

JESUS EXPLORED.

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to learning about Jesus we turn to the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Within those books we learn about the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. But Jesus isn't just talked about in the gospels, there is so much to be found in the rest of the Bible.

These studies are going to take us on a journey exploring who Jesus is in the Bible. When Jesus joined with two disciples walking to Emmaus after His resurrection, **'he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.'** Luke 24:27.

'Jesus Explored' is a ten week programme moving through the Bible, from the beginning whenever Jesus is present and active with God in the work of His creation. We then see through the key figures of the Old Testament pointing forward to Jesus's birth and ministry. We also see that one day Jesus will return to take all who love Him to heaven. What an incredible time that will be.

The Panel has reviewed the excellent original material, 'Jesus Explored', from the 2014 Scripture programme under Alistair Beattie and the contributors Rev Scott Woodburn and Rev Peter Fleming and made some updates. My thanks go to those who contributed to this process of reviewing the studies:

Rev Nigel Kane
Rev Dorothy Dunwoody
Rev Noel Mulholland
Miss Laura Ewing
Rev George McClelland.

All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

May God bless you as you teach these lessons to the young people in your Company during this session. It is the prayer of the Panel that as we have prepared these lessons that the Holy Spirit will be preparing the hearts of the young people to respond; that as you teach this material that they will encounter Jesus in a personal way; that as you open God's word there will be an awakening in young hearts to the greatness of Jesus and that they will accept the gift of salvation He offers them.

It is also our prayer that for those young people who are Christians that they will grow deeper in their relationship with their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ; that indeed you will learn more about Jesus and pass this on to those under your care and that you will know the blessing of being able to share the truth of His word.

Rev Jonathan Moxen
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1. IN THE BEGINNING

Introduction

Ask the young people when they were born. If you have internet access, you could call up what happened on their birthday in history at www.onthisday.com (Watch out for cookies & popups.) Do a little searching to get events that the young people can relate to.

What was the world like when your BB Company started?

Do the young people know when Jesus was born? While we celebrate Jesus' birth on the 25th December we must realise that Jesus always has been and always will be. He is eternal, He has not been created but has always been in existence. We use the 25th December as a point in time when we can celebrate the birth of Jesus because it is so important to know God sent His son into the world. Emmanuel, God with us.



Discussion

It is easy for us to understand the birth of Jesus 2000 years ago as the start point of Jesus existence. But whenever you read the Old Testament you see Jesus is clearly seen. Here are a few examples:

In Genesis 32:30 we read. **'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.'** Jacob realises that he was wrestling with more than just a man, he was wrestling with God. How do we explain this? Well it wasn't an angel or Jacob would have said so. It was God on earth in the form of a man so it must have been Jesus.

In Daniel 3 we have the event of three people faithful to God, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue and they were thrown into a fiery furnace to burn to death, but as the king looked on

he saw something incredible. Daniel 3:25 **'But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.'** The fourth person must be Jesus. Jesus is present all throughout the Bible.

Why is this important for us to understand that Jesus was there from the beginning? It is important that we understand that Jesus wasn't just created for the New Testament, that He was born on earth and didn't exist before that time. That Jesus is part of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that they have always been and will always be. This is incredible, for it means that God has never changed and never will. The start of John's gospel confirms this truth for us.



The Big Idea

Jesus is eternal.
He always has been
and will be God.



The Word

John 1:1-3

Application

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.' John 1:1-3

John begins his gospel by telling us some awesome things about Jesus. He calls Jesus 'the Word' and says that in the very beginning He existed. Not only that but He was with God and was God. This points us to a doctrine* called the 'Trinity' which can be summed up by saying that we believe in one God, revealed in three persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they are all equal.

So Jesus was with God and is God! Jesus isn't another type of god. He wasn't created by God, and He actually is God. That's why we say Jesus is begotten not created. In other words He is of the same stuff as God, not separate. Not only that but He was active in creation. Through Jesus everything was made. When we realise this we see just how incredible Jesus is. The Bible is full of Jesus from the beginning to the end. He was there at the very beginning.

*Doctrine: a set of beliefs we believe the Bible teaches.



Preparation for next time:

Ask the young people to bring photos of themselves as babies.

2. THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Introduction

Ask the young people to bring in photos of themselves as babies. Leaders should do this also. Display the photos without saying who is who. Have fun matching each photo to the relevant young person or leader.

Talk about family resemblances – who looks like their parents, etc.

Explain that Jesus is described as the “exact” representation of God. He does more than resemble God; He is God. This is why the birth of Jesus is so unique and so important.



The Big Idea

The birth of Jesus is unique. He was a real human baby and, at the same time, fully God.



The Word

Hebrews 1:1-3



Lesson

Many of the young people will know the details of the story of Jesus’ birth. However, there may be some young people who are not from Christian homes or church-going families. They might not be as familiar with the story.

To revise the story of Jesus’ birth, you could use one of these ideas:

- Watch a YouTube video: ‘The Story of Jesus: Teen edition’;

- Listen to audiobook: ‘The Birth of the King’ (Zondervan) for a creative recap of the details; or
- Based on the game Taboo, get a volunteer to retell the story but without using certain words – eg. manger, shepherds, angels, star. This is good fun and gets everyone to pay attention.



Discussion

The details of the birth story of Jesus are important, but it is what Christians believe about Jesus that makes this baby unique. The belief that Jesus is fully human and fully God is one of the most important teachings of our faith. That’s pretty out there, but some of the events around His birth support this belief:

- Although Mary gave birth to Jesus, she was

made pregnant, not by Joseph, but by the Holy Spirit – Luke 1:31–35.

- The Virgin birth was foretold hundreds of years before – Isaiah 7:14
- Other details of His birth also fulfilled prophecies made hundreds of years before, including the very place where His birth

would take place – Micah 5:2–4

- The unusual events surrounding the birth – angels' song, a star guiding Eastern scholars to the manger, etc. Stress that this was a baby unlike any other.
- His name 'Jesus' means 'Saviour' and 'Christ' means 'Anointed one'. For hundreds of years God's people had been waiting for this Saviour. His birth was expected for a long time and had been planned and promised by God.



Application

The identity of the baby born in the manger is absolutely crucial. No other birth in history is like it. The invisible God became visible in the form of a vulnerable human baby. This is awesome and means Jesus deserves our attention, our praise and our worship.

Why did God do such a thing? He did it because of His love for us. Only by stepping into our world as one of us could He rescue us from the problem of sin in our lives. The birth of Jesus therefore has personal significance for every single person.

3. JESUS THE KING

Introduction

You could use either or both of these ideas to introduce the theme of kingship:

- Crown the King Game (stuffyoucanuse.org). A silly, boisterous game, but you could use it to highlight the point later that Jesus is the king who forever will wear the crown.
- A more sedate introduction would be to have a multiple choice or true/false quiz on facts about our own Queen, who celebrated her Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Some of these facts can then be used in the main part of the lesson.



Discussion

Using the Queen and the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, draw some comparisons between the world's best-known monarch and Jesus, the King of kings. NB. Images and photos always help to keep the young people's attention.

Promised King

Ever since the Queen's father acceded to the throne, Princess Elizabeth knew it was her destiny to become Queen.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was even born, the world knew a special and unique king from the royal line of David was coming. Throughout the OT details are given about this promised king. In Jesus, all of these prophecies are fulfilled.

Servant King

The Queen has a staff of 1,200 people working for her. (For fun, google some of the more ridiculous jobs she has servants for – eg. breaking in her shoes!). Highlight that she has incredible wealth, lives in a palace, wears

designer clothes, dines with dignitaries regularly and has access to the best of medical care. Jesus came, not to be served but to serve. He was born in poverty, never owned a home, mixed with society's most rejected people and knelt to wash His disciples' feet – a job even the lowest servants hated doing.

Rejected King

The Queen's coronation in Westminster Abbey was full of pomp and ceremony and symbolism. It was a grandiose occasion with cheering crowds and splendid procession. Her crown weighs over 1 kg and is made of gold, silver, platinum, precious stones and velvet. It is considered priceless!

Jesus went to His coronation on a donkey. Crowds screamed for His crucifixion. His crown was made of thorns. Yet while His death on a cross marked His rejection by the world, it was the moment of greatest glory the world has ever seen, because in those moments He bore the sin of the world and won salvation for rebellious humanity.



The Big Idea

Jesus is King of kings. He deserves our worship and obedience.



The Word

Philippians 2:6-11

Reigning King

When the a monarch dies, their reign is over and the throne will go to the next in line of succession.

When Jesus died, His reign was not over. God raised Him and exalted Him to His rightful place in Heaven, seated at God's right hand. He reigns forever in that place and one day all the world will bow to Him and recognise Him as the forever King.

Returning King

All previous kings and queens on earth have been consigned to history, never to be seen on earth again.

Uniquely and wonderfully Jesus will return to Earth once more. That will be an awesome day: a day of celebration, of happy reunions, of going home, of faith becoming sight, of wrongs being righted. It will also be a day of reckoning as God's judgment is passed on the world and as everyone is called to give an account of themselves before God.



Application

Jesus isn't just any king. He is the King of kings. Before Him every knee will bow, including the kings and queens of earth.

Queen Elizabeth many years ago acknowledged Jesus as her king. She regularly speaks of her faith in Jesus and her desire to serve Him.

Challenge the young people about acknowledging Jesus as king of their lives.

Prayer

King Jesus, come and reign over my life.
Reign over my heart and my emotions.
Reign over my mind, my thinking and my beliefs.
Reign over my will and my decisions.
Reign over my family and relationships.
Reign over my money, my possessions and my time.
King Jesus, come and reign over me.

4. THE LIFE OF JESUS

▶ Introduction

Without letting the whole group know, give one young person a 'problem'. The rest of the group must then ask questions to discover what is wrong. The young person can only give "Yes" or "No" answers. After ten questions the group must make a guess at what is wrong. (eg An escaped prisoner, very ill person in hospital, school pupil has forgotten to do homework for a strict teacher, etc.)

Get the young people to discuss how good they are at knowing how someone feels, and what would help them to be better at this.

Make the point that Jesus often knew what was in people's hearts, but more than that he knew how to heal and help them.



Lesson

Read Luke 4: 14 - 30

This passage is a record of the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. It is a very strong declaration of what Jesus had come into the world to do.

- The episode occurred after 40 days of prayer, fasting and temptation (see Luke 4:2)
- It was the beginning of Christ's public ministry. (Luke 4:14-15)
- Nazareth was His hometown. Probably His carpentry business had only closed a couple of months earlier. Would there have been people there who would have wanted a quick joinery task done? We don't know.
- Jesus went to the Synagogue in Nazareth as He often did (v16). He stood up to read the Scriptures and sat down to teach. It was the custom in those days for a rabbi to sit down when they taught from God's Word.
- He read part of Isaiah 61 and then claimed that these words written by the prophet

Isaiah 700 years previously were about Him. (Luke 4:18-21).

- Some people initially thought Jesus was great and spoke well of Joseph's son. (v22). Very quickly however, they all became angry. (v28). The people of Nazareth did not like to hear Christ's teaching. Jesus was teaching that God often chooses to reach out to the people others reject rather than those proudly religious. (v25-27). See also 1 Kings 19:8; 2 Kings 5:1-14.

In verses 18-19 Luke records an important summary of the main things Jesus said He was coming to do:

- He came to proclaim good news to the poor and liberty to the captives.
- He had been sent to bring sight to the blind and liberty for the oppressed.
- He would proclaim the year (period of time) of the Lord's favour.



The Big Idea

Jesus came to earth to live amongst us. Why did He come?



The Word

Luke 4:14-30

Application

What people does Jesus reach out to today whom others reject?

How should you treat people who come from a different background than you?

What does it reveal about a person's heart if they get angry when those whom others reject are welcomed into the local church?

Ask how Jesus helped the poor, captives, blind and oppressed in practical ways.

Give some examples from the gospel records – about His healing miracles; how He set people free from bondage to evil.

Explain that Jesus' main priority was to proclaim good news to poor and needy souls who were held captive by their sins. Jesus had been anointed by the Spirit to open the spiritual eyes of people to see the serious nature of sin and how they could be set free from bondage to sin by repentance and faith in Jesus.

Explain also that the “Year of the Lord's favour” is a time when God is pouring out blessing and good things upon all people – His salvation is being freely offered to all who will come to Him. We are living in the year of the Lord's favour.

2 Corinthians 6:2

‘In a favourable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the favourable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.’

Acts 4:12

‘And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’

Challenge any unsaved young people to trust in Jesus for salvation.

5. THE DEATH OF JESUS

Introduction

Share images of famous logos eg Ferrari, Nike, Apple and perhaps a couple that are less well known. Get the young people to guess and comment on what the image speaks of.

What is the symbol of Christianity? The cross.

Would you ever imagine adopting an implement of execution implement as a good logo?

Why has Christianity taken the cross as its central image?



Lesson

Read Matthew 27:27-50

This passage is a record of the public humiliation Jesus suffered to be the sin-bearer of His people. It fulfils Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12.

The crucifixion occurred on what is now known as Good Friday. This is the day on which God showed His love to sinful humanity (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). What exactly was crucifixion?

Physical agony

This was probably the most horrific form of execution ever practiced. It is worth explaining a little about it – though keep in mind that the Gospel passages do not go into it in much detail.

- The victim had already been beaten almost to death – there would have been a lot of blood loss from the lashing, and even the strongest of men would be very weak and helpless by the time they had come to the place of crucifixion.



The Big Idea

Jesus died on the cross to be the sin bearer for all who believe.



The Word

Isaiah 53:5-6

Matthew 27:27-50

Romans 5:8

Matthew 16:24-25

- The victim was nailed through the wrists to a cross beam which was then raised up to slot into a vertical post. The feet were nailed to the upright post and the victim left to hang there.
- The nails would not pierce any veins, but would have splintered bone and damaged main nerves. It would be agony and every slight movement would make it worse.
- Hanging by the arms, every muscle and sinew would be stretched.
(Suggest the young people try hanging sometime by their uninjured hands from an overhead bar for one minute and think of how many times greater the discomfort would have been for Jesus). Shooting pain and cramp would be a major problem. Very soon as the body sags from exhaustion, breathing would become difficult. For every breath the victim had to raise himself up by pushing against the nails in his feet.
- This could go on for hours (in some cases even days). The victim suffered severe muscle cramps, searing pain from nail wounds and torn flesh with every move

against the rough timber.

- Then another agony begins – a terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the membrane which surrounds the heart slowly fills with fluid and begins to compress the heart.

The Gospels don't give this detail. As you consider the passage emphasise not only Christ's physical suffering but also the emotional and spiritual anguish He felt as He bore the sins of the world on His body.

Emotional agony

His closest friends had deserted Him. There was no one to help Jesus carry the cross. A person He didn't know called Simon from Cyrene (North Africa) was compelled to carry His cross. The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus. They forced Him to wear the clothes of a king (a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns). A reed was put in his right hand as a sign of the royal sceptre. The charge, "This is Jesus, king of the Jews", was written and placed above his head on the Cross. Passers by mocked Him and challenged Him to come down from the cross and save Himself.

The chief priests, scribes and elders mocked Him claiming He couldn't save Himself even though He claimed to be able to save others. Even the robbers who were crucified alongside Jesus mocked Him.

Despite the physical and emotional suffering Jesus endured it all because he was committed to fulfilling the task His Father had sent Him to do... to save sinners through his sacrificial death.

Spiritual agony

The spiritual agony of the Cross however, was perhaps even more painful than anything. The whole earth turned to darkness for three hours, right in the middle of the day! This darkness is a symbol of the terrible judgment that was going on at that time. Jesus had taken upon Himself the sins of the world, so God the Father had to leave Jesus completely alone.

This temporary separation from God the Father led Jesus to cry out, **'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'** Matthew 27:46

Jesus was separated from God for a time, so that sinners such as you and I might be reconciled to God through repentance and faith. His suffering, physical, emotional and spiritual, means all who submit to Jesus as Saviour and King will never be separated from God. When we ask God to forgive our sins and turn away from them to follow Jesus we are set free from bondage to sin and from the penalty of eternal death in the place the Bible calls hell.



Application

Has anyone in the group ever experienced being alone and fearful? What did it feel like? How do you think Jesus must have felt on the cross?

Explain that Christians are called to deny self, take up their cross and follow Jesus (Matthew 16:24-25). How might Christians suffer for the sake of the gospel today?

Think of the Persecuted Church and also how young people can be mocked and teased by their peers for professing Christ.

Remind the young people of the great reward which awaits believers at the end life. Christians will not have to suffer separation from God in hell. Instead, we will receive the crown of life! Challenge them to count the cost and follow Jesus.

6. JESUS IS ALIVE

Introduction

Put on a glove and demonstrate the incredible things that can be done by a 'glove'. It can pick up something, squeeze a toy, scratch your head, make a fist, point a finger, wave a finger, cover your mouth, squeeze your nose, tap on a desk and do many other things. Explain throughout that the glove is an incredible creation.

Remove your hand from the glove and ask it to do the same things you just demonstrated. Look a little puzzled and confused when nothing happens. What's the problem? The reality is, it is not the glove that does these things, but the hand inside. The glove is only a container for the hand. Without the hand the glove is lifeless.

God created us also with two parts - a body and a spirit. The body is just the container. Your body has to have a spirit inside or it wouldn't be alive and able to interact with the physical world around us. When we die, the spirit leaves the body and the body becomes lifeless. The person that was inside the body still exists but they are now someplace else. For Christians, God can put the body and the spirit back together again. That's exactly what happened on Easter morning. Christ's spirit was back in his body again. The most exciting thing is that God wants to do the same thing for us. When someone dies, their body and the spirit are separated for a time but some day God will raise us back up in a new body.



Lesson

Read Luke 24:1-8

This is an account of what happened after Jesus' body was laid in the tomb and He was declared dead. Three days after that when women came to visit His tomb only to discover it was open and empty. An angel sat on the huge stone and said, **'Don't be afraid He is not here He is risen'**. Jesus was alive! The impossible had happen just as He said it would. Even though Jesus tried to prepare His disciples for what was going to happen, they still couldn't take it in. It was as if they were living in a dream. It was so unreal. Jesus now was alive, breathing, walking and talking.

The resurrection demonstrates the true power of God - God is the one who created earth, sea and sky. God is the one who placed the stars into space. God is the one who divided the Red Sea. God is the one who gave His only Son. And God is the one who has the power to raise Jesus from the dead.

The crucifixion is Jesus taking our place and enduring punishment for all the things that we have done wrong. Sin and death had no hold on Jesus. When He rose from the grave, He was victorious over sin and death forever. The resurrection proves that God has accepted the death of Jesus and is satisfied that the



The Big Idea

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the final victory over sin and death forever.



The Word

Luke 24:1-8

penalty for our sins is fully paid. Jesus is alive to prove that the victory belongs to God. Nothing can defeat Him, not even death!

every Christian from the dead with a resurrected body and we will live with Him forever.

Just as God raised Jesus from the dead with a resurrected body, God will one day raise up



Application

Have you ever witnessed something that was truly amazing?

Imagine yourself in the story - how would you have felt when you saw the tomb empty?

The women at the tomb were so full of joy that they had to go and tell not only the disciples but everyone they met.

We need to remember that it is the same powerful God who is alive today and interested in having a relationship with us. Whatever we face in life has no lasting hold over us as God did the impossible and beat death. We can know His victorious power in our lives.

“But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.” Acts 2:24

7. JESUS RETURNS TO HEAVEN

Introduction

Has any of your close family, or friends, ever gone to live in another country, or gone to study / work in another country?

How did you feel when they told you they were going to be doing this?

How did you feel when they actually left?

How did they keep in contact with you?

Lesson

We rightly hear a lot about Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection every year at church and BB. But, it's also important to know what happened to Jesus after His resurrection.

At the end of his gospel, Luke tells us that Jesus was **'taken up into heaven'** (Luke 24:51). Then at the start of the second book he wrote (Acts), Luke gives us some more details about this event, which has become known as the Ascension. According to Acts 1:3, after Jesus was raised back to life, He appeared to the Apostles He had chosen over a period of forty days and spoke to them about the kingdom of God. Jesus also gave the Apostles, and other people, many convincing proofs that He was alive.

Jesus reassured His disciples

However, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus had told His disciples that He would be returning to His Father in Heaven (John 16:5). Naturally, the disciples were upset by this news (John 16:6). But, Jesus assured them that His return to Heaven would be to their advantage because, once there, He and His Father would

send God the Holy Spirit to be with them (John 16:7).

Jesus reminded His disciples about this just before His ascension (Acts 1:8) So, Jesus didn't remain on earth, and just leave His disciples to go somewhere else, nor did He disappear into outer space.

Jesus returns to heaven

Luke tells us in Acts 1:9 that Jesus' disciples saw Him taken up before their very eyes, and then hidden by a cloud.

The angels who appeared to the disciples confirmed that Jesus has been taken into Heaven, and He would return from there one day in the same way they'd seen Him go (Acts 1:11).

The Apostles would have known that several Psalms speak about the Messiah exaltation to reign over everyone and everything (e.g. Psalm 110:1).



The Big Idea

Jesus returned to Heaven after He had completed His work of saving His people from their sin. There He reigns over all things.



The Word

John 16:5-15
Acts 1:1-11

Jesus completed the work that His Father had given Him to do on earth (John 17:4), but this doesn't mean He's sitting idle in Heaven. He is preparing a place for all who trust in Him (John 14:2) and He is interceding (pleading) for His people on the basis of what He has accomplished for them through His life, death and resurrection.

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit

The blessings of the Holy Spirit, who Jesus promised to send, began to be poured out at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (which was ten days after Jesus ascended back to Heaven, Acts 2:1-6). This was an amazing event for Jesus' disciples and everyone who heard them proclaim the good news about Jesus.

Jesus still sends His Holy Spirit into the hearts of His people. It is the Holy Spirit who:

- helps us to understand the problem of our sin (John 16:8-9).
- shows us that Jesus is the only one who can save us from our sin (John 16:8).
- works the miracle of rebirth in our heart which enables us to repent of our sin and trust Jesus to be our Lord and Saviour (John 3:5).
- guides us into the truth (John 16:13).
- helps us to live every day for Jesus.



Application

Jesus' ascension means the same for us as it did for Jesus' disciples 2000 years ago.

We are to be Jesus' witnesses everywhere we go (Acts 1:8). We do this by telling the good news about what Jesus will do for them if they turn from their sin in repentance, and they turn to Jesus in faith.

Jesus will return one day as Judge (John 16:8 & Acts 1:11). The next big event in history will be the return of Jesus in the same body that He ascended into Heaven with. Jesus told the disciples that it wasn't for them, **'to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.'** Acts 1:7. It's not for us to know them either. But, we can be sure that just as Jesus was born, died, rose again, and ascended

into Heaven, He will return to judge everyone who has ever lived. When we're trusting in who Jesus is, and what Jesus has done, then judgement day will hold no fears for us because our Judge will be our Saviour.

We are to be heavenly minded (Colossians 3:1, 5&8-10). Jesus' ascension means that everyone who trusted in Jesus is in heaven, right now. Through being united to Jesus by faith, we're no longer citizens of this world, so we shouldn't live as if we were. Even as a Christian there will be many temptations that seek to take us away from what God wants. Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, who the ascended Christ has sent to live within us, to put these sinful attitudes and actions to death.

8. JESUS IS COMING BACK

Introduction

Have you ever had family staying at your house and then suddenly it's time for them to go home again and you have to say goodbye? It's hard to say goodbye to people that we love spending time with, especially when we don't know when we are going to see them again.

In the last session the disciples watched with sad hearts as Jesus was taken up into heaven. They wondered when they might see Him again. Would He return? As they were staring up into heaven two men in white robes appeared and said, **“Why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go”**, Acts 1:11.



Lesson

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

We can have so many questions about Jesus' return but the Bible helps us to know some important things about this:

It will be a personal return. ‘This same Jesus’. The same person who was born at Bethlehem, lived and worked in Galilee, was crucified outside Jerusalem then raised to life by God is returning to this earth. When someone goes away saying “I'll come to see you again”, we expect the same person, not someone different.

It will be a physical return. In other words Jesus will have a physical body that we will see and know. When Jesus was raised to life, He appeared to His disciples and others and they recognised Him. They could see his physical body scarred by nail prints and a spear wound.

It will be a visible return. John says in Revelation 1:7, **‘Every eye will see Him’**. Paul writes that He will return with a loud noise of trumpets so

that we will both hear Him and see Him when He returns.

It will be a sudden return. Paul writes that it will be like a **‘thief in the night’** (1 Thess 5:2). A thief does not announce when he is coming; his coming is unexpected. Many have tried to predict when Jesus will return again; Jesus himself said ‘No one knows’. The Bible teaches us to always ‘be ready’. The story of the bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-13) highlights this. We are only ready when we have trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation and are living our lives in obedience to Him.

It will be a triumphant return. Jesus is not coming back as a baby but as a King rejoicing in victory, **‘coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory’**, Matthew 24:30. It will be a day of great joy for all those trusting in Jesus; it will be a day of great sadness for all those not trusting in Jesus.



The Big Idea

Jesus is coming back; we don't know when, but we need to be ready when He comes.



The Word

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

Application

Read the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids in Matthew 25:1-13.

This is a story that Jesus told when He was preparing the people about what the Kingdom of Heaven will be like. He describes Himself as the Bridegroom and the Bridesmaids are His followers waiting for His return. We see in the story that the groom gets delayed and the bridesmaids are left waiting. Some had prepared for this while others ended up running out of oil for their lamps, and then in turn missed out on the Wedding Feast.

Are you someone who likes to be prepared? In this story being prepared paid off as those who had enough oil in their lamps were there when the Bridegroom appeared and were able to go and enjoy the banquet.

How does knowing Jesus will return make you feel?

How should knowing this affect our lives?

How would you feel if Jesus came back right now? Would you be prepared?

How can we prepare ourselves for Jesus' return?

There are lots of questions about Jesus returning. The only thing that we can be really sure about is that He is returning. Our response then is to make sure that we are ready and don't miss His return.

9. JESUS IS THE PROPHET

Introduction

Split the young people into two or more groups. Play a game of 'Chinese Whispers' by giving each group the same phrase to pass from one young person to the next, in a whisper.

If a group is able to pass the phrase correctly (word perfect) from the first young person to the last young person then give each member of the group an edible prize.

If the group doesn't pass the phrase correctly (word perfect) from the first young person to the last young person then keep the prizes for yourself.

Explain to the young people that correctly communicating the message of salvation has eternal consequences.



Discussion

Getting a message wrong can lead us to false hope, danger and death. For example, after the Titanic struck an iceberg, initial reports suggested that she was slowly making her way to Nova Scotia with all passengers safe. When the relatives heard that message they must've been relieved. But, it wasn't correct.

Furthermore, the wireless operators on the Titanic mistakenly sent out the wrong co-ordinates for her position. So, the ships coming to her rescue were heading in the wrong direction. A ship actually watched her

sinking that night and thought her emergency rockets were fireworks at a party. These wrong messages led to great loss of life. The wrong message about how we can be saved from our sin leads to an even greater loss of life – the loss of eternal life.

It might be worth discussing some of the wrong messages eg. we don't need to be saved, we are saved by doing good things, all religions lead to Heaven, etc.



Lesson

In the Bible, prophets had the job of speaking God's Word to people. In the Old Testament, this included both proclaiming God's truth, and revealing God's plans for the future. Some of the prophets also performed miracles.

The people of Jesus' day referred to Him as a prophet on several occasions (Matthew 21:11;

Luke 7:16; John 4:19), and Jesus referred to Himself as a prophet at least once (Mark 6:4). Both Peter and Stephen spoke of Jesus as being the ultimate fulfilment of the promise God had made to Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15, **'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen'**.



The Big Idea

Jesus is the Prophet who tells us all we need to know about salvation.



The Word

Hebrews 1:1-2

Jesus is the prophet like Moses who must be listened to (Acts 3:17–23; 7:37–38, 51–53).

In a previous session, we saw that Jesus taught the Word of God, and He often spoke in parables (Mark 1:22).

Jesus also foretold the future. For example, He told His disciples about:

- His death & resurrection
Matthew 17:22–23; 20:17–19
- Judas' betrayal
Matthew 26:20–25; John 13:18–30
- Peter's denial
Matthew 26:31–35; Mark 14:27–30; Luke 22:61; John 13:31–38.

He predicted:

- the coming of the Holy Spirit
John 16:7–15; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–5
- the persecution of His followers
John 16:1–4, 33
- the destruction of the temple
Matthew 24:1–2.

All of these things came true. So, we can have confidence that His promise to return will also come true (Matthew 24:30–31; John 14:3).

Like many of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus performed miracles, as we've seen in an earlier session:

- Matthew 8:1–17; 9:18–33
- Mark 1:32–34; 2:1–12
- Luke 17:11–19; 18:35–43
- John 2:1–11; 6:1–24

Jesus even compared Himself to the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha (Luke 4:24–27). Sadly, the people of Nazareth rejected Jesus, just like the people of Israel rejected Elijah and Elisha.

Jesus doesn't just speak the Word of God as a mere human prophet. He is the Word of God who came to live on earth so that He could teach us about salvation, and purchase that salvation for His people (John 1:1&14).

Jesus is the final word from God. This is why the author of Hebrews wrote, **'Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.'** (1:1–2).



Application

Jesus has correctly communicated how we can be saved from our sin. So, we can believe everything that Jesus has told us, but we also need to trust in everything that Jesus has done for us.

Then we need to correctly share Jesus' message about salvation with everyone we have contact with.

What we do with the message about Jesus is literally a matter of eternal life and death:

'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.'
John 3:16-18

This is why it's so important that we believe it, and correctly communicate it to others.

10. JESUS IS THE PRIEST

Introduction

Give each young person a paper plate and get them to write their name on it. Mark out two parallel lines on the floor which are far enough apart for it to be impossible to throw a paper plate from one side to the other. The more young people that are in the group the wider the gap between the parallel lines will need to be.

Get the young people to stand behind one of the lines. Whoever gets their plate to the far side of the other line will win a prize.

The rules of the game are:

1. No part of your body can touch the ground between the 2 lines.
2. The only thing that can touch the ground between the parallel lines is their paper plates.
3. Once a paper plate has touched the ground it can't be lifted or moved, it must remain exactly where it landed/put down.

The young people will soon realise that some (and maybe even all but one) of them will have to sacrifice their plate, and their chance of winning the prize, in order to get at least one plate across the gap.

At the end of the game, point out that it was only because of the sacrifice of others that anyone was able to get the prize.



Discussion

On 1 July 1916, Private William McFadzean and his bombing team were in the assembly trenches getting ready for the beginning of the Battle of the Somme.

Grenades were being distributed to the soldiers when a box of grenades being passed to Private McFadzean fell into the trench which caused two grenades to become separated from their safety pins before falling into the crowded trench. Without a thought for himself, William threw himself on top of the grenades. The grenades exploded, killing William instantly, and injuring one other man.

Undoubtedly, Private McFadzean saved the lives of all the soldiers around him.

William McFadzean was prepared to sacrifice his life to save the lives of his friends. He was awarded the Victoria Cross, which is the highest military decoration given to members of the armed forces for bravery 'in the face of the enemy'.

Have you ever sacrificed something for the good for others?



The Big Idea

Jesus is the Priest whose death was the once-for-all sacrifice which reconciles His people to God.



The Word

Hebrews 4:14-16 & 7:23-27



Lesson

In Old Testament times priests acted as mediators between people and God by offering sacrifices every day on behalf of people who had sinned. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would go into the Most Holy Place in the Temple, with the blood of an animal that had been sacrificed, to sprinkle it on the lid (mercy seat) of the Ark of the Covenant, Leviticus 16.

These sacrifices didn't take away the people's sin, but they did point forward to something, and someone greater to come.

Paul explained to Timothy who fulfilled this when he said, **'For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'**, 1 Timothy 2:5.

As we saw in a previous session, Jesus is our High Priest and our Mediator, because He offered Himself as a sacrifice when He died on the cross.

To use a term you're familiar with from sport, Jesus was our substitute. Jesus allowed His Father to place all the sins His people had committed upon Him, and He endured God's just

punishment of those sins, so that we could be forgiven.

Paul told the Christians in Corinth that God made Jesus to be sin, even though Jesus had never sinned, so that we could be right in God's sight, 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Unlike the Old Testament sacrifices, Jesus' sacrifice actually paid the price in full for His people's sin once for all.

When we trust in what Jesus did to save us from our sin, we are reconciled to God.

Another important role that the Old Testament priests had was to pray for God's people. Jesus also does this for those who trust Him to be their Saviour.

The author of the New Testament book of Hebrews teaches us that Jesus, **'holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues for ever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.'** Hebrews 7:24-25.



Application

Jesus has offered the once for all sacrifice for the sins of His people, Hebrews 7:27. So, we need to trust in what He has done to make us right with God, instead of thinking that anything else can make us right with God.

When we're trusting Jesus to deal with our sin, He continually pleads our case before His Father. So, we can come to God in prayer, knowing that Jesus understands what we're going through, and He'll enable us to deal with it.

'Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' Hebrews 4:14-16



MEMORY VERSES

Acts 4:12

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Romans 5:8

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Acts 2:24

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Acts 1:11

Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

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