



Matthew: New King, New Kingdom

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These studies are designed to go alongside the Winter preaching series, but will also work on their own.

The last study is an extended meditation on Jesus' death and resurrection in Matthew; this would be a good opportunity to invite people to the Maundy Thursday foot-washing and communion service (evening of 9 April at the Appleby Rooms), to commemorate the Last Supper and Jesus' death.



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STUDY 1. Introducing a New King

Aim. To explore why Matthew chose to start his gospel like this, with reference to Jesus' background and his fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. Also, how knowing that Jesus is the fulfilment of God's long-term plan can encourage us to continue following that plan into the future.

You will need: A copy of the worksheet for each person, pens

To start with; Take 5 minutes to either;

- Discuss your favourite opening to a book, film or show? Why is it so memorable?

Or

- Give everyone a copy of the worksheet & on the blank side ask them to draw their family tree, going as far back as they can. (*People don't have to go through their tree with the group; that would take ages, but discuss how far back they can go, why that is, and how they respond to the exercise.*)

Engaging with the text;

Part 1 – 10 mins

Give everybody a copy of the genealogy of Jesus from Matthew 1 on A4 paper (enclosed). Before you read it ask people the following;

1. How do you react to lists like this in the Bible? Why do you think that is? What does it tell you about *our* culture and society?

Now read through the whole passage, get people to underline anyone they have heard of or whose story they know & anything else that strikes them.

2. Spend 5 minutes discussing what people noticed (you could do this in threes if your group is large to save time) and then ask:
 - o Why do you think Matthew included this list at the start of his gospel?
 - o How do you think the original readers would have responded to it?
 - o What does it demonstrate or teach us how might that be a helpful perspective?

Part 2 – 10 mins

Divide into 3 groups. Give each one of these passages;

- Matthew 1.18–25
- Matthew 2.1–12
- Matthew 2. 13–18

3. Ask them to do the following & then feedback;
 - o Summarise the passage in 3 sentences



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- o Why do you think Matthew included it in his introduction to the gospel? (What was he trying to show/communicate?)
- 4. Scholars think that Matthew was portraying Jesus as a new Moses to his Jewish readers. Moses was the great prophet who spoke 'like a friend' with God, led the people out of slavery and symbolised the Covenant.
 - o What parallels can you see between this account and the life of Moses?
 - o Why might Matthew be trying to introduce Jesus in this way?

(N.B. If you get stuck, Matthew is trying to present Jesus so Jewish readers would understand that he was the Messiah. Thus, as 'the new Moses' bringing in a 'new covenant'. He includes 5 blocks of Jesus' teaching to parallel the 5 books of Moses – the Torah.)

Application – 10 mins

- 5. We live in a time where knowledge of Jesus has largely been forgotten. Which aspects of his identity do you think might best introduce him or make him most accessible to those around us now?
- 6. How might being reminded of the length of God's plan – over millennia – encourage or comfort us in the challenges we face? Practically, what could we do to remember that when we are discouraged?

Finally, Spend some time praying for wisdom as to how we introduce Jesus in a way that makes sense to those who don't know him yet, and for encouragement for those who feel that they need a bigger perspective in general or on something specific in their life.



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MATTHEW CHAPTER 1.

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

- ² Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
- ³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
Perez the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
- ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
- ⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse,
- ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

- David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,
- ⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,
 - ⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
 - ⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
 - ¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,
 - ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

- ¹² After the exile to Babylon:
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
- ¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
- ¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,
- ¹⁵ Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
- ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.



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STUDY 2. Introducing the Upside-Down Kingdom

Aim. To consider what blessing looks like in God's new kingdom, who is concerned for and how we might grow in maturity as disciples by understanding that.

To Start With: What is your favourite way to cheer yourself up?

Introduction: To set the scene watch the first 4.35 minutes of the Bible project introduction to Matthew 1–13. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Dv4-n6OYG>

Engaging the Text:

1. A. Who do you think is considered lucky or fortunate by 21st century Western standards?
B. Read Luke 18.10–13. Who appears to be considered blessed in 1st century Jewish society?

In the first century there was a general understanding that God blessed good people, so if bad things happened, it was a punishment for sin. God was believed to prefer the wealthy and successful, they were 'the blessed'. At one level this still outworks when people ask the question, '*Why do bad things happen to good people?*' However, **read Matthew 5.1–12** to hear what Jesus said.

2. How do you react to this teaching? How do you think his first hearers, and Matthew's readers might have responded? Why?
3. Blessings here is the word 'makarios' which also translates as 'happy', 'congratulations' or 'fortunate'. It is also significant that these phrases contain present *and* future tenses. How might considering these two literary factors help us make better sense of what Jesus is teaching? How would you sum it up?
4. A. When have you been in one of these categories?
B. How far did/do you find these promises of God's love and promise of eventual blessing helpful in those sorts of circumstances? Why/why not?
5. Obviously, there are ways to use these verses unhelpfully when people are in distress, but how might we wisely encourage people when they experience these sorts of challenges?
6. If you have time (10 minutes) in small groups you might like to re-write these for a 21st century context, trying to draw parallels that describe how God might feel about those who are struggling today.

Listen to some of them read and allow it to inform your time of prayer and ask God how he would have you act/respond in the light of this.



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STUDY 3. Power of the Upside-Down Kingdom

Aim. To reflect on the signs of God's kingdom Jesus demonstrated and the call to follow him that Matthew intersperses with them. Then to think about how far we model or follow that example.

You Will Need: A large copy/ several smaller copies of the attached chart which shows how Matthew structures the signs and wonders Jesus performed. (It might also help to have copies of the questions for Q1 rather than having to keep repeating them to remind people).

To Start with: What is the most dramatic thing you have ever seen God do?

Engaging the Text:

Part 1. The Power – 15 mins

1. Split into twos or threes. Each group takes one of the healings to discuss. (Boxes 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 first).
 - Consider the attitude and reaction of those who were sick
 - Consider the attitude and reaction of those who brought the sick
 - Consider how Jesus acted
 - What (if anything) did Jesus say?
 - How might this incident have changed the person's life?

Briefly share your findings.

Part 2. The Call – 10 mins

2. Split into two groups this time. Each takes one of the 'follow' boxes and discusses what each teaches/shows us about following Jesus.
3. Feed back and contrast the different responses to the call to follow.
4. Why do you think these calls to follow are interspersed between the amazing signs and wonders?

Part 3. The Response – 10 mins

5. Give people time in quiet to consider:
 - Which of these responses best reflects your response to Jesus?
 - How has Jesus brought his kingdom into YOUR life?
 - How can we bring the Kingdom of God into the lives of those around us?

If you have time, people can share in pairs. If not, follow the instructions Jesus gave at the end of Chapter 9 and pray for more workers to go into the harvest field, and for us all to be more effective and courageous in bringing the Kingdom of God here in our context.



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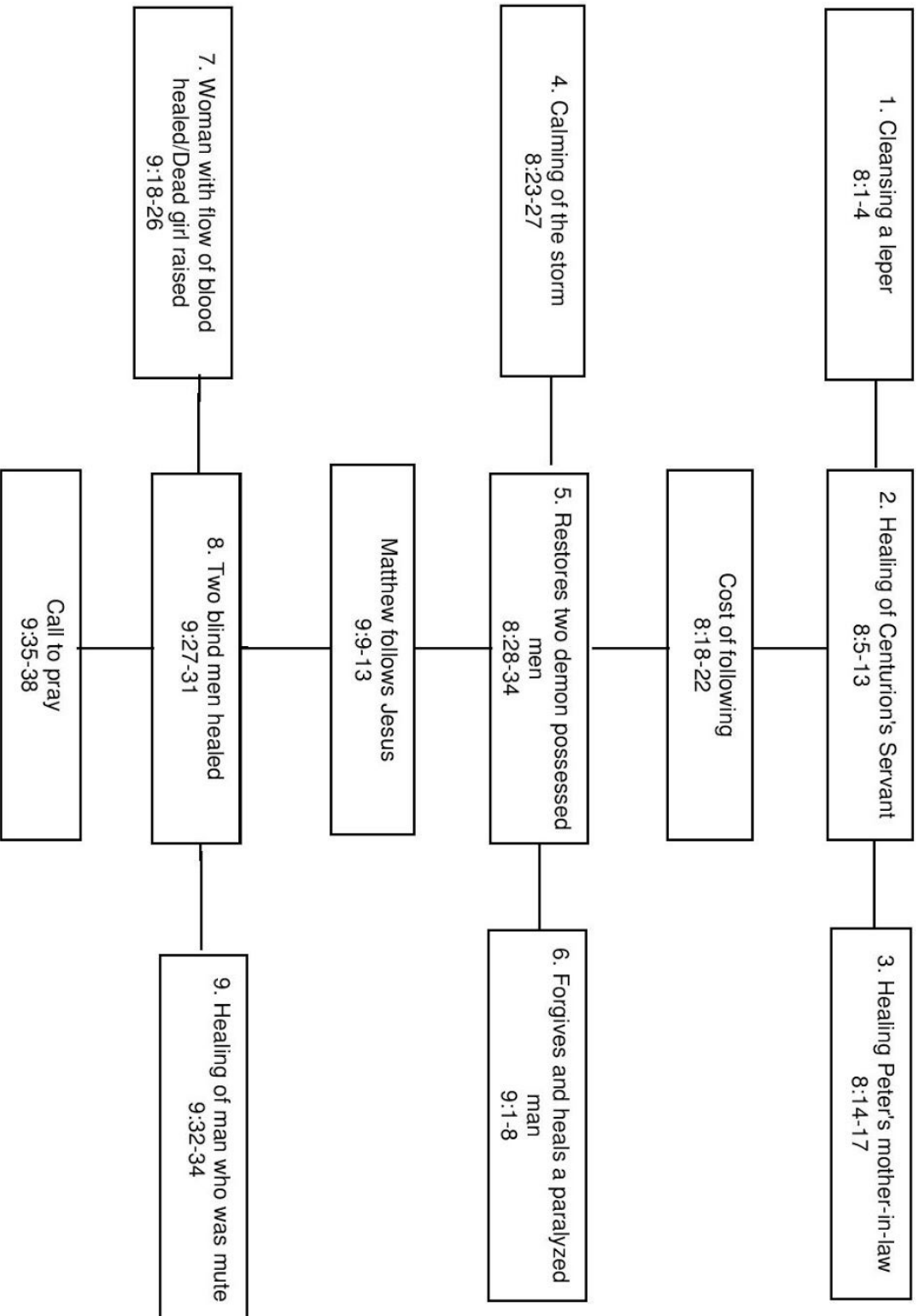
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MATTHEW CHAPTERS 8 & 9: JESUS BRINGS KINGDOM INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES





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STUDY 4. Responding to a Mixed Reception

Aim. To understand how Jesus reacted to the different responses people had to his message of God's kingdom. And to think about how we should respond when people today have mixed responses to the gospel.

You Will Need: Copies of the sheet, cut up and in envelopes.

To Start With: Look at the quotes (separate page) about Kingdoms and try to match up the quote with its author/context. (*You may wish to have more than one set if your group is large.*) Cut them up and have people match the two halves (*N.B. You can make it a competition if that suits your group!* 😊)

Engaging the Text:

This study looks at how Jesus reacted to the mixed response he and his message of the kingdom received.

1. Read each of the following which bookend either side of our chapter and sum up the response to Jesus. Matthew 11.2–6; 11.20–24; 12.13–14; 12.22–24 & 13.54–58.

In response to this hostility Jesus told a series of parables about the kingdom. We will look at the less familiar ones. Read 13.24–33 & 44–50.

2. What are your immediate reactions to these parables?
 - Which do you most easily understand or identify with (and why)?
 - Which do you find hardest to access (and why)?
3. Why do you think Jesus chose to use so many different images or metaphors to talk about the Kingdom of God?
4. Read 13.34–43 & 51–52. How far does Jesus' commentary here help us understand the parables and why he told them?
5. Jesus used metaphors that spoke to his audience, but our context is different today. (Few of us are farmers, fishermen or bakers!) How far do you think they can still speak today or challenge our thinking about God's kingdom values? In what way?
6. Finally, in small groups or pairs, share which parable you find most encouraging and which you find most uncomfortable. Finish by praying for each other, asking God to reveal more of His own Kingdom priorities.



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Starter Activity Sheet. To cut up.

Confucius	If one should desire to know whether a kingdom is well governed, if its morals are good or bad, the quality of its music will furnish the answer.
Shakespeare (Richard III)	A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!
Lion King (Mufasa)	Everything the light touches... is our kingdom. But a king's time as ruler rises and falls like the sun. One day, the sun will set on my time here, and will rise with you as the new king.
Frozen (Hans)	As thirteenth in line in my own kingdom, I didn't stand a chance. I knew I'd have to marry into the throne somewhere.
Virginia Woolf	Boredom is the legitimate kingdom of the philanthropic
Oscar Wilde	Our ambition should be to rule ourselves, the true kingdom for each one of us; and true progress is to know more, and be more, and do more.
Sun Tzu	The general who advances without coveting fame and retreats without fearing disgrace, whose only thought is to protect his country and do good service for his sovereign, is the jewel of the kingdom.
Nietzsche	The 'kingdom of heaven' is a condition of the heart – not something that comes 'upon the earth' or 'after death'.



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STUDY 5. The Inclusive Kingdom

Aim. To reflect on Jesus as saviour not just to the Jewish minority, but to us all, and consider how we can be as inclusive as possible as a faith community.

To Start With: When have you been glad to be included in something?

Engaging with the text:

1. Read Matthew 15.21–28 and in groups of two or three people discuss the following characters, including both your initial impression and if/how that changes as the story progresses:
 - the Canaanite woman
 - the disciples
 - Jesus

Now express your opinions to the group using a graph, drawings, facial expressions, mime or any non-verbal method!

2. Many people are confused by how Jesus behaves here. Below are some theories about what is going on, which are you convinced by? (If none then how do you read it?)

Theory 1. Jesus sees his mission to the Jews as exclusive and so doesn't want to be distracted by those from other ethnic groups – particularly Canaanites with whom Israel had an ancient animosity. However, her determination challenges that, and persuades him to overcome his reservations.

Theory 2. Jesus is saying out loud what the disciples were thinking i.e. Gentiles were considered inferior and called 'dogs' by Jews (in part because they had no dietary restrictions). In doing so he is challenging their prejudices and assumptions with her faith i.e. he is creating a learning point for them and showing God's inclusivity.

Theory 3. Given that she is an enemy of God's people (a Canaanite) Jesus is testing her faith to see if she is worthy of his help.

3. Ultimately, Jesus does not exclude her from God's kingdom but honours her faith. She parallels two other women in his history. (Rahab and Ruth, listed in Matthew 1).

How do you react to that and what does this tell us about God's plans for humanity?

(You may wish to read/refer to: 1 Peter 2.9–10, Romans 4.13, Galatians 3.26–28)

4. What things in your faith journey have helped you to know you are welcomed by Jesus?



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5. Given that we now know that ALL who put their faith in Jesus are welcome in the Kingdom of God, who do you think may feel excluded, or in reality find themselves excluded from the church for some reason?
6. A. How might we, either consciously or unconsciously, be excluding people from knowing Jesus today?

B. How can we try to overcome those barriers which prevent people from knowing they are welcome and embracing the gospel?

Response: Take time to pray in small groups on the topics of tonight's conversation. You might want to thank God for inviting us into his saving plan, and/or to pray for his spirit of inclusivity to grow in us and to be visible in our church family.



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STUDY 6. Children of the Kingdom - Valuing the Powerless

Aim: To see the upside-down nature of God's kingdom where the powerless are valued and the vulnerable are protected, and to see how we might nurture a 'childlike' attitude in our discipleship.

To Start With: What is your favourite childhood memory? (Get everyone to contribute at least one thing).

Q1. Read Matthew 18.1–5

- a) Why do you think the disciples wanted to know who was 'the greatest' in the Kingdom of Heaven?
- b) How do you think children were treated in the culture Jesus was brought up in? In what ways do you think Jesus' attitude might be different from those of the culture around him?

Note for Leaders: In Jesus' day, children had almost no social status and no legal rights, and were therefore very vulnerable. Jesus makes the point of bringing one into his 'inner circle' to show how much God values the powerless in his Kingdom.

Q2. a) Jesus points to children as an example of 'humility' (v. 4). What do you think humility is? What do you think is the difference between being humble and false humility (e.g. either saying we're no good at anything or alternatively 'humble-bragging' are)?

b) In Ancient Greco-Roman culture, humility was seen as a weakness or even a vice. To what extent do you think our modern culture struggles with the concept of humility?

Q3. Read Matthew 18.10–14

- a) What is God's attitude and character towards those who stray away from him or are vulnerable? Why?
- b) Who do you think the 'lost sheep' might represent in our society and our church today?
- c) How best do you think we can practically welcome in those who are vulnerable, straying, or not valued highly by society into our fellowship?

Q4. In this section, Jesus calls his disciples, including us today, to adopt a child-like attitude to our faith. What do you think this might look like in practice? What are the hardest things about this for you?

*In small groups, finish by picking **one** area of becoming childlike in character towards God, and pray about this.*



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STUDY 7. Clash of the Kingdoms

Aim. To consider what it means that Jesus was the Messiah in the light of his most violent actions. And to consider where we might need to be 'attacking' systems of the worldly kingdoms that oppress and dominate people.

To Start With:

Who is the most powerful person you have ever met (e.g. royalty, someone in high office)? How did you feel and act around them?

Engaging the Text:

Part 1. Who is the Messiah?

Read Matthew 21.1–17.

1. Matthew references a number of Old Testament scriptures in this short passage. Split into 4 groups and take one of them each, then answer the following Questions.

	<i>If people get stuck</i>
Matthew 21.5 quotes Zechariah 9.9–10	(Sovereign King)
Matthew 21.9 quotes Isaiah 62.11	(Saviour)
Matthew 21.14–17 quotes Psalm 8	(Divine Lord to be praised)
Matthew 21.9 quotes Psalm 118.26	(The Lord is God – i.e. Jesus is God)

- a. What is Matthew communicating about Jesus by using this text?
- b. How would you react if the powerful person you cited in the starting question said this about themselves?

Share your comments back to the group and decide how you would sum up Matthew's perspective.

Part 2. How does the Messiah Act?

Read verses 12–17 again.

2. A. How do you react to verses 12–13? Why?
B. How do you think people at the time reacted?
3. Why do you think Jesus chose to act this way? What is he addressing by his actions? (Isaiah 56.6–8 might help)

N.B. leader's note. The outer court where this action takes place was designated as a place of prayer for Gentiles and women, this was the closest they could physically get to God and the Holy of Holies.



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4. Why do you think Matthew emphasises the groups he does in verse 14–15?
5. Jesus is directly challenging the human kingdom, or system that oppressed the vulnerable and kept them from God. What systems today do you think do the same thing and what might WE need to do to challenge them? (Should we be flipping tables like Jesus did?)

Finally, spend some time in prayer:

- Firstly for those who have power, that they would know God and steward that for justice and the good of all.
- Then for those who are powerless, that they would know God is for them – they are welcome in his kingdom.
- Finally, for ourselves, that we would be courageous to challenge injustice and live for the Kingdom of God, making all know they are welcomed by Jesus, the Messiah, the promised one whose name means 'God to the rescue.'



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STUDY 8. Betrayal of the King

Aim. This study is designed to slow us down and sit contemplatively with the text as we approach the cross and enter afresh into what is, for many of us, a familiar story. It's probably best if someone experienced leads so they don't rush through it. Give space to each of the three parts (at least 10 minutes) and encourage people who may not be used to a slower, quieter form of reading to give it a go and see what God does.

Part 1. Matthew 26.17–35

Ask one person to read the passage through twice, slowly and clearly.

- a. Encourage everyone to sit with the text for 5–10 minutes and imagine themselves as **Peter**. You can read out the following to aid people's reflections, **leaving plenty of space in between each:**
 - i. *Imagine the taste of the bread and the wine*
 - ii. *What might Peter be feeling – to be celebrating the great Exodus story with the Passover meal, and at the same time to hear your rabbi talking about his death and betrayal?*
 - iii. *Imagine hearing Jesus' words. How might it feel to be told that you are about to betray the one you have left everything to follow?*
- b. Encourage people to note down anything God might be saying to them in the quiet.

Part 2. Matthew 26.36–46

Ask someone else to read these verses twice through, slowly and clearly.

- a. Encourage everyone to sit with the text for 5–10 minutes and imagine themselves as **one of the disciples** looking on. You can read out the following to aid people's reflections, **leaving plenty of space in between each:**
 - i. *Imagine the strain of trying to stay awake.*
 - ii. *How do you react to Jesus' rebukes?*
 - iii. *How might you feel overhearing his prayers?*
 - iv. *In the quiet, ask God if there any situations right now for which He is calling us to stay awake, to watch and to pray.*
- b. Encourage people to note down what God might be saying to them in the quiet.

Part 3. Matthew 26.47–56

Ask a third person to read these verses twice through, slowly and clearly.

- a. Encourage everyone to sit with the text for 5–10 minutes and imagine themselves as **Jesus**. You can read out the following to aid people's reflections, **leaving plenty of space in between each:**



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- i. How might he be feeling – physically, emotionally, spiritually – after Gethsemane?*
 - ii. Imagine the sense of loneliness. How does it feel to see Judas leading the crowd? How does it feel to be deserted by all the disciples?*
- b. Encourage everyone to spend some time sitting in the horror and darkness of the scene. If we skip over this too quickly, we can miss the full glory of the cross.

Finally, in smaller groups encourage people to share what God has been saying to them in the quiet and to pray together.



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STUDY 9. Fulfilment of the Kingdom Plan

Instructions for leader. This is a meditative reading of Matthew 26.57–28.20.

You will need a copy of the script for each person reading (see below). You might like to consider enlarging the script if you have those who will struggle with small print.

The passage is divided into 9 sections, separated by dotted lines. Each section should be read by a different person (if your group is small people can read more than one each).

A separate person should be assigned ALL the sections in red italics, which are from Isaiah 53 and interspersed throughout the story. They should also read the whole of Isaiah 53 at the end.

Encourage people to read slowly and leave pauses between the sections.

After reading it through, leave a few minutes silence for people to meditate individually. Then you might like to respond in various ways:

- Worship: you could use songs such as Once Again (Matt Redman), Lost in Wonder (Martin Layzell), Living Hope (Phil Wickham)
- Discussion, possibly in small groups: ask questions such as ‘what struck you afresh from the reading?’, ‘which part impacted you the most this time?’, ‘how do you want to respond to what we’ve just read?’

This would be a good opportunity to invite people to the Maundy Thursday foot-washing and communion service (evening of 9 April at the Appleby Rooms), to commemorate the Last Supper and Jesus’ death.

Matthew 26.57–28.20. (New Living Translation)

Part 1.

My servant grew up in the LORD’s presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

Then the people who had arrested Jesus led him to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of religious law and the elders had gathered. Meanwhile, Peter followed him at a distance and came to the high priest’s courtyard. He went in and sat with the guards and waited to see how it would all end.

Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find witnesses who would lie about Jesus, so they could put him to death. But even though they found many who agreed to give false witness, they could not use anyone’s testimony. Finally, two men came forward who declared, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word.



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Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Well, aren’t you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?” But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, “I demand in the name of the living God—tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

Jesus replied, “You have said it. And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God’s right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, “Blasphemy! Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?” “Guilty!” they shouted. “He deserves to die!”

Then they began to spit in Jesus’ face and beat him with their fists. And some slapped him, jeering, “Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who hit you that time?”

Part 2.

We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came over and said to him, “You were one of those with Jesus the Galilean.”

But Peter denied it in front of everyone. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said. Later, out by the gate, another servant girl noticed him and said to those standing around, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

Again Peter denied it, this time with an oath. “I don’t even know the man,” he said. A little later some of the other bystanders came over to Peter and said, “You must be one of them; we can tell by your Galilean accent.”

Peter swore, “A curse on me if I’m lying—I don’t know the man!” And immediately the rooster crowed.

Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down.

Suddenly, Jesus’ words flashed through Peter’s mind: “Before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me.” And he went away, weeping bitterly.

Part 3

Very early in the morning the leading priests and the elders of the people met again to lay plans for putting Jesus to death. Then they bound him, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. “I have sinned,” he declared, “for I have betrayed an innocent man.”

“What do we care?” they retorted. “That’s your problem.”



All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

“They took the thirty pieces of silver—
the price at which he was valued by the people of Israel,
and purchased the potter’s field,
as the Lord directed.”

“Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed?”



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But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!”

Pilate saw that he wasn’t getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So, he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. The responsibility is yours!”

And all the people yelled back, “We will take responsibility for his death—we and our children!”

Unjustly condemned, he was led away.

So, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

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Part 5.

He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

Some of the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him.

He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins.

They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, “Hail! King of the Jews!” And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Along the way, they came across a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus’ cross. And they went out to a place called Golgotha (which means “Place of the Skull”). The soldiers gave Jesus wine mixed with bitter gall, but when he had tasted it, he refused to drink it.

After they had nailed him to the cross, the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice. Then they sat around and kept guard as he hung there. A sign was fastened above Jesus’ head, announcing the charge against him. It read: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. “Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, if you are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!”

He was struck down for the rebellion of my people.



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The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! So he is the King of Israel, is he? Let him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in him! He trusted God, so let God rescue him now if he wants him! For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Even the revolutionaries who were crucified with him ridiculed him in the same way.

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Part 6.

It was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief.

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

We thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!

Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. But the rest said, "Wait! Let's see whether Elijah comes to save him." Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit.

No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream.

At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead. They left the cemetery after Jesus' resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people. The Roman officer and the other soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and all that had happened. They said, "This man truly was the Son of God!" And many women who had come from Galilee with Jesus to care for him were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James and Joseph), and the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

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Part 7.

He was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

As evening approached, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea who had become a follower of Jesus, went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. And Pilate issued an order to release it to him. Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a long sheet of clean linen cloth. He placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left. Both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting across from the tomb and watching.

The next day, on the Sabbath, the leading priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. They told him, "Sir, we remember what that deceiver once said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise from the dead.' So we request that you seal the tomb until the third day. This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he was raised from the dead! If that happens, we'll be worse off than we were at first."



Part 8.

Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you."

Who has believed our message? To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?

The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message.

When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”

As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. They told the soldiers, “You must say, ‘Jesus’ disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.’ If the governor hears about it, we’ll stand up for you so you won’t get in trouble.” So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.

Part 9.

I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death.

Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father



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and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Who has believed our message?

To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?

*My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot,
like a root in dry ground.*

*There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance,
nothing to attract us to him.*

He was despised and rejected—

a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;

it was our sorrows that weighed him down.

*And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for his own sins!*

*But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.*

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.

We have left God's paths to follow our own.

*Yet the LORD laid on him
the sins of us all.*

*He was oppressed and treated harshly,
yet he never said a word.*

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

*And as a sheep is silent before the shearers,
he did not open his mouth.*

*Unjustly condemned,
he was led away.*

*No one cared that he died without descendants,
that his life was cut short in midstream.*

*But he was struck down
for the rebellion of my people.*

*He had done no wrong
and had never deceived anyone.*

*But he was buried like a criminal;
he was put in a rich man's grave.*

*But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him
and cause him grief.*

*Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,
he will have many descendants.*

*He will enjoy a long life,
and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands.*

*When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish,
he will be satisfied.*

And because of his experience,



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*my righteous servant will make it possible
for many to be counted righteous,
for he will bear all their sins.
I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier,
because he exposed himself to death.
He was counted among the rebels.
He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.*