



Navigators

A Journey through the Life of Christ

Introduction to the course.

Welcome to the Navigators Bible Study Course. As you progress through this course, you will be looking at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will look at all four of the gospel records – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – and you will compare and contrast what these four writers had to say about the Saviour. You will travel through the life of Christ in the order that the events happened.



Each unit is divided into four studies, and each study is in three parts:-
The Bible reading. It is essential that you read this as some of the questions can only be answered from the Bible – you won't find the answers in the lesson.



The study text which outlines the events in the life of Christ for that particular study.



Devotional/reflective. This course is intended to be practical as well as educational, and there will be scope to look for the personal application to your life.

Each unit will be accompanied by an answer sheet, again divided into four studies, and each study will have questions from which you can earn a total of 25 points. Your total possible marks for each unit will, therefore, be 100. The answers expected should be in the form of a short paragraph – not one word answers – where you need to show that you have given careful thought to the lesson, Bible study and reflective notes.

As you progress through the course, you will find references to the original languages in which the Bible was written. You do not have to be fluent in Hebrew or Greek to understand these references as we will look at what people who were experts have to say. The main references for these notes are Strong's Lexicon (SL) and Robertson's New Testament Word Pictures. (RWP) If you would like to use these books yourself as reference guides, they can be downloaded free from the internet on the Online Bible package (<http://www.onlinebible.org/html/eng/index.htm>). If you would like to know how you can do this, please contact us and we can send you full instructions.

We hope you enjoy your course. If, during your studies, you have any questions or comments, please feel at ease to write to your tutor whose name can be found on the study sheets. Communications can be sent in written form or in email. Emails should be sent to office@southwalespbs.co.uk

Unit 1 The promise of the Saviour

Study 1

Four writers – One story.

The life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ is recorded in the Bible for us by four writers. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Please go to the Bible Reading at this point to find out something about each one:-



Matthew 9 v 9; Luke 5 v 27 – 32; Acts 15 v 37 – 39; 2 Timothy 4 v 11; Colossians 4 v 14; Matthew 4 v 21 – 22; John 20 v 1 – 8.



Each of these wrote about Jesus in a different way and for different people. Let's take them one by one:-

Matthew.

Matthew was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. He was formerly a tax collector for the Romans and so would have been hated by most Jews. He was also known as Levi and Luke tells us of what happened when he became a follower of Jesus.

Matthew wrote his gospel for the Jewish people and presents Jesus as the King. Because he wrote for Jewish people, he quotes a lot of Old Testament prophecies about the coming King and shows that Jesus was the fulfilment of the promises of God. The Kingship of Christ is shown right from the start of the book with His ancestry traced back to David. In chapter 3, as the wise men come seeking for the new born baby, their question is "Where is He who is born King of the Jews?" Matthew also gives us the "Kingdom" parables.

Mark.

John Mark (to give him his full name) was not one of the twelve disciples. He was the son of Mary who was one of Jesus' early disciples. She was the sister of Barnabas and it was at her house that the early church met to pray. (Acts 12 v 12)

Mark wrote his gospel account for the Romans and he pictures Jesus as the faithful servant. He mentions nothing of Jesus birth or early years, but right from the start writes about Jesus in active service. The gospel is fast moving with one event followed quickly by another.

Luke.

Luke was another writer who was not one of the twelve disciples. He was a doctor who accompanied Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and was also with Paul in Rome. Luke wrote this gospel and also the book of the Acts. Although Luke was present at many of the events in Acts, he never mentions himself by name. The reason we know he was there is that the narrative changes from time to time from “they” to “we”. (See, for example, Acts 16 v 6 – 10)

Luke wrote for Greeks – in particular for one Greek man by the name of Theophilus. Theophilus was probably an important Greek official who had an interest in learning about Jesus and His teachings.

This gospel account presents Jesus as the perfect man, and brings out much of His human nature – but one that did not have any imperfection at all. Luke brings before us the way that Jesus had time for the women He met. He also records Mary’s encounter with the angel before Jesus was born and tells us more of Jesus’ birth and early life than any other writer.

John.

John, the brother of James, was a fisherman from Galilee. He was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, and was, with Peter and his brother, James, one of the “inner circle” of Jesus friends. He was present on occasions when the other disciples were not. However, although John was closer to Jesus than most of the other disciples, he shows a true humility as his name is not found in his gospel account. John presents Jesus as the Son of God, and in his gospel we have a tremendous amount of evidence to show the deity of the Lord.



Matthew and John were both disciples of Jesus, but in their narratives they write very little about themselves. John, particularly, does not even mention himself by name. Luke, although he was not around during the Lord’s ministry, was there for a lot of the book of Acts and accompanied Paul. Yet he does not mention his presence on Paul’s journeys. All that we learn of Mark is from the pens of Luke, Paul and Peter. He said nothing of himself. Here were four men who were humble and whose only desire was to lift up the person of Jesus Christ.



Read the following passages and think about what God has to say about pride and humility:-

Luke 22 v 24–26; Matthew 23 v 11–12; James 4 v 10; 1 Peter 5 v 6.

Study 2.

In the beginning (part 1)



Genesis 1 v 1 to 2 v 3; John 1 v 1-14.



As John opens his gospel narrative, it is clear that it is widely different to any of the other three. Matthew starts with the genealogy of the king. Luke starts with Jesus' birth and Mark starts with Jesus in active service. John, by contrast, begins in eternity, and, in doing so presents Jesus as "Christ, the Eternal Son of God"

It is interesting to note that John and Genesis start with the same words, but there are other similarities between these two chapters as well. Both speak of creation, of life, of light and of God's relationship with man. The other vital point to notice is that in Genesis 1 it is God in control, whereas in John 1, it is Jesus. John clearly shows us by comparison that the God of Genesis is none other than Jesus Christ.

In this study we are going to look at John 1 v 1 – 14. These verses are really a foundation upon which John is going to build the whole of his narrative. In this short passage he brings before us five great facts which he will return to time and time again as he unfolds the story of Jesus Christ. These are:-

- ◆ v1 – 4 The eternal Word.
- ◆ v5 – 9 The source of light and life
- ◆ v10 – 11 The rejection of the Messiah
- ◆ v12 – 13 The new birth
- ◆ v14 Jesus' humanity

We will look at these one by one.

The Eternal Word. (v1-4)

These short verses tell us a tremendous amount about Jesus' nature in past eternity:-

"In the beginning was the Word," - His eternal existence. The words John uses here for "In the beginning" are quite different to those used in Genesis 1 v 1. There the writer uses the words to speak of a beginning to time and all material things.

Here, however, John uses words to denote eternity. Jesus Christ was not simply there at the start of time and the creation of the world, He was ALWAYS there. John brings this fact out again later in his gospel. (See John 8 v 56 – 58 & 17 v 5.)

“and the Word was with God,” – His standing – equality with God. To gain the full importance of what John is saying here, we need to go back to the original Greek language. The literal translation of this phrase is “the Word was face to face with God” The same form is used in 1 John 2 v 1 and 1 Corinthians 13 v 12. (RWP) John refers to Jesus’ equality with the Father again in ch 5 v 17 – 18 & 23.

“and the Word was God.” – His deity. John’s purpose in writing was to demonstrate that Jesus is God. (See Ch 20 v 30 – 31) Here, at the start of the gospel, he declares this clearly and plainly. It is a theme that occurs often as we go through the book. For some examples see 1 v 34; 10 v 30 – 33; 13 v 1 – 3.

“He was with God in the beginning.” An emphasis of what had already been stated

“Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.” – His creatorial glory. Other verses in the Bible tell us that Jesus was actively involved in creation. Compare what John says with the following references:-

- * *Hebrews 1:2 “But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.”*
- * *Romans 11:36 “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever!”*
- * *Colossians 1:16 “For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.” (Note that Paul adds that not only were all things created BY Him, but also FOR Him)*



Many of the Old Testament writers speak about the greatness of God, and that is always a good place to begin any time of reflection. Read Psalm 8 (the words of the great King David) and think about the amazing fact that this great God came to this earth for you.

Study 3

In the beginning (part 2)



The source of light and life v5 – 9

Light and life are two of the major themes of John's gospel. The word light appears 16 times and life no less than 38 times. Similarly these are two major parts of creation in Genesis 1. Light was the first thing God created in His new universe (Gen 1 v 3) and life was the last thing on days 5 and 6 when He created birds, fish, animals and people. (Gen 1 v 20 – 28) Just as God was the source of light and life in Genesis, so we are told in John that "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (1 v 4) The Lord Jesus takes this a stage further later in the book when he says "I am the light of the world" (John 8 v 12 and 9 v 5) and "I amthe life". (John 14 v 6) He is not just the source of light and life, HE IS light and life.

In this section of John 1, we are introduced briefly to John (the Baptist) He is simply mentioned as the one who came to witness to "the light" at this point, but we shall see much more of him later in our studies. Having mentioned John, the narrative returns to "the light" and we are told that "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." We need to go to Matthew and Luke to find out more about Jesus' birth, but John simply proclaims His coming as life-giving light.

v10 – 11 The rejection of the Messiah

John suddenly moves from a description of the Lord Jesus Christ in His great power and might to one of the rejection of the humble servant. He does this in a twofold description of the Messiah.

a) *He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognise Him.* This is the universal response of mankind to the Creator. But then John moves to the next level.

b) *He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.* He came especially to His own people, the Jewish nation, but this nation which He had led and protected for centuries were the ones that would cry, "Away with Him, we have no king but Caesar" (John 19 v 15)

It seems incredible that one who was so glorious, so mighty and so pure could ever be treated this way, but John gives us the reason in the next two verses.

v12 – 13 The new birth

The purpose of Jesus' coming was not to reign or to be worshiped – even though that was His right. He came to bring salvation and give people the “right” to become children of God. Note: the word used here is “children” (Greek – teknon) not “sons” as is found in the Authorised Version. John is not referring to our position in God's kingdom (that is dealt with elsewhere in the Bible) but rather he is looking at how we enter the kingdom – through the miracle of new birth. How was this miracle to come about? The next verse tells us....

v14 Jesus' humanity

“The word became flesh and made His dwelling among us”. (NIV). Solomon, as he dedicated the temple in 1 Kings ch 8 could say in awe, “Will God indeed dwell on the earth?” This is where God did just that, for the eternal God took the frailty of a baby and became a child of Mary, and all so that we could become children of God. Even so, John immediately takes us a step beyond this and reminds us that even though the appearance was one of humility and weakness, this little baby was still the glorious Son of God, for he says, *“We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, (only begotten - AV) who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* John had walked and talked with Jesus for over three years and had seen so much of His greatness. Now he is about to embark on his account of what he had seen and who Jesus really is.



1 John ch 1. (John's first epistle chapter 1)



John continues the theme of his gospel in his epistles. This study's Bible reading (1 John ch 1) returns to the subject of light, but here it speaks, not about the light giver, but about our walk in the light. Think about your walk with Jesus. Can you describe it as being “in the light” or are there some areas that you would prefer to be hidden. Read carefully the challenge of John 3 v 20—21.

Study 4

Tracing the Family Tree.



Both Matthew and Luke record Jesus' genealogy. (Matthew 1 v 1-17; Luke 3 v 23 – 38) Very often people think of these Bible passages as just a list of names, but they are far more than that. As Matthew describes Jesus as the king, he shows that He has descended from the royal line of David. Because Jesus is introduced as King of the Jews, Matthew also traces the line of descent back to Abraham to show He was truly of Jewish descent. Luke, on the other hand, follows the line back beyond Abraham to Adam to show that Jesus was a true man and descended from the first man, Adam. If you read the two accounts carefully, you will see that between David and Jesus, the names are different. It is accepted that Matthews list shows the descent through Joseph, who, although he was only Jesus' adopted father, still gave him the right to be called Joseph's son. Luke describes the line of descent through Mary and emphasises Jesus' human nature.

In both lists there are many famous names - Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat and Zerubbabel. There are also many names of whom we know little or nothing. They all had a part in fulfilling God's promise of a coming Messiah. Some of them were great men of faith, some were unwise, foolish or simply wicked. God used all of them.

Matthew also includes the names of five women amongst the many men. It is interesting that all five would have been rejected for different reasons.

- ◇ Tamar – (Genesis ch 38) Tamar was rejected by Judah when her husband died and had to resort to trickery to seduce her father in law. Her son was accepted by Judah as his own.
- ◇ Rahab – (Joshua ch 2 & ch6 v 17-25) She was a prostitute who was accepted because she helped Joshua and Caleb when they were spying out the land of Canaan.
- ◇ Ruth – (The book of Ruth) Ruth was from Moab and so was a foreigner and an outcast. She was accepted when she helped Naomi and later married Boaz becoming the great grandmother of King David.

- ◇ Bathsheba – (2 Samuel ch 11) This woman is not named, but she is referred to in the list. She committed adultery with David leading to the murder of her husband. Though their child died, she later became the mother of Solomon who was “loved of the Lord”.
- ◇ Mary – She would have been rejected by society when she gave birth to Jesus as people would have thought that He was a child conceived out of marriage. However, she was chosen and blessed by God to become the mother of the Messiah.

Promises, promises

Although the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world happened mostly unnoticed, it was not un-announced. God had made many promises in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. It has been claimed that there are no less than four hundred and twenty five prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus. Here is a small sample of the best known ones:-



Isaiah 9 v 6 – 7; Isaiah 7 v 14; Isaiah 16 v 5; Micah 5 v 2; Isaiah 9 v 1-2; Jeremiah 31 v 15; Isaiah 42 v 1-4, 6; Isaiah 53 v 3; Zechariah 11 v 12-13; Psalm 69 v 21.

Matthew, because he is writing for the Jewish people, often refers to Old Testament verses and uses words such as, “that it might be fulfilled which was written”, “as it was written” or similar phrases. All four writers bring to our attention the inescapable fact that in this one unique man all God’s promises came together. Not only was Jesus the only one who fulfilled these prophecies, he is the only one who ever could do so. For a mathematical analysis of the likelihood of any one person “accidentally” fulfilling these prophecies, please see Peter W Stoner’s online book “Science Speaks” <http://www.sciencespeaks.net/>



You may be famous and well known like David or Noah – or you may be completely the opposite like so many of the other names in the line of Jesus’ descent. Read 1 Corinthians 1 v 26 – 29 and think for a while of who God often chooses to be great for Him.

