Friends,

By the end of this week, you'll have read through an entire Gospel. Nice going! Some—and perhaps, much—of this may sound familiar, but isn't it great to move from the start of Jesus' life and ministry through to its conclusion? Reading like this can help a few more pieces drop into place. It can also raise questions…

Like Jesus' transfiguration (chap 17)—what's going on there? The voice from heaven heard by the disciples (17:5) gives us some idea; so does the question Jesus asks His friends (16:13) about how He's being perceived. Think of the transfiguration as showing us something true about Jesus' nature that has always been true, but perhaps not quite as obvious before this.

There's also a lot of teaching in these chapters. What stood out for you?

And then, there is a record of Jesus' last days: His 'triumphal entry' (chap 21), last supper (chap 26), arrest, trial, and crucifixion (chaps 26-27). Before that, though, we hear Jesus speaking to religious leaders in a stern tone (chap 23 & 24). The language here reminds us of Old Testament prophets; some of it sounds like it comes from Revelation, too.

And then, the resurrection (chap 28)! Following this, Jesus gathers disciples and sends them off on the next great adventure (28:16-20).

In addition to finishing Matthew this week, the schedule takes you into and through Paul's letter to the Philippians. There's no special reason for linking these two books (other than adding more pages so that we finish by New Year's!), but when Paul slows down to talk about Jesus in chap 2, your time in Matthew may well give you a new appreciation for what captures this apostle's attention.

Two other thoughts regarding Philippians. First, seeing that Philippi is in the north of Greece (see the map below) shows how far the news of Jesus has spread from Israel. Second, listen for how Paul speaks to believers there. What is his tone? What does he think they need to hear? And in what ways might a church today learn from what Paul said to these ancient Greeks?