



Who Is Jesus?

LESSON T W O

A Series of Five
Bible Studies Exploring
*"The Gospel According
to Matthew"*

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Previously published in booklet form.



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Revised 2002

The Int'l Lutheran Laymen's League, with its outreach through Lutheran Hour Ministries, is an auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Lutheran Church—Canada.

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LESSON TWO

Introduction

We ended Lesson One with the account of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, chapters 5, 6, 7). In Lesson Two we will study sections of chapters 8 through 16.

Who is This Jesus Who Performs Miracles with Authority?

(Read Chapter 8)

An ancient road ran along the foot of the mountain where Jesus had been preaching. It was an important trade route that ran from the Mediterranean coast to the large Syrian city of Damascus. In Galilee, where Jesus was teaching, this road led in from the hill country around Jesus' hometown of Nazareth and around the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. The city of Capernaum was located on the Sea of Galilee along this roadway. We can picture Jesus, coming down now from the hillside where He had been preaching, making His way along this road toward the city of Capernaum—which was bustling with activity less than a mile away.

Leprosy was a frightening disease of the skin that was common in the ancient world. People with disfiguring diseases were often considered outcasts from society. That is as true today as it was in Jesus' time. Lepers were not allowed to live with their families or friends. People were afraid of catching the disease from them. Lepers were required by law to stay far away from groups of people and cry out "Unclean! Unclean!" whenever anyone drew near.

Knowing this helps us understand more about the actions of the leper in chapter 8—he broke every law in the book in order to get to Jesus! In verse 1 we read that as Jesus made His way toward Capernaum "*large crowds followed Him.*" Can you imagine how they must have scattered when this white-robed leper ran into their midst and fell down at Jesus' feet? Jesus' response was important: "*Jesus reached out His Hand and touched the man*" (v. 3). This leper had not felt the touch of another's hand since coming down with the disease. Remember, he was a man confronted by screams of horror each time he was seen by others; a man deserted by everyone; and a man considered to be under the punishment of God! Jesus gave this man who was sick two gifts that day. One was simple, unconditional love and acceptance (even in his sickness). And the second was physical healing.

Matthew tells two other stories of physical healing, each of them showing that God's love and salvation are for everyone. The first story deals with a man called a centurion—an officer in the Roman army. He was a foreigner, a man who, according to the Jews, was unable to share in the riches of God's kingdom. Jesus hears this man's prayer and heals his son. Then, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law of her fever. Most ancient peoples considered women to be inferior to men, and when widowed they were considered a burden. Jesus shows His love and concern for those people society has written off.

This section also brings us to an account involving the Lord's disciples, many of whom were fishermen. All had grown up in the area around the Sea of Galilee and had probably spent some time sailing around this beautiful lake. They were, for the most part, able if not expert seamen, but they were terrified by the severe storm that crashed in on them! How terrified? These men who had just seen Jesus heal lepers, cast out demons, and restore health—all with just a word (verse 16)—came to Him in terror during the storm and said, "*Lord, save us! We're going to drown*" (v. 25). This event is also recorded in the Gospel according to Mark where we learn that the disciples' thoughts were

a little more pointed: *“Teacher, don’t You care if we drown?”* (Mark 4:38)

“Don’t you care ... ?” That was the question the disciples raised on the boat when their lives were in peril, even after all that they had seen the Lord do in the preceding days.

Review and Apply:

Choose either “Y” or “N” for each of the following:

1. The leper broke the law by approaching Jesus. Y or N
2. After Jesus healed the leper He told him the law did not matter. Y or N
3. Because the disciples were with Jesus all the time, they never doubted and they fully understood His ministry and His message. Y or N

Things to Consider...

1. Some people feel that God cannot accept them because of something they did in the past. Their guilt becomes a disease that makes them feel like outcasts in the sight of God and the Church. What does the story of Jesus and the leper have to say to them?

2. Even after seeing Jesus' miracles and watching Him demonstrate His love for all people, what might lead the disciples to think He didn't care about them? Have you ever felt like that? What is the Lord's answer to you?

Jesus Heals Souls

(Read Chapter 9:1-13)

After the event on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus and His disciples returned to His adopted "home-base," Capernaum. Some people brought in a man who had palsy, that is, was paralyzed. Jesus saw the trouble they went to in order to bring this man to Him. He knew they believed He had the power to heal so He said to the sick man, "*Your sins are forgiven*" (v. 2). This surprised and angered the Jewish religious leaders.

The parallel account of this story in Mark tells us that the teachers of the law believed that only God could forgive sins. They felt that Jesus, by telling this man that his sins were forgiven, was claiming to be God! He was, of course, but they did not believe it. They thought He was lying ... and Jesus knew what they were thinking. So He asked them a question: "*Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?*" (v. 5). Jesus knew they didn't

believe that He could forgive sins and He wanted to show them that He did have the power to do it (that He actually was God). He told the man to get up and walk—a visible sign of His divine power. We are told that the man immediately got up and walked home.

Next comes an account about a tax collector. No one seems to like tax collectors, but in Jesus' time they were more than just "not liked" by the Jews, they were hated! The tax collectors in Israel were employed by the Roman government, so the Jews felt they were cooperating with the enemies of God's people. Of course, since no "good" Jew would associate with a tax collector, all of the tax collector's friends were other people not considered to be "good company."

The tax collector we meet sitting at the main road in Capernaum was Matthew (the author of this Gospel account). Jesus walked up to the tax table and issued the command, "*Follow Me*" (v. 9). And Matthew did! And he was so overwhelmed that Jesus would want HIM that he invited all of his friends over for a big party (remember, all of a tax collector's friends were considered undesirable). Jesus and His disciples were the guests of honor at this party, surrounded by "*tax collectors and sinners*" (v. 11). The religious leaders just couldn't

believe it! Once again, Jesus knew what was going on and said the religious leaders had a lot to learn about the mission of God. Read it again in chapter 9:12-13.

Review and Apply:

Choose the best answer.

1. Jesus healed many people. In Matthew 9:1-8, what else did He do that was very important?
 - a. He forgave the paralyzed man.
 - b. He told the teachers of the Law that it was important not only to heal, but also to forgive.
 - c. He healed and forgave the paralyzed man to show that He had the divine power and authority to do so.
2. The Scribes said Jesus blasphemed because:
 - a. He told the paralyzed man to get up and walk.
 - b. Only teachers of the law were allowed to forgive sins and Jesus was claiming to be their equal.
 - c. Only God could forgive sins and Jesus was claiming equality with God.

Things to Consider...

1. How do you think Matthew's experience with Jesus was different than his experience with the religious leaders of his day?
2. What do YOU think this means: *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners"* (v. 13)?

Faith to See Jesus

(Read Chapter 9:18–34)

As Jesus moved about the city of Capernaum, many people followed along—crowding the already busy streets. As Jesus walked, He spoke with the crowds and taught them. One day, right in the middle of a conversation Jesus was having, a ruler or official came up to Him, worshiped Him, and told Jesus that his daughter had just died, but he believed Jesus could bring her back to life. Jesus followed the man to his home and, of course, the crowds followed along.

As they went along, a woman who had suffered for 12 years from a flow of blood, pushed through the crowd so that she could touch the hem of Jesus' robe. In Israel a woman was considered

“unclean” until her monthly period was over. Since this woman had constant bleeding, she was forbidden to live a normal life. She could not touch anyone, nor could she touch anything that would be touched by someone else. It took great courage and daring for her to force her way into that crowd. She did it because she believed that by just coming into contact with Jesus she would be healed. And she was!

When Jesus finally arrived at the official’s house, He saw the people mourning in the girl’s room in typical Middle Eastern ways. Jesus asked the people to leave because, He said, “*The girl is not dead, but asleep*” (v. 24). The mourners burst into laughter. They knew she was really dead. But, unlike the official, they did not see Jesus as One who could raise her back to life. After they were put out of the room, Jesus took the girl’s hand and she was alive!

Chapter 9, verses 27–31, report on two blind men who had followed Jesus, asking Him to have mercy on them. Jesus asked if they believed He could heal them. They made a confession of what they saw with their “eyes” of faith: “Yes,” they knew He could heal them. And He did.

Matthew has been sharing stories with us about people who saw Jesus with the “eyes of faith.” These people believed (saw) that Jesus was the Savior. Chapter 9 also shares a story about what was said by those who did not believe (who were “spiritually blind”).

In verse 34, right after Jesus had visibly, without a doubt in anyone’s mind, cast a demon out of a man who could not speak, the Pharisees said, “*It is by the prince of demons that He drives out demons.*” You might want to read Luke 11:14-20 to learn more about this conversation.

Review and Apply:

Choose either “T” or “F” for each of the following:

1. The woman with the flow of blood took a great risk pushing into the crowd to touch Jesus. T or F
2. Jesus made fun of the mourners because they did not realize that the little girl really had not died. T or F
3. In some ways, the blind men had better vision than the Pharisees. T or F

Things to Consider...

1. In a parallel account of the story of the dead girl as found in Mark 5:22, we are told that the father's name was Jairus and that he was a ruler in the synagogue (the Jewish place of worship). So far in Jesus' ministry most of the Jewish religious leaders have been hostile to Him. Why would Jairus have broken rank and turned to Jesus for help? Do you think that times of crisis are often turning points for people?
2. Comment on the statement: Sometimes blind men see better than those with vision. (Refer to chapter 9:27-34.)

Are You the One?

(Read Chapters 10–12)

John, who had baptized Jesus, was in prison because of his work as God's prophet. He was suffering because of his faith and was treated unjustly. John sent word to Jesus, asking Him if He was the One who was promised to come, or if John should look for someone else. Jesus turned to John's followers and told them to go back to John and tell him what they had seen and heard: Jesus had healed the blind, the lame,

and the deaf. He had even raised people from the dead. Of even greater importance was that Jesus preached the Good News to the poor! Was that the answer? What was Jesus saying? Was He the Promised One or not? Read Isaiah 35 and see if you can't figure out what Jesus was saying to John and his followers.

The fact that Jesus was the One—that He was the Messiah, the Christ—was visible to all ... all that would look with the eyes of faith! Not everyone did, though. Many rejected Jesus even though they could plainly see the works He did. It was not that Jesus rejected them (read again the invitation in Matthew 11:28-30); they rejected Him because He was not quite what they wanted.

Things to Consider...

Have you been a witness to the miracles and the teaching of Jesus? Is He the Promised One? How do you respond to His invitation?

More Things to Consider

(Read Chapter 13)

Jesus spent a great deal of time teaching people. One of His favorite methods was using a parable. A parable is a fictitious story that teaches or illustrates one main point, using additional details to make it hold our attention. Some people simply call a parable “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” Jesus’ parables are very simple. You can understand them right away—in a certain way. What you will find out, though, is that as you grow in faith the parables will grow more and more meaningful to you. It is as if you see the parable first of all in black and white, and slowly, as your faith grows, the color begins to fill in and the picture becomes even more enjoyable.

Sometimes Jesus explained the parables for His disciples, other times He just let them work it out like everyone else. We have some of both in Matthew chapter 13, each one shedding light on some aspect of the Kingdom of Heaven. The first parable, the Parable of the Sower, is somewhat different than the other parables in the chapter because it focuses on the message—the Word of the Kingdom of Heaven—rather than the Kingdom itself. Because it is one that

Jesus explains, though, we do not have any trouble understanding it.

By filling in the following sentences you will be able to keep track of the main points of each parable and, we pray, enlarge your picture of the Kingdom of Heaven.

- The message of the Kingdom is like _____ that was sown (verses 3-23).
- The Kingdom of Heaven is like a _____ who sowed _____ seed in his _____ (verses 24-30).
- The Kingdom of Heaven is like a _____ seed, which a man took and planted in his field (verses 31-32).
- The Kingdom of Heaven is like _____ that a woman took and _____ into a large amount of flour until it was worked all _____ (verse 33).
- The Kingdom of Heaven is like _____ hidden in a field. When a man _____ it, he _____ it again, and then in his _____ went and _____ all he had and _____ that _____ (verse 44).

- The Kingdom of Heaven is like a _____ looking for fine pearls (verses 45-46).
- The Kingdom of Heaven is like _____ that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish (verses 47-50).

Following Christ

(Read Chapters 14–16,
and especially 16:24-28)

Jesus told His disciples many things. They were learning more about Him each day they spent with Him. If we follow Jesus we are His disciples, too, and each day we spend with Him we learn more about Him! In this section, Jesus mentions that those who truly wish to follow Him, must deny themselves, take up the cross (or burden of believing), and follow Him. People may attack them or they may be persecuted because of their faith. But this is to be expected, for the forces of this world are very much against Jesus. You might want to look ahead to John's Gospel account and read what Jesus says in chapter 15:18-20. You can also look back at what Jesus said in Matthew 5:11-12.

Jesus stated over and over that whoever lives in selfishness, only concerned

about saving or obtaining the treasures of this world, loses everything for eternity! But, whoever loses his life for Jesus' sake (or turns it over to Him no matter what comes) will experience eternal glory in heaven. Therefore, it truly does not profit anyone if they gain the entire world but lose their very life.

Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man, who *"is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done"* (Matthew 16:27).

Some people believe that in this verse Jesus is supporting the idea that we are saved according to how good our lives are, but when you examine ALL that Jesus says you realize that this cannot be the case. He IS saying that those who truly have faith and follow Him WILL live lives of service to others—they WILL do good works. Even though good works do not save them, those works certainly will show that they have been saved.

Review and Apply:

Choose the best answer...

1. Jesus wants each of His followers to:
 - a. Deny that they believe in Him.
 - b. Deny themselves and build a cross to carry around on their shoulders.
 - c. Deny themselves and bear whatever comes to them because of their faith.
2. Jesus said that it will not profit or gain a person anything if:
 - a. He gains the world but loses his wife.
 - b. He doesn't stop and smell the roses along the way.
 - c. He gains the whole world but forfeits or loses his life.

Conclusion

Jesus often taught in parables. In some ways His whole ministry was a living parable as He taught, healed, and performed miracles. His whole life and ministry was to tell people who He was. Do you know the answer to that question yet?

Answers to Questions

Who is This Jesus Who Performs Miracles with Authority?

1. *The leper broke the law by approaching Jesus.* YES
2. *After Jesus healed the leper He told him the law did not matter.* NO
3. *Because the disciples were with Jesus all the time, they never doubted and they fully understood His ministry and His message.* NO

Jesus Heals Souls

1. *Jesus healed many people. In Matthew 9:1-8, what else did He do that was very important?*
 - c. *He healed and forgave the paralyzed man to show that He had the divine power and authority to do so.*
2. *The Scribes said Jesus blasphemed because:*
 - c. *Only God could forgive sins and Jesus was claiming equality with God.*

Faith to See Jesus

1. *The woman with the flow of blood took a great risk pushing into the crowd to touch Jesus.* TRUE
2. *Jesus made fun of the mourners because they did not realize that the little girl really had not died.* FALSE
3. *In some ways, the blind men had better vision than the Pharisees.* TRUE

More Things to Consider

The message of the Kingdom is like SEED that was sown.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a MAN who sowed GOOD seed in his FIELD.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a MUSTARD seed, which a man took and planted in his field.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like YEAST that a woman took and MIXED into a large amount of flour until it was worked all THROUGH THE DOUGH.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like TREASURE hidden in a field. When a man FOUND it, he HID it again, and then in his JOY went and SOLD all he had and BOUGHT that FIELD.

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like a
MERCHANT looking for fine pearls.*

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like A NET
that was let down into the lake and
caught all kinds of fish.*

Following Christ

1. *Jesus wants each of His followers to:*
 - c. *Deny themselves and bear whatever comes to them because of their faith.*
2. *Jesus said that it will not profit or gain a person anything if:*
 - c. *He gains the whole world but forfeits or loses his life.*

Notes:

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