

THE STORY

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.

Chapter 25: Jesus, the Son of God

Key Question: How did Jesus put eternity ahead of life on earth, and how can we be like him?

The Plan Unveiled

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Last week we saw Jesus' crowd-drawing lessons, compassion for the lost, power over nature, authority over spirits, and command over life. These made him popular for awhile. But some Jewish leaders turned against him for dismissing the Pharisees' oral traditions as mere rules taught by men, not commands of God, and for continuing to heal on the Sabbath after they ordered him to stop.¹ Some of the masses abandoned him when he refused to continue providing food miraculously and instead pointed them towards spiritual food.²

Today we pick up our story about 2½ years into Jesus' ministry.

Jesus knew the time for him to complete the work for which he'd come was drawing near, and he began preparing the twelve disciples for it. He explained that the Jewish leaders were going to kill him and that he would rise from the dead. The confused disciples pondered what he could possibly mean. Peter even took him aside and rebuked him.

1. (a) What was wrong with Peter's concerns (Mark 8:33)? (b) Jesus called the crowd over. What must anyone who followed him do (8:34)? (c) In those days, people "took up their cross" only to be led to death. How did Jesus explain what he meant (8:35–36)? (d) What are ways people try to "save" the portion of their life that is here on this earth, rather than "lose" that portion of life by using it to serve Jesus and the gospel? (e) How does Jesus emphasize which is the better way to spend earthly life (8:36)?

¹ See Mark 7:1–15, Luke 6:14, and John 5:18. The Sabbath was from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. The Fourth Commandment said the Sabbath was holy and was to therefore be a day of rest, not work (Deuteronomy 5:12–15). The Pharisees were used to telling people what constituted breaking the Sabbath, based on their oral traditions. Jesus not only healed on the Sabbath, but he told a lame man to pick up his mat and walk on the Sabbath, both things the Pharisees said broke the law (John 5:1–18).

² See John 6:1–66.

When the Jews asked how he could set them free since they weren't slaves of anyone, Jesus explained that everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Holding to his teachings would bring truth which would set them free from sin.

5. (a) What claim did Jesus make in John 8:51? (b) What two questions did the Jews ask, and what do these questions tell us about them (8:52–53)? (c) Who did Jesus say his Father was (8:54)? (d) What did Jesus say in John 8:58?

Not “I was”: “I AM.”

Back in lesson four we read of someone using that name:

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM’ has sent me to you.” ~Exodus 3:14

Jesus used the name by which God called himself, the name signifying eternal existence.

Jesus' meaning wasn't lost on the Jews. He claimed existence before Abraham was born. He had called himself the Son of God, making himself equal to God,⁵ and now he used God's name for himself. They tried to stone him for blasphemy.⁶

Resurrection Promised

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Jesus crossed the Jordan and stayed where John the Baptist used to minister. Many of John's followers believed in him.

⁵ John 5:18.

⁶ See Leviticus 24:16.

Then messengers brought word from two sisters, Mary and Martha, that their brother Lazarus was ill. When Jesus arrived at their house, Lazarus had been in a tomb four days.

6. (a) How did Jesus describe himself to Martha (John 11:25) (b) What did Jesus promise (11:25–26)? (c) Do you believe this? (d) Can you respond like Martha (11:26)?

Mary came to Jesus and fell at his feet, weeping.

7. (a) What does Jesus' response to people's tears tell you about Jesus (John 11:33–35)? (b) Jesus didn't tell anyone not to weep, but instead wept with them, leaving us an example of how to comfort the grieving. If you've suffered a loss, what was the most helpful comment you heard? (c) What are some perhaps well-intentioned but unhelpful things Christians sometimes say to the grieving?

Jesus told the people to remove the stone from the tomb, even though Lazarus had been dead four days and his body was decaying. Jesus called, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came to life and obeyed.

Jesus had just demonstrated what he meant by his claim, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Not everyone appreciated the miracle. Some reported it to the Pharisees, who called a meeting of the Sanhedrin,⁷ the court that governed the Jews' internal affairs.

⁷ The Sanhedrin had members from two Jewish sects: Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees were aristocratic priests who did not believe in an afterlife (Luke 20:27) and who were not expecting a Messiah. Though many of their religious views clashed with the Pharisees, they had in common the desire to prevent Jews from believing Jesus was the Messiah.

8. (a) Did the Jewish leaders doubt that Jesus performed miracles (John 11:47)? (b) They didn't believe Jesus was who he said he was, and as religious leaders, they didn't want the masses believing what they themselves didn't believe. What other reason had they for not wanting people to believe in Jesus (11:48)? (c) What can we do to keep our own wishes from blinding us to truth?

The high priest spoke prophetically, though without understanding the full meaning of his words: "It is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."⁸

Exchanges Required

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A rich young man asked Jesus how to receive eternal life. Jesus looked at him lovingly, realizing there was something holding the man him back from following Jesus.

9. (a) What did Jesus ask the young man to do (Mark 10:21–22)? (b) How would what he would gain compare to what he would give up?⁹ (c) Have you ever given up something you thought was hindering your walk with God, whether for a short time or permanently? If so, describe how that affected your walk with Christ.

Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). Such a large animal through a tiny opening? Impossible! The disciples astutely asked, "Who then can be saved?" But what's impossible for people to achieve is God's specialty.

⁸ John 11:50.

⁹ This wasn't a command for all people, but it teaches us to watch out for things that keep us from fully following Jesus.

10. (a) What promise did Jesus give in Mark 10:29–31? (b) Describe something you gave up for Jesus and the gospel, which God returned to you many times over. (c) What comfort is there in Jesus’ assurance that we will have persecutions in this age? (d) What will we have in the age to come (10:30)? (e) How does eternal life make up for the losses and persecutions of this life?

The Hour Arrived

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And now we reach Jesus’ last week.

On Sunday, Jesus rode a colt that had never before been ridden into Jerusalem. People ran ahead, throwing leafy branches and cloaks before him, and shouting “Hosanna,” a praise meaning “Save.”

11. How were the people’s shouts particularly appropriate for Jesus’ mission (Mark 11:9–10)?

On Monday, Jesus cleansed the outer court of the temple of buyers, sellers, and money changers, for this area was supposed to be a place for Gentiles to pray. Then he healed those who came to him while children shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David.”

On Tuesday, Jesus taught in the temple, delighting the crowds.

Sometime during the week, the disciples told Jesus that Greeks had come to see him—and Jesus replied thus:

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ~John 12:23–25

And so Jesus illustrated the means of glorification.

He prayed, “Father, glorify your name!” A voice from heaven answered, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” To the crowd of Jews and Greeks, Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”¹⁰ Not just Jews—all people.

12. (a) When we believe in Jesus, in whom else do we believe (John 12:44, 49)? (b) What happens to those who believe in Jesus (12:46)? (c) What was Jesus’ purpose for coming into the world (12:47)? (d) What is the danger of rejecting Jesus and his words (12:48)? (e) Why are Jesus’ words crucial to accept (12:49)? (f) To what does the Father’s command lead (12:50)? (g) If Jesus was not who he said he was—God’s Son—does this speech allow him to be a “good teacher”? Explain.

Next week, we see Jesus lifted up from the earth.

¹⁰ John 12:28–33.