



C O U N T E R

W O R L D O M

TERM 1 2022
BIBLE STUDY BOOK

BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM – TERM 1 2022

Counter-Kingdom

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Counter-Kingdom

Matthew 14-19

Introduction

Welcome back to The Gospel of Matthew. This series of studies, 'Counter Kingdom', marks our fourth year studying Matthew:

- 2019: A Light to Lead us Home (Matthew 1-4)
- 2020: Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- 2021: Set Free, We Follow (Matthew 8-13)
- 2022: Counter Kingdom (Matthew 14-19)

It's great that we have persisted in this. There is a bit of an art to reading and understanding this Gospel. Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament figures like Moses, David and Elijah but also the fulfillment of the whole story of Israel. It isn't immediately obvious why the book would start with a genealogy, why Jesus' family escaping to Egypt is important, why Jesus would go up a mountain to teach or what Jesus' shining face at the transfiguration teaches us. But when read against the backdrop of the Old Testament story, all of these things take on a new and exciting significance. Our persistent and careful reading of the book together helps us to see these allusions and therefore to see Jesus as Matthew wishes to present him.

As we dive back in, it's worth remembering how the whole book is structured. The book is framed by the birth and death/resurrection of Jesus. Within this frame are 5 sections, each with its own discrete "sermon" or "lesson" where Jesus, off the back of a series of events, will speak about the new reality he ushers in. We'll use the concept of "The Kingdom" to hold it together.

- Chapters 1-2: The Birth of the King and his kingdom
- Chapters 3-7: The Call of the King
 - Events: 3-4
 - Sermon: 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount)
- Chapters 8-10: The Mission of the King
 - Events: 8-9
 - Sermon: 10 (Sending out the Disciples)
- Chapters 11-13: Responses to the Kingdom
 - Events: 11-12
 - Sermon: 13 (Teaching the crowds in Parables)
- **Chapters 14-20: The Counter Kingdom**
 - **Events: 14-17**
 - **Sermon: 18-20 (Teaching the disciples in Parables)**
- Chapters 21-25: Clash of Kingdoms
 - Events: 21
 - Sermon: 22-25 (Rebuking the Pharisees in Parables)
- Chapters 26-28: The Death and Resurrection of the King and his Kingdom

Even the fact that the book is structured around five sermons or lessons echoes the Old Testament. The first 5 books of the bible are considered "The Law of Moses". Matthew presents Jesus as issuing his new Law in five parts, fulfilling the old law of Moses.

We jump back into the story at the point where Jesus' call to the nation to repent and believe has been met with mixed responses. The small and marginalized have often accepted the call, but the ruling elite have often rejected it. The disciples seem capable of going either way. They have left everything to follow Jesus and yet seem to long for Jesus to bring them the status and greatness they see in the rulers around them. In this section, through actions and words, Jesus will teach them how very different his kingdom is to the one they desire. Indeed, his kingdom's founding moment will be his own death in service of others. It is in every way a counter-kingdom to all other kingdoms where the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

These chapters can, should we allow them, transform us more and more into the likeness of Jesus. The subtle creep from the self-sacrificial heart of the Gospel can easily happen. We slowly forget the call to take up our cross each day. Likewise, the desire to be accepted and loved by our world can grow within our hearts. We slowly forget that we are born by the Spirit into a very different and often despised kingdom. So too, we can find ourselves thinking small thoughts and dreaming small dreams for this strange kingdom we call the church. Yet Jesus promises, through his self sacrifice and ours, to build it. In fact, as our prayers and efforts align with his, not even the gates of hell will prevail against it. This is his promise to us and this term we will be challenged to trust him.

Study 1

Matthew 14:1-21 Two Feasts

Talk

- 1) What was the best feast you had over the summer break? Do you like feasts or parties?

Read and Investigate Matthew 14:1-21

- 2) Jesus has already aligned John the Baptist with the Old Testament Prophet Elijah (Matthew 11:13-14). How does John's conflict with Herod and Herodias also echo the ministry of Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-2, 1 Kings 21:20-23).
- 3) Matthew has alerted us to the doubts John had about the identity of Jesus back in 11:2-3. Do the actions of John's disciples suggest that these doubts might have been resolved for John?
- 4) If John's ministry is like that of Elijah, who might we expect Jesus' ministry to resemble (2 Kings 4:42-44)?
- 5) Compare the two feasts presented in John 14. Name some of the stark differences between the feasts. How do each of the feasts embody the character of the hosts, Herod and Jesus.

- 6) Jesus comes as a second Elisha, but also reminds us of another OT character from Psalm 23. Have a read of that familiar Psalm. Who does Jesus' actions remind us of?
- 7) At the end of the passage we read "*the number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children*". Why only count men? Is this a case of 'the patriarchy strikes again', or is there an important point being made here about this crowd (Exodus 12:37 and 13:18)?

Apply

- 8) Consider the two feasts of Matthew 14. We might think of them as symbols of the people of the world (Herod's feast) and the people of God (Jesus' feast). What is appealing about each to you? Why would someone choose Herod's feast over Jesus' feast? Why did you choose Jesus' feast over Herod's?

Prayers

Pray for Brett and Mardi, Evie, Harriet, Olivia, and Willow Middleton. Please pray for Brett as he seeks to encourage, serve and build up the wider staff team. Pray for wisdom that he and the team develop ministry plans that will help St Luke's stay faithful and grow into the future.

Pray for Matt and Lauren, Ezra, Joanna and Samuel Thomas and their mission work with OMF International to an unreached people group in South East Asia.

Pray for the global COVID crisis and ask for wise decision making from leaders. Bring before God those who are physically or mentally ill, grieving or experiencing financial hardships due to the pandemic.

Study 2

Matthew 14:22-15:20 On the Water

Talk

- 1) Lots of Jesus' miracles involve boats and storms and the sea. Do you have any horrible or wonderful boat experiences to share with the group?

Read and Investigate Matthew 14:22-36

- 2) Have a read of Job 9:8, Psalm 77:19, Psalm 107:23-30, Isaiah 43:19, Habakkuk 3:16. What did Jesus reveal about himself through this miracle?
- 3) What previous story in the gospel does this remind you of? How might this help explain Peter's bold request?
- 4) What similarities do you notice between this story and the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus? How might this help us understand why Jesus made the disciples get in the boat and why Jesus waits until dawn to save the disciples?
- 5) Jesus calming the storm prepares the disciples for the day Jesus walks on water. The day Jesus walks on water prepares the disciples for Jesus' death and resurrection. How might recognising this pattern change the way we feel about the various 'storms' we face (Hebrews 12:7)?

Prayers

Pray for Jennie and Don Everist. Pray for Jennie as she ministers and cares for the people who attend the Thursday Communion Service. Pray for her as she continues to pray and care for those who are unable to attend, due to Covid.

Pray for the Sparks Family and their mission work making disciples in Spain.

Pray for our Prime Minister and government. Pray for our state and federal members, our Premier and government. We pray also for our local Council including our Mayor.

Study 3

Matthew 15:21-39 Vision Week 1: Food for the Hungry

Talk

- 1) Take a moment to remind yourselves of the mission of Jesus, the mission of his disciples and the mission of anyone who calls Jesus their King (Matthew 4:17, 4:19, 9:13, 28:18-20). How conscious are you, day to day, that this is your mission?
- 2) How can you tell if a church is driven by this mission? What might be some of the indicators that making and growing disciples is no longer the driving mission of a church?

Read and Investigate Matthew 15:21-39

- 3) Have a look at verse 21. Why is Jesus withdrawing into Tyre and Sidon (cf Matthew 2:22, 4:12, 12:14-15, 14:12-13)?
- 4) Considering the location of the event and the nationality of the woman, what is surprising about her cry to Jesus?
- 5) What would the disciples have Jesus do? How does his response to them in verse 24 bring clarity to the request they are making?

- 6) How do you feel about the response Jesus makes? Why is Jesus reluctant to help the woman at first?
- 7) The woman demands Jesus' urgent attention. The disciples request that Jesus attend to her demands and send her away. Yet Jesus, at least initially, orders his priorities according to a different set of values. The mission given to him by his father, to go first to the lost sheep of Israel, decides his limited time, attention and energy. The first half of this story is, then, a confrontation between two different ways of pursuing mission and ministry. What might we learn from this about how a church, with limited time, attention and energy should order its priorities?
- 8) What is so great about this woman's faith?
- 9) Hot on the heels of the story of the Canaanite woman comes the feeding of the 4000. Haven't we already heard this story? How might the geographic references in 15:21 and 29 help us understand the significance of this miracle?

Apply

- 10) We have seen that these passages are a critical moment in the account of Jesus' life. The religious hierarchy has rejected him but the nations are drawing near to him and praising God. Soon this ministry of 'going to the nations' will be handed over to the disciples and the church that grows from them.
- How do your prayers reflect this mission that Jesus has given you?
 - How does your giving reflect this mission that Jesus has given you?
 - How do your priorities reflect this mission that Jesus has given you?

Prayers

Pray that our church will stay steadfastly committed to making and growing disciples. Pray that we will see a great movement of God's spirit in Miranda, The Shire and beyond and that God would see St Luke's fit to welcome many many people as followers of Jesus.

Pray for Colin as Office and Site Manager. We pray for energy and enthusiasm as he takes on this role looking after staff and the Church site.

Pray for Sarah and husband Tim and her work in India with BCTI and SIM.

Pray that all our groups can start 2022 with energy and enthusiasm after a difficult few years.

- 4) What may our church learn from this warning? Is there teaching that is permeating the church that we must cut off? Are there traditions or ministry practices we unhelpfully hold to when we need to be embracing change and renewal for the growth of the kingdom?

Read and Investigate Matthew 16:13-20

- 5) Peter is given great recognition and authority in this passage. It will not be his alone (Matthew 18:18), but something has happened in this moment that leads to him being one of the cornerstones of the growing Kingdom of God. What has happened?

- 6) What authority is offered to Peter and, we can assume, the other apostles as they come to confess Jesus as King.

- 7) What promises are offered by Jesus here? Considering what God's people have built in the past, what is surprising about this promise?

Apply

- 8) Jesus promises that he will build his church and that his church will storm the place of the dead, seeing people find new life in Jesus.
 - a) Do you believe him?
 - b) Do you think St Luke's can continue to grow as more and more people find new life in Jesus?
 - c) How might this passage change our prayers (cf 16:17), aspirations, giving, church calendar and daily interactions?

Prayers

Pray that St Luke's will hear the promises of Jesus, trust the promises of Jesus and let these promises shape our aspirations and plans for the future. Pray we would be holding onto our core gospel business (worship, growth in the scriptures, serving each other, outreach, building genuine community) but be willing to let go of that which is no longer helping us in our mission to see many people become wholehearted followers of Jesus.

Nicole Murray working with our Young Adults. Luke Murray working on Sundays as our Student Minister. Prayer that their time in preparation is productive and good for all they serve.

Pray for Kylie Zietsch and her work at Johannesburg Bible College, South Africa.

Praise God for our Bible Study leaders and for their faithful work in teaching and ministering to us throughout the term.

Study 5

Matthew 16:21-28 Vision Week 3: Take up your cross and follow

Talk

- 1) Can you think of anyone who sacrificed and served so that you would know Jesus and grow as his disciple?

- 2) What about previous generations of St Luke's? How did their service and sacrifice lead us to be the church we are today?

Read and Investigate Matthew 16:21-28

- 3) Why does Jesus choose this moment in his ministry to begin explaining his approaching death to his disciples? What key events have led up to this moment?

- 4) How do you think Jesus came to know that he must suffer and die before his resurrection to glory (Luke 24:44-46, 1 Peter 1:10-12)?

- 5) Jesus names Simon "Peter" because he will be the rock (in greek, 'petros') upon which he will build his church. Now Peter reveals himself as a different type of rock. Why does Peter rebuke Jesus? Why does Jesus link Peter's attitude to Satan?

- 6) Where do you see the work of Satan in our world? How might Jesus' definition surprise and even rebuke us?

7) What do you make of Jesus' statement in Matthew 16:28? What is the moment Jesus is speaking about?

Apply

8) Are you a disciple of Jesus? What does that word mean? How do you feel about Jesus' description of a disciple?

9) "Take up your cross and follow me". What did the cross represent and symbolize at the time Jesus said these words? What must followers of Jesus be prepared to accept? Has this been your experience as a follower of Jesus?

10) Does verse 16:26 resonate with you? Do you know people who live to "gain the whole world"? Have you found yourself slipping in and out of this way of living? What do you put in place to make sure you are living with eternity in mind?

Prayers

Pray St Luke's would be a church where its members take up their cross and follow Jesus each day. That we would be self-sacrificing in service of God and one another. Pray that we who have so much materially would be very careful not to gain everything but forfeit our soul.

Pray for Cam, Katrina, Peyton and Thea Harte. Pray for Cam as he heads up Children's Ministry, including KOS (Kids on Sunday), Primary Scripture, Children's Thursday arvo programs.

Pray for our ongoing and various Children's, Youth, and Young Adults Ministries; that God would be using the leaders and volunteers to sow seeds and help people grow into mature and loving relationships with Jesus. Pray that this would be a great witness to the wider community.

Pray for Geoff and Liz, Johanna, Will, Tom and Zoe Robson as Geoff works with Matthias Media.

Study 6

Matthew 17:1-23 The Mountain

Talk

- 1) In the bible lots of big events happen on mountains. Why might this be? Do you like the experience of being high up on mountains or look-outs?

Read and Investigate Matthew 17:1-13

- 2) Jesus chooses three disciples to witness the transfiguration. What do you think Jesus is revealing about himself through this moment?
- 3) There are lots of bible echoes that can help us understand what is going on at the transfiguration, but the echoes of Moses at Sinai are probably the loudest. What are some that you notice?
- 4) With some of this in mind, have a read of Deuteronomy 18:15. How does this help us understand some further truths this moment is intended to reveal to the disciples?
- 5) With the Sinai sub narrative in mind, how might we best interpret what happens to Jesus when he is back with the crowds at the foot of the mountain (17:14-20). What did Moses find when he came down from the mountain (Exodus 32)?
- 6) Matthew 17:20 *"He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."* Is Jesus promising the disciples omnipotence? How might this verse give people false

expectations of the Christian life? How does the context of the verse help us understand exactly what Jesus is promising?

Apply

7) “Listen to him”. Listening to the Law was central to the people of God. What patterns do you have to make sure you keep listening to Jesus?

8) What big ‘mountain moving’ works of God might we be praying for and working towards in reliance on Jesus?

Prayers

Pray for Jess Moran as she oversees our Crèche and Playtime programs. We pray for energy and enthusiasm as she looks after this age group as well as providing support and encouragement for the parents.

Pray for our Church Wardens: Colin Adams, Joel Garlato & Helen Webster. Pray for our Parish Councillors: Timothy Clipsham, Laurie Davidson, Amanda Garlato, Elise Hankin, Jade Loughnan, Eliza Lucas, David Parkes, Kath Telfer and Simon Veltmeyer (also our treasurer). Pray for our Parish Nominators: Timothy Clipsham, Michael Easton, Megan Smith, Amanda Garlato, Louise Parkes. Pray for our Synod Reps: Michael Easton and Amanda Garlato.

Pray for Andrew and Adele, Isaac, Lucy, and Finn Southerton and their church plant in Wellington, City on a Hill, New Zealand.

Study 7

Matthew 17:24-18:9 Greatness in the Kingdom

Talk

- 1) *“Who, then, is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?”* Are you involved in any communities where people are seeking to be ‘the greatest’? Do you know anyone who is always trying to outperform others or who feels superior to others?

Read and Investigate Matthew 17:24-27

- 2) This short story introduces a block of interrelated teachings that extend to the end of chapter 18. It’s a quirky little story, but key themes introduced here will set the agenda for the teaching that follows, so let’s have a look at it.
 - a) The concept of an annual ‘temple tax’ is loosely based on Exodus 30:11-16 (you also find it in 2 Kings 12:4). Does Jesus pay the temple tax?
 - b) Is Jesus obligated to pay the temple tax?
 - c) So, why does he pay the temple tax?

Read and Investigate Matthew 18:1-5

- 3) How might Jesus’ words in 17:25 have inspired the disciples’ question?

- 4) What is Jesus' response to such a question? How does Jesus' response align with his teaching about paying the temple tax?

Read and Investigate Matthew 18:6-9

- 5) Who are the 'little ones' and, considering the context, what are the sorts of things that may cause them to stumble? Have you ever seen this happen to someone?

- 6) Jesus warns those who would think of themselves as better than others. He warns them that their arrogance and exclusivity may shipwreck the faith of others (18:6-7). This is directed at the disciples who have shown signs of such arrogance and pride. They are the ones who may cause little ones to stumble. However, the warnings then shift in 18:8-9. These warnings are not directed at those causing others to stumble, but those who themselves are at risk of stumbling. Is this still a warning directed at the disciples or to others listening in? In either case, what may need to be 'cut off' to avoid stumbling?

Apply

- 7) When have you seen pride and arrogance infiltrate the church or the hearts of believers? What impact did it have?

- 8) Have you ever felt on the verge of 'stumbling' because of pride, arrogance or lack of welcome shown by other followers of Jesus? How do Jesus' words affect you here?

- 9) In what ways might we 'become like little children'? Consider how we do community and relationships, our willingness to be rebuked and corrected and the ministries we are willing to engage in.

Prayers

Pray for Eddie as he assists with the bookkeeping on a Wednesday.

Pray for Lisa as Admin Assistant, as she looks after the administration of the Church.

Pray for Marty & Katrina, Simeon, Jed and Luke Feltham, preparing to serve in Kenya with CMS

Study 8

Matthew 18:10-35 Restoring One Another

Talk

- 1) Have you ever rebuked someone or been rebuked yourself? On a scale of 1 to 10, how awful was the experience?

Read and investigate Matthew 18:10-20

- 2) What themes from last week do we see continuing in this passage? How does reading this passage in light of last week help us understand the sort of situation being spoken about?

- 3) Have you ever been tempted to disregard or despise someone who is straying from Jesus? Why?

- 4) Jesus fills out what it may look like to go after a lost sheep in 18:15-20. How should we view the person stumbling in sin? What are the steps he tells us to take to restore them? Do you think this is a wise course of action?

- 5) What do you think it means to “treat them like a pagan or tax collector” (cf Matthew 9:9-10)?

Read and Investigate Matthew 18:21-35

- 6) How does Peter's question in 18:21 help us fill out the sort of situation being addressed in 18:15-20?

- 7) Considering the parable, what provides the grounds of our willingness and longing to forgive and reconcile?

- 8) Do you think Jesus aimed to set strict numerical amounts to our offer of forgiveness?

Apply

- 9) These passages address relationships at their most messy. Yet when we do conflict well, with the gospel as the basis for our relationship we can often build stronger relationships than we would have had without the conflict. Has this ever been true of you in your relationships?

Prayers

We pray for Ministry Trainees Evan Caddy and Matt Peck, working alongside Brett and Sam.

Pray for Rob and Jo, Lili, and Jemma Copland. Pray for Rob's work as the Anglican Chaplain at the University of Wollongong and for his work as Campus Director of the University Bible Group.

Thank God for the many and varied resources available to us as a parish. As we seek to witness to the goodness of God daily, pray that we might make the most of opportunities to invite people we know to church. Pray that God would be preparing the hearts of people we could invite to a service at St Luke's.

Study 9

Matthew 19:1-15 Marriage from the beginning

Talk

- 1) How has society's attitude to marriage changed throughout your lifetime? How have events in your own life changed your attitudes about marriage?

Read and Investigate Matthew 19:1-15

- 2) Do you think the Pharisees bring their question to Jesus in good faith? What do you think they are hoping to achieve by asking this question? How might their intentions dictate the tone and content of Jesus' response?
- 3) They ask 'is it lawful?' Does Jesus provide them with the neat answer they were after?
- 4) Have a read of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Does it seem to you, as the Pharisees claim, that Moses "commands" divorce in some circumstances? How does Jesus' response correct them and perhaps our society's thinking around this matter?
- 5) Why is it God's good intention that Marriages remain life-long?
- 6) In what circumstance might we still say divorce is permitted?

- 7) It's interesting that the disciples seem to think Jesus' stance on marriage is an impossible standard to keep (Matthew 19:10). This suggests to us that first century attitudes are not too far from the views of our culture. How might you paraphrase Jesus' response to the disciples?

Apply

- 8) Do you find your views on singleness, marriage and divorce being influenced by the culture around us? In what ways do you need to return to the teaching of Jesus?
- 9) How can we make sure our church community is welcoming and supportive of the single, the married, the divorced and the remarried while also staying faithful to the teaching of Jesus?

Prayers

Pray for David and Kathryn, Reuben and Felix Luis. Pray for David as Campus Director of Geelong Christian Union at the Deakin University Campus in Victoria.

Pray for Peter, Katharine, Noah and Atticus Yock. Pray as they work amongst the students at the campus of Griffith University.

Pray for our witness to our local community – especially as more units are developed and more people move into the area. Pray for opportunities to connect with our community.

Study 10

Matthew 19:13-29 The Kingdom belongs to such as these

Talk

- 1) The stereotype is that churches always talk about money and are trying to snatch it from everyone's pockets. Personally, that hasn't ever been my experience, but has it been yours? Have you been part of a church or movement that speaks often of money and is always trying to squeeze more from you?

Read and Investigate Matthew 19:13-29

- 2) How would you answer the question in 19:16? What do you think about Jesus' response?
- 3) The young man asks which commandments he should keep. Which ones does Jesus say he should keep? Which ones does Jesus leave out? Why might Jesus have done this?
- 4) How does Jesus' instruction for the man in v.21 offer the surprising but appropriate way for him to keep the commandments and enter into eternal life?
- 5) What hope is there for this young man as he struggles to love God more than his money?

- 6) Do you find Jesus' words about eternity in 19:28-29 change your attitude to wealth and possessions?

Apply

- 7) In this passage, surrendering and giving-up your treasures, whatever they might be, for the sake of the kingdom is assumed. It is perhaps less confronting than the challenges Jesus has issued previously (Matthew 16:24). Did you have to give anything up to become a follower of Jesus? In what way might you 'receive them back one hundredfold in eternity?'
- 8) Are you holding on to anything that is slowing you down as a follower of Jesus?
- 9) This command is quite specific to this particular young man at this particular moment in time. We don't find similar expectations placed on others seeking eternal life. Yet we need to be careful we don't take the bite out of the passage by claiming it has no relevance to us. That we might be called to some version of this extravagant generosity scares us. We really really don't ever want to have to consider giving up all our material possessions for the sake of Christ. What does this reveal about our hearts? Spend some time discussing your own struggles with greed and how you guard against it.

Prayers

Pray for Sam and Jess, Percy, Lois, Finn and Cleo Morton. Pray for Sam as our Services Pastor, preparing the elements, which make up our Sunday services. Pray for Sam as he also heads up Youth Ministry and high school Scripture.

Pray for Rachel and Michael Burgess as Rachel serves with AFES as a senior staff worker at at the Australian Catholic University in North Sydney

Please pray that the way we welcome people would encourage them to seek Jesus and make St Lukes their home. Pray that we would continue to connect with hospitality and warmth.