

**Bible Exploration Workbooks**  
**by Janet Payne**

# **Luke's Ancient Biography of Jesus**

**Workbook One: Luke 1-9**  
**Exploring the Identity of Jesus**

## **This workbook is for you if:**

- You like to find out for yourself what is true.
- You want a fresh look at the Bible, perhaps reading it for the first time.
- You want the language in the workbook to be understandable and clear, but the level of thought to be challenging.
- You want to feel comfortable to agree or disagree.
- You want to study alone, meet with a friend, or have a group.

## **A word to those who want to find out what is true about Jesus:**

Try this as you read: listen to Jesus, judge his character, and pay attention to his interactions with all kinds of people. Think about who he really is and what is important to him. His followers go through this same process, as you will see. They did not have trouble believing the miracles when they saw them, but the idea that Jesus was going to die and come back to life? That could not happen! So join them in their journey.

## **The Biblical Texts**

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Greek (Koine), and Aramaic, so all the texts in English are translations. However, there are several reliable and accurate translations available. Below are the copyright permissions for the New International Version (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV), and the Good News Translation (GNT). All three are used in this workbook.

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# Luke's Ancient Biography of Jesus

## I. Exploring the Identity of Jesus<sup>1</sup>

### Welcome and Introduction

#### Prologue: "Getting to Know the Bible"

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#### Epilogue: "The Turning Point" (Luke 9:28-36)

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<sup>1</sup> The second workbook in the series is entitled: Workbook Two: Exploring the Mission of Jesus.

# Introduction to the Workbook

The activities in the workbook will help you understand the text for yourself.

## LOOK OVER the Text

Before you read, look for specific words or the general organization of the text. This will help you understand what you are going to read.

## LABEL the Text

Look back, observe, and mark the text<sup>2</sup>. Notice the setting: who, what, when, and where. Pay attention to the people. How do they interact with each other, especially Jesus? All the answers for this section are in the text itself.

## LINK to the Text

Learn about the historical or cultural background of the text, or make connections to other parts of the Bible.

## LEARN from the Text

Discover the deeper meaning of the text as you discuss a few questions. Look for the author's meaning and purpose. Allow everyone to share their opinions.

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss one of these questions:

You have a choice of practical questions to discuss so that you can put into practice what you have learned. The discussion should be personal yet comfortable.

### Consider this:

This section will summarize the message in the text and encourage you to consider whether it is true. This is not a discussion; it is something to think about.

The Bible text is in a box. There is space in the box to mark the text and to make notes.  
Footnotes add background information and vocabulary help.

## THE FINAL WORD

The Bible verse in this section is from somewhere in the Bible, and is related to the lesson.

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<sup>2</sup> You can mark the text any way that helps you. You can underline or draw circles around key phrases, connect ideas with lines, or add questions or notes on the side.

# Getting to Know the Bible

The Bible is a library of 66 books with different human authors, written from about 1850 BC until 90 AD. Christians believe God chose the people to write and guided them. That is why the Bible is called the “Word of God.” The Bible has two testaments or promises. They tell about God and his promise throughout history.

## The Old Testament Promise

**FIVE** books of the **LAW** tell of God’s people and give His rules for living.

**THIRTEEN** books tell the **HISTORY** of the nation of Israel.

**FOUR** books of **POETRY** show us God in a personal way.

**SEVENTEEN** books of **PROPHECY** tell what God is doing and plans to do.

The first words in the Bible are, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>1</sup> On the earth, God made the first man, Adam, from “the dust of the earth.” He created a woman, Eve, to be with the man. God made them “in his image to reflect his character.”<sup>2</sup> They could live forever and they were friends with God. They walked with God in the garden, and he gave them everything they needed. However, God gave them the freedom to choose to do good or evil,

**and they chose to not trust and to not obey God. This is called sin.**

They wanted to be wise, but when they disobeyed God, they brought evil inside them for the first time. Instead of walking with God, they hid from him. Instead of living forever, they would have to die a human death. God gave them a choice, but we all have to live with the consequences of their choice. We all have to die; only our spirits live forever. The Old Testament starts here. It tells how God loved the people he made,

**but the people sinned.**

God gave the people many opportunities to come back to him. God taught them to sacrifice, or kill, an animal to show they were sorry. The animal was a symbol; it died instead of the people. God found a faithful man, Abram (later named Abraham), and promised him that his descendants<sup>3</sup> would become a great nation. God chose Abraham and his people, the Hebrews,<sup>4</sup> so that all nations could learn about the One, True, Living God,

**but the people sinned again.**

When the Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt, God rescued them and gave his Law to their leader, Moses. Now the people had rules to follow so they could do what was right,

**but the people did not obey the Law.**

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:1

<sup>2</sup> An image is something that is “like” the real thing. God does not have a body and He does not want people to make images of him from wood and stone. However, God says that He made us as images of him. This is why every human life is valuable.

<sup>3</sup> Your descendants are your children, grandchildren, and all future generations of their children.

<sup>4</sup>The Hebrews are now called Jewish people.

God spoke through his messengers, the prophets, “Turn away from sin; turn back to God.”<sup>5</sup> The prophets said that if they turned back to God, he would forgive<sup>6</sup> them and rescue them. He rescued them again and again,

**but they even killed prophets.**

God promised to send a Savior, the Messiah, who would rescue them and be King forever. He made a plan from the beginning that Israel would be a light to the nations because he loved all the people he created.

The Jewish people were waiting and watching for the Messiah to come. At the time of Jesus' birth, they had been waiting a long time. Israel was ruled by the Roman Empire. The Jews had a king at that time, but he was a friend of the Romans and not a man of God.<sup>7</sup> The Jews wanted God's Messiah to come and rescue them from the Romans! Finally the time came, but the Messiah was different than what they expected.

## The Promise and The New Testament

God's promise came true. God made a way for people to know him personally like the first people knew him before they sinned. When Jesus was born, an angel announced, “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus did not come to rescue the Jews from the Romans; he came to bring all people back to God and to give them a new, everlasting life. This is the story of the New Testament.

**FOUR** books of the **GOSPEL** tell of Jesus' life and ministry.

**ONE** book of the **ACTS** of the **APOSTLES** tell of Jesus' continued work through the first Christians.

We have **TWENTY-ONE LETTERS** that were written to encourage the churches.

**ONE** book called **REVELATION** was a vision of the future, given by Jesus to the Apostle John.

**GOSPEL** means “good news.” The good news is that Jesus was “God With Us.”<sup>9</sup> He was the only one who could rescue us from our sin and bring us back to God. This came at a great cost; Jesus had to be killed to make the way for us to live. But do not think that Jesus' death is the end. He proved that his identity and teaching were true when he came back to life after three days.<sup>10</sup> The disciples saw him, believed, and began to tell the world.

In the gospel accounts, four different authors tell about Jesus. They used their own memory and eyewitness<sup>11</sup> accounts. Matthew and John were disciples who walked with Jesus. Mark was a young follower and a companion of Peter, and Luke traveled with the Apostle Paul. While Paul was in prison near Galilee, Luke had two years to interview people who were with Jesus: ones who saw and heard his teaching, his power over sickness and death, his authority over evil, and his love and compassion for all. As you read, follow the disciples as they come to understand Jesus' true identity.

<sup>5</sup> Sin is not just robbery or murder. Sin is not trusting, not obeying, and not honoring God. Sin breaks our relationship with the God who made us and loves us.

<sup>6</sup> To forgive is to let go of a wrong that someone did to us. When God forgives us, he takes away our bad record of sins. When we forgive others, we cannot take away their bad record, but we can let go the wrong done against us.

<sup>7</sup> King Herod ruled the Jewish State from 37-4 BC. He was called a king, but he was under Roman rule.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 2:10, “Christ” is Greek for the Hebrew word, “Messiah.” You will see both words in the New Testament.

<sup>9</sup> An angel told Joseph that the baby to come was Immanuel, which means God with us, and should be named Jesus because he was to save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:18-25, quoting Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8,10

<sup>10</sup> Coming back from the dead is called a “resurrection.” Only Jesus has come back from the dead on his own power. The Christian faith is centered on this historical fact.

<sup>11</sup> Eyewitnesses are those who heard or saw something “with their own eyes.”

**ACTS of the APOSTLES** tells the history of the first thirty years of the Christian church. After Jesus died, rose again, and returned to the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit who is “God in Us.”<sup>12</sup> The Holy Spirit shows us more about God and continues the work of Jesus through his new people. This book tells how Jesus' disciples became the powerful and loving leaders of the church.

The apostles and other disciples started new churches all around the Roman Empire. They could not visit the churches very often, so they wrote **LETTERS** to them. Now these letters teach all Christians how to follow Jesus.

**REVELATION** is the final book. A revelation is an “opening up” of something that was closed or hidden. It is the revelation given from Jesus to the apostle John. John saw<sup>13</sup> Jesus return to earth as King and Judge. The world that we know will someday end, but God will be King forever and his people will be with him. If you know Jesus, you will live with him forever. If not, your own sins will keep you away from God and all that is good and loving.

## The Bible as History

The Bible is an ancient and historically reliable text.<sup>14</sup> The New Testament was written with the help of the disciples and other eyewitnesses. Archeologists<sup>15</sup> have found cities, lakes, streets, and names of rulers mentioned in the Bible. The Bible was copied very carefully over the years. We have thousands of handwritten copies from long ago, more than any other historical book.<sup>16</sup> The words in these texts are very close to the Bible we now read. Furthermore, Jewish and Roman historians who lived at the same time wrote about Jesus and his followers.<sup>17</sup> Again, you can trust the Bible to be historical and accurate.

As you explore the Bible, you will be amazed that an ancient text can know you so well. You will see yourself in the characters and hear your story in the stories that are told. If you listen, you will hear the Author speak directly to you.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword.  
It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 1:23 and John 14:17.

<sup>13</sup> This is a vision, like a very real dream, that Jesus gave to John.

<sup>14</sup> This means that this ancient text can be trusted to be accurate and true in its' original form and in its copies. The information in this paragraph is from the *NIV Bible Dictionary* and the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

<sup>15</sup> Archeologists are scientists who study old cities, objects, and bones left in the ground.

<sup>16</sup> One example is the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls were discovered in 1947, but they were written 150 years before Jesus. They include the book of Isaiah (Old Testament). Another example is a small part of the Gospel of John that has been found. It dates back to 120 AD. It is called the Rylands Fragment.

<sup>17</sup> Their names of the historians are Josephus, Pliny, and Tacitus.

# 1. God Has Spoken

## Part One: The Beginning of Everything Genesis 1:1-31

Before studying Luke, we'll look back to the first book in the Bible.

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

Genesis 1:3 "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

God spoke, and His Word made it happen—from nothing. He created time, space, the universe, our planet, the oceans, the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals. Then God created the first humans.

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. This is an ancient text. You will find the word "man" referred to as male and female, singular and plural. Look over the text for the pronouns for God and for man.
2. Read Genesis 1:26-27 and 31.

1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock,<sup>1</sup> over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them....1:31a God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.  
(NIV)

### LABEL the Text

3. What is God's opinion about what he has created? Underline the words that tell.

### LEARN from the Text

4. An image is made to be a reflection, or likeness, of something else. What do you think it means to be created in the image of God?
5. How does this sentence add to your understanding? "In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."
6. What is the role or responsibility given to the humans?

We were created in God's image, and we were created very good. However, something went wrong. See the background paper, "The First Humans," for more.

<sup>1</sup> Livestock are animals raised by humans for work,



## Part Two: Introduction to Luke

### Luke 1:1-4

If God spoke to you, would you listen? Good news! God has given us his Word, the Bible, and he has given us Jesus, who is himself “the Word of God.”<sup>2</sup> He is the center of history and the center of the Bible.

“The Gospel According to Luke” is one of four ancient biographies of Jesus' life and work. They were written with eyewitness accounts from those who had been with Jesus. Luke was a respected Greek doctor and historian. He traveled with the Apostle Paul, a leader in the early church.<sup>3</sup>

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. To whom is Luke writing? Before you read, put a mark next to his name and title.
2. Read Luke 1:1-4.

1:1 Dear Theophilus:

Many people have done their best to write a report of the things that have taken place among us. 1:2 They wrote what we have been told by those who saw these things from the beginning and who proclaimed the message. 1:3 And so, Your Excellency, because I have carefully studied all these matters from their beginning, I thought it would be good to write an orderly account for you. 1:4 I do this so that you will know the full truth about everything which you have been taught. (GNT)

### LABEL the Text

3. Where did Luke get his information? Underline the words that tell you.
4. Why did Luke write this? Circle the words that tell you.

### LEARN from the Text

5. We read in the introduction that Luke researched the stories about Jesus from people who knew him. What kind of questions do you think Luke asked?
6. How do you think Luke decided whether a person he interviewed had true information?

### LIVE What You Learn

**Discuss one of these questions:**

1. If we are created in the image of God, how (in what way) should we rule over the earth?
2. If we are created in the image of God, how should we treat each other?
3. What do you think is the best way to research the truth about God?

<sup>2</sup> See John 1.

<sup>3</sup> For the other three accounts, Matthew and John were disciples of Jesus, and Mark was a young follower of Jesus and companion of Peter.

**Consider this:**

The Bible tells us that God continues to speak. He wants us to know him. Listen carefully to the texts you will read.

## THE FINAL WORD

“Lord, you have examined me and you know me.  
You know everything that I do; from far away you understand all my thoughts....  
You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother’s womb.”<sup>4</sup>

Psalms 139:1,13 (GNT)

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<sup>4</sup> Womb” is a word for “uterus.” It is the female organ in which the young develop before birth.

# The First Humans

## Genesis 1-3

### Part One: The Garden

God created humans in his image so they could know him personally. (Genesis 1:27). He put the first man and woman in a garden, and gave them everything they needed (Genesis 2:8). God gave them one rule:

Genesis 2:16-17

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (NIV)

The first man and his wife, named Adam and Eve, lived in the garden. They walked with God. They were naked, but they were not ashamed. They had nothing to hide from God.

### Part Two: Satan

Satan is the great enemy of God and his people. He and the demons who follow him live in the invisible spirit world along with angels and other creatures God created. Satan (also called the devil) and his demons were angels once, but they rebelled against God. They are now completely evil with no chance to change. However, the angels who chose God are good. The angels appear in the Bible as humans, but Satan only appears as a serpent.

Satan and the demons were very busy during Jesus' lifetime. He is powerful, but not as powerful as God. He tried to stop God's plan, but he does not understand God. He hates humans, but all he can do to us is accuse and tempt us with suggestions and lies.

### Part Three: The Temptation

Satan came to Adam and Eve in the form of a serpent or snake. He used clever words to trick them:

Genesis 3:1

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (NIV)

The woman told the serpent what God really said. However, she added an extra rule. Compare God's words in Genesis 2:16-17 (above) with Eve's words here:

Genesis 3:3

“But God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” (NIV)

Genesis 3:4-5

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (NIV)

## Part Four: The Fall

The serpent tempted Eve to question God's character. It worked:

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (NIV)

Notice that her husband was with her. They were close to God, but they wanted to be as wise as God. This was the first sin. The Bible tells us what happened to them when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

## Part Five: The Curse<sup>1</sup>

Genesis 3:7-10

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked;<sup>2</sup> so they sewed fig<sup>3</sup> leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." (NIV)

When their eyes were opened, they saw that they were naked. Instead of wisdom, they brought evil inside them for the first time. Instead of walking with God, they hid from him. Adam and Eve did not die that day, but their bodies began moving toward death.

God cursed the serpent. He told Satan that the woman's offspring was going to crush his head.<sup>4</sup> The offspring is Jesus, in the family line of David.

However, Adam and Eve had to leave the garden. They lost their friendship with God. God cursed the ground, too. Adam and Eve had to work hard every day. God did not curse Adam and Eve, but their "fall" affected every human and all the earth.

## Part Six: The End of the Curse

We will never be good enough to return to God and end the curse. The good news is that God has made a way for us to return to him through Jesus' death and resurrection. Only Jesus could do it: Jesus, descendant of King David; Jesus, the Son of God. This is the gospel you are about to read.

<sup>1</sup> God is the Judge. His curse is a judgment as a result of sin.

<sup>2</sup> Before this, the Bible says they were naked (no clothes) and not ashamed. Genesis 2:5

<sup>3</sup> This fruit tree has big leaves.

<sup>4</sup> "To crush his head" is to take away Satan's power on earth.

## 2. God With Us

### Part One: The Prophet John Luke 3:1-6

God spoke to the humans he created. He spoke through the writers of the Bible. He spoke through his messengers: the angels and the prophets. His prophets said, "Turn away from sin;<sup>1</sup> turn back to God." If the people turned back to God he forgave<sup>2</sup> them and rescued them. But he had to rescue them again and again.

Then at last, an angel announced, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."<sup>3</sup> This baby was Jesus. The angel said he was "Immanuel (which means, God with us.)"<sup>4</sup> Luke gives us historical details that tell us when and where Jesus was born. See the background paper, "The Christmas Story,"

Luke 1:5 "In the time of Herod king of Judea..."<sup>5</sup>

Luke 2:1 "In those days Caesar Augustus..."<sup>6</sup>

Luke 2:4 "Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem..."

That same angel announced the birth of another baby named John. His parents were old and could not have children, but God gave them a baby boy. John grew up in the desert and became a great prophet. He spoke the "Word of God." Notice the different ways in which God speaks in these texts.

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Look over the text for the words, "at that time." Luke is giving the historical setting.
2. Read Luke 3:2-6.

3:1 In the fifteenth year of the rule of the Emperor Tiberius: Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod<sup>7</sup> was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip was ruler of the territory of Iturea and Tracoonitis; Lysanias was ruler of Abilene, 3:2 and Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests. At that time, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.

3:3 So John went throughout the whole territory of the Jordan River, preaching, "Turn away from your sins and be baptized,<sup>8</sup> and God will forgive your sins.

3:4 As it is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>1</sup> Sin is disobeying and dishonoring God. Sin breaks our relationship with the God who made us.

<sup>2</sup> When God forgives us, he takes away our record of wrong (sin) done against him. When we forgive others, we let go of our anger and our hold on the one who did the wrong.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:10 "Savior" means "One Who Saves." "Christ" is Greek for the Hebrew word, "Messiah," the Coming One."

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 1:23.

<sup>5</sup> This was King Herod the Great. He was called a king, but he was under Roman rule.

<sup>6</sup> Caesar Augustus was the Roman Emperor. He reigned from 27BC to 14AD.

<sup>7</sup> This is King Herod's son, ruler of Galilee and Perea.

<sup>8</sup> Baptism for the Jews was a ceremony with water as a symbol for cleansing and repentance - away from sin and towards God. When we are baptized as believers, we show others that God has "washed away" our sins and changed us from death to new life.

“Someone is shouting in the desert:

‘Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!

Every valley must be filled up, every hill and mountain leveled off. The winding roads must be straight and the rough paths made smooth.

The whole human race will see God’s salvation!”<sup>9</sup> (GNT)

## LEARN from the Text

5. Isaiah said, “Someone is shouting in the desert.” This was written 700 years earlier. Why do you think John is quoting this? Compare John’s command in Luke 3:3 with the quote from Isaiah in Luke 3:4. How does John prepare people to meet the Lord?

Note: There are maps and historical information in the background paper: “The Land of the Jewish People.”

## Part Two: Jesus is Baptized Luke 3:21-22

The people thought John was the Messiah. He told them he was not the Messiah, “but someone is coming who is much greater than I am.”<sup>10</sup> We read in John 1:30-33 that John did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until he saw this sign from God.

## LOOK OVER the Text

1. Read Luke 3:21-22.

3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended<sup>11</sup> on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.” (NIV)

## LABEL the Text

2. Note the words in the quotation marks. Who is speaking? Mark the text.
3. The Bible teaches that God is one, but in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Find all three in the text and mark them.

## LEARN from the Text

4. In what ways did God speak in these two texts, Luke 3:1-6 and Luke 3:21-22?

<sup>9</sup>They will see “God’s salvation.” They will see the One who can save them.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 3:15-16

<sup>11</sup> To descend means to come down from above.

5. What do we learn about Jesus in these two texts?
  
6. John tells people to turn away from their sins and be baptized. The Bible says that Jesus never sinned nor turned away from God. (Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22.) Why do you think Jesus came to be baptized?

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss one of these questions:

1. The Bible says that there is sin in every one of us. Do you agree? Give examples to support what you say.
2. John said in Luke 3:3 that God will forgive you. Share a story about a time when God or another person forgave you for something.

### Consider this:

God has spoken again. God spoke through the angel, "the Savior is born." God spoke through the prophet, "the Lord is coming." God's Spirit came down on Jesus, and a voice came from heaven with message. Now the time has come for Jesus to speak for God.

Don't miss it! If you think you are so good that you do not need God, you will not be ready to hear God speak. Sin is not just robbery or murder; it is disobeying and dishonoring God. We have all done that. So when the prophet says, "Turn away from your sins," God is speaking to us all.

## THE FINAL WORD

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets  
at many times and in various ways,  
but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."

Hebrews 1:1,2a (NIV)

# The Christmas Story

Luke begins his book of the “good news”<sup>1</sup> with two baby announcements. Proud parents will send cards or emails to say that their baby was born, but God sent angels. Angels are messengers from heaven. They can appear as humans, but they are spirit creatures from God. The angel Gabriel took God’s message to two families. He announced that God was sending a child to each family. Each baby was unexpected, and each birth was a miracle.<sup>2</sup>

One mother, Elizabeth, was old and not able to have children. Elizabeth’s husband was serving in the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Angel Gabriel came to him, and said God was going to answer their prayers. They were going to have a son. Her husband went home to his wife, and Elizabeth became pregnant. Their baby became a famous prophet. He was known as “John the Baptizer” or “John the Baptist.”

The other mother was young. When the angel came to announce God’s plan to Mary, she was “deeply troubled.” Luke 1:29

The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Mary, God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.” Luke 1:30-31

Wow! A baby! But Mary was a virgin!<sup>4</sup> She was promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, but she was not married. She believed the angel, but she had no idea how God was going to do this! She asked, “I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?” Luke 1:34

The angel said, “The Holy Spirit will come on you and God’s power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God.” Luke 1:35

Mary cried, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it happen to me as you have said....” Luke 1:38

And Mary became pregnant. Joseph was a good man, but he had trouble believing Mary’s story about the angel and God. So the angel Gabriel spoke to him in a dream. The angel told Joseph that the baby was from God, and Joseph believed him. Joseph took Mary home with him as his wife, but he “had no union with her until she gave birth to a son.”<sup>5</sup>

Mary and Joseph had to travel before the baby was born. They had to go to Bethlehem, the town of Joseph’s ancestor, King David. Each man in Israel had to register in their hometown so the government could count all the people in the Roman Empire. It was a long trip, and Bethlehem was very crowded. The time came for the baby to be born.

Jesus was not born in a house. All they could find in that crowded town was a place for animals. He did not have a bed. All they could find was a manger. It was a feeding box filled with hay<sup>6</sup> for the animals. They wrapped Jesus in strips of cloth, and put him in the manger. They did the best they could.

Luke gives the historical account in Luke 2:1-20.

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<sup>1</sup> “Gospel” means the good news of God’s plan to save us. We are studying *The Gospel According to Luke*.

<sup>2</sup> Quotes on this page are from the Good News Translation, GNT.

<sup>3</sup> The temple was the Jewish house of worship to God.

<sup>4</sup> A virgin is a woman who has never had sex with a man.

<sup>5</sup> God gave the baby to Mary through the Holy Spirit without sex. Matthew 1:24-25

<sup>6</sup> Hay is dried grass.



Read Luke 2:1-20. This is what Christians read every Christmas.

2:1 At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census<sup>7</sup> to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. 2:2 When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. 2:3 Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own hometown. 2:4 Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant<sup>8</sup> of David. 2:5 He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, 2:6 and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger<sup>9</sup>—there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

2:8 There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks.<sup>10</sup> 2:9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them.<sup>11</sup> They were terribly afraid, 2:10 but the angel said to them, “Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. 2:11 This very day in David's town your Savior<sup>12</sup> was born—Christ the Lord! 2:12 And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

2:13 Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God: 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!”

2:15 When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us.” 2:16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger.<sup>13</sup>

2:17 When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. 2:18 All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. 2:19 Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. 2:20 The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them. (GNT)

<sup>7</sup> Census: an official count of all the people.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph is in King David's family line.

<sup>9</sup> The cloths were the usual covering for a newborn baby. The manger, however, was a feeding box for animals. Jesus was born in a place where animals usually lived.

<sup>10</sup> Shepherds took care of flocks of sheep.

<sup>11</sup> “Shone” is the past tense of “shine.” Glory is a peek at the greatness of God. When we say “Glory to God,” it is highest praise.

<sup>12</sup> The name Jesus means “Savior,” one who saves, or one who rescues.

<sup>13</sup> The shepherds all heard the angels say that “Christ the Lord” was born. Yet how did they know that the angel's message was true? The angel told them, “And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

## 3. Adam's Son

### Part One: Family History

#### Luke 3:23-3:38

This is the family history of Jesus through his legal father, Joseph. Jewish genealogies included the famous or notable men and women, but not all generations. For that reason, it is good to see who was included here.

#### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Look for these names before you read, and underline them in the text..

Joseph was Jesus' legal father.<sup>1</sup>

David was the great King of Israel<sup>2</sup>

Abraham was the father of the nation of Israel<sup>3</sup>

Noah and his family were faithful to God. They were the only ones who were saved in the Great Flood.<sup>4</sup>

Adam was the first human.

2. Read Luke 3:23 and 38 and look over the rest of the text.

3:23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph the son of Heli, 3:24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, 3:25 the son of Mattathias,...the son of Nathan, the son of David, 3:32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz...3:34 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech...3:38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth the son of Adam<sup>5</sup>, the son of God. (NIV)

### Part Two: The Temptation of Jesus

#### Luke 4:1-13

God created humans so they could know him personally. He put the first man and woman in a garden, and gave them everything they needed. He only gave them one rule: "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."<sup>6</sup>

However, Satan tempted Eve to eat from that tree, and Eve tempted Adam. Read about this in Genesis 1-3, or in the background paper, "The First Humans."

<sup>1</sup> Luke 3:23 helps to explain this, but you can also read Luke 1:26-35.

<sup>2</sup> See the book of 2 Samuel.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 18:18

<sup>4</sup> See Genesis 6-8.

<sup>5</sup> See Genesis 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 2:17

## LOOK OVER the Text

1. In this text, we will see Satan (also called the devil) at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. The devil tempts Jesus three times. Before you read, look for the pattern of the three temptations and Jesus' response.
2. Read Luke 4:1-13.

4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 4:2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days,<sup>7</sup> at the end of them he was hungry.

4:3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"<sup>8</sup>

4:5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

4:6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor,<sup>9</sup> for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 4:7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

4:8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"<sup>10</sup>

4:9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here." 4:10 For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 4:11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"<sup>11</sup>

4:12 Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"<sup>12</sup>

4:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. (NIV)

## LABEL the Text

3. Who led Jesus into the desert? Underline the words.
4. How was Jesus feeling? Circle the words that tell you in Luke 4:1-2. Add your own ideas.

## LINK to the Old Testament

We are going to compare the temptation of Adam and Eve with the temptation of Jesus. Choose a group, read the text together, and discuss it.

Group 1: The first temptation of Jesus , Luke 4:3-4

Group 2: The second temptation of Jesus, Luke 4:5-8

Group 3: The third temptation of Jesus, Luke 4:9-12

Group 4 :The temptation of Adam and Eve, Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:1-6.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus was fasting. It is a time when you do not eat so that you can think more about God

<sup>8</sup> This is a quote from the Old Testament Law: Deuteronomy 8:3.

<sup>9</sup> Splendor is beauty and riches. The word has the idea of shining like gold.

<sup>10</sup> This is a quote from the Old Testament Law: Deuteronomy 6:13.

<sup>11</sup> This is a quote from the Old Testament: Psalm 91:11, 12.

<sup>12</sup> This is a quote from the Old Testament Law: Deuteronomy 6:16.

Take notes so you can talk to people in the other groups.

**In this temptation,**

**Group \_\_\_\_\_**

What is the devil suggesting?

Why is this tempting?

How does Jesus respond? (or Eve?)

Meet together to compare the type of temptations given to Adam and Eve and to Jesus.

## LEARN from the Text

3. What do we learn about Jesus from these two texts?

## LIVE What You Learn

**Discuss one of these questions:**

1. Satan tempted Jesus because Satan wanted to stop God's plan. If you were God, would you let Satan tempt Jesus? Why or why not?
2. What do you do when you are tempted?
3. Can you sin without DOING anything wrong? What are some examples of sin? For God's view, read the background paper, "God's Laws."

**Consider this:**

Satan did not win. Jesus did not give in to the temptations. This made Jesus stronger. Satan tempts him again, but Satan never wins.

Since Jesus was tempted in every way, just as we are, he is able to understand our weakness. "And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.<sup>13</sup> But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."<sup>14</sup>

## THE FINAL WORD

"[Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Jesus' words in John 8:44 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> One meaning of "to bear" is to carry. "Beyond what you can bear" means more than you are able to carry or manage or put up with.

<sup>14</sup> The quote is from 1 Corinthians 10:13b. Also see Hebrews 4:15

# God's Laws

God made the universe and everything that is in it. He made laws to govern the universe. What are God's laws? Why is it important to obey them?

## God's Natural Law

God's Natural Law is the system of rules or physical laws that hold our universe together. They have not changed from the beginning: the laws of physics, gravity, magnetism, etc. We can try to disobey God's natural law, but we will only have trouble.

## God's Moral Law

This is the system of laws that show us what God is like and what he wants people to be like. These laws were given to us through the Bible. With God's moral law, he has given us a choice. We can choose to do what God wants or to disobey him. However, if we try to disobey God's moral law, we will also have trouble.

## The Ten Commandments

God gave Moses, the leader of the Hebrew people, these laws for living. This was about 1500 years before Jesus. Read about them in Exodus 20:1-21 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21.

1. I am the Lord your God...Do not put other gods before me.
2. Do not make an idol. Do not bow down to idols or worship them.<sup>1</sup>
3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God.<sup>2</sup>
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.<sup>3</sup> Six days you shall do all your work, but on the Sabbath day, you shall not do any work.
5. Honor and respect your father and your mother.
6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.<sup>4</sup>
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.<sup>5</sup>
10. Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> An idol is a statue, a picture of a god, or anything else that you honor above the One True God.

<sup>2</sup> We misuse his name when we use his name to say something bad or to help us look good.

<sup>3</sup> "Holy" means set apart for God.

<sup>4</sup> Adultery is sex outside of marriage.

<sup>5</sup> Do not hurt your neighbor by telling lies in court. Do not lie.

<sup>6</sup> To covet is to strongly desire to have something for yourself, something that is not yours, something you should not have.

## 4. The Spirit of the Lord

### Part One: Jesus Reads Scripture Luke 4:14-21

Jesus returned to his hometown, Nazareth. The people of Nazareth heard the news: Jesus is teaching in the synagogues<sup>1</sup> and healing the sick. He has power over demons.<sup>2</sup> Everyone is praising him! However, the people of Nazareth knew Jesus and his family. They wanted to see Jesus do amazing things in his hometown.

#### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Before you read, look over the first sentence in each paragraph. What is happening?
2. Read Luke 4:14-21.

4:14 Then Jesus returned to Galilee, and the power of the Holy Spirit was with him. The news about him spread throughout all that territory. 4:15 He taught in the synagogues and was praised by everyone.

4:16 Then Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath,<sup>3</sup> went as usual to the synagogue. He stood up to read the Scriptures. 4:17 and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll<sup>4</sup> and found the place where it is written,

4:18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives<sup>5</sup> and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed<sup>6</sup> 4:19 and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.”<sup>7</sup>

4:20 Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All the people in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him, 4:21 as he said to them, “This passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read.” (GNT)

#### LABEL the Text

3. Jesus quotes the Old Testament, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has chosen me to...” To do what? Circle the phrases that tell you.

<sup>1</sup> A synagogue is a Jewish place for worship.

<sup>2</sup> Demons are spirit creatures who follow Satan rather than God.

<sup>3</sup> The Sabbath is the Jewish day of rest and worship. God set up the day in Genesis 2:1-4. It is the “Law,” Exodus 20:8-11.

<sup>4</sup> For the Jews, the “scriptures” were the books of the Old Testament. They were written on scrolls that were rolled up and tied.

<sup>5</sup> Captives are prisoners. “Liberty” is freedom.

<sup>6</sup> The oppressed are people who have been treated badly or unfairly.

<sup>7</sup> This quote is from Isaiah 61:1-2a.

## LINK to the History and Culture of the Jews

Usually, Jewish teachers stood up to read and sat down to teach what others had written about the scripture. The Jewish people knew that these verses from Isaiah were about the Messiah. The Messiah is the Promised One of God who will rescue them. Note, however, that Jesus does **not** quote the teachers.

What does Jesus say when he sits down?

What is Jesus implying about himself?

Read Luke 4:22-30 to see the strong reactions to Jesus' interpretation of Isaiah.

## Part Two: A Day in the Life of Jesus Luke 4:31-44

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Before you read all the text, read the first sentence in each paragraph. Jesus returned to Capernaum. What happens there?
2. Read Luke 4:31-44.

4:31 Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, where he taught the people on the Sabbath.

4:32 They were all amazed at the way he taught, because he spoke with authority. 4:33 In the synagogue was a man who had the spirit of an evil demon in him; he screamed out in a loud voice,

4:34 "Ah! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Are you here to destroy us? I know who you are: you are God's holy messenger!"<sup>8</sup>

4:35 Jesus ordered the spirit, "Be quiet and come out of the man!" The demon threw the man down in front of them and went out of him without doing him any harm.

4:36 The people were all amazed and said to one another, "What kind of words are these? With authority and power this man gives orders to the evil spirits, and they come out!" 4:37 And the report about Jesus spread everywhere in that region.

4:38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to Simon's home.<sup>9</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a high fever, and they spoke to Jesus about her. 4:39 He went and stood at her bedside and ordered the fever to leave her. The fever left her, and she got up at once and began to wait on them.

4:40 After sunset<sup>10</sup> all who had friends who were sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus; he placed his hands on every one of them and healed them all. 4:41 Demons also went out from many people, screaming, "You are the Son of God!" Jesus gave the demons an order and would not let them speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

<sup>8</sup> (ESV): "The Holy One of God"

<sup>9</sup> We will meet Simon again. Jesus later gives him the name Peter.

<sup>10</sup> For Jewish people, the Sabbath is from the time the sun went down on Friday to sundown Saturday. On the Sabbath, the Jews could not travel. That is why the people came "after sunset."

4:42 At daybreak Jesus left the town and went off to a lonely place. The people started looking for him, and when they found him, they tried to keep him from leaving. 4:43 But he said to them, "I must preach the Good News about the Kingdom of God<sup>11</sup> in other towns also, because that is what God sent me to do."

4:44 So he preached in the synagogues throughout the country. (GNT)

## LEARN from the Text

- How do the actions of Jesus show his authority and power? What characteristics of Jesus do you see in Luke 4:38-39?
- How would you define the "Good News"? (Luke 4:43) Look over both parts of the lesson for your answer.

## LINK to Old Testament Prophecy

The Jewish people were looking for the Messiah, but they thought he would be a political ruler. They wanted him to overthrow Rome. Compare Luke 4:18-19 (Part One) and Luke 4:31-44 (Part Two). The first text tells us what the Messiah was going to do. These words are from Isaiah 61:1-2a in the Old Testament. Which of these things did Jesus do in Capernaum?

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss one of these questions:

- Jesus tells us his goal or purpose. What is your purpose in life?
- Do you believe in miracles? If you saw a miracle, would you believe in God?

### Consider this:

A miracle is an event which could not happen naturally. Nature follows patterns that are so regular that they are called laws, such as the laws of physics. Only something outside of nature can work outside those laws. When God does a miracle, he comes into human history and changes it.

Jesus shocked his hometown when he said that Isaiah's words spoke about him, yet his miracles were well known. The people were asking, "Who is this man?" They will ask this question again and again. Jesus was either telling the truth, or he was crazy, or he was evil. The people had to decide, and you also have to decide. Think about this as you read the gospel.

## THE FINAL WORD

"In the disciples' presence, Jesus performed many other miracles which are not written down in this book. But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through faith in him you may have life."

John 20:30-31 (GNT)

<sup>11</sup> The "kingdom of God" is not political, but God's eternal (forever) spiritual rule over everything. The good news is the coming of Jesus as Savior and King because he made a way for us who believe to live forever with him in the kingdom of God.



# The Land of the Jewish People

The modern country of **Israel** was founded in 1946, but a thousand years earlier, it was part of the great King David's **Israel**. Before that, the tribes of Israel go back to Abraham, who lived around 2000 BC. Abraham's grandson Jacob had twelve sons, and the nation of Israel came from these twelve men. When David's son, King Solomon, died, the ten northern tribes were called **Israel** and the two southern tribes were called **Judah**. Only the southern tribes remained faithful to God.

By the time Jesus was born, Israel was under the Roman Empire. The Jewish ruler over the area was King Herod the Great. He did great things, but he was very cruel. When he died, the Romans divided the land into smaller provinces, including the Jewish regions of **Galilee**, **Judea**, and **Samaria**. These lands were all included in the Roman census<sup>1</sup> in Luke 2.

Jesus was born in **Bethlehem in Judea**, but his family was from the village of **Nazareth in Galilee**. They were only in Bethlehem because of the census. Before Jesus' family could return home, an angel told Joseph in a dream to go to Egypt in order to escape King Herod.<sup>2</sup> They lived in Egypt as refugees until King Herod died.

Bethlehem was near the ancient capital, **Jerusalem**. Jerusalem was the center of Jewish life. Jewish people came from all over the ancient world to worship and bring offerings to the temple. Jesus made several trips to Jerusalem. He died outside its city walls by order of the Roman governor.

Several of Jesus' followers came from the fishing village of **Capernaum** near the large inland lake called the **Sea of Galilee** (now called Tiberias). Jesus taught throughout the region, including Samaria and the land of the Gentiles (not Jewish) east of the **Sea of Galilee**.

**Samaria** had been part of northern tribes of Israel. However, the Samaritan Jews had mixed their race and religion with foreigners. The Jewish people from Israel would not accept them. They went out of their way to avoid Samaria. To get from **Galilee** to **Judea**, they would cross the **Jordan River** into the eastern desert area (**Perea**) and cross back near **Jericho** and the **Dead Sea**.

The land of the Jews would not have received much notice, except that it was near an important trade route linking Africa with Asia and Europe. The Romans did not want to lose this land. They knew that the Jewish people wanted to be free from Roman rule, so they watched them carefully and killed anyone who caused trouble. The religious leaders were also worried about trouble with the Romans. They had a certain amount of freedom to keep their Jewish laws and a certain amount of authority over the people. They did not want Rome to take that away from them.

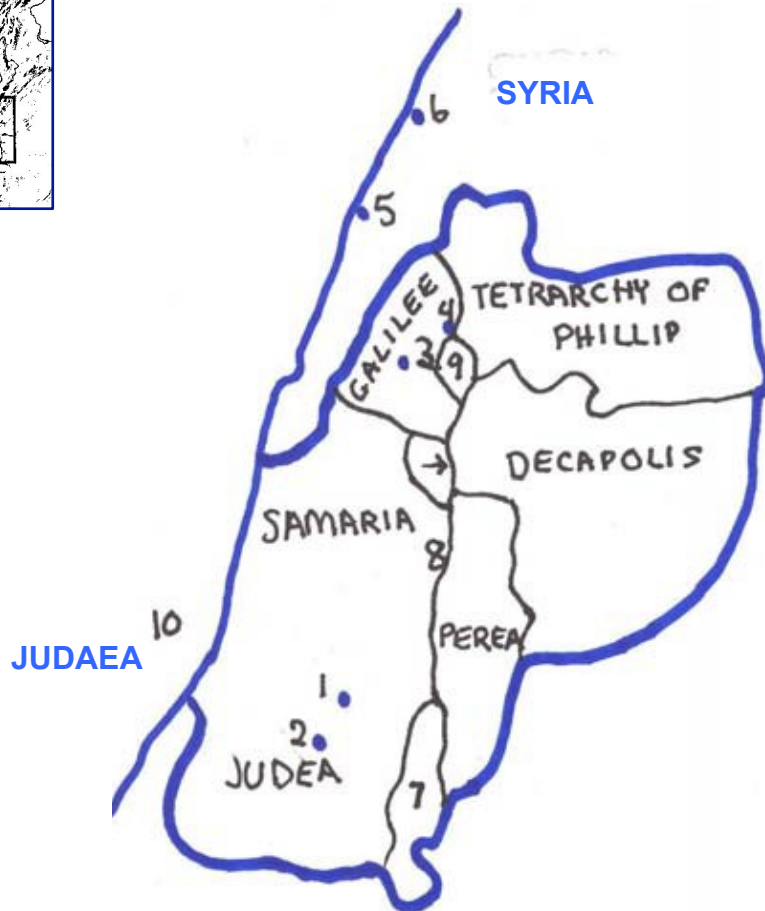
The area looked peaceful, but the peace did not last. On Jesus' last trip to **Jerusalem**, he crossed over the hill called the **Mount of Olives**. From there, he could see the whole city, and he wept. He predicted that the city was going to be destroyed (Luke 19:41-44). His words came true in 70 AD. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. They gave Jerusalem a pagan name in 135 AD and changed the "Land of the Jews" to **Palestine**. The center of the Jewish faith was gone, but by that time, Jesus had changed the history of the Jewish people. "What Jesus had given, in fact, was a whole new centre—namely, himself."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Roman Emperor asked for all people to return to their ancient family home to be counted. Joseph was from Bethlehem, the city of King David, so he took Mary there, even though she was near the time to give birth.

<sup>2</sup> Herod heard that a baby had been "born king of the Jews" in Bethlehem. He ordered all baby boys two and under to be killed. See Matt. 2.

<sup>3</sup> This page is adapted from *Jesus and His World*, by Peter Walker, with permission, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2003. The quote is from page 30.

## Judaea in Roman Times



### On the Map

#### Cities and Towns

1. Jerusalem in Judea
2. Bethlehem in Judea
3. Nazareth in Galilee
4. Capernaum in Galilee
- 5 Tyre in Syria near the Sea
6. Sidon in Syria near the Sea.

#### Water Areas

7. Dead Sea
8. Jordan River
9. Lake Galilee
- 10 Mediterranean Sea

### People and Places in Luke

Luke 1 Joseph and Mary were from *Nazareth* in *Galilee*.

Luke 2 Jesus was born in *Bethlehem* in *Judea*.  
Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple in *Jerusalem*.

Luke 3 John baptized Jesus in the *Jordan River*.

Luke 4 Jesus spent 40 days in the desert, possibly in *Perea*. He returned to *Galilee* where he healed people in *Capernaum* and preached in his hometown of *Nazareth*.

## 5. Rabbi

### Part One: Simon the Fisherman

#### Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was near the lake in Capernaum. People crowded around him to listen. In this account, Jesus calls some men to become his disciples. It was a great privilege to become the disciples, or students, of a rabbi. Rabbis taught their students as they traveled around. But Jesus was much more than just a rabbi, as his disciples are finding out. He will not only teach them, he will change them into leaders.

We begin with Simon and his fishing partners. We met him in Luke 4 when Jesus healed his mother-in-law.

#### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Before you read, underline words that refer to water or fishing.
2. Read Luke 5:1-11.

5:1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,<sup>1</sup> with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 5:2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 5:3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 5:4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5:5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

5:6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

5:7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

5:8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 5:9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,

5:10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." 5:11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. (NIV)

#### LABEL the Text

3. What do we know about Simon and his partners? Circle the words that tell you.
4. Find out how much Simon changes. Underline the words of Jesus to Simon. Put two lines under

<sup>1</sup> The lake is also called the Sea of Galilee.

Simon responds. (Luke 5:1-3, 4-5, and 6-9.)

## LEARN from the Text

5. What happened to Peter? Why do you think he changed so much?
6. What do you think Jesus meant when he said that Simon was going to “catch men”?

## Part Two: Levi the Tax Collector Luke 5:27-32

This is the story of Levi, a tax collector. Tax collectors were Jewish, but they worked for the Roman government. Jewish tax collectors got their pay by asking for extra money from the people. The Jewish people hated them.

## LOOK OVER the Text

1. Read Luke 5:27-32.

5:27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth.

“Follow me,” Jesus said to him, 5:28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. 5:29 Then Levi held a great banquet<sup>2</sup> for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 5:30 But the Pharisees<sup>3</sup> and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect<sup>4</sup> complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”

5:31 Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 5:32 I have not come to call the righteous,<sup>5</sup> but sinners to repentance.”<sup>6</sup> (NIV)

## LABEL the Text

2. Where is Levi at the beginning of the story? Mark the words.
3. Who are the other people? Underline the words that tell you.
4. How does Levi respond to Jesus? Put a star next to his response.

## LINK to History

The Pharisees were Jewish leaders. They thought the way to get close to God was to follow the law perfectly. However, they had trouble doing that. They wanted to be sure they could keep the law, so they made detailed rules. Their new rules defined exactly what they should DO. For example, the Law says, “Do not work on the Sabbath,” so the Pharisees made laws to define “work.” Jesus had very different ideas about the Law. The following comparisons are not quotes, but the Bible references are in the footnotes. See the background paper, “The Jewish People of Jesus' Day.

<sup>2</sup> A feast or dinner party.

<sup>3</sup> See the “Link to History” on this page.

<sup>4</sup> (ESV): “And their scribes”

<sup>5</sup> Righteousness usually means “right with God,” or “acceptable to God.”

<sup>6</sup> Repentance is the act of turning away from a sinful life and toward God.

**Pharisees:** You and your disciples are eating with sinful people! You are breaking the Law! Do you want to throw away the Law?

**Jesus:** I did not come to throw away the Law. I came to give it its full meaning.<sup>7</sup>

**Pharisees:** We stay away from bad people. They might make us “unclean.” We follow special washing rules to keep us “clean.”

**Jesus:** Evil comes from inside, from a person’s heart.<sup>8</sup> You clean the outside of the cup, but inside it is full of all kinds of evil.<sup>9</sup>

**Pharisees:** We keep the law.

**Jesus:** You keep the little laws, but you have forgotten the more important matters of the law – justice and the love of God.<sup>10</sup>

Many Pharisees were completely against Jesus, but others followed him, especially after the resurrection, when Jesus came alive after death, proving that his words were true.

## LEARN from the Text

5. Use the information above to help explain the reaction of the Pharisees to Levi.
6. Jesus was giving new meaning to the words in 5:31-32. What do you think Jesus was saying?
7. Compare Jesus words in Luke 5:31 with Luke 4:43.<sup>11</sup> What was Jesus' purpose? How does Jesus fulfill (do, accomplish) his purpose in this account?
8. Why do you think Jesus chose Simon and Levi?

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss:

1. If you were Jesus, what kind of people would you choose? Why?
2. Can you think of any leader that you would leave everything to follow?

### Consider this:

The Pharisees thought that if they obeyed the law perfectly, then God would accept them. The law is important for living, but Jesus said that he came to save us. He is able to change us and bring us close to God. It is not because we are good enough, but because we are forgiven. First we have to “fall at Jesus' knees” (5:8) as Peter did. Then we, like Levi, can celebrate our new life.

## THE FINAL WORD

“And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 4:19 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> “I came to fulfill [the Law].” Matthew 5:17

<sup>8</sup> See Mark 7:20-23.

<sup>9</sup> See Matthew 23:25.

<sup>10</sup> See Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42.

<sup>11</sup> Luke 4:43 But he said to them, “I must preach the good news about the kingdom of God in other towns also, because that is what God sent me to do.”

# The Jewish People of Jesus' Day

The Old Testament tells the early history of the Jewish people. Their ancestor Abraham was a faithful man. God promised to bless the whole world through his family. They were called Hebrews, and later, the Jewish people. They became the nation of Israel. They believed God provided for them and protected them. He gave them his law to keep them from evil. Obeying God's law set them apart from others. It showed that they were the people of God.

However, they were not always faithful to God. They were not always different from their neighbors. They turned away from God many times and suffered because of it. In 587 BC, they lost their land and were taken to Babylon as slaves. By the time of Jesus, the Jewish people were back in their land, but it was under Roman rule. Their temple was rebuilt, but by the pagan<sup>12</sup> ruler King Herod. They still believed that they had a responsibility to stand up against evil and keep themselves separate. However, they longed to have God make everything right.

God had promised to send his "Anointed One," the Messiah.<sup>13</sup> The first-century Jewish people were waiting and looking for him. The Messiah was going to "make right" the effects of sin and be their king forever. However, the Jewish people thought this meant the Messiah would rescue them from the Romans and be king of a free Israel. The true Messiah was different from what they imagined. Jesus did not come to rescue the Jews from the Romans; he came to rescue people of all nations from their sin. Jesus did not come to be king of Israel; he is building a spiritual kingdom of the true people of God, those who believe in him.

## Who's Who Among the Jews

**Religious Leaders:** The Jewish rulers were the high priests, the ruling council called the Sanhedrin, and leaders of the groups listed below.

**Sadducees:** This group was the established leaders. They believed only in the Torah, the five books of the Law. They did not believe in the writings of the prophets. They did not believe in a resurrection at the end of time.

**Pharisees:** This group believed God's laws helped the Jews stay clean and separate from others. They tried to follow God's laws exactly. To help them do this, they added lots of extra rules. They believed in the resurrection of the righteous at the end of time. However, only the people who kept the Law would be accepted by God.

**Scribes:** Both the Sadducees and the Pharisees had scribes. They were "teachers of the law," experts in God's Law, the Torah. There were other Jewish groups: The Zealots called for the violent overthrow of Rome, and the Essenes separated themselves from the world.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> There were several words for a non-Jewish person: pagan, Gentile, heathen, or "the nations."

<sup>13</sup> Messiah means "the Anointed One". Kings and priests were anointed with oil on their heads to set them apart for their special service. The Old Testament says that THE Anointed One was coming. In Greek the word is "Christ."

<sup>14</sup>This page adapted with the author's permission from an excellent resource, *Jesus and His World*, by Peter Walker, InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove, Illinois, 2003.

# 6. Teacher

## Part One: Blessings and Woes Luke 6:20-26

Jesus teaches his disciples what it means to follow him. He tells them what God is like and what they should be like. Listen carefully to his instructions about what brings happiness (blessings) and what brings trouble (woes). Try to put into practice what you hear. You will learn a lot about God and about yourself.

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Before you read, look for the words, “blessed are you” and “woe to you.”
2. Read Luke 6:20-26.

6:20 Looking at his disciples, he said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>  
 6:21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh  
 6:22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 6:23 “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.  
 6:24 “But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 6:25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.  
 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.  
 (NIV)

### LEARN from the Text

3. Jesus is talking about more than physical needs here. Discuss what each blessing and woe means. For example, what kind of hunger will be satisfied? How?  
 Note: Matthew's Gospel adds “poor in spirit.” to Luke 6:20.<sup>2</sup>
4. What, then, makes a disciple of Jesus blessed (happy) and what is the reward?

<sup>1</sup> The “kingdom of God” is not political, but God's eternal (forever) spiritual rule over everything. The good news is the coming of Jesus as Savior and King because he made a way for us who believe to live forever with him in the kingdom of God.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:3

## Part Two: Love Your Enemies

### Luke 6:27-36

#### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Jesus' command is to love your enemies. This comes with a reward. Look over the text and find the word, "reward."
2. Read Luke 6:27-36.

6:27 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 6:28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 6:29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.<sup>3</sup> 6:30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 6:31 Do to others as you would have them do to you."

6:32 "If you love those who love you, what credit<sup>4</sup> is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 6:33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 6:34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you?<sup>5</sup> Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. 6:35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.<sup>6</sup> 6:36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (NIV)

#### LABEL the Text

3. Underline the commands that tell what Jesus wants his disciples to do.
4. But wait! He wants us to do these things to our enemies! What do our enemies do? Put a box around the words that tell what our enemies do.

#### LEARN from the Text

5. Jesus gives a summary we call "The Golden Rule" in Luke 6:31. "Do to others as you would have them do to you." How does Jesus' teaching do even more?
6. Most people think you should love your friends, but not your enemies. Think about the commands in this section. If we do what Jesus says, what do you think might happen?

<sup>3</sup> A cloak is like a coat, a tunic is like a shirt

<sup>4</sup> This is not a credit of money. It is an honor given because of a good action. People thought the more credit they received, the closer they were to God, but that is not Jesus' view.

<sup>5</sup> To lend is to give money (a loan) that you expect to be given back. Repayment is paying back the loan.

<sup>6</sup> Ungrateful means "not thankful." Wicked means evil or an evil person.



7. Circle the words that refer to credit, lending, and repayment. How do you think these are connected to God's mercy?

Note: See the background paper: "God's Good News."

8. What do you think we can learn about God if we follow these instructions? What words in the text help you answer this question?

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss:

What do you think it means to be successful? Do you think someone can be successful by following these commands of Jesus?

### Consider this:

This message is more about God than it is about us. Jesus wants his disciples to reflect God's character. God loves us even when we have done nothing for him, even when we are evil. Since God loves his enemies, we can learn a lot about God when we try to love our enemies. We find out how great God's love is and how poor our love is. But that is a good place to be! Remember, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

These are important lessons about what it is like to follow Jesus. We can love others because God has first loved us. We can forgive others because God has forgiven us. We can show mercy because God has shown us his mercy. Try Jesus' commands for one week, and see what you can learn about God!

## THE FINAL WORD

*This is what God said when he first gave the Law.*

"I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life..."

Deuteronomy 30:19,20a (NIV)

# God's Good News

## WHO IS GOD?

**The one true God is completely holy, powerful, loving, and good.<sup>1</sup>**

“In the beginning...God,” only God. He is complete in himself, “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” He is the creator and ruler of all: “I am the Lord\*, and there is no other.” He is personal and living. He speaks and acts in history, and judges all things fairly. He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, full of love and faithfulness. He forgives sins, yet he does not let the guilty go unpunished.

## WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE?

**God created us to love him and reflect his character with joy and thanksgiving.<sup>2</sup>**

God created humans in his likeness so we could love him, worship\* him, and reflect his character in the world. One way we reflect his character is by obeying his Law. Jesus summed up the Law this way, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...strength and ... mind;” and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” When we do this, our lives are filled with purpose and joy. The first man and woman walked with God. They were caretakers of the earth, and he gave them everything they needed.

## WHY IS THERE EVIL IN THE WORLD?

**We chose not to trust and obey. This separated us from God.<sup>3</sup>**

Sadly, however, the first humans chose not to trust and obey God, their Maker. God's Enemy\* told them they could “be like God.” They wanted that, so they disobeyed. This is sin. It separated them from God and brought death. Their relationships were broken. Their lives no longer clearly reflected the character of God in the world. Their children and all generations of people continue that sin, and the whole world has felt its effects.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:1, Exodus 34:6-7, John 4:24, Romans 1:20, Matthew 28:19, John 1:1-3, Isaiah 45:5-6 \*'Lord' means master or ruler.

<sup>2</sup> John 6:28-29, Romans 10:9, Mark 1:15, Ephesians 1:13, Romans 2:16, John 5:24, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Revelation 3:20, \*Trusting him as Lord means accepting him as the ruler of our life.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3, Isaiah 59:2, Hebrews 9:27, Romans 6:23 \*Satan, God's enemy, is just a powerful angel who rebelled, but he does have influence in this world.

## WHY ARE WE NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOD?

**We try to reach God, but with sin in our heart, we all fall short.<sup>4</sup>**

We sometimes think we can reach God by being good enough or religious enough. Although we try, no one is able to keep God's Law. God is completely good, 100% pure and holy, and we all "fall short" of that. God loves us, but he is completely opposed to sin. With sin in our heart, we cannot come to God. And we cannot clean our heart by ourselves. Without God we are "without hope." Yet from the beginning, God had a plan to rescue us.

## WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

**God loved us so much that he sent his Son to die in our place.<sup>5</sup>**

The cost of sin is death. God's justice demands it. But the Bible has a great surprise. "God so loved the world" that he gave his Son to die in our place. Jesus died a human death so we could come to God: forgiven and clean. Jesus lives (was raised from the dead) so we can live forever with God. Jesus not only showed us the way, he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

## WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

**God offers new life in Jesus. "Turn back to God and believe the good news!"<sup>6</sup>**

God is offering us a gift. We receive the gift by asking for forgiveness, believing in Jesus, and following him as Lord and King.\* As Christians, Jesus lives in us through his Holy Spirit. We have a place in his family of believers from all nations. He calls us to a life of love and service so we can once again reflect God's character in the world. One day, Jesus will return to judge the earth, but we will not be condemned, for we have "crossed over from death to life." We will live with God forever. Jesus is standing at the door and knocking. Turn back to God and believe the Good News!

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 3:23, Galatians 3:21, Ephesians 2:8-9, Ephesians 2:12b

<sup>5</sup> John 3:16-17, Romans 5:8, Isaiah 53:5 in 1 Peter 2:24, John 14:6. See Hebrews 2:14-15. Satan has been defeated and we have been set free. (He is still powerful, but his end is near.)

<sup>6</sup> Acts 26:19, John 6:28-29, Romans 10:9, John 14:17, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Romans 2:16, John 5:24, Revelation 3:20, Mark 1:15 \*Trusting him as Lord means accepting him as the ruler of our life.

# 7. The One?

## Part One: The Funeral Luke 7:11-17

The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come. John the Baptist said that he was sent to prepare the way for the Lord. When he saw a sign from heaven, he knew that Jesus was “the One.” Yet in this lesson, John asks, “Are you the One?” As more and more people were coming to see that Jesus was the Messiah, the prophet John was beginning to ask difficult questions and needed answers.

Can we question God? Can we doubt and still believe? Wouldn't you love to ask Jesus yourself, “Are you the One?” What other questions would you ask? Here are two stories about life and death, faith and doubt.

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Look for the underlined words in Luke 7:14. What do you know about the story from this?
2. Read Luke 7:11-17.

7:11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 7:12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.<sup>1</sup> And a large crowd from the town was with her. 7:13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her<sup>2</sup> and he said, “Don't cry.”

7:14 Then he went up and touched the coffin,<sup>3</sup> and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 7:15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

7:16 They were all filled with awe<sup>4</sup> and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” 7:17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. (NIV)

### LABEL the Text

3. Pay attention to Jesus. Write notes next to the text that show his actions and emotions.
4. Find examples of the details that make the story dramatic. Mark the text.

<sup>1</sup> A widow is a woman whose husband is dead

<sup>2</sup> (ESV): “He had compassion on her.”

<sup>3</sup> It was not a closed coffin. The dead body was carried to the grave on a simple, flat board.

<sup>4</sup> (ESV): “Fear seized them all.”

## LINK to Different Cultures

Here are some facts about Jewish funerals at the time of Jesus:<sup>5</sup>

- a) They carried the dead body on a simple, flat board.
- b) Everyone stopped what he or she was doing to join the crowd carrying the dead person.
- c) They usually buried bodies in a tomb. It was a cave or a hole in the side of a cliff.
- d) The body was wrapped with strips of cloth and spices. Even so, the funeral and the burial happened fast so the body would not smell.
- e) Touching a dead body was one of the worst forms of uncleanness. Only those who were close to the person could prepare the body, and they had to follow special rules to become clean again. (This is also in the Law: Numbers 5:2-3 and 19:11-20.)

Today there are different traditions for respecting and remembering a dead person. Compare this funeral with ones you have seen or heard about.

## LEARN from the Text

5. The only son of a widow has died. How does Jesus feel about this? What words tell you?
6. It is terrible to lose a son, but in Jesus' day, this was especially terrible for a widow. Why do you think that is?
7. What risks<sup>6</sup> did Jesus take?
8. The people's reaction is recorded in Luke 7:16. Who did they think Jesus was? Discuss what is said and what is implied (suggested).
9. Tell the story or act it out with dialog.

## Part Two: John's Question from Prison Luke 7:18-23

Luke 3:18 says, "In many different ways John preached the Good News to the people and urged them to change their ways." However, when he told the governor, Herod<sup>7</sup>, that he should not marry his brother's wife, Herod put John in prison. From prison, John hears what Jesus has been doing. He has a question for him.

## LOOK OVER the Text

1. Look over the **bold** text in Luke 7:21,22. Underline the verb phrases in those verses to see what Jesus has been doing.
2. Read Luke 7:18-23.

<sup>5</sup> This information comes from *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Craig G. Keener, InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, Illinois:1993, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> A risk is a chance that something might go wrong

<sup>7</sup> This is King Herod's son, ruler of Galilee and Perea.

7:18 John's disciples told him about all these things. 7:19 Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

7:20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" 7:21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 7:22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: **The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy<sup>8</sup> are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.** 7:23 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."<sup>9</sup> (NIV)

## LEARN from the Text

3. What are "these things" in Luke 7:18?
4. John sent his followers to ask Jesus an important question. What is the question? Why do you think he asks it?
5. In Jesus' reply, what message does he give about his true identity?
6. After John's disciples left, Jesus tells the crowd what a great prophet John was (Luke 7:24-28.) Why do you think he responds to John this way?

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss one of these questions:

1. A doubt is different from not believing at all. Do you think doubts are good or bad? Give some examples.
2. What risks do you take when you help someone?
3. If you decided to follow Jesus today, what risks would you be taking?

### Consider this:

Do you have doubts and questions about God? What questions would you like to ask Jesus? Write them down. You will not find 100% proof that the Christian faith is true, but you will find good answers to your questions. God will be patient with you as you search. See the background paper, "Evidence for Jesus" for more.

## THE FINAL WORD

"Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus in John 14:6 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> The Greek word means various diseases that affect the skin, such as leprosy. To the Jews, a person with this disease was "unclean." They could not touch or come close to others. Jesus healed their bodies and brought them back to the community. See Mark 1:40-45.

<sup>9</sup> To fall away is to turn away from God. (GNT): "How happy are those who have no doubts about me."

# Evidence for Jesus

## WAS JESUS A REAL PERSON?

Does the Bible accurately tell the true story of his life?  
How can we know?

For a short answer to that question, we will look at some of the historical evidence for Jesus and the New Testament. Sir Isaac Newton is known to have said, "There are more sure signs of authenticity in the Bible than in any secular history."<sup>1</sup>

First, Jewish and Roman historians (Josephus, Pliny the Younger, and Tacitus) wrote about Jesus by 110 AD. Other historians have studied documents from that time or ancient copies of the Bible. There are far more ancient manuscripts of the Bible than of any other ancient historical book.

Second, the four accounts of Jesus' life were carefully recorded. The writers had been with Jesus or reported directly from those who knew him. They wrote about people and places with historical facts and details. They wrote while most of the disciples were still alive and able to check for accuracy.

Also, for a Jewish person, a death on a cross was considered a curse.<sup>2</sup> It should have been the end of the story. Yet the details of his death were important to the disciples because they were completely convinced that Jesus did not stay dead. God raised him from the dead "on the third day." This fact is central to the Christian faith.

The Romans and the Jewish leaders wanted to stop the talk of a resurrection. They put guards outside the tomb, but there was no body inside. The frightened disciples and the women saw Jesus die and saw him alive again. From that moment, they were confident and filled with joy. Within a short time, Peter declared, "You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this." See Luke 23-24 and Acts 1-4. Peter did not die that day, but he was later killed for his faith in Jesus. The other disciples were also willing to die for Jesus, and many did.

The science of archeology is providing more evidence for Jesus. Since Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, anyone writing at a later time would not have been able to describe its streets and buildings. Yet when you read the New Testament, you find details about the city and the names of rulers. For hundreds of years, there was no proof that many of these details were historical. Science is now uncovering evidence to prove that they are. For example, many thought the pool described in John 5:2 was not a real place, but it has been discovered.

"Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades."

Take a look at the evidence for Jesus. The church grew from a few disciples. In one day, 3000 believers were added. Within 30 years, there were churches around the Roman Empire, and within 300 years, Christianity was its official religion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Attributed to Sir Isaac Newton. Authenticity means true and genuine. Secular means non-religious.

<sup>2</sup>A curse is a judgement against sin. See Deuteronomy 21:23. We see in Galatians 3:13 that Jesus had to die on a cross to rescue us from the punishment of sin.

<sup>3</sup> This page adapted with the author's permission from an excellent resource, *Jesus and His World*, by Dr. Peter Walker, InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove, Illinois, 2003. For a specific reference to the Bethesda Pool, see *In the Steps of Jesus*, by Dr. Peter Walker, Zondervan, Grand Rapids Michigan, 2007, pg.170.

# 8. The Secret of the Kingdom

## Part One: The Parable of the Sower

### Luke 8:4-15

Jesus taught about God with stories on everyday themes with a deeper meaning. They intrigued<sup>1</sup> the people. The disciples are going to discover why Jesus told these parables.

#### LOOK OVER the Text

1. A sower is a farmer who throws out seeds as a way of planting. Before you read, circle the words "some fell" to see where the seeds land. (first paragraph only)
2. Read Luke 8:4-15.

8:4 And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: 8:5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured<sup>2</sup> it. 8:6 And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away,<sup>3</sup> because it had no moisture. 8:7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked<sup>4</sup> it. 8:8 And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.<sup>5</sup>" As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

8:9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, 8:10 he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God,<sup>6</sup> but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.<sup>7</sup> 8:11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 8:12 The ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 8:13 And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. 8:14 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. 8:15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit<sup>8</sup> with patience." (ESV)

#### LABEL the Text

3. Retell the story in Luke 8:4-8. Where does the seed fall? What happens to the seed?
4. Who was listening to the story? Who heard the explanation? Mark the text.

<sup>1</sup> To intrigue is to say or show just a little of something interesting. People are curious. They want to know more..

<sup>2</sup> To devour is to eat quickly, as if very hungry, and to finish everything. Think of a lion devouring its dinner.

<sup>3</sup> (GNT):"dried up"

<sup>4</sup> To choke is to stop air from coming in. In this case, the plants probably had air but not enough sunshine.

<sup>5</sup> To yield is to produce.

<sup>6</sup> The "kingdom of God" is not political, but God's eternal (forever) spiritual rule over everything. The good news is the coming of Jesus as Savior and King because he made a way for us who believe to live forever with him in the kingdom of God.

<sup>7</sup> This is a quote from the Old Testament, Isaiah 6:9.

<sup>8</sup> The Greek says "to bring forth fruit." This "fruit" is whatever was planted.



- Put a mark in the text to show when Jesus tells his disciples the meaning of the parable. Who is the farmer? What is the seed? What happens to the people in each soil?

## LEARN from the Text

- According to Jesus, what keeps people from believing?
- Jesus says we can bear, or produce, fruit with patience. What kind of fruit do you think Christians should be producing in their lives? Why do we need patience?
- Jesus tells his followers that they have the opportunity to find out the secrets of the kingdom of God. Why are they given the opportunity? (What did the disciples do that the others did not do in this account?)
- What, then, is the secret of the Kingdom of God? Say what you think at this point.

## Part Two: The Lamp Luke 8:16-18

The disciples had to ask for help to understand the parable of the sower. That gave them a chance to understand better, but also to know Jesus better. Jesus added this parable. See how it is connected to the first parable.

## LOOK OVER the Text

- Read Luke 8:16-18.

8:16 "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. 8:17 For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed,<sup>9</sup> and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. 8:18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more, and whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them. (ESV)

## LABEL the Text

- Draw lines to connect words that contrast, such as "hidden" and "be known."

## LEARN from the Text

- Why do you think Jesus used parables instead of directly telling the people what he wanted them to know?

<sup>9</sup> To disclose is to open up or show what was concealed (which means hidden.)

3. In Luke 8:17-18, Jesus talks about a future time when everyone will know the secret. However, this comes with a warning. What is the warning or command here?
4. What is the similar command in the first part, Luke 8:4-15? Discuss the meaning of these two warnings.

How does this help to explain the last part of verse 18?

## LINK to Other Words of Jesus

These words are difficult to understand! But Jesus says something similar right before he enters Jerusalem for the last time. Here is Luke 19:11-27, starting with "...he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately." The story is about what happens when three servants of a king were given money to use "in business" until he returns. When the king saw what they did with the money, he said, "...to everyone who has, more will be given."

The disciples used to be fishermen, tax collectors, and sinners, etc. Jesus took them as they were, but changed them into much more.

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss one of these questions:

1. "To disclose" is to show or reveal. It is to make something clear so we can see it or know it. How has God revealed himself to people? How can we learn more about him?
2. Has God revealed himself to you personally in any way? How would you like him to reveal himself?

### Consider this:

When you hear the Word of God, do you want to understand it? Do you come back for more? Are you like the disciples, or like those who can only hear the Word of God in parables? Think about where your heart is. Where do you want it to be?

## THE FINAL WORD

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,  
patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.  
Against such things there is no law."

Galatians 5:22, 23 (NIV)

## 9. Rescuer

### Part One: The Storm Luke 8:22-25

Think about a time when you were afraid, or when you needed to be rescued. Can we say we trust God and still be afraid? Is God angry when we are afraid? We will look for answers in two stories that show us Jesus' power to save us.<sup>1</sup>

#### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Windstorms were common on Lake Galilee. Read the underlined words before you read the full text. With just this much information, tell each other about the storm.
2. Read Luke 8:22-25.

8:22 One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, 8:23 and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.

8:24 And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!<sup>2</sup> And he awoke and rebuked<sup>3</sup> the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased,<sup>4</sup> and there was a calm.

8:25 He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him? (ESV)

#### LABEL the Text

3. What actions and words show the emotions of the disciples? Mark the text.
4. These sentences are out of order. Put them in order and tell the story to each other.

_____ "Where is your faith?"	_____ A windstorm came.
_____ Jesus fell asleep.	_____ Jesus rebuked the wind.
_____ "Master! We're going to die!"	_____ The disciples were amazed.
_____ The storm stopped.	_____ Jesus and the disciples got into a boat.
_____ The boat filled with water.	_____ "Let's go across the lake."
_____ "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"	

#### LEARN from the Text

5. Think about what the disciples knew about Jesus before this storm. Do you think the disciples believed that Jesus was able to stop the storm? Find words in the text to support your answer.

<sup>1</sup> Jesus' name means "Savior," the "One Who Saves."

<sup>2</sup> To perish is to die.

<sup>3</sup> To rebuke is to tell someone to stop doing wrong. What was Jesus rebuking?

<sup>4</sup> To cease is to stop.

6. Jesus said to the disciples, "Where is your faith?" How could they have shown more faith?

## LINK to the Geography of the Sea of Galilee

**The Sea of Galilee** is a large, freshwater lake. It was important to the region where Jesus lived. It is about sixty miles (100 km.) north of Jerusalem and connected by the Jordan River. There are high hills close to the shore that drop steeply<sup>5</sup> to the lake. The lake is so low that sudden, raging windstorms can develop. (212 meters below sea level)



The western side of the lake was called Galilee. It was Jewish land.

However, the eastern side was not. Archeologists think that Jesus landed here after the storm. There is a hill nearby that drops steeply to the lake. There were old tombs in caves. They found evidence that people used to live in those caves.<sup>6</sup> Read Luke 8:26-39 to see what happened there.

## Part Two: A Rescue Interrupted Luke 8:40-56

The boat returned to Galilee. A crowd was waiting for him. There were many disciples now, including women who traveled with Jesus.

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Read Luke 8:40-56.

8:40 Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. 8:41 Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue<sup>7</sup>, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house 8:42 because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. 8:43 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. 8:44 She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

8:45 "Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." 8:46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

Luke 8:47 Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. 8:48 Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

8:49 While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." 8:50 Hearing this, Jesus said to

<sup>5</sup> A steep drop or "bank" is a quick change in height, from a high hill to the low water.

<sup>6</sup> These details are important to the story that follows in Luke 8:26-39. The information in this section came from the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, Illinois: 1992. The photo is from Accordance Bible Atlas, 1999, Oaktree Software, Inc.

<sup>7</sup> A synagogue is a Jewish place of worship.

Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

8:51 When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. 8:51 Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing,<sup>8</sup>" Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

8:53 They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 8:54 But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" 8:55 Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. 8:56 Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. (NIV)

## LABEL the Text

- Two people were rescued. Put a box or a mark next to their stories.
- What was the physical problem that the woman had? Mark the text and discuss it.

## LEARN from the Text

- These events are full of fear and courage. Discuss where we see both of these in the disciples (with the storm), in the woman, and in Jairus. What does Jesus say or do to help each one?
- Why did Jesus stop everything when the woman touched him and was healed? How do you think Jesus' public attention help the woman?
- When you look at the girl, think about her parents, as well. Who was Jairus? What happened to his family in this text? What do you think they learned about Jesus on this day?

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss one of these questions:

- Talk about a time when you were afraid. What helped you overcome that fear?
- Have you ever felt the kind of fear that comes from being filled with amazement, like the disciples?

### Consider this:

The disciples would not forget these lessons. This miracle was personal. They were learning to trust Jesus with their own life. The woman and Jairus were also learning this. What would happen if you trusted Jesus? What would change in your life? Are you afraid of that change? Jesus will be just as patient with you as he was with his disciples.

## THE FINAL WORD

"...I will fear no evil, for you are with me..."

Psalm 23:4 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> Wailing is loud crying. It was a cultural expression of great sadness for the dead.

# 10. Messiah

## Part One: Bread for Everyone Luke 9:10-17

Jesus had an unusual way of teaching the disciples. He sent them out into other towns so they could tell the people about the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> (Luke 9:1-10) He even gave them the power to cast out demons and to heal people.

The next event happened right after the disciples returned from this trip. They all had stories to tell.

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Before you read, find the numbers in the story, and what they are counting.
2. Read Luke 9:10-17.

9:10 When the apostles<sup>2</sup> returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, 9:11 but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

9:12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."<sup>3</sup>

9:13 He replied, "You give them something to eat."

They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." 9:14 (About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." 9:15 The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. 9:16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. 9:17 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. (NIV)

### LABEL the Text

3. Why are they in a remote place? Look for the answers in the text.
4. When did the miracle start? Mark the text.

<sup>1</sup> The "kingdom of God" is not political, but God's eternal (forever) spiritual rule over everything. The good news is the coming of Jesus as Savior and King because he made a way for us who believe to live forever with him in the kingdom of God.

<sup>2</sup> The apostles are the twelve disciples who were being trained by Jesus. There were many others who were disciples at this point.

<sup>3</sup> They were outside of the city, so there were no places to buy food or a room for the night.

## LEARN from the Text

5. We know that Jesus used every opportunity to teach the disciples. What was his method this time? Why do you think he used this method? What was the lesson for the disciples?
6. How did the disciples feel about the crowds, and why? How did Jesus feel about the crowds? Use the text to help you answer.
7. Do you think the miracle surprised the disciples? Use the text to help you answer.

## Part Two: The Christ of God Luke 9:18-23

### LOOK OVER the Text

1. Read Luke 9:18-23. This is a turning point in the Gospel of Luke.

9:18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

9:19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."<sup>4</sup>

9:20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

9:21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 9:22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law,<sup>5</sup> and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

9:23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself<sup>6</sup> and take up his cross daily and follow me." (NIV)

### LABEL the Text

2. What was Jesus doing at the beginning of this text? Circle the words.
3. After Peter answers Jesus' question, Jesus told them all that must happen. Find Jesus' words in the text and read them again.

<sup>4</sup> Luke tells us more about this in Luke 9:7-9.

<sup>5</sup> The "elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law" are the Jewish leaders.

<sup>6</sup> Do not be selfish. Do not put yourself first. (To deny is to refuse to take things for yourself.)

## LINK to the Old Testament and History

### “The Christ of God”

The Greek word “Christ” is “Messiah” in Hebrew. The Old Testament tells where the Messiah was going to be born. “The Lord says, ‘Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times.’” (GNT)

The Old Testament says the Messiah is coming as the king and judge of the whole earth.<sup>7</sup> The Jewish people thought the Messiah would judge the “others”, such as the Romans. However, Jesus taught that he will judge “the living and the dead.”<sup>8</sup> This will happen when he returns at the end of time. We can thank God that He sent the Messiah to save us from our sins first!<sup>9</sup>

### “Take up your cross.”

The Romans used crosses to kill criminals with a slow, painful death. The criminals’ arms were nailed or tied to a large wooden board called a crosspiece. Often the criminal had to carry the crosspiece through the city on his way to the cross. Jesus was not a criminal, but he had to do this. And this is the image, or picture, of “take up your cross.”



Why do you think Jesus used this image in Luke 9:23? What was his message to the disciples?

## LEARN from the Text

4. In all the texts we have studied, including Luke 9:10-17, the disciples have been watching Jesus. What has Jesus said or done to give the disciples the idea that he is the Christ of God?
5. Imagine you are Peter. You say to Jesus, “You are the Christ of God.” What do you think Jesus will say to you next? What does Jesus actually say?
6. Why do you think Jesus warned the disciples not to tell anyone that he is the Messiah?
7. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said that his disciples should deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him. Give examples of how the disciples have already done this.

## LIVE What You Learn

### Discuss one of these questions:

1. Have you heard of people who were hurt or killed because of what they believed?
2. Is there any person or any belief that you would be willing to die for?
3. What would you say to Jesus if he asked you, “Who do you say I am?”

### Consider this:

Peter’s answer to Jesus’ question is the turning point of the gospel. Now that Peter and the others understand, Jesus can begin to train them to be leaders. They will become the leaders of the church

<sup>7</sup> King: Zechariah 9:9, Judge: Ezekiel 7:27

<sup>8</sup> Luke 9:26

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 1:21



after Jesus is gone. Years later, Peter, James, and most of the other disciples were killed because they were followers of Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

Note: The background paper is about a famous choral piece (with music and choral singing) called "The Messiah: An Introduction to the Oratorio."

## THE FINAL WORD

"No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily.<sup>11</sup>  
For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again.  
For this is what my Father has commanded.

Jesus in John 15:12-15 (NIV)

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<sup>10</sup> See Acts 12:1-2 regarding James and John 21:18-19 regarding Peter. Tradition says that all the disciples except John died for their faith. John was sent off to the island of Patmos.

<sup>11</sup> This means, "I freely give it."

# The Messiah

## An Introduction to the Oratorio

George Frederick Handel's *Messiah* has been one of the greatest pieces of choral music in English for 250 years. It is something like an opera in three parts, but it is performed like a concert with no costumes or action. It tells the story of human redemption—God reaching down to save us and to bring us to himself. The text is directly from the Bible, chosen by Handel's friend, Charles Jennen. We love to hear *Messiah* at Christmas because it reminds us that the baby Jesus is also the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

The Biblical song texts for this introduction came from a book, *Messiah: The Gospel According to Handel's Oratorio*, by Roger A. Bullard (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993). The Bible version is the King James Version (1601). Check a modern version of the Bible for better understanding.

### Part One: The Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

The *Messiah* begins with the prophet Isaiah,<sup>1</sup> seven hundred years before Jesus. The Jewish people were waiting for God to send the Messiah, the Holy One, to save His people. Handel carefully quotes the Old Testament to show that the Messiah is Jesus.

The first song is about someone who will “prepare ... the way of the Lord.” (Isaiah 40:3) We know from the New Testament that this is John the Baptist.<sup>2</sup> Other songs in *Messiah* tell us that the Messiah will be born of a virgin<sup>3</sup> (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem, but whose origins are ancient (Micah 8:6). Furthermore, he will be “God with Us” (Isaiah 7:14), “The Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6), and “The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Song Number 8.<sup>4</sup> Alto Recitative: Isaiah 7:14 (Check also Matthew 1:23)

“Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, ‘God with us.’”

Song Number 12. Chorus: Isaiah 9:6

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

Song Numbers 14., 15., 16. Soprano Recitatives: Luke 2:8-11,13, modified

“There were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them: Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:...”

<sup>1</sup> A prophet is a messenger from God. Isaiah's prophecies are in the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament.

<sup>2</sup> You can read in all the gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) about how John the Baptist met Jesus, recognized him as the Messiah, and told people to follow him.

<sup>3</sup> A virgin is a young woman who has never had sex. Jesus' mother was a virgin (Luke 1 and 2).

<sup>4</sup> The words with numbers refer to the types of music. A recitative is a solo, sung by one person. It is more like a musical reading than a song. A chorus is a song that is sung by a group of singers.

Song Number 17. Chorus: Luke 2:14

“Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men!”

### Part Two: Death and Resurrection

Handel opens Part Two with John the Baptist again. John the Baptist calls Jesus, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In the Old Testament, people brought lambs to the temple. The lambs were killed to “take away” the people's sins. Jesus died, like one of those lambs, to take away our sin.<sup>5</sup>

Handel moves from Jesus' death to His resurrection.<sup>6</sup> Jesus came alive again three days after he died. Jesus proved he was more powerful than death. Handel celebrates this victory with a song for the true king, the “Hallelujah Chorus” (number 44). The words for the chorus come from a vision<sup>7</sup> God gave the Apostle John. You will find this vision in the book of Revelation.

Song Number 22. Chorus: John 1:29, slightly modified

“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

Song Number 26. Chorus: Isaiah 53:6

“All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Song Number 44. Chorus: Revelation 19:6b,15,16b modified

“Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, Hallelujah! The Kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah! King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and he shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah!”

### Part Three: Living with the King

A lot of people expect Handel's *Messiah* to end after the “Hallelujah Chorus.” However, the resurrection was just the beginning. Jesus is alive; he will never die again. If we know him, we can live with him now and forever. If we do not know him, we will be judged when he comes back to earth as the rightful King. The oratorio ends at the end of time when all the people in heaven join the chorus.

Song Number 53. Chorus: Revelation 5:12b with 5:9 modified, Revelation 5:13b,14a

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever, Amen.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jesus was the Son of God. His death took the place of all our sins. (Romans 6:23)

<sup>6</sup> Resurrection means physically coming back to life after death.

<sup>7</sup> A vision is a message from God, but it is a picture or actions instead of just words.

<sup>8</sup> Again, check a modern translation of the Bible to understand the text better. And we hope you will be able to listen to a performance of the *Messiah*.

# The Turning Point

## Luke 9:18-36

Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter's answer is the turning point of the gospel.

Peter and the other disciples had traveled with Jesus. They had studied his teaching. They had watched him heal the sick and blind. Jesus did miracles that no human could do: stopping a storm and even bringing a dead man and a young girl back to life. He commanded demons to stop their evil work in people. The disciples were amazed again and again. Could he be the One? Yes, they decided, and Peter announced; "You are the Christ of God."

A turning point "turns," or changes a story. It changes the lives of people. The disciples had been students, but now he could train them to be leaders. He shared with them in private, "The Son of Man must suffer many things...and be killed, and on the third day be raised to life." He said they would have to "die each day" if they were going to follow him.<sup>1</sup>

At this point, these words just went in one ear and out the other. It was impossible for the disciples to put together the idea that Jesus was the Messiah AND that he was going to be killed. The resurrection was so far from "possible" that they would not understand it until they themselves saw Jesus alive after his death. However, something happened to help three of the disciples understand more.<sup>2</sup>

Eight days after Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus went up a mountain to pray. He took Peter, James, and John with him. Jesus prayed, but his disciples fell asleep. When they woke up, Jesus was talking to two men. Jesus' face had changed and his clothing was bright white. Luke tells us, "They saw his glory," his greatness and true identity.

The two men with Jesus were famous Jewish men from the past, Moses and Elijah! They appeared "in glory," direct from heaven. Moses was the leader of the Hebrew people around 1200 years before this time. When Jews thought about Moses, they thought about the Law that God gave him on a mountain.<sup>3</sup> Elijah was a famous prophet from around 860 years before. The Bible said that one "like Elijah" was going to come right before the Messiah arrived.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, when the Jews thought about Elijah, they thought about the coming Messiah.<sup>5</sup>

These men came from heaven to talk to Jesus about his "departure" that he was about to "accomplish" in Jerusalem. They were talking about his own death. For even though he was killed by Romans at the request of the Jewish leaders, it was the mission of Jesus.

As the two men left Jesus, Peter said something about building tents, perhaps to build a memorial. He really didn't know what to say!

Luke 9:34-36

<sup>1</sup> See Luke 9:23-26.

<sup>2</sup> His mission is his purpose or goal in life.

<sup>3</sup> You can read about Moses in the book of Exodus.

<sup>4</sup> This is from Malachi 4:5 in the Old Testament. Also, see the story of John the Baptist in Luke 3.

<sup>5</sup> Elijah's story is told in the books of the Kings, 1 Kings 17:1 to 2 Kings 2:12.

As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen. (ESV)

The disciples told no one, but they never forgot this time. In the difficult days ahead, they remembered what God had done on this sacred<sup>6</sup> mountain.

These are Peter's words, years later: 1 Peter 1:16-18.

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.<sup>7</sup> For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory,<sup>8</sup> saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'<sup>9</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

This event gives us a picture of glory. We expect God's glory to be connected with a big show of power, but His glory is connected with Jesus' death. How can his death be so important? The disciples did not understand at first, but Jesus continued to prepare them for his death and for what he, Jesus, was going to do through them.

Luke 9:51

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely<sup>10</sup> set out for Jerusalem.

The next section in Luke is like a travel journal filled with lessons for his followers, from Luke 9:51 to Luke 19:44.<sup>11</sup> The rest of the *Gospel According to Luke* records Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, his resurrection from the dead, and the forty days before he went up to heaven.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Sacred means set apart for God. The mountain was sacred because God was there.

<sup>7</sup> Majesty is greatness, as with a great ruler or king.

<sup>8</sup> God Himself

<sup>9</sup> Matthew (17:5) adds the words, "whom I love" and "with whom I am well pleased."

<sup>10</sup> Resolutely means with purpose and determination.

<sup>11</sup> See Workbook Two of *Luke's Ancient Biography of Jesus*.

<sup>12</sup> You might want to discuss: 1. If you were at a turning point today, which two people would you like to talk to? 2. After a "mountaintop" experience, we sometimes come home and everything looks the same. This happened to the disciples. Has this happened to you? Tell about a time when you returned home after you had changed in some way.