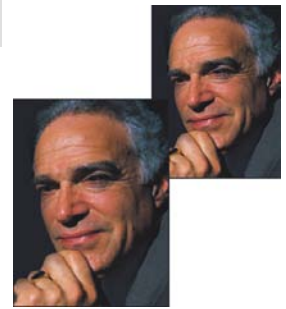


Study One

What Did Jesus Teach?

Please write your name above and fill in the Bible references in the spaces provided.



Imagine yourself boarding an aircraft and travelling, not only to another country, but back in time! Eventually you land in Jerusalem as it was almost 2,000 years ago. When you get off the plane you discover that everyone is talking about a holy teacher named Jesus¹, from a town called Nazareth. Some people like Him, while others hate Him. Some say that He is a troublemaker and deceiver, and others that He is a special messenger of God, a prophet. And there are yet others who believe He is more than a prophet, that He is the Christ.



Going back in a time machine

Note: The eye-witness record of Jesus' life is found in the Bible. The Bible was revealed over a period of nearly 2000 years. God used men in several different ways to record His word: we see the stately words of Moses and the poetic words of David. So it is in the part of the Bible which speaks of Jesus - the New Testament - we see the different personalities of the writers, like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.² But know that the words are at the same time totally inspired by God.

He Taught About God's Love For Sinners

Do you remember the teachers you had at school? Some were good – and you learnt a lot from them. Jesus was a very good teacher.³ He often used parables in His teaching. Parables are interesting stories with a hidden meaning.



A good teacher

Three of Jesus' parables compared sinful people, like us, to things that are lost and joyfully found.⁴ The lesson of all three parables is plain. There is rejoicing in Heaven when *lost* sinners come "home" to God.

GOD SEARCHES FOR LOST SINNERS

The first parable is about a lost sheep that a shepherd searched for and found. This parable (and the one after it) speaks of God looking for sinners, not sinners looking for Him.⁵ Read Luke 15:3-7. **Write out verse 6**

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A lost sheep found

Jesus is just like that shepherd. **Look up Luke 19:10**

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Historic Note
Christ's life on earth began in the days of the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus. (27 BC – AD 14.)

¹ Latest research shows that the actual name of the Messiah, as pronounced in the Aramaic language of the time, is most clearly represented by the spelling 'Yesua'. Others, over the centuries, have known Him by the name 'Isa'.

² See later "Note" about these Gospel writers on the first page of Study 5.

³ Jesus taught with authority (Luke 4:32) and was even admired by His opponents (Luke 4:22).

⁴ Luke 15:1-7 (The Lost Sheep), 8-10 (The Lost Coin), 11-32 (The Lost Son).

⁵ Sinners would remain lost, unless God chose to seek and save some. See Ephesians 1:4.

A lost son comes home

GOD WELCOMES LOST SINNERS

The third parable is about a son who had lived a very bad life. When he admitted his sin, his father welcomed him home. The son had lost his way in life. God is compared to the father in the parable. When we admit our sin, God joyfully welcomes us back. Read Luke 15:21-24. **Write out verse 24**

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This parable teaches us about repentance. Repentance is forsaking sin and returning to God. We shall consider this further when we come to Study 6.

Now look at other aspects of His teaching.



Laws of happiness

He Explained God's Law

Man's laws are intended to create a happier way of life. The law that tells us to stay on one side of the road prevents accidents. And laws that forbid stealing protect our property. God's laws are also intended for our happiness. But God's standards are much higher than ours.

We should not think of sin, which is the breaking of God's law, as a minor mistake. Sin offends God and earns His judgement. Adam was thrown out of the garden and his relationship with God was broken because of just one sin.

JESUS TAUGHT THAT WE MUST BE PERFECT

He taught that we must be as good as God Himself. This may sound impossible (and it is), but it is what we were originally meant to be. **Look up Matthew 5:48**

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JESUS TAUGHT THE EXTENT OF GOD'S LAW

He showed us that God's law covers everything we think and say, as well as what we do.⁶ **Look up Matthew 5:28**

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JESUS TAUGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE

Jesus said that if we *love* God and people as we should we would do what God's law required.⁷ We may *think* we love everyone – but do we love our enemies?

Look up Matthew 5:44

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Love for enemies

⁶ Matthew 5:21-22 and 27-28.

⁷ Matthew 22:36-40.

He Taught That He Must Suffer

We all know that we must die someday. But we are not born with the express purpose of dying. We are born that we might live for a long time. Death is an unwelcome intrusion!

Jesus, on the other hand, spoke as if His death was the major reason for His birth. He foresaw a cruel death by crucifixion – one of the most painful and humiliating deaths anyone could experience. It was a remarkable prediction. Why should anyone wish to kill someone as kind as Jesus? He also predicted that He would come alive within three days of dying.

JESUS SAID HE WAS BORN (ON PURPOSE) TO DIE

He said it was essential for Him to die and come alive. He told His disciples about it on three separate occasions.⁸ **Look up Matthew 16:21**

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JESUS SAID HE WOULD DIE FOR HIS SHEEP

In Jesus’ day, a good shepherd would risk his life to save his sheep from wolves. Jesus said He would die for *His* sheep (i.e. believers). He predicted the day when He would give His life in place of His sheep. **Look up John 10:11**

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Finally, Jesus said that His death was a “ransom for many”.⁹ And just hours before He died, He taught His disciples a symbolic lesson with bread and wine. He spoke of them as emblems of His body and blood. They were to be taken as a perpetual reminder of His dying love for them.¹⁰ We shall consider in Study 4 the explanation given by the New Testament writers for Jesus’ death.

He Said He Would Return To Judge

Wherever there are laws there are penalties for disobeying them. But those who are appointed to judge are not perfect themselves. And because they are not perfect, they will make mistakes – the innocent will sometimes suffer, and the guilty will go free.

Earthly judges deal with the more obvious sins of theft, violence, rioting, etc. but the hidden sins of hate, impurity, and greed, go unpunished by man. If a man were appointed to judge others for *these* sins he would need to be guiltless himself.

All wrongdoing is sin in God’s eyes, and deserves to be judged. But who is sufficiently sinless to undertake the task? Who is perfect enough to judge fairly? Who understands enough to take into account all the circumstances that cause us to act in the way we do? Jesus is the only person qualified; no ordinary person is good enough. So, consider what Jesus said on this subject.

⁸ Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23 and 20:18-19.

⁹ Mark 10:45 (See Study 4).

¹⁰ Luke 22:19-20.

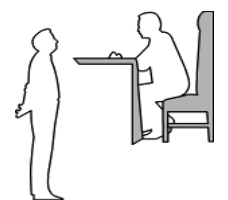


He would suffer on the cross!

Born to die



An eastern shepherd



Judging the wrongdoer

The perfect Judge

A great honour

JESUS SAID HE HAD BEEN APPOINTED AS THE WORLD'S JUDGE

This great honour, said Jesus, was given to Him by God – His Father in Heaven.

Look up John 5:22-23

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Jesus is sinless but understands my problems.

Jesus often used the title 'Son of Man' when speaking about Himself. By saying this, He declared Himself thoroughly human. As a human being He appreciates man's trials and difficulties. As a *sinless* human being,¹¹ He understands perfectly, and will judge perfectly.

Look up John 5:26-27

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Jesus is coming back

JESUS SAID HE WOULD JUDGE THE WORLD **ON HIS RETURN**

Jesus did not say He would immediately judge the world. He said He had not come to judge it, but to save it.¹² But He spoke of a day when He would *come back* to judge it. All nations would gather before Him and He would divide the saved from the unsaved.

Look up Matthew 25:31-32

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Jesus did not mean re-incarnation

and FINALLY

Jesus spoke of the need for an inner change that could only be achieved by God's Spirit. This change was so radical that He compared it to being born all over again. Without this change it was impossible, He said, to enter Heaven.¹³ Have you experienced this change? If you have, you will want to follow the teaching of Jesus outlined in this study.

¹¹ See Study 2.

¹² John 12:47.

¹³ John 3:3-5.