



KINGDOM COME

Exploring who Jesus really is and
why it matters for all of life
Matthew chapters 8 - 12

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Who Jesus is and why it matters for all of life: 8 studies in Matthew chapters 8-12

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Some additional introductory notes provided by Rev. Matt Viney (matt@wavellpc.org.au).

INTRODUCTION

A good way to get to know the true character of someone famous is to find out more about their early years. Seeing what people were like before they became famous reveals a great deal about their true identity. It is exciting, too, going back to where everything began for them. You are transported back to the early days, recognizing the greatness that one day others will also see. This is true in the case of Jesus.

Looking at the early days of Jesus' ministry gives us a sense of what lies ahead for him, and gives us a powerful insight into his character and appeal. This early glimpse is what we find in Matthew 8-12. These chapters provide us with an authentic opportunity to get to know Jesus and to understand who he is, what he did and what he demands of his followers. In these chapters, we see Jesus' fearsome authority and his tender compassion. We see him living up to the extraordinary Old Testament expectations, all based on God's promises about the coming Messiah. We see opposition beginning and hardening against him, and we witness his courageous response. We see his faultless integrity and hear him teaching his disciples. In short: we meet the real Jesus in his early ministry in a biography he authorized.

The other thing we find in Matthew 8-12 is a vast array of different responses to Jesus. He is loved, hated, feared, labelled, pleaded with, questioned. People leave their jobs because of him; people stake their reputations on opposing him. No-one can sit on the fence. This examination of Jesus' early years is confronting for us too, for Jesus always demands a response. A right fear of Jesus' power and authority will lead, paradoxically, to true freedom.

It is my prayer that your examination of Jesus in these chapters will be genuine, and that your response to Jesus will be worthy of him.

Peter Collier
October 2008

Greetings! These study guides are intended to compliment our Sunday morning teaching series in Matthew's Gospel. Since Matthew is the third longest book in the New Testament it's hard to study the whole book in 7 or 8 Home Group meetings. So here's how we'll do it: on Sunday mornings we will be picking out key passages across the whole of Matthew's Gospel, but our Home Groups will focus on chapters 8-12. These particular chapters bring the unique authority, purpose and character of Jesus into focus. Between the Sunday talks and these studies we hope you're clearer on who Jesus is and what it means to respond to him as God's promised King.

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Matt Viney
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- b. Why does Jesus seem surprised (8:26)?
4. "...but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (8:20).
 - a. Why is this surprising?
 - b. What attitude, then, should Jesus' disciples have to where they 'lay their heads' (that is, where they live)?
 5. "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead" (8:22).
 - a. What does this command tell us about Jesus?
 - b. What relationships do you have that may challenge Jesus for 'top spot'? What should you do about this?
 6. What else do we learn in the rest of this section about what it means to follow Jesus? (See, for example, 8:8-13 and 8:26.)



To finish

The disciples ask the question in 8:27, "What sort of man is this...?"

- How would your workmates or friends answer this question?
- What sort of man would you say Jesus was before he was famous?
- Given your answer, how should you act?



Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks for the fact that Jesus' authority is matched by his compassion.
- Pray that you would have faith in Jesus and be prepared to give priority to following him ahead of anyone else.
- Pray that our fear of what we might lose, in worldly terms, will not stop us from embracing the freedom Jesus offers.

b. How do people today respond in a similar way?

Turn back to the Old Testament and read Ezekiel 34:1-6.

4. What were the 'shepherds' of Israel doing?

Read Ezekiel 34:11-16.

5. What did God say he would do?

Go back to Matthew 8:28-9:36.

6. How does Jesus' action fulfil Ezekiel's prophecy?

7. Our passage has highlighted a number of responses to Jesus, good and bad. What do these responses tell us about the character of those responding?



To finish

- Do you think Jesus had come to call the Pharisees? Why or why not?
- What warnings can we take away from the Pharisees in particular?



Give thanks and pray

- Thank God for keeping his promise to send the good shepherd, Jesus.
- Pray that we would see our need for 'Dr Jesus'. Pray for one friend who does not see their need for Jesus—that they *would* see it.

6. How are the disciples to go about their task?

7. What warnings does Jesus give the disciples?

8. Jesus is clearly speaking to the disciples about a specific task.
 - a. What is specific about the task? (Compare with Matthew 28:18-20 and Luke 22:35-36.)

 - b. What aspects of the task are common to all Christian ministry?

9. According to Matthew 10:17-23, what does it mean to be “wise as serpents”?

10. “...you will be hated by all for my name’s sake” (10:22). Why, then, follow Jesus?



To finish

What expectations ought ‘workers’ in the Lord’s harvest field have, according to this passage?



Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks for those who brought the good news of the kingdom of heaven to you.
- Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest field where you are. Pray for a plentiful harvest and for innocence, shrewdness and courage for Jesus’ workers.

4. JESUS: THE ONE TO FEAR

Matthew 10:24-42



Getting started

What makes you afraid? How do you overcome that fear?



Light from the Word

Read Matthew 10:24-42.

1. What does Jesus teach his disciples to expect?
2. What do these verses show about Jesus' opinion of himself?
3. In our last study, we saw that in the first part of this speech (10:5-23), Jesus was giving the disciples a specific task, and that several things he said applied only to their particular situation. Which parts (if any) of what Jesus says in our current passage apply *only* to the twelve disciples?
4. Who does Jesus mean by "them" and "those" in verses 26 and 28?
5. Why are the disciples not to be afraid of "them"?
6. What might fear of "them" stop the disciples doing?

7. Who is the equivalent of “them” for you?

8. What might fear of “them” prevent us from doing?

9. What should we do instead?

10. What might loving our family (or our life!) more than Jesus look like in practice?

11. What is the significance of Jesus saying “for my sake” (v. 39) and “because he is a disciple” (v. 42)?



To finish

Who are some ‘disciples of Jesus’ you could receive? How could you receive them?



Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks for Jesus’ promise to stand by those who stand by him.
- Thank God that *true* fear of Jesus will result in freedom from fear.
- Pray for:
 - courage to acknowledge Jesus before people
 - willingness to lose our lives for his sake
 - strength to stand by his messengers and disciples.

5. JESUS: DON'T LOOK FOR ANOTHER

Matthew 11:1-19



Getting started

Think of a friend who has doubts about Jesus. What doubts do they have? How would you go about answering them?



Light from the Word

Read Matthew 3:11-12.

1. What was John the Baptist expecting?

Read Matthew 11:1-19.

2. John's disciples ask if Jesus is "the one who is to come" (v. 3).

a. Why might they have done this?

b. What is Jesus' answer? (See verses 4-6. Jesus' answer refers to Isaiah 61:1 and Isaiah 35:3-6, so compare these passages.)

c. How does Jesus' answer help us with our own doubts?

3. What do we learn here about John the Baptist?

4. Read Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6. (In the Bible, Malachi is the book before Matthew!)
What will happen after the ‘messenger’ and ‘Elijah’ come?
- Malachi 3:1

 - Malachi 4:5-6
5. If John the Baptist is the ‘messenger’ and the ‘Elijah’, then who is Jesus?
6. Jesus says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (v. 15). What is he commanding us to hear (vv. 4-15)?

Read Matthew 11:16-19.

7. How did Jesus’ generation respond to him and to John the Baptist?
8. How does *our* generation respond?



To finish

If a Christian friend began to have doubts about Jesus because of hardship (like John the Baptist), how could you use this passage to encourage them?



Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks to God for keeping his promise about sending a messenger like Elijah in the person of John the Baptist.
- Pray we would be prepared to listen and receive what Jesus teaches about himself.
- Pray for anyone you know who may be struggling with doubts, that they would not ‘take offence’ at Jesus.

6. JESUS: THE WAY TO FIND REST

Matthew 11:20-30



Getting started

Which of the following do you think would be the most popular recommendations for getting peace of mind?

- Take a holiday
- Be told how to live your life
- Spend time with family
- Go shopping
- Play or watch some sport
- Have a coffee with friends
- Hear about God's judgement
- Take a long walk outdoors



Light from the Word

Read Matthew 11:20-24.

1. What do we learn about the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum?

Tyre, Sidon and Sodom were cities that had been judged severely in the Old Testament because of great wickedness. Yet Jesus says it will be more bearable on the day of judgement for these cities than for Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum.

2. Why does Jesus denounce these cities so strongly? What had they done that was so wrong?

3. What warning is there for those people who know more about Jesus' ministry and teaching than others?

Read Matthew 11:25-30.

4. What does Jesus say here about:

a. God the Father?

b. himself?

c. people?

5. Given what Jesus says here, how would you respond to the person who insists, “We can’t know what God is like”?
6. What command does Jesus give in this section?
7. To whom does he give this command?
8. What does he promise to those who obey?
9. What happens if we disobey Jesus’ command here?
10. How does Jesus’ way of finding ‘rest for our souls’ differ from the ways recommended in our society?



To finish

Why are we sometimes reluctant to come to Jesus, take his yoke upon ourselves and learn from him? How do the things Jesus says in this passage help us overcome this reluctance?



Give thanks and pray

- Thank God the Father that we can know him through his Son Jesus.
- Give thanks for the fact that Jesus is a humble and gentle master, and for the rest and freedom he gives for our souls.
- Pray that we would be prepared to take Jesus’ yoke upon ourselves, and not be stubborn and refuse to learn from him.
- Pray for a friend or family member who has not yet found rest for their souls in Jesus, that they would come to him.

5. In what ways could we make the same mistake as the Pharisees?

6. Jesus performs an astonishing miracle in this passage. Yet in response, the Pharisees plot to kill him.
 - a. Why do you think they are doing this?

 - b. What warning is there for us?

7. How does Jesus' behaviour fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 42:1-3 (vv. 18-21)?

8. What does this tell us about what the Lord of the Sabbath is like?



To finish

Jesus says the Pharisees are in error because they have not understood what God said in the book of Hosea. There he said, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6). How should understanding this affect:

- the way we treat other people?

- the way we treat God?



Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath who serves his people gently.
- Pray we would see Jesus rightly and so avoid petty and harsh legalism.

8. JESUS: THE BIG BROTHER YOU WANT

Matthew 12:22-50



Getting started

“It’s not what you know but who you know.” Do you agree? Why or why not?



Light from the Word

Read Matthew 12:22-50.

1. What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?
2. What do we learn about the Pharisees and teachers of the law from this passage?
3. How does Jesus answer the Pharisees’ charge that he is driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons?
4. What encouragement is there here for people who may be anxious about demonic activity?
5. What warning does Jesus give the Pharisees after they have made their charge against him?

6. What evidence is there that the Pharisees had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit?

7. How would you respond to someone who said, “I am worried that I have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit and cannot be forgiven”? (Hint: think about what the Pharisees were doing, and were continuing to do.)

8. In Matthew 7:7 Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you”.
 - a. Why, then, was it wicked for the Pharisees to ask for a sign (vv. 38-42)?

 - b. What will they receive?

9. How would you respond to someone who said, “I just wish God would give me a sign that I should follow Jesus—then I would believe”?

10. The expression ‘blood is thicker than water’ is sometimes used to mean that family bonds are tighter than other relationships. But how should Jesus’ words here (vv. 46-50) affect our thinking about family relationships?



To finish

“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters” (Matt 12:30). How should this affect the way we speak?



Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks for the fact that Jesus is stronger than Satan and that he calls all who do the will of his Father his brothers and sisters.
- Pray that our words would not condemn us but would show that we follow the one greater than Solomon and Jonah. Pray for situations where you might be tempted to neither stand with Jesus nor gather with him.

Soli Deo Gloria