

Preparation for Sessions 22-23, Chapters 26-27

Matthew – The King And His Kingdom - The Great Adventure

Overview of Sessions 12-21 – Chapters 11-25

Chapter 10 wrapped up Book 2 of Matthew's Gospel with Jesus' missionary instructions to the 12 newly-appointed apostles. Having demonstrated His power over nature, sin, and death, He turned His attention toward getting out the news of the kingdom through these apostles, on whom He bestowed His own power and authority to heal illness and cast out demons. Imagine for a moment the roller-coaster of their emotions as He first announced they'd share in His power, then told them to expect the same negative reception He'd gotten, then fortified them against certain persecution! His answer is the most-frequently occurring promise of the New Testament: Do not be afraid. Those who persecute you cannot touch your soul, and God has overcome the world.

Chapters 11 & 12: Jesus Confronts an Evil Generation

Book 3 "The Kingdom Defined." From giving His missionary instructions, Jesus went on to confront the very people who gave Him, and would give the apostles, the most trouble. This leads to the discourse on the parables that help further define what God's kingdom is all about and who belongs. Narrative section of Book 3, Jesus confronts His generation with their failure to repent and receive the good news of the kingdom, and in which the Jewish leaders begin to challenge His authority and power.

Jesus demonstrates through His teaching that He is the new King.

A. Disciples picking wheat on the Sabbath. Jesus teaches that He is the new King of the new Kingdom and His Apostles are the new priests of the new Kingdom. All He said was "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, 1 Sam 21:2-7.

B. Jewish leadership wants Him dead in Chapter 12:14 "But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him to put him to death."

Chapter 13: Parables About the Kingdom

Matthew 13 is Jesus' third discourse, which is about the Seven Parables about the Kingdom of Heaven. The parables of the kingdom function as a hinge between the two halves of Matthew's gospel. They draw a "line in the sand" between those who accept Jesus' message and those who reject it. With them comes a shift to growing opposition among Jesus' enemies and a fresh comprehension of the truth among His followers.

One who seeks the kingdom must be willing to give up every-thing in order to attain it and be confident that it will be worth every penny spent and more. While on earth, it will contain "weeds" and "wheat"-both "good" and "bad" people-together. People living in the kingdom are to exercise the same sort of mercy and patience that they receive from God. They must be patient and refrain from the temptation to "pull out the weeds" prematurely. Judgment belongs to God.

Chapter 14 & 15: Instructions for the Twelve

This begins the 4th Book of Matthew: Transfer of the Kingdom's Authority. In His two feeding miracles, Jesus demonstrated what He taught in His parables about the kingdom: it might look small at first, but it possesses great power and potential for growth when His disciples step out in faith and cooperate. In these miracles, Jesus demonstrated for His disciples what He would charge them to do before He leaves: to take the power and life of the kingdom first to the Jews, but then to the Gentiles and all the world. We see this work continued today in the supernatural distribution of Jesus'

body and blood. The Eucharist, transformed in the hands of priests around the world, provides spiritual nourishment to all in the Church.

A. Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes for 5,000 people (for Israel).

- 1) He had Twelve baskets left over. Enough for all of Israel.
- 2) Jesus walks on water and Peter asks to do the same.

B. Jesus also multiplies loaves for 4,000. (For the 4 corners of the earth done in Gentile territory)

- 1) Seven baskets left over. Perfect fulfillment for the whole world. God has enough to feed not only to feed Israel, but also to feed the whole world.

Chapter 16: Jesus Establishes the Church

At the center of this narrative, Jesus makes Peter the first Vicar (the first Pope). Jesus gives authority to Peter to be the first "prime minister" of the new Kingdom to exercise authority "over the house" in Jesus' absence.

Jesus expresses His intention to build His house, the Church, upon the "Rock" of Peter. The kingdom that Jesus is establishing on Earth is a spiritual fulfillment of the kingdom God established in Israel. This is the fulfillment of God's original promise to David, that He would make David's name great and establish His house.

At the close of chapter 16, Jesus tells His disciples for the first time that He must suffer, die, and rise again. They do not yet understand. They are pre-conditioned to think of kingdom and glory in earthly terms, and Jesus must teach them what they mean in heavenly terms.

Chapter 17: The Transfiguration

The events of chapter 17 end the narrative section of Book 4; and lead into the discourse on life in the Christian community in chapter 18.

Any doubts Peter might have had as to whether Jesus truly was the Son of God would have vanished on the Mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus was revealed as the New Moses preparing to lead a new Exodus of His people from slavery to sin.

A. Disciples get a look at Jesus in His Divine Glory. The veil is lifted for a moment on this mountain (Matthew 17 and Luke's Gospel 9). Luke is the only one who tells us what they are talking about in the Transfiguration.

B. Jesus is talking to Moses and Elijah about His exodus, which is going to be accomplished in Jerusalem. He is going to be Crucified, Die, and Rise from the Dead.

C. Jesus' life is bringing on the true exodus. Not an exodus of bondage of Egypt, but exodus from the bondage of sin. And the true return from exile. Not an exile from Babylon, but an exile brought on by sin.

Chapter 18: Characteristics of the Christian Community

Book 4 of Matthew's gospel closed with Jesus' discourse on the characteristics of the kingdom. Only the truly humble and child-like can enter, and mercy is the hallmark of relationships within it. The kingdom more closely resembles a family than a courtroom. Reconciliation and restoration is the goal of correction when it is needed. The key to all is to have the heart-attitude of Christ; to offer to Him the little we have and allow His power to work within and through us.

Chapter 19: Marriage: A Demonstration of God's Love

Matthew 19 begins the fifth and final "book" of Matthew's Gospel before its account of the Passion. The overall message of this and the next six chapters is the announcement of the end of the old kingdom. The book culminates with Christ's "Olivet Discourse" in which He pronounces judgment on Jerusalem.

The narrative section of Matthew's fifth book began with Jesus moving south from Galilee to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. There He was tested by the Pharisees with a question about divorce designed to trap him into offending Herod Antipas. Jesus deftly avoided the trap and turned it on them, exposing the hardness of their hearts while asserting His greater authority than Moses to proclaim law.

Chapter 20-21: Stepping Down into Greatness

Jesus has been showing the disciples how greatness in the kingdom can be achieved. In this new kingdom, the last will be first. Whoever wants to be great must be a servant, and the outward show of religion is not enough (you must bear fruit!).

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem takes place in Chapter 21. Jesus is greeted by the crowds shouting "'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest.'" Jesus cleansing the Temple, cursing of the Fig Tree and Jesus being challenged by the Religious Authorities, follows His entry into Jerusalem.

Chapter 22-23: "Let's Get Real"

In these final chapters before Christ's Passion, His glory is placed side by side with images of suffering and judgment. The old is going out and the new is coming in and it will not happen quietly. Jesus gives example after example that He is the Messiah, the true Son of David, who is coming to establish His reign and kingdom. But the inevitable clash with the religious leaders will now intensify.

The fifth narrative section of Matthew ends in a scathing judgment on the scribes and the Pharisees with a list of seven Woes. Woes for Hebrews are curses. Each of the Woes start in the reverse order of the Beatitudes. They are the opposite of the Blessings.

Chapter 24-25: Jesus Predicts the End of an Era

Matthew 24 and 25 form the "Olivet Discourse," which is the final discourse before Matthew's conclusion and the Passion narratives. Not surprisingly, they are concerned with the occasion of the end of the old covenant age and the establishment of the new.

1. Signs of the End of a Age
2. Be watchful and Faithful
3. Two Parables (Ten Virgins and Talents)
4. The Last Judgment - 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?'

Matthew's gospel is drawing to a close. The five "books" have all pointed to this conclusion: "The Victory of the King."

Chapters 26-28 are the heart of the gospel and the accumulated weight of not just Matthew 1-25, but of the entire Old Testament.

The world as the Apostles know it is about to end and Jesus will be at the center of both the end and the new beginning.