

LESSON 7:

JESUS AND THE GOSPELS – MESSIANIC FULFILLMENT

The Israelites seem to be lost with no hope in sight. They are slaves of the Roman Empire under Caesar Augustus, and they are under the thumb of King Herod the Great. He has massacred children, murdered countless adults, and kept himself in power through bribes taken from taxing the visitors to the new temple he is renovating in Jerusalem. The stage is set for the coming of the Messiah.

Mary is about to be visited by an angel. She will conceive the One who will bring us back to the Garden, the One who will not just teach us but show us how to truly love again: the new Paschal Lamb, the Son of Man, the King of Kings, Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23). God comes “down” to take us “up.” Pay attention to the importance of gardens: Gethsemane and the garden tomb. Remember God’s plan to teach us perfect love?

In Nazareth, a town of probably no more than 150 people, a young woman by the name of

TIME PERIOD(S) COVERED: _____

WHERE WE ARE ON THE JOURNEY: _____

OPENING QUESTION: _____

VERSE TO REMEMBER: _____

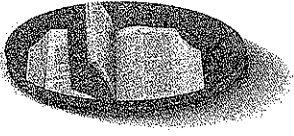
BREAKING IT DOWN

1. How many times did angels visit Joseph in his sleep? _____
2. What was the first miracle Jesus performed, and who asked him to do it?

3. What happens during a year of Jubilee (one Jesus announced)?

4. In what chapter of Matthew do we read about Jesus giving Peter “the keys” to the kingdom? _____
5. What is a “tabernacle,” by definition? _____

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPELS



All the books in the Bible are inspired by God and are free from error. That being said, among all of the Bible's seventy-three books, the four Gospels are unique and supremely important.

In the Gospels, we are not only given prophecies about the Messiah; we receive the Messiah himself in flesh and blood. We encounter God in an entirely new way, and everything we have read in the Law and the Prophets is now fulfilled.

Put simply, Jesus is the One that all have been waiting for, the One to whom we are called and invited to offer our lives. It is with the gospel as your foundation that you will come to know the love of God and learn how to share that love with a world desperately in need of it. Everything you yearn to know, everything you wonder about God, every fear, hope, pain, and joy, collide and find meaning within the gospel of Jesus Christ. St. John Paul II put it this way: "It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you ... it is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives."

The same Holy Spirit who inspired these words from St. John Paul II moved through the writing of the four Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Christ you encounter on the pages of their Gospels is not a "nice Jesus," here to make everyone happy. No. When you encounter Jesus in the Gospels, you see four portraits of God, who became man in Christ Jesus.

Use these brief outlines to help you better understand the differences, but also the likenesses, in the Gospel portraits. If you go back to the Gospels repeatedly, you will notice something amazing. While the words and the truths do not change over time, they will change *you* over time, and over time, you will hunger for them like you do for physical food and spiritual food (Eucharist).

"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

- Matthew 4:4

Matthew

Author background:

One of the original twelve apostles, Matthew (also called "Levi") was a tax collector working at a customs post when Christ invited him to follow (see Mark 2:14).

Key themes for understanding Matthew's Gospel:

- Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for.
- Jesus did not come to abolish the Law of Moses but to fulfill it (see Matthew 5:17).
- Jesus came to begin his kingdom, one we are invited to enter by grace.
- Jesus instituted a Church on earth to teach his truth and administer his sacraments.

The central theme of Matthew's Gospel is that Christ, the Messiah and King, came to establish a Church.

Mark

Author background:

We know very little about the author of this Gospel writer except that his name was John Mark (John is his Jewish name, and Mark is his Roman name), and he was a traveling companion of both Peter and Paul (see 2 Timothy 4:11; Colossians 4:10).

Key themes for understanding Mark's Gospel:

- Jesus was powerful because he was a servant, not a conqueror.
- Jesus is our mediator to God; he provides us with the authority to teach and preach.
- It was written to reaffirm the primacy of Jesus Christ within the early Church as the apostles and eyewitnesses began to die.

The central theme of Mark's Gospel is action and service more than teaching.

Luke

Author background:

Luke was not a Jew but a Gentile convert to Christianity. We also know that he was a physician by profession and, as such, was quite methodical in his approach to writing both his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Finally, we know he was a traveling companion of Paul for at least some time (see Philippians 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:11; Colossians 4:14).

Key themes for understanding Luke's Gospel:

- Jesus has compassion for the poor, needy, sick, and helpless.
- It reveals God's glory, mercy, and desire and willingness to heal.
- It focuses on the power of the Holy Spirit, God's grace, and our salvation.
- It uplifts the dignity of all women, especially the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- It emphasizes prayer and humility.

The central theme of Luke's Gospel is liberation and healing.



John

Author background:

John is believed to be the writer of the final Gospel, as well as of the three letters that bear his name and the book of Revelation. He was the younger brother of James (they were the sons of Zebedee) and a fishing partner of Peter. He is also called the "Beloved Disciple" (see John 13:23, 19:26), who was entrusted with Mary's care at the Cross. He was most likely the youngest of the apostles and lived the longest of the Twelve. This Gospel includes extraordinary detail that would have to have come from an eyewitness.

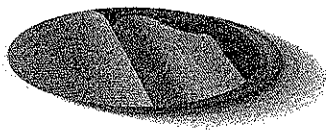
Key themes for understanding John's Gospel:

- John was not writing "another biography" of Jesus to add to the others; he assumes readers are familiar with the other Gospels.
- He wants to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God.
- He desires to explain to Christians how to root their religious beliefs and practice in Jesus (the sacraments) and how their faith will lead to eternal life.
- It explains why Jesus came, who he is, what he did, and how it related to the life of the early Church followers.

The central theme of John's Gospel is the identity of Jesus and what that means to our faith.

NOTES

FIFTEEN KEY EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST (AND WHERE TO FIND THEM)



It is impossible to take all the important events in the life of Jesus and put them into one list. St. John even reminds us at the end of his Gospel, "There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written ... the world itself could not contain the books" (John 21:25).

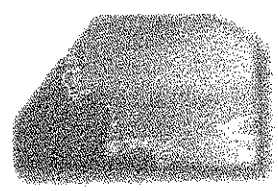
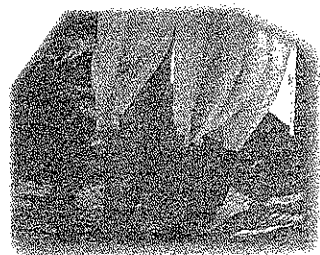
Although everything that happened in Jesus' life is important, the following fifteen "key" events are some of the more well-known parts of his life and are provided here for your quick reference. Take the time to pray through them, and note the attention of the individual Gospel writers to word choice, tone, and other details. You will be amazed at what God reveals to you if you take the time to put yourself "into" the stories.

Before you begin, say a prayer that the Lord will open your eyes and ears in a new way today. And then open his Word ... encounter Jesus once again, for the first time.

NOTES

A large, empty trapezoidal shape intended for taking notes, with the word "NOTES" written diagonally across its top edge.

1. Annunciation to Mary (and Joseph) Luke 1:26-38 (Matthew 1:18-25)
2. Birth of Christ Luke 2:1-7
3. Presentation in the Temple Luke 2:22-29
4. Baptism in the River Jordan Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22
5. Fasting and temptation in the wilderness Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13
6. Wedding at Cana John 2:1-12
7. Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:1-7:29; Luke 6:17-49
8. Peter is given the keys Matthew 16:13-20
9. Transfiguration Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36
10. Cleansing of the Temple John 2:13-17
11. The Last Supper Matthew 26:2-30; Mark 14:17-26; Luke 22:14-39; John 13:1-17, 13:26
12. Jesus before Pilate Matthew 27:2, 27:11-31; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-17; John 18:28-40, 19:1-16
13. Crucifixion and death Matthew 27:35-50; Mark 15:24-37; Luke 23:32-46; John 19:18-30
14. Resurrection Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:3-8
15. Ascension Mark 16:19; Luke 24:49-52



PARABLES OF JESUS



The word “parable” comes from the Greek word *parabole*, which means “a comparison.” Jesus often communicated the truths of God and the coming kingdom of God through parables. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “Through his parables [Jesus] invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything” (CCC 546).

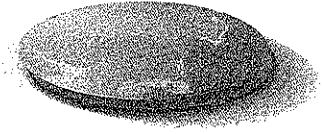
Parables are particularly useful in modern biblical study because they are simple truths expressed in very practical, easy-to-understand ways, with visuals and concepts that even the most hardened heart can comprehend. Part of the modern difficulty in studying the parables, though, is that we often do not know much about life in the Holy Land two thousand years ago, and much needs to be explained. In addition, some parables can only be understood over time and through faith. It is through the “eyes of faith” that disciples, both in biblical times and in the modern day, come to the deepest understanding of the love and person of Jesus Christ (see John 20:29).

As you read and pray through these parables, be sure to take the time to read the footnotes in your Bible. Write out questions as they arise, and take the time to ask your parish priest, parent, youth minister, adult leader, or some other teacher of the Faith to answer them. In addition, there are several other texts that can help you better understand the teachings and parables of Christ. Just like anything else in your life, the harder you work at it, the better you will be at it ... it just takes time and practice.

NOTES

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
What Jesus said about parables	13:10-17, 34-35	4:10-12	8:9-10	
Sower	13:3-9, 18-23	4:3-9, 14-20	8:4-8, 11-15	
Candle	5:14-16	4:21-22	8:16-17	
Seed growing by itself		4:26-29		
Wheat and tares	13:24-30, 36-43			
Good Samaritan				10:25-37
Rich man				12:13-21
Mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19	
Barren fig tree				13:6-9
Leaven	13:33			13:20-21
Parables to disciples	13:34-35	4:33-34		
Treasure in the field	13:44			
Pearl of great price	13:45-46			
Net	13:47-50			
Householder	13:52			
Wedding feast				14:7-11
Great supper				14:12-24
Lost sheep				15:1-7
Lost coin				15:8-10
Prodigal Son				15:11-32
Unjust steward				16:1-8
Lazarus and the rich man				16:19-31
Unjust judge				18:1-8
Publican and the Pharisee				18:9-14
Laborers in the vineyard	20:1-16			
Pounds				19:11-27
Two sons	21:28-32			
Wicked husbandmen	21:33-36	12:1-12	20:9-19	
Marriage of king's son	22:1-14			
Fig tree	24:32-36	13:28-32	21:29-33	
Man taking a long journey		13:34-37		
Ten virgins	25:1-13			
Talents	25:14-30		19:12-27	
Sheep, goats	25:31-46			

MIRACLES OF JESUS



Jesus once said, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe” (John 4:48, NAB).

Modern-day followers of Jesus often fall into the same trap. Maybe you have prayed for God to “show you a miracle” so that you would believe. While God does promise that he will hear our prayers and will give us what we need if we ask him in faith, we have to remember that what we want is not always what we need.

The miracles that Jesus performed were not done in an effort to wow the crowd or to make people believe he was God. His miracles always had a larger purpose than just a “cool trick” over nature or to alleviate someone’s personal suffering. The miracles of Christ always pointed people back to his Father and to the kingdom of God, not to building his reputation or popularity.

As the *Catechism* tells us: “Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: ‘He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.’ But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover” (CCC 1505; Matthew 8:17; cf. Isaiah 53:4).

It is important not to fall into the “trap” of trying to explain away the miracles of Christ through science or sociology. Such pursuits are inconsistent with Church teaching and with the very heart of God. Christ’s miracles prove not only the power God has over sin and death, but the larger reality of God’s willingness to heal you and work miracles in your life in accordance with his will.

Take some time to pray through the following miracles that Jesus performed. Pay attention to the who, what, when, where, and how, but as always, ask yourself, “*Why* did Jesus do this? How does it point me back to the kingdom?”

NOTES

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Water into wine				2:1-11
Healing of the crowd in Galilee	4:23-25			
Many healings	8:16-17	1:32-39	4:40-41	
Healing of a leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-15	
Healing of the centurion's servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Healing of Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	
Calming of the storm at sea	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
Healing of the wild men at Gadara	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
Healing of the official's son				4:46-54
Healing of the lame man (paralytic)	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:18-26	
Healing of the lame man at Bethesda				5:1-17
Healing of the woman with a hemorrhage	9:20-22	5:24-32	8:49-56	
Raising of Jairus' daughter	9:23-26	5:35-43	8:49-56	
Healing of two blind men	9:27-31			
Healing of the possessed man	9:32-34			
Healing of the man with a withered hand	12:9-13	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Feeding of the five thousand people	14:13-21	6:32-44	9:10-17	6:1-13
Walking on water (Sea of Galilee)	14:22-33	6:45-51		6:15-21
Healing of the Gentile's daughter	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Healing of the multitude	15:29-31			
Feeding of the four thousand people	15:32-39	8:1-10		
Healing of a blind man				9:1-41
Healing of an epileptic boy	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-42	
Finding the money in the fish	17:24-27			
Healing of the man with an unclean spirit	1:21-27	4:33-37		
Healing of the deaf, speechless man		7:31-37		
Healing of the blind man at Bethesda		8:22-26		
Healing of the crowds in Judea	19:1-2			
Healing of Bartimaeus (blind man)	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Healing of many in Jerusalem	21:14			
Miraculous catch of fish (2x)			5:1-11	21:1-14
Raising of the widow's son			7:11-17	