



Matthew 17:1-19:12

Jesus is the Messiah... and following him...

by Bernard Gabbott

Peter has recognised Jesus. Jesus has stated the truth of his Lordship: he will suffer, die and rise. The disciples are struggling to comprehend the enormity of what they have been told. To follow this Lord is to walk in suffering. That said, Jesus is also the glorious Lord—after all, what (or, who) is more significant than the bloke who walks out of the grave? As Jesus is revealed as he truly is, the disciples learn more of what it means to follow this Lord who will suffer but be more glorious than they could ever imagine. In many ways, this is an examination of what it means to ‘listen to Him!’.

Memory verse:

⁵ While he was still speaking,
suddenly a bright cloud covered them,
and a voice from the cloud said:

“This is My beloved Son.

I take delight in Him.

Listen to Him!”

⁶ When the disciples heard it,
they fell facedown and were terrified.

Matthew 17:5-6

Study 1: Matthew 17:1-13

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. Who does Jesus take with him up the mountain? And what happens to Jesus? (vs.1-3)

Who joins them?

3. Peter's response is so human—so much like us! But then someone speaks—who is it, and what do they say? (vs.5)
4. The response of the three disciples is clear and very real. Jesus reassures them. And then he gives them an instruction—what is it? (vs.9)
5. The disciples are puzzled by this—what question do they ask? (vs.10; cf. Matt.11:14)

What is Jesus' answer? And what do you think he means? (vs.11-12)

Consider

1. What is so important about these parts of the events described here?
 - the mountain (cf. Ex.19:1-8)
 - the appearance of Moses and Elijah (cf. Mal.4:4-6)

- the words spoken by God (cf. Ps.2; Matt.3:17)

2. Why do you think God adds words in vs.5 to what he said at Jesus' baptism? And why is this addition so important?
3. Who is the 'Elijah-figure' (cf. Matt.11:14)?

How does Jesus use the treatment of the 'Elijah-figure' to connect his role as suffering AND glorious Lord?

Contact

1. What 'kind' of Jesus do we meet here?
2. Why must we meet Jesus like this—and as the suffering Lord?
3. What do we learn here about how we respond to Jesus?

Study 2: Matthew 17:14-27

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. How did the previous episode finish? (vs.13)
3. What do we meet as Jesus' and the three disciples descend? (vs.14-16)
4. How does Jesus respond? Who do you think he is speaking to, and why? (vs.17)

What does Jesus do? (vs.18)

5. What comment does Jesus make about 'faith'? (vs.20)
6. Why do you think Matthew includes Jesus' next 'passion prediction' at this point? (vs.22-23)

What does the reaction of the disciples suggest to you?

7. What happens in the strange little episode of verses 24-27? Why do you think this is here? And, what is Jesus saying about being a disciple and following him?

Consider

1. Do you find Jesus' rebuke of vs.17 confronting, or not? Why/why not?

2. What do you think of Jesus' comments on faith, and what do you think he means?
3. Jesus' is insistent on stating his destination in Jerusalem. How does this help us understand what it means to be 'sons' in vs.24-27?

Contact

1. Do you struggle with 'faith'? How are Jesus' words here helpful, or even confronting?
2. What do we learn here about being a disciple of Jesus? How might this confront so much of what we live as disciples?

Someday Sunday Study: John 3:16

1. Read the passage.
2. What do we learn of God in this verse?
3. What do we learn of Jesus in this verse?
4. What do we learn of us in this verse?
5. What is comforting about this verse?
6. What is confronting about this verse?
7. Spend some time in prayer for Someday Sunday—for the people being invited, for opportunities to invite, for the simple truth of God's love for this world to be heard, understood, and accepted.

Study 3: Matthew 18:1-14

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. What question do the disciples ask? (vs.1)
3. Who does Jesus draw into the answer—almost as an object lesson—and what point(s) does he make? (vs.2-5)

What warning, and exhortation, does he also give? (vs.6-9)

4. What does Jesus say about the ‘concern’ of the Father, in vs.10-14?

Consider

1. Why do you think they ask the question in vs.1?
2. What do you think Jesus’ command in vs.3 means? And how does he expand this to talk about community in vs.5?
3. How serious is the sin of ‘causing someone to stumble’? And how serious is sin?
4. There is a ‘communal concern’ here that stands against the self-interest in vs.1. How is this ‘communal concern’ described in vs.10-14? How does this help us understand God, and Jesus, better?

Contact

1. Do we, and how do we, ask the same question as the disciples ask in vs.1?
2. How does Jesus extended, and nuanced, answer redirect our focus?
3. How might we express, and then combat/confront, the sin of causing someone to stumble?
4. How might we do better on confronting sin, given how serious it is?
5. How are we concerned for the perishing?

Study 4: Matthew 18:15-35

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. The whole idea of community, conflict, and caring for each other, now spills into Jesus discussing dealing with brothers or sisters who have sinned against you. What is the first step? (vs.15)

How does the process unfold, and what is its final endpoint? (vs.16-17)

3. What do you think verse 18 means? How does the tense help us understand this verse?
4. What do you think verse 19 means?
5. How is verse 20 often used? How might its context here help us actually understand it rightly?
6. Peter wants some clarity (vs.21). How does Jesus respond? (vs.22)

Jesus then tells a striking, and well-known story to make his point. What is the punchline, in vs.35?

How does this deal with Peter's question, and attitude?

Consider

1. Jesus switches focus in vs.15, compared to vs.14. Why?

And what does this do?

2. What do you think about this process of reconciliation and forgiveness that Jesus sets out?
3. Why do we get vs.20 so often so wrong?
4. Why is Peter's question in vs.21 so familiar to us?
5. Why is Jesus' punchline in vs.35 so hard to put into practice?

Contact

1. Why do you think we find conflict resolution so hard, as God's people?
2. Why do you think Jesus' instructions are so helpful?
3. How does Jesus' answer to Peter's question encourage the forgiveness sought in vs.15-17?

Study 5: Matthew 19:1-12

Comprehend

1. Read the passage.
2. What change has happened in vs.1?
3. Who meets Jesus, what do they ask, and what is their motive? (vs.3)
4. Jesus' answer immediately turns to which part of the Bible—and what point does he make? (vs.4-6)
5. The response is aggressive—how does Jesus deal with it, in vs.8-9?
6. The disciples are confronted. How does Jesus respond to them, in vs.11-12?

Consider

1. What does Jesus' answer, in vs.4-5, reveal about his views on:
 - Genesis?
 - marriage?
 - human sexuality?
2. Jesus helps us think through ethics, sin, and how God deals with our sin breaking his good design. What are some of the things we learn?

3. How does vs.11-12 fit within the exhortation of Matthew 17:5?
4. How does Jesus' answer in vs.11-12 help us understand 'singleness'?

Contact

1. How do Jesus' answers here reassure, and encourage us, about God's word, and design?
2. How do Jesus' answers here help us navigate a broken world?
3. How are Jesus' answers here both confronting and comforting?