

Session 1: Bethlehem (Where It All Began)

Opening Prayer

May God give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you. Amen!

(Ephesians 1:17-18)

First Thoughts *(before the video)*

1. What images, feelings, and thoughts come to mind when you hear the word Bethlehem?
2. What do you hope to get out of a study of the Gospels and the Holy Land?

Watch the Video: Outline

We tend to picture Jesus as being born in a stable, but the evidence suggests He was born in a cave ~ the birthing place of lambs.

Jewish tradition tells us the animals born around the fields in Bethlehem were used as sacrifices in the temple for the worship of the Lord.

The caves were kept in a state of ritual purity, and the lambs were wrapped in swaddling cloth to keep them without spot or blemish.

Jesus was wrapped like one of these baby lambs to show that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Priestly garments which were too worn for use were made into the wicks of the menorah in the temple, which points to Jesus as the Light of the world.

Everyone event in Jesus' life revolves around a Jewish holiday: He dies as the Passover Lamb; His resurrection was on the Feast of Firstfruits; and He poured out His spirit on Pentecost.

Debriefing the Tour: Discussion Questions

1. What caught your attention most as you viewed the video?
2. Read Luke 2:1-18. Jesus was born in the humblest of places: a cave for animals. In what ways did His humility reveal His greatness?
3. What explanations did Rabbi Sobel give in the video for why Jesus was placed in a manger in a cave? Wrapped in swaddling cloths?
4. Why is it significant that Jesus may have been born in the same place as the lambs used for sacrifice in the temple?
5. What is the significance of the infant Jesus being wrapped in cloth that came from used priestly garments?
6. Read the information about the Feast of Tabernacles. What do you think about the idea that Jesus may have been born in September on the Feast of Tabernacles, rather than on December 25?

Feast of Tabernacles *(to be read after discussion question #5)*

Biblical scholars are in general agreement that Jesus may have been born in September on the Feast of Tabernacles, rather than on December 25. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorates the wandering of the Israelites in the desert after God liberated them from slavery in Egypt. This holiday commemorates how God provided manna from heaven, water from the stones to quench them, and a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night to guide them. It reflects God's presence, provision, and protection. For Christians, it reminds us of the time when "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us [*literally, tabernacled among us*]." (*John 1:14*)

Closing Prayer

Father of Grace, we thank You for sending Your Son into the world to be our Passover Lamb. Thank You that through His coming in the flesh, He has dealt with sin and death for all who trust in Him. We offer ourselves completely to You and ask You to be active and real in our lives this week. Please fill us with courage to face whatever comes to us during the coming week as we keep our eyes fixed on the Lamb. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Recommended Reading: Chapters 5 and 6 of *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi*

Session 2: Nazareth (The Early Years)

Opening Prayer

May God give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you. Amen!

(Ephesians 1:17-18)

First Thoughts (before the video)

1. Share two things you did when you were in your twenties (or are doing now if you're currently in your twenties). How do you think Jesus' life in his twenties was similar or different?

Watch the Video: Outline

The word for what Joseph did as an occupation is *tekton*, which means builder, craftsman, or architect.

The word *tekton* points to Jesus as the *architect* of creation ~ "through the firstborn, God created the world."

The word *tekton* also points to Jesus as the messianic craftsman, for in Jewish thought, the Messiah was going to be a craftsman (see Zechariah 1).

Messiah son of Joseph represents Jesus as the one rejected by his brothers, crucified on the cross, but ultimately exalted into a position of power.

Messiah son of David represents Jesus as the warrior king who is going to return to this earth to rule and reign.

Jesus' first miracle of turning the water into wine resembles the miracle performed through Moses of turning the Nile into blood ~ but whereas Moses brought judgment, Jesus came to bring abundant life.

Debriefing the Tour: Discussion Questions

1. What caught your attention most as you viewed the video?
2. Read aloud Mark 6:1-3. This took place when Jesus was thirty and had begun His ministry, traveling from village to village in the Galilee region, teaching and performing miracles. Finally, he went to his hometown and attempted to teach there, too. What do you learn from this passage about Jesus' life in Nazareth?
3. The word "carpenter" in verse 3 in the Greek is *tekton*, which means builder. In Israel, building was done with stone because there were few trees. So, Jesus was likely a stone mason, not a woodworker. Regardless of the specifics of His occupation, what does it tell you about Him?
4. What difference does it make to you that Jesus was the Architect of all creation? How does this affect your view of Him?
5. Read John 2:1-11, and then read aloud the text about weddings below. What connection did Rabbi Sobel draw between Jesus turning water into wine and Moses turning the Nile water into blood?
6. What does this story tell us about Jesus?

Weddings (*teaching point*)

A wedding was a huge event for a Jewish village. The whole village would attend, and the celebration could go on for days. Running out of wine was a social calamity. Jesus takes advantage of the situation to teach His disciples something: The Feast of the Messiah's coming has arrived. It is transforming the mere water of Jewish ceremonial washing into the excellent wine of God's kingdom. The Messiah has come. He has authority to upend Jewish rituals like washing and give them new meaning. The time for celebration is now.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we honor You as the Architect of the entire universe. We thank You that You changed the water of Jewish purification into the wine of Your kingdom. And we are humbled by Your willingness to live as an ordinary man, a stone mason, in a very specific time and place in history. Like Your first disciples, we have beheld Your glory and we want to follow where You lead. As we go through the coming week, enable us to notice and praise You for the work You have done designing the creation around us. We pray in Your great name, Amen!

Recommended Reading: Chapters 7, 8, 10 of *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi*

Session 3: Capernaum (Ministry Headquarters)

Opening Prayer

May God give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you. Amen!

(Ephesians 1:17-18)

First Thoughts *(before the video)*

The age of thirty was a turning point for Jesus. If you are over thirty, what was one thing you did at that age? If you are not yet thirty, what is one thing you imagine yourself doing at that age?

Watch the Video: Outline

The rabbis would travel the countryside gathering disciples, preaching and teaching the people as they went along, and then teach on the *shabbat* (day of rest).

By using the number 490 when instructing Peter how many times to forgive, Jesus was saying that Peter's faith could not be complete if he was not willing to wholeheartedly forgive.

The number 490 is also the numeric value for Bethlehem, which is significant because Jesus was born that we might find forgiveness.

Just as a person cannot live physically without "bread", we cannot live spiritually and emotionally without forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the key that sets us free, and it is what sets other people free as well.

When we build our lives on the Lord, the Word, and faith, we create a legacy that stands for generations to come.

Debriefing the Tour: Discussion Questions

1. What caught your attention most as you viewed the video?
2. Read Mark 1:14-39. In this passage, how was Jesus like other rabbis of His day?
3. How was Jesus different from other rabbis?
4. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "The kingdom of God has come near" (verse 15)?
5. What do you think Jesus' habit of driving out demons told the people of Capernaum about the kingdom of God?
6. In this passage from Mark, Jesus teaches more by action than by word. What effect do you think this would have had on people?

Jesus' Parables (*activity to do together*)

Matthew 13 contains seven of Jesus' parables, the stories He told as He taught the crowds. To get a feel for how visual and concrete (rather than abstract and intellectual) they are, try drawing them. Choose a parable from this list and draw a portion of the parable that would have been familiar to Jesus' first hearers:

- Matthew 13:1-9 (the farmer sowing seed)
- Matthew 13:24-30 (the weeds)
- Matthew 13: 31-32 (the mustard seed)
- Matthew 13:33 (the yeast)
- Matthew 13:44 (hidden treasure)
- Matthew 13:45-46 (the pearl)
- Matthew 13:47-50 (the net)

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are our Rabbi. You are our teacher. We acknowledge Your authority, and we want to follow where You lead. Go before each one of us this week and open our ears to those moments when You say, "Come!" Help us to become aware of Your kingdom, the realm where what You want done is done gladly and without resistance. We want to be part of that. In Your name of authority we pray, Amen!

Recommended Reading: Chapter 11 of *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi*

Session 4: Galilee (Ministry Grounds)

Opening Prayer

May God give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you. Amen!

(Ephesians 1:17-18)

First Thoughts *(before the video)*

In Jesus' time, people were often cut off from society because of their afflictions, which is a common feeling for many teenagers today. Share a little bit about your experience as a teen. Did you feel shut out of the in-crowd, or did you fit in well with the people around you?

Watch the Video: Outline

Historically, the Jews were terrified of water ~ bad things happened on bodies of water ~ and even today they don't like to go out in it.

Jesus called His disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee (known by the Jews as "the abyss") and go to the pagan cities called the Decapolis.

The woman with the issue of blood was bold in touching Jesus' garment because it was immodest for a woman to touch a holy rabbi and a man outside of her own family.

The woman touched the tassels on the corners of Jesus' garment, which is symbolic of the power of God's Word to touch and heal our lives.

Women in the ancient world were treated like property, but Jesus allowed them to sit at His feet and learn, valuing them the same as the men who were around Him.

When Jesus told the disciples to cast their nets on the right side, He was telling them to "fish" from a place of kindness and love, not from a place of strict justice, legalism, or judgment.

Debriefing the Tour: Discussion Questions

1. What caught your attention most as you viewed the video?
2. Read Luke 8:22-39. What are we supposed to learn about Jesus from verses 22-25?
3. Why was Jesus' decision to go to the non-Jewish side of the lake shocking to His disciples?
4. What do you suppose life was like for the formerly demonized man after he was healed?
5. Why do you think Jesus didn't let the man go back to the Jewish side of the lake with him?
6. Which of these two stories ~ the trip across the lake or the healing of the demonized man ~ is most relevant to you life? Why? What will you take away from this story?

Praying for One Another *(activity to do together)*

Jesus traveled all the way across the Sea of Galilee just to heal one man. He cares about people whom no one else cares about. So today, think about how the group can pray for you. If you're not suffering from anything, how can the group pray for you to go deeper with God? Or how can the group give thanks for what's happening in your life?

It's easy to request prayer for other people, and much deeper when you let the group pray for you in your own areas of need. With this in mind, gather around one person and pray for him or her. Ask God to heal this person, or to give him or her the courage to travel to the other side of the lake, or whatever else he or she needs.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, even the wind and the waves obey You. The demons obey You. So do the angels and every star and planet in the universe. You have graciously given us choices about whether and when we will obey You. It's hard for us to yield fully to You, even though we know You are the best King we could possibly have. Please help us to say yes to You throughout our lives. Please show us the areas we are holding back from You. In Your name of authority we pray. Amen!

Recommended Reading: Chapters 9, 12, 14 of *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi*

Session 5: Mount of Olives (*The Triumphal Entry*)

Opening Prayer

May God give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you. Amen!

(Ephesians 1:17-18)

First Thoughts (*before the video*)

If you knew you were going to die within a week, where would you like to spend your last days?

Watch the Video: Outline

Jesus didn't come riding on a horse (a symbol of military might) but on a donkey (a symbol of humility), because he was going to humbly surrender his life as a sacrifice.

The Old Testament stories of Abraham's and Moses' use of a donkey points to the fact that Jesus, as the "greater than" of these two men, would bring a greater redemption.

Not only was Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem triumphant, but his return will also be triumphant as he descends and set foot on the Mount of Olives.

When we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, we are praying for the kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven.

The Garden of Gethsemane means the "place of the olive press," which represents the anguish that Jesus faced on the night of His betrayal.

It is significant that Jesus prayed three times for God to take the cup from Him, for it would take three "pressings" for all the oil to be removed from an olive.

Debriefing the Tour: Discussion Questions

1. What caught your attention most as you viewed the video?
2. Read Luke 19:28-40. According to Rabbi Jason, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey colt instead of a horse colt (see Matthew 21:7) because "horses are a symbol of military might, wealth, and strength. Donkeys, on the other hand, are symbolic of humility and peace. At His first coming, Messiah came as the humble Lamb of God riding on a donkey, but at His second coming He will descent from the heavens riding a white war horse ready to vanquish all evil from the world (Revelation 19:1-6). In that ways are you drawn to the idea of Jesus as the humble Lamb of God riding on a donkey?
3. In what ways are you drawn to the idea of Jesus as the warrior riding on a war horse?
4. Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, which reads, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See your kind comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." How was the reality of what Jesus did after He rode into Jerusalem different from what His disciples expected?
5. Read Matthew 26:36-46. How does this scene make the Mount of Olives an important place?
6. How are the events in Gethsemane relevant to your life?

Visualizing Jesus' life and Ministry (*activity to do by themselves*)

Since we don't have donkeys and palm branches readily available, take a stone to represent the stones that would cry out to acclaim Jesus' Triumphant Entry or the stark contrasting silence in the Garden of Gethsemane while Jesus prayed. Write a word or verse that will help you prepare for personal study time this week, thinking about these events driving toward Jesus' self-sacrifice. Reflect on what these scenes reveal about the kind of king that Jesus was determined to be.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You rode into Jerusalem as a king of peace. You deliberately took actions that would provoke the authorities in Jerusalem to have You arrested. You knew what You were doing, and You walked open-eyed into suffering. You were brave and determined, yet at the same time You were fully human and experienced all of the fear any mortal would feel at taking on the weight of human sin and dying a slow and agonizing death. Enable us to taste Your courage as we face our own lives. Thank You for never forsaking us in our Gethsemanes. In Your royal name we pray, Amen!

Recommended Reading: Chapters 18 and 21 of *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi*

Session 6: Jerusalem (Crucifixion and Resurrection)

Opening Prayer

May God give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you. Amen!

(Ephesians 1:17-18)

First Thoughts *(before the video)*

What is one thing you are thankful for that you have received from this study of the places where Jesus lived and ministered?

Watch the Video: Outline

The crucifixion of Jesus closely follows what was known as a Roman triumph.

The first Adam, through the tree, brought death in to the world; but the second Adam brought about a redemption and restoration by means of dying on a tree.

Jesus, through the crown of thorns, took on Himself the curse of creation in order to reverse it and restore the original blessing.

Jesus wasn't just making atonement for Adam but for Eve as well ~ and all of us.

Just as the first sin took place in a garden, so the atonement for that sin would take place in a garden when Jesus was placed in a tomb there owned by Joseph of Arimathea.

Jesus rose from the dead on the Feast of the Firstfruits ~ a good firstfruits was the sign of a greater harvest to come.

The greatest demonstration of God's lovingkindness was the fact that He gave His life for us and rose again on the third day ~ the tomb is empty!

Debriefing the Tour: Discussion Questions

1. What caught your attention most as you viewed the video?
2. Read Mark 15:6-39. This is the passage from Mark's Gospel that parallels the Roman procession known as the triumph. The festival referred to in verse 6 is Passover. Pilate is the Roman governor, who alone had the legal authority to execute a criminal. So, the chief priests of the temple had handed Jesus over to the governor, rather than killing Him themselves. Why do you think Mark makes such a point of mentioning what Pilate calls Jesus? What is Mark's purpose (which isn't the same as Pilate's purpose)?
3. What does Mark want us to remember about Jesus when we read these details of His last hours? Why is it so important for us to remember this?
4. According to Rabbi Sobel, why did Jesus have to die on a cross?
5. To what in the Old Testament did the crown of thorns point back?
6. What difference does it make to you personally that Jesus is the King of the Jews and the Son of God? How does it affect your life if Jesus is King?

Silent Reflection

This week we are looking at Jesus' journey to the cross and His death on that cross. We were introduced to the meaning in many of the details of exactly what happened. As you prepare for personal study time this week, think about those details and praise God for being present in the smallest details of life, giving meaning to all of it.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You gave up Your life so that we could live. You are the king of the Jews, the emperor of the universe. Give us the courage and unselfishness to follow You in the way of the cross, knowing it to be none other than the way of life and peace. We pray in Your great name, Amen!

Recommended Reading: Chapter 22 of *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi*