

Finding the Messiah

Key Verse:

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.’ “

Matthew 16:24

Extra: What convinced them to believe in Jesus as Messiah?

Level 5 lesson 33

Read: John 1:35-51 and Isaiah 53

WAITING

Have you ever had to wait a long time for something? Isn't it exciting when you finally get it? Well, the Jewish people had been waiting for their "Messiah" for centuries! From the book of Genesis, down through all the Old Testament prophets, God had promised them a Saviour. As we continue our studies in the book of John, we will be looking at how five men came to believe that Jesus was truly the "Messiah" - God's promised Saviour of mankind.

The first two were Andrew and John (the writer of the Gospel). They were initially disciples of John the Baptist. Seeing Jesus approaching one day, John the Baptist exclaimed, "Look, the Lamb of God!" The two men immediately left John and began to follow Jesus (v35-37). John, the "messenger," lost two disciples, but he didn't mind. They were following the "Messiah" now!

FOLLOWING

Jesus saw the two men following Him and He turned and asked them, "What do you want?" They replied, "Where are you staying, Rabbi (Master)?" Jesus knew they really wanted to talk with Him. "Come and see" He said kindly. So they spent the rest of that day with Jesus. What a special time they must have had together! I'm sure their hearts were racing with excitement, as they listened to the Lord explaining the Scriptures, proving He was truly Israel's Messiah!

SERVING

Andrew was so thrilled; he had to go and find his brother Simon, and tell him the great news, "We have found the Messiah!" He brought him to Jesus, who welcomed him with these words, "You are Simon, the son of John. You will be called Cephas (Peter in English) which means a stone".

Now, there were three men following Jesus, all because others spoke about Him. How glad they must have been at their great discovery and how grateful that someone told them about Jesus. What a lesson and example for us today!

OBEYING

Next day, Jesus went to Galilee, and saw Philip. He said to him, "Follow Me". Philip immediately obeyed. Friends, have you heard Jesus' voice calling you to follow Him? Will you obey promptly, believing in Him, and accepting Him as your Saviour?

Philip too, was excited and happy. He told his friend Nathaniel, "We have found Him, the one who Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote about - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph!" This was how Jesus was known at that time. Nathaniel was doubtful. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he asked. This little town was seen as a bit of a 'dump!' "Jesus of Jerusalem" sounded a lot better! However, Philip didn't argue. "Come and see!" he said simply.

TRUSTING

So Nathaniel went with Philip. Jesus saw him coming and said, "Here is a true, honest Israelite!" Nathaniel was surprised; "How do you know me?" he asked. "Oh," said Jesus, "I saw you while you were under the fig tree, before Philip called you." Nathaniel's doubts disappeared instantly! He realised that Jesus knew all about him, his life, his thoughts, and everything!

Nathaniel made this great confession to Jesus, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God: You are the King of Israel" (v49). So Nathaniel also had now found the Saviour! What about you? Don't be satisfied until you have. Then you too can look forward to one day seeing Jesus in all His Heavenly glory, just as He promised Nathaniel!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why would John the Baptist not mind his two disciples leaving to follow Jesus?
2. What example do Philip and Andrew set for us today?
3. How can we come to the Lord today?
4. What great confession did Nathanael make to Jesus?
5. What has helped you most from this study?

My Name is Age

Our Lord's First Miracle

Key Verse:
"For whoever
does the will of
My Father in
Heaven is My
brother and
sister and
mother."

Matthew 12:50

Extra: Do a project on the miracles found in the Bible.

Level 5 Lesson 34

Read: John 2:1-12
and Luke 7:18-23

THE WEDDING

A wedding is usually a time of happy celebration, with the Bride and Groom the centre of attention. The wedding we read about today was something of an exception. We do not even know who got married! There was a far more important guest there. Yes, the Lord Jesus had been invited, along with His disciples. Mary, the Lord's mother, seems to have been responsible for organising things, and so maybe it was a relative of hers that was getting married.

THE NEED

As the celebrations continued, Mary became aware of a major problem: they had run out of wine! This was a real embarrassment! There was no way she could get more in time; what could she do? She could think of just one person who could help - Jesus. Anxiously she told Him, "They have no more wine!"

The Lord gave her what appears to be a strange reply. "Dear woman, why do you involve Me? My time has not yet come." Notice He does not say "Mother" but "Woman." This was still respectful, but Jesus seemed to be making a point here. Her earthly relationship to Him as Mother was now to be secondary. He was about to commence His public ministry as the Messiah, the Son of God. Mary must now submit to HIM, no longer asserting her authority, but recognising His!

Sometimes we hear of people praying to Mary to 'command' her Son. This is wrong and certainly never found in the Bible. "My time has not yet come" was Jesus' answer to Mary's worry. He had everything under control and would do something at the right time. Mary accepted the gentle rebuke, and in total submission to Jesus, told the servants, "Do whatever HE tells you." What a challenge for us all! To obey the Lord is the only way of true blessing.

THE MIRACLE

Jesus was well aware of the 'problem' facing Mary. He had known about it even before she did! It was not a problem for the Messiah though. Seeing six empty water pots standing nearby, He commanded the servants to, "fill them with water." They obediently filled them to the brim. "Now," said Jesus, "Draw some out and take it to the master in charge of the banquet!"

Wow! This took faith. This man would be very insulted and angry to be given water. But the servants obeyed, drawing some out and giving it to the master. He tasted it, swirling it around in his mouth before swallowing it. The servants held their breath.

"Terrific!" he said. "Normally everyone brings out their best wine first, and later on the cheap wine, but you have saved the best till now!" Without knowing what had happened, he was a witness to a marvellous miracle - the Lord's first. This was a great example of faithful obedience to the Word of the Lord bringing great blessing.

THE POWER

Jesus had exercised His creative power. He had turned water into wine. This was in contrast to Moses, you may remember, who turned water into blood back in Egypt. Moses' ministry of the Law brought condemnation; Christ's ministry brought blessing, and we can see the difference so clearly portrayed in this miracle.

Jesus was also demonstrating His power over the Laws of Nature, showing Himself to be truly God in human flesh. This was the real purpose behind the miracle and the disciples certainly believed more firmly than ever! May we too believe in Him more firmly!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why did Jesus address Mary as Woman and not Mother?

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2. What did Mary say to the servants?

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3. What did the master say about the wine brought to him?

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4. Who does the miracle prove Jesus to be?

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5. What effect did the miracle have upon the disciples?

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Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Key Verse:

“For even Christ did not please Himself but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on Me.’ “

Romans 15:3

Extra: Visit a library or look on the internet to find out all you can about the Jewish temples. So what happened in A.D. 70?

Level 5 Lesson 35

**Read: John 2:13-25
and Matthew 21:12-17**

THE TEMPLE

The Temples of the Jews were wonderful and magnificent buildings. Including the one we read about in this lesson, there have been two temples so far. The first was built by King Solomon, about 1005 BC. This was destroyed by the Babylonians just over 400 years later, in 586 BC. The second was built by the Jews who returned from captivity under the Babylonians, about 515BC. This was partly ruined 350 years later by the Syrians, and the remainder fell into disrepair through neglect.

This second temple was re-built and enlarged by King Herod the Great who lived at the time of our Lord's birth. This temple, according to v20, took 46 years to build. The Temple was the only place where the people could bring their sacrifices and worship; and offer prayer to God. Today, we can approach God and pray to Him anywhere, anytime, because of our Lord's sacrifice on the cross. How fortunate we are!

USING HIS AUTHORITY:

As usual, at Passover time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem and visited the Temple. What He saw there filled Him with righteous indignation and anger! Within the courts of the Temple, He found a huge market-place had become established! There were people selling cattle, sheep, goats and doves for the various sacrifices. Others had set up money-changing businesses to provide Jewish money for the payment of the half-shekel Temple tax. However, people were being over-charged and "ripped-off" by the greedy money-changers.

You can imagine the noise and smells of this busy market, with pens of animals, huge crowds of people "haggling" and bargaining over prices, people coming and going, pushing and shoving as they went about their business. This was a place which should have been sacred and quiet, a place for thoughtful meditation and preparation for worship!

How could anyone worship with such a commotion going on? It was an insult to Almighty God and a disgrace to the High Priest and Temple authorities who allowed it!

Jesus was furious with them! He made a scourge of small cords, and drove out the traders and their animals. He poured out the changers' money and overthrew their tables, "Get these out of here!" He cried. "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market?" Everything came to an abrupt halt. People and animals fled from the sacred enclosure, expelled by the authority and power of the One who is the Son of God!

PROVING HIS IDENTITY

The Jews watched with astonishment and demanded a sign from Jesus to prove His authority for what He had done. He refused, but did say they would be given a sign, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again." They completely misunderstood this statement, thinking He referred to their Temple close by. He really referred to the temple of His body, which about three years later, was to die and rise again. His death and resurrection was to be the great sign that He was really the Christ, the Son of God!

Today, that sign has been given - Jesus has died and risen from the dead! We know for certain He was all He claimed to be. He expects us now to accept that sign as sufficient for our faith. His disciples did! Verse 22 tells us that later, when Jesus was risen from the dead, they remembered His saying and believed the Scripture. We too, need to simply believe Scripture, and not seek signs and miracles as the unbelieving Jews did. Scripture needs no further proof!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What were the Jewish Temples used for?

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2. How can we approach God today?

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3. Why was it wicked for the traders to be trading in the Temple?

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4. How did Jesus turn them out?

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5. What is the greatest sign that proves Jesus to be the Son of God?

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The New Birth

Key Verse:
“For you have been born again... imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.”

1 Peter 1:23

Extra: How would you point someone to the Saviour?

Level 5 Lesson 36

Read: John 3:1-21 and Romans 3:9-31

THE SECRET MEETING: Nicodemus was a Pharisee, one of the religious teachers who ruled Israel. He had seen Jesus’ miracles and was intrigued. He needed to talk to Him! He was afraid to do it publicly though, because his fellow Pharisees treated Jesus as a heretic and were hostile toward Him. Due to the danger in being seen with Christ, he came secretly, one night. Don’t be too critical of him for this, for he was brave to come at all! Many are still too scared to come to Christ, even today!

THE NEED REVEALED: Nicodemus introduced himself with these words, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles which you do, except God be with Him”. This was quite an acknowledgement for a Pharisee to make. Many would not even admit that! Our Lord of course, was far more than a mere teacher - He was the Messiah, God in human form, and had come to save people from their sin.

Jesus knew that Nicodemus was expecting the Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom. Jesus had a lesson for him, and us, about the “kingdom of God”. Jesus profoundly stated, “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. Nicodemus didn’t understand. How can anyone be “born again?” What did Jesus mean? The Lord again stated that without this ‘new birth’ a person cannot enter the kingdom of God. It’s impossible! He tried to explain to Nicodemus that God’s kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly one. Just as we enter this physical world by a physical birth (of water), so we need a spiritual birth (of the Spirit) to enter the kingdom of God.

THE ANSWER EXPLAINED: Jesus went on to explain that this new birth is an inward, spiritual one. The Pharisees were very concerned about outward appearances, but Jesus wanted him to see firstly, that a spiritual birth by the Spirit of God makes a person new on the inside! Just as we can’t see the wind, only it’s effect (v8), so the new birth can only be seen by its effect in a new believer’s life.

“Old things have passed away” wrote Paul, “all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul, who was a Pharisee himself, explained in Galatians 6:15, “Circumcision or uncircumcision is not important; what matters is a new creation!” The new birth is God changing us, not us changing for God!

Nicodemus was still confused. “How can these things be?” he asked. Jesus rebuked him gently, reminding him that as a “teacher of Israel!” he should have known. Ezekiel 18:31 for example, implores Israel to “get a new heart and a new spirit!”

Jesus continued and used the following story that was well known to Nicodemus. Remember the bronze snake Moses lifted up on a pole? (Read about it in Numbers 21) As the people of Israel looked to the bronze snake for healing and salvation, so we must now look to Christ. This was a symbol of Christ, because He too was “lifted up,” but on a cross for the sin of the world, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.

All who obey God’s Word and look to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God at the moment of true belief. He is the “imperishable seed” which Peter was speaking about in our Key Verse: “Being born again, not of perishable seed (human), but imperishable (the Holy Spirit), through the living and enduring Word of God.” True believers are “made alive” (Ephesians 2:5) to live for evermore!

THE LIFE RECEIVED: It is quite simple. Have you “looked to Christ” in repentant faith, thanking Him for dying for you, asking for forgiveness of your sins, and acknowledging Him as your only Saviour and committing to Him as Lord? If you have, then you have been “born again!” You are a “new creation,” a child of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and fit for an Eternity in God’s Holy presence! Isn’t that wonderful!

If you have not yet, please, will you respond to the love of God, so beautifully expressed in v16? Here we see that God loved us and gave His Son to die for our sin, so you just have to believe and turn away from sin! Read it again, and look to Jesus, the One who died to save you. You too can receive Eternal Life today!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why do you think Nicodemus came by night?
2. What profound statement did Jesus make to Nicodemus?
3. Why do we need to be ‘born again’?
4. How can we be born again and receive Eternal Life?
5. Name 2 important things in verse 16 of today’s reading in John.

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