

1. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS – the promised birth of the Messiah

Aim: To show that God is faithful, in promising the birth of the Messiah and His forerunner.

Intro: *The last prophet of the OT was Malachi. What two things did he remind the Jews of?*

1. Mal 4:1-3 God's promised Messiah would come to heal (save) them (the Sun of Righteousness)
2. Mal 4:4-6 Before the Messiah came, God would send another prophet in the power of Elijah to prepare the people so that they would be ready for the coming Messiah (this was John the Baptist).

How long was the period of time from the prophecies of Malachi to the coming of the Messiah?

It was 400 years. During this time of "silence", God was still at work. Unnoticed by most people, God was making everything ready for the coming of the Messiah. He came when the time was right (Gal 4:4).

A. God promised Elizabeth a son – the forerunner

As we begin our study of the NT, in Luke's Gospel who are we introduced to first? (Luke 1:5-7)

We are introduced to an elderly Jewish couple, Zacharias and Elizabeth. They were old and childless.

As Zacharias was performing his priestly ministry, what happened? (Luke 1:8-14)

God's angel (Gabriel) promised Zacharias a son and told him he must name his son John.

What was so special about this promised child? (Mal 3:1; 4:5-6; Luke 1:15-17)

John was God's promised forerunner to the Messiah/Saviour, as the prophets had made known. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, and make ready God's people in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Whom did the angel say that John would prepare the way for? (Luke 1:17; Isa 40:3-5)

John would prepare the way for the Lord. This clearly means that the Messiah was not just a natural descendant of David, nor a normal human being, but God Himself. (cf. Isaiah 7:14; 9:6).

B. God promised Mary a Son – the Messiah

In Luke 1:26-31 the angel Gabriel was sent by God to give another person a very special message. Who was this and what was the message?

God sent Gabriel to tell a virgin named Mary that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah. It was now God's time to fulfil His promises by sending the Messiah into our world. Mary was just an ordinary young woman who trusted in God as her Saviour (Luke 1:47).

What was the name that Mary was to give to the promised Messiah? (Luke 1:31)

His name was to be Jesus – Jesus is the Greek name for the Hebrew name of Joshua, which means "God our Saviour". How appropriate, then, that the Saviour of the world should be called Jesus.

What other things did the angel Gabriel tell Mary about her future son? (Luke 1:32-35)

- He would be great (eminent and mighty) – consider Col 1:15-18
- He would be called the Son of the Most High and the Son of God
- He would be David's greater Son who would rule forever over the house of Jacob (Israel).

What the angel declared to Mary about Jesus was prophesied long ago by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 9:6-7. What else did this prophecy tell us concerning who Jesus would be?

He would be Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace. Clearly, Jesus is divine – He is God (John 1:1) in the flesh. He is Emmanuel, which means "God with us" (Matt 1:23).

According to Luke 1:35 why would Jesus be called the Son of God?

Jesus was not conceived as an ordinary human being, but through the Holy Spirit. This is because He already existed, for He is eternal. God's Spirit planted Him in the womb of Mary. Thus, Mary was the human carrier for Jesus, and Joseph was His earthly carer - not his human father.

What do we learn in Luke 1:36-37?

Nothing is impossible for God. He caused Elizabeth who was barren and old to fall pregnant with John, and God would cause Mary, a virgin, to bear His Son.

What was Mary's response to the angel's message? (Luke 1:38)

Mary trusted in God and accepted His will for her to be the mother of the Messiah. She did this, knowing that she would bear the shame of having a child out of wedlock.

What can we learn from God's words to Mary through the angel and from Mary's response?

With God all things are possible (Phil 4:13). There is nothing impossible with Him. And like Mary, we are to trust God in all things, whether we must bear shame and whether things may seem impossible.

Summary: **God is faithful. Elizabeth would bear the forerunner. Mary would bear the Messiah.**

2. The Birth of John the Baptist

Aim: To consider the birth of John the Baptist and the fulfilment of God's promises.

Intro: *In Josh 21:45 what do we learn about God in the days of Joshua?*

When God makes a promise, He fulfills it; no matter how difficult or how impossible it may seem.

Throughout the OT, God promised to send the Messiah and His forerunner. What happened?

Just as God promised, when the time was right (Gal 4:4), God fulfilled His promises by sending the forerunner first, John the Baptist, and then the Messiah, our Saviour, even Jesus.

In this study, we shall consider the birth of the Messiah's forerunner – John the Baptist.

A. John's Birth

In accordance with God's Word to Zacharias (Luke 1:13) what do we read in Luke 1:57?

Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth had a son, just as God had promised. Although Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in age, God enabled them to have this promised son, whom they named John.

What extraordinary thing happened when John was born? (Luke 1:59-63)

Zacharias broke custom and wrote that his name should be John (according to what the angel told him in Luke 1:13), and then suddenly as he wrote down his name John's mouth was loosed and he could speak – for he couldn't speak until then, because of how he had doubted the angel's words to him (Luke 1:19-20).

What did these special events, that God had arranged, bring about in the people? (Luke 1:65-66)

They wondered what would become of this child John; God was preparing their hearts for the forerunner.

B. Zacharias' Prophecy

After John's birth, Zacharias prophesied by the Holy Spirit. What do we learn in Luke 1:76?

John would be a prophet of God Most High, who would prepare the way for the Lord, just as Isaiah 40:3-5 had declared. Also, the Messiah is called the LORD – for though the Messiah would come from the line of David, He actually would be God Himself – that's why one of His names is Emmanuel ("God with us").

Note: The Messiah was the Lord, because only the Lord Himself can deliver us from sin, Satan and the sentence of death. No human or angel can save us and deliver us. Only God Himself could.

In what way would John specifically prepare the people for the Lord? (Luke 1:77)

John would give the people the knowledge of salvation. He would do this by calling people to do two things – to repent of their sins, and to receive the Messiah as their Saviour from sin. John would declare the Messiah to be "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

How does Zacharias describe the Messiah in his prophecy? (Luke 1:67-75, 78-79)

- He would be a "horn of salvation"; ie, Jesus' power (horn) would bring about our salvation – v. 69
- He would be from the line of David in accordance with Old Testament prophecies – vv. 69-70
- He would come to His own people (the Jews), and in accordance with God's covenant with Abraham, He would make them true worshippers of God (in holiness and righteousness) – vv. 72-75
- He would come like the sun rising (Mal 4:2). He would come as the light of the world (John 8:12) into a spiritually dark world, where humans are lost in sin, in order to deliver us – vv. 78-79.
- He would guide us into the way of peace, so that we might no longer be enemies of God, but be reconciled to Him – v. 79.

In what way would Jesus fulfil God's promises to Abraham? (Luke 1:72-73)

Before Abraham went to Canaan, God promised him that one of his descendants would bring blessing to us all (Gen 12:3). Also, after Abraham was tested in sacrificing Isaac, God promised him that one of his descendants would be a blessing to us all (Gen 22:15-18); that blessing was saving us, through faith in Him.

C. John Fulfilling Prophecy

Where did John live until God's time for him to begin his ministry? (Luke 1:80)

He lived in the desert until the time was right for him to prepare the people for the Messiah's coming.

How did John survive in the desert? (Mark 1:6)

John ate locusts and wild honey, and wore clothing of camel's hair. It was far from the normal way of life.

Where he lived and how he survived would have been considered strange by most people. Was it?

No! It fulfilled what was prophesied about him in Isa 40:3. In the desert he would prepare the way for the Messiah. Cf. - every word of prophecy will always be fulfilled, no matter what (cf. Josh 21:45).

Summary: God is faithful; and praise Him for John's birth who prepared the way for the Messiah.

3. The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

Aim: To consider the birth of Jesus our Messiah and the fulfilment of God's promises.

Intro: *With the birth of John the Baptist, what was everything now set for?*

Everything was now set for the long-awaited Messiah to come. Praise God for His awesome faithfulness.

In this study, we shall consider the birth of Jesus – our Messiah and Saviour.

A. The Coming of Jesus

Just as the angel Gabriel had said to Mary (Luke 1:31-35), what came to pass? (Matt 1:18)

Mary conceived a child through the Holy Spirit; the Bible emphasises that this conception was not through normal human means (Mary was a virgin). Thus, this child was the Son of God.

Mary was engaged to Joseph. What did he do when he found out Mary was pregnant? (Matt 1:19)

When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, and that he was not the father, according to Jewish law, he could have had Mary killed. But because he loved her, he decided to break off their engagement quietly.

What did God do to ensure that Joseph and Mary would remain together? (Matt 1:20)

God sent an angel of the Lord to appear to Joseph in a dream. The angel told Joseph how the child that Mary was carrying was conceived in her by the Holy Spirit. God gave this special dream so that Joseph and Mary would still marry, and so that Joseph would be the earthly father of Jesus.

What do we know about Joseph and Mary? (Matt 1:19; Luke 1:30)

Joseph was a righteous man and Mary had found favour in God's eyes. God had chosen these two godly people to help raise Jesus, the Messiah, through his early years.

Was there anything else special about Joseph and Mary? (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:27)

They were both of the line of David, as the Messiah had to come from this line according to prophecy. But besides this, they were normal people, who were righteous because of their faith in God – not because they were sinless. Indeed, they were sinners like us (Rom 3:23), and would need Jesus to save them.

Note: The Catholic church believes in the "Immaculate Conception of Mary"; ie, she was born free from original sin and was sinless. This is heresy. Only one was sinless – even Jesus (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15).

What else did the angel tell Joseph in the dream? (Matt 1:21)

Joseph was to call the baby Jesus, just as Gabriel had told Mary in Luke 1:31. Also, most importantly, Jesus' main ministry was stated: "to save His people from their sins" - just as God prophesied (Isa 53:5-6).

Why was the Messiah given the name "Jesus"?

The name "Jesus" is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew name "Joshua", which means "Jehovah Saves".

In Matt 1:22-23, what is highlighted?

All that Joseph was told by the angel was in fulfilment of the prophecy in Isa 7:14. Also, as per the prophecy, the child would be called "Emmanuel" (meaning "God with us"), for that's who was being born amongst us. This Child would be none other than God Himself; as Isa 9:6 had also made clear.

What did Joseph do after God had appeared to him in a dream? (Matt 1:24)

Being a righteous man, he obeyed God by taking Mary as his wife. This would have caused Joseph to bear much reproach in the eyes of his Jewish society. Sometimes we are called upon by God, in obeying Him, to bear reproach as well. There is always a cost in obeying the Lord, but there is also great reward.

What does the Bible emphasise in Matt 1:25? Why?

Joseph had no sexual relations with Mary until Jesus was born – God wants us all to know that Jesus was not conceived the normal way. He was conceived miraculously by the Holy Spirit.

B. The Birth of Jesus

Where was Jesus born and how did that come about? (Luke 2:1-7)

Joseph and Mary were living in Galilee, but because of a Roman census, they had to return to Joseph's birthplace of Bethlehem, in order to register. It was here that Mary gave birth to Jesus, fulfilling Mic 5:2.

What was unusual about Jesus' birth? (Luke 2:7)

Since there was no room in Bethlehem, Jesus was born in the place where animals were kept, and he was laid in a manger (a cattle-feeding trough). What humble surroundings for the Messiah, the King of Kings.

So, the promised Messiah was born, just as God had said. What prophecies were fulfilled?

Jesus was born of a virgin (Isa 7:14 & Matt 1:25), born of the line of David (2 Sam 7:12-13 & Matt 1:20), and born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2 & Luke 2:4-6). God is always true to every prophecy in His Word.

Summary: God fulfilled His promises by sending His Son into the world to be our Saviour from sin.

4. The Shepherds & Wise Men & Herod

Aim: To consider the pronouncement of the Saviour's birth, and the response of different people.

Intro: *Jesus' birth was so special and so unique. In what ways was it unique?*

Jesus was born of a virgin; an angelic choir sang at His birth; a star heralded the Saviour's birth.

In this study, we shall consider the special events at Jesus' birth and the response of people.

A. The Shepherds

Just after Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, how did God make it known? (Luke 2:8-12)

God sent an angel from heaven to tell about the birth to some shepherds in the fields around Bethlehem.

What incredible words did the angel proclaim to the shepherds? (Luke 2:10-11)

The baby that had been born in Bethlehem was the Saviour, the Christ (Messiah), and the Lord.

What response did the angel anticipate from the shepherds? Why?

He anticipated that they would be filled with great joy, because it was such good news that he was proclaiming - the long-awaited Messiah (Christ) had finally been born to save us.

After the angel spoke words of good news, what happened next? (Luke 2:13-14)

The shepherds were privileged to see and hear an angelic choir, who praised God for the Saviour's birth, and who declared God's peace and favour upon us humans through Jesus coming into our world.

After this amazing announcement, what was the response of the shepherds? (Luke 2:15-20)

They hurried to see the Saviour, and they proclaimed all that the angel had told them about Jesus. They then returned home praising God. What a great response! Is our response to Jesus like the shepherds?

B. The Wise Men

Who came in search of Jesus in Matt 2:1-2? Why?

Wise men from the East came in search of Jesus to worship Him. This is because they had seen "His star". These wise men somehow knew that this special star heralded the birth of the king of the Jews.

What does the term "King of the Jews" mean? (2 Sam 7:12-13; Psalm 2:1-12)

It refers to the long-awaited king who would sit upon the throne of David and rule over the house of the Jews. This was Jesus. He would also be the king over all the nations.

When these wise men arrived in Jerusalem, what happened? (Matt 2:2)

They came to Jerusalem, expecting to find the new king. But He wasn't born in a palace in the capital city.

How did Herod and all Jerusalem react to the wise men's visit? (Matt 2:3)

They were troubled about a new king being born; especially Herod. He didn't want anyone else to be king.

After consulting the religious leaders, what did Herod and the wise men learn? (Matt 2:4-6)

They learnt that this new king would not be born in Jerusalem, but Bethlehem, as it says in Micah 5:2.

After leaving Jerusalem, what did they do? (Matt 2:7-10)

They followed the star, and it led them to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. Note: If they had just followed the star in the first place, they would have arrived there without any problems.

What was the wise men's response when they found Jesus? (Matt 2:11)

They worshipped Jesus and gave expensive gifts. What a great response to Jesus! Is that our response?

Was it right for the wise men to worship Jesus?

Yes! Jesus is God. He is both God and man. In heaven He is constantly worshipped (Rev 5:11-12).

What was the significance of the gifts that the wise men gave to Jesus?

The expensive gifts would have helped Mary and Joseph support Jesus, but each gift also highlighted who Jesus truly was. Gold was for kings - Jesus is the King of Kings. Frankincense was for priests - Jesus is our great high priest. Myrrh was for anointing dead bodies - Jesus would die to save us.

C. Herod

After the wise men worshipped Jesus, what happened next? (Matt 2:12-15)

The wise men went back home and didn't report to Herod where the baby was, for God had warned them in a dream not to tell Herod. Joseph and Mary and baby Jesus also left Bethlehem for Egypt (fulfilling Scripture), for God had warned Joseph in a dream of Herod's evil intentions to kill Jesus.

What was Herod's response to the birth of Jesus and being deceived by the wise men? (Matt 2:16-18)

He became very angry and ordered the slaughter of male babies two years old and younger. Herod's response to Jesus was evil. Today, many have this same response to Jesus. (Cf. the words in Luke 19:14)

Summary: Like the shepherds and wise men, we are to be seekers and worshippers of Jesus.

5. Jesus' Early Years and the Ministry of John

Aim: To consider how God prepared the way for the coming ministry of Jesus the Messiah.

Intro: *Jesus' birth was well received by the shepherds & wise men, but what about the rest? (John 1:11)*
Jesus was not well received. Herod wanted to kill Him, and the people of Jerusalem didn't go to Bethlehem to see the Saviour's birth – just the wise men went.

In this study we shall consider the early years of Jesus, and John's ministry to prepare the way.

A. Jesus' early years

What did Mary and Joseph do with baby Jesus in obedience to God's law? (Luke 2:21-24)

They had Jesus circumcised on the eighth day, and presented their firstborn to the Lord at the temple, in accordance to God's law. Their offering showed that they were poor. Jesus was born into a poor family.

At the temple, some amazing things happened. What were they? (Luke 2:25-38)

A man named Simeon, full of the Holy Spirit, took hold of Jesus and prophesied how He was God's salvation for mankind. Also, Anna, a prophetess, gave thanks for Jesus and spoke of how He would be the means of our redemption (our Saviour from sin). Truly, Jesus would be no normal child.

What does the Bible say about Jesus as He grew up? (Luke 2:39-40)

Jesus grew strong and increased in wisdom. This was necessary for Jesus, for although He was God in the flesh, He was also fully man. Also, God's grace (or favour) was upon Him like no other. This is because He never sinned, but always did God's will; unlike us.

When Jesus was just twelve, what incident occurred in Jerusalem? (Luke 2:41-47)

Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem after His family had celebrated the Passover. But while there, He was discussing spiritual truths with learned men. They were amazed at His understanding and His answers. Again, we see that Jesus was no ordinary Child – here was One who knew God and all spiritual truth.

In Luke 2:48-51 what do we learn about Jesus?

Jesus clearly understood that God was His true Father (not Joseph), and that He was to be about His Father's business. We also see Him submitting to His earthly parents, even though He was God's Son.

In Luke 2:52 what do we learn about Jesus?

He continued to increase in wisdom. Isaiah 11:1-2 tells us that this was because the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him. He also grew in favour with God and man, for His character as a man was the character of God. He was sinless and holy, faithful and true, completely righteous and good, merciful and gracious, loving and kind. No wonder Jesus was a man who found favour with God and men.

B. The ministry of John the Baptist

To prepare people's hearts for the ministry of Jesus, what did John do? (Matt 3:1-3)

John preached a message of repentance, telling people that the kingdom of heaven was near. This was in fulfilment with Isa 40:3-5 – written 700 years before John began his ministry.

What is the kingdom of heaven that John preached about?

The kingdom of heaven is the domain where God rules and where people lovingly submit to Him and live with Him forever. Jesus would bring this kingdom in reach of us. All those who repent and by faith receive Jesus enter this kingdom. They also experience salvation from sin, and the blessing of God's rule.

Repentance is essential for entering the kingdom of heaven. What is repentance?

Repentance means a change of heart & mind in the way we view our sin against God. It's realising:

- 1) God is holy and His righteous anger burns against my sin
- 2) I have sinned and face God's condemnation
- 3) I need to turn away from my sins and come back to God in true sorrow over our sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness, and having a desire to follow His ways

What did John require the people to do as a sign of their repentance? (Matt 3:4-6)

John required them to be baptised in water to indicate that they agreed with God that they were sinners, under God's wrath, and were in need of God's mercy and forgiveness.

How did John's ministry prepare people for the coming of Jesus?

In Jesus is found God's mercy, forgiveness and salvation; if we repent and receive Jesus. Thus, John's message was preparing people so that they might be ready to receive Jesus, by getting them to repent.

Summary: We cannot receive Jesus unless God prepares our heart and we repent of our sins.

6. John's Message and Jesus' Baptism

Aim: To look at repentance and who Jesus truly is through John's ministry; and to look at Jesus' baptism.

Intro: In our last study we considered John the Baptist's ministry. What was the main purpose for it? To prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the Saviour, by getting people to repent of their sins. In this study we shall continue to look at John's ministry, and also the baptism of Jesus.

A. John's Message

John's ministry was prophesied in Isa 40:3-5 and Mal 4:5-6. How did John fulfill Mal 4:5-6?

In the desert, preparing the people for the Lord (in fulfilment of Isa 40:3-5), John preached in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the people back to the Lord and to each other (cf. Luke 1:17; Matt 17:10-13).

How did many of the Jews respond to John's message? (Matt 3:5-6)

Many believed that John was speaking God's Word, and they confessed their sins and were baptized.

How did John baptise? What did it signify?

John immersed people in the water of the Jordan. It was a sign that they were repenting of their sins; ie, agreeing with God that they were a sinner and needed to turn from their sins to receive God's mercy.

Note: The word "baptize" comes from the Greek word "baptizo." It means to completely immerse. The word "baptizo" was also used in the process of dying cloth. When the cloth was plunged (baptised) into a vat of dye, it would take on the colour of the dye. Just as the cloth was identified with the dye by taking on its colour, so also the Jews identified with John's message of repentance by being baptised.

Can baptism alone make us right with God? What did John say about this? (Matt 3:7-8)

Baptism alone cannot make us right with God. There must be genuine repentance of our sins and then a turning back to God for His mercy and forgiveness. John did not compromise the message. He denounced those who were seeking to be baptised, without any repentance. Many of these were the religious leaders.

What else did John have to say to the religious leaders in Matt 3:9-10?

He warned them about trusting in the fact that they were children of Abraham, as if this meant that they were automatically right with God. It's the same for us. Having Christian parents or being a church attender will not save us. We must personally repent and trust in Jesus.

What did John say about the Saviour in Matt 3:11-12?

He declared that Jesus was far greater than him; he wasn't even worthy to remove His sandals. That's because John knew that Jesus was God's Son. He also made known that Jesus would baptise people with the Holy Spirit, resulting in conversion and transformation. Jesus would also gather those who believed in Him, but would bring severe judgment on those who refused to believe – Jesus was far greater than John.

Read also John 1:24-30. What else do we glean from John's ministry about Jesus?

Jesus is the Saviour - "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". Jesus is the Lamb God provided to atone for our sins so that we could be forgiven and be reconciled to God. All the sacrifices in the OT pointed to this one - God's ultimate sacrifice for sin. Also, John states that Jesus existed before him, even though He was born after: that's because He knew Jesus was the eternal Son of God.

B. Jesus' baptism

Why did Jesus submit Himself to John's baptism? (Matt 3:13-15; John 1:31-34)

Jesus wasn't baptised to show that He had repented of sin. Unlike us, He is the only One without sin (Heb 4:15). He was baptised to "fulfil all righteousness"; that is, He was baptised to obey His Father's will, for by this means God would manifest Him to John and to the world.

Who came upon Jesus straight after He was baptised? (Matt 3:16)

The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and rested on Him. This showed that Jesus was truly the anointed One – the One God had sent into the world. Note: Messiah means "anointed one".

What else happened after the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus? (Matt 3:17)

God the Father spoke from heaven. How amazing! God confirmed that Jesus is His Son; and that He dearly loves Him, and was fully pleased with Him. Indeed, Jesus perfectly pleased the Father right throughout His life; including in His death. He's the only one who perfectly pleased the Father.

What should we conclude from Jesus' baptism?

Jesus is God's Son. He is the anointed one, the Messiah, the Lamb of God, and the Saviour of the world.

Summary: Jesus is God's Son. We must repent of our sins and believe in Him to be saved.

7. Jesus' Temptation

Aim: To consider that Jesus' was severely tested and tempted, but is the only One who did not yield.

Intro: *We are tempted to sin. So was Jesus. How was He tempted? How did He respond? (Heb 4:15)* Jesus was tempted in all that we are tempted in. Also, He wasn't just tempted during one time in His life; known as the "Temptations of Jesus". He was tempted many times (Luke 4:13). But He never sinned.

A. Jesus in the Wilderness

After Jesus' baptism, that confirmed who He was, what happened next? (Matt 4:1)

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil. God permitted this.

Note: Often, at the start of a new ministry, we can be tempted and tested by the devil.

Jam 1:13 says that God can't be tempted. How could Jesus be tempted if He is God?

Although Jesus is fully God, He was also fully man. Being a man, He was vulnerable to temptation.

Many doubt the reality of the devil. What does the Bible say about him? (Gen 3:1; Rev 12:9,17)

The Bible consistently confirms the devil's reality. He tempted Adam & Eve in the garden, and constantly opposes God's will and to bring humans under his control. He personally came to test and tempt Jesus.

Why was the devil tempting Jesus? What was he seeking to do?

The devil wanted to bring Jesus under his control (he craves worship) and to take Jesus from the course God had set for Him - to save us from our sins by dying on the cross (he seeks to hinder God's will).

In what way was Jesus made more vulnerable to temptation? (Matt 4:2)

The Spirit led Him into the wilderness to fast for 40 days and nights. He was alone and physically weak.

Note: We are often most vulnerable to sin when we are alone and weak and tired (cf. Matt 26:40-41).

B. Jesus being Tempted

What was the first temptation Jesus faced? Why would this have been challenging? (Matt 4:2-3)

The devil tempted Jesus to use His power to change stones into bread to satisfy His hunger. Being fully human, the devil exploited Jesus' humanity and hunger to tempt Him.

What was Jesus' response to the devil's temptation? (Matt 4:4)

He used Scripture (Deut 8:3) to "cut down" the devil's temptation. Even though we need food to keep our bodies alive (and it's not wrong to eat), above this is the need to obey God. The Father had called His Son to fast. So He would fast, until He was told to stop. Behold Jesus' obedience; even though He was hungry.

In the second temptation what did the devil do? (Matt 4:5-6)

The devil used Scripture (portions of Psalm 91:11-12) to encourage Jesus to test God by suggesting to Him to jump off the pinnacle of the temple - for God would protect Him.

What does this temptation tell us about the devil?

He knows the Scriptures, but he uses it wrongly (cf. Gen 3:1-5 and the way the devil tempted Eve).

In what way did the devil misuse Scripture here? (Psalm 91:11-13)

Satan misused the Scripture, in order to tempt Jesus to do something that was outside God's will. Other Scriptures tell us how we shouldn't behave like this and test the Lord.

How did Jesus respond to the devil's temptation? (Matt 4:7)

He again quoted Scripture (Deut 6:16). Jesus knew that such an action would be testing God. God will protect us, but not necessarily when we choose to act foolishly and do something outside His will. Jesus did not have to test His Father to see if He would take care of Him; Jesus knew this already.

In the third temptation, what was the devil up to? (Matt 4:8-9)

The devil tried to get Jesus to worship him. His desire is for people to worship him as God. He tempted Jesus to do this by offering Him all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus would receive all this after the cross (Phil 2:9-11). So, the devil was seeking to not only get Jesus to worship him, but also to bypass the cross.

What was Jesus' response to devil's temptation? (Matt 4:10)

Jesus commanded the devil to go, and again He used God's Word (Deut 6:13) to declare that only the Lord God is to be worshipped. Note also that Jesus called the devil "Satan"; which means "adversary".

What did Satan do after this, and what did God do? (Matt 4:11)

At Jesus' command, the devil left. Jesus, even while fully human, was far greater than Satan. God then comforted His Son by sending angels. God will always comfort us in our trials (2 Cor 1:3-4).

Summary: As Jesus did, temptations are overcome through the word of God and obedience to God.

8. Jesus Begins His Ministry

Aim: To show that Jesus is God's Son and that He has the authority to save mankind.

Intro: *Before Jesus began His ministry, what important events occurred beforehand? (Matt 3:13-15; 4:1)*

At Jesus' baptism God the Father declared who Jesus truly is, and He was anointed for ministry by the Holy Spirit. But straight after this, Jesus was tempted by the devil. But He was resolute in doing God's will, which would include Him carrying out the ministry that His Father had given Him – to save us.

In this study we shall consider the beginning of Jesus' ministry that would be about our salvation.

A. Jesus' Message

What happened to John the Baptist as Jesus began His ministry? (Mark 1:14; Matt 14:3-10)

John was taken into custody by king Herod because he had challenged him about unlawfully taking his brother's wife. Then, when an opportune time arose, king Herod had John killed.

Although John tragically died, in God's eyes, he had fulfilled the ministry he was sent for. What were some of the main points of John's ministry? (Matt 3:1-3, 11; John 1:29, 3:26-30)

He prepared the hearts of the people for the Lord's coming by calling them to repent.

He declared how great Jesus is, compared to himself, and how Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit.

He made clear that Jesus is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"; our Saviour.

He pointed people away from himself to the Lord Jesus and said, "He must increase, but I must decrease".

As Jesus began His ministry, what did He declare? (Mark 1:14-15)

Jesus declared that the time was now right for God to reveal His great plan of salvation for mankind. God's kingdom was at hand for the King (Jesus) had come to open the way to it. Jesus declared that people had to repent and believe in the Gospel in order to enter this kingdom, and to receive God's salvation.

From the beginning, Jesus preached repentance and faith. What are we to repent of and believe in? We are to repent (turn away) from our sins. John the Baptist had declared this as well. Without repentance we cannot receive God's salvation. But we must also believe. We are to believe in the gospel.

What is the Gospel? (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

The word Gospel means "good news". The Gospel is the "good news" of Jesus. It tells us about who Jesus is and what He did for us to save us from our sins. To believe in the Gospel is to believe in Jesus.

Why is the message Jesus declared called "good news" or Gospel? (Eph 2:1-5; Col 1:13-14)

It tells us how us sinners can be forgiven of our sins and be made right with God, so that we may not perish in hell, but have eternal life. Through our sins we were under Satan's power, and face eternal separation from God, but Jesus came to deliver us from this – this is the Gospel. What good news!

To help Him in His ministry, what did Jesus do? (Mark 1:16-20)

Jesus called men to follow Him and become "fishers of men". They had to leave everything behind to become a follower of Jesus. They became disciples, or learners, of Jesus. He personally taught them, and He also sent them out to tell others about the Gospel in order to bring others into God's kingdom.

If we are a follower of Christ, how should we be living our life? (Matt 16:24-25)

We should be just like the disciples of old – leaving the world behind and following Jesus, listening to Jesus and learning from Him, and impacting this world for Christ and God's kingdom.

B. Jesus' Authority

What was different about the way Jesus taught the people compared to the scribes? (Mark 1:21-22)

Jesus taught the people with authority compared to the scribes. The scribes taught God's Word as a duty, and with their limited insight. But Jesus taught knowing the truth of God's Word, as He is God and is from the Father, and is the truth (John 1:1,18; 14:6). He also taught with power, performing miraculous deeds as He spoke. But even how He spoke was so special (cf. John 7:45-46).

In Mark 1:23-28 how did Jesus specifically show His authority to those He was teaching?

Jesus cast out an evil spirit from a man. This showed He had authority even over the devil and his spirits.

Just before the unclean spirit left the man, what did the unclean spirit say? (Mark 1:24)

The unclean spirit testified that Jesus is the Holy One of God, who has power to send them to hell.

The unclean spirit recognised Jesus' power and authority. How do most view Jesus today?

Sadly, most have no idea that He is the Lord, who has all power & authority over all (cf. Matt 28:18-20).

Summary: Jesus is Lord and has the authority to command us to repent, believe and follow Him.

9. Jesus' Power to Heal

Aim: To show Jesus' great power and compassion to heal people while He walked this earth.

Intro: *Jesus performed many miracles in His ministry. What was the purpose of them? (John 6:14)*

John the Apostle calls Jesus' miracles in his Gospel "a sign"; that's because they serve as a sign to point us to the obvious truth that Jesus is God's Son.

Jesus had extraordinary power to heal diseases. What diseases could He heal? Did He heal all? There was no disease Jesus couldn't heal. No sickness was beyond Him. But He did not heal everyone. He had the power to, but He only healed those whom His Father told Him to heal (John 8:28-29).

In this study we shall consider Jesus' healing people – it was an integral part of His ministry.

A. Jesus' the Healer – it's extraordinary

At the beginning of Mark, after casting out a demon, who did Jesus heal? (Mark 1:29-31)

He healed Simon's mother-in-law (Simon was a disciple of Jesus, whose name was changed to Peter). His mother-in-law had a fever, but when Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up, the fever left her.

In Mark 1:40-42, Jesus healed an outcast of society. Who was this?

He healed a leper. In Lev 13:45-46 a leper had to cry out "unclean", so that people would not touch him and contract the disease. But Jesus reached out His hand and touched this man, and He was healed.

In the healing of this leper what do we note about Jesus?

Jesus didn't just have power to heal. He was moved with compassion at the man's request. After saying "If You are willing, You can make me clean", Jesus replied in love, "I am willing; be cleansed." Jesus always healed people according to God's will, but He also healed people with a heart of compassion.

In Luke 17:11-19, what healing do we read of? What lessons do we learn?

In this passage, we read how Jesus healed a group of ten leprosy men. They were healed as they obeyed the Lord by going on their way to show themselves to the priest. But only one returned to give thanks to the Lord. So often, the Lord can heal us or touch us, but we can neglect to thank Him.

In Mark 5:25-34 a woman was healed. What problem did she have and what do we learn?

A woman had been bleeding for 12 years, and no doctor could help her. She had spent all her money in finding a cure. But when she touched Jesus' garment, she was instantly healed. We learn that it was her faith in Jesus (and her persistence) that caused her to be healed.

In Mark 7:31-35 what miraculous healing took place?

Jesus healed a man who was deaf and dumb. As in other healings (but not all), Jesus touched the man to heal him. He touched His ears and tongue. Even today, the Lord can "touch" our life from heaven.

Read Matt 8:5-13. How is the healing in this passage different to others?

Jesus healed a centurion's servant by just speaking the word. He did not go and touch the servant, but just told the centurion to go home and that his servant would be healed. This shows us that Jesus can heal, even when He is not physically present (so, He can heal us from heaven, if He chooses).

In John 5:2-9 what type of healing took place?

Jesus healed a paralysed man who had been like this for 38 years. Although many at the pool were sick, and though He had the power to heal all, He only healed this man - for this was God's will.

B. Jesus the Healer – who is He?

In John 9:1-11 what miraculous healing took place? Why was it done?

Jesus healed a man born blind from birth. What an extraordinary miracle. But Jesus had the power to do such an amazing thing. It was also done to glorify God (John 9:3).

What did this miracle make clear? (John 9:30-33)

Since such a miracle had never taken place before (v. 32), the healed man rightly deduced (v. 33) that Jesus must be from God. This miracle proved that Jesus was no ordinary man, or even a prophet of God.

What do all the healings of Jesus teach us concerning Him?

They teach us that Jesus is God's Son; that He is divine, that He is one with God, and is God (John 1:1).

Jesus also fulfilled prophecy in regards to healing people (cf. Luke 7:18-23; Isa 35:5-6, 53:4, 61:1). What does this reveal?

Jesus is the promised Saviour; the Christ. He is the One whom God sent to save us from our sins.

Summary: Jesus' power to heal shows us that He is God's Son; and our promised Saviour.

10. Jesus' Power Over Creation

Aim: To show that Jesus is the Creator and has power over His Creation

Intro: *Have you ever been in a severe storm? How did you feel?*

You probably felt powerless and scared; hopefully you also prayed and sought God's help.

We are absolutely powerless against a storm. We cannot stop a cyclone's devastation. Nor can we defy the laws of nature. But there is One who could, as we shall see in this study.

A. Changing water into wine (John 2:1-11)

What was the first miracle Jesus performed when He began His ministry? (John 2:1-11)

He changed normal water into good-quality wine, right before many witnesses at a wedding feast.

What does this miracle indicate about who Jesus is? (John 2:11)

This miracle manifested His glory; that is, it revealed that Jesus was no ordinary man. To change one element into another element is impossible. This meant Jesus had extraordinary power over elements.

B. Calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41)

What situation did the disciples find themselves in? (Mark 4:37)

They were in a boat being swamped by waves because of a fierce storm on the lake. They were terrified.

What was Jesus doing? What do we learn from this? (Mark 4:38)

Although the disciples were greatly alarmed, Jesus was sleeping in the stern of the boat. He was not alarmed. He trusted His Father completely in all things. But He was also tired and exhausted; showing us that He was also fully man.

After the disciples woke Jesus, what did He do? (Mark 4:39)

He got up and said "Hush, be still". Then instantly, the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

What was the response of the disciples? (Mark 4:41)

They became very afraid of Jesus saying "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Who then is this man?

This miracle showed that Jesus has absolute power over Creation. No person can do such things. Truly, Jesus is Lord over His Creation. He just needs to speak the word and it obeys Him.

C. Walking on water (Mark 6:45-51)

What amazing miracle did Jesus perform in this event? (Mark 6:45-51)

He walked on water, and on the waves, even though the sea was being stirred up by the wind.

What effect did this have on His disciples? (Mark 6:49-50)

They were greatly frightened and thought they were seeing a ghost.

When Jesus came into the boat what happened? What do we learn from this? (Mark 6:51)

When Jesus entered the boat the wind stopped and it became calm. Again, we see how Jesus had power over Creation, such that He could defy gravity and cause the waves to support Him and obey Him.

D. Jesus the Creator

What do we learn about Jesus from John 1:1-3?

Jesus was in the beginning with God the Father, and all things were created by Him. There is nothing that He has not created. The Father created as well (Rev 4:11); but He created through the Son.

In Col 1:15-16 what do we learn about Jesus?

Jesus is the "image" of the invisible God; that is, the visible and exact manifestation of God in the flesh (Hebrews 1:3). He is the "firstborn" of all creation; that is, the one who has "first rights" over all Creation because He is the Maker of all. Again, we read that there is nothing that He has not created.

Read Col 1:17 and Heb 1:3. What do we learn in these verses?

Jesus is the one who not only made all things with the Father, but He holds all things together; it's not the laws of science, but Jesus' power that holds the whole universe together, and who sustains it. Wow!

If we understand who Jesus really is, how should we view the accounts of His power over nature?

We should have no problem accepting how He could change water into wine, calm the sea, and walk on water. We don't have to minimise these accounts – as some try and do. They really happened because of who Jesus is. And it should fill us, like the disciples of old, with awe and reverence for Christ. He is God!

Summary: Jesus the Saviour is our great Creator and Sustainer whom we can depend upon.

11. Jesus' Power Over Darkness

Aim: To show how Jesus has power to deliver people from Satan, and to transform their lives.

Intro: *Many people today are incapacitated by Satan without realising it. [Discuss]*

Consider: People are caught up in cults and religions that Satan has orchestrated; others are caught up in human secularism or human philosophy without realising that Satan is behind it; some (not all) are in rehabilitation centres under the influence of evil spirits. But there is one who can set us free – even Jesus.

In this study we will consider Jesus' power over spiritual darkness, evil spirits, and Satan himself.

A. The Demon-Possessed Man

When Jesus and His disciples arrived at the Gerasenes who did He meet? (Mark 5:1-5)

He met a man who was controlled by an unclean spirit (actually many unclean spirits, as we read in v. 9). He was in a terrible state. He lived in a cemetery, gashing himself and screaming out amongst the tombs.

What is meant by the term "unclean spirits"?

Unclean spirits are evil spirits, or demons, from Satan, and they seek to take control of certain areas of a person's life. As we can see in Mark 5, they gave the man extraordinary strength, but they also left him in a terrible state. Satan and his demons only want to destroy us and make our lives miserable.

Was this man able to deliver himself at all? Why not?

This man could not release himself from the power and control of the evil spirits. People had even tried to restrain him, but the demons enabled him to break every chain. He was absolutely helpless and powerless against Satan's forces. Humanly speaking, there was no hope for him.

We may be glad that we are not like this man, but what does the Bible teach us in Eph 2:1-3?

Every person born into this world is under Satan's control. We are often not possessed by evil spirits, but Satan can enslave us to various sinful practices. Even when Satan treats people seemingly well by getting them to enjoy the pleasures of this world, he is still out to destroy us (cf. John 8:44).

What was the response of the unclean spirits to Jesus? (Mark 5:6-7)

They knew exactly who Jesus was; the Son of the most high God, and they trembled before Him. They knew he had power over them – even the power to banish them into pits of darkness and hell itself.

After commanding the demons to come out of the man, what did Jesus permit them to do? (Mk 5:8-13)

He permitted them to enter a herd of swine. Notice how Jesus had absolute control over them. They could only make requests, but whatever Christ commanded, that's what the demons had to do.

What do we learn about Jesus' power over Satan and his demons?

Jesus is the supreme ruler over Satan and all of his evil spirits. He created them good, but they rebelled against God and were thrown out of heaven (Revelation 12:3-4,7-9). He has absolute power over them, and He can do with them whatever He pleases. We have no power over Satan, but Jesus does.

At Jesus' command, the demons went into the pigs. Where will He send them one day? (Rev 20:10)

Jesus didn't send the evil spirits into everlasting punishment at that time. It wasn't God's time to finally punish them for their rebellion and sin. Nevertheless, God will one day cast them into hell forever.

B. The Changed Man

What change did Jesus make to this man? (Mark 5:14-15)

He was completely set free from Satan's power and was wonderfully transformed such that he could sit peacefully in his right mind. Such is the transforming power of Jesus when we come face to face with Him. He doesn't just put a "bandage" on our brokenness, but transforms us completely (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).

What was the reaction of the local people to what Jesus did? (Mark 5:16-17)

They were more concerned about the loss of their pigs than about the liberation of this man. They were also probably frightened of the change Jesus had made and His power. People can often react like this.

The man wanted to follow Jesus but what did Jesus tell him to do? (Mark 5:18-20)

He was to tell what great things the Lord had done for him and how he had received mercy from the Lord. Though people knew him as a mad, uncontrollable, and dangerous man, now they would hear the testimony of a transformed man, who had experienced the grace, mercy and power of the Lord Jesus.

Have you experienced Jesus' power & mercy? Do you have a testimony to share? Do you share it?

Summary: **Jesus has all power to set us free from the power and influence of Satan (Col 1:13-14).**