

+ ST MATTHEW'S

Meeting Jesus

**SIMPLY CHRISTIANITY
&
MEALS IN LUKE**

Name

Term 1, 2024

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About this series

At the start of each new year St Matt's has a habit of looking at a Gospel. The movement from Christmas to Easter aligns nicely with Term 1, offering a chance to start the year by reorienting our thinking to our Saviour. This term, during our services, we are focusing on specific meals Jesus shared, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Concurrently, our Life Groups will go through a modified version of *Simply Christianity* by John Dickson, providing a quick run-through of Jesus' life from Luke's Gospel.

Revisiting the fundamentals of our faith is never a futile endeavour. Christians never move on or graduate from learning about Jesus. Christianity is not merely an ethical or moral system; fundamentally it is about Jesus. Whether you have been a Christian for 50 years or 5 minutes, taking the time to explore Jesus, his mission, identity, death and resurrection will be time well spent together, for it truly is good news.

Another advantage of doing *Simply Christianity* together means that you can become familiar with the series, making you more confident to invite someone you know to the course. You may also consider leading a friend through the five week course in a one-on-one situation.

The remainder of the term will have us following the sermon series in an inductive manner. The two sermons on Zacchaeus and the Lord's Supper before Easter will have an evangelistic bent to them. It would be worthwhile to invite someone along so they can hear more about our Lord, whose mission is the seek and to save the lost by dying for them in their place.

This term, as we look at Jesus from Luke's account, I pray that it will help deepen and reaffirm your faith and understanding of who Jesus is and what He achieved for us. I also hope it will equip you with knowledge of the *Simply Christianity* course so you can help invite or share it with others.

In His name for His glory,

Andrew Vella

About these studies

Simply Christianity is a program designed to help people explore who Jesus is through the Gospel of Luke. It aims to let the Gospel of Luke speak for itself, and a keen participant would have read the whole gospel over the five weeks. The course is tailored for a non-Christian audience, and its leader's booklet suggests refraining from group prayers or calling on individual people to read the Bible aloud. However, because the context of our Life Groups is different, we strongly encourage you to pray and read the Bible together.

The program involves reading between sessions, concluding each session with reading homework that offers both "full" and "shorter" options. If you are not following the SOAP readings or a personal Bible reading plan, this homework could be a good tool for someone to initiate and sustain a reading plan for the rest of the year.

The course itself travels through Luke, hitting some of the major themes such as the reliability of the Gospel, Jesus' authority, His mission to seek and save the lost, the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection, and the implications of responding to this message. Occasionally, videos can be shown in these sessions. In our first session there is a YouTube clip from a similar program that will complement that study (along with the Appendix at the back). The other sessions may cover too much, so it is worth monitoring the time carefully to ensure the study lands on the Big Idea.

Once we finish the modified *Simply Christianity* course, we will follow the remaining sermons in the term's series. These studies loosely use the SOAP headings of Scripture, Observations, Application, and Prayer, with some other sub-headings to help direct the Observation phase.

With this framework, the emphasis is on letting the text speak for itself. As a group, the goal is to allow the text to direct the content and flow of our discussions, enabling us to discern the main idea and derive an application that flows out of that idea. While questions may naturally arise from the text, it is essential not to force answers if they aren't explicitly present in the text. The aim is for the text to guide our group discussion, fostering a shared approach to the content and ensuring that everyone is literally on the same page.

Session 1 – Jesus, Now and Then

1. 'Christ'-ianity

As the word suggests, 'Christianity' is all about a person, Jesus Christ. In fact, Christianity could be defined simply as 'responding appropriately to Jesus Christ'.

Since Christianity is based on Jesus it is worth knowing, what we can know about Jesus.

Watch the 19 min video of the "Life of Jesus Group Bible Study by John Dickson" on YouTube¹

2. Information about Jesus?

a. there are lots of Greek and Jewish sources about Jesus that prove he was a real person, within a time period and geographical area. That he did startling deeds and died on a cross. His followers continued to believe Jesus to be God and spread this message and caused disruption to the empire. See the Appendix A for more references and sources.

b. We have four biographies of Jesus in the New Testament

- The Gospel of Matthew is famous for its lengthy record of Jesus' great ethical teachings.
- The Gospel of Mark is famous for its short, punchy style.
- The Gospel of Luke is famous for its emphasis on Jesus' friendship with 'non-religious' people.
- The Gospel of John is famous for its profound insight into the nature of Jesus.

We will be looking at Luke in these sessions and by the end you will be able to say that you have read at least one whole book of the Bible and know what it says about Jesus.

3. Who was Luke?

Read Luke 1:1-4

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvR2Dj85HeU>

account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

1. Can we have certainty in matters of faith and religion?
2. What do we learn about Luke and the purpose of his gospel?
3. How might Luke's prologue be useful in refuting the idea that Christianity is based on mythology?

4. The Big Idea

Christianity at its heart is not about rules or rituals but about a person, Jesus Christ – a person we can get to know by reading the Gospel of Luke

4. Can you share how knowing Jesus has made a difference in your life?

5. Prayer

Give thanks for the certainty we can have in the faith and for what God has done in our lives.

6. Homework

For next week read Luke 1-9 (or if you are short on time, read Luke 4:14-5:39 and 7:36-9:22). Ask yourself: According to Luke, who is Jesus and what has he come to do?

Session 2 – In the Presence of Greatness

1. The Story So Far

Christianity at its heart is not about rules or rituals but about a person, Jesus Christ – a person we can get to know through reading the Gospel of Luke.

2. A Great Title

1. What do you think makes a good leader?

Read Luke 2:8-12

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

2. What are the titles, names or descriptions of Jesus given in this passage? Do you know what they mean?

3. Jesus Authority

3. In each of these snippets from the Gospel of Luke, what do we see Jesus having authority over?

Luke 4:14–22

¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of

the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.

Luke 4:38-40

³⁸ Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. ³⁹ So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

⁴⁰ At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

Luke 5:17-26

¹⁷ One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and

walk'? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Luke 5:27-28

²⁷ After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, ²⁸ and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

4. Recognizing Greatness

Luke 9:18–20

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

¹⁹ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

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

Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

4. This point in Luke's gospel is the climax of all that has gone before. What is so significant about Peter's answer to Jesus' question?

5. How would you answer Jesus' question and what do you base that on?

5. The Big Idea

As the Christ, Jesus possessed the authority of God himself. It is an authority he called on people to recognise.

6. Prayer

Give thanks for Jesus' authority and that we can come to know Him more and more.

7. Homework

For next week read Luke 10-19 (or if you are short on time Luke 15:1-19:10) Make a note of what Jesus thought His central mission was.

Session 3 – Search and Rescue

1. The Story So Far

Christianity is about responding appropriately to Jesus Christ. As the ‘Christ’, Jesus possessed the authority of God himself.

2. Jesus: The Rescuer

1. Do you know what your name means? Share with the group.

2. Do you know what “Jesus” means?

Jesus was designated ‘Saviour’ (or ‘Rescuer’) because he would rescue or ‘save’ people (remember Luke 2:11 from last week)

3. Jesus and Judgement

Read Luke 13:22-30

²² Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them, ²⁴ “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’

“But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’

²⁶ “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

²⁷ “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’

²⁸ “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.

²⁹ People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

3. In the passage above what is Jesus talking about?

4. How does it make you feel to know that judgement is coming and that not all people will be saved?

5. Who are the ones who are welcomed into the kingdom? Do you think you will make it in? Why/why not? On what basis?

4. Jesus and the Rescue of 'Sinners'

Read Luke 15:11-32

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

6. Who is the ‘sinner’ (v11-3)? What is his sin?

7. In this parable what is God like (v20-24)? Does this align with your own ideas of what God is like?

5. The Big Idea

Jesus was God’s ‘rescuer’. His aim was to find people who have distanced themselves from God and deserve his judgement, and convince them to return home and offer them a fresh start.

6. Prayer

Thank God for Jesus who rescues people who have strayed away from God. Pray that we would return to God seeking His forgiveness and thank Him that He is a loving father who offers mercy to all who come back to Him.

7. Homework

For next week read Luke 20-23 and ask yourself: Why was it necessary for Jesus to die?

Session 4 – Jesus' Death

1. The Story So Far

Christianity can be summarized as responding appropriately to Jesus Christ.

As the Christ, Jesus possessed the authority of God himself.

Jesus' mission as the rescuer involved finding and rescuing people who had distanced themselves from God.

2. The Last Supper

1. The symbol of the cross has become quite prominent over the years. What does the symbol of cross mean to you?

Read Luke 22:14-20

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you.

¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

2. This meal took place during the Passover. Does anyone know the significance of this meal?
3. What is the cup in v20 and what does that mean?

3. Tears in the Garden

Read Luke 22:39-46

³⁹ Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” ⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶ “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

4. What is the cup in v42 and what does that mean see also Jer 25:15-29?

4. The Criminal, the Christ and the Crucifixion

Read Luke 23:26-46

²⁶ As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ ³⁰ Then

“ ‘they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!”

and to the hills, “Cover us!” ’

³¹ For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them,

for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

5. On the cross, how does Jesus show His authority?

6. On the cross, how does Jesus show His mission?

5. The Big Idea

The meaning of Jesus’ death is simply – Jesus sacrificed his life to take our punishment upon himself, so that we could have open access to God.

6. Pray

Thank God for Jesus who has authority to let people into God's kingdom, and demonstrated His love for us by dying and forgiving those who have strayed far from God. Ask God to help us to never lose sight of the good news of the cross of Christ.

7. Homework

For next week read Luke 24.

Session 5 – Jesus, Here and Now

1. The Story So Far

Christianity can be summarise as responding appropriately to Jesus Christ.

As the Christ, Jesus possessed the authority of God himself.

Jesus' mission as the rescuer involved finding and rescuing people who had distance themselves from God.

Jesus willingly sacrificed his life to take upon himself the judgement we deserve.

2. The Meaning of Jesus' Resurrection

1. If Jesus' resurrection was untrue, what would be the implications for us and Christianity?

Read Luke 24:30-43

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

2. How is Jesus' resurrection body "normal"?

3. How is Jesus' body somehow "super-natural"? What does this tell us?

Read Luke 22:66-69

⁶⁶ At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. ⁶⁷ "If you are the Messiah," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, ⁶⁸ and if I asked you, you would not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

4. What does it mean to be elevated to God's right hand?

5. How has Jesus' death and resurrection elevated Him to be seated next to God?

3. Our Response

Read Luke 24:44-47

⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

6. What is the appropriate response to Jesus' power?

7. What is so good about the message that is to be preached in Jesus' name?

4. The Big Idea

The fact that Jesus has been raised from the dead demands that we respond to him. Jesus expected this response to take the form of repentance and seeking forgiveness.

5. Prayer

After looking at the life and work of Jesus you may want to respond with this prayer:

Lord,

Thankyou for Jesus, your Christ: for his life, death and resurrection.

I admit that I have sinned against you and lived at a distance from you.

I am truly sorry.

Because of Jesus, please forgive me.

Help me, from this time on, to see things your way and to live accordingly.

Thank you. Amen.

Luke 19:1-10 – Zacchaeus

Scripture

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

⁹Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. How well positioned are you to see Jesus? Do you need to move in some way (physically, socially, spiritually) in order to get a clearer sight of the Lord?
2. What evidences of repentance do we see in Zacchaeus? What evidences of repentance were present at your conversion?
3. The crowds disapprove of Jesus' fellowship with Zacchaeus, yet Zacchaeus comes to faith in the Lord. How commonly do you think Christians resemble the attitudes of the crowds, who did not think Zacchaeus was worthy to be with Jesus? How can we better spot those attitudes in ourselves and root them out?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Luke 22:14-38 – The meal Jesus was Passionate to eat

Scripture

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you.

¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹ But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²² The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!” ²³ They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵ Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸ You are those who have stood by me in my trials. ²⁹ And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

³¹ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

³³ But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

³⁴ Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”

³⁵ Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?”

“Nothing,” they answered.

³⁶ He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. ³⁷ It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.”

³⁸ The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.”
“That’s enough!” he replied.

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. Jesus knew his disciples would betray him, fail him, and deny him ... yet he still walked toward the cross. How does knowing he knew these things increase our awe of his sacrifice?
2. How are we to be great in the kingdom? What might we change in our thinking and behavior to be more aligned with Jesus' teaching?
3. Are there ways you expect or demand to be treated better than Jesus was by this world? What would change in your life and your joy if you did not expect this?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Luke 24:13-49 – Emmaus and the Spooky Meal

Scripture

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

²⁵ He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴ He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. For someone to believe in Christ, He must open their eyes—and He can open their eyes. Who is the Spirit prompting you to commit to praying for, that Christ would open their eyes? What part are you going to play in Jesus' mission?

2. Throughout this chapter the disciples were told to remember what was written about the Messiah. What habits or routines do you have or could you start this Easter to help you to remember what Moses, the prophets and Psalms said about the Messiah?

3. How does Christ's resurrection affect our lives today?

4. If you had to sum up the Jesus you meet in Luke's Gospel in five words, what would they be?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Appendix A – References to Jesus outside the New Testament

Below is a summary of references of Jesus outside the New Testament from no more than about 120 years after His death.

Greco-Roman sources

1. **Thallus** (50-70 AD) was a historian who said that when Jesus died a solar eclipse happened. We have a retort to his statement by Sextus Julius Africanus (180-250 AD) but not the original statement by Thallus. Africanus writes:

In the third book of his Histories, Thallos dismisses this darkness as a solar eclipse. In my opinion, this is nonsense. For the Hebrews celebrate the Passover on Luna 14, and what happened to the Saviour occurred one day before the Passover. But an eclipse of the sun takes place when the moon passes under the sun. The only time when this can happen is in the interval between the first day of the new moon and the last day of the old moon, when they are in conjunction. How then could one believe an eclipse took place when the moon was almost in opposition to the sun? So be it. Let what had happened beguile the masses, and let this wonderful sign to the world be considered a solar eclipse through an optical (illusion).

2. **Mara Bar-Serapion** (73-165?? AD) in a letter to his son, mentions a Jewish "wise king" that was killed by Jews before Jerusalem was destroyed. Jesus is a strong possible contender for this reference.

What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given

3. **Tacitus** (56-117 AD) in his *Annals* 15.44 attributes a Christus who under Pontius

Pilatus suffered some extreme punishment. The followers of Christus started from Judea and spread to Rome.

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

4. Pliny the Younger when writing to emperor Trajan (53-117 AD) talks of interrogating techniques for Christians and mentions what the Christians got up to when they gathered together. Pliny had seen Christians recant 25 years of their faith and heard Christians say Jesus was a god. The whole letter 10.96 is worth a read, below is a short extract.

...they were [Christians] in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to perform any wicked deed, never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to make good; after which it was their custom to separate, then reassemble to partake of food -- but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.

5. Suetonius (70-130 AD) mentions the Christians being kicked out of Rome in 49 AD, indicating the spread of Christianity to Rome in less than 19 years of Jesus' death. The Suetonius' references are more about Christians than Jesus himself.

He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus (Volume on Tiberius Claudius Drusus Caesar, paragraph 25)

He likewise inflicted punishments on the Christians, a sort of people who held a new and impious superstition. (Volume on Nero Claudius Caesar, paragraph 16)

6. Lucian of Samosata (125-180 AD) wrote a play called *The Passing of Peregrinus* (165 AD) which mocks the Christians. This is more a pop-culture reference to Jesus at the

time than a factual account of what happened but does show some ideas about Jesus such as his crucifixion. Christians are mentioned in paragraph 11-13, below is just 13

Indeed, people came even from the cities in Asia, sent by the Christians at their common expense, to succour and defend and encourage the hero. They show incredible speed whenever any such public action is taken; for in no time they lavish their all. So it was then in the case of Peregrinus; much money came to him from them by reason of his imprisonment, and he procured not a little revenue from it. The poor wretches have convinced themselves, first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and even willingly give themselves into custody; most of them. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once, for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property, receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence. So if any charlatan and trickster, able to profit by occasions, comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk.

Jewish sources

7. Josephus (37-100 AD) in his *Antiquities of the Jew* (93/94 AD) mentions Jesus as doing strange deeds, died on a cross under Pilate and converted Jews and Gentiles. There is debate about parts of this quote. Parts in brackets are contentious and possibly put in later.

*Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, [if it be lawful to call him a man;] for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. [He was the Christ]. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; [for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him.] And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day. (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18.63-64)*

8. Josephus again later in his *Antiquities of the Jew* (20.200) there is an off the cuff mentions Jesus again in reference to his brother James.

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned...

9. Others? There are also two other quotes in the Talmud mentioning Jesus in Beraitha Sanhederin 43a (200 AD) and another in Baraita Shabbat 104b. There is also another reference in Celsus (~170-180 AD), but they might be too far removed from the event to be considered primary sources.

Putting it together from these references

We can say that Jesus:

1. lived during the reign of Tiberius
2. was considered a teacher
3. was considered a doer of wonderful works
4. was known as Christ
5. died under Pilate
6. died on a cross in Palestine
7. suffered an "extreme penalty" (another reference to the cross?) by Pontius Pilate
8. it went dark when Jesus died
9. had a brother James
10. was followed by Jews and Gentiles

We can say that Jesus' followers:

1. started in Judea
2. made it to Rome before 49 AD
3. in Rome broke the peace or upset the status quo
4. took on the name Christians
5. worshiped and obeyed the teachings of Jesus
6. considered Jesus a god
7. were punished for following Jesus under Nero
8. looked after their own, even those in prison
9. consider they would have everlasting life

Books and References

The first five sessions used the following:

Simply Christianity by John Dickson. In that series Leon Morris's commentary in the Tyndale series is recommended.

Some of the questions throughout this booklet have been taken from:

Anyabwile, T. (2018). *Exalting Jesus in Luke*

McKinley, M. (2017). *Luke 12–24 for You*

Appendix A used:

An old blog series Andrew Vella wrote in 2009². This series leaned heavily on *The Christ Files* by John Dickson

² An overview of this series with links to (translated) primary sources can be found here: <https://ravingsandraining.blogspot.com/2009/12/list-of-jesus-references-outside-nt.html>