

The **Bible** Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

The Bible's teaching presented
for Bible students

Paul Mallison

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for Bible students

12. Jesus Christ's Mission

Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: www.thebibleunpacked.net.

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God and/or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ

God enabled Jesus Christ to carry out his mission, empowering and directing him. Consequently what Jesus did and said showed that he had been sent and empowered by God. For without God no one could possibly have the extraordinary authority, power and knowledge that Jesus had.

a) Jesus Christ's Authority from God

See also:

- *Jesus Christ's Power from God*, p. 5
- *Jesus Christ as Lord of All*, Ch. 14

God granted Jesus sovereign authority

MATT 11:27A [JESUS:] *All things have been handed over to me by my Father.* NET

JOHN 17:2 For you [God] *have given him authority over all humanity so that he might give eternal life to all those you gave him.* ISV

Jesus had the authority to forgive sins

MATT 9:5–8 [JESUS, TO TEACHERS OF THE LAW:] *Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? ⁶But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – then he said to the paralytic – "Stand up, take your stretcher, and go home."⁷And he stood up and went home. ⁸When the crowd saw this, they were afraid and honored God who had given such authority to men.* NET

Jesus' question in v. 5 makes the point that forgiving sins is, like healing a paralytic, humanly impossible. So although his claim to be able to forgive sins could not be directly verified, by proving he could do the latter (vv. 7–8) he gave his claim credence.

Jesus' teaching had great authority

MARK 1:21B–27 On the next day of worship, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²²*The people were amazed at his teachings. Unlike their scribes, he taught them with authority.* ²³At that time there was a man in the synagogue who was controlled by an evil spirit. He shouted, ²⁴"What do you want with us, Jesus from Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" ²⁵*Jesus ordered the spirit, "Keep quiet, and come out of him!"* ²⁶*The evil spirit threw the man into convulsions and came out of him with a loud shriek.* ²⁷*Everyone was stunned. They said to each other, "What is this? This is a new teaching that has authority behind it! He gives orders to evil spirits, and they obey him."* GW

Jesus had the authority to state what was required for eternal life . . .

JOHN 3:16 [JESUS:] For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that *everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.* NET

. . . Likewise, Jesus had the authority to state what was required to enter God's kingdom

MATT 7:21 [JESUS:] *Not everyone who keeps saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will get into the kingdom of heaven, but only the person who keeps doing the will of my Father in heaven.* ISV

JOHN 3:3 *Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again."* GNT

Why do you think that God handed over all things to Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 11:27a)?

How does Jesus Christ exert his authority over all things today?

How is Jesus Christ's sovereign authority evident in your life? What could you do to make it more prevalent?

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Christ's Power from God

God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission . . .

MATT 3:16–17 After Jesus was baptized, just as he was coming up out of the water, *the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on him.* ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight.” NET

LUKE 4:18–19, 21 [JESUS:] “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the regaining of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed,* ¹⁹*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*” ... ²¹Then he began to tell them, “*Today this scripture has been fulfilled even as you heard it being read.*” NET

Jesus claimed that the prophecy of one who would be anointed with the Holy Spirit to carry out God's messianic work (vv. 18–19; cf. Isa 61:1–2) was fulfilled in himself. As such, through the Holy Spirit God empowered Jesus in his mission and Jesus performed many miraculous deeds with God's power.

. . . The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did

JOHN 3:34 *The man* [Jesus] *whom God has sent speaks God's message. After all, God gives him the Spirit without limit.* GW

ACTS 10:38 *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and he went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him.* ISV

Presumably the power spoken of was due to the Holy Spirit, the power being given in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. This verse also appears to correlate Jesus having the Holy Spirit with God's presence being with him.

As such, Jesus did many miraculous deeds with God's power

LUKE 5:17B *The power of the Lord was present for Jesus to heal the sick.* GNT

JOHN 3:2 One night Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, we know you are a teacher sent from God, because *no one can do the miracles you do unless God is with him.*” NCV™

Jesus' deeds led people to praise God

MATT 15:30–31 Then large crowds came to him bringing with them the lame, blind, crippled, mute, and many others. They laid them at his feet, and *he healed them*. ³¹*As a result, the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing, and they praised the God of Israel.* NET

The fact that the people praised God for all the miracles that they saw Jesus perform, suggests that they understood his power to perform the miracles ultimately came from God.

Jesus' deeds validated his claims about himself and God . . .

JOHN 10:36–38 [JESUS, TO UNBELIEVING JEWS:] As for me, *the Father chose me and sent me into the world. How, then, can you say that I blaspheme because I said that I am the Son of God?* ³⁷*Do not believe me, then, if I am not doing the things my Father wants me to do.* ³⁸*But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, you should at least believe my deeds, in order that you may know once and for all that the Father is in me and that I am in the Father.* GNT

In vv. 37–38, Jesus claimed that the miracles validated his claim of being the Christ (v. 36a; cf. vv. 24–25a), God's Son (v. 36b) – and in conjunction showed that God was in him and he in God (v. 38b).

. . . and so Jesus' deeds led many people to believe in him

JOHN 12:9–11 Now a large crowd of Judeans learned that Jesus was there, and so they came not only because of him but also *to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead*. ¹⁰So the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus too, ¹¹*for on account of him many of the Jewish people from Jerusalem were going away and believing in Jesus.*

NET

What did the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on Jesus and the Spirit's empowerment of him show about Jesus Christ's relationship with God?

To what extent do Christians have the Holy Spirit's empowerment? And how can this power be utilized in our lives?

What do Jesus' deeds show about him?

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God

See also:

- *Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God*, p. 19

Jesus Christ's surpassing knowledge and his related trait of profound wisdom were key aspects of his teaching ministry. As can be seen in some of the verses in this section, these capabilities were also important in other areas of his life and mission.

God taught Jesus

JOHN 8:28 Then Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing on my own initiative, but *I speak just what the Father taught me.* NET

JOHN 15:15B [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] But I have called you friends, because *I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father.* NET

Jesus taught his disciples everything he learned from God (cf. NIV).

Jesus knew everything

JOHN 16:30 [THE DISCIPLES, TO JESUS:] Now *we know that you know everything* and do not need anyone to ask you anything. Because of this we believe that you have come from God. NET

The final statement suggests that Jesus' knowledge of all things was due to God and/or his relationship with him. Jesus' complete knowledge would appear to have been due to both: God's teaching of him (as per the previous subsection); and, debatably, God enabling him to know or perceive all things about people and everything else (capabilities that are seen in the following subsections).

Jesus knew everything about all people . . .

JOHN 2:24–25 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them [people with limited faith], because *he knew all people.* ²⁵*He did not need anyone to testify about man, for he knew what was in man.* NET

JOHN 4:29 [A WOMAN WHO HAD TALKED WITH JESUS:] "*Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! Could he be the Messiah?*" CEV

. . . Jesus even knew people's thoughts and intentions

MATT 12:25A *Jesus knew what they were thinking, and he said to them: Any kingdom where people fight each other will end up ruined.* CEV

MATT 22:18 *But knowing that these leaders were trying to trick him, Jesus said, "You hypocrites! Why are you trying to trap me?"* NCV™

Jesus knew about future events

MARK 13:19–26 [JESUS:] *For in those days there will be suffering unlike anything that has happened from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, or ever will happen. ²⁰And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved. But because of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut them short. ²¹Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe him. ²²For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect. ²³Be careful! I have told you everything ahead of time. ²⁴"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then everyone will see the Son of Man arriving in the clouds with great power and glory.* NET

JOHN 18:4 *Then Jesus, because he knew everything that was going to happen to him, came and asked them, "Who are you looking for?"*

NET

Jesus was also filled with wisdom . . .

LUKE 2:40, 46–47, 52 *And the child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him. ... ⁴⁶After three days they [Jesus' parents] found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard Jesus were astonished at his understanding and his answers. ... ⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and with people.* NET

. . . Nobody could match Jesus' wisdom

LUKE 20:22–26 [MEN TRYING TO TRICK JESUS:] *Is it right for us to pay the tribute tax to Caesar or not?" ²³But Jesus perceived their deceit and*

said to them, ²⁴“Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?” They said, “Caesar’s.” ²⁵So he said to them, “Then give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²⁶Thus they were unable in the presence of the people to trap him with his own words. And stunned by his answer, they fell silent.

NET

MATT 22:46 No one could answer him at all, and from that day on no one dared to ask him another question. ISV

Note: Jesus knew God

JOHN 7:28B–29 [JESUS, REFERRING TO GOD:] You do not know him, ²⁹but I know him, because I have come from him and he sent me. NET

How do Jesus’ miraculous knowledge and wisdom give credence to his miraculous claims (e.g. that he was sent by God and was the Son of God)?

How can we utilize Jesus’ knowledge or wisdom in advancing God’s kingdom and/or in other aspects of our lives?

What bearing should Jesus Christ's knowledge and wisdom have on your relationship with him (e.g. in trusting him)?

d) Jesus Christ's Direction from God

God was with Jesus

JOHN 8:29 [JESUS, SPEAKING OF GOD:] And *the one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do those things that please him.* NET

Jesus only did works of God . . .

JOHN 5:19 So Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, *the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.* NET

. . . and God worked through Jesus

ACTS 2:22 [PETER:] Listen to these words, fellow-Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was clearly proven to you by *all the miracles and wonders which God performed through him.* You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you. GNT

As such, Jesus carried out God's will, doing the work God had given him . . .

JOHN 4:34 Jesus said to them, "*My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work.* NET

In speaking of doing God's will as his "food", Jesus indicated that it was his prime source of "nourishment" (AMP, NLT). Doing God's work was in a sense what sustained him in his mission and was his highest priority.

. . . Jesus sought to do God's will as opposed to his own will

JOHN 6:38 [JESUS:] For *I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.* NET

So Jesus obeyed God's commands . . .

JOHN 14:31A [JESUS:] However, I want the world to know that I love the Father and that *I am doing exactly what the Father has commanded me to do.* GW

. . . and Jesus spoke what God wanted him to say

JOHN 12:49–50 [JESUS:] *For I have not spoken from my own authority, but the Father himself who sent me has commanded me what I should say and what I should speak.* ⁵⁰*And I know that his commandment is eternal life. Thus the things I say, I say just as the Father has told me.*

NET

How or in what sense did God work through Jesus Christ?

What aspects of the way God worked through Jesus have parallels to the way God works through Christians today?

What is one major plan or goal that you have in life? To what degree is it based (as Jesus' life was) on God's will?

II. Jesus Christ's Ministry, Death and Resurrection

The life Jesus Christ lived has been unparalleled in word and deed. It culminated in his sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection by God. How we respond to the NT's testimony to these events and their significance, will determine our eternal destiny.

a) Jesus Christ's Miracles

See also:

■ *Jesus Christ's Power from God*, p. 5

The earlier section *Jesus Christ's Power from God*, p. 5, also spoke of Jesus' miraculous deeds, in referring to God as the source of Jesus' power. The focus of this section is on Jesus' use of his power in his ministry, which was largely in performing miracles that brought people deliverance from some form of bondage or difficulty. In performing these miracles Jesus demonstrated power over all other forces.

Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people

MARK 7:37 *People were completely astounded and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.* NET

Jesus delivered people from demons and Satan – demonstrating power over evil

MATT 8:16 *When it was evening, many demon-possessed people were brought to him. He drove out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick.* NET

LUKE 11:14, 21–22 *Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the man who had been mute began to speak, and the crowds were amazed. ...* ²¹[JESUS:] *When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his possessions are safe. ²²But when a stronger man attacks and conquers him, he takes away the first man's armor on which the man relied and divides up his plunder.*

NET

In v. 22 Jesus refers to his own overpowering of Satan – breaking Satan's stranglehold on Satan's earthly domain – a truth demonstrated by Jesus driving out demons (v. 14).

Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders . . .

MATT 4:23–24 *Jesus went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴So a report about him spread throughout Syria. People brought to him all who suffered*

with various illnesses and afflictions, those who had seizures, paralytics, and those possessed by demons, and he healed them. NET

. . . Jesus even raised the dead

LUKE 8:53–55 And they began making fun of him, because *they knew that she was dead.* ⁵⁴*But Jesus gently took her by the hand and said, “Child, get up.”* ⁵⁵*Her spirit returned, and she got up immediately.* Then he told them to give her something to eat. NET

Jesus exercised control over nature, in rescuing and helping people

MARK 4:37–41 *Now a great windstorm developed and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was nearly swamped.* ³⁸But he was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to die?” ³⁹So *he got up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Be quiet! Calm down!”* Then the wind stopped, and it was dead calm. ⁴⁰And he said to them, “Why are you cowardly? Do you still not have faith?” ⁴¹They were overwhelmed by fear and said to one another, “Who then is this? *Even the wind and sea obey him!*” NET

JOHN 6:9–11 [ANDREW, TO JESUS:] Here is a boy who has *five barley loaves and two fish, but what good are these for so many people?* ¹⁰Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” (Now there was a lot of grass in that place.) So the men sat down, *about five thousand in number.* ¹¹*Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed the bread to those who were seated. He then did the same with the fish, as much as they wanted.* NET

What reasons do we have to believe that Jesus’ miracles really did take place?

Are you aware of Jesus' power affecting your life or the lives of people you know? If so, share examples with your group. If not, why do you think this is so?

Jesus said to his disciples in John 14:12 that they would do what he had been doing and even greater things. Is what he said to his disciples relevant to believers today? If so, how?

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Christ's Teaching

Jesus was a prophet . . .

LUKE 24:19B [TWO FOLLOWERS, UNKNOWINGLY SPEAKING TO JESUS:] Those things that happened to *Jesus from Nazareth. By what he did and said he showed that he was a powerful prophet, who pleased God and all the people.* CEV

As a prophet Jesus was a representative and spokesperson of God, speaking and acting on God's behalf. His speaking role as a prophet included: teaching, admonishing and prophesying.

. . . As such, Jesus taught and preached to the people

MARK 6:34 As Jesus came ashore he saw the large crowd and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So *he taught them many things.* NET

MATT 11:1 *When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their towns.* NET

Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God

MATT 4:17, 23 From that time *Jesus began to preach this message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."* ... ²³Jesus went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing all kinds of disease and sickness among the people. NET

The kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) was the most prominent theme in Jesus' teaching.

Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God

JOHN 14:24 [JESUS:] Those who do not love me do not obey my teaching. *This teaching that you hear is not really mine; it is from my Father, who sent me.* NCV™

Jesus' teaching is the truth . . .

JOHN 8:31–32 Then Jesus said to those Judeans who had believed him, *"If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my*

disciples ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” NET

... Jesus himself is identified with truth

JOHN 14:6 *Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* NET

Jesus did not just simply teach the truth, he is “the truth” – the embodiment of truth.

Jesus’ teaching was amazing – leading people to believe in him, ...

MATT 22:33 When the crowds heard this, *they were amazed at his teaching.* NET

JOHN 4:41–42 *And many more believed because of the things he said. ⁴²They said to the woman, “First we believed in Jesus because of your speech, but now we believe because we heard him ourselves. We know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”* NCV™

... although many others did not believe Jesus

JOHN 7:5 *For not even his own brothers believed in him.* NET

JOHN 7:48 [THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND PHARISEES:] *None of the rulers or the Pharisees have believed in him, have they?* NET

What things about Jesus’ life and teaching set him apart from other great teachers and their teaching?

What did Jesus mean by saying that "the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt 4:17)?

How can we use Jesus' teachings to help others believe in him?

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death

Jesus was rejected . . .

LUKE 17:25 But first [before Jesus returns] *he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.* NET

JOHN 1:11 He came to what was his own, but *his own people did not receive him.* NET

Jesus was rejected by the Jewish people as a whole, but in particular by the Jewish religious leaders.

. . . and Jesus was despised

JOHN 8:52–53 *Then the people said [to Jesus], “Now we are sure that you have a demon. Abraham is dead, and so are the prophets. How can you say that no one who obeys your words will ever die? ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”* CEV

JOHN 15:18 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me first.* NET

Jesus faced intense opposition, with efforts to kill him

JOHN 5:16–18 Now because Jesus was doing these things [miracles] on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began persecuting him. ¹⁷So he told them, “My Father is working until now, and I too am working.” ¹⁸For this reason *the Jewish leaders were trying even harder to kill him*, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, thus making himself equal with God. NET

Jesus' betrayal and arrest

MATT 26:45–50 Then he [Jesus] came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is approaching, and *the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.* ⁴⁶*Get up, let us go. Look! My betrayer is approaching!*” ⁴⁷*While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests and elders of the people.* ⁴⁸*(Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I kiss is the man. Arrest him!”)* ⁴⁹*Immediately*

he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi," and kissed him. ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do." Then they came and took hold of Jesus and arrested him. NET

The unjust condemnation of Jesus – who was innocent of any charge

LUKE 23:4, 20–24 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." ... ²⁰Pilate addressed them once again because he wanted to release Jesus. ²¹But they kept on shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" ²²A third time he said to them, "Why? What wrong has he done? I have found him guilty of no crime deserving death. I will therefore flog him and release him." ²³But they were insistent, demanding with loud shouts that he be crucified. And their shouts prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. NET

The horrific suffering and death of Jesus

MATT 27:26–31, 35, 39–40, 45–46, 50 Then he [Pilate] released Barabbas for them. But after he had Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified. ²⁷Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's residence and gathered the whole cohort around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe around him, ²⁹and after braiding a crown of thorns, they put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, and kneeling down before him, they mocked him: "Hail, king of the Jews!" ³⁰They spat on him and took the staff and struck him repeatedly on the head. ³¹When they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. ... ³⁵When they had crucified him, they divided his clothes by throwing dice. ... ³⁹Those who passed by defamed him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who can destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are God's Son, come down from the cross!" ... ⁴⁵Now from noon until three, darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶At about three o'clock Jesus shouted with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ... ⁵⁰Then Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. NET

In v. 46, Jesus' cry (cf. Ps 22:1) suggests that the intimate relationship between himself and God had in some way or sense been impaired.

Jesus' death was planned . . .

MATT 26:2, 18 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] “You know that the day after tomorrow is the day of the Passover Feast. *On that day the Son of Man will be given to his enemies to be crucified.*” ... ¹⁸Jesus answered, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, “The Teacher says: *The chosen time is near. I will have the Passover with my followers at your house.*” NCV™

. . . It was God's will that Jesus die – for everyone

ACTS 2:23 [PETER, TO A CROWD OF LARGELY JEWS:] *In accordance with his own plan God had already decided that Jesus would be handed over to you; and you killed him by letting sinful men crucify him.* GNT

ROM 8:32A *God didn't spare his own Son but handed him over to death for all of us.* GW

In accordance, Jesus suffered and died willingly

JOHN 10:11, 17–18A [JESUS:] I am the good shepherd. *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* ... ¹⁷This is why the Father loves me – because *I lay down my life*, so that I may take it back again. ¹⁸*No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of my own free will.* NET

Why was it God's will that Jesus die? Why did he actually have to die?

Choose one aspect of Jesus' suffering and death that you find particularly moving, and say why.

Have you ever experienced rejection, opposition and suffering in being faithful to God? What lessons and encouragement can we take from Jesus' experience of such things and his response?

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

God raised Jesus from the dead, by his power

ACTS 2:24 But God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held in its power.

NET

1COR 6:14 By his power God has raised the Lord from the dead and will also raise us from the dead. NCV™

Jesus' body was not found in his tomb

LUKE 24:22–24 [AN EARLY BELIEVER:] Furthermore, some women of our group amazed us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body, they came back and said they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴Then some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him. NET

Jesus was raised in a bodily form

LUKE 24:39–40 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] Look at my hands and my feet; it's me! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones like you see I have." ⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. NET

Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection

ACTS 1:3 To the same apostles also, after his suffering, he presented himself alive with many convincing proofs. He was seen by them over a forty-day period and spoke about matters concerning the kingdom of God. NET

ACTS 2:32 [PETER, TO A CROWD OF LARGELY JEWS:] This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it. NET

Jesus was taken up to God in heaven

ACTS 1:9–11 After he [Jesus] had said this, while they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰As they were still staring into the sky while he was going, suddenly two men in white clothing stood near them "and said, "Men of Galilee, why do

you stand here looking up into the sky? *This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way you saw him go into heaven.*" NET

Because he had willingly suffered death, God exalted and glorified Jesus Christ

PHIL 2:8-11 *He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross! ⁹As a result God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow – in heaven and on earth and under the earth – ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.* NET

HEB 2:9B *We see him now crowned with glory and honor because of the death he suffered.* GNT

What makes you think Jesus was raised from the dead? (The group could make a list of reasons, which could be used whenever talking to someone who is skeptical about it.)

What do you think is significant about Jesus being raised in a bodily form, rather than simply a spiritual form?

Hebrews 2:9b says: "We see him now crowned with glory and honor..."
What do we know about this glory and honor that God gave Jesus Christ?

Pray for persecuted Christians

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Supporting Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

It provides material and spiritual support based on locally identified needs.

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

Open Doors – sb.od.org; www.opendoors.org.au

It equips believers for persecution and maintaining a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org.

Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin – rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com.au

It provides weekly bulletins. Send a blank email to join-rlpb@hub.xc.org.

The Bible League – www.bibleleague.org/persecuted; www.bibleleague.com

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com; www.persecution.com.au

VOM helps persecuted Christians spread the gospel. It also gives material aid.

World Watch Monitor – www.worldwatchmonitor.org

It reports the story of Christians under pressure for their faith.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

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