

Formation Hour
January 4, 2026
Life of Jesus



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Session 1: Kingdom Come

Here in the West, Jesus is a familiar figure to Christians, dominating Sunday School lessons and sermons since our earliest memories. Yet, removed as we are by 2,000 years since he walked the earth, He remains somewhat mysterious. Why did He come? What did He teach? What was He really like?

Let's take an adventure to know more of this person about whom we assume so much familiarity. We will be exploring the Life of Jesus in 21 sessions; the first 14 will focus on Jesus' life and ministry in the 1st Century and will end around Easter. The last 7 will focus on Jesus' life and ministry in our own century and will take us through the month of May. Let's experience the Life of Jesus together!

Deep Hope: May we, together, (re-) fall in Love with the Messiah as we understand, imitate, and experience the Life of Jesus.

PART I: Empire Succession:

Original "kingdom" before any invasion: _____

(Ruled by _____ and _____) (~1000 BC)

1st invasion by _____ (722 BC)

2nd invasion by _____, Israel taken into _____ (586 BC)

***How long was this time period? _____

Surprisingly, King _____ of _____ let the Jews go _____ (539 BC)

3rd Invasion by _____ (332 BC)

***Uprising called the _____ (164 BC)

/ 4th invasion by _____ (63 BC onward—this brings us to the time of Jesus)

Part II: The 4 Philosophies of 1st Century Jews

There were many diverse positions and views of the Jews of Jesus' time. The 4 we will learn about were all different postures that tried to reconcile the Roman occupation with the coming Kingdom of God.

Sadducees: "We _____ on the Kingdom of God"

Pharisees: "We _____ to bring God's Kingdom."

Essenes: "We _____ for the Kingdom of God (Just for _____)"

Zealots: "We _____."

Part III: Prophecies

Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17-19; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:5-7, 42:1-4; Daniel 9:26-27

These prophecies point to a Messiah who will reign as a mighty king—ruling and subduing the nations, receiving their homage.

Magi from the East ride into Jerusalem, looking for the King—has Messiah come at last?

Part IV: Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you about the succession of empires between David and Solomon's kingdom and the coming of Jesus?
2. After centuries of domination, what were the Jewish people of Jesus' day expecting/hoping for? In other words, what did they expect the "kingdom of God" would look like?
3. In our modern era, we often picture/imagine God's Kingdom as a heavenly place we go after death. But imagine you are hoping the kingdom of God will be an earthly kingdom. How is this similar and/or different from hoping for a happy place after death?
4. There were many men claiming to be "Messiah" both before and after Jesus. Messianic fervor was high (in part because of specific prophecies like the one in Daniel)! What impresses you about Jesus being "right on time?"
5. Which of the 4 philosophies of Jesus' day stood out to you the most? Which do you most strongly sympathize with? 😊
6. The prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures clearly foretell a coming ruler/king. What is most clear about this leader from the passages we read? How does Jesus fit this picture? How does Jesus not fit this picture?
7. When the magi come into Jerusalem, they are clearly expecting a powerful king/godlike figure. Their gifts are typically offered to royalty and even divinity. How do you imagine Joseph and Mary felt about receiving such gifts?
8. What are you left wondering/thinking about/pondering?

Part V: Gospel Reading:

Read Matthew 1-2 and Mark 1-5

How does Jesus both fulfill and subvert the expectations of the prophecies we read about?

Bonus Challenge: Reread the prophetic passages listed above in their context. If all you had to go on in waiting for the Messiah was these passages, what kind of Messiah would you be hoping for?

Prayer: "Father God, please show us Jesus. Let us see Him with fresh eyes and love Him anew.

Amen."