

Good Word Schedule

“Matthew”

April, May, June, 2016

1. **Son of David**—*March 26–April 1*
2. **The Ministry Begins**—*April 2–8*
3. **The Sermon on the Mount**—*April 9–15*
4. **“Get Up and Walk!” Faith and Healing**—*April 16–22*
5. **The Seen and the Unseen War**—*April 23–29*
6. **Resting in Christ**—*April 30–May 6*
7. **Lord of Jews and Gentiles**—*May 7–13*
8. **Peter and the Rock**—*May 14–20*
9. **Idols of the Soul (and Other Lessons From Jesus)**—*May 21–27*
10. **Jesus in Jerusalem**—*May 28–June 3*
11. **Last Day Events**—*June 4–10*
12. **Jesus’ Last Days**—*June 11–17*
13. **Crucified and Risen**—*June 18–24*

Guests for this series of GOOD WORD broadcasts are Pastors Troy Fitzgerald and Jenniffer Ogden, Associate at the Walla Walla University Church in College Place, WA. Host and Study Guide author is Brant Berglin, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Biblical Languages in the WWU School of Theology.

For more information about GOOD WORD contact the School of Theology at Walla Walla University by phone (509-527-2194), fax (509-527-2945), email (GoodWord@wallawalla.edu) or regular mail (Walla Walla University, 204 S. College Ave., College Place WA 99324).

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The Book of Matthew

General Introduction

This study guide is meant to accompany the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School lesson for the 2nd Quarter of 2016. The format of this guide follows a similar pattern for each week's lesson: an introduction to the topic, a short discussion on several verses or bullet list of concepts for a passage, followed by questions in bold type. Please read through the Biblical passages, and then prayerfully consider the bolded questions. Perhaps you'll find better questions that should be asked, and answered!

It is my hope and prayer that our study of the Gospel of Matthew will bring the Kingdom of Heaven to life in our own hearts and sphere.

Brant Berglin
February, 2016

Opening Question

If you were writing a story about someone who made a huge impact on your life, what would you make sure was included and what might you leave out?

Introduction

The Protestant Canon of Jewish and Christian Scriptures include four stories about the life of Jesus, we term “gospels”—good-news reports about one of the most influential men who ever lived. These are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each has similarities to the others, but each one also provides some unique perspectives. And each one seems to be written for a different audience. This quarter, we’ll study the book of Matthew. In today’s lesson, we’ll start with a bit of background to the book and its author, then discuss some broad lessons in the first couple chapters.

Author of the Book

1. Are there clues about the author from within the Book of Matthew?
2. Evidence from external sources (early church leaders’ testimony)
3. What can we know about Matthew?
 - a. Also called Levi (named after the 3rd son of Jacob and Leah, “joined” or “united”)
 - b. Tax Collector (see Luke 5:27-29)
 - c. Had a party for Jesus at his home and invited many other tax collectors and sinners. Maybe Zacchaeus had been there...?

Character of the Book and Audience

1. Matthew’s organizational structure (as opposed to Luke’s “scattering” of passages). Matthew is organized into five broad sections. Some have drawn parallels with the first five books of the Old Testament—the Pentateuch—which formed the foundation of Israel’s law (“*Torah*”).
2. Teaching about the Kingdom and its ethics
 - The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)
 - The Kingdom parables (Matt 13, 18)
 - Eschatology—“The Return of the King” in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25)
3. “Fulfillment” emphasis
 - Focus on the fulfillment of Old Testament Prophetic oracles in Jesus
 - Jesus’ fulfillment of the Old Testament Law in the Sermon on the Mount (5:17)
 - Messianic hopes fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 1:1, 16; cf. 1:17, and 2:1). Matthew is the only Synoptic Gospel whose narrator calls Jesus the Messiah. In John 1:41, Andrew tells Peter they had found the Messiah, and in John 4:25, Jesus tells the woman at the well that He is the Messiah she had been hoping for.
4. Unique passages in Matthew
 - Infancy narratives: focus on Joseph, arrival of the Magi (1:18-2:23). See Luke for the Shepherds, Elisabeth and Zechariah, and a focus on Mary.

- Passion narratives of the Judas' remorse (27:3-10), Pilate's wife's dream (27:19) and washing his hands (27:24-25), special resurrection (27:252-53), soldiers guarding the tomb and bribery (27:62-66, 28:11-15), Jesus' appearance to the eleven (28:16-20).

What separates Matthew's story of Jesus from the others? What gives it a unique character? Who did Matthew write for, that is, who would most appreciate *his* story of Jesus?

Matthew 1:1-17: Genealogy

Matthew begins his story with a summary verse in 1:1: Jesus is the messiah, Son of David, and Son of Abraham. He sets up a Jewish audience to hear the story of a potential messianic candidate. He then—in good Jewish fashion—provides a genealogical record of this man's history, starting with Abraham and working his way down to Jesus. We usually skip over reading the “begats.” But Matthew's is fascinating! His genealogy is different from Luke's in its inclusion of some unsavory people. Most political campaigns try to paint their candidates in the best light, but Matthew goes out of his way to include those who might sully the Messiah's pure lineage. We don't have time to examine every person on this list, but we see murderers, prostitutes, pagans, idol-worshippers, liars, and thieves.

What would Matthew's genealogy of Jesus convey to a Jew looking for the Messiah? Why would Matthew include some of the people he does when he may have left others out? What lessons might this list of people in Jesus' lineage hold for me?

Matthew 1:18-25: Jesus' Scandalous Birth

Joseph didn't believe Mary was pregnant by God until an angel came to him and told him to take her as his wife. He wanted to divorce Mary “secretly”.

Describe Joseph's character. What kind of man did God chose to help raise His Son?

Matthew 2:1-23: The Visit of the Magi

Only Matthew includes this story. The Magi (plural, but not necessarily only three men) come from the East. They're aware by means of Astronomy of a new star, and perhaps from the fourth oracle of Balaam in Numbers 24:17: “A star shall come forth from Jacob, A Scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.”

How does the story of the Magi add to Matthew's story of Jesus? What does their presence in Jerusalem mean for Herod, for the religious scholars and rabbis, and for Israel in general?

Closing Comments

Christ's lineage should give us hope that God in the flesh would take up human nature, even when its history is one of scandal; but even sinful humans are able to be associated with Christ through their faith.

Opening Question

How should we relate to a 2,000 year old statement that the Kingdom of God is near?

Introduction

The ministry of Jesus doesn't begin with Jesus, but with His cousin, John. Before Jesus starts his ministry of love, of healing, teaching, and preaching about the new Kingdom, John preaches it (Matthew 3:2). John's ministry included ritual immersion in water, a mind-change (repentance), confession of sin, and a change in ethics.

Matthew 3:1-10—John the Baptist

1. John's persona:
 - Clothing: John is dressed as was Elijah the Tishbite (see 2 Kings 1:8) suggesting a prophetic role from the outset.
 - Food: Some have suggested that John's diet was vegetarian, eating wild honey with locust beans like carob. However, the Greek word here is for grasshoppers, not pods, even though the English is "locust."
 - A Wilderness lifestyle? Scholars have suggested John may have Essene background, or maybe even lived for a time at Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.
 - Christian Monasticism found evidence for an ascetic lifestyle in John's simplicity, hairy clothing, and wilderness abode. Some orders modeled their lifestyle after him.
2. John's Message:
 - Repent! An imperative, a command. The Greek word *Metanoio* suggests a change of mind, of thinking or of heart
 - The Kingdom of God is near. Matthew uses the phrase Kingdom of Heaven (32x) or Kingdom of God (4x) 36 times in his gospel, and references the kingdom over 56 times. It's a major theme, especially in chapter 13 with the parables of the Kingdom.
 - John rebukes the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and ethnic confidence.
 - Another imperative, bear fruit congruent with a statement of repentance. Sorrow for sin should lead to a reform in the life.
3. John's Methodology:
 - Public proclamation – is there a place for street-corner preaching these days?
 - In the wilderness – John wasn't in the busy cities, but in the Judean desert.
 - Calling people to wash—immersed in water. The Greek word "baptize" means to immerse. John's message was one of whole-body washing as a symbol of cleansing from sin in harmony with their confession, repentance, and subsequent new life.
4. John's Influence and Fruit:
 - Jerusalem, "all Judea" and the Jordan region came to hear John. He attracted large groups of people
 - People confessed their sins, admitted to doing wrong. We may think of admitting doing wrong as of utmost privacy.
 - Luke 3 10-15 suggests people even asked what needed to change in their lives. They were willing to make a change. There was an air of eager expectation

Are John the Baptists' message, methodology, and influence still relevant today?

Do people really need to “repent,” and if so, from what? After all, isn't the idea of sin a bit old-fashioned or outdated, or at least religiously charged and thus not politically correct in advanced western culture?

What would the announcement of the arrival of God's heavenly Kingdom have meant to Jews then, and what should it mean for us 2,000 years later?

Matthew 3:11-17—Jesus' Baptism

The last part of John's message was about one coming after him who was greater than him, one who would arrive with signs of judgment, and of a greater Baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire.

It is immediately after this announcement in the narrative that Jesus shows up to be baptized.

What is John's reaction to Jesus' request to be baptized? Isn't He the Messiah? Why would Jesus get baptized?

What supernatural events take place at the baptism of Jesus that confirm John's preaching about Him?

Matthew 4:1-11—The Temptations

Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tempted (40 days, like Israel's wanderings) by the adversary. Three specific temptations are recorded, and three times Jesus thwarts the attacks, parrying with the sword of the Scriptures and confidence in His Father's love.

Would you have been tempted by these same trials?

What is the difference between temptation and sin? Is it wrong to be tempted?

Is it possible to overcome temptations, and if so, does Jesus provide me an example here?

Opening Question

What makes Jesus' Sermon on the Mount so challenging, yet relevant today?

Introduction

Matthew 4 records the call of the first disciples. They, and other crowds, follow Jesus to hear Him speak and to bring the sick, demoniacs, and cripples to Jesus, and He healed them. This summary seems to do injustice to what must have been amazing, miracle-filled events; yet we're only given this brief glimpse as a setting for the next 3 chapters—teachings of Jesus—where Matthew devotes more space than the other Synoptic authors to the ethics of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 5:1-12—The Beatitudes

These nine confirmations seem to go against just about every value we would consider a blessing or fortune: money, happiness, satisfaction, revenge, inner integrity, strength, power, peace, and security. These seem to speak to issues of the heart toward external situations that are sometimes beyond our control.

**To whom are the beatitudes written? Who would benefit most from hearing them?
Is Jesus right? Have we been duped by the values of this world as to what truly constitutes “blessing” or “fortune” or “happiness”?**

Matthew 5:17-48—Jesus Relationship to the Law

Jesus addresses several issues of the Old Testament Law that had been perverted by the oral traditions of the Rabbis and had thus lost their force in Jesus' time: murder and hatred, adultery and lust with marriage/divorce, making vows or promises, and revenge toward enemies. The section concludes with a call to be perfect as Father God in Heaven is perfect: He loves his enemies, and wishes good on those who wish him evil.

Are any of these more difficult for you than the others? Are any of them outdated or irrelevant to our culture or human nature?

Can the Old Testament laws really be summed up with “love”? Is it possible to actually love our enemies? If I don't feel love for someone, should I give up hope?

Matthew 6:1-18—Inward Piety

Outward show in the Christian life cannot fool God, the One Whom we ultimately serve and pray toward. In a religious culture, there may be temporary gains by pretending piety through influence and reputation, but in the end, these cannot please God; they will only earn temporary rewards and forfeit eternal ones. Jesus called such people “actors,” “hypocrites.”

Who is most susceptible to the temptation to live an outwardly pious life while harboring selfish motivations?

Matthew 6:19-34—Treasure in Heaven

If I cannot be assured of anything during life on planet earth because of things that destroy: violent people, weather, pestilence, disease, etc., then it seems silly to preoccupy life with the attempt. Yet we should have food, clothing, and shelter.

Jesus says I shouldn't worry about the basics of life. Is He suggesting I shouldn't work, and just trust Him to give me what I need? Where is the balance between providing a living, and worrying about the needs of this life?

What, according to Jesus in 6:34-35, is the antidote to worry?

Matthew 7:1-27—Judging

Jesus begins the section by warning against judging others, then proceeds to say that false prophets are known (“judged”) by the fruit they bear, whether they “do the will of the father.” What matters most to Jesus seems to be carrying out God’s will rather than comparing oneself to others.

How do we unravel Jesus' statements about judging? Are they contradictory? Or is that too simplistic a conclusion?

Closing Comments

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is amazing for its depth of insight into human nature, its highest spiritual/ethical/social standards, and comprehensive nature. If all people made these principles the foundation of their interactions with God and other people, a piece of heaven would be felt here on earth. That is God's plan!

Opening Question

Must faith in God be accompanied by obedience?

Introduction

In this lesson, we see Jesus’ authority over various diseases, over nature itself, and even the power of demons. Christ’s power didn’t always come without some kind of human response.

Matthew 8:1-17—Loving the Unlovely and Outcasts

This passage contains three healings: A leper, a centurion’s servant who was paralyzed, and Peter’s mother-in-law sick with fever. In the first and last, Jesus touches those who might be contagious. The leper was not to be contacted for fear of defilement, perhaps ritual defilement more than physical. In the middle story, where the Centurion’s faith is commended, Jesus heals over a distance without ever coming into the man’s home. Verse 17 sums up this section with a quotation from the Isa 53 suggesting Jesus’ fulfillment of the prophet’s words: Jesus bore our diseases!

What do these healings suggest about 1) Jesus’ attitude toward physical infirmity, 2) God’s relationship to the “outcasts” in society, and 3) my approach to people with “unclean” problems and diseases?

Matthew 8:23-27—Storm on the Sea

When traveling by boat across Galilee, a storm arose, covering the boat with waves. The disciples wake the sleeping Jesus pleading for Him to save them. He rebukes both the wind *and* their faith: in the Greek, He calls them cowardly and “little-faith ones.”

Did the disciples have reason to fear? Did Jesus answer their request as they expected Him to? What makes faith so hard when times are difficult?

Matthew 8:28-34—Setting Demoniacs Free

The disciples and Jesus are met on the other side of Galilee by two demon-possessed men. Jesus casts the demons out into herds of swine. We see little in Matthew of the demoniac’s post-exorcism experience like we find in Mark 5; the focus is definitely on Jesus and His authority to command them. Jesus only speaks once in Matthew, an imperative: “Go!”

Is there a need for this kind of healing today? Demon possession isn’t something psychologists or medical doctors probably explore in their textbooks, so is it still a real diagnosis?

Matthew 9:1-8—Get up and walk!

Mark 2:1-12 records the story of paralyzed man lowered through a roof by his friends. Matthew’s story is perhaps the same, but without mention of the roof or the friends. In both cases, Jesus first forgives the man’s sins, then commands the paralytic to get up, take his mat, and head home. The people watching are amazed when the man gets up and does as Jesus said.

Do you think there is a connection between spiritual healing and physical health? Is it possible to suffer physical ailments because of inner spiritual/mental/emotional turmoil?

When I read Romans, Galatians and Ephesians by Paul, I get the idea that we are saved by our faith *apart from* works. Could this man have been healed without getting up? What is the role of obedience in our Christian faith?

Closing Comments

Jesus' healing sometimes seemed predicated on the sick carrying out a small, but specific action, such as getting up, carrying a mat, or washing in a pool. Faith required action in order to prove its validity. For example to say I trust in airplanes to carry me in flight is only proven by getting in and flying. Words alone are insufficient for the word "trust."

Opening Question

Can followers of Jesus look forward to a life without conflict?

Introduction

John the Baptist sends a delegation to Jesus questioning his authenticity as the Messiah. Jesus sends them back with an answer. He then speaks about John's role in the new Kingdom.

Matthew 11:1-6—John's Questions

Somehow, rumors came to John the Baptist, while imprisoned by Herod Antipas, of Jesus' ministry. It wasn't what Israel expected, and perhaps not everything John anticipated, either. He wished some evidence that he hadn't pointed people astray. Jesus' reply to John was evidence enough to convince him of the truth. Just look at the power of the gospel!

How could John the Baptist question Jesus' identity? If even John the Baptist had questions about Jesus, is it any surprise that other Israelites wondered as well?

What should we do with spiritual doubts, or with life difficulties?

Matthew 11:11-15—John, the Greatest Prophet

Jesus makes some strong statements about John the Baptist. John was considered by Jesus as the "greatest" of the prophets, but no reason is given.

What made John the Baptist the "Greatest Prophet born of women"?

The lesson this week targets 11:12 as worthy of attention, suggesting it be interpreted in a Great Controversy context; that "violence" will be done to those who follow Christ. This is one possible interpretation of the passage. Comparing it to Luke 16:16, it is possible to suggest that forceful people were taking hold of the kingdom and forcing their way into it.

How do these passages—Matthew 11:12 and Luke 16:16—present the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 11:16-27—The Faithless Generation

Jesus compares His generation to children who don't react consistently, and to the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon, who would have repented if shown what Chorazin and Bethsaida had seen. Jesus suggests that the Day of Judgment would be easier for places like Sodom.

If these cities would have repented, why didn't God give them enough to believe and to bring about their repentance? Are people judged based on a moving scale? Are we only accountable for what we know or experience about God?

Closing Comments

John's ministry was fraught with hardship, but Christ gave him enough to sustain him. He will do the same for us.

Opening Question

Is Sabbath rest still important to God?

Introduction

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus offers rest to those who are weary. He invites us to come to Him and He will give rest for our souls. He yokes us to Him so we work side-by-side, yet unlike the burdens we often willingly take on ourselves, His burden is light and service with Him is easy compared to the burdens we bear and the competitive yoke of the world and the debilitating yoke of sin and guilt.

What is the meaning of “soul” and how can Jesus give it rest? How do the verses or passages around Matthew 11:28-30 give meaning to his offer of rest?

The Sabbath at Creation

The Sabbath is an integral part of the Creation week, before there was any ethnic distinction between Jew and Gentile; yet it is reiterated at Sinai and included as part of the Jewish Law (Exo 20:8-11); it is given again in Deut 5:12-15.

What was the purpose of Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-4? How do Exodus 20:8-12 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15 apply the Sabbath to Israel’s place and time?

Matthew 12:1-14—Jesus’ Example

The only place in the entire book of Matthew where Sabbath is specifically mentioned is in 12:1-14. But these verses seem to provide a context for, and an example of, the “rest” Jesus promises. They also show God’s gracious intention and rejuvenating purpose for Sabbath.

Two periscopes are joined in vs. 1-14. In vss. 1-8, Jesus and his disciples walk through the grain fields and are accused of breaking the Sabbath. In vss. 9-14, Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath.

What example did Jesus set in these passages? What does he teach about the Sabbath?

Sabbath Rest Today

Some denominations and groups, even some Messianic Jews, argue that the Sabbath is no longer to be honored as holy, that Christ’s death on the cross abrogated such laws.

Did Jesus’ method of keeping the Sabbath expire at the cross? What could motivate someone to argue against keeping the Sabbath today? Are there good theological arguments to do so? Lifestyle reasons?

Closing Comments

It’s possible that there has never been a generation in history more in need of rest than today. We close today with an invitation to enter into God’s rest—His finished work of Creation

—and his re-creation in the redemptive work of Christ. He invites you to come unto him, all who are weary, and He will give you rest for your “whole person,” for your soul!

Opening Question

What is the relationship between time with God and serving the needs of the people around us?

Introduction

This week's lesson covers several stories often taken independently of one another: the death of John the Baptist, feeding 5,000 people from a small sack lunch and 4,000 people on another occasion, and a windy night when Jesus walked on the surface of a lake. And yet, they are related as Jesus begins to withdraw from the conflicts of previous chapters over His teachings, His miracles, and His Sabbath-keeping.

Matthew 14:1-12—John's Death and Jesus' Response

John the Baptist courageously confronted the immorality of Herod Antipas, ended up in prison, and then lost his life at the request of Herod's wife Herodias. After John dies, his disciples report John's passing to Jesus.

What is Jesus' response to the disciple's return? Does this story prescribe seclusion at certain times in our lives due to stress, disappointment, or grief?

Matthew 14:13-22—Feeding 5,000

One of the very few stories outside the passion events that close the gospels that occur in all four gospels, Jesus feeds 5,000 men (plus women and children) from a small amount of food. The disciples asked Jesus to send the people away to get food, but instead Jesus tells *them* to feed the multitude. They can only see their small possession, not what God is able to do with it.

Consider how God may want to use you, or some possession or ability He has granted you, to help others or spread the good news of His Kingdom. Can my inability to envision God's plans hold me back from using what I have? Does God still multiply "loaves and fish"? Might a person be inclined to hold back from serving if they think they may not make a large impact?

Matthew 14:23-36—Jesus' Need for Solitude

After sending the disciples on ahead, Jesus finally gets the seclusion He was unable to enjoy because of the hungry crowd. He spends the evening in prayer. Alone.

Our connected culture keeps us in constant contact with others, to media—reading material, news, music, video, etc. What kind of reaction do you have to absolute solitude? Is there value in it?

Jesus comes to the disciples via water-walking. The disciples think they see a ghost (Greek: "Phantasma") and become troubled by the sight. But Jesus encourages them to the point that Peter joins Jesus walking on the water. But when he sees the wind, he sinks, crying out for help. After helping Peter back into the boat, the disciples worship Jesus.

When Peter cries out, what does Jesus *do*? What does Jesus *say*?

Closing Comments

Jesus deals with the very real struggles of life here on earth: grief and loss, hunger, fear, and devotion. He models the balance \between spending time with His Father recharging, connecting to the divine source of life, and then meeting the needs of people, which will never end this side of Christ's return.

Opening Question

Did the Disciples of Jesus fully understand His identity?

Introduction

Matthew 16:13-18 describes a private interchange between Jesus and His disciples. Jesus inquires about people's perception of Himself. The responses are varied: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. But all were influentially spiritual Jewish men who had died, implying a resurrection or incarnation of some sort.

But when Jesus asked more specifically the disciple's opinion, Peter spoke up: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus commends Peter for his human perception of a divine revelation. Take note of the two titles Peter offers: Christ, or "Messiah" the anointed one, and "Son of the Living God."

What makes Peter's declaration so important? What was Peter actually admitting? What difference does it make if Jesus really is the Messiah?

The Christ, the "Messiah"

The concept of Jewish messiah (Hebrew: "mashiach") has some interesting Old Testament antecedents such as Priests, Kings, prophets, and even Cyrus, the Persian King (Isaiah 44:24-45:5). Anyone anointed by God for a work was a "messiah" of sorts.

However, Jewish apocalyptic fervor in the time of Jesus had created a sense of expectation, hopes in a king like David who would give them rest from the oppression of Rome. But Matthew 16:20-25 suggest another type of work for Jesus, one Peter attempted to sidetrack.

What did Jesus teach concerning His real role as Messiah at the first Advent?

The "Son of God"

Jesus' second title is "son of God." Peter had some Scriptural reason (from the Old Testament) to call Jesus the Son of God: see 2 Samuel 7:12-1, Proverbs 30:4, Psalm 2:7-12, Isaiah 7:14 for some possibilities.

What does the title "son of God" imply about Jesus' relationship to people while He was here on earth? Do we fully understand Jesus' role today?

Matthew 16—The Keys of the Kingdom

Immediately following Peter's confession of Jesus' identity, in vss. 18-19 Jesus offers Peter (singular "you" in Greek) the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus' use of the future passive ("it will *have* been done") shows that using that key, the earthly binding and losing, is a reflection of something already accomplished in Heaven. Peter has no authority to command Heaven, only to reflect it.

Jesus says the Kingdom is built on the “rock”. In this passage, and others in the New Testament, who or what is the rock on which the Kingdom is built? Is it Peter? Something else? How does the transfiguration story that follows reflect this kingdom?

Closing Comments

Seeing the disciple’s reaction to Jesus’ death, they still were unclear as to His identity. Although we want precision, we also grow in our understanding of Christ as the disciples did.

Opening Question

How do we judge greatness in others?

Introduction

Although our study this quarter is on Matthew, the context for today's lesson is really in Luke 9:46-48. There, an argument boiled between disciples as to who was the greatest. Today, this is known as "smack-talk," trying to put someone else down and elevating oneself. How would Jesus respond to His bickering, childish disciples?

Matthew 18:1-9—Like a Child

Matthew 18:1-4 (as well as Luke) record Jesus' response: He puts a child among them and informs them that someone who humbles himself like the child is the greatest. Humility can be both an inward attitude and an outward action or deportment. Luke 14:7-11 illustrates how invitees at a meal should carry themselves by sitting at lesser places, not those reserved for the VIPs.

Can I fake humility? If I carry out the deeds of a humble person, is it enough to actually *be* humble? (like courage: "pressing on in spite of present fear") How will I know the difference between good manners and true humility?

But this doesn't reflect the heart, only common courtesy. Jesus reveals in Matt. 18:3 that disciples must be "converted," that is, turned back into children. Most adults forget what it is like to be a child. But accepting a child in Jesus' name is also as good as accepting Jesus Himself.

In what ways did Jesus expect the disciples to become like children? Can I know if I've become like a child, too?

Matthew 18:10-20—Reconciliation of Lost Sheep

Matthew 18:10-14 tells the parable of the lost sheep, followed by 18:15-20, where people of the Israelite congregation ("ekklesia", that is, also translated "church", Israel by faith) are to reconcile with brothers who have sinned against them by pointing out sins privately. Others are only called in to witness if the brother won't listen and be reconciled. Vs. 18 is a restatement of 16:19, only this time the plural "you all" is used for those binding and loosing.

How does Matthew 18:20 fit into the overall context of this section? The verse is usually used differently...

Matthew 18:21-35—Forgiveness

Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive a brother who sins against him. The generous, and holy 7 times Peter proposes seems good, but Jesus multiplies by 70. Jesus tells a parable to explain the fundamental concept: How many times have I sinned against God, yet He continues to forgive me. How, then, can I not forgive my brother for lesser offenses that do not

lead ultimately to the death of God's son? The challenge comes when social science gets involved.

What makes forgiveness so difficult to do? Can I learn to forgive without becoming a doormat for people to walk all over, or enabling wicked behavior in others?

What place does Jesus' previous advice about speaking to brothers who sin against us have in this process of forgiveness?

Closing Comments

Jesus' standards of greatness are often lauded by popular culture, but the spotlight usually shines on those with money, fame or infamy, power, position, achievement, intellect, revenge or some combination of these. The Kingdom of God values humility, forgiveness, repentance, and love.

Opening Question

What evidence is there that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament messianic prophecies?

Introduction

Our study today examines some events from the closing week of Jesus' life before He was crucified.

Matthew 21:1-11—The Triumphal Entry

Jesus has his disciples go into a village and get a donkey and her colt (according to Matthew). They bring it to Jesus. They spread blankets on them, and Jesus rides on them.

People sometimes wonder which donkey Jesus rode on. What do you think? How does Matthew see this arrival in Jerusalem as a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9? What made this event so special? Did the people recognize in the gesture the entrance of the King?

Matthew 21:12-17—Cleansing the Temple

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem is significant if one considers Jesus' as God's presence on earth. Jesus goes to the Temple, but how different for the Jewish people than for Ancient Israel. Moses met with God, but Aaron only saw the Shekinah glory of God on the Day of Atonement. Here, Jesus Himself, God in the flesh, is in their presence, and they don't recognize him.

John's gospel portrays Jesus cleansing the temple at the beginning of His ministry. Why does Matthew put it at the end? Did Jesus clean it twice, and if so, what would that imply about our spiritual need for cleansing?

Matthew 21:18-22, 33-46—Cursing the Fig Tree

The next morning, Jesus sees a fig tree in leaf, but curses it when He finds no food.

Is this just an outburst from a frustrated human, or is there more here? What is the "meaning" behind Jesus' actions?

In vss. 33-46, Jesus tells a parable about a vineyard, most likely taken from Isaiah 5:1-7, a parable that the Rabbis knew well, no doubt.

How does Jesus modify Isaiah's parable in His retelling? How is this parable related to Jesus' cursing of the Fig Tree just a few verses before?

Closing Comments

The events the begin Jesus' final week nearing Passover—His "Passion week" begin with His arrival at His Father's house, just as the Pascal lamb was brought into the house several days before the sacrifice. There is controversy, but Jesus hopes one last time to find fruit in His people. To the very end, Jesus never gave up hope in His people. How much He values us and what we can become in Him!

Opening Question

Is excitement about signs of the end of the world healthy for Christians?

Introduction

Today, we're studying Matthew 24 and 25, sometimes called Matthew's Apocalypse or the Olivet Discourse. Here Jesus gives one of His final sermons related to His second coming. Jesus and His disciples have left the temple, and move to the Mount of Olives where, looking across the Kidron Valley, they see the temple. The disciples remark about the beauty and size of the temple beautified by Herod the Great (also known as the "Builder"). Jesus most likely shocks them by informing them that every stone will be torn down, that not one will be left on the other.

How do the final chapters of Matthew, especially Matthew 23:29-39, provide a context for Jesus' announcement of the Temple's destruction?

Matthew 24:1-3—Questions about the Temple

The disciples are shocked by Jesus' Revelation that the temple could be overthrown. That could only mean the end of the world as they knew it, and maybe that coincided with the setting up of Jesus' new Messianic Kingdom.

What three questions do the disciples ask Jesus? Are they the same or will they have different answers?

Matthew 24:4-31—Signs of Jerusalem's Destruction and the Parousia

Jesus gives a number of events the disciples could watch for, maybe even ones they already expected to accompany the "Day of the Lord" prophesied in the Old Testament Prophets. He gives warnings about when to leave Jerusalem, and speaks about Daniel's "Abomination of Desolation." Matthew uses the important word "Parousia" for Christ's return, a word used for the visit of Kings to conquered territory.

Many Adventists look at the signs as a list of boxes to check, and feel that only one "sign" remains unfulfilled—the gospel of the Kingdom going to the world. Is this an accurate conclusion to come to from Matthew 24? What is the actual sign of Christ's "return"?

Matthew 24:32-44—Be Ready!

Jesus tells the disciples that life will get worse for them before it gets better. But maybe most shocking, He tells them that nobody knows the actual day of the Parousia, not prophets, angels, or even Jesus Himself, but only the Father. Thus, the only real preparation to make is to live in a constant state of preparedness.

How involved with “prepping” for doomsday should Christians get? Is there value in stocking physical goods in the event of emergency, or should we focus elsewhere? What does true “readiness” look like according to Jesus’ words here?

Matthew 24:45-25:46—Parables of Readiness

Jesus tells a series of parables following His warnings about future events. Each one has a different lesson for us related to the 2nd Coming.

What does each of these parables tell us about Christ’s return, and what can we know about what Jesus values in relation to His coming?

Closing Comments

Jesus hopes we’ll live in daily expectation of His coming, being constantly “ready.” But as history has shown for many people, death comes first. We should seek a balance between being prepared for heaven today because I could die at any moment, and the eager looking forward to the “soon” future when Jesus comes.

Opening Question

How should Christians handle opposition and false accusations?

Introduction

The final hours of Jesus' life culminates with more significant events than we'll have time to cover in this one lesson. There is no doubt that each scene is worth much Biblical meditation and reflection. But looming over all of these is Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and ultimate death.

Matthew 26:1-30—Preparations for His Death:

Matthew juxtaposes three stories: the woman's costly gift at Simon's house, Judas' plans, and Jesus' final Passover meal with His disciples in the upper room.

How are these events related, and how do they escalate the conflict in Matthew's narrative? What is the importance of the Passover ("pasca"=suffering) for the story? Is the Passover still meant to be kept as the Jews have, or did Jesus institute a "new" ordinance in its place?

Matthew 26:31-27:25—Gethsemane, Arrest and Trial

After retiring to the Mount of Olives again after the meal, Jesus warns the disciples that they will fall away, and that Peter would deny him.

Why was the Gethsemane experience so difficult for Jesus? How did His disciples view it, having no real foreknowledge of the next few hours?

The arrest of Jesus comes at night, in secret, to steal Him away. How is this a fulfillment of Jesus' teachings throughout His ministry?

Peter's denial occupies some space in Matthew's story. Why is this event highlighted during Jesus' last hours before He dies?

Describe Jesus' response to His accusers throughout His trial. What model does He serve for us when we are accused falsely, put in difficult places, or challenged publically?

Closing Comments:

The crucifixion that follows these events garners the expected emphasis when we talk about the Passion Week, but we must not minimize how important are these closing scenes that lead to Jesus' death. The physical pain to come is exacerbated by the psychological, spiritual, emotional, and social pain of abandonment and rejection Jesus faces starting in Gethsemane and throughout His trial. Oh that we might handle trials as Jesus did!

Opening Question

Do the death and resurrection of Jesus still have relevance to us today?

Introduction

The last two chapters of Matthew are the lowest point in human history followed by perhaps the most triumphant as we follow Jesus to the cross and then find his grave empty and Jesus alive.

Matthew 27:26-54—The Crucifixion:

Crucifixion was one of the worst forms of torture known to man, essentially causing a constant asphyxiation or suffocation that could last for several days. In addition to the pain of the nails, the cramping of muscles, and Jesus' scourging (which may not have been typical for crucifixion victims), the crucified also suffered exposure to elements, hunger and thirst, and public insult and shaming. But for Jesus, this was His coronation as King of a Kingdom of suffering.

What language in Matthew gives irony to Jesus' Kingship? List the different ways Jesus is shown to be a King here, and what physical and social items related to Kingship show up in this passage.

What is so ironic about the abusive comments made to Jesus while He is on the cross? How do they both reveal the heart of the people and at the same time reveal God's purpose in Christ?

Though difficult to watch, the closing scenes of Jesus' life are filled with lessons for us as we live our daily lives amid much hardship and difficulty. More than that, we see clearly the self-sacrificing heart of God for us in contrast with the willingness of Satan and those who follow Him to kill God. As you see Jesus, the lamb of God, sacrificed for you in His death, I urge you to accept His substitutionary death in your place, that by faith, you might become a child of God's.

The Resurrection—Matthew 27:56-28:20

Jesus was placed in a tomb owned by wealthy Sanhedrin member Joseph of Arimathea. There are fascinating parallels to Jesus' birth where His father Joseph wraps him in cloth and lays Him in a (possibly stone) feed trough. Here He is placed by another Joseph, wrapped again, in a stone tomb. Here, Jesus would rest in death through the Sabbath hours. Early in the morning, the women come to the tomb to finish the burial process.

What attempt did the Pharisees make to ensure there could be no "resurrection"? How has this event helped to provide evidence of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus?

What would be your reaction if you had been with the women at the tomb early on Sunday morning? Matt. 28:17 says some “worshipped” Jesus, but some were doubtful. How does this verse describe people’s reactions today when they hear of this event?

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for the world? Why has so much effort been brought against the historical validity of this event?

Matthew 28:18-20: The Great Commission

Matthew concludes His gospel with Jesus’ authoritative commission to His disciples to make more disciples. He asks them to do the very work He did with them, teaching them, baptizing them in the name (singular) of the Father, Son and Spirit, and essentially modeling the work of the Kingdom. But He leaves them with the amazing promise of His presence until the end of this age, and the inauguration of the next age at His 2nd Coming.

Closing Comments

Matthew’s gospel ends with hope—Jesus is Alive!—and purpose for the disciples—go make disciples—and with the expectation that Jesus will return again. May God bless your continued study of this amazing gospel as this quarter has given us a taste of what is there for us if we study.