

A ten hour character study on the life of Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING JESUS



What you don't know about the most famous person in history.

SEBASTIAN LUCIDO

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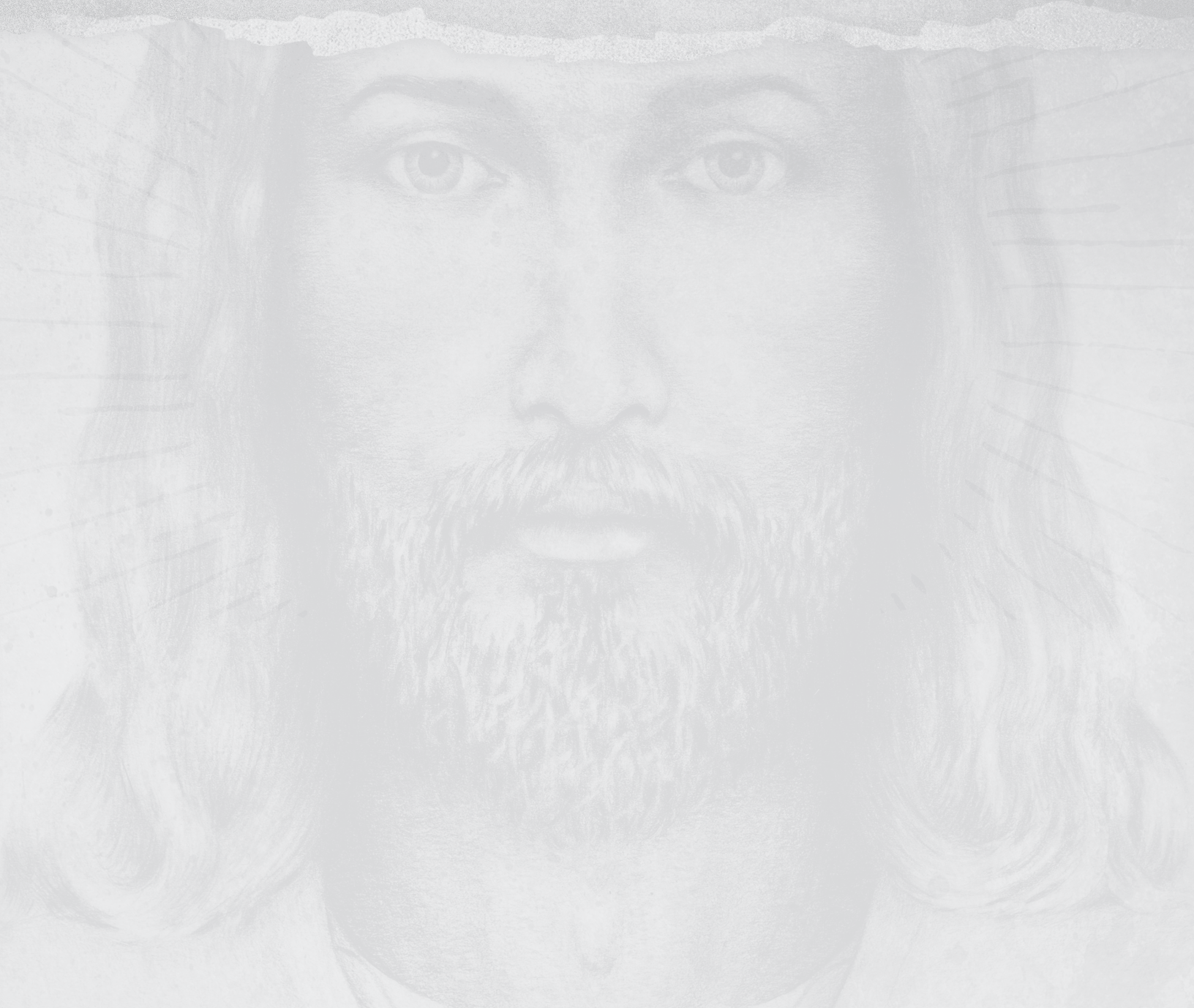
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SESSION 1

THE PRE-BETHLEHEM YEARS

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE PRE-BETHLEHEM YEARS

Reading Assignment : Colossians 1 :13—20

¹³ HE HAS DELIVERED US FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS AND CONVEYED US INTO THE KINGDOM OF THE SON OF HIS LOVE, ¹⁴ IN WHOM WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. ¹⁵ HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, THE FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION. ¹⁶ FOR BY HIM ALL THINGS WERE CREATED THAT ARE IN HEAVEN AND THAT ARE ON EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THRONES OR DOMINIONS OR PRINCIPALITIES OR POWERS. ALL THINGS WERE CREATED THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM. ¹⁷ AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND IN HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST. ¹⁸ AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH, WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD, THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MAY HAVE THE PREEMINENCE. ¹⁹ FOR IT PLEASED THE FATHER THAT IN HIM ALL THE FULLNESS SHOULD DWELL, ²⁰ AND BY HIM TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF, BY HIM, WHETHER THINGS ON EARTH OR THINGS IN HEAVEN, HAVING MADE PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS.

1. The Trinity is broken up into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Almost always we see the mission of God the Father as _____ the Gospel plan. Then Jesus generally _____ the plan from the Father and the Holy Spirit _____ the plan and provides the power for us.
2. Within the structure of the Trinity we learn the Father planned our _____, Jesus brought everything into _____ by His spoken Word, and the Holy Spirit is the _____ or revealer of the Gospel plan.
3. We celebrate _____ as the birth of Jesus Christ and we celebrate _____ as the resurrection of the Lord. However, the greatest thing most of us fail to understand is that Jesus _____ before Bethlehem.
4. Through the Gospel plan, the Father _____ us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the _____ of His Son. This was the plan of the Father from the beginning of time.
5. One of the greatest sacrifices Jesus made for humanity was coming to earth. By doing this, Jesus gave up His _____ in heaven. At this moment, the Son is seated at the right hand of God not only in Spirit, but also in _____ at our creative level.
6. Everything started with _____ Jesus because He created all things. This includes _____ and the spiritual realm that opposes Him. This adds a whole new dimension to His life and sacrifice.

7. Jesus spoke through _____ in the Old Testament and all things are upheld by the power of His Word. This is His spoken Word, and there is still _____ and harvest today because Jesus spoke this in the Bible.
8. No one can see the _____ of God or they will die. When God appears to the people of Israel in the desert, He appears as a thick cloud. God shields Himself from us because without _____ we would die in His presence.
9. God spoke covenant _____ to Jesus and handed over the blessings to His Son. This means God the Father swore the Gospel plan to His mediator, _____, who in turn swore the plan to mankind through _____. This locks us into all the promises in the Bible.
10. Jesus freely _____ God and He freely brought about the _____ that led to His crucifixion. Jesus freely humbled Himself and became a bond servant for humanity. He took on the humblest of positions where at any time He could have called more than twelve _____ to set Him free.
11. The overall plan of Jesus and His mission was to bring _____, as a creative class, from our fallen state of sin to be made _____ and brought up to Him so we could experience salvation. Jesus came down to earth so He could bring us up to Him in heaven.
12. Our faith in confessing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior _____ us with Him. Jesus _____ us on the cross and in His death and in His resurrection. We don't have to do anything because Jesus did it all, and our faith in His _____ makes us joint heirs with Him.
13. Essentially, our _____ is the belief in who Jesus is and what He did by representing us on the cross. All of this began thousands of years ago, because long before the worlds were _____, Jesus always existed.

Key Words :

(a) Pre-Existence (b) Trinity (c) Resurrection (d) Deliverance (e) Ascension

- _____ To be rescued from the impending calamities and wrath of God.
- _____ The departure of Christ from Earth into the presence of God.
- _____ Spiritual structure of God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- _____ Belief that after being put to death Jesus rose from the dead.
- _____ Personal existence of Christ before His incarnation.

Session Answers :

1. developing, executes, reveals
2. creation, existence, power
3. Christmas, Easter, existed
4. delivered, kingdom
5. royal position, Man
6. pre-Bethlehem, Satan
7. prophetic voices, seed time
8. face, salvation
9. terms, Jesus, Abraham
10. obeyed, events, legions of angels
11. humanity, righteous
12. identifies, represented, sacrifice
13. salvation, created

Key Word Answers :

d, e, b, c, a

JESUS GAVE IT ALL

READ: John 1

We celebrate Christmas as the birth of Jesus and we celebrate Easter as His resurrection. But one of the greatest things we fail to understand is that Jesus existed before Bethlehem.

Jesus had an eternity of history before the creation event. This is hard to imagine! He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Our understanding is based on time and in time, but Jesus operates outside of time.

Time began at creation, but Jesus existed well before creation. All things were created by Him. He created the Earth. He created the angels. He created everything. Creation was planned by the Trinity: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Each part of the Trinity has a role in creation. The Father planned out creation. Jesus executed creation, which means He spoke creation into existence. Then the Holy Spirit powered or revealed creation to humanity. They are the architect, the builder, and the power source.

Colossians 1:16–20 tells us, “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him (in God’s plan) all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace (peace with God) through the blood of His cross” (parenthesis and emphasis mine).

This is easy to read but when you think about it, one of the greatest sacrifices Jesus made for humanity was by coming to earth. He gave up His royal position in heaven to do that for us.

Jesus left eternity to enter our temporary. His eternal understanding, power and prestige became human in order for us to be saved! Isn’t that a remarkable thing!

Questions and Reflection :

Have you considered Jesus’ eternal existence? Does this change your view of the Trinity? Pray today that God would reveal His eternal perspective to you.

JESUS AS MEDIATOR

READ: Genesis 15

God commands Abraham to prepare a covenant in Genesis 15. A covenant is a binding contract. This agreement can be between two people, tribes, or nations that become locked together in covenant. In ancient times, it was generally sealed in blood and rituals.

In fact, when the explorers came to America, they discovered tribes and people living under covenant contracts. This is the meaning behind the term, “blood brothers.” This type of relationship and contract is something we may not understand today.

In Biblical times, it was through covenant people forged relationships with one another, and the way God forged a covenant with us. Abraham prepares a covenant with God. He prepares all the pieces for the ceremony and then falls into a deep sleep.

God begins to speak the covenant terms over him. These are the blessings we see given to us in Genesis 15. What is often overlooked in the story is that while Abraham is asleep, two entities pass between the pieces of the sacrifice. Those two entities are the Father and the Son.

In that covenant, God the Father makes a promise to uphold the Gospel plan to Jesus. God then disappears, and on that same day, Jesus forges a relationship and completes the covenant with humanities representative, Abraham. Using a theological term, this is called the Hypostatic Union.

Again, this is pre-Bethlehem. This is Jesus the Son of God.

All these promises and benefits that were sworn by God the Father were given to Jesus in the Gospel plan. And then Jesus swore them to humanity.

Jesus became the mediator. He is our representative. He is like a lawyer for us in front of our Judge.

Questions and Reflection:

Do you consider Jesus your representative? What does the term “mediator” mean to you? Pray today that God would show you what Jesus has done, and ask that He would reveal the deep meaning of covenant to you.

JESUS HAD FREE WILL

READ: Philippians 2

In Philippians 2:7–8 we read, “...but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

What does this mean? It means Jesus became like us. He stepped out of the “God” form and became human. He was God in the form of a man. This is crucial to understand because Jesus had free will. He didn’t have to come to earth and He most certainly did not have to suffer and die. It was His free-will decision.

Picture this: God lays out the plan of salvation, and the only way for redemption to come is for Jesus to become a man and die as atonement for the sins of humanity. God tells Jesus what the plan is and its requirements. But Jesus had to choose to execute God’s plan.

Praise God that He did! It was only because of His great love for us that He took on the form of a man. He humbled Himself. He became a bondservant. He obeyed the Father even to death on the cross—the most terrible of all deaths.

Jesus not only began the plan but he also followed it through unto death. What an amazing Savior we have!

The Creator of all things entered His creation to save it. He freely walked into death for us.

Salvation takes on a whole different dimension when you understand that at any time, Jesus could have said no or abandoned the rescue mission. But He didn’t!

Questions and Reflection:

Is there something you’ve walked away from that hurt someone else simply because you couldn’t live up to the responsibility? Imagine Jesus walking away from humanity because He couldn’t stand the thought of being crucified. Today, consider salvation and the crucifixion from Jesus’ perspective of free-will.

BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN

READ: John 17

Pre-existence is defined as “existence in a former state or previous to something else.” In the case of Jesus, His pre-existence means He was already in existence as a second part of the Trinity before He came into humanity.

In John 17:5 Jesus says, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” This passage alone supports Jesus’ pre-existence, but it is just one of many Scripture references. Jesus openly taught His own pre-existence and even said He existed prior to Abraham’s birth.

Probably the most powerful evidence of the pre-existence of Christ was the very behavior of Jesus Himself. He said and did things that, according to the Jewish religious leaders, only God had the authority and power to do. For instance, Jesus’ healing of the paralytic in Mark 2 was to demonstrate His power and ability to forgive sins. In ancient Israel, this action would have been very clear to Jesus’ Jewish audience.

His pre-existence was not just a centerpiece of teaching; it also gave Him the ability to influence and infuriate the religious leaders. This would ultimately bring the Sanhedrin to the point of accusing Jesus of blasphemy.

The pre-existence of Christ is a teaching of the Christian faith and foundational tenet to those who believe Jesus truly is who He said He was—God.

Questions and Reflection:

Do you see Jesus as having authority to both forgive sin and provide the miraculous in your life? Ask God to uniquely introduce you to each being in the Trinity.

WORSHIP THE CREATOR

READ: Colossians 1

Jesus was the firstborn over all creation. Meaning, He was born before “all things” as Paul wrote in Colossians 1. This means Christ pre-existed before everything.

Colossians 1:15–17 reads, “The Son is the image of the invisible God, *the firstborn over all creation*. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is *before all things*, and in him all things hold together” (emphasis mine).

Today, I want you to think about verse 16: “...all things have been created through him and for him.” Now ask yourself, when was the last time you thought about why you were created?

You were created for Jesus. You were created for His pleasure, His purpose, and most importantly, to worship Him.

A very large question of our existence is our purpose. Today, I want to remind you that you are created to worship God and to worship Jesus. You were created to worship Him, but you were saved by Jesus from death, hell and eternal damnation. Doesn't that give you a reason to worship?

Find a way to worship Him as you go about your daily routine. Worship Him through your diligence at school and your honesty in the workplace. Worship Him through your love and self-control in traffic. Worship Him through your peace and patience with your children.

Just as He performed all things and created all things for you—give back to Him worship in all things.

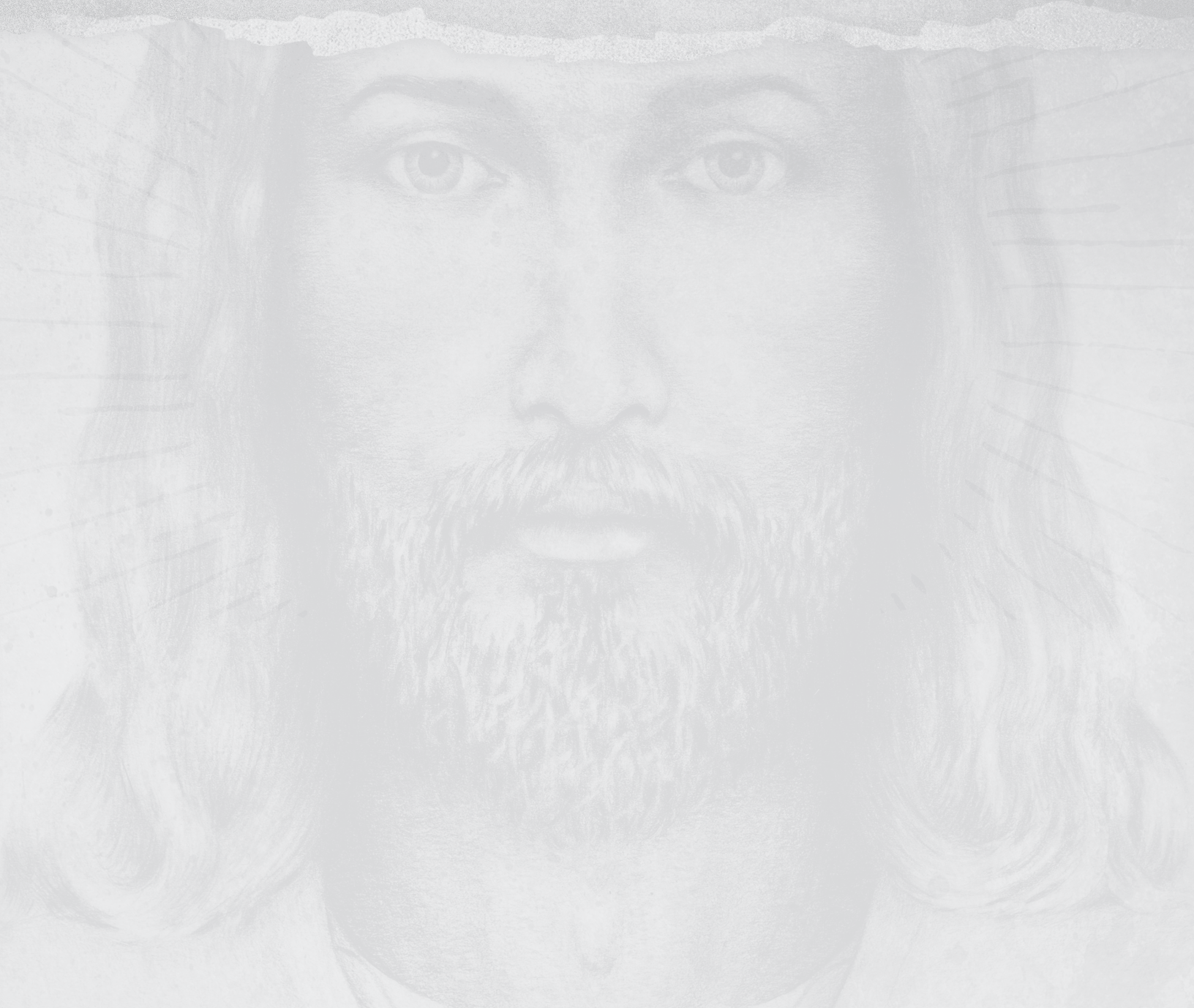
Question and Reflection :

Why were you created? Find a way to worship the Creator in all things today.

SESSION 2

THE CONCEIVED MAN

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE CONCEIVED MAN

Reading Assignment : Luke 1 :26-37

²⁶ NOW IN THE SIXTH MONTH THE ANGEL GABRIEL WAS SENT BY GOD TO A CITY OF GALILEE NAMED NAZARETH, ²⁷ TO A VIRGIN BETROTHED TO A MAN WHOSE NAME WAS JOSEPH, OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID. THE VIRGIN'S NAME WAS MARY. ²⁸ AND HAVING COME IN, THE ANGEL SAID TO HER, "REJOICE, HIGHLY FAVORED ONE, THE LORD IS WITH YOU ; BLESSED ARE YOU AMONG WOMEN!" ²⁹ BUT WHEN SHE SAW HIM, SHE WAS TROUBLED AT HIS SAYING, AND CONSIDERED WHAT MANNER OF GREETING THIS WAS. ³⁰ THEN THE ANGEL SAID TO HER, "DO NOT BE AFRAID, MARY, FOR YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD. ³¹ AND BEHOLD, YOU WILL CONCEIVE IN YOUR WOMB AND BRING FORTH A SON, AND SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS. ³² HE WILL BE GREAT, AND WILL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE HIGHEST; AND THE LORD GOD WILL GIVE HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID. ³³ AND HE WILL REIGN OVER THE HOUSE OF JACOB FOREVER, AND OF HIS KINGDOM THERE WILL BE NO END." ³⁴ THEN MARY SAID TO THE ANGEL, "HOW CAN THIS BE, SINCE I DO NOT KNOW A MAN?" ³⁵ AND THE ANGEL ANSWERED AND SAID TO HER, "THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL COME UPON YOU, AND THE POWER OF THE HIGHEST WILL OVERSHADOW YOU ; THEREFORE, ALSO, THAT HOLY ONE WHO IS TO BE BORN WILL BE CALLED THE SON OF GOD ³⁶ NOW INDEED, ELIZABETH YOUR RELATIVE HAS ALSO CONCEIVED A SON IN HER OLD AGE ; AND THIS IS NOW THE SIXTH MONTH FOR HER WHO WAS CALLED BARREN. ³⁷ FOR WITH GOD NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE."

1. The conception of Jesus Christ is the real _____ in the story of Bethlehem because His birth was a _____ event. It was no different than any other human birth. The real life-changing event was His conception.
2. Jesus came into the world to execute the will of God for humanity. Jesus _____ all the prophetic words spoken of Him in the _____. Jesus came as it was prophesied, and God prepared a _____ for Him to accomplish His will.
3. Jesus is the only person in history to know His _____ before He was born. Jesus knew His place of birth and the people surrounding the event. He knew about His _____ and _____ before it happened. Jesus wrote these things about Himself before His birth in Bethlehem.

4. Jesus came into the world at our _____ as a man. When He was hungry, He ate. When He was tired, He slept. And when He was dirty, He bathed. Jesus was subjected to the passions, temptations and sufferings of _____, yet He was without sin.
5. Humanity was made in the _____ of God's living spirit and according to His _____. In other words, when we see God, He will have two eyes, two ears, two hands. We read about the hands and fingers of God and the eyes and ears of Him throughout Scripture.
6. As a humble couple, Mary and Joseph had to carry the weight of their situation. Their child was born in a foreign city, _____ were appearing to them, _____ came in from the field to see the child, and _____ poured out gifts upon them.
7. The key point of the virgin birth is Jesus had to be born outside of _____ transgressions. Jesus had to be born _____ and _____ to God in order for Him to be the perfect and Holy sacrifice for humanity.
8. It was because of the _____ Jesus was the perfect _____ without blemish to be sacrificed and pleasing to God the Father. Jesus was righteous before God, and paid for the transgressions and sins of all mankind.
9. No one else could _____ humanity other than Jesus because He is the only way to the Father. He is the way, the truth and the life and no one gets to the _____ but by Him. Jesus is the only righteous sacrifice the true God would _____ in order to fulfill the Scriptures.
10. We celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25, but He was probably born in late September or October during the _____. December 25 was pegged by the early church to accommodate the festivities of the _____.
11. The wise men who came to _____ weren't kings, but they did travel from the direction of Iraq. These men were probably _____ who had stayed behind after the Babylonian empire.
12. _____ and all of Jerusalem were troubled at the arrival of the wise men. We can assume there were more than three followed by a _____ of hundreds. The wise men did bring three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Key Words :

(a) Census (b) Image of God (c) Christology (d) Miracle (e) Likeness of God

- _____ An event not explicable by natural or scientific laws; outside the natural process.
- _____ Branch of theology dealing with the nature, person and deeds of Jesus Christ.
- _____ Created of God; a living spirit.
- _____ Created with the physical attributes of God; two hands, two eyes, 10 fingers, etc.
- _____ Required people to travel from their own homes to those of distant ancestors.

Session Answers :

1. miracle, natural
2. fulfilled, Old Testament, body
3. mother, life, death
4. creative level, humanity
5. image, likeness
6. angels, shepherds, wise men
7. Adam's, alive, righteous
8. virgin birth, Lamb
9. save, Father, accept
10. Feast of Tabernacles, winter solstice
11. Bethlehem, Jews
12. King Herod, caravan

Key Word Answers :

d, c, b, e, a

BEYOND THE MANGER

READ: Hebrews 10

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. While His birth is important, the real miracle—the game changer—was His conception.

Think about that for a moment. If the miracle conception hadn't occurred, nothing after that would matter. The conception is the first miracle on which all other miracles hang. But what does it mean beyond a manger in a stable?

It means Jesus not only planned His own death, but He also planned His own birth.

Jesus is the only person in history to know His mother before He was born. He is the only person to know His Father, His own life story, and the time in history He would enter the world.

Wouldn't we all enjoy the ability to pick out the members of our family? We probably would all change a few of our relatives. I'm just joking. But for Jesus, this was a reality.

Every moment of His life was carefully orchestrated. It wasn't orchestrated just from the moment of His birth or even the moment of His conception—it was all orchestrated from the beginning of time.

His lineage. His family. The prophecies. The wise men. The angels. The shepherds. The manger. Bethlehem. His birth story. All of these pieces came perfectly together to form the prelude to the symphony called, salvation.

In fact, the Old Testament contains over 300 prophecies on the life of Jesus. It is nearly mathematically impossible for one person to fulfill half of these prophecies, let alone all of them! But Jesus fulfilled them all.

After understanding the details of the orchestration for salvation, one can only realize how beautiful and marvelous our Savior's love for us must be.

Questions and Reflection:

Have you considered the miracle of Jesus' conception as the blueprint for salvation? What does that mean to you?

PEOPLE WILL CALL HIM

READ: Matthew 1

To the nation of Israel, the prophecy given in Isaiah 9:6 gave them hope—and why wouldn't it? The prophecy reads, "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." This speaks of a government that wouldn't end and peace that wouldn't end. Justice. Righteousness. Now and forever. And what would they call Him?

Beautiful names such as Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace—these are names that capture the magnificent splendor of our God.

In the minds of the common Jewish person, the man coming to save them was a mighty warrior. The Almighty God. Their King. And so begins the Christmas story. Well, not really.

In Matthew 1:1–6, we read a list of 42 names. Before the angels, shepherds, and wise men, Matthew tells us in Verse 2 that, "Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah..."

Do we really need to know about Tamar, Rahab and Ruth? Why does Matthew mention David, Solomon and a man named Herzon before he mentions Joseph and Mary?

In the family tree of Jesus, there were some unrighteous people—people who made mistakes just like we do. They were folks who had the cards stacked against them and who faced burdens and hardship.

Tamar was abandoned and Ruth was an illegal immigrant. Rahab was a prostitute. David was a king, but he was also a murderer. Solomon was a womanizer. The list of names goes on and on to include thieves and scoundrels. There are some interesting characters and awkward stories.

The fact is, the people in Jesus' family tree weren't too wonderful. Yet, rather than try to gloss over this embarrassing fact, Matthew highlights it without hesitation.

Why? He is telling us the theme behind the whole story of Jesus: Grace.

Matthew tells us the Creator of the universe, in all of His wisdom, wanted to use abandoned people, sinful people and crooked people from the "wrong side of town." All these names were people God used to bring His Grace to the earth.

And so Matthew immediately highlights the premise of the Gospel at the very beginning of the story. With names of grace.

Questions and Reflection :

What names have you been labeled? What do the names of God mean to you? Are they powerful in your life right now, or are they just a list of names with no meaning?

THE KING IS HERE

READ: Matthew 2

While Rome was occupied and people were prophesying, Divinity arrived in the least likely of places. No one expected for Him to be born in Bethlehem. No one expected shepherds to arrive at the stable. No one expected for Him to be conceived by a virgin, but heaven opened herself and placed her most precious gift in a human womb.

The Almighty, in one moment, made Himself fragile. God became flesh and blood. The God who is larger than the universe became a fetus. The Creator was being created. He spent nine months forming His head, shoulders, arms and legs inside of Mary.

In a world that was expecting someone larger than life, only Mary and Joseph knew that the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, and the Prince of Peace would be Jesus.

He would become like us and face the same challenges. How unusual God became a humble man.

Oftentimes, we overlook this extraordinary truth: God became a man. When God chose to reveal Himself to humanity, He did so through a human body.

The lips that would call forth the dead became chapped. The feet that would walk on water smelled like any another person's. The hands that would heal the sick and calm the storm would be calloused and dirty. All of this, so we could know He would understand our pain, our fear, and our humanity. Jesus left eternity to live among us.

Questions and Reflection:

Think of Jesus in human terms. What is the one human attribute you can't picture Jesus having? Since He knows our humanity, what burdens can you give to Him today? Is it fear, insecurity, or hopelessness? Whatever it may be, cast it on Him today.

NO ONE NOTICED

READ: LUKE 2

A lower place of birth could not exist. The manger where Jesus was born was filled with the strong odor of sheep and donkey. Yet, this unforeseen, unprepared, and most unqualified place would be the place His Majesty would enter our world.

The manger may have been unprepared and unqualified, but it was far from unforeseen. Surely the King of the universe deserved a high-profile birth in a royal palace. But no earthly trumpets sounded that night. No newspaper headlines were circulated. No one noticed the manger. Of course, this was purposeful. God's own Son made His first appearance on earth modestly.

Within the unqualified manger lies a greater truth. What we view as unqualified, God has ordained. What may be unprepared, God has prearranged. And who or what we may consider unqualified is precisely who or what God has designed.

Bethlehem—unforeseen, unprepared, and unqualified. Maybe you see your life this way.

I'm sure Joseph did. We think of Mary's questions and wonder, Mary did you know? What were Mary's thoughts while she held the baby Jesus and watched Him grow?

Today, think about Joseph. What do you think his thoughts were? I'm sure he saw himself unqualified in many ways. Imagine a simple carpenter holding the Creator of the universe in his hands. What did he think?

How was he supposed to be a father to the Son of God? What was he supposed to teach the Teacher? What words does a father speak to the One who spoke the world into existence? Imagine the deep evaluation of himself.

Joseph experienced the dream and the angels. What was he qualified for? What did he have to give Jesus? He was just a lowly carpenter and surely this baby he was holding had a far greater destiny than wood and nails.

Wood and nails. A destiny only a carpenter would understand.

Questions and Reflection:

Do you see yourself as unqualified to be used by God? Ask God today to reveal how He has qualified you to fulfill your calling.

IN GOD'S EYES

READ: ROMAN 5

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). This verse means that because of Adam’s sin, death entered the world in all three parts of humanity. Death of the body, spirit and soul would spread to all of humanity because of one man’s sin.

We continue reading that Jesus is a “type of Adam.” This means Jesus didn’t have a natural human father, and neither did Adam. God was their Father, and Jesus was born outside any human interaction. He was born this way so His nature would be outside of sin.

This is key to understanding the reason Jesus came.

When Adam sinned he became:

- Unrighteous in the eyes of God.
- Condemned in the eyes of God.
- Guilty of sin in the eyes of God.

This is why we needed Jesus. Humanity needed a sinless, perfect and Holy Savior.

When Jesus came into the world He was:

- Righteous in the eyes of God.
- Accepted in the eyes of God.
- Became sin for us in the eyes of God.

Adam’s sin caused the disease of death. It was spiritual death first, then physical death. It spread to all of humanity—to everyone born of Adam. That disease of sin and death traveled through the male seed. It traveled from generation to generation. So anyone born of Adam needed some way to get back in good standing with God.

Through Adam, you are called unrighteous. In Adam, you are called disobedient. In Adam, you are called guilty and condemned before God. But in Jesus, you are justified, righteous and accepted in the sight of God.

Jesus had to be born outside of the male seed. That’s why there was the virgin birth—so that we may enter into righteousness through Him.

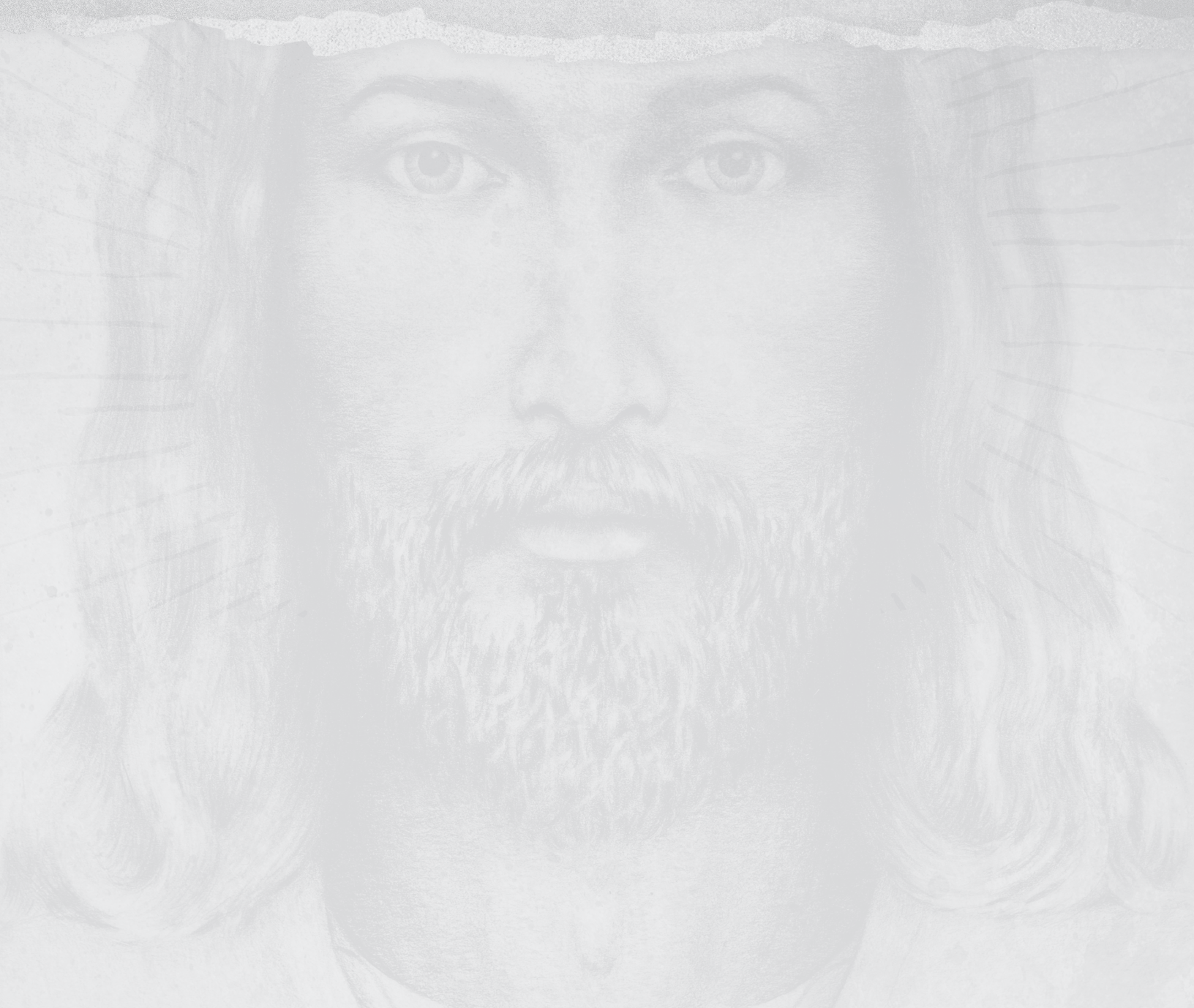
Questions and Reflection :

What sinful nature can you see in your life? Ask Jesus to take that sinful nature and make it righteous and give you a renewed mind to conquer it.

SESSION 3

THE GOD MAN

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE GOD MAN

Reading Assignment: John 16:22—28

²² THEREFORE YOU NOW HAVE SORROW; BUT I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN AND YOUR HEART WILL REJOICE, AND YOUR JOY NO ONE WILL TAKE FROM YOU. ²³ AND IN THAT DAY YOU WILL ASK ME NOTHING. MOST ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, WHATEVER YOU ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME HE WILL GIVE YOU. ²⁴ UNTIL NOW YOU HAVE ASKED NOTHING IN MY NAME. ASK, AND YOU WILL RECEIVE, THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL. ²⁵ “THESE THINGS I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU IN FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE; BUT THE TIME IS COMING WHEN I WILL NO LONGER SPEAK TO YOU IN FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE, BUT I WILL TELL YOU PLAINLY ABOUT THE FATHER. ²⁶ IN THAT DAY YOU WILL ASK IN MY NAME, AND I DO NOT SAY TO YOU THAT I SHALL PRAY THE FATHER FOR YOU; ²⁷ FOR THE FATHER HIMSELF LOVES YOU, BECAUSE YOU HAVE LOVED ME, AND HAVE BELIEVED THAT I CAME FORTH FROM GOD. ²⁸ I CAME FORTH FROM THE FATHER AND HAVE COME INTO THE WORLD. AGAIN, I LEAVE THE WORLD AND GO TO THE FATHER.”

1. When Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple at the age of 12, Jesus submitted to them in _____ because of the _____ to honor your mother and father. Jesus also submitted to His mother at a wedding celebration in Cana when He was 30 years old.
2. As the oldest son, Jesus probably had His father's trade as a _____, but He also spent much time at the Synagogue engaging with the _____. While growing up, Jesus went about the business of a human. He _____ no miracles or healings or signs or wonders.
3. In Mark 6:3 we learn Mary and Joseph had many other children. _____ and _____, were two of the books written in the Bible by Jesus' _____ - _____. Jesus had great wisdom as a young boy, and the grace of God was upon Him and His Spirit became strong.
4. John the Baptist was a Nazarite and a _____ to Jesus. As a _____, John's ministry was to prepare the people for the coming _____. John called others to repent and to be baptized at the river Jordan.
5. We see the three entities of the _____ when John baptized Jesus at the age of 30. The _____ spoke in a loud voice saying He was well pleased with His _____. The _____ descended upon Him and prepared Jesus for His public ministry.

6. The Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the _____ for 40 days and nights where He was _____ and _____. The temptations and trials of Jesus were required of _____, just as our trials and temptations are required of us.
7. God did not tempt Jesus, the _____ tempted Him, but it was required. God _____ trials in our lives to make the spirit world aware of our _____, because there is an ongoing conflict over the hearts of mankind in the spiritual realm.
8. When His ministry began, His _____ noticed a change in Jesus and wanted to _____. They went out to “lay hold” of Him because they thought He had lost His mind. He drew _____ once He began healing, setting people free, and delivering them to the Father.
9. Jesus told His family they must believe in Him as the Son of God, just like _____ else. Those who surrounded Jesus _____ to Him and in their hearts _____ in who He was. Everyone must believe in Him for salvation.
10. Mary was highly favored of God, but she needed _____ because she was born of a male seed just like His brothers and sisters. Jesus made it clear that His _____ are those who embrace Him and accept His teachings. They are His _____.
11. In the Old Testament, _____ was widely known as the father of faith, but Jesus _____ God to us as our Father. When Jesus prayed the Lord’s Prayer it was to God, His Father who art in heaven.
12. The mindset in the Old Testament was not of a _____ Father, because God only revealed Himself in broad masses. However, Jesus is showing them a Father who has _____. The disciples wanted to know who the Father is and wanted Jesus to show them the Father.
13. Jesus also revealed _____ to us and the influence he has on humanity. Only wisdom from the _____ _____ could set us free. Satan brings sickness, poverty, pride, division and things that take us away from God, but _____ sets us free from the devil’s influence.

Key Words :

(a) Intervention (b) Forerunner (c) Ignorance (d) Passover (e) Empowerment

_____ Jewish festival commemorating liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.

_____ Person who goes before to announce or herald the coming of someone else to follow.

_____ To invest with power; to equip or supply with authority and delegation.

_____ Planned effort to persuade a person with serious problems to seek treatment.

_____ Lack of knowledge, education, or awareness.

Session Answers :

1. obedience, commandment
2. carpenter, religious leaders, performed
3. James, Jude, half-brothers
4. cousin, forerunner, Messiah
5. Trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit
6. wilderness, tempted, tested, God
7. evil one, allows, faith
8. family, intervene, multitudes
9. everyone, listened, believed
10. salvation, relatives, family
11. Abraham, revealed
12. loving, compassion
13. Satan, Word of God, revelation knowledge

Key Word Answers :

d, b, e, a, c

LEFT BEHIND

READ: Luke 2

Imagine leaving an amusement park only to realize you left your child behind in the gift shop! Can you imagine the panic and confusion? The rush to hurry back and get your child?

That's exactly what happened to Mary and Joseph when Jesus was 12 years old. They unintentionally left Him in Jerusalem after celebrating the Passover. After a quick turn-around, they found Him in the Temple teaching, asking questions, and debating with the religious leaders.

The Bible tells us the religious leaders were astonished at His understanding. In other words, He was asking intentional questions and putting up a lively debate.

This is the only glimpse we get into the adolescent Jesus. It's important to note two things here: the location and the mission.

In the Temple at 12 years old and on His journey to becoming a man, Jesus was seeking to spend time in His Father's house. In those days, the Spirit of God would have dwelt in the Temple, in an area called the Holy of Holies. He was getting as close to His Father as possible. Jesus even went so far as to leave His earthly parents without notice to stay there.

Perhaps Jesus couldn't get enough of being close to His heavenly Father so He stayed behind.

His mission became clear. In a foreshadowing of what was to come, He was engaged in a question and answer session with the religious leaders. It's a very uncommon picture if you think about it, a 12-year-old carpenter's son debating and winning against older and more "schooled" teachers.

In the years to come, Jesus would continue the debates by always confounding and challenging the Pharisees and religious leader's beliefs about God. This adolescent Jesus shows us He knew His place and mission well in advance of His baptism.

Questions and Reflection:

What is your mission? Where are you spending too much time and taking the risk of being left behind? Pray that God would reveal to you where to go and what mission to accomplish, even if that means being left behind by others.

PREPARE THE WAY

READ: Matthew 3

Here we first encounter the remarkable character of John the Baptist. He is dressed in camel skin, unruly and unkempt. But His message draws the attention of everyone, including the Pharisees.

In verses 11 and 12, John foretells the coming Messiah and His mission. He says: “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

John is explaining there is one coming after him, and he is not the Messiah, but they should be looking for someone else. He explains his own mission was to come before the Messiah. This is why John the Baptist is known as the forerunner.

Speaking as the forerunner, John made it clear what Jesus was coming to do. He told us Jesus was going to come and He’s going to judge. This means purging the threshing floor. Jesus is to cleanse the earth. He’s going to gather the wheat, those who are His, into His barn and to Himself. But the chaff—the sinners, the lost and the unsaved—He is going to burn with an unquenchable fire.

This was John’s ministry. John’s ministry was to prepare a way for the Lord and call people to repentance.

Today, we are living on the edge of Christ’s second return. Just as Jesus came the first time, He will come the second time, to a world unprepared and unrepentant.

We must live in preparation for His second return. Prepare your heart for His coming, His judgment, and His reign. Let the warning of John the Baptist and his mission resound in your ears and take root in your heart.

Prepare the way of the Lord. Repent!

Questions and Reflection :

Take time today to examine your heart. Repent of hidden sin and search for areas where you are weak in your relationship with Jesus.

OVERCOME TEMPTATION

READ: Matthew 4

Isn't it ironic how sometimes the greatest times in life can be followed by some of the most difficult? This is what happened for nearly every great character in the Bible. Abraham had a son and was asked to sacrifice him. David beat Goliath and became a fugitive to escape the wrath of Saul. Elijah called fire down from heaven and ran in fear of Jezebel.

Jesus was baptized by John, and then was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

Please understand difficult times are not always from Satan. Oftentimes, it is the Lord purifying and preparing us to do His work. That's what the wilderness experience was for Jesus.

Before Jesus could operate in His earthly ministry He first had to be baptized and then overcome temptation. The Bible says in Matthew 4:1, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." This means there was a purpose for the tempting of Jesus Christ. And there is a purpose behind our temptations.

Why did Jesus have to be tempted, tested, and then pass the test?

It was required of God. Just like it is required of God in our lives.

We are tested all the time. Whether it's being honest when a lie is easy or holding our tongue when we want to speak out at someone who did wrong to us, we are tested every day.

Temptation reveals who we are and who we trust in. Do you trust in God, or do you trust in yourself? Do you love God, or do you love yourself more? In the wilderness, Jesus overcame temptation, and then His spiritual power and authority followed. When we overcome temptation in our lives, it results in the devil having no hold over us. By overcoming temptation we prove we love God every time and Satan loses.

Jesus overcame temptation not just in the wilderness, but throughout His entire ministry. In the garden, He was tempted to let the cup pass. Then on the cross, he was tempted to call down angels from heaven to save Him.

I'm sure Peter's constant mistakes tempted Jesus to exclude him from the twelve, but in every instance, Jesus overcame.

He overcame so that we may overcome.

Questions and Reflection :

What temptations will you face today? How will you overcome them? Pray that God will give you strength and boldness to overcome.

NOTABLE CHANGE

READ: Mark 3

Have you ever been forced to have an intervention with a member of your family or a good friend? Or maybe it was just a serious conversation with someone. Perhaps it was one of those conversations where you say, “Hey, you really need to straighten up and get your life together!”

In Mark 3, the entire town comes together to have an intervention with Jesus. His family, His friends, and people who knew and liked Him and wanted to intervene in His life because they thought Jesus had lost His mind.

If you look at Mark 3:21 it reads, “But when His own people...” This means those who lived in His village and grew up around Him. The verse continues with, “...heard about this they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, ‘He is out of His mind.’”

Here is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He’s living life as a carpenter, probably a model citizen, peaceful, and likeable. But when He is anointed of the Holy Spirit, He fasts for 40 days and nights and becomes a different man.

His own people said, “He is out of His mind.” They noticed a change in Jesus and they wanted to have an intervention. That’s what happened when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus. He was notably different. He began to perform miracles. His teaching changed. He even told His family members they were no longer His family. His followers were His family.

Mark 3 is a critical chapter in the divinity of Jesus. In this portion of Scripture, He claims Jesus makes separate Him from just a moral teacher and philosopher. He began to act and speak as the Son of God.

The intervention demonstrates to us the visible change in Jesus’ life after the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This marks the beginning of Him walking in His calling. This separation had to happen from everyone who knew Him previously in order for Him to do His work.

Questions and Reflection :

Are there people in your life who don’t understand you because you’ve given your life to Christ? Have you changed enough from your old self to prompt others to say you are different now? Pray that God would execute a difference in your life that can be seen by others.

OUR EXAMPLE IS JESUS

READ: 1 John 3

In 1 John 3, Jesus tells us He came to destroy the works of the devil. What works of Satan need to be destroyed by Jesus? It is his influence and lies to all of humanity and the blind ignorance of his work.

Wisdom from the Word of God will cause us to be free from the devil's influence.

Satan brings sickness, poverty and pride. He brings division. He brings strife. He brings things that would take us away from God and away from the things of God.

What stops the lies of Satan?

Truth, understanding, wisdom and revelation that are all found in the Word of God. The Bible makes it clear in John 8:32, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Jesus gave us a revelation of how we destroy Satan's works in our lives. He showed us for three years how to live, what to do and how to act. He was our example of how to battle Satan. In temptation, Jesus used the Word of God.

Satan battles Christians by trying to steal the Word from our hearts so we don't have fruit, actions, or light to expose his lies.

The more we act like Jesus, walk like Him, think like Him, and speak like Him, the greater we grow into the image of Him. Then we have the ability to destroy the work of Satan. In doing so, we are a light to the world. We're the salt of the earth. That is the manifestation of our faith in His Word because when we act on His Word, we are revealing faith in His Word.

Love Him with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. Those are the two greatest commandments. It's through loving Him and knowing His Word we can conquer Satan and his works.

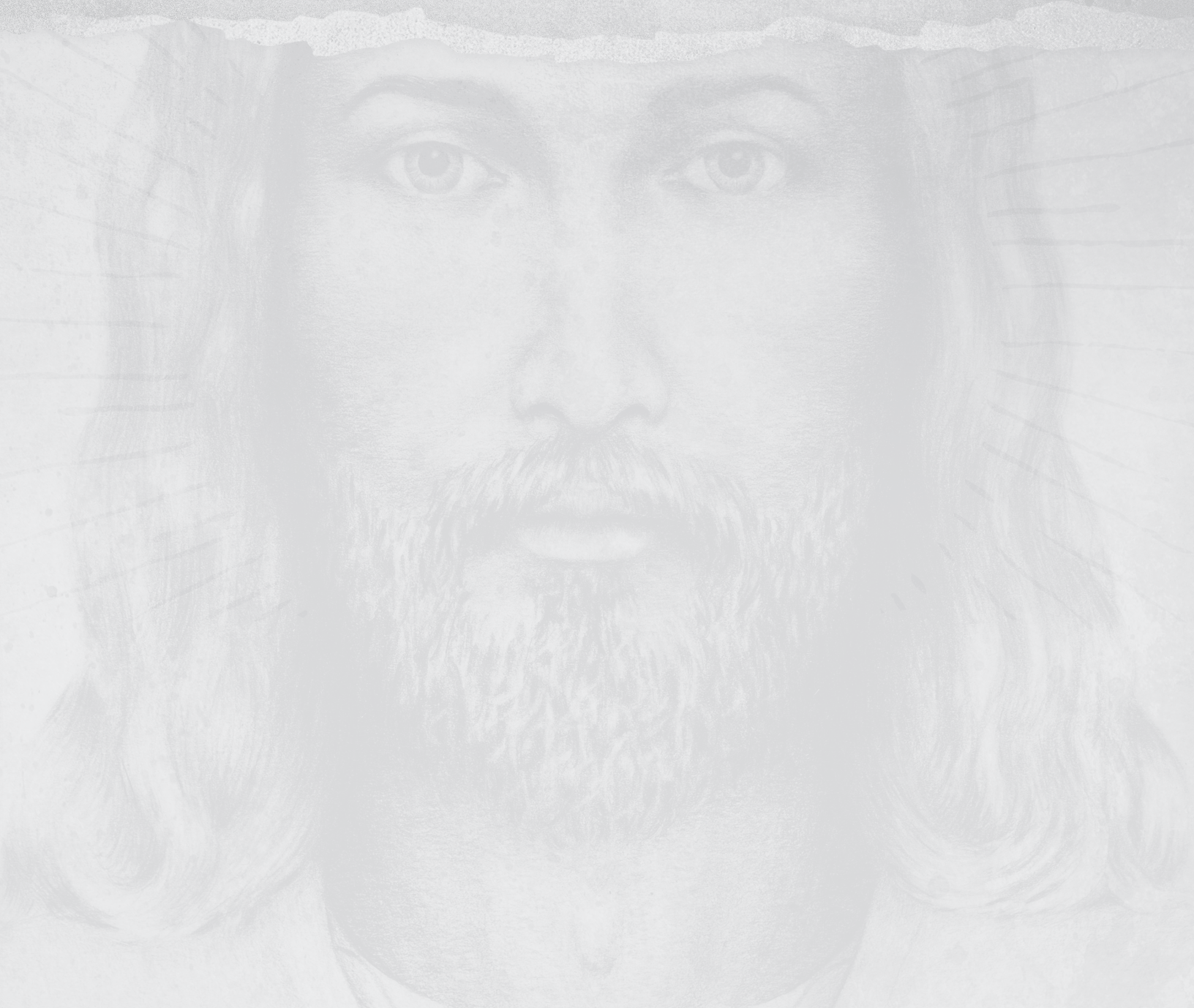
Questions and Reflection :

How do you defeat the works of Satan? Pray that God would give you supernatural love for others and His Word.

SESSION 4

THE MIRACLE MINISTRY

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE MIRACLE MINISTRY

Reading Assignment: Matthew 5:1—16

¹ AND SEEING THE MULTITUDES, HE WENT UP ON A MOUNTAIN, AND WHEN HE WAS SEATED HIS DISCIPLES CAME TO HIM. ² THEN HE OPENED HIS MOUTH AND TAUGHT THEM, SAYING: ³ “BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. ⁴ BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED. ⁵ BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH. ⁶ BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED. ⁷ BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY. ⁸ BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD. ⁹ BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD. ¹⁰ BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. ¹¹ “BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN THEY REVILE AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND SAY ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY FOR MY SAKE. ¹² REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDINGLY GLAD, FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN, FOR SO THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS WHO WERE BEFORE YOU. ¹³ “YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH; BUT IF THE SALT LOSES ITS FLAVOR, HOW SHALL IT BE SEASONED? IT IS THEN GOOD FOR NOTHING BUT TO BE THROWN OUT AND TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT BY MEN. ¹⁴ YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A CITY THAT IS SET ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN. ¹⁵ NOR DO THEY LIGHT A LAMP AND PUT IT UNDER A BASKET, BUT ON A LAMPSTAND, AND IT GIVES LIGHT TO ALL WHO ARE IN THE HOUSE. ¹⁶ LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

1. The _____ truth Jesus reveals during His ministry on earth is what He reveals to us about _____. One of Jesus’ missions was to explain the Gospel message and show us He is the _____, the innocent sacrifice for the salvation of mankind.
2. Thousands of people, or _____, would follow Jesus. But no matter how large the crowd was, He always _____ stopped to heal those who were oppressed spiritually, physically or mentally. _____ is part of Jesus and His ministry.
3. A _____ man with leprosy cried out for healing, and Jesus touches him regardless of his condition. Back then, lepers were not permitted to be in _____, but this man had no _____ other than to be healed by Jesus.

4. A _____ asked Jesus to heal his servant who was dying. Jesus was willing to walk to the man's home and heal him, but the wise commander knew the _____ of His spoken Word. Jesus was amazed at the man's _____.
5. We know God can do anything. We must be _____ enough to believe God is willing to heal us because that is when the power of God is _____ in our lives. God is always willing to stop, focus on us, touch us, and heal us.
6. The Bible teaches us about the _____ of His ministry. He healed Jews, Gentiles, and Roman soldiers. Even the _____ knew Jesus was the Son of God and that He came to bridge the gap between _____ and God.
7. Jesus had great authority and power _____ by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. They were functioning together with Jesus in His ministry. He spoke words from the _____, and by the _____ of the Holy Spirit He went about healing the sick and those oppressed by the devil.
8. God wants us to be _____ from the world and their values because their values are not His values. The world values money, prestige, beauty and power, but _____ gets excited about Christians who love. The highest value in the _____ of God is love.
9. We must align our _____ with what Jesus taught us during His ministry. Jesus taught us to be _____ so we would inherit the earth. He taught us to be _____ so we would find peace. He taught us to strive for righteousness and to be holy as God is holy.
10. Part of Jesus' ministry is to raise the bar higher in the New Testament. We are commanded to serve God not only in our _____, but also in our _____. We are not even to think about sin because we have the power to walk in the _____ of the Spirit. There is a big, big difference!
11. The things God has called us to do are to be done for His glory alone. We must have the right _____ when we pray, fast, tithe or do _____ for the kingdom of God. Actions performed without the attitude of Jesus have no eternal rewards and are _____.
12. We are _____ to do kingdom works by faith and for the glory of God because we can never _____ mankind. God sees everything we do and God knows everything we are _____, and wants us to serve Him all day, every day, from the inside out.
13. The attitude of the Spirit is completely opposite of what we learn in the world. In our power, we don't love our _____ or bless those who _____ us, or do good to those who _____ use us. The only way to do these things is to see more of God in our lives than we see of the world.

Key Words :

(a) Manifestation (b) Centurion (c) Gospel (d) Sanctioned (e) Gentile

_____ Announce to someone that something very good has taken place; good news.

_____ Roman legion commander of 100 soldiers.

_____ Person of non-Jewish faith or from a non-Jewish nation.

_____ Authoritative permission or approval; serves to support an action.

_____ Obvious to the understanding; distinctly perceived.

Session Answers :

1. greatest, Himself, Lamb of God
2. multitudes, willingly, Healing
3. Jewish, public, hope
4. Centurion, power, faith
5. bold, manifested
6. diversity, demons, mankind
7. sanctioned, Father, power
8. separate, heaven, kingdom
9. attitudes, meek, peacemakers
10. actions, thoughts, fruit
11. internal attitude, anything, worthless
12. expected, satisfy, thinking
13. enemies, curse, spitefully

Key Word Answers :

c, b, e, d, a

CONTINUE HIS WORK

READ: Luke 4

One of Jesus' missions was to explain the Gospel. Remember at this point, the Gospel in the Old Testament was sacrificing a lamb on the altar at the Temple and sprinkling the blood on the Ark of the Covenant. But more importantly, no one had a personal relationship with God.

Jesus begins sharing the good news that God wants a relationship with humanity. He teaches the most important commandment: love God and love people. Jesus teaches us how to pray and how to live out the beatitudes He gave us.

As Jesus read the prophecy of Isaiah from Luke 4 in the Temple, He revealed His thesis statement to the world:

- To preach the Gospel to the poor
- To heal the brokenhearted
- To proclaim liberty to the captives
- To recover sight to the blind
- To proclaim the acceptable Year of the Lord.

As we examine this statement, we understand He did these things routinely.

People were healed and set free. Those who were oppressed in their minds or had demonic oppression received healing spiritually, physically, and mentally.

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy for three years, and He told us after He leaves we are to continue His work.

His ministry wasn't just teaching. He went in the power of the Holy Spirit and changed lives and opened eyes. Even though he healed people physically and spiritually, He also set people free.

Questions and Reflection :

What are the things in your life that fit into the categories of healing, liberty and recovery? How do you see Jesus working in those areas?

WALK IN FAITH

READ: Matthew 8

As we examine the faithful story of the centurion, we must understand that what pleases Jesus also pleases God. And what pleases the Father and the Son is our faith.

A desperate Roman officer comes to Jesus asking to heal his servant. What does this act of coming to Jesus say?

This Roman officer was an outsider. He was not Jewish. He was a man who, in any other terms, would have been deemed a “Jewish oppressor” simply by his job title. However, He understands the spiritual authority and power Jesus operates in. His faith took him outside his comfort zone and place of authority to a position of humility and trust. The centurion appeared in front of a multitude asking Jesus for his servant’s healing.

The centurion knew Jesus is able, but the question was: Is Jesus willing?

We know God can do anything. Are you bold enough to believe God is willing to heal you? We all know He’s able. But is He willing to come into my life knowing my resume, knowing who I am, and what I’ve done in my life? Is He willing to stop all He’s doing to come and heal me or my servant?

The answer is yes.

Jesus was willing to heal the centurion’s servant and visit his house. What happens next is miraculous. At the request of the centurion, Jesus healed the servant without visiting his house.

It was the remarkable faith of the centurion that impressed Jesus.

The Bible tells us in verse 10, “When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!’”

Do you have faith that impresses God? Do you have the kind of faith that takes you out of your comfortable place where you have to be humble? The kind of faith that asks for the miraculous?

In verse 13, “Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour.”

Questions and Reflection:

What is your level of faith? Grade yourself and ask the Lord if He is impressed. Ask Him what He desires to do in your life and in your faith.

ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE

READ: Mark 10

Over the last few years, we have seen a resurgence of racism in the headlines. If nothing else, these acts of hate and violence have begun to appear more frequently.

One of the things that made Jesus stand out in the ancient world was His acceptance of all ethnicities. Even His frequent interaction with women was beyond what was acceptable in the ancient times. His ability to cross racial and gender lines was one of the most remarkable things about His ministry. It wasn't just men, it was also women. It wasn't just Jews, it was also Gentiles.

Jesus demonstrated the love of God in a way that we oftentimes overlook. In His culture, these taboo topics drew criticism and disapproval.

Jesus did these things to demonstrate God's love for all His people. No matter the skin tone or biological differences, His love was the same. No matter the socioeconomic level or age, Jesus treated everyone with respect and esteem.

As His popularity grew, He acted in ways opposite of what we see in famous people today. Instead of turning people away, He told the little children to come and sit with Him. Instead of only hanging around the popular and influential, Jesus spent time with the outcasts and the rejected.

His counter-culture stance and often-questionable company was a demonstration to everyone that God doesn't care about our skin color, accent, or gender. God doesn't accept us based on our past, our bank account, or our occupation. The only thing He cares about is you.

Don't overlook those whom Jesus did not overlook. Live a life of acceptance and forgiveness.

Questions and Reflection:

How can you combat discrimination in your mind and heart? Do something today for someone outside your normal group of people. Today, do something with a smile for someone who is different than you.

KINGDOM PRINCIPLES

READ: Matthew 13

We all love reading a good story or watching a good movie. Popular TV shows are commonplace in our culture. But storytelling has been a tradition of humanity for thousands of years.

Why is that? It is because storytelling and speaking in parables was a major part of Jesus' ministry. In Matthew 13:10–11 we read, "And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.'"

Jesus told stories not to entertain, but to teach. The parables He told were purposeful. They were to reveal the Kingdom of God.

In Matthew 18, Jesus tells multiple parables such as the sower and the seed, the leaven in the bread, and the treasure in the field. This series of parables has a theme, and the theme is all about the Kingdom of God.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus took time to reveal the Kingdom to His followers. He wanted us to understand how the Kingdom functions, or how things work in the Kingdom of heaven. What is the Kingdom of heaven? How do we fit in, and who will we be in the Kingdom of God?

Jesus made it a point of emphasis to teach us how God's economy in His Kingdom works.

Questions and Reflection:

What is your favorite story Jesus told? Meditate on how it reveals the Kingdom of heaven and then apply that principle to your life today.

WOOD, HAY AND STUBBLE

Read : Matthew 6

Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:1–5:

Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Jesus teaches that whatever you do, you must do it with the right attitude or you have no reward.

He moved sin from the outside to the inside because, ultimately, that's what God cares about. He cares about the inside, your heart. Jesus brings this out in His teaching. He tells us we shouldn't seek the glory of mankind because we have a greater reward in the Kingdom of heaven.

In fact, we learn that each of us along with our works will be judged. Our works will be either wood, hay and stubble, or gold, silver and precious stones. Then fire, which is God's judgment, will come down and test our works (1 Corinthians 3:12–13).

Jesus already paid for our sins. Therefore, the wood, hay and stubble in our lives is not sin. What is it then? It's doing Kingdom acts with the wrong attitude. It's self-righteousness.

Part of His ministry was revealing that our actions are not the only things that matters. It is the motives that lie within our hearts.

If you pray and you want to be seen of mankind, then you have no reward. It is wood, hay and stubble that will be burned. If you give to the poor just so others see what a great person you are, there's no reward in that. But if you do things with the right motivation of the heart, you will be rewarded in heaven.

Questions and Reflection :

Are you seeking approval from others or approval from God? Pray that God would reveal in your heart when you are doing things with the wrong motive.

SESSION 5

THE AGENDA OF HEAVEN

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE AGENDA OF HEAVEN

Reading Assignment: John 8:1—12

¹ BUT JESUS WENT TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. ² NOW EARLY IN THE MORNING HE CAME AGAIN INTO THE TEMPLE, AND ALL THE PEOPLE CAME TO HIM ; AND HE SAT DOWN AND TAUGHT THEM. ³ THEN THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES BROUGHT TO HIM A WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY. AND WHEN THEY HAD SET HER IN THE MIDST, ⁴ THEY SAID TO HIM, “TEACHER, THIS WOMAN WAS CAUGHT IN ADULTERY, IN THE VERY ACT. ⁵ NOW MOSES, IN THE LAW, COMMANDED US THAT SUCH SHOULD BE STONED. BUT WHAT DO YOU SAY?” ⁶ THIS THEY SAID, TESTING HIM, THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING OF WHICH TO ACCUSE HIM. BUT JESUS STOOPED DOWN AND WROTE ON THE GROUND WITH HIS FINGER, AS THOUGH HE DID NOT HEAR. ⁷ SO WHEN THEY CONTINUED ASKING HIM, HE RAISED HIMSELF UP AND SAID TO THEM, “HE WHO IS WITHOUT SIN AMONG YOU, LET HIM THROW A STONE AT HER FIRST.” ⁸ AND AGAIN HE STOOPED DOWN AND WROTE ON THE GROUND. ⁹ THEN THOSE WHO HEARD IT, BEING CONVICTED BY THEIR CONSCIENCE, WENT OUT ONE BY ONE, BEGINNING WITH THE OLDEST EVEN TO THE LAST. AND JESUS WAS LEFT ALONE, AND THE WOMAN STANDING IN THE MIDST. ¹⁰ WHEN JESUS HAD RAISED HIMSELF UP AND SAW NO ONE BUT THE WOMAN, HE SAID TO HER, “WOMAN, WHERE ARE THOSE ACCUSERS OF YOURS? HAS NO ONE CONDEMNED YOU?” ¹¹ SHE SAID, “NO ONE, LORD.” AND JESUS SAID TO HER, “NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU ; GO AND SIN NO MORE.” ¹² THEN JESUS SPOKE TO THEM AGAIN, SAYING, “I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. HE WHO FOLLOWS ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

1. There is a mindset in modern day culture to _____ Jesus as a weak man. Some have even gone so far as to _____ His love and compassion as more _____ rather than masculine, but this is not true. Jesus walked as a man, a strong man, on the earth and He is a man in heaven.
2. A woman caught in _____ was taken to the Temple, and according to Jewish law the religious leaders ordered that she be stoned. They wanted to invoke God's _____, but Jesus was more interested in the _____ of the woman and restoring her back to God.
3. Jesus contented more with the religious leaders than He did with _____. We are to recognize sin, but we are called to _____ and understand the hearts of others. We have revelation knowledge and we are to handle things just as _____ would have through intervention and restoration.
4. The woman at the well was surprised when Jesus spoke to her because He was a _____ and they had no

dealings with _____ people. Jesus told her of her past and present sins, but He didn't _____ the woman because He was interested in repentance and her future.

5. The Bible tells us when the _____ returned and found Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman, they were _____ that He would even speak to her. We can assume they were shocked and never spoke to Him about the incident because it was _____.
6. People question why Christians _____ with certain sects of the population that don't have our same beliefs. Well, how else will they hear the _____ if we don't reach out to them the way Jesus reached out the Samaritan woman? We are not to _____ ourselves from others.
7. The most _____ aspect about Jesus is He never asked His followers to do anything that He hadn't already done. He sacrificed first and he loved first. Jesus taught us to _____ the evil done to us and not allow it to grow within us and _____ out of control.
8. Jesus turned the other _____ and prayed for those who persecuted Him and spitefully used Him. Yet this behavior is not weak or _____ because Jesus is a man and when He returns He will _____ billions who did not believe in Him. This is not weakness, it is strength.
9. The _____ - _____ angered Jesus because the exchange rate was too high. Jesus made a whip and lashed out at those who _____ from the merchandise in the Temple. He turned over tables and beat them in front of the guards.
10. Throughout history, travelers or families who were not _____ were allowed to purchase their sacrifice, but some were not able to _____ the costly exchange and couldn't offer a _____ to the Lord.
11. The religious leaders were profiting from a _____ given to the Jews in Scripture. They had turned the Father's house into a _____ . Jesus was a compassionate man who walked in peace, but when you crossed the line He _____ Himself.
12. This has _____ over the last 50+ years where pastors are merchandizing the Gospel through TV and social media, and this angers the Lord. They are making the Holy God that we serve into a profitable _____ for their glory, and their followers are their _____.
13. When the disciples were _____ with the Holy Spirit they went out two-by-two with little money and no food. They _____ God to provide them with their needs as they traveled place to place. God wants us to trust Him for _____ just as the disciples trusted in Him.

Key Words :

(a) Scribes (b) Stoning (c) Money-Changers (d) Market Place (e) Samaritan

_____ Forum where commodities and animals were set out for sale as merchandise offerings.

_____ Capital punishment where a group throws stones at a restrained criminal until they die.

_____ Smallest and oldest sect of people in the world; mixed inhabitants out of Babylon.

_____ Dealers who charged a high price to exchange foreign coins for Temple currency.

_____ Subordinate class of Levites who engaged in various ways as writers.

Session Answers :

1. perceive, attribute, feminine
2. adultery, judgment, heart
3. sinners, love, Jesus
4. Jew, Samaritan, condemn
5. disciples, marveled, unacceptable
6. engage, Gospel, insulate
7. inspiring, absorb, spiral
8. cheek, feminine, execute
9. money-changers, profited
10. herdsmen, afford, sacrifice
11. commandment, den of thieves, engaged
12. expanded, business, customers
13. empowered, allowed, everything

Key Word Answers :

d, b, e, c, a

NO CONDEMNATION

READ: John 8

We all know the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery, even still, let's look at a quick recap. Jesus is in the Temple when the religious leaders brought a woman at His feet. She is charged with adultery and their judgment is death by stoning. This places Jesus in a predicament because He must navigate the Mosaic Law while also demonstrating compassion. In other words, the religious leaders set a trap before Him.

The rulers of the Synagogue were out for blood and, let's be honest, it was a well thought out plan. In ancient Israel, nothing sold more tabloids than a scandal within the Temple about a religious figure. Especially when the news was about a preacher condemning someone to death or going against the religious law of the day. One way or another, everyone saw the headline as "Scandal Brewing: Jesus and the Adulterous Woman!"

So, what did Jesus do? He did exactly what they didn't expect because He didn't react with urgency to their demands. The Bible tells us He bent down and wrote in the sand. Jesus was stalling, He was waiting, but what was He waiting for? Perhaps it was an answer from His Father or perhaps He was waiting for conviction to fall upon the crowd.

What He wrote in the sand is a mystery left to be answered in eternity, but what happens next completely diffused the situation. John 8:7-8 says, "So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.' And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground." Twice Jesus delayed reacting to the situation. The Bible records the play-by-play of the aftermath in great detail.

Verses 9-11 reads, "Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'"

Why didn't Jesus condemn her? He had the authority and the power to do so, but He knew she was a lost soul. She knew nothing about God. She was lost and merely doing in life what she knew to do.

Here Jesus is showing us the heart of God. Jesus is illustrating that God judges, but He also brings our sins to the surface and draws us to repent. But understand the purpose of the people involved. The Sadducees and Pharisees and scribes were more interested in judgment than in the adulteress woman.

But Jesus was more interested in the woman and her soul than the judgment of others.

Jesus cares more about the hearts of His people and their restoration to Him more than He cares about condemnation and judgment. He cares about a change of the heart toward Him. Jesus tells her to go and sin no more. This means if you're going to live then you have to stop sinning.

We have to start looking at His actions and mimic them in our own lives.

Questions and Reflection :

What sins have you been thrown at the feet of Jesus for in your life? Have you left that place hopeful, or does that sin still exist? Repent today of those sins and do as Jesus commands: "...go and sin no more."

TRUE WORSHIPPERS

READ: John 4

In John 4, the story of the Samaritan woman encapsulates Jesus' view of forgiveness and grace. Again, we see Jesus interacting culturally with someone He shouldn't. First of all, she was a Samaritan, and the Jews and Samaritans were very unfriendly toward each other. You could even say their prejudice was mutual. Secondly, beyond her ethnicity, she was also a woman. Again, a man talking to a woman alone was not acceptable within that culture.

In the story, we understand the woman was even surprised Jesus was talking to her. After a brief interaction, Jesus gets right to the point. He tells her she has been married five times and the man she currently is living with is not her husband. But Jesus doesn't go any deeper with blame or disapproval; instead, He gently tells her not to live that way.

In my opinion, Jesus revealed the intimate details about her life so she would know the power He walked in. He reveals sinful details about her life to get to the real crutch of the issue, which is true worship. God deeply cares about who, what, when, where and how we worship.

Jesus' interaction with the woman demonstrates His compassion for someone who doesn't quite have it all together. He doesn't condone the sin, He simply points it back to worship. He knows once she figures out the worship part the other pieces will fall into place.

We must understand sin blocks authentic worship from taking place. In this story, Jesus wants to move past sin in order to get to the heart of worship.

Jesus tells her in verses 21–24, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

That day is here because God is looking for those who will worship Him at home or together in fellowship and in spirit and truth. God is looking for us to begin worshipping Him sincerely because He knows when that happens, the repentance and life-changing events will work themselves out for His glory.

Questions and Reflection :

What is blocking your worship to God? Today, take a moment to reflect and truly give God worship.

JESUS WAS FIRST

READ: Matthew 5

For me, one of the most inspiring things about Jesus is how He did not ask His followers to do anything He didn't already do first.

- He was first to love us.
- He was first to sacrifice for us.
- He was first to serve others.
- He was first to take care of the sick, the hurting and the lost.
- He was first to show us the first will be last, and the last will be first.
- He was first to teach us how to pray and how to give.
- He was first to demonstrate forgiveness and love.

We are to be like Jesus and absorb the evil that is done to us and not allow it to spiral out of control and grow within our hearts. The world looks at our faith as weakness. They do not view life with the lens of Kingdom perspective. But, friend, we must live with the Kingdom perspective. It's the only one that matters.

Even in His death, Jesus modeled love for us. His executioners put the nails in His hands, and He prayed for them. Stop and think about that for a moment—His pain and torment are incomprehensible for us to imagine, yet He prayed for them!

He loved us first; therefore, let us love Him first!

Questions and Reflection:

Are you modeling your life after Jesus? What are some of the things you can view today from the Kingdom perspective?

UNFAIR EXCHANGE

READ: John 2

Many times, the world paints Jesus as a loving, longhaired hippie with His followers dancing behind Him with flowers in their hair, but this couldn't be further from the truth. In every book of the Gospels, we see Jesus with a wide range of emotions. He emanated love, but He was fierce in His rebukes of the religious leaders. He was sharp and quickly disappointed when the disciples didn't have enough faith. He was counter-cultural with women and Gentiles. Every emotion we feel, He felt as well, including anger.

In John 2, the Bible recounts the story of Jesus driving out the money-changers from the Temple during Passover. You see, it was required that families offer a sacrifice at the Temple for sin, but if a family didn't have access to the certain type of sacrifice needed to be made, they had to purchase it outside the Temple gates. For example, a blacksmith wouldn't have access to a lamb because his profession wasn't that of a shepherd or herdsman. Consequently, the blacksmith would buy the necessary lamb outside the Temple and proceed inside to make the sacrifice.

Not only would someone need to buy the type of sacrifice needed according to Jewish law, they would also have to transact all purchases in Jewish coins, not in Roman currency.

This is where the corruption began.

To make the exchange, money-changers would raise the exchange rate to unprecedented highs. This made it nearly impossible for the poor to make a sacrifice. The Temple leaders were also in on the unfair trade, which only extended the corruption to the leadership. This is what angered Jesus. The system was crooked and it kept the poor from being able to worship God.

So Jesus did something. He fashioned a leather whip and drove them out of His Father's house! Our Savior defended the defenseless with a whip made from His own hands! That doesn't sound like a docile, long-haired hippie at all.

What does His righteous anger tell us? It tells us Jesus could not stand the merchandising of worship. He could not stand the exclusivity of worship. The Temple of God belonged to everyone, and that includes the outcast and the poor and the downtrodden. When these greedy, selfish and corrupt people began to cut off access to God for others, it made Jesus mad and He took action. He jumped in to defend and protect the holiness and worship of God at the Temple.

Questions and Reflection:

Have you ever thought of Jesus as having a wide range of emotions? What are some Bible stories you can think about where He has an unexpected emotional response? Ask God to reveal His true nature to you so you can become more intimate with Him.

COVETOUS PRACTICES

READ: 2 Peter 2

2 Peter 2:1–2 reads, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth (or the truth which is the Word of God) will be blasphemed” (parenthesis mine).

“Covet” means to desire something that belongs to someone else. In other words, I want what you have. The tenth commandment talks about coveting. It is an act of wanting, desiring or lusting for someone or something. Verse 3 tells us the false prophets and teachers will exploit the believers, “by covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgments has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”

Verses 12 and 13 read, “But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it please to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast on you,” Who will feast on whom? Again, the false prophets and teachers will feast, eat up and destroy the believers.

Verses 14 and 15 continue with, “having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Boer, who loved the wages of unrighteousness . . .”

This means they are enticing you by teaching and using words that will covet you for their glory and benefit. The Bible tells us they are making merchandise of you, and you have become a commodity to them. For instance, how many of these prayer cloths can we sell? Or how many other religious objects can we market to the believers for our financial gain? Or worse, send me \$100 and I will send you a religious trinket! This marketing concept has greatly expanded over the last 50 years where false prophets are merchandising the Gospel.

Yesterday, we studied Jesus in the Temple and the anger of the Lord that raged within Him about crooked practices inside His Father’s house. He showed us that those in leadership who know better are exploiting the flock by merchandising the people of God. They are receiving wages of unrighteousness by making the pure God we serve into a business or something that benefits them for their glory. This makes them become people-pleasers and not true worshippers of God.

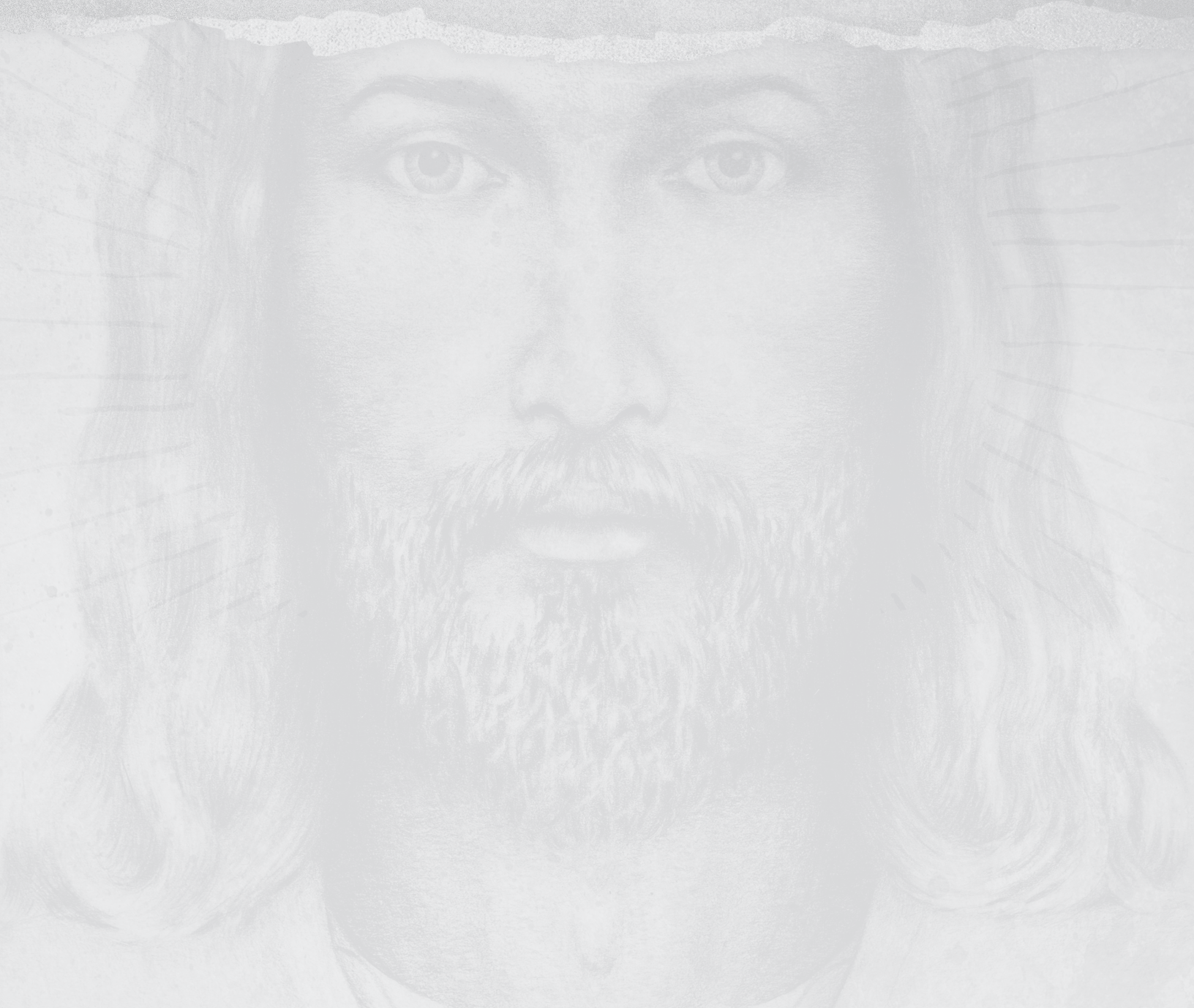
Questions and Reflection:

What area of your life has been merchandised? Are you selling out to something, or perhaps someone, other than God? Ask God to reveal the true motive of your heart.

SESSION 6

THE INNER CIRCLE

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE INNER CIRCLE

Reading Assignment: John 12:1—13

¹THEN, SIX DAYS BEFORE THE PASSOVER, JESUS CAME TO BETHANY, WHERE LAZARUS WAS WHO HAD BEEN DEAD, WHOM HE HAD RAISED FROM THE DEAD. ²THERE THEY MADE HIM A SUPPER; AND MARTHA SERVED, BUT LAZARUS WAS ONE OF THOSE WHO SAT AT THE TABLE WITH HIM. ³THEN MARY TOOK A POUND OF VERY COSTLY OIL OF SPIKENARD, ANOINTED THE FEET OF JESUS, AND WIPED HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR. AND THE HOUSE WAS FILLED WITH THE FRAGRANCE OF THE OIL. ⁴THEN ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES, JUDAS ISCARIOT, SIMON'S SON, WHO WOULD BETRAY HIM, SAID, ⁵"WHY WAS THIS FRAGRANT OIL NOT SOLD FOR THREE HUNDRED DENARII AND GIVEN TO THE POOR?" ⁶THIS HE SAID, NOT THAT HE CARED FOR THE POOR, BUT BECAUSE HE WAS A THIEF, AND HAD THE MONEY BOX; AND HE USED TO TAKE WHAT WAS PUT IN IT. ⁷BUT JESUS SAID, "LET HER ALONE; SHE HAS KEPT THIS FOR THE DAY OF MY BURIAL. ⁸FOR THE POOR YOU HAVE WITH YOU ALWAYS, BUT ME YOU DO NOT HAVE ALWAYS." ⁹NOW A GREAT MANY OF THE JEWS KNEW THAT HE WAS THERE; AND THEY CAME, NOT FOR JESUS' SAKE ONLY, BUT THAT THEY MIGHT ALSO SEE LAZARUS, WHOM HE HAD RAISED FROM THE DEAD. ¹⁰BUT THE CHIEF PRIESTS PLOTTED TO PUT LAZARUS TO DEATH ALSO, ¹¹BECAUSE ON ACCOUNT OF HIM MANY OF THE JEWS WENT AWAY AND BELIEVED IN JESUS. ¹²THE NEXT DAY A GREAT MULTITUDE THAT HAD COME TO THE FEAST, WHEN THEY HEARD THAT JESUS WAS COMING TO JERUSALEM, ¹³TOOK BRANCHES OF PALM TREES AND WENT OUT TO MEET HIM, AND CRIED OUT: "HOSANNA! 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' THE KING OF ISRAEL!"

1. Jesus engaged _____ with many people during His years of ministry. There was a lot of _____ surrounding Him and the multitudes that followed Him. Some people _____ who Jesus was and the Gospel message He taught, while others had no clue.
2. Mary of _____ recognized Jesus was from God, and for more than a year she saved money to purchase _____ to anoint His feet. Even though Judas complained of her extravagance, Mary blocked out his disapproval and _____ on Jesus.
3. Of all the inner circle _____ in His life, the Bible tells us that Mary was the one person who always did the right thing. From her first _____ with Jesus she started to save money for His burial. Her choice was to _____ all else, sit at His feet, and listen to Him.

4. The _____ of Jesus drew Mary to His feet in _____. She wasn't satisfied sitting in the background straining to listen or to hear His message from someone else. She eliminated all the _____ and focused on Him. This is why she understood who Jesus was.
5. Jesus had a special relationship with Mary of Bethany, they were _____. In Matthew's account of pouring the oil on His feet, Jesus _____ them wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world she would be _____ for her adoration.
6. We cannot be distracted from _____ by the drama that surrounds us today. We are to humble ourselves _____ and sit at the feet of Jesus in an effort to gain revelation knowledge because this is where _____ is found in the heart of Christians.
7. Judas was part of the inner circle and witnessed Jesus raise _____ from the dead. Judas was anointed as one of the twelve and played an active role in the ministry as _____, but he never elevated Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Judas did not have Jesus in his _____.
8. Judas considered Jesus as an _____, or simply another man. Likewise, someone today who does not believe Jesus is Lord and Savior of the earth, or if they believe He is just a historical figure, then their thinking is that of Judas Iscariot, and so is their _____.
9. Judas' betrayal of Jesus and Peter denying Him both were actions _____ Jesus, but what they did after their sins is what makes the difference. Peter _____ and went on to preach the Gospel, while Judas was self-absorbed and only felt _____.
10. Jesus was in the _____ of Peter as Lord and Savior, Master and King. Even though Jesus told Peter ahead of time he would deny Him, it was personal _____ that caused Peter to fail as a _____ in the courtyard that night.
11. Jesus _____ Peter because He knew the heart of the man, and it is the heart of mankind that _____ whether or not they are saved. Yes, Judas was engaged with Christ and he actively attended church, but his heart was not _____ by the truth.
12. The drama surrounding Jesus followed Him to the cross where Mary Magdalene, His mother Mary, and Mary of Bethany were by His side in death. They were fully _____ to Jesus. Like them, we need to _____ Jesus with a pure heart _____ with commitment.
13. Lastly, part of His inner circle was His cousin, John the Baptist, whose ministry was that of a _____. John knew the Messiah was greater than he and _____, which is turning away from sin and walking toward Christ, was the only way to _____.

Key Words :

(a) Distracted (b) Virtue (c) Diversity (d) Humility (e) Worship

_____ Composed of different types of people, cultures, groups or organizations.

_____ Act of expressing reverence; Christian homage rendered to God.

_____ Direct one's attention away from their desired focus or initial intention.

_____ Conform to a particular standard of moral excellence.

_____ Freedom from pride, vanity or arrogance; modest view of one's importance.

Session Answers :

1. personally, drama, understood
2. Bethany, fragrant oil, focused
3. characters, encounter, disregard
4. presence, worship, distractions
5. friends, assured, remembered
6. Jesus, spiritually, peace
7. Lazarus, treasurer, heart
8. equal, eternal destiny
9. against, repented, remorse
10. heart, weakness, witness
11. restored, determines, converted
12. committed, serve, overflowing
13. forerunner, repentance, salvation

Key Word Answers :

c, e, a, b, d

PERSONAL DEVOTION SESSION 6 // DAY 1

AT HIS FEET

READ: John 12

Of all the characters in Scripture who walked with Jesus, there's one person who got it right all the time, and it was Mary of Bethany. The perfect story to illustrate this point happened on the Saturday before His crucifixion.

We see a group of disciples together with Mary and Martha when a very interesting interaction happens. Mary pours an expensive ointment, a year's worth of wages, on Jesus' feet and anoints Him with oil.

We read in John 12:4–8, “Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.’”

Obviously, we know Judas will ultimately betray Jesus, but we must ask ourselves, why was it that Mary constantly got things right?

She got it right time-and-time again, even when Jesus showed up at her house in a different story. Mary spent time in conversation with Him while her sister, Martha, continued to do housework. Jesus admonishes Martha and blesses Mary.

Mary of Bethany appears once more at His feet during the resurrection of Lazarus.

During all three instances, Mary is close to Jesus. She is at His feet. What does this mean?

It means Mary is not distracted by humanity. Her pride has vanished and she is humbled in each case. She was at His feet paying attention and serving Him. She wasn't caught being busy or in another room with everyone else. Instead, she drew near to Him.

Jesus had a special relationship with her, and it was because of her desire to be with Him and her lack of pride. This woman of virtue showed us what it means to have a heart for Jesus.

Questions and Reflection:

How can you spend time at the feet of Jesus? Ask God to give you the same heart as Mary of Bethany.

CHANGE OF HEART

READ: MARK 14

What many people never consider is that Judas walked with Jesus for three years before betraying Him.

One must wonder how that happens. How do you have an intimate relationship with Jesus and end up betraying Him? If it can happen to someone who witnessed Jesus' miracles, had dinner with Him, and interacted with Him daily, then it can happen to anyone. And my friend, that is scary!

Even at the last supper, Judas wasn't assumed to be the one who would betray Jesus.

In fact, Judas looked like a believer. He looked like he fit in with the twelve. No one pointed at him or thought he stood out from the others, right?

Think about it for a moment—for three years this man witnessed the ministry of Jesus, and his heart did not change. It was still focused on money, wealth and things of the world. We don't know what was in his heart other than the Bible tells us he had an evil spirit (John 6:70).

I don't think Judas really wanted Jesus executed, because in the garden as he's betraying Jesus, Judas told the guards to lead Jesus away safely. Many Biblical commentaries recount he most likely didn't value Jesus more than he valued his own life and his own agenda.

Judas did what humanity does today.

They care more about money than God. They care more about the way they see life than the way God sees it.

It's a simple answer. Judas cared more about money than he cared about God. Judas cared more about his agenda than he cared about God's agenda.

Judas did not position Jesus as Lord and Savior of his life. He didn't give Jesus the authority over his life. Judas still thought of Jesus as an equal—just an ordinary man.

Questions and Reflection :

Have you put a value on Jesus? How do you see Him? Ask God to create in you a supernatural insight into the value of His sacrifice for you.

LEARN GOD'S VOICE

READ: Matthew 16

There are two distinct and separate stories within Matthew 16 about the Apostle Peter. The first is when Jesus walks with His disciples in Verses 13–16 and He asks, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” Peter in like fashion, always willing to raise his hand and move first, stated that Jesus is the Christ. The Son of God. The One we are waiting for. Jesus is the Messiah. This is a confession of faith.

In return, Jesus gives Peter a star, a compliment. Jesus told Peter that flesh and blood didn’t tell him that—meaning this is not discerned by himself—but God revealed it to him. Jesus then tells him that upon this rock, and the rock is the confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, that His church will be built. So it was upon the rock of that confession in our hearts that God is going to build the church.

In the same chapter, Jesus is telling them of the Gospel plan and that He has to be crucified and He will rise on the third day. But Peter emphatically says that he would not let that happen to Jesus. But then in Verse 22, Jesus tells Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan!” When Peter spoke those words, he was listening to the voice of Satan.

We see here in the great apostle that God reveals to us His wisdom and revelation knowledge.

I want you to understand there is another voice. After the fall of man, Satan’s voice becomes more normal to us. It is his spiritual voice that makes more sense to us, and he has more influence over us. It is only by activating our faith and learning God’s voice that we will be able to discern between the two.

Questions and Reflection:

Are you able to discern between the two voices? Recall a time when you knew you heard from God? How do you overcome doubt? Pray today that God would continue to speak to you, and that you would know His voice in an intimate way.

AN OPEN HEART

READ: Matthew 13

How did Peter learn in Matthew 16 that Jesus was the Christ? It was because God revealed this knowledge to Peter in his open heart, and then as he walked with Jesus, he was able to see and comprehend things. It was revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Son of God.

At the same time, what happened to Judas? He saw the same miracles and heard the same teachings and was in the same boat when Jesus walked on the water. You see, Judas went through miracle after miracle and witnessed the same things as Peter, but it was not revealed to Judas as it was to Peter. Why is that? It is because the heart of Judas was closed; therefore, he did not see things as Peter saw them.

In Matthew 13:11, Jesus tells them there are two groups of people, “. . . because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”

Why are they not digesting the message? Well, Jesus calls it back to the heart, which is the spirit of humanity. This is what we have to learn. You see, the Spirit of God reveals things to us in our spirits; it is not head knowledge. There is a difference between the head and the heart. Some of the apostles and disciples could not understand what Jesus was saying while others wondered why they could not see things clearly. Jesus told them it was because their hearts are dull of hearing.

When we see someone who is really closed off and rejecting the truth, it is our job to preach and teach the Gospel. But not everyone is going to receive it because not everyone's heart is open to the message.

Questions and Reflection :

Do you know someone who is closed to the message of the Gospel? How can you open their heart to it? Pray for them today that their heart would be softened and opened to truth.

STEP OUT IN FAITH

READ: Matthew 14:22—31

I love this story! Stop for a moment and picture it in your mind. They are in the boat and they are looking over the side when Jesus appears in the middle of the sea walking on the water. Suddenly, Peter shouts to Him:

“Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

Jesus answered, “Come.”

Peter climbs out of the boat and begins to walk on the water. Peter is doing the supernatural.

Verse 24 tells us, “But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.” I want you to notice this was already the condition of the storm before Peter stepped out of the boat. When Peter took his attention off of Jesus and looked around at the waves and circumstances surrounding him, his faith left and doubt came in.

You have to ask the question, what was keeping Peter above the water? It was the Word of God that kept Peter above the water, because he had Jesus’ Word to come to Him. This told Peter that if he wanted to walk on the water, then come to Me. God, through Jesus, ordained that Peter could walk on the water.

He steps out of the boat and begins to walk on the water. As long as his eyes were fixed on Jesus, he was able to do the supernatural. But when he took his eyes off Jesus, his faith left and fear entered, so he began to sink. It wasn’t God pushing or dunking him under the water. It was his faith leaving and fear coming in that caused him to sink.

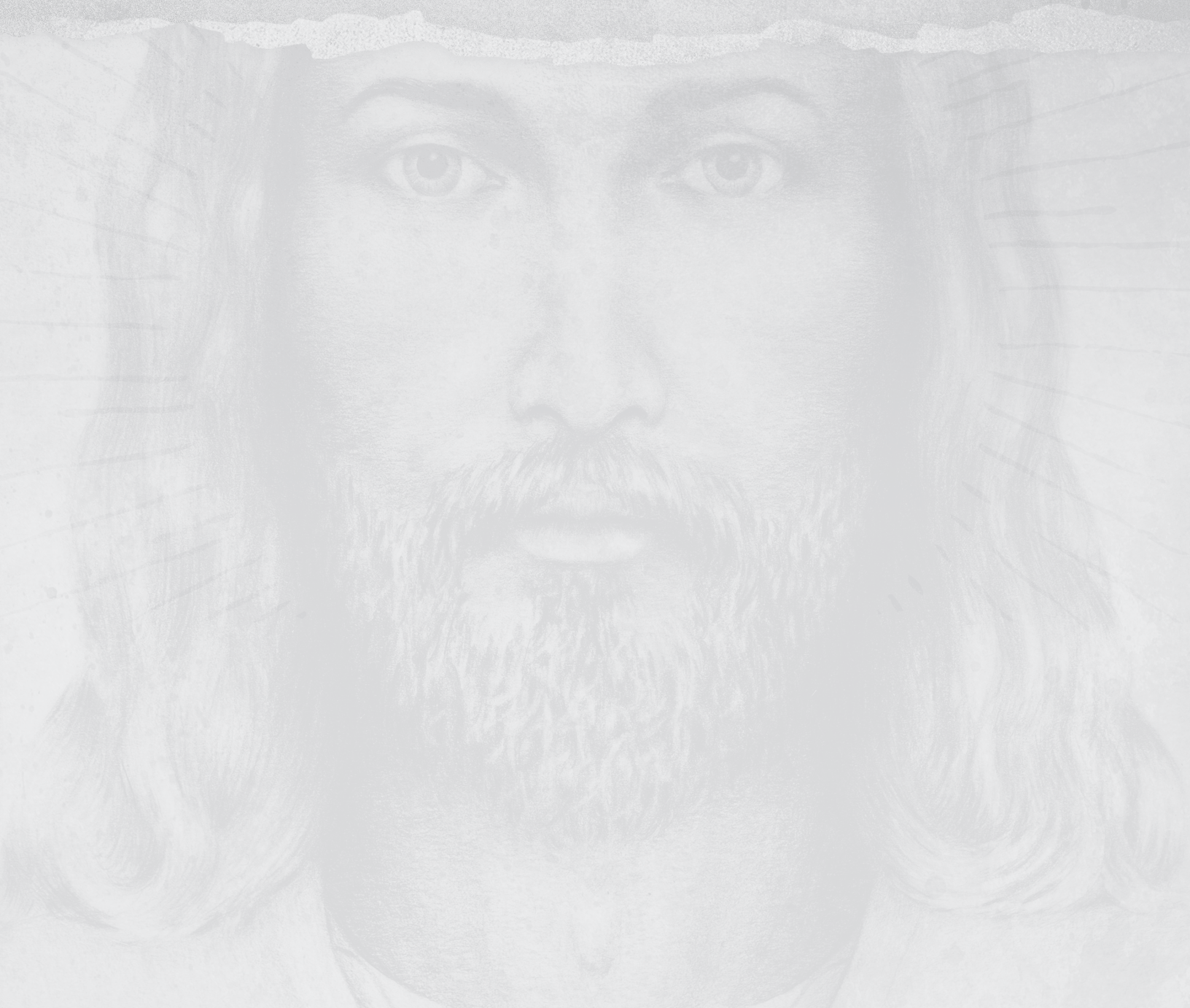
Questions and Reflection:

When have you recently stepped out in faith? How can you keep your eyes on Jesus and not fall into doubt? Pray today that God would give you boldness and courage to step out of the boat.

SESSION 7

THE CUP

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE CUP

Reading Assignment: Psalm 22:1—18

¹ MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME? WHY ARE YOU SO FAR FROM HELPING ME, AND FROM THE WORDS OF MY GROANING? ² O MY GOD, I CRY IN THE DAYTIME, BUT YOU DO NOT HEAR; AND IN THE NIGHT SEASON, AND AM NOT SILENT. ³ BUT YOU ARE HOLY, ENTHRONED IN THE PRAISES OF ISRAEL. ⁴ OUR FATHERS TRUSTED IN YOU; THEY TRUSTED, AND YOU DELIVERED THEM. ⁵ THEY CRIED TO YOU, AND WERE DELIVERED; THEY TRUSTED IN YOU, AND WERE NOT ASHAMED. ⁶ BUT I AM A WORM, AND NO MAN; A REPROACH OF MEN, AND DESPISED BY THE PEOPLE. ⁷ ALL THOSE WHO SEE ME RIDICULE ME; THEY SHOOT OUT THE LIP, THEY SHAKE THE HEAD, SAYING, ⁸ “HE TRUSTED IN THE LORD, LET HIM RESCUE HIM; LET HIM DELIVER HIM, SINCE HE DELIGHTS IN HIM!” ⁹ BUT YOU ARE HE WHO TOOK ME OUT OF THE WOMB; YOU MADE ME TRUST WHILE ON MY MOTHER’S BREASTS. ¹⁰ I WAS CAST UPON YOU FROM BIRTH. FROM MY MOTHER’S WOMB YOU HAVE BEEN MY GOD. ¹¹ BE NOT FAR FROM ME, FOR TROUBLE IS NEAR; FOR THERE IS NONE TO HELP. ¹² MANY BULLS HAVE SURROUNDED ME; STRONG BULLS OF BASHAN HAVE ENCIRCLED ME. ¹³ THEY GAPE AT ME WITH THEIR MOUTHS, LIKE A RAGING AND ROARING LION. ¹⁴ I AM POURED OUT LIKE WATER, AND ALL MY BONES ARE OUT OF JOINT; MY HEART IS LIKE WAX; IT HAS MELTED WITHIN ME. ¹⁵ MY STRENGTH IS DRIED UP LIKE A POTSDHERD, AND MY TONGUE CLINGS TO MY JAWS; YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME TO THE DUST OF DEATH. ¹⁶ FOR DOGS HAVE SURROUNDED ME; THE CONGREGATION OF THE WICKED HAS ENCLOSED ME. THEY PIERCED MY HANDS AND MY FEET; ¹⁷ I CAN COUNT ALL MY BONES. THEY LOOK AND STARE AT ME. ¹⁸ THEY DIVIDE MY GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS.

1. At the _____ Jesus informed His disciples that very night one among them would betray Him and another would deny Him three times. They left the _____ and went to a garden in _____ where Jesus told them to wait and pray.
2. Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him a little further into in the garden. He told them how deeply _____ He was in mind, soul, body and spirit. He asked them to stay there and _____ while He prayed to the _____.
3. He fell to the ground and prayed that this hour might pass from Him. Jesus knew everything was possible with Abba, Father, but His _____ and _____ worked against His Spirit because He was in agony over the _____ crucifixion.

4. We see all three parts of _____ in Jesus as His soul was reasoning with His mind, and His body reacted by sweating drops of _____ from the pressure and stress. The Lord was in a place of pain and agony yet His _____ said, “Not My will, but Yours be done.”
5. At any time Jesus could have _____ Himself from the agony of the cup that was before Him, but He _____ it for our salvation. Like anyone else Jesus had a _____ – _____ and He could have walked away from the cross.
6. The group approached the garden looking for Jesus of Nazareth and when Jesus replied, “I am He,” they fell _____ to the ground. There was an _____ and Peter cut off one of the guard’s ears. But Jesus, still doing the work of the Father, _____ the injured man.
7. After His followers _____ Him, we learn of a certain _____ wearing a linen cloth over his naked body came near the garden scene. This possibly was a _____ that took place because of the power that was released when Jesus spoke the words, “I am He.”
8. The Roman guards knew the arrest of Jesus was highly _____ and powerful things happened that night in the garden of Gethsemane. They witnessed the _____ of the Spirit of God in the arrested man they were carrying off to face a mock _____ and condemnation.
9. Jesus was first sent to the Jewish high priest, _____, who then sent Him to _____ in Judea. Pilate then sent Jesus to _____ in Galilee, but He was brought back to Pilate for the final verdict.
10. Jesus kept His _____ and stayed calm while answering Pilate’s questions even though He knew what the _____ future held for Him. Jesus remained in _____ when they scourged Him, mocked Him, spat upon Him and beat Him with a rod.
11. He did not cry out in _____ or pain when they nailed His hands and feet to the cross. Instead, He prayed _____ for His executioners because they didn’t know what they were doing. We are told in Isaiah 53 He was “as a sheep before its shearers is _____.”
12. We learn in Scripture the cup represents all the suffering Jesus endured for humanity’s salvation, but the _____ of His agony was the _____ from God. Jesus became _____ as He hung on the cross for all of our sins, shame, guilt and iniquities.
13. Who placed the cup before Jesus? We all did. Our _____ sin against God placed Jesus on the cross to die for us. Because we are _____ from God, Jesus had to be separated from God. Because we are _____ by God, Jesus had to be forsaken by God.

Key Words :

(a) Consecrated (b) Abba (c) Gethsemane (d) Praetorium (e) Scourged

- _____ Word used to express love from a confident child toward his father.
- _____ Scene of the agony and arrest of Jesus; garden outside Jerusalem.
- _____ To be set apart, dedicated, or devoted to the service of God.
- _____ To whip a lash or corded instrument of punishment or discipline; vindictive affliction.
- _____ Governor's residence or headquarters within the palace.

Session Answers :

1. Last Supper, Upper Room, Gethsemane
2. distressed, watch, Father
3. soul, body, impending
4. humanity, blood, Spirit
5. delivered, endured, free-will
6. backward, upheaval, healed
7. forsook, young man, resurrection
8. unusual, power, trial
9. Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, Herod
10. composure, immediate, control
11. anger, forgiveness, silent
12. pinnacle, separation, unrighteous
13. continual, separated, forsaken

Key Word Answers :

b, c, a, e, d

PLACE OF SURRENDER

Read : Mark 14

Mark 14: 32–34 says, “Then they came to a place which is called Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ And He took Peter, James and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. And He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even to death. Stay here and watch.’”

Now imagine this: They have finished eating the Last Supper and Jesus tells the twelve someone here at the table with Him is going to betray Him. Then He tells Peter he will deny Him three times before sunrise.

They leave the Upper Room and go to the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus asks them to stay here and pray. Then He took Peter, James, and John a little further with Him and told them He was deeply distressed. He says His soul, my mind and my Spirit are exceedingly sorrowful, and even unto death stay here and watch.

We see Jesus in a stressful situation. Something similar to what we saw in the wilderness during His temptation, but this time it is far greater. One event after another begins to fall like dominos. Jesus went further into the garden and fell to the ground in prayer. He asked His Father if it was possible for the hour to pass from Him. In verse 36 He says, “Abba Father all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”

What does this mean?

Jesus is asking God to reveal another way. Reveal another way for salvation other than the cross. Jesus knew what He was about to face. Not just death, but the penalty of sin and the separation from God. It is the separation Our Savior dreaded the most.

The “Cup of Suffering” represents something Jesus is going to endure for humanity. No one could face it but Him. Imagine the garden scene as He leaves the first group of disciples and then the second group. He enters the place of surrender alone. Jesus alone could pay the penalty of sin and He must do it without the Father.

Jesus surrendered His life by saying, “Not My will, but Your will be done.” His complete surrender made a way for our salvation.

Questions and Reflection :

Is there something you are enduring alone? What is it you are suffering through? Ask God to give you strength to endure.

POWER IN HIS NAME

READ: John 18

When the Temple guards came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, something very interesting happened.

We read in John 18:4–5 “Jesus therefore, knowing that all things would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ They answered Him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am He’..”

I am.

This is the name of God. Jesus used the name of God to identify Himself. As He spoke those words the Bible tells us “... they drew back and fell to the ground.”

The power of His name forced them to the ground. The same voice in the burning bush, the same name given to the Israelites in Egypt, had just revealed Himself as the man standing in front of the Roman soldiers with burning torches. The power of His name literally knocked those surrounding Him off their feet.

But it actually did more than that, because while the arrest was taking place someone runs through the garden scene—a naked boy!

We read in Mark 14:51–52, “Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.”

A naked boy? What does this young boy have to do with the ongoing story in the garden? Well, the naked boy has nothing to do with Gethsemane, but he has everything to do with the power behind the name of God!

In Biblical times, people were buried in linen cloths. We can conclude the boy who appeared in the garden had recently been buried on the outskirts of Gethsemane near Jerusalem and this boy was resurrected. When Jesus said, “I am He,” the power in His spoken words not only knocked down the Roman soldiers, but also released life and resurrected the dead.

Questions and Reflection:

What areas in your life need to be knocked down? What needs to be resurrected? Pray the name of God over those areas in your life today.

SEEK THE TRUTH

READ: John 19

We read in John 18:33–38:

Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered him, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews...

This section of Scripture has been scrutinized for centuries. It contains perhaps the simplest and clearest answers from Jesus in the Gospels on His Kingdom, His authority, and why He was born.

The only answer we do not hear from Jesus is perhaps one of the most asked questions in all of history.

“What is truth?”

This is a question that afflicts everyone from birth to death. Plato and Socrates, governments and kings, the rich and the poor—all search for the answer to this one question.

Pilate sought this answer, too.

Yet Pilate had no idea the man standing in front of him was indeed the Way, the Truth, and the Life. All the things Pilate needed that day and all the things we need every day, stood in front of Pilate in the form of Jesus.

We will never know why Pilate walked away without hearing Jesus’ answer to his final question: “What is truth?” Perhaps Jesus would have simply answered, “I Am.”

Questions and Reflection :

What is truth to you? Is it defined by someone other than Jesus? Ask God to answer the question Pilate asked that day: What is truth?

JESUS ENDURES IT ALL

READ: Luke 23

Jesus was led back and forth between Pilate and the Jewish council. Each time, He was being beaten between His trials. Ultimately, He was scourged by the Romans and forced to carry His cross uphill to Golgotha.

What we see during this entire time is Jesus maintaining His composure.

As they're pounding the nails into His hands, He prays for His executioners. All during His crucifixion and trials, at no point was He broken in Spirit or did He cry out in anger.

He committed to God, in Gethsemane, to endure the cross. Not His will, but God's will. From the prayer in Gethsemane through the way of the cross and up to the crucifixion—Jesus submitted to God.

He maintains His composure. As He hangs on the cross, they make fun of and humiliate Him. People stop to watch as He dies. As He hangs their naked, the God of the universe turns His back on His only Son. Yet Jesus endures it all.

He didn't lash out. He didn't become angry. He didn't say a word.

Isaiah 53:7 tells us "He was oppressed and afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He did not open His mouth."

Questions and Reflection :

What does Jesus' composure and reaction to His own crucifixion tell you of His love for you? Think about His attitude toward His crucifixion and His love for you today.

CUP OF SUFFERING

READ: Matthew 27

In verse 46, we read the final moments of Jesus' life as He cried out to His Father, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

He's asking a question. God, why now have You turned Your back on Me and walked away from Me?

This is the cup of suffering.

The first time in eternity He was separated from God. The first time in eternity He knew sin and the wages of sin upon Himself. It's the first time in eternity past that Jesus was separated from God—like humanity is separated from God.

He became our unrighteousness on the cross. He became our sin on the cross. He took on our iniquities, our transgressions, our shortcomings, our guilt, our shame, and our sins. In generations to come of our unborn sons and daughters and grandchildren's sins—all of them were put upon Him. Sins not yet committed were placed on Jesus. At this point, God being holy had to turn away from sin.

This is the cup of suffering.

And you know who made this happen? We did. Sin did. It was because of Adam's sin and our continual sin that Jesus endured the cup of suffering. Jesus was separated from God for us. Because we were separate from God.

He had to represent us and take upon Himself our sins so those who believe in Him could stand righteous before God. We were forsaken by God; we were the ones on the outside looking in.

Yet Jesus came to bring us back to God—His perfection for our imperfection; His righteousness for our unrighteousness; His life for our life; His death for our death.

His cup of suffering in place of our cup of suffering.

Jesus bore the burdens for us. Oh, what a Savior!

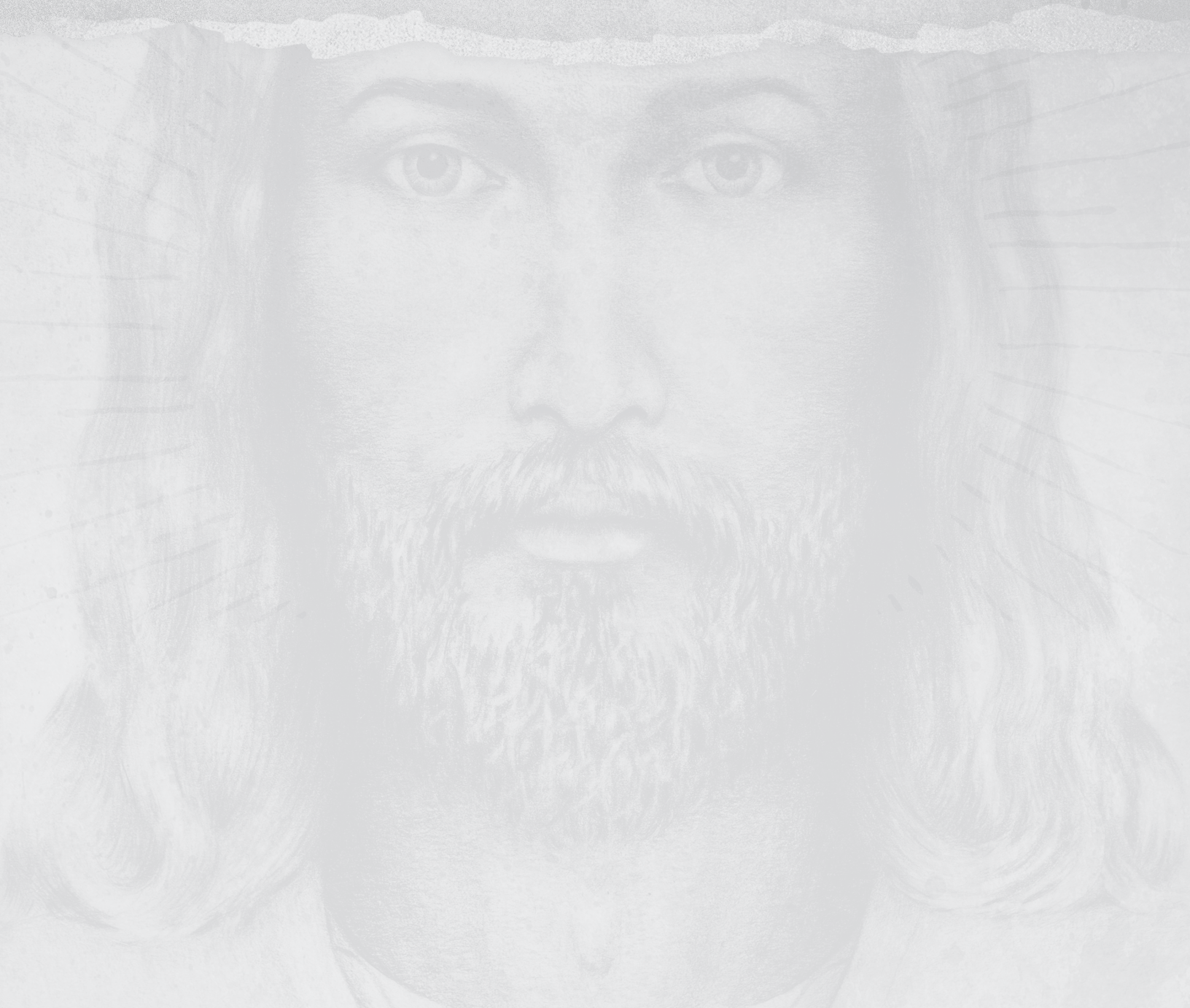
Questions and Reflection

What has Jesus bore for you? Thank Him today for the things He overcame in order for you to live free from sin.

SESSION 8

THE CROSS

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE CROSS

Reading Assignment: Luke 23:32—43

³² THERE WERE ALSO TWO OTHERS, CRIMINALS, LED WITH HIM TO BE PUT TO DEATH. ³³ AND WHEN THEY HAD COME TO THE PLACE CALLED CALVARY, THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM, AND THE CRIMINALS, ONE ON THE RIGHT HAND AND THE OTHER ON THE LEFT. ³⁴ THEN JESUS SAID, "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY DO." AND THEY DIVIDED HIS GARMENTS AND CAST LOTS. ³⁵ AND THE PEOPLE STOOD LOOKING ON. BUT EVEN THE RULERS WITH THEM SNEERED, SAYING, "HE SAVED OTHERS; LET HIM SAVE HIMSELF IF HE IS THE CHRIST, THE CHOSEN OF GOD." ³⁶ THE SOLDIERS ALSO MOCKED HIM, COMING AND OFFERING HIM SOUR WINE ³⁷ AND SAYING, "IF YOU ARE THE KING OF THE JEWS, SAVE YOURSELF." ³⁸ AND AN INSCRIPTION ALSO WAS WRITTEN OVER HIM IN LETTERS OF GREEK, LATIN, AND HEBREW: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS ³⁹ THEN ONE OF THE CRIMINALS WHO WERE HANGED BLASPHEMED HIM, SAYING, "IF YOU ARE THE CHRIST, SAVE YOURSELF AND US." ⁴⁰ BUT THE OTHER, ANSWERING, REBUKED HIM, SAYING, "DO YOU NOT EVEN FEAR GOD, SEEING YOU ARE UNDER THE SAME CONDEMNATION? ⁴¹ AND WE INDEED JUSTLY, FOR WE RECEIVE THE DUE REWARD OF OUR DEEDS; BUT THIS MAN HAS DONE NOTHING WRONG." ⁴² THEN HE SAID TO JESUS, "LORD, REMEMBER ME WHEN YOU COME INTO YOUR KINGDOM." ⁴³ AND JESUS SAID TO HIM, "ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE."

1. The Jews were seeking a sign, something _____ to hold onto, and the cross was foolishness to them. The Greeks were interested in _____ and _____, something scientific for them to believe in, and the cross was foolishness to them.
2. For nonbelievers the cross means _____, but to Christians the cross means _____. For us it is the _____ of the cross, (meaning the immeasurable act of love), that saves us from eternal damnation and separation from God.
3. Capital punishment in the _____ was crucifixion, and it is probably the most painful way to die. Crucifixion is not _____ death. The accused died from _____, and typically it would take two or three unbearable days of agony.

4. Generally, crucifixion would take place along the _____ where travelers would scorn and ridicule the _____. They would taunt them with shouts of accusations, humiliate them, and often times inflict additional _____ on them.
5. Jesus was hung on the cross at the third hour, which is _____ a.m. He was on the cross until _____ p.m. The timing is not arbitrary, it was necessary because six is the _____ number for mankind, broken and fallen.
6. The way Jesus maintained His composure on the cross had a very _____ effect on those who witnessed His death. In the end, the garrisons who scourged and mocked Him were astonished at His _____ and _____ as He gave His life so others could live.
7. His _____ were men trained to be killers who were emotionally detached and _____. But through the course of God's miracles—the torn veil, the earthquake and the darkness—these men _____ and gave their hearts to the Lord.
8. During His passion on the cross, He _____ how we are to live as followers of Jesus Christ. He showed us the way to _____ ourselves and the words to say when others spitefully persecute us, because our actions will make a _____ to the people around us.
9. Jesus _____ to His killers and the robber who hung besides Him on Calvary. He did not _____ to them, but showed them love and forgave them. When we understand our true calling and purpose as believers, we must be _____ into the image of Jesus Christ.
10. Jesus made these seven statements on the cross:
 - a. Father, _____ them, for they do not know what they do. (Luke 23:34)
 - b. Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in _____. (Luke 23:43)
 - c. _____, behold your son. Son, behold your _____. (John 19:26-27)
 - d. My God, My God, why have You _____ Me? (Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34)
 - e. I _____. (John 19:28)
 - f. It is _____. (John 19:30)
 - g. Father, into Your hands I _____ My spirit. (Luke 23:46)

Key Words :

(a) Garrison (b) Conform (c) Foolishness (d) Assuredly (e) Malefactors

_____ Comply with or yield to; live and act according to Jesus.

_____ Acting without regard to the divine law; living for one's own happiness.

_____ Troops stationed to defend against an enemy; keep inhabitants in subjection.

_____ Criminal guilty of violating the law; subject to public punishment.

_____ To be certain, without doubt, confidently.

Session Answers :

1. physically, philosophy, academics
2. weakness, strength, foolishness
3. Roman Empire, immediate, suffocation
4. roadside, criminal, pain
5. nine, three, Biblical
6. profound, compassion, forgiveness
7. executioners, coldhearted, repented
8. demonstrated, conduct, difference
9. witnessed, preach, conformed
- 10a. forgive
- 10b. Paradise
- 10c. Woman, mother
- 10d. forsaken
- 10e. thirst
- 10f. finished
- 10g. commend

Key Word Answers :

b, c, a, e, d

BY HIS STRIPES

READ: Mark 15

Crucifixion was not a normal form of punishment in Jewish culture. Death on a cross was a Roman institution, and was reserved for the vilest offenders, such as slaves, murderers and thieves. Remember, this was Barabbas' fate. Instead, Jesus took his place, and made His way from the courtyard of Pilate straight to Golgotha.

Jesus stumbled through the city streets as a public spectacle, shouldering His own crossbar. The stripes on His back were bleeding from the soldiers who whipped Him.

He would have worn a placard around His neck that gave name to His crime. On this day, the placard would read: "King of the Jews."

A crown of thorns was pushed into His skull and caused blood to stream down His innocent face. As He made His way up the path to the execution site, people would curse Him, spit on Him and mock Him. Our Savior.

Finally, at the crest of the hill, He would be stripped naked and beaten again.

Generally, criminals were stoned to death in Jewish culture. That was the preferred way. They would either stone someone while they were tied up and standing or bury them part way in the ground. Either way, it was a long and agonizing public death.

That was the preferred way of execution for the Jewish people.

But they wanted nothing to do with the execution of Jesus. They simply wanted Him dead and handed Him over to the Romans. By doing so, they unknowingly fulfilled every prophecy ever made about the death of the Messiah.

Questions and Reflection:

Imagine the scourging of Jesus. Reflect on these verses of Scripture, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

READ: Romans 8

Six hours, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Jesus hung on the cross. During His trials, on the way to Calvary, and all through the crucifixion everyone along the way persecuted Him. And the beating from the soldiers never stopped until the cross was standing.

Try putting yourself in the minds of those around Him. They thought He was a lunatic when they nailed Him to the cross. In the minds of the religious leaders and the mob, Jesus was a loser. They made a sign that labeled Him, “King of the Jews” but it was done in mockery. They were convinced His death would silence His message.

His arms were tied to the wooden beam just before the soldiers took the nails and drove them through His wrists. Jesus prays, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Finally the cross, the object of death, would be lifted up as a warning to anyone passing by—this was the fate that awaited those breaking the laws of Rome.

But really, this was the fate that awaited all of us. Our punishment was death.

The Bible tells us the wages of sin, the wages of breaking God’s law, is death. We read in Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

He was pierced because of our rebellion and crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be made whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. He died so that we could spend eternity with Him in heaven.

The dying words of Jesus, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Forgive who? Those who were executing Him? Yes, but also you, me, and everyone. He was saying we are responsible for His death, but forgive us because we are blinded by sin.

Questions and Reflection :

Repent today of any sin you are content to live with. Focus on the cross. Think of His words and your responsibility in His death.

LORD, REMEMBER ME

READ: Luke 23

Can you see it? The silhouette of the three crosses against the darkened sky on Calvary. Thief. Jesus. Thief.

In the middle of the crucifixion we are introduced to two new characters in the Bible, both of them convicted criminals. One of them speaks to Jesus and asked Him, “Aren’t you supposed to be God? Isn’t that your claim? Well, save us and yourself!” (paraphrase mine). Basically, the thief is telling Jesus to do something to get them out of the circumstances they are in. He is challenging Jesus to win everyone over and prove He is God’s Son.

At times, isn’t this the same thing we do? When our circumstances are dark and discouraging, don’t we want to ask God why we’re going through so much trouble?

This is an age-old question.

I want you to notice that Jesus doesn’t respond to the one thief. I like to think that if Jesus were to say something to him, perhaps Jesus would’ve stated, “Save you? Can’t you see that is exactly what I am doing? I am saving you!”

The other criminal speaks in defense of Jesus.

I picture him saying to the other thief, “This man is innocent, but we are getting what we deserve.” These two criminals in Luke 23 were given a fair trial and found guilty based on evidence of their crimes. They deserved to die. They got the cross, the punishment for sin. They were sentenced to die with the same fate you and I deserve: death. Suddenly, the one thief realized he is getting what he deserves.

In Luke 23:42 the one thief repents and says to Jesus, “Lord, Remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” In other words he is asking Jesus, “Please don’t forget about me. Take me with You. I’m sorry for my sins!”

This is a desperate plea from a dying man who just received revelation knowledge. The man on the cross next to him is Lord. And he looks to God and asks, “I don’t deserve it, I’ve lived a terrible life, but would you remember me?”

And Jesus’ answer from the cross is one of the greatest responses in all of Scripture. He is moments from death—moments from completing the greatest act in history. Yet, Jesus turns to this thief and says, “...*Today* you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43, emphasis mine).

Not when you’ve worked things out. Not when you get into church. Not once you’ve joined a Bible study. Not when you stop your addictions. No. Jesus said, “Today...”

Why? It was all because the thief recognized he was getting what he deserved on the cross and he recognized Jesus as Lord and Savior. He repented and asked for mercy from the Son of God.

Questions and Reflection:

Which thief are you? Are you the one asking God to prove Himself in your circumstances? Or are you the one who simply asks Jesus to remember you?

THE DARKEST HOUR

READ: John 19

Can you imagine the anguish of Jesus' mother, Mary? The Bible says she was there at the execution. She would've watched as her son hung on a beam between two criminals. If there was anyone who knew Jesus was the Son of God, it was Mary. I'm sure her thoughts took her back to the appearance of the Angel Gabriel and the miraculous conception of Jesus.

And here she is witnessing an event that seems far from a miracle. I'm sure she had many questions when Jesus was a child. How could she not have questions as the appointed mother of God? The countless prayers of why and how?

I'm sure at the cross her once silent prayers came pouring forth: "Why?"

What happens to your faith in your darkest hour?

In the last moments, as Jesus was dying, the Bible says He spoke instructions to Mary in reference to the Apostle John. He told her, "Woman, behold your son!" (John 19:26).

Right before His death, Jesus charges John, His beloved disciple, to take care of His mother. He gives her someone to mourn with—someone who believes just as she believes.

How do bad things turn to good? Sometimes we don't know, but the worst thing in history resulted in the greatest thing for mankind. The resurrection of our Savior!

Mankind's sin gave God the opportunity to show His love for us.

Questions and Reflection:

Why and how has God showed up in your life? Thank Him for His sacrifice today.

BEYOND THE VEIL

READ: Matthew 27

Matthew 27:50–51 reads, “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split . . .”

There are three courtyards in the Temple. The outer court is where all of the people are. The inner court is where the priesthood administers and the Temple furniture pieces reside. Then there is the Holy of Holies, which is separated by the veil. This is where the presence of God is, along with the Ark of the Covenant. This place is separated by the veil. It is out of reach and sight from the people. The people can't go in His presence. The veil is a physical reminder of their separation from God.

Only the high priest had the right to go into the Holy of Holies. We know from Scripture that the high priests sometimes would die when they went into the inner court. In other words, when they went into the presence of God, if they had not repented of their sins, they would die right where they were standing—on Holy ground.

If they didn't die, they would sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat which is on top of the Ark of the Covenant. The sprinkling of the blood was atonement for the sins of Israel. The only one to enter was one man, the high priest, once a year.

All that changed when Jesus died. The veil was torn from top to bottom. The veil was 25 feet tall and several inches thick. It was a heavy, solid piece of woven fabric. According to Scripture, it supernaturally tore in two. Now God's presence exists beyond the veil.

The second thing that happened was an earthquake which split the rocks. This means the tremors from the earthquake were strong enough to break the rocks in two. And the Bible says when the soldiers and Centurions saw this, “...they feared greatly, saying, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’” (Matthew 27:54).

If they would not have said it, the rocks would have!

The men who mocked Him and pushed a crown of thorns into His brow, the men who spit on Him, slapped Him, beat Him, and scourged Him, now bowed and knelt before Him. They saw what had happened at His death. They repented and had a revelation of who Jesus truly was.

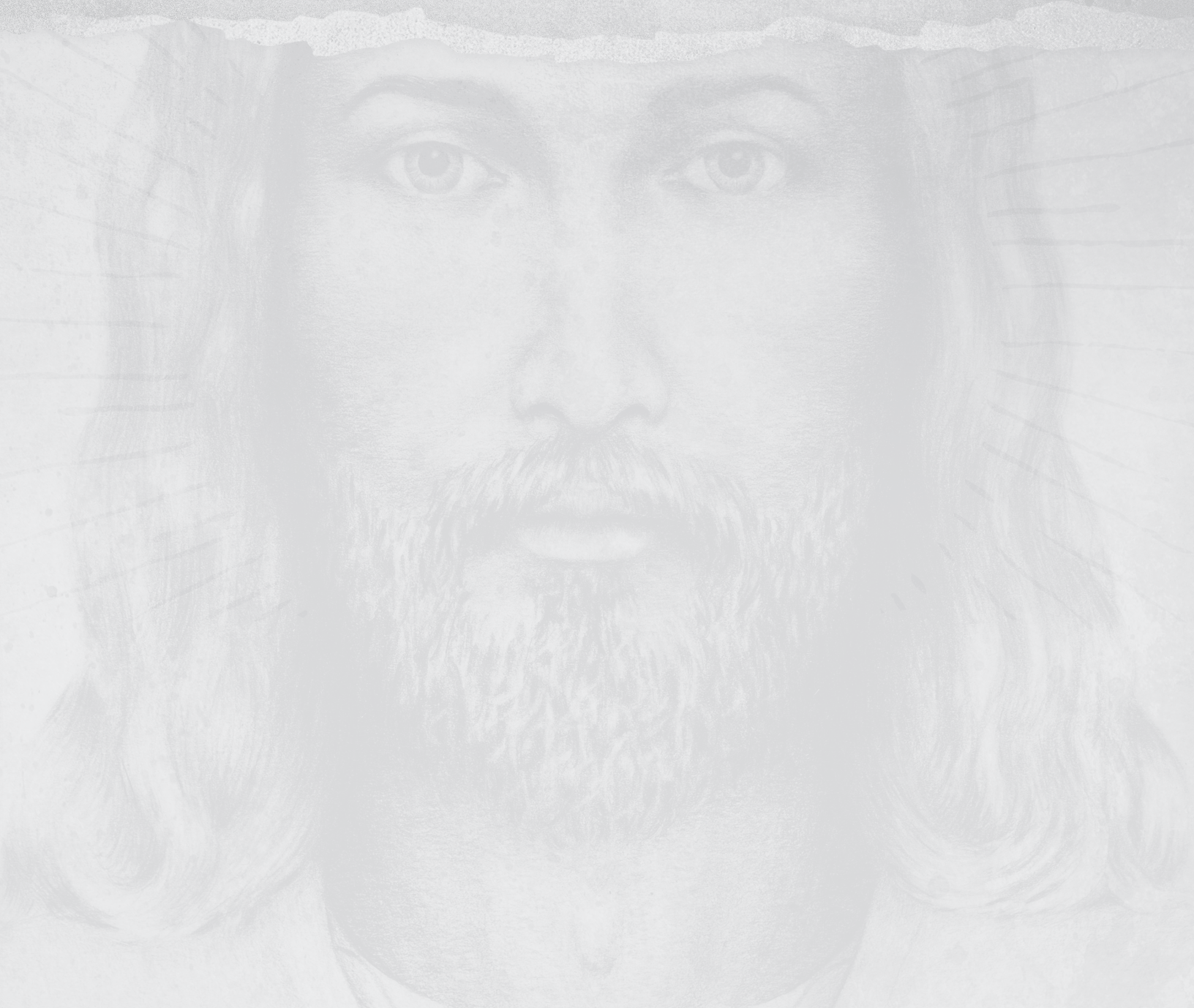
Questions and Reflection:

What things in your life need to be shaken and torn apart by Jesus' sacrifice? Examine your heart today and ask God to remove things that are not of Him so you can wholeheartedly proclaim, “Truly, Jesus is the Son of God!”

SESSION 9

THE RESURRECTION

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE RESURRECTION

Reading Assignment : Luke 16:19—31

¹⁹ “THERE WAS A CERTAIN RICH MAN WHO WAS CLOTHED IN PURPLE AND FINE LINEN AND FARED SUMPTUOUSLY EVERY DAY. ²⁰ BUT THERE WAS A CERTAIN BEGGAR NAMED LAZARUS, FULL OF SORES, WHO WAS LAID AT HIS GATE, ²¹ DESIRING TO BE FED WITH THE CRUMBS WHICH FELL FROM THE RICH MAN’S TABLE. MOREOVER THE DOGS CAME AND LICKED HIS SORES. ²² SO IT WAS THAT THE BEGGAR DIED, AND WAS CARRIED BY THE ANGELS TO ABRAHAM’S BOSOM. THE RICH MAN ALSO DIED AND WAS BURIED. ²³ AND BEING IN TORMENTS IN HADES, HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES AND SAW ABRAHAM AFAR OFF, AND LAZARUS IN HIS BOSOM. ²⁴ THEN HE CRIED AND SAID, ‘FATHER ABRAHAM, HAVE MERCY ON ME, AND SEND LAZARUS THAT HE MAY DIP THE TIP OF HIS FINGER IN WATER AND COOL MY TONGUE ; FOR I AM TORMENTED IN THIS FLAME.’ ²⁵ BUT ABRAHAM SAID, ‘SON, REMEMBER THAT IN YOUR LIFETIME YOU RECEIVED YOUR GOOD THINGS, AND LIKEWISE LAZARUS EVIL THINGS ; BUT NOW HE IS COMFORTED AND YOU ARE TORMENTED. ²⁶ AND BESIDES ALL THIS, BETWEEN US AND YOU THERE IS A GREAT GULF FIXED, SO THAT THOSE WHO WANT TO PASS FROM HERE TO YOU CANNOT, NOR CAN THOSE FROM THERE PASS TO US.’ ²⁷ THEN HE SAID, ‘I BEG YOU THEREFORE, FATHER, THAT YOU WOULD SEND HIM TO MY FATHER’S HOUSE, ²⁸ FOR I HAVE FIVE BROTHERS, THAT HE MAY TESTIFY TO THEM, LEST THEY ALSO COME TO THIS PLACE OF TORMENT.’ ²⁹ ABRAHAM SAID TO HIM, ‘THEY HAVE MOSES AND THE PROPHETS ; LET THEM HEAR THEM.’ ³⁰ AND HE SAID, ‘NO, FATHER ABRAHAM ; BUT IF ONE GOES TO THEM FROM THE DEAD, THEY WILL REPENT.’ ³¹ BUT HE SAID TO HIM, ‘IF THEY DO NOT HEAR MOSES AND THE PROPHETS, NEITHER WILL THEY BE PERSUADED THOUGH ONE RISE FROM THE DEAD’.”

1. The Roman soldiers were experienced _____, but they knew something was very different about the way Jesus of Nazareth died. Other accused offenders would _____ the soldiers and resist the nails, but Jesus _____ for them and His compassionate actions were out of place.
2. When Jesus died on the cross His _____ body was laid in a tomb with Roman soldiers guarding the entrance. Although Jesus died physically, this does not mean He _____ to exist because _____ will go somewhere when they die, either to heaven or to hell.
3. We learn in the story of the rich man and Lazarus that both these men _____ to exist after their physical death and _____ on earth. The Bible tells us the rich man went to a place of torment and Lazarus went to _____.

4. Our eternal destinies are _____ the moment we die. This certain rich man is still in the place of torment to this very day. He has not _____ about the choices he made while he was alive on earth, in fact, he now even has a greater _____ of the way he chose to live.
5. Anyone who died _____ the resurrection of Jesus and believed in the coming _____ went to Paradise after their death. They did not go directly to _____ because sin had not yet been dealt with by the cross.
6. On account of Jewish _____, Jesus was hastily taken off the cross and quickly buried before _____, leaving no time for a proper burial. As customary, the body of Jesus was not _____ anointed with spices and oils before He was laid in the tomb.
7. Three days after His burial, the women went to the tomb with spices and oils to anoint His body, but Jesus had _____ from the dead. His soul and Spirit came up out of the _____ and were reunited with His _____ body. Jesus is now alive again.
8. After His burial, Jesus went into the belly of earth to _____ the truth specifically to those who lived in the days of Noah and died during the great flood. He did not _____ a message of salvation because it was too late. Our _____ is sealed upon our death.
9. In His resurrected body, Jesus took the _____ from the belly of the earth with Him into heaven where He poured His _____ blood on the altar before God. Jesus represents us as _____ of the covenant agreement before the throne of God.
10. He fulfilled the promise by coming to earth and dying for our sins. In the heavenly _____ and before God as the High Priest, He brought the sacrifice of _____ so that once and for all, believers in Him would experience eternal _____.
11. Jesus entered the holy place in the _____ of God, and His innocent blood made _____ for all of mankind. His sacrifice represented all of us to God the Father. Without the shedding of innocent, purified blood there could be no _____ of our sins.
12. It is the _____ of Jesus Christ into heaven that sealed the covenant promises for us and saves us from eternal death. Mankind was _____, but Jesus paid our price with His blood and satisfied the _____ of the court in heaven.
13. When He returned to earth, Jesus went to His disciples who _____ in Him and confessed Him as their Lord and Savior. He then _____ on them and they received the Holy Spirit, making them righteous in the eyes of God. This _____ the Gospel plan.
14. Christ lived, died, was buried, and rose again. He _____ to many while on earth for 40 days after His resurrection. Jesus spoke and interacted with people before He _____ back to heaven, and now He sits at the _____ of the Father.

Key Words :

(a) Ascension (b) Redemption (c) Resurrection (d) Remission (e) Tomb

- _____ Rock-cut grave normally inside a cave that was easily closed by a stone.
- _____ Cancellation of a debt, charge or penalty; absolution or forgiveness
- _____ Concept of coming back to life after death; rising from the dead.
- _____ Changing location in an upward direction; rising up through the air toward heaven.
- _____ Act of saving or being saved from sin or evil.

Session Answers :

1. executioners, curse, prayed
2. lifeless, ceased, everyone
3. continued, burial, Paradise
4. sealed, forgotten, awareness
5. before, Messiah, heaven
6. Passover, sundown, properly
7. risen, grave, resurrected
8. proclaim, preach, destiny
9. Saints, sacrificial, mediator
10. tabernacle, Himself, redemption
11. presence, atonement, remission
12. resurrection, unrighteous, requirements
13. believed, breathed, completed
14. appeared, ascended, right hand

Key Word Answers :

e, d, c, a, b

TORMENT OR PARADISE?

READ: Luke 16

Jesus tells a story of a wealthy man and a beggar named Lazarus in Luke 16. Because of the way Jesus sets up the story, we have reason to believe these two people actually existed.

When both of these men died, the rich man probably had a lot of people at his funeral with a lot of flowers. Perhaps even some dignitaries were in attendance. On the other side of the tracks, the poor man Lazarus, probably had a pine box and a state arranged funeral with a handful of people.

Both of these men died physically, yet, the Bible tells us they did not cease to exist.

We learn from Scripture they went into two separate places in eternity. The rich man went to a place called hell. Lazarus went to another place called Abraham's bosom, which is a place of comfort for believers.

I'm paraphrasing the rich man as saying, "I am in torment! Have Lazarus, the guy who ate out of my garbage can on earth, dip the tips of his fingers in water to give me some refreshment." Abraham tells him, "No, because no one can pass between the two places."

When we die physically we do not go off into some void without our senses. We still have the appearance of who we are as a spirit being with our soul. This man still had his memory, he still had his faculties about him, and he was still able to negotiate for water. He also had enough capacity to say, "Listen, I don't want my five brothers to come to this place." He begged Abraham to send someone to tell them about this place of torment and the agony therein because he didn't want them to experience anything like this.

In Verse 29, his request was denied and Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." In other words, if they don't believe in the prophets, who speak the Word of God, then they are not going to believe in a miracle.

The rich man sealed his fate here on earth. I also want you to know that same rich man is still in the place of torment today! He has not moved since the day he died, and his ultimate fate will be from hell into the lake of fire—and he knows it. But as believers, we can look forward to living eternally with Christ here on earth!

Questions and Reflection:

Are you living for eternity? Ask God to give you an eternal perspective this week.

THE MISSION

READ: 1 Peter 3

After Jesus' death, He went to the place of Paradise. 1 Peter 3:18–20 reads, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

This means that Jesus preached to those who were eradicated, eliminated and killed during the judgment days of Noah. They are dead. And although their bodies are buried in the ground, their souls are in the place of torment within hell. Jesus preached specifically to them.

This is true, because in this particular case the entire earth was killed by the flood. All of humanity was eradicated except for Noah's family.

But I want you to see something that Jesus did while He was there.

Once He died on the cross, He went into the earth and He preached. He proclaimed and He teaches. Then everyone who had spoken about Him in the Old Testament up until that point—meaning Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and all of the old prophets—got to see and meet Jesus in the earth.

Let's go over verses 19–21 once more, “...by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

This is referring to the resurrection of Jesus. The death and burial of Jesus does not save us—His resurrection saves us.

Without the resurrection, we would not have salvation. Jesus was put to death in the flesh. Then He went into the earth and preached to those who were disobedient and interacted with them. Then He was resurrected. Next, He went into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God. This completes the salvation process.

Questions and Reflection:

Think about the resurrection of Jesus. What does it mean in your life on a day-to-day basis? How do you apply it to your daily routine? Your relationships? Your home? Your marriage?

HE REPRESENTS US

READ: John 20

When Jesus died, it was very late in the afternoon. He had to be taken down from the cross by sundown the same day. So they quickly wrapped Him in linen, brought Him to the tomb, and hastily buried Him. They rolled the rock in place to close the tomb.

They went home and went through the Passover ceremony. Mary returned to the tomb on Sunday morning to perform the ceremonial duty of anointing His body with oil and spices. This was necessary because there wasn't enough time to prepare His body for burial before the Passover.

When she enters the place where He was buried, she sees the stone was rolled away. She bends low to look inside and there are two angels sitting where the body of Jesus had been placed. Mary was at the cross and knew exactly what they had done with His body. She knew Jesus was supposed to be in the tomb. In verse 13 the angels asked her, "Woman why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

She begins to cry, thinking someone took Him. But as she turns to leave, Jesus appears, but she did not know it was Him.

This is now His resurrected body. The soul and spirit have reunited with the body.

In other words, His soul and Spirit have now come up out of the earth and entered His body making it alive again. Mary begins to recognize Jesus and she clings to Him, but He tells her in verse 17, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

Jesus is telling her He still has more to accomplish. He tells Mary where He must go—He must ascend to heaven because there is something still to be done. He tells Mary to go back and tell the others what has happened.

We learn in Hebrews 9:11–15 that Jesus, after His resurrection, went into heaven itself with His blood and His sacrifice to God. After He resurrects, He now acts as a mediator of the covenant between humanity and God.

Just as we learned in Session 1, Jesus represents us before the throne of God. Remember, God the Father made a covenant with pre-Bethlehem Jesus, and pre-Bethlehem Jesus, the Son of God, made a covenant with Abraham. Jesus fulfilled that promise to come to the earth. After His resurrection, He goes into heaven.

Jesus went into a place that was not made with human hands. He went before God as a High Priest to bring His holy sacrifice that once and for all gives those who believe in Him eternal redemption.

Questions and Reflection:

Imagine Jesus in the throne room of Heaven mediating on your behalf. What does this mean to you?

THE SPIRIT WITHIN

READ: John 20

John 20:18–23 says, “Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’”

In other words, the new birth is triggered. Prior to this, the Holy Spirit could not come live inside of us because we were unrighteous. But because Jesus paid the price and satisfied the courts of heaven, the Spirit of God lives in all Christians.

The first thing Jesus did when He came and appeared to those who believed was to tell them to receive the Holy Spirit because you are now righteous.

Let’s take another look at the order of events:

- Jesus resurrects.
- Jesus goes to heaven.
- Jesus accomplished salvation for us.
- Jesus comes back to earth.
- Jesus tells us to receive the Holy Spirit.

Questions and Reflection :

Are you sure the Spirit of God lives within you? Ask God to place a desire in your heart to seek the truth found in His Word.

AT THE RIGHT HAND

READ: Mark 16

If the resurrection had not happened, where would Jesus be? He would be dead, just like all other religious figures in history. His death would have been the end for all mankind, but His death was not the end because of His resurrection.

This is what separates Him from every other figure in history. Jesus is alive!

He had to resurrect and go into heaven. Jesus paid the price that was required of God in order to seal our salvation. His death paid for our sins. His resurrection secures our salvation.

Adam died spiritually when he sinned, which caused him to be separated from God. He was not alive to God because of his unrighteousness. Then, Adam's soul died and he began to feel emotions much like the ones we feel today. Adam felt anxiety, depression and fear.

Jesus paid for us spiritually. He took our sins, our iniquities, and our transgressions upon Himself. And through His resurrection, He conquered death and the grave. Jesus did all of this so we could live with Him eternally!

After the resurrection, Jesus gave His disciples special instructions.

Mark 16:15–20 tell us, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’ So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

This is His ascension. His resurrection was rising out of the grave on the earth, but He ascended and He sits at the right hand of God. We read His last words to us were to go out into the world and proclaim what He has done. He told us we are to act in the same way and perform the same miracles as He did.

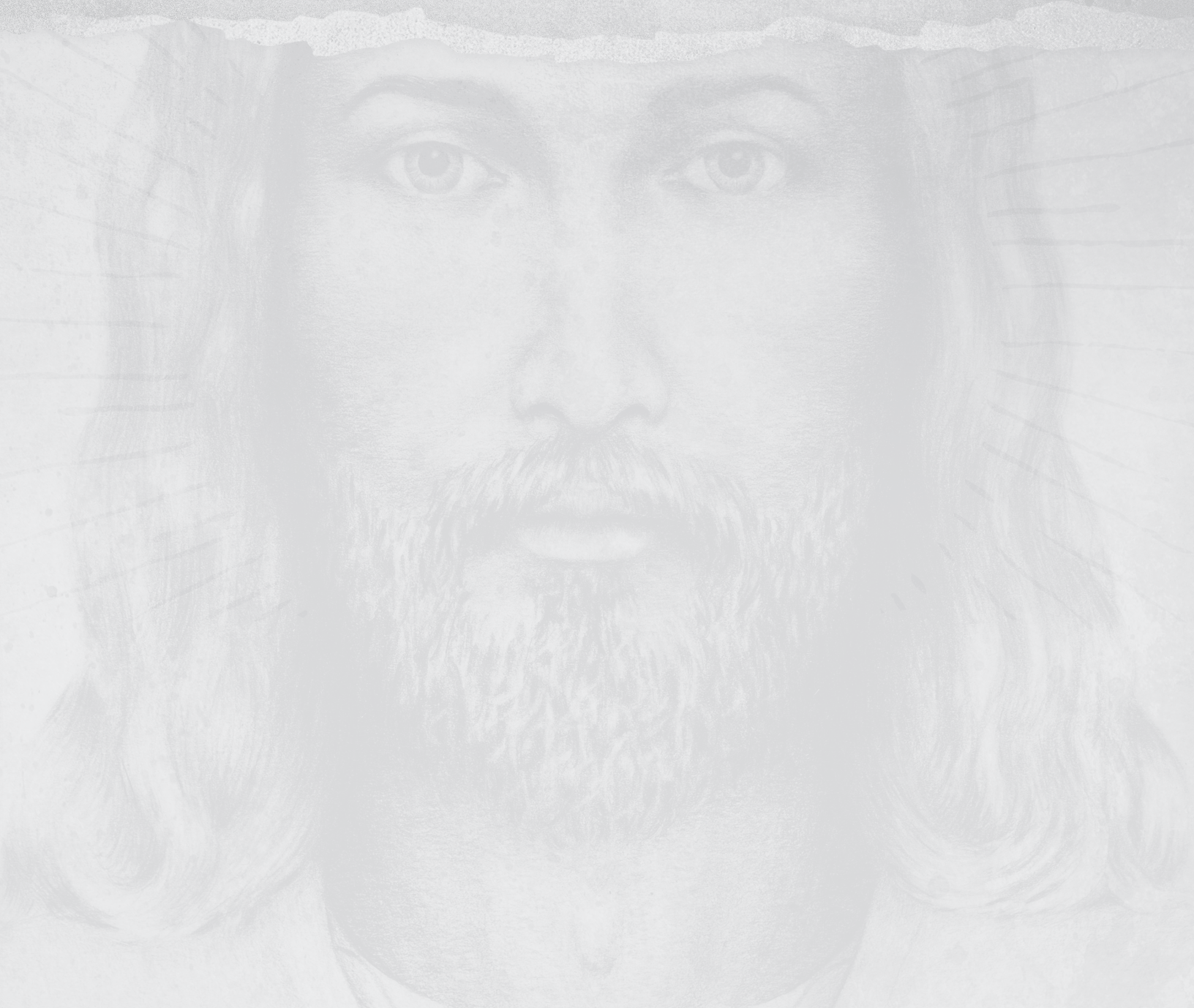
Questions and Reflection :

Are you being a witness for Jesus and following the Great Commission? Write down how you can be a better witness for Christ in your workplace, home, and community.

SESSION 10

THE NEW BEGINNING

by SEBASTIAN LUCIDO



THE NEW BEGINNING

Reading Assignment : Ephesians 4 :4—16

⁴ THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT, JUST AS YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING ; ⁵ ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM ; ⁶ ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, WHO IS ABOVE ALL, AND THROUGH ALL, AND IN YOU ALL. ⁷ BUT TO EACH ONE OF US GRACE WAS GIVEN ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF CHRIST'S GIFT. ⁸ THEREFORE HE SAYS : "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, AND GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." ⁹ (NOW THIS, "HE ASCENDED"--WHAT DOES IT MEAN BUT THAT HE ALSO FIRST DESCENDED INTO THE LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH? ¹⁰ HE WHO DESCENDED IS ALSO THE ONE WHO ASCENDED FAR ABOVE ALL THE HEAVENS, THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS.) ¹¹ AND HE HIMSELF GAVE SOME TO BE APOSTLES, SOME PROPHETS, SOME EVANGELISTS, AND SOME PASTORS AND TEACHERS, ¹² FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY, FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, ¹³ TILL WE ALL COME TO THE UNITY OF THE FAITH AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD, TO A PERFECT MAN, TO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST ; ¹⁴ THAT WE SHOULD NO LONGER BE CHILDREN, TOSSED TO AND FRO AND CARRIED ABOUT WITH EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE, BY THE TRICKERY OF MEN, IN THE CUNNING CRAFTINESS OF DECEITFUL PLOTTING, ¹⁵ BUT, SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, MAY GROW UP IN ALL THINGS INTO HIM WHO IS THE HEAD—CHRIST— ¹⁶ FROM WHOM THE WHOLE BODY, JOINED AND KNIT TOGETHER BY WHAT EVERY JOINT SUPPLIES, ACCORDING TO THE EFFECTIVE WORKING BY WHICH EVERY PART DOES ITS SHARE, CAUSES GROWTH OF THE BODY FOR THE EDIFYING OF ITSELF IN LOVE.

1. Jesus now sits at the right hand of God, but there are still several ways in which He _____ with us to _____ His Gospel plan. When we go out into the world to teach and preach we are _____ His Word and doing His work.
2. He confirms our ministry work through _____ signs. The gifts we are given by Him are _____ through the Holy Spirit. This is similar to attending a Sunday service and having the overwhelming feeling that the message was intended _____ for you.
3. Our spiritual gifts are _____ by the Holy Spirit, but they came about because of Jesus working with us _____ in our ministry. When we engage ourselves in the work of the _____ and do things for Him and in His name, Jesus is active in our work.

4. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to _____ all things. He is the Spirit of _____ who teaches us. When our prayers are answered and the _____ of God is released, it is released through Holy Spirit.
5. When Jesus ascended to heaven He _____ believers from His ministry on earth over to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who does the work. He does the _____ and He engages in all the _____ of the Church.
6. Every Christian has a _____ or a calling to do the work of God. We all have a purpose and a responsibility to perform as a _____ member in the Body of Christ. Jesus gives us ministry gifts in order to accomplish His will and to _____ others for His glory.
7. God's plan is put into motion through the _____ of our gifts. When we cooperate with the Trinity and use our spiritual gifts for the _____ of God, then we complete the Gospel plan for our lives. We are doing the good, the _____, and the perfect will of God.
8. Jesus gave us ministry gifts to bring others to Him, but also to _____ and edify each other so we are joined in _____ of faith and the knowledge of the things of God. Each of us must do our share in speaking truth and love, which causes the Church to _____ in maturity.
9. Most Christians never find their place or _____ in their ministry gifts. They are saved, but they are always _____ off the body and not giving back. In most churches it is always the same people who _____ to do the work in order to keep the family of God functioning.
10. Jesus never _____ us, so when someone comes against us they are coming against Him. When someone hurts us they are hurting Jesus. He makes _____ for us. He _____ for us and He identifies us with Him because we are one with Christ.
11. When we pray in the _____, we are praying for God's will to come into our lives. We don't know God's will for our lives, but Jesus does. We don't have all the _____, but Jesus does. When we pray Jesus _____ on our behalf and helps to unlock closed doors.
12. God wants His children to _____ in life and He sent Jesus on His earthly mission so He could give us all things. Through the life of Jesus the _____ accomplished salvation for mankind and nothing is _____ from us.
13. The reason why things may not come to us in our _____ is because God is preparing our heart so we can receive the _____ He has planned. Remember, God did not spare His own Son for us and He freely gives us all things in His _____ timing.
14. Between the _____ and His return, Jesus continues to work with us daily. He intercedes for us, He prays for us, and He is driving us to _____ to build up His family. As Christians, we are to fulfill the Great Commission and use our _____ until we die or He returns.

Key Words :

(a) Manifestation (b) Intercession (c) Ministry Gifts (d) Edification (e) Validate

- _____ Recognize, establish or illustrate the worthiness of someone or something.
- _____ Christ's provision to the Church to build it up; equip, edify and mature the body.
- _____ Something spiritual becomes evident and obvious; apparent to others.
- _____ Instruction or improvement of a person morally and spiritually; uplifting.
- _____ Prayer and petition in favor or on behalf of others.

Session Answers :

1. works, live out, verbalizing
2. accompanying, validated, directly,
3. administered, daily, Great Commission
4. reveal, truth, power
5. transferred, miracles, activities
6. ministry, valuable, impact
7. manifestation, kingdom, acceptable
8. equip, unity, grow
9. engage, feeding, volunteer
10. leaves, intercession, prays
11. Spirit, answers, intercedes
12. prosper, Trinity, held back
13. timing, blessings, perfect
14. Ascension, continue, ministry gifts

Key Words Answers :

e, c, a, d, b

INTERCEDING FOR US

READ: Acts 1

What does Jesus do after the ascension? What is Jesus doing today?

Mark 16:19 tells us, “So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.” We also learn from Acts 1:9, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

Today, Jesus sits at the right hand of God, and there are several things He is doing for us. One such thing is, He is working with us as we work out His Gospel plan. In other words, as we go out into the world and we preach and teach and share the Gospel, Jesus confirms our ministry through signs. Mark 16:20 reads, “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

The gifts and signs are executed to us by the Holy Spirit. Why? The gifts and accompanying signs confirm and validate us for the Gospel message. It’s not that we are able to stand up and teach a message—it is the message we teach that speaks directly to the heart of another, which are the accompanying signs. Have you ever been to a Sunday service along with hundreds of other people, yet somehow you feel as if the pastor is speaking directly to you? You know, like they spoke a word from God just for you that morning? Or you ask the pastor a question and they gives you a word of knowledge and wisdom that fits perfectly into your life?

Those gifts are administered by the Holy Spirit, but they come about because of Jesus.

Jesus works with us daily—all of us, the entire Church. Whenever you or I decide to engage in the Great Commission and do something for Him in His name, He is active with us in that engagement.

Today, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father working with us and interceding on our behalf.

Questions and Reflection:

Have you seen Jesus active in your life? Step out in faith today and watch as He actively intercedes in your life.

OUR MINISTRY

READ: 1 Corinthians 12

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:1–4).

There are diversities of gifts from the Holy Spirit, but it is the same Spirit who administers the gifts. And that Spirit is Jesus. He is the same Lord who administers the gifts and the diversities within the gifts. God also works in all the gifts of the Spirits.

The Holy Spirit’s ministry today is to reveal the things of God to us. Jesus first talked about the Holy Spirit in John 16:13: “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

The Holy Spirit reveals truth to us. The Holy Spirit teaches us.

He reveals the things that are given to Jesus for us, but He is also the power of God. So, when you pray and your prayers are answered, it is the power of God being released through the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He transferred His ministry on earth over to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does the work, He performs the miracles, and He engages with us in kingdom activities.

Each of us has a ministry, which is our calling and purpose. Our ministry gift was given to us by Jesus. When He ascended, He gave the apostles power and gifts, just like He gives us our ministry gifts today.

For instance, at my birth it was sanctioned on me by God to one day be a teacher of His Word, but I didn’t know I was going to be a teacher until I was in my early 20s. But the ministry gift of teaching was on me all along and given to me by the Lord. The same is true with your gift—it is given to you by the Lord from the time you were born.

Each one of us receives a gift, whether it is in the area of helping others, ministering, leadership, or by taking care of children or teens, or assisting in church functions, or whatever it may be—the Lord gives us gifts we are to use for His glory. The gifts come from Him.

Questions and Reflection :

What are your spiritual and physical gifts? How are you using them for the kingdom? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your talents so you can use them to grow the body of Christ.

PARADISE IS EMPTY

READ: Ephesians 4

Verses 4–8 tell us, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’”

When Jesus resurrected from the earth, He took the saints in Paradise with Him into heaven. This means Paradise is empty today. But why did Jesus take them with Him? It is because all sin— past, present and future—was paid for by His death, burial and resurrection. This includes those in the earth and those on earth. When Jesus ascended, He took Abraham, Noah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Nehemiah—all of those who had been waiting for the Messiah. Their sins were now dealt with by His sacrifice.

When we die, the Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:8 we will, “. . . be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” And where is the Lord today? He is seated at the right hand of God.

We also learn about Stephen who was martyred and his vision, in Acts 7:55–56: “But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’”

You see, Stephen’s spirit was committed to God, and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the throne. As New Testaments saints, this tells us we will go directly into the presence of God when we die because our sins have been dealt with by His Son.

Ephesians 4:8–12 breaks down when Jesus took the captives into heaven with Him and when he went into Paradise. “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men. (Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does that mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the Saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . .”

Again, who gave us these ministry gifts? Jesus gave these fivefold ministry gifts for the equipping of the saints. These are the people who are in the pulpit speaking to the congregations. They have the role of leadership; however, their role does not mean dominance in the church. As a matter of fact, it means the exact opposite. Jesus tells us in His Word that leadership is the role of a servant. The leaders in the body of Christ are to serve His followers.

Remember, what did Jesus do before He went to the cross? He washed the feet of His twelve disciples, and this is what leadership means—it means you are a humble servant to others. The leadership in the church is not above the congregation. The fivefold gifts to humanity are to “equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

Questions and Reflection:

Are you giving back to the body of Christ? How can you be a better servant leader? Search your heart for the truth. Discover your spiritual gift today and start using it for His glory.

HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE

Read : Revelation 19:1—4

In Revelation 19, we learn no one knows the day or the hour of Christ's return, but all of heaven will rejoice when the day comes. We learned in our study of Daniel that 70 weeks were determined upon his people and the holy city. Then at the close of the 70th week, there would be an end to sin and reconciliation for iniquity.

Now, if we understand the time we are living in today, we will be able to correlate it with Biblical revelation and know what is going to happen next. This is just as it was with Moses during the 10 plagues, because he had a revelation from God concerning what was going to happen next. It was the revelation that equipped Moses to forewarn the Israelites of the ultimate disaster. This way they were prepared, alert and ready for the circumstances to come.

Revelation 19 is dedicated entirely to His return.

Verse 1 shares great joy, great expectation, and great excitement because at last, Jesus is going to return to the earth!

In verses 6 and 7, we see there is a clamor of voices going back and forth in heaven, and God gives us a revelation that all the saints in heaven are shouting praises to Him over and over again, because the time has come for the books to be reconciled and God's judgment is here!

Until then, we are to endure in the earth or until our time of physical death when we will go and meet Him in heaven. Either way—we must look forward to this day! The day of His return is not only the day we will meet Jesus, but also when the whole Church will be brought together to watch Him take His rightful place as King of kings!

At His first coming, Jesus came as a baby in a manger.

At His second coming, He will be riding as a victorious King, coming to take what is rightfully His.

Questions and Reflection :

Do you see Jesus as the Almighty King of kings? What is your image of Him in His present form? Pray that when He returns you will be prepared, alert and ready.

A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

READ: Revelation 19:15—21 and Isaiah 63:1—7

In these verses, we see a much different picture of Jesus than what we normally see throughout the Bible. He is not the “sweet baby Jesus” we sing about at Christmas. Upon His return, He is bringing judgment and engaged with His mission. He is executing wrath and destroying those who did not walk in love toward Him. This emphasizes the importance of our salvation and the significance of understanding that salvation is a daily process. Salvation is not a one-time experience. It is an ongoing process for every Christian.

We learn from John 3:18 that, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

This means the wrath of God is upon those who do not believe in Jesus. When He returns, all of humanity will be judged. And of the 7 billion people on the face of the earth today, only a very small percentage truly, truly knows Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The Bible tells us that first comes the wrath of God, then the anger of God, and then the judgment of God. The wrath of God is poured out during tribulation. Next, the anger of God is seen when Jesus returns and annihilates those who oppose Him. Finally, the judgment of God comes after the millennial reign of Christ, which is a 1,000 years after His return.

The Beast, Antichrist and the False Prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire immediately following Christ’s return at the end of tribulation. I want you to look closely at this timing because at this point, they are the only ones in the lake of fire. Everyone else who is unsaved—or not a believer in Jesus Christ—is in a place called hell. But once Christ returns and He establishes His Kingdom on earth for 1,000 years, the final judgment happens. This is when the lost souls in hell are thrown into the lake of fire for eternal suffering with Satan. This is the end of all things.

Believers in Christ experience a completely different type of judgment. We will live forever, eternally, with Christ our Lord!

It is exciting to think of the day when our Lord returns and brings His kingdom to this world. As believers, we will escape eternal death. We will rule and reign with Christ throughout eternity! This is the Good News! This is the Gospel plan at work!

Questions and Reflection :

Are you prepared for the return of Christ? Is eternity your daily perspective? Take time, everyday, to meditate on His return.

ARE YOU SURE?

PETER. JUDAS. SALVATION OR DAMNATION.

SALVATION – it's the most fundamental element to the Christian faith, but do we really understand it? Do we take it for granted? There's no topic that has been debated more in the history of the Church than salvation. Is there such a thing as eternal security? Once you're "saved" are you always saved or can you actually lose that salvation? No matter what your view is on the subject there's one thing for certain – you want to be sure about where you will spend eternity once this life comes to an end. *Are You Sure?* DVD and workbook curriculum breaks down God's gift of grace and salvation in a way you've never heard it before. From Peter and Judas, to Nicodemus and the Apostle Paul, we explore how the early Church saw salvation and how it should impact our lives today.

Are You Sure? will inspire and challenge you in your everyday lifestyle to be prepared, alert and ready for where you will spend eternity.



SESSION 01: FALLEN AND BROKEN

Adam and Eve's death in spirit, soul and body
Humanity's current condition

SESSION 02: GOD'S CONTRACT TO FIX OUR PROBLEM

Understanding God's covenant terms
God's faithfulness to His contract with humanity

SESSION 03: GRACE—A GIFT FROM HEAVEN

Unmerited favor that can't be earned
God's grace to humanity

SESSION 04: REVELATION KNOWLEDGE

The things of God aren't naturally known to mankind
Gaining revelation knowledge through faith

SESSION 05: FAITH IS ACTION

The validation of true faith by our actions
Living out His Word

SESSION 06: SALVATION IS A RELATIONSHIP

Saved or unsaved
The catastrophe of taking salvation for granted

SESSION 07: DEALING WITH THE PENALTY OF SIN

The born-again experience
Why Christians must renew their minds

SESSION 08: SALVATION OF THE SOUL—POWER OVER SIN

The ongoing struggle of sin
Learning how to gain victory over sin

SESSION 09: SALVATION OF THE BODY—RESURRECTION

The sealing of salvation at death
When salvation is complete

SESSION 10: THE JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH

Judgment of mankind based on His Word
Playing with fire when you walk away from Jesus

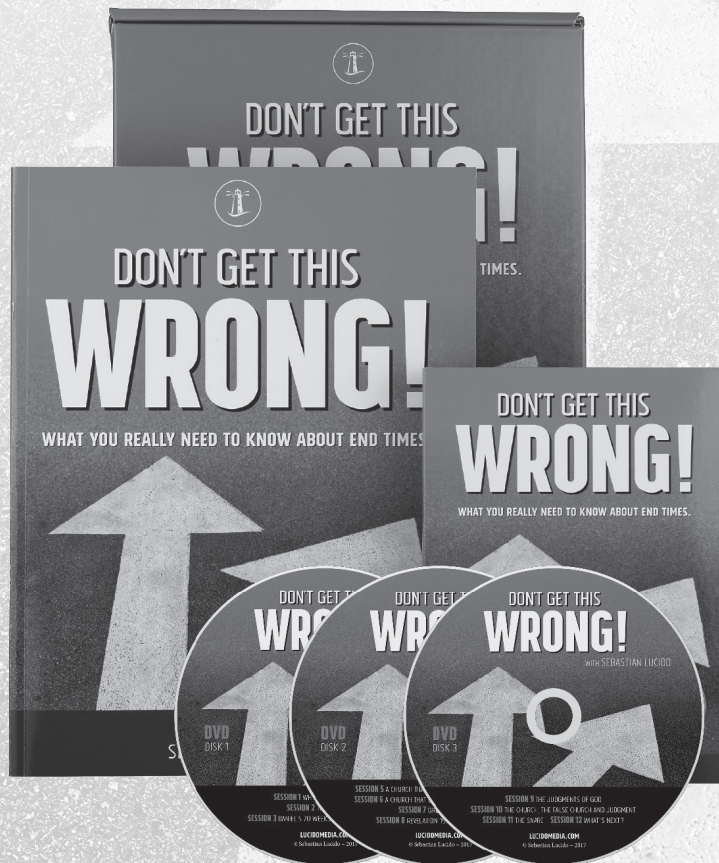
DON'T GET THIS WRONG!

WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT END TIMES.

Although the end time prophecy makes up a good chunk of the Bible, many Christians admit that they don't know much about it.

No matter how you view the Book of Revelation or Jesus' prophetic Words about His return, one thing is for sure; you don't want to be wrong when it comes to the end of the world. *Don't Get This Wrong!* DVD series and workbook curriculum breaks down end time events and their effect on the world. It's a fresh take on everything you've ever heard about the end times, and possibly a new perspective on the role of the Church during the tribulation.

Don't Get This Wrong! will inspire and challenge you in your everyday lifestyle to be prepared, alert and ready for the greatest event in history – Christ's Return and His reign here on earth.



SESSION 01: WHY WE STUDY END TIMES

Being alert, prepared and ready
Knowing God's Word as it speaks of His return

SESSION 02: THE BIG PICTURE

The truth behind Satan's agenda
The infiltration of the enemy's thinking in humanity

SESSION 03: DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS

Unfolding Daniel's prophecy regarding God's calendar
How to prepare yourself for tribulation

SESSION 04: MATTHEW 24

Interpreting the signs and chronology of end times
Recognizing deception and false gods

SESSION 05: A CHURCH THAT LOOKS LIKE THE WORLD—PART ONE

The separation of unbelievers from believers
To be all in for Jesus

SESSION 06: A CHURCH THAT LOOKS LIKE THE WORLD—PART TWO

Understanding God's definition of love
God will not change His Word

SESSION 07: GREAT TRIBULATION

What the tribulation is not
When we work with God

SESSION 08: REVELATION 19—THE KING'S RETURN

From the Sacrificial Lamb to the Lion of Judea
The notable change in Jesus upon His return

SESSION 09: THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD

Eternity is forever
Your choice of heaven or hell

SESSION 10: THE CHURCH, THE FALSE CHURCH AND JUDGMENT

What happens during the last days
What Jesus expects Christians to do

SESSION 11: THE SNARE

The snares laid out by Satan
Actively living in preparation for Jesus' return

SESSION 12: WHAT'S NEXT?

Growing in your knowledge of God
Living the life God has called you to live