

2020 New Testament Reading Plan

Living Hope Fellowship, Chico
Directed Study, Week 3
Matthew 15–21

We're only half way through Matthew's gospel yet the narrative's pace is going to accelerate to the last week of Christ's life in our reading this week. The scribes', Pharisees', and Sadducees' relationship with Jesus is even more hostile. And Jesus takes the opportunities to engage them with increased opposition of his own. The King is not out to make political alliances or friends with them. The King is setting his own "trap" as the climax of the cross looms. The cross is very clearly on his mind.

Increasing Hostility

The acceleration of hostility between the King and his enemies can be seen in the following two chapters which follow a similar literary structure:

Opposition of Jesus' Enemies	15:1–2	16:1
Jesus' Rebuttal	15:3–9	16:2–4
Jesus Explains to Disciples	15:10–20	16:5–12
Response of Faith	15:21–28(Canaanite Woman)	16:13–20(Peter's Confession)

1. What do the responses of faith from the Canaanite woman and Peter have to do with Matthew's purpose statement in 1:1? In other words, who do these two confess Jesus to be that correlates to Matthew's opening thesis statement (1:1)?

"Church"

Perhaps surprisingly, Matthew is the only gospel to mention the word "church." The word appears 3 times (16:18, 18:17 twice). This can be explained because what we know of as the "church" has yet to be instituted at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. That will take place 50 days after Passover (Jesus' crucifixion) on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2). Luke's gospel does not mention the word "church" but his sequel, the book of Acts, mentions it frequently.

2. In light of the 2 "church" passages (16:18, 18:17), what are 2 necessary things for Christ's true church to do? (Hint: If you're having trouble on this one, Google what the Reformers/Anabaptists decided was necessary for there to be a true church during the Protestant Reformation.)

Jesus Foretells His Death

Jesus' prophesies his death 3 times on his way to the cross (16:21–23; 17:22–23; 20:17–19). He is fully aware of what his kingdom mission of salvation will cost him. It's also painfully clear that his disciples don't get what he's talking about.

3. How does the fact that Jesus knows what's about to happen to him give you hope that he's in control of *your* situation? How does his patience in teaching through this section give you hope that Jesus will never leave or forsake you even when you don't get what he is saying sometimes?

The Triumphal Entry (AKA Palm Sunday)

Chapter 21 marks Sunday, the beginning of Christ's final earthly life. He will die on Friday. The gospel has accelerated toward it's concluding scenes. But time slows down in a sense as well. Matthew devotes 1/4 of his gospel to this final week.

4. What do the people cry out to Jesus as he enters into Jerusalem? Link this to Matthew's purpose statement (1:1).