

Teaching, Calling, & Cleansing

Key Verse:
“Through the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners...”

Romans 5:19a

Extra: How do we overcome the problem stated in the Key Verse?

Level 5 lesson 41

Read: Luke 5:1-16 and Mark 1:16-20, 40-45

TEACHING: One day Jesus was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, quite a large lake about 21km long and 10km wide, also known as the Sea of Galilee. A huge crowd of people had gathered round Him. Many had heard Him speaking around the district and the word had spread, “No-one teaches the Word of God like this man!” Of course, no-one could teach us about God and His Word better than Jesus, because He is God! No wonder they came to hear Him teach. It was important for them to hear the Word of God - even more important than to see miracles!

Let us all be eager to listen to the Word of God like these people were that day. In fact, they were so eager to get close to Jesus and catch every word He said, that He hardly had room on the shore. So Jesus climbed into Simon’s boat that was moored nearby and pushed it out a little from the land. This made a great place from which to teach the crowd standing on the shore. Now everyone could hear Him.

We are not told what He taught them that day, but what a privilege it must have been to hear Him, the Son of God Himself. We can’t do that today, but we have His teachings recorded in the Bible, along with all the other revelations of God, revealed through His Apostles and Prophets. God has promised that His Holy Spirit will teach us as we read and study His precious Word. Let’s do it!

CALLING: After the Lord had finished teaching, He turned to Peter and said to him, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch” (v4). Peter said, “Master we’ve worked hard all night and caught nothing, but **because you say so**, I will let down the nets.” Although his experience as a fisherman said it was useless, in faith he obeyed the Lord. His faith may have been small, and he may have doubted the use in what he was doing, but he obeyed! Often we also don’t know why God wants us to do something, but if we have a direct command from God’s Word, we need only obey! God’s blessing will follow our obedience.

So out the disciples went in their boat and let down the nets. What happened next was truly amazing, and verse 6 says, “They caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break!” In desperation they cried out to friends nearby to help. They did and when they were finished, both boats were so full they almost sank!

Peter knew straight away this was no ordinary catch. Jesus, the Lord of Creation had done this! This demonstration of Jesus’ power “opened his eyes.” Peter realised who Jesus was, and that he was a sinner in the presence of God! He knew he wasn’t worthy to be in Jesus’ Holy presence, and he at once fell at Jesus’ feet and cried out, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man.”

Peter acknowledged his sinful state, not merely guilt for his sins. This is important. The Bible clearly teaches, “There is no-one righteous, not even one!” (Romans 3:10) We are all born sinners by nature, and we sin because we’re sinners. And so we also, must acknowledge before God that we need to be cleansed from our sinful state.

Our Lord, however, did not depart from Peter. He was the Saviour who had come to save sinners! Graciously Jesus said to him, “Don’t be afraid, from now on you will catch men!” These disciples (Peter, James, and John) knew that this was their call to service. We read in verse 11, “so they pushed their boats up on shore, left everything and followed Jesus.” They wanted to spend the rest of their lives bringing others to know Jesus, “catching people” for Him, before people were lost forever!

CLEANSING: Shortly after this, Jesus visited a certain city. A poor leper approached, bowed humbly before Him, and begged the Lord to heal him. This leper had great faith that Jesus could heal, but was He willing? Graciously, Jesus touched him, saying, “I will, be clean,” and immediately he was healed!

Jesus is able and willing to cleanse us from the terrible disease of “sin” that afflicts each of us. Are you willing to humbly bow before Him today (just like Peter and this poor leper) and acknowledge your sin and need of cleansing? If you are willing, Jesus will cleanse you and make you fit to serve Him in this life, and to live with Him in Heaven forever after death. Will you do it today?

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Which is more important - to see miracles or to hear the Word of God?	.....
2. What does the miraculous catch of fish tell us about the Lord Jesus?	.....
3. What did Peter acknowledge about himself that is true of us all?	.....
4. What did the disciples do after they brought their boats to land?	.....
5. What main lessons do we learn from the cleansing of the leper?	.....

My Name is Age

The Beatitudes

Key Verse:

“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.”

Psalm 32:1

Extra: Describe the useful character of salt and light. How can you live more like this?

Level 5 Lesson 42

Read: Matthew 5:1-16 and Psalm 119:1-8

This lesson we study part of the greatest sermon ever preached. Of course it was preached by the greatest preacher – Jesus Christ! It has been admired and studied by great men down through history, and is still spoken about today! There is much we could say about this wonderful sermon, but we will take only two lessons from it, one from the beginning and one from the end. Do read it and study it carefully for yourself; this will be of great benefit to you.

Jesus began His sermon with ten verses called “the Beatitudes”. Each verse begins with the word “blessed”. It means to be “joyfully content” through knowing God’s blessing. Let’s put it this way:

WHO IS BLESSED:

1. The poor in spirit: that is, the humble.
2. Those that mourn: because of their sins.
3. The meek: not the violent, but the gentle.
4. The hungry and thirsty: that is, spiritually.
5. The merciful: who assist and help others.
6. The pure in heart: those who are pure within.
7. The peacemakers: those who try to prevent trouble.
8. The persecuted for righteousness sake: that is, for doing right.

HOW THEY ARE BLESSED:

1. For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
2. For they shall be comforted in the Kingdom.
3. For they shall inherit the earth.
4. For they shall be filled.
5. For they shall obtain mercy.
6. For they shall see God.
7. For they shall be called the children of God.
8. For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

As we read these things, most of us will realise that we don’t qualify for all these blessings! We are all sinners, so how can we attain such a high standard? Our hearts are stained by sin, so how can we be pure in heart?

The answer is found only as a result of the New Birth. Through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ - whereby He died in our place, taking all God’s punishment for our sin - we can have our sin forgiven. God’s Holy Spirit then indwells us, giving us a new nature, and we will then receive all these wonderful blessings! Apart from the Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount sets an impossible standard. The Good News is that the standard is attainable by all who believe in Jesus Christ!

As we look at verse 11, we notice the ninth blessing addressed to all true disciples, “Blessed are you...” says the Lord, “...when people insult you, persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.” The world will not love us if we are Christians. In fact, Jesus promised it will oppose and falsely accuse us if we belong to Christ. Yet, He told us not to worry about it, but to “Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in Heaven!”

So don’t let fear of persecution keep you back from receiving Christ as your Saviour. Knowing that our reward in Heaven is great, gives us strength and joy.

In the remaining verses of our lesson, the Lord shows us how important His disciples are in the world. “You are the salt of the earth” (v13) and “the light of the world” (v14-16). Salt is to preserve and light is to illuminate. Christians are to live and speak the gospel in such a way as to both preserve a high moral and spiritual standard in this corrupt world, and to illuminate its darkness by shining as reflections of Jesus.

Practically, we can do this by living in such a way that our lives display those characteristics described in the Beatitudes. This is what Jesus meant when He said, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.”

Of course, we must take care that the world DOES NOT corrupt us, or else our saltiness will become tasteless and our light will become dim. This would make us useless in this unbelieving world. Instead we must be obedient imitators of Jesus to enjoy His blessings!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why do you think this sermon is famous?	.....
2. What does it mean to be pure in heart?	.....
3. How can we attain to the high standard of the Beatitudes?	.....
4. What does the Lord say we should do when persecuted?	.....
5. What two things does our Lord say His disciples are?	.....

The Sermon on the Mount

Key Verse:
“For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 3:11

Extra: Write down some more valuable lessons for you from Matthew 7.

Level 5 Lesson 43

Read: Matthew 7:13-29 and Revelation 20:11-15

We are looking today at some lessons from the close of the Sermon on the Mount. As mentioned last time, do try and study the whole sermon - it is well worth it!

CHOOSE THE RIGHT WAY: The Lord begins this important closing section of His sermon, by speaking about two gates, two ways, and two destinations in life. He spoke of a wide gate, which opens on to a broad road leading to destruction. He spoke too, of a narrow gate opening on to a narrow road leading to life. Friends, Jesus taught clearly that we can only be on one of those roads. Which one are you on today?

Once we are of an age to do so, a conscious decision is required. If you have never decided to enter that narrow gate by putting your faith in Christ, you are not on the road to life eternal - and that means you are on the other road leading to destruction. Jesus urged His listeners to enter the narrow gate, and walk the narrow way leading to life.

Sure, there seem to be many more travelling the broad road. Jesus said it would be like that. The broad way is the popular way, the way of the world that the crowds travel. Only a few, by comparison, walk the narrow way. That doesn't change the truth of Jesus' words one bit. How much better to travel with the few to life eternal with the Lord, than to travel to a lost eternity with the crowds? Accept Jesus as your Saviour today and enter the narrow gate that leads to Eternal Life.

LISTEN TO THE TRUE MESSAGE:

Next, the Lord said, "Watch out for false prophets" (v15). There are true prophets who in God's name speak His Word, but there are also those who speak falsely in God's name. They claim to speak for God, but instead teach their own false ideas, wickedly using God's name to deceive people. Jesus warned they would come like "wolves in sheep's clothing" and unfortunately, many are led astray by these false "prophets." Jesus described His followers as sheep, with Him as the Good Shepherd. Obviously, sheep would never accept a wolf into the flock - even sheep know the danger in that!

However, Jesus warned that Christians can be deceived by the outward appearance of these false prophets and teachers, and advised us how to tell the true from the false: "By their fruit you will know them" (v20).

If teachers lead people to becoming Christians, and living godly, holy lives, then they are true prophets. If teachers lead people away from the Word of God and Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, then they are "false prophets" who will destroy the flock. We must be on our guard, and cling to the Word of God as our only authority, and to Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

A FURTHER WARNING: Jesus continued with a warning that we should not accept everyone who merely SAYS they are a Christian. He told the people, "Not everyone who SAYS 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only He that DOES the will of My Father." Jesus warned that in a coming day of judgement, many will claim to have done even miracles in His name, but He will disown them saying, "I never knew you" (v23) How solemn! We should look for the real fruit of the Spirit in people's lives, as the true guide to their faith. There is a warning there too, for us: do we only profess with our lips, but not really believe with our whole heart? Make sure you are 'for real' - a true believer in Jesus Christ.

CHOOSE THE FIRM FOUNDATION: With these thoughts in mind, Jesus came to His final point. He said that someone who listens to His words and acts on them is wise! He is building his life on a firm foundation which will stand the test of trouble and time! Christ is the rock that can never be shaken - firm, solid, and immovable.

How terrible to find that your life is falling apart when trouble strikes, because your foundation is not strong. Are you trusting, not in Christ, but in yourself or others perhaps? How much worse to discover that like those false prophets, on the day of judgement, this foundation for Eternity is useless, and Jesus has to say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you!"

Friends, listen to the words of Jesus and be wise - act on them in faith. Then you will be secure in Him for this life, no matter what happens, and for all Eternity. Any other foundation for your life is just 'sinking sand.'

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Which 'way' would you rather be on, and why?

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2. How can we identify teachers who are 'false prophets'?

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3. How would you describe the person who is 'wise'?

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4. What is the firm rock foundation to build our lives upon?

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5. How can we make sure we NEVER hear the Lord say, "I never knew you!"?

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The Saviour's Birth

Key Verse:
“But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law....”

Galatians 4:4-5a

Extra: Describe Christmas and its meaning for someone who has never heard about it.

Level 5 Lesson 44

Read: Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25 & Micah 5:1-5

Another Christmas is now here, where we remember again the birth of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. His was a birth different from any other before or since - totally unique! The eternal Son of God took human form upon Himself, being born of a virgin (without a human father) and came in humility to live among His creation. What a truly amazing thing! How did it all happen?

GABRIEL'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Luke 1:26-28 tells us of the occasion when the angel Gabriel visited a virgin named Mary, and told her that she was highly favoured and blessed by the Lord. Naturally Mary was a little frightened by the appearance of a shining angel, but Gabriel told her not to fear, and explained what was about to happen. "You will be with child, and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name, Jesus."

MARY'S SUBMISSION

This Son was to be great, and would be called the Son of the Highest. He was to be a King on the throne of David, and reign over the house of Jacob forever. Mary was still unsure how this would happen, since she was a virgin. So the angel made it clear to her, "God the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God!" Mary humbly submitted to this, and said these beautiful words, "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said."

Mary was highly honoured and blessed - no doubt more highly than any other woman - but students, we should never call her the "Mother of God" or the "Queen of Heaven" as some do. Although a very pious woman, she was NOT sinless. Jesus, of course, WAS sinless as the result of being conceived of the Holy Spirit, besides being truly God Himself! Joseph was Mary's husband-to-be, and in Matthew 1 we read how the angel also visited to assure him that Mary's pregnancy was caused by the Holy Spirit, and so he should not be afraid to marry her.

Joseph was also told to call their son's name "Jesus", because "He will save His people from their sins". Our Lord was born to be a Saviour as well as a King!

JESUS' BIRTH

Finally, the time for the birth had arrived. The prophet Micah had foretold hundreds of years before that the 'Messiah' would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), but Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, away up in the north! So God moved Caesar Augustus to demand a Census of all the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1). This meant everyone had to return to the place of their birth. And where was Joseph's family from? You guessed it: Bethlehem, the town of David, Joseph's famous ancestor.

Of course, the Emperor didn't know God was interested in this. He was probably thinking only of increased revenue, but God is able to move the heart of even a Roman Emperor in order to fulfil His Word. And so Joseph and Mary travelled down to Bethlehem, but were unable to find even a simple room for the night, so they had to spend the night in the animals' shelter. In due course, we read, the great event of "Christmas" took place; "She gave birth to her first-born, a Son and wrapped Him in strips of cloth, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7).

And so the Saviour of the world was born in the most humble of circumstances. He was born to die for our salvation and also to reign as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords". For some weeks we have been studying the life and teaching of this One, the Lord Jesus Christ. Many deep and lasting impressions have been made on our hearts and minds as we have faced up to the truths presented to us.

Friend, is He your Saviour? If you don't really know Him in this way, you can pray right now. BELIEVE in Him and ASK HIM to come into and change your heart, forgive your sin, and be your Saviour, too! Commit your whole life to Him: REPENT from sin and FOLLOW as His disciple today. What a truly joyous time Christmas is when we know the "Christ" of Christmas as our own Saviour, Lord, and Friend!!!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Give one reason why our Lord's birth was different from every other birth.	.....
2. Why was His name to be 'Jesus'?	.....
3. Why was He born in Bethlehem?	.....
4. How did God make sure the birth would be in Bethlehem?	.....
5. Have YOU asked Jesus to be your Saviour? Write to us if you need further help.

NOTE: NO LESSONS IN JANUARY. NEXT ONES WILL BE FEBRUARY 2017

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