

“THE CHURCH HANDBOOK”

Studies in Matthew 22-25



St Faith's Church Narrabeen

INDEX

Introduction		2	
Praying for people who don't know Christ yet		4	
Prayer Points		6	
Study	Title	Page	Week commencing
1.	The Great Invitation	7	15 th July
2	The Question of Life after Death	11	22 nd July
3.	Deadly Leadership	13	29 th July
4.	Turned Inside Out	16	5 th August
5.	Warnings for our Time	19	12 th August
6.	Waiting Well	22	19 th August
7.	On Being Prepared	24	26 August
WEEK BREAK	FOR OUTREACH		2 nd September
8.	Judgement	27	9 th September
Prayer points		30	

The Church Handbook

Studies in Matthew Chapter 22-25.

Introduction.

Matthew's gospel can be divided into two sections. In chapters 1 to 15, the big question that keeps arising is "Who is this man Jesus?" Then in Chapter 16, Jesus poses this question directly to the disciples, and Peter replies - "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". (Ch 16 v16). This is the great turning point in Matthew's account of Jesus' life. From now on the teaching of Jesus focuses more and more on what it will mean to be a follower of Jesus. In the very next section (Ch 16 v21-28), a key emphasis of this teaching emerges for the first time. Since Jesus is about to suffer and die, losing his life in this world, that is what anyone who decides to follow him must be ready for. They must expect to die to this world, they must plan to die to self. And they must do this, for the sake of the same mission that Jesus himself died in order to achieve, that is, the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now, the word Jesus uses here to describe this new people of God is "The Church". He tells the disciples at this key moment in his ministry "I will build my church". (Ch 16v18) The church here is the people of God, the gathering of disciples, those who have come to know that Jesus is the King, God's Messiah or Christ, the one all people are called to serve.

From Chapter 16 onward, Jesus then is teaching what it will mean to live as part of his church. He uses the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" to speak of the same group of people, disciples who know God as King, as they follow the Son of God, Jesus.

In the studies that follow, then, we will look at a few of the chapters in this second section of Matthew's gospel, with this theme in mind. We will be asking what Jesus' actions and teaching mean for us today, as followers of this Jesus. As we do so it is important also to keep in mind that Matthew's gospel closes with a clear instruction to the Disciples, to the church that he is establishing. Recorded in Matthew Ch 28 v18-20, Jesus says "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations....." This instruction to go to all nations and make new disciples, is the climax of Jesus' instructions to his Church. Matthew closes his gospel with the same theme that he began with. Back in Chapter 1v1, Jesus' ancestry was traced back to Abraham. It was to Abraham that God had promised "All nations on earth shall be blessed through you"

(Genesis Ch 12 v3). Here was the beginning of God's plan to rescue his creation. As Jesus gives his final instruction to those first disciples, we see how the church is to be at the centre of this rescue plan. While Jesus himself confined his mission to Israel, the church is to take the message to the nations. It is to announce that Jesus is God's Messiah, God's son, and call on people to serve him, becoming disciples themselves. And they are to become part of the Kingdom of heaven by learning to do all that Jesus himself taught.

So as we come to chapters 22 to 25, we come to learn how we ourselves are to live, as part of Jesus' church. But we also come to learn what we need to be teaching and training others to know and do, as we also take on the responsibility of making disciples of all nations.

Of course, not all of us are evangelists, and not all of us are equipped to be teachers of others. But I believe we should all be supporting, and participating as we can, in this mission. With this in mind, you will find on the next page space to write out a group prayer list. I want to encourage us all to identify a few non-christian contacts that we can pray for. People that we can ask God to bring to know Christ as Lord and Savior. People, that, perhaps God might bring to know Christ, through our invitation to an event where the gospel is announced. People that God might even have us speak the gospel to personally.

I would also like to urge all groups to try and host, or focus on, one such event themselves this term. For the men, this might be our Mens' Dinner (Thursday Night 5th September). Or you may choose something else that you could invite friends to, where they can meet other Christians, and hear something of the gospel of Christ. We will have a break in our teaching series in the first week of September, so that may be a good week to hold such an event yourselves, if you feel the men's dinner would not suit your needs. (e.g. the Ladies !)

You will not have time in your group meetings most weeks to study every section of Matthew that is included in the readings for that week. I want to encourage you to have a go at reading the whole section privately before the study group meeting, then discuss the answers to the questions in the main section indicated for each week. I am sure God will encourage and inspire and challenge us as we do this together, over the term.

Kerry Nagel June 2013

Praying for people who don't know Christ yet

Group member	Praying for...
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.

Praying for people who don't know Christ yet

Group member	Praying for...
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.

Prayer Points

Study 1

The Great Invitation Matthew 22:1-22

1. Getting started.

a) Have you ever invited someone to an event you were hosting, and then found that they did not even reply? How did you feel? What made you feel that way?

b) Discuss.

2. Read Matthew 22v1-10.

a) Setting the scene - from verse 1, who is Jesus particularly speaking to when Matthew writes “Jesus spoke to them”? Look back at Chapter 21 v23, 45-46.

b) Who else is probably listening in? (see Ch 21v10-11, Ch 21v23, and Ch23 v1 and note that many people came up to Jerusalem in those days to celebrate the Passover)

c) Try and picture the scene as Jesus begins to tell the parable in Ch 22 v1-14. How would you describe the ‘atmosphere’ as he speaks?

d) From verses 1 to 4

(i) What does the King in the parable do?

(ii) *What to you think his reasons are?*

(iii) What do you think this tells us about his character?

e) From verses 5 to 10

(i) In what two ways does the King respond to the refusal of his invitation?

(ii) What do you think this tells us about his character?

f) We need to be careful not to try and identify every part of the parable, every character, with something in life. But clearly, the king here is God. What do you think Jesus is telling the Pharisees, through this parable?

g) (i) What sort of people does the King invite into his feast, in the end? (v10)

(ii) What do you think might be the significance of this?

3. Read Matthew 22 v11-14.

- a) What does the King immediately notice, when he comes to the feast himself?

- b) What does the King do, as a result?

- c) What do you think the “Wedding Clothes” symbolise? (look at Ch 21 v43; then Ch 7 v21, Ch 12 v50)

- d) Jesus’ final comment is surprising (v14) since in the parable, many are both invited to the feast, and are allowed to remain. What do you think Jesus means, then, when he says that “few are chosen”? (see also Ch 7 v13-14)

4. Getting Personal.

- a) As disciples of Jesus, what encouragement is there in this parable for us, as we consider the character of the King? Discuss.

- b) What warning is there for those who follow Jesus?

- c) (i) What does the parable tell us about who God wants invited to his Heavenly feast?

(ii) How might this be important for us, personally?

(iii) As a Group?

5. Spend some time praying in response to what you have discussed.

6. Only if you have time-

a) Read Matthew Ch 22 v15-22.

(i) What are the Pharisees trying to do (v15)?

(ii) For what reasons, do you think?

b) Describe the way they speak to Jesus.

c) (i) What is the point of Jesus' answer to their question?

(ii) How might each part of this apply to us, today? Discuss.

Study 2

The Question of Life after Death

Matthew 22:23-46

1. Getting started.

- a) The question of what happens when a person dies can be a very sensitive and emotional one, if a person has lost someone they love. For others, it is a matter of opinion or discussion. Amongst your non-christian friends, what do you think they believe about this matter? It would be a good exercise to ask a few of them, in preparation for this study- it would enable you to raise the topic of Christian faith later, perhaps. List the views you encounter, and any reasons given for them.

- b) Discuss in your group the various opinions you have heard.

2. Read Matthew 22 v23-33.

- a) What do you think the Sadducees believed about life after death? (v23)

- b) Why do they tell the hypothetical story recorded in verses 24 to 28?

- c) What two things does Jesus say they do not know? (v29)

- d) Jesus does not here give a complete statement about life after death, but what does Jesus teach his hearers on this matter, as he corrects the error of the Sadducees? (v30-32)

3. Getting Personal

- a) What hope does Jesus teaching here give to us today, when faced with death?

- b) How do you feel about this?

- c) How, if at all, might this help us to speak of the Christian Faith to non-christian friends? Discuss.

4. If you have time - Read Matthew 22 v34-46

- a) What do you think Jesus means when he says that “all the law and the prophets hang on these...” (v40) Discuss.

- b) In verse 41-46, Jesus again raises the question of his own identity. What puzzle does he put before the Pharisees?

- c) What do we understand, as Christians, is the answer to Jesus’ question in verse 45? Discuss

Study 3

Deadly Leadership

Matthew 23:1-22

1. Getting Started

a) Consider which Christian leaders have had the most influence on you. What things did you learn from them? How did they teach you these things? What did you learn from their example? Discuss.

b) Can you think of people who have been an unhelpful (i.e. bad) example to you?

2. Turning to the Bible. Read Matthew 23 v1-7.

a) To whom is Jesus giving these warnings? (v1)

b) What do the teachers of the law and the Pharisees do, which Jesus warns against?(v3)

c) What do these religious leaders love?

d) What does this show about their true motives?

- e) Getting personal
 - (i) Are there religious practices today that others see, which make a person look 'pious' or 'devout'?

 - (ii) How can we avoid the mistake of the Pharisees? Discuss.

3. Read Matthew 23 v8-13.

- a) What does Jesus tell his disciples not to do?

- b) What reasons might Jesus have for giving this warning? (see also Ch 18 v1-4)

- c) What attitude lies behind the titles listed here? Why is it wrong to give such titles to other people?

- d) (i) What attitude does Jesus demand of his followers, in contrast? (v11)

- (ii) Why, do you think he speaks like this, about behaviour in his church?

- (iii) Why is this so important to Him? (see Ch 20 v28)

- e) Just a note to consider - It is possible that in verse 13 Jesus is emphasising how important his previous warning is (i.e. v1-12) –
- (i) If so, what is he saying is the consequence of following the religious leaders of Israel?

 - (ii) What is the danger of following bad leaders today?

4. Getting personal

- a) How should Jesus’ teaching here affect how we function as a small group?
Discuss.

- b) How should Jesus’ teaching here affect how we function as a local church?
Discuss.

- c) Pray about what you have considered in this study.

5. If you have time - Read Matthew 23 v13-22.

- a) What other practises of the Pharisees and teachers of the law does Jesus warn against?

- b) How might this warning apply today?

Study 4

Turned Inside Out Matthew 23:23-39

1. Getting Started

a) What examples of greed have you seen reported in the news over the last year?
What has greed led people to do?

b) What has been the consequence for the people involved in greed, and for others?

2. Read Matthew 23 v23-28.

a) (i) What images does Jesus use to describe the Pharisees and teachers of the law, in verses 25 and 27?

(ii) What do these images convey?

b) What was going on in the hearts of the religious leaders? (v25 and 28)

- c) What were they doing as a result? (v25 Note - the Greek word translated “greed” often has the sense of taking something by force, i.e. by robbery, so the practices in which they engaged meant that they took from others that to which they were not entitled.)
- d) On the outside they looked very holy and godly and religious. What does Jesus tell his disciples that the religious leaders had neglected? (v23, and see Micah 6 v8)
- e) What would it mean in practise to attend to matters of “justice and mercy”? How would this affect the way a person gets money? How would this affect the way a person uses money?
- f) How might doing what Jesus says here challenge and change and ‘clean’ the hearts of those who do them?

3. Getting Personal

- a) How can you, personally, guard against greed and self-indulgence taking root in your own heart? (be specific, re actions you are taking or will start to take)

b) (i) How can we help each other in our groups to guard against greed and self indulgence?

(ii) As a church, how do we guard against this? Discuss.

4. If you have time - Read Matthew 23 v29-39.

a) What is Jesus' key point in this section, about the behaviour of the religious leaders?

b) What, if anything, does this have to do with Jesus' prediction of what is ahead for him? (e.g. Ch 16 v21)

c) What is ahead, for the people of Jerusalem, because of their actions, and that of their leaders?

Study 5

Warnings for our Time Matthew 24:1-28

1. Getting started.

- a) If you knew that Jesus was going to return on the 11th of January 2014, how would that affect your life? What would you do differently?
- b) Who have you heard predicting the end of the world? What did those who believed them do, as a result?

2. Read Matthew 24 v1-14.

- a) (i) What does Jesus say is to happen to the temple in Jerusalem?
- (ii) From Ch 23 v37-39, why do you think this will happen?
- b) From verse 3, what three questions does Jesus' prediction about the temple raise in the minds of the disciples?

c) In verses 4 to 14, Jesus gives the disciples- (and so his 'church', us)- a number of warnings about what is to come. List these warnings, and what the disciples are to be careful to do in response to each.

d) Given the opposition predicted above, we might think that the gospel message would not be preached. From verse 14, what does Jesus tell the disciples will actually be the case?

e) How is this verse connected with Ch 28 v18 - 20?

f) What do you think Jesus intends his Church as a whole to be doing, until His return?

g) Should we each be part of this? In what way? Discuss.

h) To what extent has Jesus answered the disciples' questions in verse 3?

4. If you have time - read Matthew 24 v15 - 28.

a) Some of the themes in this section are repetition and expansion from the previous one. But Jesus does introduce a new, specific warning, in verse 15. What do you think he might be referring to?

b) What spiritual dangers does Jesus warn his people of? How will his warning help?

c) Why do the disciples not need to know when Jesus will return? (v26 - 27)

(Note: Biblical Scholars differ regarding which parts of this chapter refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, and which parts refer to the end of the world and Jesus' return. In the study questions I have tried to focus on what I think is clearly applicable to the whole period till Jesus returns. See the commentaries for further information, if you wish)

Study 6

Waiting Well

Matthew 24:29-51

1. Getting Started.

a) It has been centuries since Jesus first appeared on earth, lived, died and rose again. How do you feel about this? How does it affect your plans for the future? How does this 'delay' affect your life in general, do you think? Discuss.

b) This section continues Jesus' response to the question his disciples asked, recorded back in verse 3. Why do you think they asked this question?

2. Read Matthew 24 v29-51.

a) The disciples asked about the 'sign' of Jesus' return. From verses 29 to 31, what does he tell them will happen at that time?

b) The section from verses 32 to 35 is puzzling.

(i) What does the image of the fig tree teach?

(ii) What does Jesus mean by the assurance he gives in verse 34? (The puzzle is it sounds like he is saying his return will occur in the lifetime of the disciples)

c) From verses 36 to 44,

(i) What does Jesus tell the disciples that they can not know?

(ii) Why does he not tell them what they have asked? (i.e. when he will return in power)

d) What is the strong, practical instruction that Jesus does give, in response to their questions? (v42, v45-51)

3. Getting Personal

a) Discuss what things you think Jesus wants you to be doing, so that you are personally ready for his return. The warning Jesus gives in this passage is very strong, so be as specific and practical as you can.

b) How, as a group, can you help each other to be 'faithful and wise servants' in this time of waiting? Again, be as specific as you can.

Study 7

On Being Prepared Matthew 25:1-30

1. Getting started

- a) Have you ever had to wait some time for something you were really looking forward to? How does that feel? What did you do? Discuss.

2. Read Matthew 25 v1-13.

- a) From verse 1, what is the parable illustrating?
- b) What do the wise virgins in the story do, that the others do not?
- c) What is the result?
- d) What is the point of the story? (v13, and compare Ch 24 v42)

e) Why do you think Jesus repeats the point yet again? Discuss.

3. Read Matthew 25 v14-30.

a) At the end of the previous story, the disciples are left without clear instructions about what they are to be doing, to be prepared. This next parable gives some general teaching on this point. Summarise, from this parable, what the 'good and faithful' servant was doing.

b) What happened to those who claimed to be the master's servants, but were unfaithful (i.e. wicked and lazy - v26)?

c) What warning is Jesus giving his hearers in this passage? (Remember that the immediate context is first century Israel, where the Pharisees and teachers of the law were seen as models for God's people)

4. Getting Personal

a) Discuss

(i) Would you say that Jesus' return figures in your thinking and planning for life?

(ii) If not, do you think that should change?

b) Discuss

(i) What 'talents' do you think your master has entrusted to you?

(ii) How are you putting those to work in his service? Discuss.

Study 8

Judgement

Matthew 25:31-46

1. Getting started.

- a) How do you feel about the idea of God judging people? Do you think this is a good or bad thing? Share your reasons for your feelings on this.

2. Read Matthew 25 v31-46.

- a) (i) What sort of scene is pictured in v31-33.

(ii) What is the role of the 'Son of Man' here?

(iii) Who is he, do you think?

- b) What happy message do those on his right hear?

c) What six reasons are given for this verdict?

d) Who are the 'least of these brothers of mine' (v40)? (See Ch 10 v40, Ch 12 v48-49, Ch 18 v6,10,14, Ch 28 v10 and then Isaiah Ch 58 v7 for background)

e) What do the actions of these 'blessed ones' indicate about their attitude to Jesus? In what way do they show this?

f) (i) From verses 41 to 46, what is the destiny of those who are told to depart?

(ii) What reasons are given?

3. Getting Personal

a) What questions does Jesus' teaching on Judgement raise for you? Discuss.

b) What does this passage indirectly encourage us to do? How can we help each other to be doing these things?

Prayer Points

