

Following Jesus Discipleship Program

for

JESUS Film Harvest Partners

Standard A

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STANDARD A: WHO IS JESUS AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW HIM?

Lesson 1: Who is Jesus?

- A. Jesus Is the Fulfillment of God's Promises to Abraham**
- B. Jesus Is the Messiah**
- C. Jesus Is the Savior**
- D. Jesus Is the Son of God**
- E. Jesus Is God**

Lesson 2: What Is Important About Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection?

- A. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection Unlock the Meaning of Christian Life**
- B. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection Demonstrate God's Power over Evil**
- C. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection Provide Forgiveness of Sins**
- D. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection Bring New Life in Christ**

Lesson 3: What Is the Kingdom of God?

- A. The Kingdom of God Came in Jesus**
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- A. Those Who Enter the Kingdom Must First Recognize They Are Lost**
- B. Those Who Enter the Kingdom Must Accept the Kingdom as God's Gift**
- C. Those Who Enter the Kingdom Become Born Again**
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- A. Jesus Expressed Forgiveness**
- B. Jesus Taught Forgiveness**
- C. God Provided Forgiveness and Reconciliation**
- D. Disciples Share Forgiveness and Reconciliation**
- E. Christian Baptism Is a Sign of Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

Lesson 6: What Is Repentance?

- A. John the Baptist Called People to Repentance**
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Lesson 7: What Is the Church?

- A. Jesus Christ Is the Head of the Church**
- B. Christ Is Present with Us in the Lord's Supper**

Lesson 8: How Does Jesus Rule over the Powers of Evil Today?

- A. Jesus Cast Out Demons**
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- C. Jesus Gives Victory over all Evil Powers**

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Lesson 1: Who Is Jesus?

Introduction

Christians have that name because they are followers of Jesus of Nazareth. The early Christians recognized Him as Christ, the Messiah, God's "Anointed One." The early followers of Christ were sometimes called "followers of the Way." They were first called Christians in a city named Antioch in ancient Syria. Those who follow Jesus are His disciples. This means many things, and in the *Following Jesus Discipleship Program* we will explore many of these. One thing the word *disciple* means is that Jesus is their most important teacher. Disciples of Jesus live in the school of Jesus.

But who is Jesus? Why would so many people want to follow Him? In this lesson we will begin to ask and answer this question.

A. Jesus Is the Fulfillment of God's Promises to Abraham.

Jesus is the One who completes the story of God. He fulfills the trust God's people had placed in God's promises to Abraham. He is also the fulfillment of the hopes of the whole world.

The angel announced to Mary she would give birth to Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). Afterwards, she praised God for what He had promised to do (Luke 1:46-55). She concluded her song with references to God's earlier promises. "He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers" (Luke 1:54-55).

God's purpose in calling Abraham was to create a people. God's purpose in creating a people was to make himself known to them. They would then take the blessing of their knowledge of God to the rest of humanity. God repeated these promises to Abraham later in his life (Genesis 22:15-18). God again emphasized the blessing that would come to all the nations of the earth.

The prophets believed the purpose God intended for Israel to fulfill would, in fact, be accomplished (Isaiah 9:2-7; Isaiah 11:1-5; Isaiah 60:1-3; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32).

Jesus began His public ministry in Nazareth (Luke 4:14-30). In the synagogue on the Sabbath, He read from the prophet Isaiah (61:1-2; 58:6). Jesus declared that these verses were now being fulfilled in Him. Later, some followers of John the Baptist asked Jesus about His ministry (Luke 7:18-23). Jesus replied with words from the prophet Isaiah (29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1). Jesus understood His mission as fulfilling the prophet's expectations for God's future activity.

The apostle Paul referred to God's promise to Abraham as being the scriptural foundation of the Good News that Jesus preached. Paul declared: "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'" (Galatians 3:8). Paul heard the Gospel as a message of God's mercy. God had revealed in Jesus the way people would be accepted by God. Paul's word for this acceptance was *justified*. The word means the loving act of

God by which He makes people right with Him. Paul applied the words of the promise to Jesus himself. Paul wrote: “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

Question: What is the promise God made to Abraham?

Question: Why is God’s promise to Abraham so important to who Jesus is?

B. Jesus Is the Messiah.

One day when Jesus was praying, He asked His disciples a question. “Who do you say I am?” His disciples answered, “The Christ of God.” (See Luke 9:18-20.) *Christ* means “Messiah” or “the anointed one.” The Jews hoped for a future king that would come from the family of David. He would be their Messiah. He would free them from their enemies.

“Christ” is the Greek word for Messiah. The disciples believed Jesus was the Messiah. He had been anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Luke 3:21-22). God had chosen Him to bring salvation to all the world. He was God’s Christ, God’s Messiah. So, Jesus is the Christ. The enemy He came to destroy was sin. He brought the kingdom of God that the Old Testament promised. Christians are people who recognize Jesus as the Christ. They receive His salvation, the salvation of God. And they follow Him because He is the anointed One of God. The Bible provides the inspired record in which we learn all of this.

Question: What does the word Messiah mean?

Question: Why is it important that Jesus is the Messiah?

C. Jesus Is the Savior.

Mary the mother of Jesus sang, “My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:47). Then she continued by explaining the meaning of Savior. As Savior, God delivers all who are oppressed and who call upon His name. He shows mercy to those who fear Him. He scatters the proud and performs mighty deeds of salvation. He lifts up the humble, feeds the hungry, and remembers to be merciful. (See Luke 1:47-55.)

The angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds and announced Jesus’ birth to them. The angel identified Jesus as the Savior. The Savior was Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11). When Jesus was eight days old, they took Him to the Temple to be circumcised. This was Jewish custom. A righteous man named Simeon was serving in the Temple. When he saw Jesus he took the baby in his arms. Simeon gave thanks to God for Jesus. He said, “For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people” (see Luke 2:29-32). Inspired by God, Simeon said Jesus the Savior would reveal God to the Gentiles and would bring glory to Israel.

In the Old Testament, God is sometimes called the Savior. (See 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 106:21; Isaiah 19:20; 43:3, 11; 60:16.) This is because of His mighty acts of redemption. Also, in the New Testament, Christ is called the Savior. For example, the Apostle Peter said that after Jesus’ death and resurrection, God exalted Jesus to His own right hand. He exalted Him as “Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). The Apostle said that “God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:23). He is the Savior God promised through the prophets. Through Him God made salvation possible for all people.

Question: What does it mean to call Jesus the Savior?

Question: What makes Jesus the Savior?

D. Jesus Is the Son of God.

Once Jesus took some of His disciples up to a mountain to pray. While they were there, some amazing things happened. The appearance of Jesus' face changed. His clothes became very bright. Moses and Elijah appeared and began to talk with Him about His death. A cloud was over all of them. The disciples were terrified. Then out of the cloud God spoke. He said, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen" (Luke 9:35). God instructed the disciples to listen to His Son.

On another occasion Jesus encountered a man that demons had possessed. The man was so broken by (sick with or possessed by) the demons that he could not live in a house. He lived where tombs were located. His mind and body were so much in the power of demons that he did not even wear clothes.

No mere man or creature could break the power of the demons and set the man free. Only God could do that. And that is exactly the way the demon-possessed man recognized Jesus. Just before Jesus forced the demons to leave the man, the man recognized Jesus as the "Son of the Most High God" (see Luke 8:26-31).

Question: How are Jesus and God related?

Question: Because Jesus is the Son of God, what are some special things Jesus can do?

E. Jesus Is God.

Who is this One whom God called His chosen Son? Who is this Son of the Most High God who could force demons to obey Him? He could even raise the dead. He forgave sins (Luke 7:48-50). He set people free from slavery to evil and evil powers.

The answer is also found in another story. One day Jesus got into a boat with His disciples. They intended to cross a lake. Jesus went to sleep. But a fierce storm arose and threatened the ship and its passengers. The alarmed disciples shouted at Jesus. They told Him to do something or they would die. Jesus rebuked the raging storm, and the wild sea became calm.

The frightened disciples naturally asked, "Who is this One who makes even the raging storm to obey His command?" They were overcome by fear and amazement. Why? Because they recognized that in Jesus of Nazareth they had encountered the Holy God. (See Luke 8:22-25.)

The angel had told Jesus' mother, Mary, that He would be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Now we know by looking at these events in Jesus' life we meet God himself in Jesus of Nazareth. God is uniquely present in Him. The *incarnation* is what Christians call God's unique presence in Jesus (John 1:1-5; 14-18; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-20).

Question: What are two ways we know that Jesus is God?

Question: Before Jesus was born, what did His mother already know about Jesus?

Conclusion

When Christ speaks, God is speaking. When Christ acts, God is acting. When Christ forgives sins, it is God who does this. When Christ tells us what God is like, God is speaking for himself.

God is the One who suffered on the Cross. He is the One who overcame death, hell, and all that tries to separate people from God. God is the One who saves and provides salvation for all people. In Jesus, God is the One who forgives and receives all sinners who repent. He is the One who finds the lost coin. He finds and restores the lost sheep. He forgives and restores the lost son. God is the One who brought salvation to Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Jesus preached the Good News of God's salvation for all. He also *is* the Gospel, which is God's Good News.

Activity: Tell another person who Jesus is.