

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).**

12. Jesus' Power over Death

Aim: To show that Jesus has power over death, and has power to give life to whom He chooses.

Intro: *We are all subject to decay and death. What does this result in according to Eccl 8:8 & Heb 2:15?* We feel powerless and fearful, as there's nothing we can do to avoid it or overcome it (cf. also Heb 9:27).

We've seen how Jesus has power over sickness, creation and Satan. He also has power over death.

A. Jesus raises a girl from death (Mark 5:21-24; 35-43)

In Mark 5:21-24 what did a man named Jairus do? Why? (Mark 5:21-24)

He pleaded with Jesus to come and heal his sick daughter. He believed Jesus could heal his daughter.

When Jairus was told that his daughter had died, what did Jesus do? (Mark 5:35-36)

Jesus encouraged Jairus by telling him not to be afraid; only believe.

When Jesus said to the crowd that the girl was asleep, what did the crowd do? (Mark 5:37-40a)

The crowd laughed at Him, for they knew she was dead; not asleep. But Jesus used the term "sleep" for He knew what He would do – "awaken" her from death (cf. John 11:11-14).

After dismissing the mourners what happened next? (Mark 5:40-43) What's so remarkable?

Jesus took her by the hand and said "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" – and she did! It was as easy as that, for Jesus to raise her from the dead. As a result, those present were completely astounded.

What does this show us about Jesus?

Jesus has power over death; just by a word He can raise the dead.

B. Jesus raises a widow's son (Luke 7:11-17)

Upon seeing a widow who was attending her son's funeral, what did Jesus do? (Luke 7:11-13)

Jesus, full of compassion, said to her "Do not weep". He knew what He was about to do for her.

What amazing thing occurred? (Luke 7:14-15)

Jesus touched the coffin and said "Young man, I say to you, arise!" and the dead man immediately sat up and began to speak. Incredibly, the widow's son was raised from the dead. He had been dead a whole day.

What was the reaction of the people who witnessed this? (Luke 7:16-17)

Great fear came upon them and they began glorifying God. They knew someone great was in their presence.

C. Jesus raises Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

Why did Jesus delay going to heal Lazarus when he was sick? (John 11:1-4)

Jesus knew that it was for His Father's glory and for His glory that Lazarus die and then be raised to life. It was also so that the disciples might believe in Jesus (John 11:15), and His power over death.

When Jesus went, at God's timing, who met Jesus first, and what was she told? (John 11:17-26)

Martha was the first to meet Jesus. She left her house and went to see Jesus. And she was blessed to hear Jesus declare something so profound: He is the resurrection and the life, and if we believe in Him we will live; physical death will have no power over us. In Christ, our physical death is entrance into eternal life.

After this revelation, what did Jesus ask Martha and what was her response? (John 11:26-27)

He asked her if she believed, and Martha responded affirmatively that she did. She believed in Him.

Read John 11:28-32. What do you think of Mary's response?

It was the same as her sister Martha (v.21). They believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus; but that's all.

When Jesus saw the people weeping, He wept. Why? (John 11:33-35)

Jesus began to weep, not for Lazarus, but after seeing the grief of the people and the effect that death has on us. Although Jesus is God, He is touched by our grief and sorrow (cf. Heb 4:15-16).

Read John 11:36-37. Even though Jesus wept, what was the response of some?

Some scolded Jesus for not coming earlier to heal Lazarus of his sickness. They thought wrongly of Him.

When Jesus ordered the stone to be rolled away from the tomb, what happened? (John 11:38-41a)

Mary thought it was not a good idea, as Lazarus had been dead four days already (there would have been a stench). But in response to Jesus words, and by faith, Mary permitted the stone to be removed.

After telling Mary to believe, what did He do? (John 11:40-44)

Jesus prayed to His Father, acknowledging that He always hears Him. Then He said "Lazarus, come forth". At Jesus' words, Lazarus came out of the tomb – alive from the dead – and still embalmed. Wow!

What does this show us in regard to who Jesus is? (cf. John 5:24; John 11:25-26)

He is God's Son. He has power to raise the dead. He has power to resurrect us and give us eternal life.

Summary: If we believe in Jesus, we will live in glory forever, and with a new body (1 Thess 4:16-17).

13. Jesus Power To Feed Us

Aim: To show that Jesus has power to feed our bodies, as well as to feed our souls with the Bread of Life.

Intro: *One of Jesus' great miracles was when He fed 5000 people. What was so extraordinary about it?* He wasn't just multiplying the fish & loaves to feed all the people. He was creating food from nothing. It's impossible to create something from nothing – but Jesus could; for He is truly the Creator God.

A. Feeding the 5000

Why did many people follow Jesus? (John 6:1-2)

They followed Him for physical benefits (and because they hoped He would deliver them from Rome).

But why did Jesus come? What should people have followed Him for? (John 1:29; John 6:68-69)

They should have followed Him because He's the Saviour who can deliver us from the consequences of our sins, and because He has the words of eternal life, and is able to grant us the gift of eternal life.

Many today follow Jesus for wrong reasons. What's some of those reasons?

They follow Him to have a better life for themselves here; cf. the "health, wealth & prosperity" doctrine.

What important Jewish feast was at hand during this event? What was it a picture of? (John 6:3-4)

It was the feast of the Passover. This was when the Jews remembered how in Egypt, the firstborn was delivered from death by having a lamb killed, and by applying its blood to the doorposts of their houses. Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He shed His blood to deliver us from spiritual death when applied to our life.

In John 6:5-7, Jesus asked Philip a question. Why?

Jesus knew what He was going to do, but He asked Philip this question in order to test his faith. The Lord often may test us with circumstances to see if we have faith to trust God and look to Him.

What did one of Jesus' disciples bring to the Lord's attention? (John 6:8-9)

Andrew mentioned there was a lad with five loaves and two fish; but he knew this would go nowhere.

What did the Lord do with the boy's "lunch"? (John 6:10-11)

He gave thanks to His Father and then He miraculously multiplied the fish and loaves so that a great crowd of people (5000 people) were satisfied.

What can we learn from this outstanding miracle?

Jesus is God and Creator. Also, when we give into the Lord's hands our "little things", He can do great things with it. This includes everything; no matter how small. This is because of who He truly is.

What's the main point from the twelve baskets of food leftover? (John 6:12-13)

Everyone had ample food to eat; that's because the Lord is generous & gracious (cf. Psa 23:5; Phil 4:19).

What did the people think of Jesus and what did they intend to do? (John 6:14-15)

The people thought Jesus was the "Prophet"; ie, the one Moses spoke of in Deut 18:15. They intended to make him king as they thought He would be like Moses, providing for them and delivering them from their enemies (in their case, the Romans). How wrong they were about what He came to do!

What did Jesus do when they intended to make Him king? (John 6:15)

Jesus withdrew from them for He knew His mission was to go to the cross and die for our sins.

B. Feeding us the Bread of Life

After the crowd caught up with Jesus again, what did He say to them? (John 6:26-27)

He chastised them for following Him to only have their stomachs filled. Then He urged them to "work" not just for physical food, but for the spiritual food that leads to eternal life, which He alone can give.

What is the "work" we must do to have eternal life? (John 6:28-29)

The all-important "work" is to believe in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. Good works won't ever save us.

How did the crowd respond to Jesus' words? (John 6:30-31)

Even though the crowd had witnessed an incredible miracle in the feeding of the 5000, they basically wouldn't believe in Him unless He did a miracle – like what Moses did when he gave the people manna.

Jesus responded to the crowd by correcting Him. But what else did He do? (John 6:32-33)

He told them Moses didn't give them manna – God did. But now God had given them something greater – it's Jesus Himself, who is the true bread from heaven that gives life to us spiritually dead people.

What great declaration did Jesus make next, after they asked for "this bread"? (John 6:34-35)

Jesus is the bread of life. If we come to Him by faith, we will never spiritually hunger or thirst, but have eternal life. Like we take in food physically, by faith we must take Jesus into our life for spiritual life.

Summary: **Jesus is the Bread of Life. Spiritual life and satisfaction comes when we receive Him.**

14. The Transfiguration of Jesus

Aim: To show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, as testified by His transfiguration on a mount.

Intro: *Jesus, the Son of God, came from heaven. But what form did He choose? (Isa 53:1-2; Phil 2:6-7)*
He chose to come so humbly, laying aside His heavenly glory, and taking on a very plain and ordinary human appearance. And He came as a servant – to serve us.

In this study, we shall consider a special time when Jesus questioned His disciples about who He truly was, and some of them even beheld His true glory, at what is called the Mount of transfiguration.

A. Jesus in the eyes of the people

What did Jesus' neighbours say about Him? (Mark 6:2-3)

They said He was just a "carpenter's son"; one of the local citizens.

In John 10:19-20 what did many in the crowd say about Jesus?

They said He was an insane man and had a demon.

When Jesus asked His disciples who people thought He was, what did they say? (Mark 8:27-28)

They said that people thought He was John the Baptist come back from the dead, Elijah who had come back down to earth, or one of the prophets.

What did the disciples answer when Jesus asked them who He was.? (Mark 8:29; Matt 16:16)

Peter responded by saying that He is the Christ; that is, the special anointed One that God promised to rescue us and rule us. In Matt 16:16 we also read that Peter declared Jesus to be the Son of the living God. He knew that Jesus was God's eternal Son, and that He had come from the Father.

Why is the question "Who do you say I am?" so important?

We cannot be saved unless we know and believe who Jesus truly is. He is not just a good man, or a moral teacher, or some prophet, as many think. He is the Christ, God's Son, and our only Saviour from sin.

B. Jesus transfigured before His disciples

After Jesus questioned His disciples as to who He is, what happened next? (Mark 9:2-3)

Throughout Jesus' ministry He had hid His true glory from the eyes of man. People just saw Him as a plain Jewish man, but before three disciples He was transfigured such that He shone forth His true glory.

What did the transfiguration make clear to the disciples?

It proved that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus' birth, His baptism, and His miracles all proved this, but here the disciples caught a glimpse of His true glory and majesty.

Who appeared with Jesus? (Mark 9:4)

Moses and Elijah appeared. Moses was the One whom God gave His law to on Mt Sinai, and Elijah was one of God's great prophets who pointed people to the Lord.

What does the appearing of Moses and Elijah prove?

It proves that there is life beyond the grave. We are not annihilated. We are not reincarnated into a different form. We continue to live beyond the grave. However, only those, like Moses and Elijah, who trust in God have life with the Lord in Heaven. The rest are in their graves awaiting the Day of Judgment.

What did Jesus, Moses and Elijah speak about? (Luke 9:30-31)

They were speaking about Jesus' departure; ie, His death and resurrection. In other words, they were speaking of that greatest event that would secure our salvation, which God had promised through His prophets. What more important thing is there to speak of, then how Jesus saved us from our sins?

What did God the Father do at the transfiguration? (Mark 9:5-7)

He enveloped the disciples with a cloud and spoke to them. He spoke the Ten Commandments from Mt Sinai. He spoke at Jesus' baptism. Here He spoke again, for He had something very important to declare.

What did God the Father declare?

He declared who Jesus is; His beloved Son. He also declared that we must listen to Him.

Why is it absolutely critical that we listen to Jesus? (John 6:68-69; John 14:6; Rom 10:17)

Jesus alone has the words of eternal life. If we want to be saved from our sins and be received into heaven when we die, then we must listen to Him; we must listen to the Gospel He proclaimed. In a nutshell, only He can save us. We must repent of our sins and receive Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Have you?

Summary: Jesus is God's Son. We must listen to Him and believe in Him to be saved and have life.

15. You Must Be Born Again

Aim: To show from Jesus' teaching that a person can only be saved if they are "born again".

Intro: *What do religious people think when it comes to being right with God?*

They think that by their religious service and observing religious practices that this will please God and make them right with God, and ensure their entrance into heaven.

What does God think of this?

God is not impressed. Religion is man's way of being right with God; listening to men rather than God. It ignores what God has declared, and it bypasses what God has done for us through the cross of Christ.

In this study, we'll consider what Jesus said about being right with God (cf. Mark 9:7; John 6:68).

A. We must be born again

A man came to Jesus at night? Who was he? (John 3:1-2)

Nicodemus was a Pharisee; a member of the Jewish ruling council (Sanhedrin). They ruled Israel from a spiritual perspective, setting the rules in worshipping God, and living a religious life pleasing to God.

What made Nicodemus different from the other Pharisees? (John 3:2)

The other Pharisees hated Jesus and saw Him as a threat to their way of life (John 11:47-48). They did not believe He was from God, or the Christ. However, Nicodemus knew that He had to be from God because of the miraculous signs He performed.

What most important word did Jesus give to this religious man in John 3:3?

He told him that he must be born again if he was to see God's kingdom; that is, to be part of God's family and to have eternal life. Even though he was a religious man, and probably thought like any other Jew, that he was already in God's family, Jesus knew that he wasn't unless he was born again.

What did Jesus mean by the statement "You must be born again"?

We must be born of God's Spirit (see John 3:5). We are spiritually dead (Eph 2:1) because of our sin, and cannot see or enter God's kingdom unless we are made alive by God's Spirit. The term "born again" can be translated "born from above", indicating that God is the only One who can give us this new life.

How did Nicodemus respond to Jesus' statement? (John 3:4)

Nicodemus couldn't make sense of it. He thought it was about being born a second time as a baby.

What did Jesus answer Nicodemus and what did He mean? (John 3:5)

Jesus emphasised that being born again meant being "born of water and the Spirit". The water Jesus spoke of is not baptism - baptism cannot make us children of God. It can either mean that we must be born of flesh (with water referring to our birth when the water breaks). It could also refer to the "water of life" (John 7:37-39); ie, Jesus was putting a double emphasis on the need to be born of God's Spirit.

What else did Jesus say to Nicodemus in John 3:6-7?

There are only two categories of people; those who are born once (born of flesh), and those who are born twice (born of flesh, but more importantly, born of the Spirit). Only the latter shall see and enter God's kingdom. Jesus also told Nicodemus that he shouldn't be surprised at this. This is because the Old Testament prophets spoke of this truth (Ezek 36:26-27).

Read John 3:8. What does this mean?

The Spirit's work is mysterious. We don't know who will be born again, but it's evident when a person is.

B. How one can be born again

Nicodemus still did not understand the re-birth; so what did Jesus explain to Him? (John 3:9-15)

Jesus explained to him something more essential; how one can be born from above. It is by faith in Jesus Christ. Anyone who believes in Jesus is instantly born again (John 1:12-13; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:38).

What illustration did Jesus use to explain what it means to believe in Him? Why? (Numb 21:5-9)

He used the Old Testament story of the bronze serpent. When the people were dying from snake bites as a punishment for their sins, God ordered Moses to make a bronze serpent. It was lifted up high, so that all who looked to it would be spared. In the same way, Jesus was lifted up (on a cross) so that if we, who are dying in our sins, would look to Him, we would be saved from our sins and have spiritual life.

God chose for Jesus to be "lifted up" on a cross. What really happened when He was "lifted up"?

He was lifted up on a cross in order to bear the punishment of our sins (Isa 53:5-6). Because of this, when we look to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are forgiven of our sins and then receive God's Spirit.

Summary: Have you been born again? Unless we are, we shall not see or enter God's kingdom.

16. Christ's Seeking and Shepherding Heart

Aim: To show that Christ seeks after us to save us and to shepherd us.

Intro: *Why did God send His eternal Son Jesus into our world according to John 3:16-17?*

Although God is holy and we are sinners, He so loves us and sent His Son to save us – not condemn us.

A. Parables on the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son

In the parable on the lost sheep, how much value did the lost sheep have? (Luke 15:1-7)

Great value! The shepherd left the other 99 and went in search of the lost one, so that it might not perish.

What does this parable teach us in regards to Christ and us?

We are of great value to God (cf. Luke 12:6-7). Although we are sheep that have all gone astray (cf. Isa 53:6), Christ came to seek us and to save us and to bring us back home to God.

In the next parable in Luke 15:8-10, what do we learn in regards to Christ and us?

We are like the lost coin. We are lost, in the sense of being separated from God, just as the coin was separated from the woman. But Christ seeks to find us and bring us back to God.

The shepherd rejoiced. The woman rejoiced. What do we learn about God from these parables?

God rejoices greatly when one lost person is found; even the angels rejoice. It's a really big thing in heaven when a person, who was separated from God, is found by Christ, and puts their faith in Christ.

Read Luke 15:11-13 –parable of the lost son. What did the young son do? Who does he represent?

He turned away from his loving father, and chose to live a wayward life in the world. He represents us. We have done the same (Rom 3:23). We have turned away from our loving Father to enjoy worldly pleasures.

What caused the wayward son to be awakened? (Luke 15:14-17) What does God often do to us?

When the son ran out of money from loose living, a severe famine struck the land, and he found himself in great need, thinking of home. God also brings us to the end of ourselves, so that we may look to Christ.

What did you notice happened to the wayward son's heart after the famine? (Luke 15:18-19)

He was humble, and acknowledged his sin. We must come to this place too if we are to be saved.

Upon returning home, what unexpected response did the son receive? (Luke 11:20-24)

While he was still some distance away, the father ran to him and embraced him. He did not receive a "telling off", for the father loved him. He rejoiced, because his lost son was found and back home.

What was Jesus seeking to teach us from this parable?

We are all like the prodigal son. But if we would humble ourselves, acknowledge our sins, and turn to God through Jesus, then God will welcome us and embrace us with much rejoicing. He loves us.

How much does God really love us? (John 3:16; Rom 5:6-8)

God loved us so much that He gave us His most precious gift, the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, so that through His death and resurrection, we might not perish, but have eternal life. However, as the Bible says, we must believe in Jesus and accept this gift if we are to have eternal life.

B. Jesus the Door and the Shepherd

Read John 10:1-10. What important things do we learn about Jesus?

Just as a middle-eastern shepherd would shepherd his sheep and bring them through the door into the sheep pen, so Jesus is our shepherd, as well as the door through whom we enter into God's kingdom.

Consider John 10:9 and John 14:6. What important truths do we learn here?

Jesus is the only door and the only way to God. There are not many ways to God – just one; even Jesus.

In John 10:8 who are the "thieves and robbers" that Jesus is referring to?

They are false prophets and false teachers who seek to lead people to God some other way.

Read John 10:10. What contrast is made between Jesus and the "thieves and robbers"?

The "thieves and robbers" bring spiritual harm and spiritual death to those who follow them. They steal and kill (for they are workers of Satan), but Jesus came to give us life; abundant and spiritual life.

Besides being the door, who else is Jesus? (John 10:11-18)

He is the good shepherd who knows us and cares for us. But above all, He laid down His life to save us from Satan and sin. He willingly laid down His life, bearing our sins, so that we could be saved.

Who are God's sheep? What blessings do they have? (John 10:27-30)

God's sheep hear Christ's voice and they know Him and follow Him. They will never perish. They will never be separated from Christ or God. Their salvation is secure through Christ (cf. Rom 8:31-39).

Summary: God so loved us that He sent His Son to seek and save us and to bring us back home.

17. The Light of Christ and our Lost State

Aim: To show Jesus is the Light of the World, and without Him we are in darkness and spiritually lost.

Intro: *It's not pleasant to be lost. Have you ever experienced this? How did you feel? [Discuss] The Bible says that, without Christ, we are spiritually lost. What does this mean?*

We are separated from God, having no idea about God and life and what's beyond the grave, and our need for salvation from sin. Sadly, spiritually lost people are not normally aware of their lost state.

In this study we will consider our lost state and the light of Christ.

A. Our Lost State

In Eph 2:1-3 what is our state before we come to Christ?

We are spiritually dead, under the influence and rule of Satan, and facing God's wrath because of our sin.

In Eph 2:11-12 we read of the state of Gentiles (non-Jews). How is our state described?

Without Christ, we are strangers to God's promises, without hope and without God – spiritually lost.

But even Jews were lost. What did Jesus say to the Jewish religious leaders in Matt 23:13-28?

The religious leaders followed their own rules and performed made-up religious rituals, rather than following God's ways. They assumed they were right with God, and even boasted in their right state before others. But they were lost, in spiritual darkness, and nothing but blind guides leading others astray.

In Luke 18:9-14 Jesus gave a parable. Who was this parable for and what was the point of it?

It was directed to the Jewish religious leaders who trusted in their own righteousness. The Pharisee in the parable boasted about how good he was. But the humble tax-collector admitted he was a sinner in need of God's mercy. The tax collector was right with God. But the Pharisee was not – he was still lost.

In His teaching, Jesus revealed that there is a way to be right with God; to no longer be in darkness and to no longer be spiritually lost. What is that way? (John 14:6; Acts 16:30-31)

Like the tax collector, we must humble ourselves and acknowledge our sins, and we must turn to Jesus and trust in Him as our Saviour and Lord. He is the only way. We'll remain lost if we come any other way.

What happens when we come to Christ by faith? (Rom 8:1; John 5:24; Col 1:13; 1 Pet 2:9)

We move from being under God's wrath to being free from condemnation, from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive, and from being in spiritual darkness to being in Christ's kingdom of light.

B. The Light of Christ

In contrast to us being spiritually lost and in darkness, who is Jesus? (John 1:1-9)

Besides being our God and our Creator, He is the light of men. He came to enlighten us to the truth.

Jesus being the Light was prophesied well before He came. What did Isa 9:1-2 declare?

Jesus would come to Galilee, to a people in darkness, who were spiritually blind and lost, but Jesus' light would open their eyes to the truth and He would bring them to God – if they would put their faith in Him.

Read Isa 42:5-7. What does this prophecy declare?

Jesus would not just be a light to the Jewish nation, but to all the nations (cf. also Isa 49:6).

In John 8:12 Jesus made a very important declaration. What was it? What does it mean?

Jesus is the Light of the world; for all people and for all time. No one can know God except through Him (cf. John 1:18). Only He can enlighten our mind in regards to God, ourselves, life and salvation.

What was the promise Jesus made in John 8:12?

Those who follow Jesus shall not be in darkness. They will no longer be alienated from God. Instead, they will have Jesus' Light of Life to enable them to be spiritually alive and in relationship with God.

In John 1:5 and John 3:19-21 what do we read concerning people in response to Christ's light?

Many humans don't comprehend that Christ is the light (John 1:5). Also, they hate the light (John 3:19-21), because Christ's light reveals their sinful deeds. As a result, they turn away from the Light (Jesus).

In John 12:35-36 what does Jesus urge people to do?

He urges us to walk in the Light and to believe in the Light (in Him). Unless we do, we will remain in darkness and be spiritually lost, and will not see heaven. We also cannot be God's "sons of Light".

When we receive Jesus as the Light of the World, what do we become? (Matt 5:14; Phil 2:14-16)

We become "lights of the world" too. We are to shine Christ's light so that others may come to Him. Like the way the moon reflects the sun's light, we are to reflect Christ's light to others; we are "sons of light".

Summary: **Jesus is the Light of the world; without Him, we are lost and in spiritual darkness.**