

THE LIFE OF JESUS – A LIFE TO FOLLOW

4.1 Jesus – the Prophesied One

Aim: To help us appreciate who Jesus is – the Prophesied One.

Intro: Last year in our Home Groups, we considered friendship with God through Jesus and growing in our relationship with God through the Spirit. We also considered God establishing His church, and what our place and involvement in His church should be.

This year, we will be considering the life of Jesus, and learning what it means to follow Him. We will also consider evangelism and the need for all of us to carry out Christ's call in His Great Commission to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19).

Discuss: To begin our new series on the life of Jesus, let us consider this fundamental question: "Who is Jesus?" Jesus asked His disciples in Matt 16:13 "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?", and then in Matt 16:15 He said "But who do you say that I am?" *What's your answer?*

Peter responded to Jesus' question by saying "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". In giving this right answer, which he had come to through God's help (Matt 16:17), Peter made two great declarations of Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, the One God promised to send and who God anointed to be our Saviour King, and Jesus is the Son of God – the One who is divine, though He also took on human form.

In this first lesson, let us consider Jesus being the Christ – the Prophesied One.

The Fulfilment of Prophecy

There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that refer specifically to the Christ - the One God would send to be our Rescuer and Ruler. All of these prophecies were fulfilled in only one person in history - Jesus. He is the Christ. It's also truly amazing that Jesus fulfilled every prophecy, considering that they were written by more than 20 different Bible authors over a 1,000-year period. In this first study we will consider some of the main prophecies about the Christ and how Jesus fulfilled them all.

What was to be unique about the Christ's birth? (Isa 7:14 and Matt 1:18-23)

He would be a son, born of a virgin, and be called Emmanuel ("God with us") – just as Jesus was.

Where was the Christ to be born? (Mic 5:2 and Matt 2:1-6)

He would be born in Bethlehem – just as Jesus was.

How would people be prepared for the Christ's public ministry? (Isa 40:3 and Luke 3:3-6)

John the Baptist, in the wilderness of Judea, would come and prepare peoples' hearts for the Christ.

Where would the Christ especially minister? (Isa 9:1-2 and Matt 4:12-16)

He would minister to the people in the land of Galilee – just as Jesus did.

What amazing feats would the Christ perform? (Isa 35:5-6 and Matt 11:2-6)

He would perform miracles of healing, such as healing the blind and deaf and lame - just as Jesus did.

How would the Christ teach? (Psa 78:2 and Matt 13:34-35)

He would speak in parables - just as Jesus did.

How would the Christ be received? (Isa 53:3 and John 19:15)

He would be rejected - just as Jesus was.

How would the Christ respond to His accusers? (Isa 53:7 and Matt 27:12-14)

He would be silent - just as Jesus did.

How would the Christ die? (Psa 22:14-18, Isa 53:5 and John 19:17-18, 23-24, 28)

By crucifixion – just as Jesus was. NB: Crucifixion wasn't even practised when Psalm 22 was written!

What would the Christ not experience in His death? (Psalm 34:20 and John 19:32-36)

He would not have any bone broken, even though it was customary to break the legs of the crucified.

What would the Christ's death accomplish? (Isa 53:4-6 and 1 Peter 2:24)

His death would bring about the forgiveness of our sins – for He died to bear the penalty of our sins.

How would the Christ be buried? (Isa 53:9 and Matt 27:57-60)

Though He would die a criminal, He would be put in a rich man's grave – just as it happened to Jesus.

What would happen to Christ's body? (Psa 16:9-10 & Acts 2:24-32; Psa 110:1 & Matt 22:41-45)

He would rise from the dead, conquering the grave, and then ascend to the right hand of the Father.

Why is the fulfilment of these prophecies by the man Jesus so important?

It proves that the man Jesus is truly the Christ, the One God sent to save us, as well as to rule us in righteousness. Fulfilled prophecy also affirms God's existence and the inspiration of His Word.

Summary: Fulfilled prophecy clearly declares to us that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah).

4.2 Jesus: Fully God and Fully Man

Aim: To help us appreciate who Jesus is – the one and only who is both fully God and fully man.

Discuss: *Why is it vitally important to have a right and accurate view of Christ?*

A right and accurate view of Christ is essential for us to respond to Him rightly, to interact with Him correctly, and, in the end, to spend eternity with Him in glory.

What's the most important view we are to have of Christ? Who is Jesus' really?

Besides being our Saviour and Lord, He is both fully God and fully man; if He wasn't fully God and fully man (the Son of God and the Son of Man), He wouldn't have been able to save us and redeem us.

Jesus' Divinity

Who is Jesus really according to prophecy (Isa 7:14, Isa 9:6; Jer 23:6)

Jesus is divine – He was prophesied to be "Emmanuel" (God with us) in Isa 7:14, "the mighty God" in Isa 9:6, and "the LORD (Yahweh) our righteousness" in Jer 23:6.

Who is Jesus really according to the New Testament? (John 1:1, John 20:28, Rom 9:5)

He was clearly proclaimed to be God – He is the Son of God, God's the Son, and God Himself.

Being truly divine, what do we learn of Jesus in John 1:1-3 and Col 1:15-17?

Jesus is the Creator of all things; together with God the Father (cf. Heb 1:2, Rev 4:11). Indeed, in regard to Creation, Jesus existed before it, He created it, and He continues to sustain it.

What did Jesus Himself claim about His existence in John 8:58?

Before Abraham was born, He had always been ("I AM" is what God declared of Himself in Exod 3:14).

What is the significance of the phrase Jesus uses in Rev 1:8,17 and 22:12-13?

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The phrase "I am the Alpha and Omega" declares that Jesus has no beginning and no end. He is eternal; like the Father.

Jesus is the second Person of the Trinity. What do you understand the Trinity to mean?

- The Trinity is not three separate Gods (Tritheism). There is only one God (Deut 6:4; John 10:30)
- The Trinity is not one person who appears in three separate forms (Modalism). Consider Matt 3:16-17.
- The Trinity is not three unequal persons (Arianism). Jesus and the Father equally share the divine nature (John 14:8-9; Heb 1:3).

Illustration: The Trinity is like the sun; it exists as fire, light, and heat - inseparable, yet distinct.

Who is Jesus according to Heb 1:1-3?

He's the Son of God, heir of all things, co-creator of the world, radiance of God's glory, exact representation of God's nature, holds creation together, and rules with the Father from His right hand. He is truly God and one with the Father, even having an eternal throne and an eternal existence (Heb 1:8-12)

What is Jesus' relationship to the angels? (Heb 1:4-6; Rev 5:11-14)

He is far greater than the angels just as the Father is. God calls Him "My Son" unlike any angel. Also, angels worship Him, just as they worship the Father. Truly, Jesus is divine and above all creation.

Jesus' Humanity

In order to come to earth, what did Jesus do? (John 1:14; Phil 2:6-8)

He humbled Himself and laid aside His blinding glory in order to take on our humanity and became a man.

What things in Jesus' life showed that He was fully human?

He was tempted and hungry (Luke 4:1-2); He was angry (John 2:14-17); He was tired and thirsty (John 4:6-7); He was exhausted and sleepy (Mark 4:37-38); He wept (John 11:35); He was deeply troubled (Mark 14:32-36); He experienced pain, abandonment and death at the cross (Mark 15:22-25, 33-39).

Why did Jesus humble Himself and become a man? (Matt 1:21; Mark 10:45; Heb 2:14-18)

He became a man to save us sinners and to rescue us from death by giving His life up for us.

The Importance of Jesus' Identity

What's so important about Jesus being fully God? (John 1:18, 14:6)

He alone reveals God to us and makes us right with God; He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

What's so important about Jesus being fully human? (Heb 2:14-16, 4:14-16)

He alone can represent us and lay His life down on our behalf to save us. He also can sympathise with us.

What bearing does our belief in Jesus' true identity have on our salvation? (John 8:24)

Everything! We will die in our sins if we don't believe what Jesus claimed about Himself.

Summary: Jesus is fully God & fully man; that's why He can relate to us, represent us, and save us.

4.3 Preparing For Christ's Coming

Aim: To help us understand how God prepared specific people personally for Christ's coming.

Discuss: *In keeping His promise to send the Christ, what did God do? (consider His dealings with Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Joseph & Mary)*

God became personally involved in their lives by sending an angel or a vision in order to help them know His will in regard to the coming and birth of Jesus, and what they were to do to accomplish His will.

Consider: God could easily do everything Himself. But what does He love to do?

He loves to use us and involve us in accomplishing His will and purposes. How do you feel about that?

This study will show how God prepared the way for Jesus' coming. We will consider His personal involvement in people's lives, and His ongoing desire to be personally involved in our lives today.

The First Promise: John the Baptist

Who were Zechariah and Elizabeth? (Luke 1:5-7)

Zechariah was a priest, both of them were of outstanding moral character, and they had no children.

What happened to Zechariah while he was faithfully ministering in the temple? (Luke 1:8-13)

An angel appeared before him and announced that God would give him a son named John.

What do we learn about John the Baptist from this account? (Luke 1: 14-17)

He would be a great man of God, preparing the hearts of the people for Christ's coming.

How did Zechariah and Elizabeth respond to this good news? (Luke 1:18-25)

Zechariah didn't believe at first and he became mute. Elizabeth gave glory to God.

What can we learn about our own responses to God from this story?

God uses ordinary people; He wants to use you. Sometimes it's hard to believe God would really use us. Don't let doubt stand in the way of His will. Be sure to give glory to God when His work is evident.

The Second Promise: Christ Himself

What was the angel's message to Mary? (Luke 1:26-33)

God was with her, and she had found favour with Him. Though a virgin, she would conceive a child miraculously through the Holy Spirit. Her son would be called Jesus, and He would be the Son of God.

How did Mary respond to the angel's message? (Luke 1:34-38)

She questioned the possibility of such a thing, but then she humbly accepted and submitted herself to it.

What do we learn about Jesus from this account?

He would be great, the Son of the Most High, David's greater Son, and conceived miraculously.

What was Joseph's response? (Matthew 1:18-25)

As a righteous man he wanted to call off the engagement, until the angel of the Lord spoke to him. But when Joseph learnt that Mary's pregnancy was of God, he obeyed the Lord and took her as his wife.

Does Mary and Joseph's experiences provide any lessons for us today?

We are to trust and obey God, even when the circumstances may seem impossible to us. As the angel declared to Mary, "Nothing is impossible with God." Also, we are to trust and obey God when it may be very intimidating; ie, it would have been scandalous for Mary to be pregnant without being married.

What are the similarities and differences in the circumstances of John and Jesus' births?

Similarities: God sent the angel Gabriel to each of the people who would be entrusted with these special children; God chose godly and faithful people; God brought about His promises in extraordinary ways; the parents were told that Jesus and John were destined for great things.

Differences: Zechariah did not believe and became mute until John's birth; Mary accepted the angel's words: "May it be done to me according to your word". John and Jesus would be very different; John was sent by God to prepare people's hearts for Jesus; Jesus is God's king for us, who came to save us.

Personal Application

God, in His wisdom, chose Elizabeth & Zechariah, and Mary & Joseph – ordinary, but faithful and obedient people to fulfil His purposes. What can we learn from this personally?

Firstly, God has chosen us ordinary people to be saved and to be His people (1 Cor 1:26-29; 1 Pet 2:9).

Secondly, He will choose to use us mightily, if we would be faithful and obedient to do His will (cf. Jesus in Heb 10:5-7 and Paul in Acts 26:19-20; no wonder God mightily used them – especially Jesus).

Summary: **The same God who prepared others for the coming of Christ wants to be involved in our lives. But we need to be humble, obedient, trusting, and available.**

4.4 Jesus' Birth and Early Years

Aim: To show God's character in the events surrounding Jesus' birth and early years.

Discuss: *How do most non-Christians view the Christmas story?*

Many regard it as either a nice story that has little relevance for their lives, or a fictitious story of no value.

As a Christian, how should we view the Christmas story?

It is the fulfilment of God's promises from long ago, and the realisation of His plan to rescue us from sin and reconcile us to Himself. The Christmas story also reveals God's glorious character and heart for us.

The Birth of John the Baptist

What controversy surrounded the naming of Elizabeth and Zechariah's baby? (Luke 1:57-63)

It was customary to name the son after someone in the family, such as the father. In the face of tradition and family pressure, they called their baby John in obedience to the angel's word (see Luke 1:13).

Note: John's name means "God has been gracious" - a good name for someone who would announce the coming of our Saviour, and God's gracious plan of salvation.

What were the results of Zechariah's obedience? (Luke 1:64-67)

His speech was restored, he praised God, he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and others revered God.

What can we learn from this passage?

We are to obey God, even if it means encountering resistance. God will bless us when we obey Him.

The Birth of Jesus

What do we learn from Matt 1:18-23 in regard to Jesus' birth?

Jesus is "God with us", and He was born and given the name Jesus, because He came to save us from sin.

What do we learn from Luke 2:8-14 in regard to Jesus' birth?

Jesus is our Lord, and He was born to be our Saviour, and to bring us great joy and hope.

What light does Paul shed on Jesus' birth? (Rom 5:6-11; Gal 4:4-5)

It happened at just the right time and for the purpose of redeeming us and reconciling us back to God.

Consider the people involved in the Christmas story – how did they react and respond?

Joseph (Matt 1:18-25): He wanted to end his engagement with Mary, after she was found to be with child, but after the angelic visit, he obeyed the Lord and married her.

Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20): Although initially frightened, they believed the angel and went to see baby Jesus, and then they shared with those at Christ's birth, all that the angels had told them.

What can we learn from this passage about God, and what can we learn for ourselves?

God is sovereign – Jesus was born at the right time. As humans, we are to believe God's Word and to obey Him. For those who do, we experience His blessings.

Jesus' Infancy & Childhood

Why is it significant about the account in Luke 2:21-24?

It shows that Mary and Joseph were obedient in carrying out all God's commands for their firstborn son.

How would you be if you were Mary or Joseph when Simeon and Anna came up (Luke 2:25-38)?

We would probably be startled, but reassured that baby Jesus truly is the Christ; our Saviour and King.

How did Jesus spend His early childhood? (Matt 2:13-23)

God protected Jesus from Herod by having Him go to Egypt, and then to Nazareth, fulfilling Hosea 11:1.

What kind of religious training did Jesus probably receive? (Deut 6:4-7)

He would have received instruction in the Law of Moses from His parents.

In parenting, what can we learn from Mary and Joseph during Jesus' infancy and childhood?

We are to be good parents, offering up our children to God and training them in His Word.

What do we know about Jesus' later childhood? (Luke 2:41-51) What lesson can we learn?

He was once separated from His parents while talking with the religious teachers at the temple. They were amazed with His wisdom. However, when His parents found Him, He subjected Himself to them.

Children, like Jesus, should submit themselves to their parents while under their care (Col 3:20).

Conclusion

What do we learn about God from these details of the birth and early years of Jesus' life?

God is sovereign and faithful; He fulfilled all the prophecies concerning Jesus at just the right time.

God is caring; He protected His Son, so that through Him God's plan of salvation might come to us.

God is relational; He visited Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah and shepherds, in regard to Jesus' coming.

Summary: God is sovereign, faithful, relational and caring; in response, we are to trust & obey Him.

4.5 The Temptation of Jesus

Aim: To help us learn to deal with temptation from the way Jesus responded to temptation.

Discuss: *Why are we tempted to sin?*

We are tempted to sin because of three reasons: we have a sinful nature that seeks to have its desires satisfied; we have a hostile world that lures us into sin; and we have the devil who seeks to tempt us.

Consider: In the 1500's, Martin Luther said, "You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair!" Temptations, like birds in the air, will always be with us. But we should not, nor do we have to, allow them to roost." [Discuss]

After fasting for forty days, the devil came and presented three temptations aimed right at Jesus' human weaknesses. The way Jesus resisted them can teach us how to keep sin from "roosting" in our lives.

The First Temptation

Describe the circumstances surrounding Jesus' time of temptation. (Matt 3:13-4:2)

After a spiritual high of being baptised and affirmed by the Father and then anointed with the Holy Spirit, He was then led into the wilderness by the Spirit where He was alone and hungry after fasting 40 days.

What did Satan first tempt Jesus to do? (Matt 4:3)

Satan tempted Jesus to use His power to make bread so that He could satisfy His hunger from the fast.

Why would it have been wrong for Jesus to give in to Satan's temptation?

He would have been using His power wrongly, for God His Father had called His Son to fast during this time; ie, Jesus would have been going against God's will and using His power for personal advantage.

How did Jesus respond to Satan's first temptation? (Matt 4:4)

He used an appropriate portion from God's Word to cut down Satan's temptation; in particular, that we are to live according to what God proclaims, and for Jesus, it was for Him to fast in obedience to God.

The Second Temptation

What was the second temptation Jesus faced? (Matt 4:5-6)

Satan tempted Jesus to throw Himself down from the top of the temple and have angels rescue Him.

Why would it have been wrong for Jesus to give in to Satan's temptation?

It would have called into question God's promises, and it would have been testing God.

How did Jesus respond? (Matt 4:7)

As before, He quoted an appropriate Bible verse. We are not to put the Lord God to the test.

The Third Temptation

What was the third temptation Satan tried on Jesus? (Matthew 4:8-9)

Satan offered to give Jesus rule of all the nations of the world if He would worship Satan.

What was the significance of this temptation?

It offered Jesus what the Father would give Him after the cross (ie, bypassing the cross). This temptation had the biggest promise (all the kingdoms of the world) and the biggest price (worshipping the devil).

How did Jesus respond? (Matt 4:10)

He again quoted from the Bible; we're only to worship God and serve Him. He also told the devil to flee!

What We Can Learn

What do we learn about Satan's tactics from this story?

- He will misuse Bible verses and bend the truth to deceive us. He did it to Jesus, and he does it to us.
- He doesn't leave anybody alone. He even attacked the Son of God! Whether we are spiritually mature, knowledgeable about the Bible, or sure of our faith, it doesn't mean we won't be tempted.
- One of his favourite tactics is to call into question our identity. As he said to Jesus, "If you're really the Son of God, then . . ." so he'll taunt us with, "If you're really a child of God, how could you . . ."
- He wanted Jesus to avoid the cross. Satan will seek to keep us from our "cross" (Luke 9:23-24).

What weaknesses can Satan exploit in our lives through the world? (Consider 1 John 2:15-17)

Satan can tempt us, as he did Eve (Gen 3:1-6), in the lust of the flesh (desire for physical pleasures), the lust of the eyes (desire for material things); and the pride of life (desire for personal greatness). Be aware!

What can we learn about resisting temptation from Jesus' example?

- We need to be aware when we may be vulnerable to temptation (cf. Jesus' words in Matt 26:40-41).
- We need to know the Bible so that we can use God's truth to oppose Satan's lies (cf. John 8:44).
- We need to tell the devil to flee, or continue to resist the devil and he will leave us alone (cf. Jam 4:7).

Summary: Jesus is our perfect example in obeying God and resisting temptation.

4.6 Satan - Know Your Enemy

Aim: To help us know and recognise our enemy, and how to experience victory through Christ.

Discuss: There was a boxer who was being badly beaten. Battered and bruised, he leaned over the ropes and said to his trainer, "This guy's killing me!" The trainer replied, "Oh no he's not. He hasn't laid a glove on you!" At that point the boxer wiped the blood from his face and said, "Well then, I wish you'd watch that referee, for somebody is sure hitting me!"

Many Christians today are ignorant of Satan. Some even live as if he doesn't exist. But, as we saw last week, Jesus knew his reality and even encountered his temptations and battles, as we will too. This study will look at who Satan is, his strategies against us, and how we can experience God's victory.

Knowing Your Enemy

Who is Satan? (Rev 12:7-9)

Satan is a fallen chief angel who has been kicked out of heaven for opposing God, together with angels that sided with him. He is known as the great dragon, the serpent, Satan, and the devil.

What characterises our enemy? (Rev 12:9-10; John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8; Eph 2:1-2, 6:11-12)

He's a deceiver, an accuser, a liar, a murderer, a devourer, the prince of this fallen world, and a schemer.

What is Satan's ultimate aim? (Matt 4:8-9; Rev 12:12-17)

He longs to be worshipped as God. He also desires to harm God's people in order to get back at God.

Knowing the Strategies of Your Enemy

Look up the following verses and discover what strategies Satan uses:

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| Gen 3:1-6 | He twists God's truth and deceives; he substitutes God's word with his lies. |
| 2 Cor 4:3-4 | He blinds our minds to the truth; especially concerning Jesus and His Gospel. |
| 2 Cor 11:3 | He is crafty and seeks to control our thinking with unholy things; our mind is truly a battle field between Satan's fiery arrows and the Spirit of God. |
| 2 Cor 11:13-14 | He comes as an angel of light to deceive us. He is very much into counterfeiting (counterfeit Gospels – Gal 1:8; counterfeit ministers - 2 Cor 11:14-15; counterfeit doctrines – 1 Tim 4:1; counterfeit signs and wonders - 2 Thess 2:8-10 & Matt 24:24) |
| Eph 4:27 | He looks for opportunities (half-open doors) to establish a foothold in our life. |
| Rev 12:9-10 | He falsely accuses us in order to wear us down and make us give up. |
| 1 Pet 5:8 | He seeks to intimidate us and frighten us into submission to obey him. |
| Eph 6:10-11 | He doesn't want us to stand for God, but to fall and bring disgrace to God. |

In summary, Satan is opposed to God, His Son, the Spirit's work, and God's children (us).

Knowing Victory over Your Enemy

Look at the following verses to learn how we can have victory over Satan's strategies.

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| Col 2:15 | Christ has defeated our enemy at the cross (cf. also Gen 3:15, 1 John 3:8). |
| 1 John 4:4 | Because of Christ's victory over Satan, and because He lives in us by His Spirit, we can have victory over Satan in this world, and overcome those allied with him. |
| Jam 4:7 | As we submit to God, and resist the devil, Satan will flee from us. |
| 2 Cor 2:10-11 | We are to be aware of Satan's schemes and our own weaknesses. |
| 2 Cor 10:3-5 | We are to use God's weapons (the Word and prayer) to fight against the enemy. |
| 1 Pet 5:8-9 | We are to be alert, and also mindful that other believers are battling against Satan too. |
| 1 Pet 1:13 | We are to prepare our minds for action; we need to gather up all the wrong thoughts and cast them out so they don't trip us up (cf. Phil 4:8). |
| Eph 6:10-17 | We are to stand firm against Satan by having God's armour in place every day; ie, being committed to truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, and exercising faith, dwelling on our hope (the helmet of salvation – 1 Thess 5:8), and using God's Word. |

When we do fall, we can still experience victory. How? (1 John 1:9-2:2)

We can experience forgiveness and victory through Christ as we confess our sins and call on our Advocate.

What do we learn from Rev 12:10-11 in overcoming Satan?

We overcome Satan through the blood of Christ (in having forgiveness), through the Word of our testimony (the Word of God), and by standing firm even in the face of death (ie, when persecuted).

Summary: We of ourselves cannot overcome Satan, but we can through Christ (1 John 2:13-14)

4.7 Jesus Commencement to Ministry and Calling of His Disciples

Aim: To consider Jesus' commencement to ministry and His call for us to join Him.

Discuss: *Being a Christian is not just about the forgiveness of sins, being spared from God's judgment, and receiving the gift of eternal life. What else is the Christian life about? [Discuss]*

It's a calling to follow Jesus and to minister for Him and with Him, through His Spirit.

In this study we will consider Christ's calling, the Disciples' calling, and our calling to ministry.

Jesus' Baptism

Before Jesus began His ministry, what very special and public event occurred? (Matt 3:13-17)

Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist.

Jesus didn't need to be baptised. Why? (Matt 3:14-15)

The baptism of John was for repentance for sin. Jesus had no sin to repent of; therefore, He didn't need to.

To fulfill all righteousness, Jesus was baptised. As He did, what happened? (Matt 3:16-17)

The Holy Spirit came upon Him visibly to anoint Him, and the Father confirmed that Jesus was His Son.

After such an amazing event, what happened next (and after Jesus was tempted)? (Matt 4:12-17)

Jesus began His public ministry – a ministry He was called to and commissioned to do; and this was especially made clear from what had happened at Jesus' baptism. God's anointing was on Him.

Jesus' Disciples Then

During Jesus' ministry He chose twelve disciples. How did He do this? (Luke 6:12-16)

After He spent a night in prayer, He chose twelve disciples, in whom He would invest the majority of His time and attention. They would carry on His ministry, especially after His resurrection.

What type of people did Jesus choose to be His disciples?

Rough fishermen, a tax-collector, a zealot (Jewish rebel against the Romans); they were ordinary people like you and I, but they were prepared to leave everything to follow Jesus.

What does the term "disciple" mean? (Matt 16:24-25)

A disciple is someone who has submitted himself to be a learner of Jesus and who is prepared to obey the Lord at any cost (including giving up his own life).

Why is it significant that Jesus called the disciples to "be with him"? (Mark 3:13-15)

Jesus wanted the disciples to know Him thoroughly, and also to be with Him so they could experience day-to-day activities with Him, and to see a model and a lifestyle that they would imitate.

What happened to Jesus' disciples (except Judas) after He ascended? (Acts 2:1-4; 14-16, 34-39)

They were anointed with God's Spirit and began to minister in the name of Jesus for the rest of their lives.

What's significant about the way the Spirit came upon Jesus and His disciples? What's common?

The Spirit came on Jesus as a dove; to signify that He had come to make peace between God and man.

The Spirit came on the disciples in tongues of fire, to signify that their ministry was to tell the good news.

Jesus' Disciples Now

Today, when we respond to Jesus and are saved, what's firstly expected of us? (Acts 2:38-41)

We are expected to obey Jesus and get baptised. For us, baptism is not a sign of repentance, as in the case of John the Baptist's ministry, but rather it's our identification with Christ (cf. also Rom 6:3-5)

But baptism is not the end! What else is expected of us? (Matt 16:24-25; 28:18-20)

We are expected to make disciples of others, and to deny ourselves and follow Jesus (like the Twelve).

How are we to fulfill the call on our life to follow Jesus and do His ministry? (Rom 8:9-11)

Like Jesus and the Twelve, we have been anointed with the Holy Spirit. Through Him we live and serve.

What does it take to be a true and faithful disciple of Jesus? (John 6:66-69; Luke 8:11-15)

We must persevere to the end in following Jesus, even if others forsake Him. We are not to be shallow (rocky soil) or worldly (thorny ground), but genuine persevering followers. NB: Peter persevered and remained a disciple because he was convinced who Jesus was, and that it was worth following Him.

How are we to remain faithful, even when experiencing great hardship? (Hebrews 12:1-3)

- We are to remember the Lord and His people in glory, who are encouraging us on to the finishing line.
- We are to lay aside everything that will hinder us and weigh us down from running the race well.
- We are to fix our eyes on Jesus, who remained true to His calling and has gone before us.

What motivates you to stay faithful to Jesus? (2 Pet 1:5-11; Matt 25:21)

To affirm our calling, and to hear those words from the Lord: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Summary: Jesus wants you to be one of His disciples who faithfully follows Him to the end.

4.8 Jesus Sharing the Gospel

Aim: To help us learn from Jesus how to share the Gospel with others.

Discuss: Consider this scenario: You meet a friend who, out of the blue, ask you "How can I get to heaven?", or "How do I become a Christian?" What would you say to them? Do you know how to help them be a follower of Jesus? Can you give an example of when you've done that?

In this study, we will learn from our Master how He went about sharing the Gospel with a religious man and a wayward woman, showing them the way to God and to heaven.

Jesus' Conversation with Nicodemus

What do we know about Nicodemus? (John 3:1-2)

He was a Jewish religious leader (a Pharisee), and well-educated (especially in the Scriptures). He came to Jesus at night, probably secretly, so that the other religious leaders might not see him with Jesus.

How did Jesus answer Nicodemus' respectful greeting? (John 3:3)

He told him he needed to be "born again".

Why did Jesus say this?

Though he was religious and believed in God, he was still lost; he didn't know God personally. There are people we might know who are just like this; being religious and "good" doesn't save us.

How did Nicodemus understand Jesus' words, "You must be born again"? (John 3:4)

He took Jesus literally and physically, rather than spiritually. This is because he was spiritually blind and ignorant of the truth about how to be saved and how to be right with God.

What did Jesus mean by saying "you must be born again"? (John 3:5-8)

Jesus was talking about an inner transformation by the Spirit of God. This happens, not by being religious, but through faith in Jesus Christ. We must believe who Jesus Christ is, God's Son, and we must come to trust His sacrifice on the cross for us as our means of being forgiven and being made right with God. When we do this, God's Spirit comes to dwell in us; this is what it means to be born again. We have all been born physically, but to be born into God's family we all need to have a spiritual birth.

Jesus' Conversation with the Woman at the Well

What kind of person was this woman? (John 4:7a, 16-18)

A Samaritan woman (a Jewish half-caste) who was living immorally.

What was Jesus' attitude towards this wayward woman?

He didn't despise or condemn her, but with compassion, saw her as a person in need of being saved.

How did Jesus introduce the Gospel to her? (John 4:7-10)

After asking for a drink of water, he used physical water to illustrate her need of living water.

What did Jesus want this woman to understand? (John 4:11-14)

That salvation was available through Him because He Himself is the source of that living water.

What is living water? (cf. also John 7:37-39)

"Living water" refers to the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus gives to all who trust in Him. It is this "living water" that quenches our spiritual thirst and causes us to have an abundant life through knowing God personally.

Jesus' Way of Witnessing

What can we learn from how Jesus shared with these two very different people?

- We learn that Jesus did not discriminate between who could hear His message and who could not. He took His message of salvation to every kind of person. So should we!
- He met them where they were and showed them their need of Him. We are to do the same!

How would you summarise Jesus' main message? (John 3:3-5, 16; John 4:13-14)

We all need to be born again through faith in the Lord Jesus; we all need to receive Christ's living water by coming to Him. To those who feel their religious acts will earn them the right to go to heaven, Jesus delivers them from this lie of the devil by telling them to be born again. To those who feel they are outcasts in regard to God, Jesus brings them salvation and near to God, by offering them His living water.

Summary: Jesus' main message is that everybody needs salvation, and everybody needs to come by faith to Him. He is our example of how to share our faith with others; He says "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19)

4.9 The New Attitudes

Aim: To see the difference between the attitudes of the world and that of a true believer.

Discuss: You have just performed a task for the Lord with all your heart. A non-Christian says some discouraging words. What would your reaction be?

How we react all depends on our heart's *attitude*. Attitude is the central theme of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. This sermon looks at the heart attitude that is to be found in all those who know God personally through Christ. We will consider the Beatitudes that Jesus wants us to have.

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

What does it mean to be blessed (ie, blessed of God)?

It means to know and experience God's goodness and favour, and to be filled with His peace, joy and contentment, independent of our circumstances (cf. God's blessing on Abraham in Gen 12:1-3).

In regard to the Beatitudes in Matt 5:1-12, who are the blessed? (cf. Matt 5:1-3)

The blessed are those who are disciples of Christ and who live out Christ's teaching – including the Beatitudes. In Christ we have every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3), and also as we follow Jesus's teaching.

What does it mean to be poor in spirit? (Matt 5:3)

It means to be humble and dependent on God; we are not proud and independent of God.

What should we mourn over? (Matt 5:4)

We should mourn over our sin, the sin of others, the sin of our nation, and the consequences of sin.

What does it mean to be gentle (or meek)? (Matt 5:5)

It means to be kind and considerate. It doesn't mean to be weak and compromising.

What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness? (Matt 5:6)

It means to appreciate God's righteousness, and to have a heart to live righteously in order to reflect the image of God to the world about us (Jesus was perfect in this; cf. Matt 3:17; Heb 1:3a).

Why should Christians be merciful? (Matt 5:7)

We are to be merciful because God is merciful, and because He has shown us great mercy (Tit 3:4-5).

What is purity in heart? (Matt 5:8)

To have a clear conscience before God and man by being holy in word, thought, and deed; ie, no hypocrisy.

What does it mean to be a "peacemaker"? (Matt 5:9)

To be at peace with God, to help others be at peace with Him, and to be at peace with other people.

Why are Christians persecuted? (Matt 5:10-12; John 3:19-20)

They are persecuted because of their righteous life and because of their love and loyalty to Jesus. Our righteous life convicts the world of their sin, and the world opposes the One we love and adore – even Jesus.

What blessings are we promised as we live out the Beatitudes in Matt 5:3-12?

We are promised incredible blessings –the kingdom of God is ours, being comforted, inheriting the earth, being satisfied, receiving mercy, seeing God, being called a son of God, having a great reward in heaven.

What important point must we make about the Beatitudes and about salvation? (cf. Eph 2:8-9)

We are not saved by living out these words, but if we are saved, then we will seek to live out these words with the help of the Holy Spirit, and we will be blessed because of God's grace; not because we deserve it.

Who is our perfect example of living out the Beatitudes?

The one who taught the Beatitudes is the One who lived them out perfectly. Imitate Jesus (Heb 12:2-3).

Consider the Beatitudes (Christ's Attitudes) versus the World's Attitudes

Jesus Says

Blessed are the poor in spirit
 Blessed are those who mourn over sin
 Blessed are the gentle
 Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness
 Blessed are the merciful
 Blessed are the pure in heart
 Blessed are the peacemakers
 Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness

The World Says

Blessed are the proud in heart
 Blessed are those who play down sin
 Blessed are the self-assertive
 Blessed are those who do evil and get away with it
 Blessed are the hard-hearted
 Blessed are the hypocrites and manipulators
 Blessed are those who get their way at all costs
 Blessed are those who persecute His people

What steps can you take to live out the Beatitudes (or Christ's Attitudes)?

Consider Christ, confess your sin, be in prayer, and be accountable to God for behaviour we need to change.

Summary: The attitudes and actions God wants for us are distinctly different from those of the world.

4.10 Having Godly Attitudes & Motives

Aim: To follow Jesus' teaching in living with godly attitudes and motives.

Discuss: We are often impressed by someone who knows their Bible well, who prays eloquently, and who is busy serving the Lord. But what if they did these things to look good in the eyes of people; to get their approval and attention. What would you think then? What would God think?

God is concerned with our heart as well as our outward behaviour. Outward behaviour alone does not impress God, but things done with a right heart do. God knows our heart (see Jer 17:9-10; Heb 4:13).

Motives and Behaviour

In our last study we considered the Beatitudes at the start of Christ's Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5. Why did Jesus begin with these, before He addressed how we are to live as His followers?

He knew it was most important that we live before Him with right attitudes and motives.

How do inner heart attitudes affect our outward behaviour? (Matt 15:18)

They affect us in every way. What we think in our heart is what will come out.

Attitudes to Watch

1. Murder *We all know that murder is wrong, but what else is as bad as murder? (Matt 5:21-22)*

Such heart attitudes as anger and contempt toward another is equal to murder (cf. 1 John 3:15).

What are we to always do before we serve and worship God? (Matt 5:23-26)

We are to repent of any heart attitudes such as anger and contempt, and restore our relationships.

2. Adultery *Why did Jesus go beyond condemning the act of adultery? (Matt 5:27-28)*

Some people harbour lustful thoughts and think there's nothing wrong with it. But Jesus says that these lustful thoughts are just as bad as actually committing adultery.

Why did Jesus use such violent imagery to describe how we should resist sin? (Matt 5:29-30)

Sin is serious. If we don't repent of sins, including heart sins, it shows that we are not truly born of God.

Note: Jesus obviously didn't intend for us to take these words literally - maimed people still sin.

3. Hatred *What heart attitude are we not to have for enemies? (Matt 5:43-48) What should we have?*

We are not to hate them or wish for harm to come upon them. Instead, we are to love them, treat them well, help them, and pray for them (even for their salvation) – we are to be gracious, like God our Father.

Motives to Watch

1. In Doing Good *What do we need to watch out for in doing good? (Matthew 6:1)*

We need to watch out that when we do good, that we are not doing it to gain recognition from others.

2. In Giving *In the area of giving to the poor, how should we do it? (Matt 6:2-4)*

We should give so that others don't know what we're doing. It's a matter between us and the Lord.

3. In Praying *How would you describe prayer that is pleasing to God? (Matt 6:5-8)*

We are to pray without impressing others; and meaningfully - not with meaningless repetition.

4. In Fasting *In what way should we fast? (Matt 6:16-18)*

We are to fast before God so that others don't even know, but God alone.

If we would do things for God's glory and not for man's praise, what will happen one day?

God will reward us; even for things done that no one else knows about. May we live for God's reward.

Areas of Life to Watch

1. Treasures *What is a right spiritual attitude toward material things? (Matt 6:19-21, 24)*

We are to know that life does not consist in material things; for one thing, they don't last. We are also to be aware that what we value will take over our life; we cannot serve both God and money/materialism.

2. Worry *Why is it harmful to worry about material things? (Matt 6:25-34)*

It denies the fact that God will meet our needs; it shows that we are more concerned for our material well-being than the things of God; worry doesn't change the situation; it leads to ill-health.

3. Judging *Why are we commanded by Jesus not to be judgmental of one another (Matt 7:1-5)*

We are not to judge because of the sin that is in our own hearts, and also, we aren't God (Rom 14:10, 13).

Also, God will judge us in the same way we judge others. So, let us be merciful to others (cf. Matt 5:7).

4. Treating Others *What helpful attitudes will help us live out Matt 7:12?*

If we would see people as God sees them (made in His image and loved), it will help us treat others well.

Summary: God is concerned about our attitudes and motives, as much as our behaviour.

4.11 He Spoke in Parables

Aim: To understand Jesus' use of parables and grasp the main point of several of them.

Discuss: *Good stories have a way of sticking in our memory. We can remember the details years later. Jesus told many stories. His stories were filled with common, ordinary, relatable experiences. Why? Jesus used stories, called parables, to explain spiritual truth.*

Parables are not perfect analogies. They do not have lessons hidden in every little detail. Rather, these stories usually communicate one or two essential points. This study highlights eight of Jesus' parables. You will examine them closely to learn how to understand a parable.

The Sower and the Seed

What is the main point of the Parable of the Sower? (Matt 13:1-9, 18-23)

People respond in a variety of ways to the Gospel (Word of God); how we respond depends on our heart's condition. We can have a hard heart, a shallow heart, or a compromised heart. Only the fourth picture represents those who are saved; ie, the Gospel penetrated a humble heart and it produced a crop (fruit).

The Tares among the Wheat

What lesson did Jesus give in comparing people to tares and wheat? (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43)

A day is coming when evil people (tares) will be dealt with once and for all, though, at present, God's people (wheat) must live side by side with them. God will judge the unrighteous and reward His children.

The Mustard Seed

Why did Jesus choose the mustard seed to illustrate the kingdom of heaven? (Matt 13:31-32)

The mustard seed was one of the tiniest seeds in the Middle East. Yet, it would grow into a 5 metre tree. Similarly, the Gospel begins small in our life, but it ends up taking over our life; making it useful.

The Leaven

What quality does yeast have that makes it a fitting illustration of God's kingdom? (Matt 13:33)

Yeast, like a mustard seed, begins small, but it will take over the whole dough. God's work is like that.

The Hidden Treasure

What is the main point of the Parable of Hidden Treasure? (Matt 13:44)

When someone finds a great treasure, they will spare no expense to obtain it. The wealth and joy that comes from finding Christ ought to make us be willing to sacrifice everything to be completely His.

The Costly Pearl

Why is the most expensive pearl in the world like the kingdom of heaven? (Matt 13:45-46)

Such a pearl would be the "find" of a lifetime and a cause for great rejoicing. In the same way, the Gospel is more valuable than anything else. Note: Jesus wasn't saying that we can buy our way into heaven; He was merely illustrating the priceless value of finding Christ and receiving the gift of salvation.

The Fishing Net

Why would Jesus compare a fishing net to the kingdom of heaven? (Matt 13:47-50)

A fishing net catches everything in its trail. At the end of this age, all people, saved and unsaved, will be gathered together and judged. Though evil and good coexist, even in good places, a time is coming when God will sort out and deal with false believers as well as nonbelievers from among His people.

The Unmerciful Servant

What is the main point of the parable of the Unmerciful Servant? (Matt 18:21-35)

We have wronged and offended God greatly, yet He willingly forgave us our great debt. We should imitate Him and forgive those who wrong us as well, remembering that we have been forgiven much, and what others have done against us is much less compared to what we have done against God.

Jesus' Use of Parables

Consider Matt 13:35. Why else did Jesus speak in parables?

He spoke in parables to fulfil prophecy (Psalm 78:1-2). Jesus fulfilled every prophecy about Him.

Read Matt 13:10-17. Why did Jesus use parables?

Many have concluded that Jesus used parables to illustrate spiritual truth so that everyone could better understand what He was teaching. But in His own words, Jesus used parables so that the spiritually in-tune (those blessed with the help of the Spirit) may understand, but the unspiritual may not understand.

Summary: Parables use common, ordinary experiences to explain spiritual truths that God wants us to know. Are we in tune with Him spiritually to understand what He is telling us?

4.12 Jesus - A Man of Compassion

Aim: To help us understand the compassion that Jesus had for people in need (including you).

Discuss: A member of a church board fell into sin. The minister called the board together. He asked each member, "If you had been tempted as our brother was, what would you have done?" Each said, "I would never have fallen into such a sin as he did." Finally the minister addressed the question to the last board member. He replied "I feel that if I had been tempted like he, I would have fallen even lower than my brother." The pastor said, "You are the only member of this board fit to go with me and help restore my brother to fellowship." *Why was this?*

He was humble, non-judgmental, and above all, compassionate. That's how we are to be (cf. Matt 23:23).

Jesus and the Woman (John 8:1-11)

What was the attitude of the religious leaders to the woman?

They were judgmental and legalistic, full of condemnation, and lacked any compassion for a sinner.

What was Jesus' attitude toward this guilty woman?

He was compassionate and forgiving, and sought her restoration.

What did Jesus seek to do with those who were full of condemnation toward the woman?

He sought to get them to see that because we all sin against God, we should have compassion on sinners.

Jesus and the Pharisees (Matthew 12:1-14)

What did Jesus identify as the real problem with the Pharisees?

Unlike Him, they had no compassion. They were only concerned about enforcing the law (and their own human law at that), rather than having compassion to do good. They were legalists. (cf. Jam 2:12-13)

Jesus and the Needy

What was Jesus' reaction when He saw the widow? (Luke 7:11-15)

He had compassion on her because of her situation. Compassion then led to Jesus raising her son to life.

How did Jesus respond to the cries of the two blind men compared to the crowd? (Matt 20:29-34)

The crowd had no concern, but Jesus did, and moved with compassion He acted and healed them.

Jesus and the Crowds

After the death of John the Baptist, what did Jesus do with His disciples? (Matt 14:13)

He took them to a secluded place so that they could have time away from the crowds; time to grieve.

How did Jesus respond to the crowd that came and disturbed their solitude? (Matt 14:14)

He had compassion on them; He even healed the sick among them.

What was Jesus' attitude toward the crowds in Matt 9:35-36? Why?

He had compassion on them, because He saw them as distressed and dispirited sheep; ie, lost sheep without God being their shepherd to guide them and help them (cf. Psa 23).

Jesus and You

What is your response to the truth that God is not just holy and righteous, but gracious and compassionate? (cf. Exod 34:6-8)

Do we worship and thank Him for being the God of great compassion and mercy (cf. 1 Pet 1:; Tit 3:4-7)

Why should we have mercy and compassion on others? (Matt 18:32-33)

Because the Lord has shown us great compassion, we are to be compassionate to others.

Jesus and Your World (some questions to consider/discuss)

How compassionate are we as God's people? Are we more like the Pharisees or like Jesus?

Do we have compassion for the needy? Does our compassion move us to act? (cf. Jam 2:15-16)

If a brother/sister is unwell, would you visit them, offer to clean their home, or cook for them?

When a brother/sister sins, do you condemn them or have compassion on them? (cf. Luke 15:20)

If an immoral person lived next to you, would you condemn them, or pray for them?

If a person sat next to you in church a little intoxicated, smelling of alcohol and body odour, would you get up and sit somewhere else, or would you make them feel welcome?

Do you weep over those who are lost like Jesus did, seeing them as sheep without a shepherd, sheep who will one day perish and face eternal punishment? (cf. Luke 19:41-44).

Summary: Jesus was compassionate to all, including us, and we are to be the same as we follow Him.

4.13 Jesus - the Healer

Aim: To help us understand the heart of Jesus and His desire to help us and heal us.

Discuss: If you moved to a new city, how would you choose your family doctor? You would want someone who was knowledgeable and kept up to date with changes in medicine. Just as important would be someone who was concerned for your entire well-being. You would want to sense that this doctor genuinely cared about you and would want to do everything in their power to help you keep well.

Jesus' healing ministry was a highly personal part of His work, healing on an individual basis. He didn't do it to impress the crowds, but He did it out of compassion for the individuals involved.

This study, like the last one, emphasises the compassion that Jesus had on people in need. He didn't limit His ministry to people's souls, but was concerned for bodies and emotions as well.

Healing the Centurion's Servant

What facts do you observe about the centurion? (Luke 7:1-10)

He cared deeply for his servant; He had heard about Jesus and respected Him; He was very humble, considering himself unworthy to approach Jesus; He had good relationship with the Jewish elders (unusual for a military commander); He had built and paid for a synagogue; He had great faith in Jesus.

What can this story teach us about asking God to heal others?

God responds to genuine faith and humility, answering our prayers according to His will and the measure of our faith. How does your faith compare to the faith of the centurion?

Raising the Widow's Son

What strikes you in the raising (healing) of the widow's son? (Luke 7:11-17)

The boy was the woman's only child; Jesus was moved by the woman's sorrow; Jesus healed the boy even before the woman asked Him to; Jesus led the healed boy back to his mother.

What does this story teach us about Jesus?

He cares deeply about hurting people. Sometimes He meets our needs even before we ask Him.

Raising Jairus' Daughter

Who was Jairus? (Mark 5:21-23,35-43)

He was a synagogue official; He knew Jesus could heal his daughter; He did not know that Jesus could raise his daughter back to life.

What can this story teach us about trusting God? (cf. Eph 3:20-21)

Always have faith in God, because He is able to do amazing things even when we think all hope is lost

Healing of the Haemorrhaging Woman

What impresses you about the woman Jesus healed? (Mark 5:24-34)

She believed Jesus could heal her and nothing would stop her from reaching Him.

What can this story teach us about asking God for help?

God hears our requests, but do we seek Him with all our heart? Will we continue to implore Him without stopping (cf. the parable in Luke 18:1-8).

Healing of Ten Lepers

What are some significant details in the healing of the ten lepers? (Luke 17:11-19)

All ten were healed, but only after they obeyed Christ. Only one, a Samaritan, came back to thank Jesus. Note: Samaritans were half-caste Jews who were scorned by the Jews in Jesus' day.

What can this story teach us about expecting to see results from our prayers?

Sometimes we must take a step of obedience before we see any change; God deserves our thanks always.

Conclusion

What do these healings by Jesus show us about His nature?

He is compassionate and cares for us in every way; spiritually, physically and emotionally.

What can we learn from the above stories in regard to how we are to be in seeking God's help?

We are to turn to Him and ask Him for help (cf. Psa 50:15); we are to exercise faith in Him, knowing that without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6); we are to always be thankful (1 Thess 5:18).

Summary: God/Jesus is compassionate and He will always help us in our time of need. Trust Him.

4.14 Jesus's Call to Follow

Aim: To help us to hear and to heed Christ's call to follow Him as the Lord of our life.

Discuss: *Did Jesus come just to heal the sick and to give us moral law? (cf. Luke 19:10)*

No! He came to save us from our sins and to bring us lost people into right relationship with God.

But in coming to seek and save us, what else did Jesus come to do? (cf. Matt 9:9; 19:21)

He came to call us to follow Him. He isn't just our Saviour; He is the King we are to follow.

When we think of Jesus' title, the Christ, what are we meant to understand?

Jesus is the King that God promised to send and who God has appointed to lead us, and for us to follow.

Note: Christ (in the Greek) and Messiah (in the Hebrew) mean the same - God's anointed king for us.

If we are a true Christian, can we have Jesus as our Saviour, but not the Lord of our life?

No! We can only have Jesus as our Saviour if we have made Him as the Lord of our life. We must come to Jesus on His terms, and they are, that we make Him Lord and Saviour. We can't have one without the other.

In this study, we will gain an understanding of what it means to follow Christ.

The Cost to Following Jesus

Read Matt 16:13-16. What great confession did Peter make concerning Jesus?

He declared Jesus to be the Christ (the promised and anointed King for us), and the Son of the living God.

Although Peter made this true and right declaration about Jesus (through God's help – cf. Matt 16:17), it's not enough. Why? (cf. Luke 4:33-34, 40-41)

Even demons confessed who Jesus truly is – both Lord and Christ.

So, according to Matt 16:24-25, what else must we do besides confessing Christ?

We must follow Jesus and give up our life to Him (in service).

No one can follow Jesus unless they do two things beforehand. What are they? (Matt 16:24)

We must deny ourselves and take up our cross.

What does it mean to deny ourselves? (Matt 16:24)

To deny is to say "no" to something. Specifically, in regard to Jesus, it means denying ourselves of sinful and worldly desires that are contrary to God's will, and turning away from ruling our own life and doing our own thing without reference to God's will (cf. Jesus in Matt 26:39: "not as I will, but as You will").

Can you share some area in your life that God has called you to deny?

What did it mean for a person to literally "take up his cross" in Jesus' day? (Matt 16:24)

It meant that a person had to carry a wooden crossbeam through the scolding crowds to an execution site where he would be painfully crucified and die. Thus, the phrase meant to endure scorn, pain and death.

What truth was Jesus communicating when He said to His disciples to take up their cross?

Jesus did not mean that we are to be crucified. Rather, we are to give up our life to Him. We are to do what He wants, rather than what we want. We are to be a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1); enduring scorn and pain, and even martyrdom, but we gain eternal, spiritual and abundant life through Jesus (Matt 16:25).

Why is it unnatural for each of us to take up our cross?

Our nature and our culture tell us that we should live for ourselves; not die to self.

How does taking up your cross relate to family life? (Luke 14:26)

Even when it comes to those closest to us, we are to obey the Lord over and above our loved ones.

The Core Requirements in Following Jesus

Jesus calls us to follow Him in Matt 16:24? What does it mean to follow Him? (cf. John 10:27)

It means that we listen to Jesus and seek to do what He says; we listen to His voice.

How are we to listen to Jesus voice now (compared to when He walked this earth)?

We are to read His Word and put it into practice, and we are to know the leading and prompting of His Spirit in our life – this is how we listen to Jesus and follow Him now.

Consider: If we don't read His word daily, how can we follow Him daily?

What else does it mean to follow Jesus according to 1 Pet 2:21-23 & Heb 12:2?

It means we study His life and imitate Him. Jesus taught us how to live, how to pray and walk with God, how to treat people and how to face trials and temptations. May we study His life and do what He did!

In what ways is it difficult to imitate Jesus? In what areas do you want to become more like Jesus?

Like Peter, what do we need to be challenged with, according to John 21:15-22?

We are to love Jesus (keep His commands; John 14:15) and we are to follow Him (keep our eyes on Him).

Summary: Jesus calls us to follow Him as our King – may we listen to Him and imitate Him.

4.15 Following Jesus Means Obeying Him

Aim: To help us understand the importance of obeying Jesus.

Discuss: In last week's lesson, we considered how Christ calls us to follow Him. As a recap, read Matt 16:24-25 and John 10:27. *What's required to follow Jesus?*

In order to follow Jesus we must deny ourselves (say "no" to worldly and carnal desires) and take up our cross (suffer for Christ). We must also listen to Jesus (through His Word and Spirit) and follow Him.

In this week's lesson, we shall consider how we must obey Jesus if we are to follow Him.

What's the reason for Obedience to Christ?

We are meant to obey those in authority. Why should we obey Jesus? (Matt 28:18; Phil 2:9-11)

We are to obey Jesus because God has given Him all authority to be our Ruler (cf. also Acts 2:36).

Why do many Christians not obey Jesus?

One reason is because they do not recognise His Lordship; they just see Him as their Saviour.

We should also obey Jesus for another reason (our heart response)? (Rom 12:1)

We should obey because of God's great mercy and because of what Jesus has done to save us.

What does Obedience to Christ look like?

We are to call Jesus "Lord", but what should it look like practically? (Luke 6:46)

It doesn't just mean proclaiming Christ's Lordship in song, but obeying Him – doing what He says.

Read Matt 7:21-23. Who will Jesus say to "Depart from Me"? Why?

Jesus will turn people away to hell, even though they call Him "Lord", because they don't do God's will (v.21); that is, they may do lots of amazing thing (v.22), but they are not following Jesus by knowing Him personally and by obeying Him (v.23) - instead, they are lawless (doing their own thing).

In Matt 7:24-27, Jesus gave a parable on obedience to Christ. What do we learn?

If we hear and do (obey) what Jesus says, then we will stand and not be shaken, and show ourselves to be truly the Lord's. But if we don't do what Jesus says, then we are not the Lord's, and one day we will fall.

What impact does Obedience to Christ have on God?

When we follow & obey Jesus, how does that impact God according to Col 1:9-10 & 1 Thess 4:1?

It pleases God so much – God delights in His children obeying Him and His Son.

According to Matt 5:16 and 1 Pet 2:12, how should we obey Christ? And why should we?

We are to obey Christ in shining His light by doing good works, as well as keeping our behaviour excellent amongst non-Christians. As we do, we shall glorify God and cause others to praise Him.

In 1 Pet 1:14-16, why should we be "obedient children"?

Obedience makes us holy, which in turn causes us to reflect God's holiness – this is honouring to Him.

How does God view obedience to other practices and things? (1 Sam 15:22; Matt 5:23-24)

Obedience is far more important than even sacrifice. God delights in obedience more than sacrifice.

How does God view disobedience? (1 Sam 15:23)

Disobedience is as the sin of divination (ie, witchcraft), and is equivalent to committing idolatry.

What does our obedience to Christ express according to John 14:15 & John 15:9-10?

Obedience expresses to Jesus (and to God our Father) our love. To truly show God how much we love Him, it's not so much in the singing of worship songs, but rather obeying Him from the heart.

What Blessings do we receive when we are Obedient to Christ?

When we live a life of obedience to Christ what does that confirm? (cf. 1 Pet 1:1-2)

It confirms that we are truly saved, for both obedience to Christ and trusting in His blood, are the result of the work of the Spirit in our lives; ie, it confirms that we have been born again. (cf. John 3:36; Heb 12:14).

Read John 15:7-11. As we abide and obey Jesus, what blessings will we enjoy?

God will hear us and answer our prayers, we will bear much fruit for God's kingdom, we will remain in God's love, and we will experience Christ's joy.

What will God do for those who obey Him? (Matt 5:11-12; Matt 6:3-4, 6:6, 6:17-18; Luke 18:28-30)

God will richly reward those who obey Him; both in this life and in the life to come. Note: Although salvation is not a reward, but a gift through faith in Christ, God will reward us for our obedience.

Summary: Following Jesus means obeying Him – it pleases God and it causes us to be blessed.

4.16 Following Jesus Means Having Him Direct us

Aim: To help us learn how to have Jesus direct our life, rather than us or others direct our life.

Discuss: Your boss has been pressuring you to do excessive overtime. You've been talking with him about Christ and feel the need to "go the extra mile". You wonder: Should you submit to your boss's pressure to work at this hectic pace, although it is affecting your family life and your spiritual walk?

Your sixteen year-old daughter has been invited to a movie by a non-Christian guy. She's insistent in going. What should you do? Intervene, or give her the freedom to do what she wants?

Your car is getting old. Soon you will need to replace it. As a Christian, does it matter what kind of car you get or how much you spend on it?

Some things of what we do in life are not regulated by *specific* commands of Scripture. How can we be sure we are making right choices, and pleasing God when we don't have specific commands? What does it mean to have Jesus direct us, when the Bible doesn't speak about a given subject?

In this study, we'll examine four principles that'll help us follow Jesus and make right decisions.

1. Is it beneficial?

What are some activities that may be permissible but not necessarily beneficial? (1 Cor 6:12)

Watching TV, reading certain magazines or books, etc. Some of our activities fall into the "grey areas".

Read Eph 5:15-16. How does this Scripture relate to doing things that are beneficial?

Many activities clamour for our time. As a follower of Christ we should evaluate such activities by asking whether they add anything to our life and relationship with God, and filter out activities that do not help.

Can you think of a recent activity that you participated in, but then later wished you hadn't?

2. Does it master (or control) me?

We know that sin can master us (cf. Gen 4:6-7), and we must learn to master it through prayer (Psa 19:13) and Christ's Spirit (Rom 8:13). But good things can also master us. How? (1 Cor 6:12)

Even though God has given us many good things to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17), they can become dangerous if it masters us (eg, hobbies, sport, TV, books, food, etc); our time and thought and energy and money go into these things and away from devotion to Christ and living for His kingdom.

What activities do you need to guard against becoming master over you?

3. Could it hurt someone else's walk with God?

In Christ we have freedom, but though it may be permissible to do various things, what are we to consider before we make a decision? (1 Cor 8:13, 10:23-24)

We are to exercise our freedom in Christ responsibly, making sure we don't cause a fellow believer to stumble and fall. We're not to seek our own good, but the good of others.

How could a permissible act cause someone to stumble? (1 Cor 8:7-13)

It could lure them into sin, cause them to violate their conscience, and thereby harm their walk with God.

Note: Cain asked "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). For the Christian, the answer is "yes". We should seek the good of each other and avoid doing anything that would cause another believer to sin.

4. Does it glorify God?

In our choices and freedoms, above everything what are we to be conscious of? (1 Cor 10:31-33)

We are to be conscious of doing everything for God's glory, not causing offence to anyone, and not to do things for our own gain and profit, so that we do not hinder others from walking with God or being saved.

What does it mean to glorify God? (1 Cor 10:31)

To glorify God means to praise, honour, and magnify Him for all that He is and does. It is to "make Him great". A follower of Christ should seek to glorify God in the midst of **every** activity and every situation.

What should our ambition in life be? (2 Cor 5:9-10)

Our goal is to please God in all things, and one day be rewarded for our obedience to Christ.

Being led by the Spirit

But beyond all that has been said thus far is the need to be led by the Spirit of Christ in all areas of life. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? (Rom 8:11-14; Gal 5:16-26)

It means to be under the Spirit's control, having Him put to death the power of sin in our life, to direct our life and our life's choices, and to walk in the way of righteousness in order to please God and glorify Him. He is to be our teacher in all things (John 16:13; 1 John 2:27).

Summary: Following Jesus means allowing Him to direct us by His Spirit and Word.

4.17 Following Jesus means He's Lord of My Money

Aim: To help us see Jesus as the giver and owner of all we possess, and to be good tenants of it.

Discuss: In our society, we often have the comforts of life and the things that money can buy. But what if a fire destroyed everything, and you had no insurance. What would your reaction be? Or say your property is seized from persecution. Would you have the same response found in Heb 10:34? [Discuss]

The Bible says a lot about money. Money holds the potential for great kingdom gain or great personal loss, including bondage, anxiety, marriages break-ups, and shipwrecking our faith. In this study, we will look at having a right perspective on money, which is part of following Jesus as our Lord.

The Heart of the Matter (Matthew 6:19-24)

Read Matt 6:19. Why shouldn't we pursue money and riches and possessions?

They don't last; they are subject to change and decay. Also, we can't take them to heaven (1 Tim 6:7).

According to Matt 6:20, what should we pursue?

We should pursue heavenly treasures; ie, having heavenly rewards by following Jesus and obeying Him.

Why is it important what kind of treasure we seek? (Matt 6:21)

It impacts our heart, and it's our heart that will determine whether we will follow Jesus or the world.

Thomas Cranmer once said "What the heart loves, the will chooses, and the mind justifies" [Discuss].

Read Matt 6:22-23. What does Jesus mean by these words?

What we desire is so important; if we desire money and worldly riches, then we will be in spiritual darkness, but if we desire to use what God has given us for His glory, then we will have Christ's light in our life.

Jesus summarises His teaching on money and treasures in Matt 6:24. What's the warning?

You cannot love God and serve Him if our desire is for money and worldly riches. It's one or the other.

According to Jesus' teaching in Luke 16:10-13, how should we view our wealth?

Wealth has been entrusted to us by God. We are to be faithful in using it for God's glory and not our gain.

In 1 Tim 6:7-10 what does Paul say about money?

We must learn to be content with what God has given us. To love money will destroy us; even our faith.

The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-26)

A rich young ruler came to Jesus one day, asking Him what he needed to do to have eternal life.

Why did Jesus respond to his good question the way He did? (Matt 19:16-17)

The man thought he could **do** something to earn eternal life; he was rich and had the means. But Jesus wanted him to focus on what God calls "good" and whether he met God's standard.

After Jesus presented God's standard, what was his response? (Matt 19:18-20)

He believed he was a good person, who had met God's standard. Yet he still felt something was missing.

According to Jesus, what was the man's problem? (Matt 19:21-22)

Wealth was "his god". As a result, he was breaking the first command, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod 20:3). He was guilty of idolatry. He loved his money more than anything else.

Why did Jesus say that it is hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of heaven? (Matt 19:23-24)

Once we have money, it has us. This then keeps us from knowing God and following Jesus.

Why were the disciples so perplexed at Jesus' comments? (Matt 19:25-26)

The disciples thought wealth signalled God's blessing. In effect Jesus was saying, "Don't think rich people are favoured by God; it's the one who humbles Himself and seeks God's mercy" (Luke 18:9-14).

The Poor Widow (Mark 12:41-44)

What did Jesus observe about the rich? (Mark 12:41)

They seemed to give much, but it really didn't cost them anything compared to what they had.

What did Jesus observe about the widow? (Mark 12:42-44)

Even though, to the disciples, it looked like she gave nothing, Jesus knew that she had given all she had.

What is Jesus commending about the widow?

She honoured God with her possessions even when it was going to cost her all. She put into practice Matthew 6:33; she sought after God's kingdom first, believing that the Lord would care for her.

What example does the Apostle Paul set before us in 2 Cor 8:1-9?

The Macedonian churches gave themselves to the Lord first, and their wealth for His use. By doing this they followed Christ's example, who laid aside His riches so that we might become rich.

Summary: Following Jesus means being good tenants of what God has entrusted to us for His glory.

4.18 The Blessings in Following Jesus

Aim: To help us appreciate the blessings of following Christ.

Discuss: *The last few studies have looked at the costs of being a disciple of Christ. What are they?*
 Matt 16:24 - deny yourself, and take up your cross; John 10:27 – listen to Jesus and follow Him; Gal 5:16 – let the Spirit lead you and not your old nature; Matt 6:24 – love God and not money (cf. also 1 Tim 6:10).

We need to keep perspective on what the "cost" of following Jesus really amounts to. It can be compared to the cost of going to the hospital and having a life-threatening tumour removed. Of course there are costs involved, but consider the blessings! Similarly, the cost of following Jesus is all worth it. Jesus didn't hold back from telling us of the blessings of following Him. This study will focus on this.

The Blessings in Following Christ

1. The Assurance of Eternal Life

For those who follow Jesus, what does He promise us in John 10:27-30? (cf. also 1 John 5:11-12)
 He assures us eternal life, that we will never perish (that is, in hell), and that God the Father and the Lord Jesus will never let go of us; we belong to them forever – our salvation is secure.

Consider John 14:1-3 and 1 Pet 1:3-9. What do we learn from these passages?

We have a home in heaven that's been prepared for us, and an amazing inheritance reserved for us.

On Judgment Day, what will Jesus' followers hear? What won't they hear? Why? (Matt 25:31-46)
 They won't hear Jesus say "Depart from Me", but "Come, you who are blessed". In particular, they will hear this, because they not only believed in Jesus, but they followed Him by caring and helping others.

2. The Blessings in this Present Life

Read Mark 10:28-31. What was Jesus' answer to Peter's question?

Those who have left everything to follow Him will be blessed – not only will they receive eternal life, but they will enjoy God's blessings in the "present time", despite also experiencing persecutions and hardships. God will bless us with the enjoyment of His family, and provide for all our needs abundantly.

As a follower of Jesus we are to seek God's kingdom first. What is promised as we do? (Matt 6:33)

We have the promise that God will meet our needs; He will care for us.

As a follower of Jesus, what do we enjoy according to Rom 5:5-8 and Rom 8:38-39?

We enjoy knowing and experiencing God's strong and unconditional love for us – He will always love us. Christ died for us when we were still sinners. By loving us under such conditions, we need never doubt that God will always love us, even if we don't follow Christ as well as we should.

According to John 14:27 and Rom 5:1, 10-11 what else do we enjoy as we follow Jesus?

We enjoy peace with God because we have been reconciled to Him through Christ. As we follow Jesus, and look to Him, we enjoy and experience that peace more fully (cf. Phil 4:6-7).

What is unique about Jesus' joy for those who follow Jesus? (John 15:11; 1 Pet 1:5-8)

The joy Christ gives us transcends life's ups and downs. It causes us to rejoice, despite our situations.

When we follow Jesus and fix our eyes on Him, what do we experience according to 2 Cor 3:18?

We experience beholding the Lord's glory and being transformed into His image through the Spirit.

What blessing is there in believing and following the truth in Christ? (John 8:32)

We are set free from sin. Sin isn't just some bad act we do - it's a power that enslaves us. Through submission to Jesus Christ, and following His truth, we are liberated, or set free, from sin's power.

When it comes to prayer, what are we assured if we follow Jesus? (John 15:7-8; Heb 10:19-22)

We are assured that our Father will hear us and answer us. Note: When Jesus died, the veil of the temple tore in two, showing that the barrier between us and God had been removed. Through Christ, we have direct access to God; we can speak to Him at any time, in any place, about anything - and He will hear us.

Conclusion

Why is it worth paying the cost in following Christ? (Rom 8:18-23; 1 Cor 9:24-27)

The rewards far outweigh the costs. They are permanent and glorious, unlike the rewards we get from the world; which are temporary. Not only that, Jesus deserves our faithfulness and obedience. He sacrificed His life to save us, and we ought to sacrifice our life for Him; it's our reasonable service (cf. Rom 12:1).

Summary: **Eternal life is a free gift through God's grace and faith in Jesus. As we follow Jesus we assure ourselves of our salvation, and we are also so blessed in this present life.**

4.19 High Expectations!

Aim: To help us learn some important lessons from Christ's "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem.

Discuss: *In the past studies, we have considered Christ's life that we are to imitate, and His call to follow Him. Reflecting on what we have considered, how are we to live as a follower of Jesus? [Discuss]*

In the next few studies we are going to concentrate on looking at the last week of Jesus' life before He was crucified for us. In this study, we shall particularly consider Christ's "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem that occurred six days before the Passover. Thousands of people had crammed into Jerusalem to observe the feast. Jesus Himself had just raised Lazarus from the dead. There were high expectations.

The Triumphal Entry

How did the crowds greet Jesus as He was riding into the city of Jerusalem? (Matt 21:1-11)

They gave Jesus a king's reception, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!", and they gave Him the "red carpet" treatment middle-eastern style (ie, putting branches and coats before Jesus).

Why did the crowds gather to greet Jesus? (John 12:9-18)

They had heard of Jesus' awesome power in raising Lazarus from the dead, and so, they were hoping that Jesus would use His awesome power to deliver them from the rule of Rome as he came into Jerusalem.

What was significant to the crowds as Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem? (Zech 9:9)

The prophet Zechariah predicted this very act by the Messiah. So, when the crowds saw this, they thought that Jesus would now come into Jerusalem and be their political king to drive out the Romans. That's why they called Him "Son of David" – in their view the Messiah would be a second David to rule politically.

What was meant to be understood by this prophecy from Zechariah?

What was meant to be understood was that Jesus is the Messiah, and that He would come humbly and gently; not to rule as a political king, but to save us from sin, as other prophecies declare (cf. Isa 53:5-6).

The Beginning of the End

After Jesus entered Jerusalem, what did He do? (Mark 11:15-18)

He did not use His power to throw out the Romans and make Himself the new political king, but He went to the temple and cleansed it of all the impurity that was occurring in His Father's house.

What reaction did the religious leaders have to what Jesus did?

They had had enough of Jesus. They wanted Him destroyed. They would not tolerate Him anymore.

How do you think the crowd felt towards Him?

Many turned and opposed Jesus, for He failed to meet their expectations.

Jesus knew the expectations of the people, but what did He do? (Mark 14:36)

He didn't choose to meet the expectations of the people, for He had come to do His Father's will.

What was the Father's will for Jesus? (cf. Heb 10:4-10)

It wasn't to set Israel free from the Romans, but to set us free from judgment and the consequences of our sins, by dying in our place and offering up His body and blood as our atoning sacrifice.

Nearly a week later, Jesus was arrested and tried, and the crowd condemned Him to die (Mark 15:8-15). How could Jesus be rejected by the crowd so soon after He was hailed as their king?

The religious leaders had incited the crowd against Him, but this was made easier by the way Jesus had not fulfilled the expectations people had at that time for their Messiah.

We sometimes want God to meet our expectations when it's not His will. What are some examples?

Give us all our desires; make all our troubles go away; overlook sin; deliver us from all consequences of our sin; answer all prayer when we want and in the way we want; keep us from experiencing loss or pain.

We all have expectations; even expectations that God will protect us from life's trials (e.g., sickness). What happens when these expectations aren't met? [Discuss]

How can we ensure our expectations are in line with God's will and expectations?

We need to read God's word and allow His Spirit to reveal us His will (cf. Rom 12:2). We also need to make sure we have a right view of God. God is not a means to our ends, but rather we are a means to His. It is when we allow ourselves to be used for His purposes that our lives will take on meaning and a sense of accomplishment. In this way God is glorified and we are fulfilled.

What should our constant prayer and desire be? (cf. Jesus in Matt 26:39, 42)

Our prayer should be that of the Lord Jesus: "Not my will but yours be done".

Summary: Following Jesus means our expectations become God's expectations.

4.20 Jesus Under Attack!

Aim: To help us learn why people oppose Jesus and how we, as believers, should respond.

Discuss: Most people want to be liked by somebody; to feel affirmed, appreciated, important. Who hasn't done something with the hope that "so-and-so will be really pleased"? *[Discuss]*

But being liked was not at the top of Jesus' priorities. Instead, He did what was right; what the Father wanted Him to do. His healings may have gained some admirers (not that He healed for that reason), but His stance against sin and hypocrisy gained Jesus many enemies. While Jesus knew this, He never altered His behaviour to be liked.

Christians who live their faith openly will encounter opposition too. *[Discuss]*

Non-believers walk in darkness and hate the light (John 3:19-20). Just as the world rejected Jesus, it will reject those who follow Him. Because rejection from the world is inevitable, we should be ready for it. In this study, we will learn how to handle opposition by seeing the way Jesus responded.

Jesus under Attack

How did the religious leaders try to trap Jesus? (Matthew 21:23-27; 22:15-33)

The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians publicly challenged Jesus in regard to His authority and used questions to try to catch Him out so that they might be able to accuse Him and condemn Him.

Why did the religious leaders want to trap Jesus in order to accuse Him?

Jesus posed a major threat to their power, influence and authority. They believed Jesus, if He continued, would sway all the people away from them to Himself (cf. John 12:17-19). This, they could not bear.

Pharisees: Religious teachers, who had made up many additional laws on top of God's law. They were more concerned with enforcing their rules than keeping God's law. They opposed Jesus because He was a threat to their authority, and because Jesus labelled them hypocrites (which they were).

Sadducees: A group of wealthy, ruling-class religious leaders who believed only in the first five books of the Bible. They did not believe in a future resurrection. They opposed Jesus because of His teaching on the Resurrection and the life to come, and because He upset their political status quo.

Herodians: Jewish people loyal to Herod, the local Roman ruler. They opposed Jesus because they feared He would stir up the crowds against Herod.

Jesus' Response

How did Jesus respond to the questions of the religious leaders? (Matt 21:23-27; 22:15-22)

He clearly perceived what they were doing, and He answered them so wisely, causing them to be amazed.

When we are challenged by questions or accusations by people who want to mock us publicly and trap us, what should we do? (cf. Luke 12:11-12; Jam 1:5)

We should follow in the footsteps of Jesus – in our case, we are to rely on the Holy Spirit to give us the right response and words to speak (Luke 12:11-12). We are also to ask God for wisdom (Jam 1:5).

In Matt 22:23-36, how did Jesus respond to the Sadducees? What can we learn for ourselves?

Jesus responded to the Sadducees with truth, quoting appropriate Bible verses to oppose their error.

Not only did Jesus give great defensive arguments to their questions, but in Matt 22:41-46 He asked them a question to challenge them (read Matt 22:41-46). What can we learn from Jesus?

Jesus challenged them about His true identity by quoting a passage from Psalm 110. When we are being tested, we can also do the same. We can challenge people about Christ's true identity and their own sin.

As the Son of God, Jesus condemned the religious leaders in Matt 23:1-33. What for?

They were hypocrites (23:3); they required impossible deeds of people (23:4); they did their good deeds for show (23:5-7); they craved recognition (23:6-7); they blocked others from coming to God (23:13); they emphasised minors and missed the majors (23:23-24); they mistook ceremonial cleanliness for true godliness (23:25-26); they were outwardly good, but inwardly corrupt (23:27-28); they didn't see that their own opposition to Jesus was worse than their ancestors' opposition to the prophets (23:29-33).

What can we learn from the words of Jesus in Matt 23:1-33?

We are not to be hypocrites, but be lovers of Jesus, following Him and living out God's Word sincerely.

Even if, after responding wisely and biblically to people, we are mistreated and persecuted (as what ended up happening to Jesus), how are we to be? (1 Pet 2:21-23)

We are to follow Jesus, behaving in a holy manner, and entrusting ourselves to God's care and judgment.

Summary: **Believing in Jesus will result in the world opposing us (John 15:18-19; 2 Tim 3:12), and as we are, we are to follow Jesus in the way He responded to attack and insult.**

4.21 Christ's Return – What will Happen?

Aim: To help us understand Christ's teaching on His return.

Discuss: *One of the last things Jesus taught before He celebrated the Passover with His disciples and before He was arrested and crucified, was about His return (His second coming). He gave a lot of teaching on this. Why? [Discuss]*

Jesus wanted us to know that He wouldn't just die and rise again, but that He would return, and that we should live our lives in the light of it. When He ascended into heaven, it wouldn't be the end (Acts 1:9-11).

In this study we will look at the teaching we have in the New Testament on Christ's return.

Christ's Return (Matt 24:4-31)

What things would occur leading up to the return of Christ? (Matt 24:4-14)

There would be deception, wars, natural disasters, persecution of Christians, lawlessness and coldness.

When would the things Jesus listed occur?

We may think that Jesus was speaking about the time just before His return, but He's describing the period of time between the birth of the church and His return. The things that Jesus described have been occurring from the 1st century, but their intensity is increasing the closer we get to the Lord's return.

In Matt 24:15-28, Jesus specifically addresses the question that the disciples raised in Matt 24:1-2; ie, the destruction of the temple in 70AD. What can we learn from these verses for our own time?

God is in control, and He will not allow us to suffer more than we can handle (v.22). We must especially be on guard against being disillusioned from trials, or from being led astray by false Christs/teachers.

In Matt 24:29-31 what is described here?

We have Jesus specifically speaking about what will happen right at His return. There will be very clear signs, even in the heavens, and Jesus will return spectacularly from heaven in the clouds with great glory. Unlike any other person, He will not rise from the earth but come from heaven.

What impact will Christ's return have on unbelievers? Why? (Matt 24:30; Rev 1:7; Rev 6:12-17)

Unbelievers will mourn and will try and hide from Christ's presence, for they will realise in an instance that He is real, and that He has come to judge those who did not believe in Him.

What will be the situation for believers when Christ returns? (Matt 24:31; 1 Thess 4:16-17)

Jesus will gather us up and we will be with Him forever, with a new glorious body. We will be rejoicing.

Christ's Return – Prepared or Surprised? (Matt 24:32-41)

What truth does the parable of the fig tree portray? (Matt 24:32-33)

We are to observe the signs around us in order to recognise the nearness of Christ's return.

Why should we believe that Christ's return is imminent? (cf. Rom 11:25-27; 2 Thess 2:1-8)

Besides the fulfilment of Matt 24:4-28, we have also witnessed the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and Jewish people returning there - in readiness for them to be saved one day. We have also seen a great apostasy (a great falling away from the Faith). Not only that, but never has there been a time in recent centuries for the man of lawlessness (anti-Christ) to arise and rule the world, especially with computer technology to control everything, and with a huge vacuum in political leadership.

What does Jesus emphasise in Matt 24:34-35?

His words are true and faithful. He will return and it will happen just as He declared. Note: The word "generation" can also be translated "race"; ie, everything will happen before life on earth ends.

What are we to conclude from Matt 24:36?

No one knows when Jesus will return, and we are never to set a date. However, we are to know the season for it, as Jesus mentioned in Matt 24:32-33.

What do we learn in Matt 24:37-39 in regard to Christ's return?

He will come back suddenly and unexpectedly, while people are just getting on with living. Christians, on the other hand, should not be surprised because Christ has told us what to expect (cf. 1 Thess 5:1-5).

What does Jesus want us to learn from His teaching in Matt 24:40-41?

When He returns, there will be no time to change your position. Those who have loved and believed in Jesus will be taken up to be with Him, but everyone else will be left behind to face Christ's judgment. Also, it's personal – our loved ones will not go up to be with the Lord unless they personally know Jesus.

Summary: Christ is returning! Do you know the signs? Will you be surprised or prepared for it?

4.22 Christ's Return – Are you Ready and Active?

Aim: To help us be ready for Christ's return and to be active in our service to Him.

Discuss: When it comes to big events (eg. a wedding or big holiday), it takes much effort to prepare and be ready for them. What about the biggest event of all that is coming - Jesus' return?

Jesus declared that He would return. Are you ready for it? Do you know what will happen when He returns? [Discuss]

Following Jesus means living in the light of His return. He taught that we are to be prepared and ready, and faithful as we wait; no matter how long it might be. In this study we will look at this.

Be Ready (Matthew 24:42-44)

After teaching us about His return in Matt 24:1-31, and how the world will be surprised at His coming (Matt 24:37-41), what does Jesus teach His followers in Matt 24:42-44?

We are to be ready and alert so that we are not surprised when Jesus returns - like the world will be. He will come like a "thief in the night" – suddenly and expectantly (cf. 1 Thess 5:2-3).

Imagine Christians living as if Jesus might return today or tomorrow. What would it result in? It would cause us to live more holy lives and to live more fully for Christ's kingdom, rather than the temporal things of this world. What a way to live!

Be Faithful (Matthew 24:45-51)

What do the two slaves in this parable represent?

Faithful slave: Genuine Christian faithfully serving the Lord until He returns.

Evil slave: Unbeliever/false Christian who takes Jesus' absence as a license to indulge in worldly living.

Why did Jesus give this parable?

Jesus told this parable because He knew He would not come back immediately, and He wanted to help genuine followers not lose heart in the interim. He wanted to assure those who are faithful to Him that they will be rewarded, while those who do not faithfully serve Jesus will be judged.

Jesus' words to those who are unfaithful are very strong. How will they be judged?

They will face the same fate as an unbeliever (compare Matt 24:51 with Matt 13:41-42). If we don't faithfully serve the Lord then we are not saved (cf. Matt 7:21-23).

Be Prepared (Matthew 25:1-13)

Who do the five wise virgins represent?

They represent those who are prepared for Christ's return because they live their lives, not in their own strength, but through the enabling of the Holy Spirit - they have abundant "oil".

Who do the five foolish virgins represent?

They represent those who thought they were Christians, and who thought they would be ready for Christ's return, but they weren't prepared, because they lived their lives in their own strength. They weren't born again, and their "oil" ran out.

How should this parable challenge us?

The main point is that we be prepared for Christ's return, not by relying on our own strength and standing with God, but by making sure we are born again and have God's Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9; 2 Cor 13:5).

Be Active (Matthew 25:14-30)

In this parable about how we should live while we wait for His return, what is implied? (v. 14, 19)

Jesus' return would not be immediate – he would return after a long time (as we now know in hindsight).

What do the talents stand for?

A talent was a sum of money. In the parable, it stands for our abilities and possessions God has given us.

What is the main point of the parable?

We are to live our lives for God through Christ as depicted in the lives of the first two slaves – investing our abilities and possessions for Christ's kingdom. The third slave didn't do that – he was an unbeliever.

What are we to learn from this parable?

We need to be active in using our gifts, abilities and possessions for God. He has given all something to invest for Him. The Lord's slave is fruitful using whatever resources he has to further God's kingdom. The wicked slave avoids any obligation to serve God, and covers up his inaction with excuses.

Summary: Following Christ means being ready, faithful, prepared and active until He returns.

4.23 The Judgment of Christ

Aim: To help us understand the Day of Judgment and what will happen.

Discuss: More and more Christians are believing that the mention of hell in the Bible is only metaphoric to encourage holy living. They assert that there is no literal hell, and argue: "how could a loving God create such a place?" Also, many Christians now hold to the position that a non-Christian will be annihilated, and not face eternal punishment. What are your thoughts on these matters? *[Discuss]*
In this study we will consider Christ's teaching on the Day of Judgment.

The Glorious throne (Matt 25:31-33)

After Christ taught us about His return and being ready, He then used a parable in Matt 25:31-46 to teach us about the Day of Judgment and what will happen. What do we learn in Matt 25:31-33? Jesus will judge all humans. He will sit on His glorious throne (cf. Rev 20:11) and separate everyone into only two groups – the sheep that stand for His followers, and the goats that stand for everyone else.

Why is it fitting for God to appoint Jesus to be our Judge? (John 5:21-23, 26-27; Acts 17:30-31) By becoming the Son of Man He is fully human and can completely relate to us. He has also been appointed our King after His mighty resurrection. Finally, He is fully God, who alone can execute justly.

Why does Jesus describe believers as sheep and non-believers as goats?

Sheep follow their shepherd, just as we follow Christ (John 10:27), whereas goats do their own thing.

What do you think of the size of the two groups – will it be 50/50? (cf. Matt 7:13-14)

No! Jesus made it clear that those who follow Him are much fewer in number than those who do not.

The Sheep (Matt 25:34-40)

On the Day of Judgment, what will Jesus say to the sheep (His followers)? (Matt 25:34)

He will welcome them to inherit the kingdom that God has prepared for those who love His Son. This was prepared for Christ's followers before the foundation of the world. Wow!

Christ's sheep have also sinned like all others (Rom 3:23). Why will they be welcomed?

Through what Christ has done for them and through faith in Him, they have been forgiven of sin and received salvation as a free gift (Eph 2:8-9; Rom 3:23-24). In Christ, there is no condemnation (Rom 8:1).

Read Matt 25:35-40. What's the reason Jesus gives for why His sheep will be welcomed?

They will be welcomed into the kingdom because of how they have lived; helping and blessing those about them in Jesus' name, and especially fellow believers, in whom Christ lives (cf. v.40).

How are we to understand Jesus' emphasis here in Matt 25:35-40 on good works?

Good works don't save us, but good works will result when we follow Jesus. We will be doing those things Jesus taught us, and show that we are true followers of His (cf. Eph 2:8-10; Jam 2:14-20).

When Jesus commends His sheep, why do the sheep respond as they do in Matt 25:37-39?

The sheep live humble lives, not "showy" lives, and will be surprised with what Jesus commends them for.

The Goats (Matt 25:41-46)

What will Jesus say to the goats (those who do not follow Jesus)? (Matt 25:41)

Jesus will turn them away from Himself and send them to the eternal fire (hell).

What will the "eternal fire", also called "the lake of fire", be like? (Rev 20:10)

It will be very severe – people will face eternal torment forever, together with the devil and his demons.

Is this judgment too severe?

A non-believer's rebellion against God and their rejection of His love, and the way they spurn Christ's sacrifice, warrants this severe penalty. It is just and fair. Also, Christ has lovingly warned us about this.

How can a loving God create a hell and send humans there? What's the answer?

Hell was created for the devil & his angels. Humans will go there too, because they have rebelled like him.

What characterises a non-Christian's life, according to Jesus' words to them in Matt 25:42-43?

They lived for themselves; and when it came to dealing with Christians, they particularly neglect them.

What will the goats say on the Day of Judgment and how will Christ respond? (Matt 25:44-46)

They will try and offer up excuses for their behaviour, but Jesus will condemn them for their selfish lives, and He will affirm that their fate is eternal punishment; but His sheep will enjoy eternal life.

What should we learn from Jesus' teaching here in Matt 25:31-46?

Hell is to be avoided at all costs, and we need to make sure that we are true Christians by following Jesus.

Summary: Christ will judge, hell is real, and it's to be avoided at all costs by following Jesus.

4.24 Christ's Betrayal and Denial!

Aim: To help us be committed to doing God's will, just as Jesus was, regardless of the cost.

Discuss: Jesus suffered at the hands of cruel men (Acts 2:23) and died unjustly. The sacrifice He made cost Him more than we can imagine. *Why did Jesus endure such treatment? [Discuss]*

Jesus endured it all because He was committed to doing His Father's will more than anything else. "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39), was not just a prayer; it was His life.

In this study we'll consider the events leading up to Jesus' arrest, and His desire to do God's will.

1. The plot to kill Jesus (Matthew 26:1-5)

Why did the religious leaders plot to kill Jesus?

They believed Jesus was blaspheming by claiming to be God's Son; He was taking away their authority over the people by calling them to follow Him; He was discrediting them by exposing their hypocrisy.

In what way is Jesus' Lordship a threat to our authority over ourselves?

Jesus wants to rule our lives, but we want to rule our lives. We can see His right to rule us as a threat.

2. The costly perfume controversy (Matthew 26:6-13)

Why did Jesus defend the woman for pouring expensive perfume on Him?

She was doing God's will, preparing Jesus for burial, as well as expressing her devotion & worship of Him.

What's more important: doing God's will (despite opposition) or doing what we think is best?

Obviously, it is doing God's will, despite opposition. In this story, the practical good idea by the disciples of helping the poor was not God's will – actually, there was an evil motive behind it (cf. John 12:4-6).

3. The betrayal of Judas (Matthew 26:14-16; 47-50)

What led to Jesus' arrest and how did He react to it?

He was betrayed by one of His closest friends for some money. This would have hurt deeply, but Jesus continued to love Judas by calling him "friend", and Jesus continued to do His Father's will.

4. The Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-30)

Under what conditions did Jesus share the Last Supper with His disciples?

Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, Peter would deny Him, and that the rest would desert Him. Yet He gladly shared this meal with them (Luke 22:14-16), and He even washed their feet in love (John 13:1-5).

What's one of the main reasons why Jesus earnestly wanted to share the Last Supper with them?

Jesus wanted to institute the Lord's Supper for us so that we might always remember His death for us.

What is so special about the words Jesus declared concerning the bread and the cup?

The bread represents His body He gave up for us. The cup represents the blood He shed for our forgiveness.

5. The Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:31-46)

What do you observe about Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane?

Jesus is in a state unlike any other time we have seen Him. He is deeply troubled and distressed at the point of death because of the implications of bearing our sins and bearing His Father's wrath for us. Yet, in His anguish, He prayed earnestly, seeking to do His Father's will; no matter what the cost.

Consider the contrast between the disciples and Jesus. What do you observe?

At a point of great temptation to not go to the cross, Jesus prayed earnestly. Yet, His disciples did not pray for Him, or for themselves, nor did they support Him. It wasn't long after that they deserted Him.

What does this incident teach you about prayer and God's will?

God wants us to pray, even when we are struggling within ourselves or when we are under spiritual attack. He wants us to pour out our hearts to Him. In doing this, we are strengthened to carry out His will.

6. The betrayal and arrest of Jesus (Matthew 26:51-56)

What did Jesus' disciples do at His arrest and why did they behave like this?

Peter inflamed the situation, and they all fled Him, because they had been prayerless, and instead of being committed to do God's will, they were seeking to do what was best for themselves – save their own skin.

On the other hand what did Jesus do when He was arrested? (cf. John 18:4-9)

He did His Father's will. He gave Himself into their hands, and He also protected the disciples from arrest.

7. The denial of Peter (Matthew 26:69-75)

What human tendencies do you see in Peter's denial of Christ? What should he have done?

He succumbed to fear when pressed to identify with Christ, for he knew it could mean death for him.

Instead, he should have listened to and followed what Jesus had taught them in the garden (Matt 26:41).

Summary: Following Jesus means His prayer becomes our own: "Not my will but Yours be done."

4.25 Christ's Trial

Aim: To help us appreciate what Jesus experienced under trial, and how we ought to be.

Discuss: Christ is the "King of kings and the Lord of lords", our eternal Creator, and the Judge of all. Yet He allowed Himself to be judged unjustly by humans. How incredible! [*Discuss*]

In this study we shall consider the trial and treatment Jesus endured before His crucifixion. May we worship Him as we consider what He endured, and may we learn from Him how we ought to be.

Jesus' trial before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-68)

What is noteworthy about Jesus' trial before the high priest? Why did He behave like this?

Jesus was silent over all the false accusations brought against Him. He did not defend Himself for He sought to give Himself into their hands, thereby doing His Father's will.

When Jesus was charged by the high priest to answer his question, how did He respond?

He spoke the truth about who He is and His glory, without holding back – knowing full well the result.

What was Jesus declaring about Himself?

Jesus is the Christ (God's appointed king for us), the Son of God (divine), and the One who would be seated at the right hand of the Father and coming back in glory.

How should the religious leaders have responded to Jesus? How did they respond? (vv. 67-68)

They should have bowed down and worshipped Him. Instead they treated Him shamefully, for they were so blind to who Jesus truly was – as so clearly seen through His life and the fulfilment of prophecy.

Jesus' trial before Pilate (Matthew 27:1-32)

The plan of the religious leaders is clear in Matt 27:1-2. What do you make of their behaviour?

Their actions were aligned with the devil, rather than God, as Jesus pointed out to them in John 8:44.

They weren't servants of God, but servants of the devil. They even bound Jesus as a condemned man.

Read Matt 27:11-14. What amazed Pilate?

Jesus' silence to the accusations levelled at Him amazed Pilate. Remember that His silence fulfilled Scripture, which the religious leaders, who knew the Scriptures, didn't pick up on (cf. Isa 53:7).

What would have been challenging to Jesus in Matt 27:15-26? How did Jesus respond?

A clearly guilty man named Barabbas, who had committed heinous crimes, was released instead of Him. Also, the rejection of Jesus and the cry of the people "crucify Him" would have been so difficult to bear. Yet, He did not protest against the injustices He bore, nor to the spiteful words "crucify Him".

What do you make of Pilate during the trial?

Pilate appears to be supportive of Jesus, but really, he was influenced by the crowds; even after his wife urged him not to condemn "that righteous Man". He was a crowd-pleaser; Jesus was a God-pleaser.

The crowds cried out "His blood shall be on us and on our children". What did they mean by this?

They were willing to bear the responsibility of putting Jesus to death – something which God would hold them accountable for. Consider - in 70AD Jerusalem was destroyed and over a million Jews died.

How did the soldiers treat Jesus? (Matthew 27:26-31)

Without an ounce of mercy, they sought to crush Him via humiliation and torture (cf. Isa 53:5 and the word "crush"). Consider how Jesus was stripped and flogged (an extremely cruel punishment of repeated whippings and where a person even died), had a crown of thorns beaten into His head, and even spat on.

Consider Isa 52:13-14. How are these prophetic words meant to be understood?

What Jesus endured at the hands of wicked men was more than we could ever comprehend. He was left in a state where He was almost unrecognisable and barely human.

What was Jesus' reaction to all this intense suffering and mocking?

He never complained or retaliated, nor did He use His immense power to deliver Himself from the hands of His accusers and from the hands of those who mistreated Him.

Why did Jesus endure all that He did?

Jesus endured all to completely obey His Father's will, which involved Him being our sin bearer and our substitute (cf. Isa 53:5-6). He also endured all because of His love for us. What love! Amazing love!

In all Jesus endured, He set an example for us. What do we learn in 1 Pet 2:21-23 & Heb 12:2-3?

We are to bear unjust suffering by entrusting ourselves to God's care, and we are to consider our hope.

Summary: We praise Jesus for what He endured for us, but may we also follow the example He has set for us when we are called to suffer for Him – even when it is unjust and unfair.

4.26 Christ's Cross

Aim: To help us grasp the importance of Christ's suffering & sacrifice, and to learn from His example.

Discuss: Christ's death is the most important event in all human history. [*Discuss*]

More than just a painful death, the Crucifixion was where Christ paid the penalty for our sins so that we could be forgiven and be saved, through faith in Him. For all eternity we will remember His sacrifice. But even though He primarily died to save us, out of love for us and out of obedience to the Father, He was also setting an example for us to follow – how to live sacrificial lives, and how to suffer in a godly way.

In this study, we will consider Christ's sacrifice and suffering so that we can be saved through Him, and we will also consider the example Jesus set for us.

Jesus' Suffering on the Cross (Matthew 27:33-46)

Read Matt 27:33-44. What sufferings did Jesus endure on the cross?

He was crucified – a most painful and torturous form of execution for criminals; He was treated with contempt by the soldiers who divided His garments by casting lots; those passing by hurled abuse at Him; the religious leaders taunted and mocked Him; He was insulted by the two criminals either side of Him.

What was the greatest suffering that Jesus endured on the cross? (Matt 27:45-46; Isa 53:5, 10a)

Jesus' greatest suffering was not physical, but spiritual. He bore our sins, and in doing that, He was pierced and crushed. He experienced separation from His Father, realised when He cried, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me." We will never fully know what He had to suffer for our sake.

Read Psa 22:1-18. What is most striking about this psalm? What do we learn about the cross?

This psalm is all about Jesus' death on the cross, written 1000 years before it happened. In it, we behold more of what Christ endured for us than what we read in the Gospels – we see the Saviour's crushed soul.

What is most significant to you about Jesus' death on the cross?

Jesus endured "hell" (the penalty for sins) for us, so that we might not go there. He experienced separation from God, for the first time in all eternity, so that we might not be eternally separated from the Father; and He endured it all out of love for us (cf. Gal 2:20; Rev 1:5).

Jesus' Death and Burial (Matthew 27:47-66)

Read Matt 27:47-49. What happened after Jesus cried out "Why have You forsaken Me"?

The religious leaders (who knew the Scriptures) did not connect how Jesus was fulfilling Psalm 22. They had no idea what was really happening and what Jesus was accomplishing for us all; including them.

At the moment Jesus died, what did God do to help people realise the significance of His Son's death? And who realised it? (Matt 27:50-54)

The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, there was a great earthquake where even rocks were splitting apart, and tombs were opened by the earthquake. But only the centurion and other soldiers, from the signs they saw, realised the staggering truth that this Jesus was truly "the Son of God".

Why did God tear the curtain in the temple?

This was to help us understand what Jesus was accomplishing for us through His death. By dying in our place and bearing our sins, Jesus was not only saving us from the consequences of our sins, but He was opening the door for us to know and experience God like never before (previously, only the High Priest had access to God's presence, once a year). Now, through Jesus, we can approach and know God.

Read Matt 27:55-61. What happened to Jesus' body? What was being fulfilled?

Jesus' body (for He truly had died) was taken down from the cross and placed in a rich man's tomb, fulfilling Isa 53:9. Also, important for the resurrection account, the women knew where Jesus was buried.

In Matt 27:62-66, what extraordinary things do we read?

It was the religious leaders who remembered that Jesus had said that He would rise again. Even though they didn't believe Him, they did everything in their power to prevent anything happening to Jesus' body.

Jesus' Example

Although we are to primarily comprehend Christ died for us, what do we learn in 1 John 3:16?

Jesus set an example for us to follow. We are to lay down our life for each other. This doesn't necessarily mean dying physically for each other, but rather, where we live sacrificially and not selfishly.

Read 1 Peter 2:18-25. What do we learn in this passage?

We are to suffer in a way that pleases God. May we utter no threats and may we trust God as Jesus did.

Summary: As Christians we are to comprehend what Christ has done for us, & follow His example.

4.27 Christ's Resurrection

Aim: To help us appreciate the importance of Jesus' resurrection.

Discuss: In our culture, Easter comes and goes without much fanfare. Yet, at Easter, we celebrate Christ conquering our greatest enemy – death. *What does Christ's resurrection mean to you? [Discuss]*

The resurrection is absolutely essential to the Christian faith. Our salvation stands on it. Without the resurrection, Christianity is just another religion. The resurrection declares the deity of Jesus (Rom 1:4), it confirms that Christ alone can save us, that Jesus is alive and personal, and that he's coming back one day in power and glory. In this study, we will focus on the resurrection and why it is so significant.

Jesus Rose from the Dead (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-12, 36-43; John 20:1-20)

What facts appear in all four Gospel accounts?

The resurrection took place on the first day of the week (on a Sunday), fulfilling Jesus' words that He would rise on the third day (by the Jewish reckoning of time); the stone had been moved from the tomb; Mary Magdalene was among the first to arrive at the tomb; Jesus' body was not in the tomb; an angel met Mary and the women; the disciples were sceptical at first, but believed when they saw Jesus that first night.

What do these four different accounts confirm?

They confirm that the resurrection really did happen; it's authentic. If it was a fabricated story, all four stories would be identical, but we have four different eye-witnesses, who emphasise different things, but the certain reality that Jesus rose from the dead.

Note: We understand from church history that Mark received his testimony from Peter, & Luke from Mary.

The Significance of the Resurrection

If the resurrection didn't occur what would that mean? (1 Corinthians 15:13-19)

It means that our preaching is in vain; we are liars for claiming that God raised Jesus from the dead; our faith is useless for we're still in our sins and facing judgment; there is no hope of dead believers rising again; and every Christian is to be pitied for throwing away his or her life on something that isn't real.

What do we learn from the following verses on the resurrection?

Acts 2:36	Jesus is both Lord and Christ (our King and the Saviour of the world).
Acts 4:10-12	Jesus' resurrection makes it clear that He's the one we are look to, to be saved.
Acts 17:30-31	Jesus has been appointed by God to judge us one day.
Romans 1:4	Jesus is God's Son; He is divine.
Romans 4:25	We have been justified (made right with God) through Christ's resurrection.
Revelation 1:17-18	Jesus is alive forevermore and has power over death.
John 11:25-26	Jesus is the resurrection; those who believe in Him have passed already from death to life.
John 14:19	Because Jesus lives, we can live (enjoy spiritual, abundant, and eternal life).
Phil 3:10; Rom 8:11	We can experience the power of Jesus' resurrection in this life (victory over sin and fellowship with God).

What does Christ's resurrection teach us about life after death for the believer? (1 Cor 15:50-57)

All Christians will be raised from the dead; that is, their physical bodies will be changed into permanent and glorious ones, just as Christ's body was raised from the dead to live forevermore.

What do we learn from 1 Thess 4:13-18 in regard to our own resurrection?

Christians will receive their new bodies on the day of Christ's return. Those who died and have been with Christ will return with Him and have their bodies raised first. Then those who were alive at Jesus' return will have their bodies changed into glorious eternal ones as they are taken up to be with the Lord.

How does the resurrection give us hope? (1 Peter 1:3-5, Rev 21:1-4)

It gives us a certain and real hope (it's not a "dead" hope but a "living" hope) that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, we will be raised to life too, to enjoy our eternal inheritance; ie, living eternally on a new earth with a glorious and eternal body, that will never get sick, or suffer pain, or die again.

How does Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection especially touch you?

Summary: Following Jesus means experiencing the reality of the resurrection both now and for all eternity.

4.28 Christ's Commission and Coronation

Aim: To help us appreciate the importance of Jesus' ascension.

Discuss: As Christians, we often emphasise the death and resurrection of Jesus. But there are other significant events after Jesus' resurrection that we should also highlight. *What things can you think of?*

Before Jesus' ascension, He gave some very important teaching to His disciples and to us who follow in their footsteps. Also, Jesus' ascension was truly a momentous occasion.

In this study we shall consider these important events.

The Commission

Read Matt 28:16-20. What important last words did Jesus give His disciples before His ascension? He affirmed how He had been given "all authority" and that He would be with them always, and He commissioned them to go and share the Gospel with all people, helping others become disciples too.

What does it mean to "make disciples"?

It means **going** to others who are not a Christian yet, **telling** them about the Gospel of Jesus so that they may believe in Jesus and be baptised, and **teaching** them to follow Jesus and His teaching.

Baptism is mentioned in Christ's "Great Commission". What are we to make of this?

Even though baptism doesn't save us, but faith and trust in Jesus (cf. Acts 16:30-31), we are still to encourage people to be baptised after they have committed themselves to Jesus. Jesus commanded baptism. It's to be one of our first steps of obedience in following Jesus.

What's significant about baptising people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Baptism is many things; a picture of being washed clean of our sins, a picture of dying to self and living a new life for Christ, an act of obedience to Jesus, and a public declaration of our faith in Jesus. But it's also the time when we declare that we belong, that we are in, God the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit; that we have come to part of the Trinity, and where God is our Father, Jesus is our Saviour and Lord, and the Holy Spirit is our counsellor and friend. Baptising is a very profound and precious act.

For many of us, what particular parts of the "Great Commission" have we not been good at?

We haven't been good at going. We often expect people to come to church and be saved through the preaching, but we are meant to be going out and being witnesses. Also, after a person has become a Christian, we often haven't been good at discipling them and teaching them the Christian way.

Read Luke 24:44-49. What do we learn in Luke's account from Jesus' final words to His disciples?

Jesus opened their minds and affirmed to them that He truly is the Christ and that He had fulfilled everything written of Him in the Scriptures. He also commissioned them to be His witnesses, and for them to proclaim the message of the forgiveness of sins through repentance and in Jesus' name. Finally, He affirmed the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower them (which occurred 10 days after He ascended).

In the light of Jesus' last words and His commission to us all, how well have you obeyed Him?

With the help of God's Spirit, may we be revived to carry out Christ's Great Commission, to be His witnesses, calling people to repentance and to faith in Jesus, and helping new believers follow Christ.

The Coronation

Read Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:9-11. What do we learn about Jesus' ascension?

Before the very eyes of His disciples, Jesus was lifted up through the clouds into heaven in His resurrected body. This is phenomenal – He went straight from earth into heaven, with a body.

When Jesus went to heaven what happened? (Eph 1:18-23; Phil 2:5-11)

God the Father glorified His Son by placing Him at His right hand, and giving Him all authority and all power over all things; ie, there was a coronation service in heaven where Jesus was made Lord of all.

Read Dan 7:13-14 and Luke 22:66-69. What do we learn from these passages?

Jesus' coronation was prophesied a long time before Jesus came. Also, Jesus Himself knew what would happen to Him before He died for us. He knew He would be at the Father's right hand (cf. also Heb 12:2).

Although the majority of the world lives in rebellion to Jesus, who is He to all people?

He is the Lord! He is the Lord who will one day judge us and condemn us to hell for all eternity, or He is the Lord who will bring us to glory because we believed in Him and accepted Him as our Lord & Saviour.

Summary: Following Jesus means making disciples and making Jesus our personal Lord.