



Matthew 19-22...

by Bernard Gabbott

Memory verse:

Then Jesus said, "Leave the children alone,
and don't try to keep them from coming to Me,
because the kingdom of heaven is made up of people
like this."

Matthew 19:14

Introduction

This our sixth year in Matthew. At its heart is good news for the outsiders (sinners)—they can become insiders (part of God's mob) because of Jesus. Finally, we reach Jerusalem, the capital city of God's mob. Jesus enters, and so begins the last week before his crucifixion. Everything slows down—this last week will take six chapters, until the death of Jesus.

Three things have struck me as I have read this section.

First, there is conflict everywhere, and much of it provocative and aiming at destroying Jesus. But even the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is laden with conflict, as the crowd that has accompanied Jesus from up north meet the city gathered for the Passover.

Second, the constant them of the Old Testament, and its fulfillment in so many ways in this week. Not only is it fulfilled, it is referenced time and time again.

Third, the nature of Jesus' authority, and what to do with it, is everywhere. And it boils down to faith and obedience, or distrust and rebellion—those are the two responses revealed time and time again.

Study 1: Matthew 19:13-30

Comprehend

1. Read Matthew 19:13-30.
2. In verses 13-15, what do the disciples try? And how does Jesus respond?
3. Someone approaches Jesus with a question—what is it and how does Jesus answer? (vs.16-18)

What does this lead to, and what does Jesus expose? (vs.20-22)
4. What does Jesus proclaim? (vs.23-24)

How do the disciples respond, and what does Jesus reassure? (vs.25-26)
5. Peter raises a concern. What is it, and what is Jesus' reassurance? (vs.27-30)

Consider

1. What do you think Jesus means in verses 14—why?
2. How has Jesus exposed the materialistic young man's need, in verses 16-22?
3. How does Jesus assess the real danger of being 'rich' and entering God's kingdom?

How does this drive people to grace?

How is the disciples' question in vs.25 meant to be understood?
4. What encouragement is there from Jesus about the cost of following him?

Contact

1. In what way might we misinterpret and misapply verses 13-15? And how might we apply them well, and faithfully?
2. How might the interaction between Jesus and the materialistic young man expose us, and ask us uncomfortable questions?
3. How might we apply the goodness of the 'Messianic Age' now?

Study 2: Matthew 20:1-19

Consider

1. Read Matthew 20:1-19.
2. How does verse 1 help us understand the context for this parable?

Summarise the parable...

3. What is the key concept in the parable? Why?
4. Where is Jesus headed? (vs.17)

What does Jesus reveal?

Comprehend

1. How is the parable an explanation/illumination/expansion on what has come before? Why?
2. What does the parable reveal about the 'right' and the 'generosity' of the landowner?
3. How might we understand Jesus' explanation of what will happen in Jerusalem as a lived example of 19:30 and 20:16?

Contact

1. What does the parable expose in us, and reveal to us?
2. How might this change how we regard ourselves, and how we live as a community under Jesus?

How might this change how we regard the decisions/answers/actions of the 'landowner'?

3. What is helpful in seeing Jesus enact his own teaching?

Study 3: Matthew 20:20-33

Comprehend

1. Read Matthew 20:20-33.
2. What is Jesus asked, by whom, and how does he respond? (vs.20-23)
3. How is this received by the other disciples? (vs.24)
4. How does Jesus respond? (vs.25-28)
5. How does the next episode bear out the greatest becoming the least, and the least being lifted up? (vs.29-33)

Consider

1. Why do you think the sons of Zebedee and their mother so misunderstood Jesus?
2. What do you understand verse 23 to be stating? Why?
3. What vision of Christian community ('among you') do verses 25-28 present?
4. How does Jesus' practice match his proclamation?

Contact

1. How might the sons of Zebedee confront us?
2. Do we drink Jesus' cup? Why? Why not?

Is our community like the one Jesus' describes? Why? Why not?
3. How does compassion drive us to match proclamation and practice?

Study 4: Matthew 21:1-17

Comprehend

1. Read Matthew 21:1-17.
2. As they approach Jerusalem, what does Jesus do? (vs.1-3)

Why? (vs.4-5)
3. As they enter the city, what happens? (vs.8-11)

What is the reaction of the 'whole city' as 'the crowds' enter? (vs.10-11)
4. How does Jesus respond to the Temple? (vs.12-13)
5. Who flocks to Jesus, and what does he receive? (vs.14-16)

What is the response of the religious leaders? (vs.15-16)

How does Jesus respond? (vs.16-17)

Consider

1. As you look over this passage, what strikes you about its tenor and tone?
2. Look up all the Old Testament references, and try to see how/why Jesus 'fulfils' them...
 - Isaiah 62:11, Zechariah 9:9:
 - Psalm 118:25-26:
 - Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11:
 - Psalm 8:3:
3. This is the beginning of the last week before the crucifixion—what is the tone? Why?

Contact

1. How do verses 1-11 help us understand the change in attitudes during the Passion week?
2. How does the tone of this passage, as Jesus starts his final week, help us understand the events that will follow?
3. How do the reactions to Jesus help us understand our reactions to Jesus?

Study 5: Matthew 21:18-27

Comprehend

1. Read Matthew 21:18-27.
2. On the way back to Jerusalem from Bethany in the morning, Jesus meets a fig tree. What happens? (vs.18-19)

The disciples ask why this took so little time. How does Jesus respond, and what does he say? (vs.21-22)

3. Jesus' entry to the Temple complex provokes questioning by the religious authorities—what do they ask? (vs.23)

How does Jesus respond? (vs.24)

What is the outcome? (vs.25-27)

Consider

1. Why do you think the fig tree event is here?
2. How could this fig tree episode be misused?
3. Why is the issue of 'authority' so important here?

How does Jesus' response establish a continuity between him, John the Baptist, and the rest of God's word?

Contact

1. What is the connection between faith and authority in this passage, and in understanding Jesus appropriately?
2. What is the crucial issue we face when it comes to Jesus' authority? Why?

Study 6: Matthew 21:28-46

Comprehend

1. Read Matthew 21:28-46.
2. Jesus mightn't answer their questions about authority, but he does tell the religious leaders a parable, asking them for their thoughts. What is the parable, what is Jesus' question, and what is Jesus' conclusion? (vs.28-32)
3. Jesus then tells another parable. What is it, what is his question and conclusion? (vs.33-43)
4. How is this received by the religious leaders? (vs.45-46)

Consider

1. How do these two parables deal with questions of faith and authority? How do they also raise issues of obedience and judgement?
2. Read Isaiah 5:1-7 and Psalm 80. How do these help us understand the background to Jesus' telling of this parable, and the reaction it receives?
3. Read Psalm 118. How does this help us understand Jesus' conclusion from the parable?
4. How does the reaction of the religious leaders illustrate their understanding of Jesus' authority?

Contact

1. How would you describe Jesus' defence of his own authority, and his exposure of the response of the religious leaders to his person and work?
2. How does this episode also continue the theme of continuity with God's promises and word and work so far?

Study 7: Matthew 22:1-14

Comprehend

1. Read Matthew 22:1-14.
2. Who is the 'them' in verse 1?
3. What is the parable Jesus tells?
4. What is the point of the parable?

What other themes emerge through this parable?

Consider

1. How does the imagery in the parable reveal the authority of God's kingdom?
2. How does the imagery in the parable reveal the intentionality and deliberate choices of God's kingdom?
3. How does the imagery in the parable reveal who will be in, and not welcome, in God's kingdom?
4. Why do you think Jesus speaks this parable?

Contact

1. What do you find confronting in this parable?
2. What do you find comforting in this parable?
3. What do you find confusing in this parable?

Study 8: Matthew 22:15-22

Comprehend

1. Read Matthew 22:15-22.
2. There is a plan to trap Jesus – this conflict has been relentless. What is the plan, and what is so striking about how it is carried out? (vs.15-17)
3. How does Jesus see through it, and how does he answer it? (vs.18-21)
4. What is the response? (vs.22)

Consider

1. Why is this a testing question?

How does it tie in with the prevailing tone of authority and faith and obedience?

2. What does Jesus' statement in vs.21 mean? (cf. Genesis 1:26ff)

Contact

1. How exposing is Jesus' answer here to our approach to his authority and our trust in him expressed in obedience?

What scope is there for wriggle room?