

This is
Jesus

A Companion Study Guide

This Is Jesus: A Companion Study Guide
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Introduction

He claimed to be God. He claimed to be King. He forgave and judged, blessed and cursed. In all of this, He is inescapably linked to us. But who is Jesus? What did He say and do that was so spectacular? More importantly, how can we trust that He is who He says He is—Savior of the world?

Jesus made serious claims. He also did some serious things. If those claims and acts are even possibly true, then what we know and believe about Jesus has serious implications for our lives.

This book was written to guide you through a series of lessons to help you answer the question of Jesus' identity correctly and biblically. We will journey through a progression of evidence that paints a clear picture of who He is. Your job is to follow along and decide for yourself. Your life depends on it.

In lesson one, we'll consider the historicity of Jesus from the Gospels and why these accounts can be trusted. Then, we'll jump immediately into His teachings to discover His uniqueness among the leaders of His day. Lesson three takes the next step and grabs hold of a particular teaching on His kingly rule. After that, lesson four cuts to the heart of much debate about Jesus' divine nature. In lesson five, He became man for us. He lived perfectly for us in lesson six. He died to pay for our sins in lesson seven. Finally, He was raised to life, proving Himself in lesson eight.

Join us as we journey through this study and seek to answer the ultimate question: Who is Jesus?

Now it happened that as he was
praying alone, the disciples were
with him. And he asked them,
“Who do the crowds say that I am?”

— LUKE 9:18 —

LESSON ONE

Jesus Was Here

Luke 9:18-20; John 10:22-39

“Jesus was here.” The strange phrase was scribed into the bathroom stall among other not-so-pleasant ones. No one mistook it to be the workmanship of the famous man from Nazareth. Still, the symbolism was too obvious to go unnoticed. Among the shoddy clutter of handwritten names and pictures, there was Jesus. His name wasn’t penned in some glorious calligraphy or even a careful cursive. It was nothing more than graffiti, just like everything else.

Truth be told, Jesus was here. About 2,000 years ago, He laid aside His heavenly renown and dwelled among some not-so-pleasant others who were a shoddy clutter of broken lives. He wasn’t born of a prestigious family, didn’t hold a political office, never ruled a nation or commanded an army, nor won any door prizes. He did, however, stir up some trouble with the religious authorities who eventually had Him killed. He also did some rather extraordinary things and taught some out-of-this-world truth. If it were not for His remarkable acts, Jesus would have been just another man, an ordinary name on the wall.

Opening Thoughts

1. What do people in your sphere of life think of Jesus? How would they describe Him in reference to themselves? Do their lives line up with their beliefs about Him?

LESSON ONE

2. Based on what you know, who did Jesus claim to be? How do His claims affect your life and how you interact with those around you?

The Christ of God

Everywhere you look, there are reminders of the historical Jesus. Only a few doubt His existence today. The facts of His life — where He lived, when He lived, how He died — are generally agreed upon. His significance, however, is another matter. Even among His contemporary followers, there is disagreement about the importance of His life and death. Some say He was a prophet. Others, a good teacher. But who did He say He was? What did those closest to Him think?

The religious Jews were expecting a king from heaven who would champion the earth and overthrow the Romans. But even they differed on how it would happen. Some took matters into their own hands. Some believed a new world would be made through Roman integration. Others trusted that a rigorous compliance to the Talmud would bring the Messiah. There was no shortage of disagreement back when Jesus was here.

Read Luke 9:18-20 and answer the following questions:

3. Why do you think the crowds referred to Jesus as John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets of old? What was it about Him that made them think this way (see Luke 1:17, Matthew 11:14, and Mark 9:13 for help)?

LESSON ONE

4. When Jesus asked His disciples about His identity, Peter answered, “The Christ of God.” What do you think he meant by this? Why is it significant?
5. Matthew’s account of this story adds a further description to Peter’s response: “the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). What more does this tell us? What did the disciples think of Jesus?

The Son of God

Regardless of the disagreements around Him, Jesus knew exactly who He was. He told the Jews, with no uncertainty, “I and the Father are one” (Jn. 10:30). Judging by their tempered response, this was nothing short of a bold statement. By identifying Himself with God in this way, He was saying He was God in every way. Keeping with the Law’s command to stone blasphemers, the Jews grabbed rocks from the ground (Lev. 24:16).

“I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” asked Jesus (Jn. 10:32). Undoubtedly speaking with their fists in the air and their brows like daggers, they answered, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

LESSON ONE

Read John 10:22-39 and answer the following questions:

6. According to verse 24, the Jews in the temple were anxious to hear if Jesus would refer to Himself as the Christ. Why do you suppose this was the case? What does Jesus' response to them tell you about their hearts and His truth?

7. What more can we learn about Jesus in His response to their inquiry? What more does it say about those who believe in Him? Why is this significant for us today?

8. In verses 34-38, Jesus judged the Jews with a challenging response (see Psalm 82:6). What do you think He meant? What does it teach us today?

Conclusion

The Bible is a tremendous treasure trove of truth about Jesus. It recounts what He said and did as well as who He is. The writers of the New Testament recorded these details knowing fully well they would be executed for doing so. There must have been something compelling about this man, Christ Jesus. Over the next few lessons, we will explore some of the more critical truths about Jesus and challenge you to think deeply about Him so you can firmly decide who He is. For now, we can rest in the reality that indeed Jesus was here.

But when the Pharisees
heard that he had silenced
the Sadducees, they
gathered together. And one
of them, a lawyer, asked
him a question to test him.

— MATTHEW 22:34-35 —

LESSON TWO

Not Your Ordinary Rabbi

Matthew 22:34-40; 15:1-9; John 11:1-16

On December 4, 2006, Army PFC Ross Andrew McGinnis was on patrol with his team in Adhamiyah, Iraq. Their task was critical—to install a massive generator that would supply electricity to more than 100 homes. While making their way through the village, an insurgent hurled a hand grenade into the Humvee. McGinnis, positioned behind the .50 caliber machine gun, was the only one to notice. The grenade was lodged beneath a stack of radios, and there was no way of extraction. The grenade was going to blow. Pressing himself against the stack, McGinnis smothered the blast with his body and saved his unit.

Ross McGinnis wanted to be a soldier at the age of four. He enlisted in the Army through the Delayed Entry Program at the age of seventeen. One year later, he joined the unit that he gave his young life for. His bravery preserved the lives of his four fellow soldiers. McGinnis was an ordinary young man. Yet, when faced with the most difficult of situations, he stood extraordinary.

Opening Thoughts

1. Is there someone you consider to be an extraordinary person? How did this person affect your life or the lives of others?

2. What do you think makes someone (or something) truly extraordinary? What is so remarkable about them?

He Spoke with the Authority

During Jesus' time, listening to a sermon by a religious teacher was a popular form of entertainment. There were hundreds of religious "entertainers" in and around Jerusalem. They spoke with great wisdom. Jesus, however, excelled in teaching. He demonstrated extraordinary power. The gospel of Matthew says crowds were "astonished" by what He said and how He said it (Matt. 7:28-29; 13:54). His teaching was unique. While the rabbis taught the words of Moses, Jesus taught "as one having authority" not passed down by man, but an authority given to Him by God (Matt. 7:29; 28:18).

His authoritative speaking caused Him to become more influential, and this angered the religious leaders. Jesus was a threat to their leadership. To make matters worse, Jesus often corrected their teachings while recognizing their role as interpreters of the Law. He cautioned His hearers to listen to the Pharisees, but not to emulate them. They had an outward adherence to the Law, but no inward change (Matt. 23:2-3). Furious with Jesus, they challenged His authority and tried to discredit Him. In one instance, they asked Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" It was a test.

LESSON TWO

Read Matthew 22:34-40 and 15:1-9 and answer the following questions:

3. What is significant about the Pharisees asking for “the great commandment” in all the Scriptures? How would this put Jesus to the test in their opinion?
4. Why did Jesus give two commandments instead of one as He was asked? How do all other commandments depend on them?
5. What characteristics of Jesus’ teaching do you think astonished those who heard Him speak? What was it about Jesus that led His audiences to conclude He was speaking with the authority of God?

He Acted with Authority

Jesus was more than an extraordinary man. Not only was His speech authoritative, but He had the power to back it up. He performed numerous miracles. He turned water into wine, healed the lame, gave sight to the blind, walked on water, and fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. The other rabbis performed parlor tricks to wow their audiences. The miracles of Jesus could not be duplicated with the sleight of hand. They were astonishing wonders before thousands of witnesses and each marvel gave witness to His teaching. He had the authority of God.

LESSON TWO

Read John 11:1-16 and answer the following questions:

6. Why did Jesus delay in returning to Bethany after He received word that Lazarus was ill? What do you think would have happened had He returned immediately?

7. What do you think Jesus meant when He said Lazarus' illness would not lead to death? How was the illness to be used to glorify God?

8. How does this story demonstrate that Jesus was extraordinary? Does it convince you today?

Conclusion

Through His teachings and miracles, Jesus was spreading the word, "I and the Father are one." This aroused resentment and fear among the religious leaders of His day. Jesus was claiming to be more than a man. He sometimes prefaced His teaching with "You have heard that it was said..." followed by "but I say to you..." He was turning the religious system on its head. It was misplaced, misinterpreted, and misunderstood. In doing so, He displayed His divine authority in such unmistakable ways. And yet, He was doing more, saying more, and showing more than they could have imagined. He was claiming to be their king.

Of the increase of his
government and of peace there
will be no end, on the throne of
David and over his kingdom, to
establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with
righteousness for this time forth
and forevermore.

— ISAIAH 9:7 —

LESSON THREE

Awaiting a King

Isaiah 9:6-7; 2 Samuel 7:11-14

The emotional roller coaster was exhausting, almost unbearable. For eight long years, Amanda and Jason had been looking forward to a baby of their own. They prayed. They hoped. But they were often struck with disappointing news. This might be their last time in the doctor's waiting room.

Holding hands, Amanda leaned toward her husband and whispered one last prayer, "Lord, will today be the day you grant us the desire of our heart?" Jason squeezed her hand tightly in assurance. His confidence never wavered. Amanda, on the other hand, was disappointed so often that she expected bad news. A quiet knock on the door broke their prayer, and the nurse entered the room. "Congratulations, you're pregnant!" After years of hope, prayer, doubt, disappointment, and anticipation, God had blessed them with a baby.

Opening Thoughts

1. Has there been a time when you prayed for something you desperately wanted and found God responding "Not yet," if anything at all?
2. How do we typically respond to God when He tells us to wait? Do you find yourself willing to "wait" long on God?

The King Was Coming

Amanda and Jason waited eight years for a child. The Israelites waited generations for God's promised king to come. One can only imagine the hopefulness and frustration they must have felt while waiting on God's timing. Israel was originally led by a series of patriarchs, the prophets, then judges. Desiring to be like other nations, they insisted on a king, which the prophet Samuel reluctantly anointed (1 Sam. 8:4-22). The kingly rule reached its height during the reign of King David. He was followed by his son, Solomon. During these two periods, the twelve tribes of Israel were united, their enemies were conquered, and the nation prospered. But this soon ended.

Although God promised David his dynasty would reign forever (2 Sam. 7:16), the monarchy crumbled into chaos. King Solomon died. A civil war arose. The nation split in two and both were overrun. For more than 600 years, Israel was ruled by surrounding nations, and the Davidic throne was empty. Israel was in disarray without a king. But God promised restoration. He vowed to send them a king who would be anointed with the Spirit of God. So they prayed and waited.

Read Isaiah 9:6-7 and answer the following questions:

3. How did the prophet Isaiah characterize the future king promised by God? According to the prophecy, how long would the king's reign last?
4. What type of king did the Jewish people expect? How do you think the Jewish people's expectations differed from Isaiah's prophecy?

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5. Do you think the years of waiting influenced their expectations? Do you think Israel grew more eager or more apathetic? Why?

The King Had Come

Jesus is the promised king. Many were expecting someone different and ultimately denied His kingship in the end. Their disappointment was crushing. On the other hand, there were some who believed. John the Baptist recognized Him as king. His ministry was that of a herald, who goes before a king to announce his coming. His message was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). In other words, prepare yourself for your king.

The disciples and other Jewish followers saw it as well (Matt. 16:15-20). Jesus, for obvious reasons, acknowledged His own kingship (Lk. 19:28-40). One story in particular is telling. When Jesus was baptized, the “heavens were opened to him,” the Spirit of God descended on Him, and a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16-17). The king had come.

Read Exodus 4:22-23, 2 Samuel 7:11-14, and Matthew 3:16-17 and answer the following questions:

6. What parallels are made in each of the passages? How does God describe the nation of Israel and their future kings?

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7. In light of these parallels, how are we to understand what John the Baptist meant when he described Jesus as the “Son of God”?

Read Luke 19:28-40 and Matthew 21:8-9 and answer the following questions:

8. Who did the people in the crowd believe Jesus was? What did Jesus say about Himself? And, how did the Pharisees view Him?
9. In light of this, what are your convictions about Jesus and His kingship? What evidence do you see from the Bible? How does this impact the way you live?

Conclusion

Jesus was an extraordinary man. He spoke and acted with divine authority like the prophets of old. John the Baptist, who was the last of God’s prophets according to Jesus, pointed the way to the promised king (Matt. 11:7-15). So, Jesus was more than extraordinary. He was the extraordinary, promised king. He was unlike any other king before Him who reigned only a finite time. Jesus is King of kings. His reign is forever. Why? Because He is also God.

Jesus said to them, “Truly,
truly, I say to you, before
Abraham was, I am.”

— JOHN 8:58 —

LESSON FOUR

Before Abraham Was, I Am

John 8:48-59

The world has characterized Jesus in many ways that are different from a Christian's view: a political activist, a positive role model, a mere historical figure, and even a financial advisor. There are others who argue that Jesus never considered Himself to be God or even some lesser deity. However, to understand who Jesus is, we must look at what He said and did. It is telling. It draws a definite line. Take it from C.S. Lewis:

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (from *Mere Christianity*).

Opening Thoughts

1. In your experience, how is Jesus popularly characterized by the world? How have these characterizations impacted you and your beliefs?

LESSON FOUR

2. Is it difficult to wrap your mind around the divinity of Jesus? If so, in what way? What aspects of Jesus' nature trouble you?

He Said He Was God

Jesus unabashedly identified Himself as the Messiah. It was evident to His disciples. When He asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter, the spokesman for the twelve, responded, "You are the Christ," which means Messiah (Mk. 8:29). It was also evident to those who questioned Him. When speaking to the Sadducees and scribes, He said His coming was the fulfillment of God's promise of an heir to David's throne—the promised Messiah (Lk. 20:41).

Jesus also went into the synagogues and announced to everyone that He was the fulfillment of the Scriptures. After reading from Isaiah about God's anointed one, He rolled up the scroll and declared, "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:18-21). This identified Him as God. Additionally, Jesus made Himself equal with God by using His authority to forgive sins (Matt. 9:2-6; Lk. 7:44-50), give new commandments (Jn. 13:34; Lk. 6:27-35), and describe Himself as one with the Father (Jn. 10:30).

Read Exodus 3:13-17 and John 8:48-59 and answer the following questions:

3. Based on your reading, what do you think Jesus was saying when He responded to the Jews? What was meant by the phrase "I am" in both passages?

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4. Why do you suppose they responded in the manner they did? What was it about Jesus' words that aroused so much anger?

5. What do you think hindered people from believing that Jesus was God? How is this similar to people's disbelief today? Are people still hindered the same way?

He Showed He Was God

Jesus taught with the authority and wisdom that only God could have. This is because He is God, without dispute. With no uncertainty, He declared His deity. He further demonstrated His deity with miraculous works. They were not magic shows. Jesus calmed storms (Mk. 4:39), walked on water (Matt. 14:25), multiplied loaves and fish (Matt. 14:19), withered a fig tree (Mk. 11:12-25), raised the dead (Jn. 11:43-44), cast out spirits (Mk. 1:23-26), and healed the sick (Mk. 1:34).

While some of His miracles were acts of compassion, others were intended to challenge doubters and hard-hearted unbelievers. To them He said, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn. 10:37-38). Jesus was evidently more than human.

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Read Mark 4:35-41 and Matthew 14:22-33 and answer the following questions:

6. How did Jesus demonstrate His divine power in these passages? How did the disciples respond to His supernatural feats?

7. What role, if any, did fear play in these stories? How does the unknown and supernatural argue for a higher power? How would this look today?

8. How does this lesson shape your life today? What is it about Jesus' divinity that convicts or encourages you to believe and obey Him?

Conclusion

Jesus was no mere human being. He was more. And still is. We find proof throughout the New Testament that Jesus is God. He demonstrated it in both speech and works. He proclaimed deity, forgave sins, healed ailments, controlled nature, and determined outcomes. Only God could do these things, and Jesus is undeniably God. And since He is God, He is also holy and righteous. He judges sin and punishes the guilty. What then shall we do with Jesus? It was man who sinned against God, and by God's design, it must be man who pays the penalty. We need a man in Jesus.

Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

— MATTHEW 3:15 —

LESSON FIVE

Into the Thick of the Mire

Matthew 3:13-17; John 11:28-37

There is a touching story of a wealthy couple who waited expectantly for their adopted son in a distant country. Although they had never met the youngster, their hearts were already full of affection. They even wore their finest clothes to meet him.

The orphanage where he lived was dreadful. This part of the world was infamous for its lack of orphan care. The boy was unkempt, dirty, and covered in mud. His filth was only matched by the mire on the ground. It was a terrible sight.

The couple stood in their fine attire before their son in his squalor, and the amazing happened. The father stepped forward into the mud where his son stood. His expensive shoes sank into the thick mire. It splashed onto his pants. He knelt down into the grit and hugged the boy. It was his first time to be hugged in this way. His first time to feel loved. Together, they walked back. The father's clothes were ruined, but he wasn't bothered. He got messy to claim his child.

In Philippians 2:5-11, we learn Jesus did the same for us. He gave up His glorious throne to enter our messy world and claim us. The passage says He "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." Jesus became human. He was one of us.

Opening Thoughts

1. What is significant about the actions of the wealthy father who adopted the boy? What kind of impression do you think he left on his new son?
2. What does it mean for us that Christ came to earth? What does it suggest about His heart?

He Came to Substitute

The Bible describes Jesus as having two natures, divine and human. In theological terms, this is called the hypostatic union. It says that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. This is crucial to the Christian faith. Our salvation depends on it. As sinners, we have a debt to pay. Since man sinned, man must pay his debt by dying. So, as a man, Jesus was able to pay a man's debt — something we could not do on our own. This does not suggest that Jesus sinned and a debt was required from Him, for He was a perfect human. He lived righteously. The sin debt He paid was not His, but ours.

In His death, we have our vicarious atonement. We also have life in His resurrection. Jesus lived perfectly, without sin, and achieved the reward of heaven on our behalf. Furthermore, His faultless life gives us an example of living. We can learn what it means to obey God by carefully observing Jesus.

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Read Matthew 3:13-17 and 2 Corinthians 5:21, and answer the following questions:

3. According to the reading, why did Jesus insist on being baptized? What implications flow from this reality? Why is it significant today?
4. What does it mean that “he made him to be sin who knew no sin”? What is the flip side of this truth? How does it relate to us?
5. Bringing these two passages together, what can we learn about God’s love for man? How does it encourage you to honor Him through obedience?

He Came to Relate

Although it is crucial we believe in Jesus’ hypostatic union, it is also important to know that He came to identify with our struggles through that union. God was not content to be aloof in any way. He took the initiative to enter our world as a human to experience all that we experience as humans. He stepped into the mire with us.

This is God’s unabashed declaration of love for us. The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus spending time with the outcasts of society, feeding the hungry, hugging the children, celebrating with those who were celebrating, and weeping with those who wept. Everything Jesus said and did pointed to the

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God who loves us enough to come to our dirty world and relate to us.

Read John 11:28-37 and answer the following questions:

6. How does Jesus react in His humanity? What does this teach you about Him and His way of relating to us?

7. What other human experiences did Jesus have on earth? What more do they teach us about Him?

8. How does this lesson affect you in your Christian walk? What is the significance of Jesus being 100% man? Why is relating to us important?

Conclusion

The humanity of Jesus is essential. We need a savior who experienced what we experienced. Even more, who could overcome what we never could on our own? Jesus was able to stomp out sin and overcome the temptations of the devil as a man. But, we need more than a man to be victorious over sin. We need a man to be victorious over *our* sin — one who could reverse the curse from the first man, Adam. What we need is a new Adam.

For if while we were enemies we
were reconciled to God by the
death of his Son, much more,
now that we are reconciled, shall
we be saved by his life.

— ROMANS 5:10 —

LESSON SIX

The Triumph of the Last Adam

Matthew 4:1-11; Romans 5:12-10

“Thanks a lot!” Sharon thought to herself when she remembered the tragedy that occurred just weeks ago. She worked at a large corporation downtown. The CEO had in his mind that an alternative business model would be good for the company. He reasoned from the success of other businesses in other industries, not his own. It was a risky decision, and the odds did not appear to be in his favor. His counsel advised against it, but it was his decision to make. And make it he did.

Months later, the new business model was adopted. Almost immediately the company spiraled downward. It was in disarray and panicking to pick itself up from the decay. Unfortunately, it was too disastrous to resolve. The model could not be undone as easily as it was done. Weeks later, the company let go of all its employees, including the CEO. It died and was dissolved — all because of one man’s decision.

Opening Thoughts

1. Have you ever been dramatically affected by someone else’s decision? Have you ever been the decision maker who affected others? How did it feel?

2. How did you or others resolve the situations that affected so many? Did resolution involve someone else? What was the reaction to the resolution?

One Man's Disobedience

Major decisions that affect others happen all the time. Presidents, CEOs, and religious leaders hold positions where this is the case. People are under their care. The decisions they make may benefit or harm others. This was true in biblical times as well. Consider Noah, Moses, Saul, and David. Each of them were in authority over others. When they obeyed God, all of the people in their care benefited. When they didn't, the people suffered the consequences.

One particular case happens at the beginning of the Bible. According to Genesis 1 and 2, God's creation was perfect. He designed a perfectly ordered system, and it involved a man who held a position of great honor and responsibility. He was empowered to make decisions on behalf of mankind. His name was Adam. God gave Adam a helpmate named Eve. Together they were to rule God's earth responsibly. However, Satan hated God and despised God's orderly design. When he entered the story, he entered with evil intent. He planned to cause Adam and Eve to go against God's wishes.

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Read Genesis 3:1-7 and Romans 5:12-14, and answer the following questions:

3. According to your reading, how does Satan try to overthrow God's authority? What are some evidences of him working against God's perfect order?
4. What is significant about Adam's sin? What are the consequences of his sin (see Genesis 3:16-19 and Rom 6:23 for help)?
5. According to Genesis 3:22, why is death a consequence of sin? Why did it affect all who came after Adam?

One Man's Obedience

God put Adam in charge of His creation to protect and cultivate it for His glory. Yet, he failed miserably. And because of his failure, all of creation suffers. Sin is all around us. We see its effects in war, disease, famine, and more. The worst consequence of Adam's decision is death.

Before Adam sinned, creation could live forever in perfect harmony with God. But now, no one escapes death. People die daily. And when they do, we are reminded of Adam's great

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failure and bad decision. He was unable to withstand Satan's temptation.

This is why we need another Adam. One who can resist the devil to re-establish God's perfect order. We have this person in Jesus Christ. He came to make things right. He perfectly fulfilled the role in which Adam so miserably failed. Like Adam, Jesus was soon tempted when His ministry began. Also like Adam, Jesus' decision affects all who are under His care.

Read Matthew 4:1-11 and Romans 5:15-19, and answer the following questions:

6. What similarities do you see when comparing the two passages? What are the differences?

7. Why was the outcome different when Satan tempted Jesus? What was lacking when Adam was tempted?

8. What does this lesson teach us about Jesus? What does it say about salvation and how we can be saved through Christ?

Conclusion

Adam was created to be the head of God's creation, protecting and caring for it with the help of Eve. But he chose to disobey God and heeded the cunning words of Satan. His decision changed the course of history forever, affecting all of creation. Thankfully, the story does not end there. God had a plan to set things right with another type of Adam who is perfect and holy. Jesus overcame Satan's temptation by obeying the Father perfectly. Adam's decision damned everyone. Christ's decision brought restoration. Still, more was needed to bring salvation to mankind. Only death would be accepted as the payment for sin. Christ's ultimate sacrifice and victory was yet to come.

Out of the anguish of his soul he
shall see and be satisfied; by his
knowledge shall the righteous one,
my servant, make many to be
accounted righteous, and he shall
bear their iniquities.

— ISAIAH 53:11 —

LESSON SEVEN

Like a Lamb to the Slaughter

Genesis 3:1-7; Isaiah 53:3-11

While wandering through a busy market, a young boy noticed a golden basket with a scarlet cloth tucked inside and draping over the sides. The quality dazzled him. He wanted to see it up close. He walked near and lifted the drapery to see what was inside — candies wrapped in glittering paper! He couldn't contain himself.

Both hands hurried into the basket to snag the treats, but a pair of large, leathery mittens grabbed his arms. A menacing voice followed. The would-be thief was escorted home.

It wasn't often that the king's soldiers paid a visit to the cottages near the forest. The boy's mother was terrified as she stood at the door. She noticed her son in tears, ashamed at what he had done. As she dried his cheeks, his heart sank.

"Your son had his hand in the king's pocket," the soldier said. He shoved the boy into his mother's arms. "The penalty is ten years in bondage as the king's slave." The mother breathed deeply. There was no reason to beg for mercy. The crime was done. The king's men were not known for compassion. She wept for her beloved. Her tears fell to his cheeks, and she stared at the soldier in desperation.

"Will you take me instead?" she asked, her voice trembling. "Please! Allow me to serve the king in his stead." The soldier was particularly moved by her plea, but his stony face showed no evidence. He paused and then relented. The mother was taken into custody.

Opening Thoughts

1. Was the soldier right in arresting the mother of the boy? Was there any evidence of him being unjust? Did he show any sign of mercy?
2. What motivated the mother to pay the price for something she had not done? Would you have done the same in her place?

The Penalty of Sin

God is holy. He is totally independent and perfectly pure. His very nature prevents Him from sinning. So He has never sinned, nor will He ever. Moreover, God has a strong distaste for sin. He doesn't like to be near it. And when He is, He burns in anger. His holiness expresses itself in furious wrath.

There was a time when all the things of earth were pure. God created earth and man, and He called them good — very good, in fact. There was no sin around. Things were essentially blameless and upright. It was paradise. God and man and beast lived in peaceful bliss. That is, until Adam fell to the temptation of Satan and all was lost. He was like the boy who stole from the king.

Read Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7, and 3:22-24, and answer the following questions:

3. Would it be right for God to ignore what Adam did? Could He have given him another chance?

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4. What was the penalty for sin? According to Romans 5:12, how was that penalty spread to all mankind? Is this true even today?
5. Did God show any sign of mercy toward Adam's sin? If so, how? Is this an indication of a flaw in His nature?

The Payment of Sin

According to Scripture, God told Abraham, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Gen. 22:2). This was a terrible thing for a father to hear, especially Abraham, for his son was a promised gift from God. Abraham was too old to have another son, and his wife was barren. The command was crushing.

God was testing him. The story continues, and Abraham's faith in God is vindicated. God stops him before he sacrifices his son and reveals a ram in the bushes. So he "went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son" (Gen. 22:13). The story illustrates a common theme throughout the Bible of a lamb that would absorb the sins of man and be sacrificed in his place. It is called the sacrificial lamb. God, in his boundless love and mercy, would personify this lamb. It was all pointing to Him.

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Read Isaiah 53:3-11, John 1:29, and Matthew 20:28, and answer the following questions:

6. How would you put the passage from Isaiah in your own words? What impression does this leave on you?

7. How does the “anguish of his soul” satisfy God the Father (Is. 53:11)? What does this have to do with God’s holiness, justice, and mercy?

8. What does this lesson mean to you today? What changes will you make in your life?

Conclusion

We are all like the boy who put his hands in the king’s basket. We deserve death for our sins, and the penalty must be paid. The King is just. He cannot look the other way. Thankfully, the God who is perfectly just is also abundantly merciful and gracious. In His love, He sent His son to be the Lamb sacrificed in our place. In doing so, God satisfied His wrath and salvation was accomplished. Jesus was slain for us. So now what? Is His life over? Is His ministry done? Is this the end?

For as by a man came death,
by a man has come also the
resurrection of the dead.

— 1 CORINTHIANS 15:21 —

LESSON EIGHT

Jesus: The Risen One

1 Corinthians 15:12-28

He offered life. And yet, He died. After a mock trial and numerous brutal beatings, the King of the Jews hung on a cross until He drew His last breath. “It is finished,” and it was over. It was a dark day for His disciples. They were devastated and depressed. Their hope was lost, and their faith destroyed. They had nothing left. Their King had died.

Friday evening, they removed His dead body and placed it in a tomb. Mary, Joanna, and a few other women wanted to anoint the carcass in order to delay the foul stench of decay, but they would have to wait for the Sabbath to end.

Sunday morning, when the sun was rising, they rushed to the tomb — spices in hand — eager to anoint their Lord’s remains. “Who will roll the stone away to let us in?” they wondered. A sonic boom shook the ground as they drew near the tomb. They were shocked to find it wide open. Rushing inside, they noticed the body missing. It appeared to them that it was stolen. “The tomb was defiled and pillaged!” But an angel appeared and explained, “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here.”

Opening Thoughts

1. How troubled do you think the disciples were by Jesus’ death? What moved the women to take spices to the tomb that Sunday and anoint the body?

2. Do you think the women were expecting Jesus to rise from the dead? Does this story sound fanciful and irrational? How would you have responded?

The Reality of the Resurrection

Over the past few lessons, we have embarked on a journey to answer the most profound question that could ever be asked: “Who is Jesus?” It is loaded with eternal significance, particularly for us sinners. Nothing could be more crucial to life than this. Our lessons have helped us see that Jesus was not just a man who walked the earth and found His way to our history books. He was more than an extraordinary man and teacher. He was a King of a heavenly kingdom. But, as good as that is, it is not enough to save us.

We need God. But more than God, we need a God who is human in order to pay for our sins. But more than that, we need this Godman to live a perfect life for us. But more than that, we need Him to suffer death on our behalf. Jesus was all of these things. But still, none of this matters if He died and remained dead.

This is exactly the argument Paul made in his letter to the church at Corinth. Apparently, there were doubts about the resurrection of believers and, consequently, the resurrection of Christ. Paul argued that all of Christianity hangs on the reality of His resurrection.

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Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-28 and answer the following questions:

3. How would you summarize this in your own words? What was Paul's reasoning? What was his argument about the resurrection of Jesus?
4. Why would our faith be futile without the resurrection? What does this imply for our hope today? What is significant about the term "firstfruits"?
5. What do you suppose is meant by "the last enemy to be destroyed is death" (according to verse 26)? What implications does this have for us?

The Response to the Resurrection

Peter wrote that God "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). Since Christ has been raised from the dead, the ball is now in your court. Will you believe it?

After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to Mary in the garden (Jn. 20:11-13), then to other women in route (Matt. 28:9-10), then to Peter (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5), then to the two disciples traveling to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-32), then to the disciples (Lk. 24:36-43), then to five hundred (1 Cor. 15:6), and even more. His resurrection was undeniable during those days. It was not just a religious claim, but a historical claim. Jesus rose from the dead!

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Read the following scriptures and answer the questions:

6. According Romans 10:13, how should we respond to the reality of the resurrection? What does it mean that we can be saved by calling on Him?

7. According to Mark 1:15, what must we do when we call upon Him to be saved? To what extent are we to believe “in the gospel”?

8. According to John 3:16, who is Jesus and why did He come? What is at stake with this question? How does the way we answer it affect us today?

9. Have you properly responded to this truth? If not, take some time now and tell your small group. Together, you can call upon the Lord and Savior, Jesus.

Conclusion

Who is Jesus? He is the King of heaven who invaded earth to save some from the kingdom of Satan. He is the Great I Am who existed with God as God before anything else existed. He is the loving One who left His heavenly glory to subject Himself to the pains of life in order to understand you. He is the only man who perfectly lived a righteous life in honor of God. He is the

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suffering Lamb who shed His blood for the penalty of sinners. And finally, He is the resurrected Lord who triumphantly rose from the grave as the first of us who follow Him into heaven.

In Matthew, Jesus asks of the world, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Then, turning to His disciples, He asks, “But who do you say that I am?” At this very moment, He is asking you the same question: “Who do you say that I am?” Will you acknowledge Jesus for who He is? Make that decision now.

This is Jesus.

DO YOU KNOW HIM?

About The Book

Bruce Lee's amazing one-inch punch has wowed ordinary spectators and martial arts masters for years. It was tiny but powerful. This is how one pastor compared Greg Gilbert's book *Who is Jesus?* to many titles with the same subject. In so few pages, Gilbert walks through the biggest questions about the most influential person in history. This study guide was written as a companion for that walk.

This Is Jesus is the product of a small team of writers at Northeast Houston Baptist Church in Texas. While we commend this guide to you in high hopes that you will find the Jesus of Scripture, we also suggest reading the tiny-but-powerful book that inspired it.

Greg Gilbert is the senior pastor of Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He earned his Master of Divinity at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has authored several other works, including *What Is the Gospel?* and *Why Trust the Bible?* You can purchase all of his books from bookstores worldwide and online.

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