adam and Eve originally had in the garden (Genesis 1:26) but lost that dominion when they sinned.*

There are some **unique** things about this miracle of Jesus:

9. Where else is this miracle recorded?

*Nowhere, only in Matthew*

10. How many other miracles did Jesus do for His own needs?

*This is the only one.*

11. How many other miracles are to do with money?

*This is the only one.*

12. How many other miracles are there that use one fish?

*Only this miracle used one fish. Jesus had multiplied the fish for Peter (Luke 5:1-11; John 21:1ff)*

13. This miracle was for Peter; how many other miracles did Jesus do for Peter?

*Peter's mother in-law (Mark 1:29-34); helped Peter catch fish (Luke 5:1-11); enabled him to walk on water (Matthew 14:22-33); healed Malchus's ear (Matthew 26:47-56); and delivered Peter from prison (Acts 12:1ff)*

14. This miracle is the only one where the result is not recorded. We might expect verse 28 to say "Peter went and caught a fish, opened its mouth and took the money" but there's no verse 28. So, how do we know the miracle took place? (cf. 1 Kings 8:56)

*Because Jesus said it would be so!*

*1 Kings 8:56 - "Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses"*

15. What can we say about Peter's faith in this incident?

*We must commend Peter's faith; He trusted Jesus' word and did as Jesus said.*

16. In what way did Jesus show His humility in this incident?

*Jesus describes Himself as one greater than the temple (Matthew 12:6) and so Jesus could have lorded it over the temple tax collectors and refused to pay the tax. But He humbly paid the tax so as not to cause an offence or problem or put the tax collector in a bad situation.*

### Read 1 Peter 1:17-21

17. How does this passage relate to Matthew 17:22-27?

*In the Old Testament reading from Exodus 30, the money they paid for the tent/tabernacle was a reminder to the Jews that they had been redeemed from Egyptian slavery. But according to 1 Peter 1:18-19 we have been redeemed, not by something perishable like silver and gold; but redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, the lamb, without blemish or defect.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 17:14-21**?

The humility of King Jesus

The trust and obedience of Peter



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

*The complexity of the miracle of catching a fish with just the right coins to pay for both Jesus and Peter*



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

- a. Jesus has power of nature
- b. Jesus cares about every detail
- c. We can learn from Peter's faith and obedience in this case
- d. If we trust the King, He will meet our needs, as we obey His Word.

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

*<sup>27</sup> "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."*

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking God that Jesus has the power over all things. Ask God to help us to **trust** King Jesus and **obey** His Word.

**Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke**  
**January 2023**

**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**