

Were *you* there?



A 6 SESSION **BIBLE STUDY**
FOR LENT

leader's guide

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Creative Communications Sample

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Introduction



“Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” We ask the question in the familiar Lenten spiritual. Were you there? Although it was our sins that Jesus bore in his body on that dreadful tree, we were not physically present to witness the tragedy and triumph of our Savior’s death and res-

urrection. We were not there, but many people were. They listened to Jesus teach and witnessed his miracles. People followed him into Jerusalem, hailing him as the Messiah. Others plotted against him and arranged his betrayal and arrest. His disciples fled for their lives. Crowds watched his trial and shouted for his death. These things, as the apostle Paul would later say, were not “done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). The people who watched and participated in these very public events held a variety of opinions about Jesus of Nazareth. Just who was he?

Creating Effective
Communications
Sample

Leader's Guide for Session 1

BEFORE CLASS:

Read through this session yourself.
Examine the Bible readings listed
and become acquainted with them.

READ: Have a member of the
group read the Introduction
on page 4 aloud.

READ: Have someone read
the Opening Prayer or read
the prayer in unison.

DISCUSS: Discuss favorite
titles for Jesus.

READ: Read aloud or have someone
read aloud the Introduction.

SESSION 1

Identified

*Some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet."
Others said, "This is the Christ." John 7:40-41*



Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, when your Son lived on earth, many people wondered about him. Some rejected him, yet others listened to his Word and believed. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, who called us to faith through the Gospel, we too believe that Jesus is your Son, the promised Messiah of Israel and our Savior. Bless our study of your Word so that we might be strengthened in our faith and in our witness to our Lord. Hear our prayer in his name. Amen.

Discussion

Which of the many names and titles for Jesus (Emmanuel, Messiah, King of kings, Good Shepherd, and many more) is your favorite? Which title, in your opinion, best explains his saving work?

Introduction

Were you there? Would you have believed what you heard? The people who listened to Jesus teach and witnessed his miracles knew

The Promised One

1. A person was sprinkled with blood and with anointing oil or just with oil. Anointing set the person apart for special service to God, consecrating him to the task for which he was appointed. Priests and kings were anointed, and in the psalm the Son of God is called the Lord's Anointed. Today pastors are ordained and installed in office, or government leaders are sworn in to office.
2. The coming prophet would be sent from God, and the people were to listen to him, as they listen to Moses. The new prophet would be raised up from among the people. The people were to listen because the coming one would speak in God's name. God would put his words in the prophet's mouth. Those who refused to listen would be accountable to the Lord. The words spoken by a true prophet would come true.
3. Daniel sees what may be the "throne room" of heaven. The Son of Man comes with the clouds. The Ancient of Days is the God of Israel. From him the Son of Man receives dominion over all peoples and nations. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

about the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. They wondered, "Could he be the one?" There was disagreement on the issue. Some, like Jesus' future disciple Nathaniel, wondered, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). They knew that Scripture said the Christ was to come from Bethlehem, but Jesus lived in Galilee (John 7:42). Yet many, after hearing Jesus and seeing the miracles, believed. Surely this man was the long-awaited Messiah. The people asked one another: "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?" (John 7:31).

The promised one

1. The Old Testament prophecies spoke of the Savior promised to Israel. The promised one would be born into the family line of Abraham and would be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:3). The promised one would be known by many names and titles. His Hebrew title of Messiah (or in Greek, the Christ) means "the Anointed One." **Read Exodus 29:21, Exodus 40:12-15, 1 Samuel 16:10-13 and Psalm 2:1-3.** How were individuals anointed? What did the anointing signify? What kinds of rites or ceremonies today, religious or secular, might compare to the ancient practice of anointing?
2. **Read Deuteronomy 18:15-22.** How would the promised prophet be like Moses? From where would the new prophet come? Moses reminds the people of their terrified promise at Horeb (Mount Sinai), when they told him, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19). Why were the people commanded to listen to the coming one? What would happen to those who would not listen? How would the people know they were hearing a true prophet of the Lord?
3. **Read Daniel 7:9-14.** What place does Daniel see in his vision? How does the "Son of Man" arrive? Who is the Ancient of Days

4. Elijah the prophet will come before the day of the Lord. Elijah will turn the hearts of the people so the Lord will not destroy them. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Who Do People Say That I Am?

1. The wise men search for the “king of the Jews.” Jesus is the king of the Jews and the King of kings. According to Scripture, the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem and he would rule the people of Israel.
2. Jesus reads in the synagogue from the prophet Isaiah words concerning himself; he then tells the people that the prophet’s words have been fulfilled that day in their hearing. The people refer to him as Joseph’s son; he is Joseph’s adopted son and the true Son of his heavenly Father. Jesus tells them that a prophet is not accepted in his own town. He tells them how Elijah was sent to help those who were not of Israel. The people of Nazareth are angry because Jesus rebukes them for their unbelief. They try to throw him from a cliff. Answers will vary.
3. Herod was confused or puzzled about Jesus’ identity. Some said Jesus was John raised from the dead, but Herod knew he had killed John. He wanted to see Jesus for himself.
4. Some people think Jesus could not be the Christ because every-

to whom is he presented? What does the Son of Man receive from the Ancient of Days (see Psalm 2:7-8 and Isaiah 9:6-7)?

4. **Read Malachi 4:5-6, Luke 1:13-17 and Matthew 17:10-13.** Who will come before the day of the LORD? What will this messenger do? When this prophecy was fulfilled, who was it that came in the spirit and power of Elijah?

Who Do People Say That I Am?

1. **Read Matthew 2:1-6.** How do the wise men from the east identify the infant Jesus? Were they correct in that identification? When the priests and scribes consulted the Scriptures, what do they find concerning Jesus’ birth and his identity?
2. **Read Luke 4:16-30.** How does Jesus reveal his identity to the people of his hometown of Nazareth? At first the people speak well of him. How do they identify him? Are they correct in this identification? What does Jesus say to them? Why do his words anger them? What is their response to Jesus? Why would they treat their “hometown hero” in that way?
3. Even Herod (the son of the king who killed the children of Bethlehem) wondered just who this Jesus might be. **Read Luke 9:7-9.** What was his reaction to the things he was hearing about Jesus?
4. **Read John 7:25-31.** What were some of the opinions in Jerusalem concerning Jesus’ identity? Why did some people think he could not be the Messiah? Why did others think he might actually be the Christ? What was Jesus’ response to these speculations? Why wasn’t he arrested right then?
5. **Read Matthew 16:13-20.** What were some of the opinions offered concerning Jesus’ identity? What might the people have seen and heard or read in the Old Testament Scriptures that would lead them to come to such a variety of conclusions about

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one knows where he is from, and no one is supposed to know where the Christ comes from. Others think he is the Christ because of the miracles he has done and because the authorities seem afraid to arrest or rebuke him. Maybe the authorities think he is the Christ! Jesus was not arrested because his hour had not yet come.

5. Some people said Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead or Elijah, Jeremiah or another prophet. The people were familiar with the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and the return of Elijah. There was much speculation because of Jesus’ teaching and miracles. Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. The Father in heaven revealed this to Peter.

Who Do You Say That I Am?

1. When the woman says she knows that the Messiah is coming, Jesus says that he is the Messiah. The woman goes into the town and tells everyone what has happened, asking, “Can this be the Christ?” Many Samaritans believed because of the woman’s testimony and they asked him to stay with them. Many more believed after listening to him.
2. Jesus tells the healed man that he is the Son of Man and the man believes in him. The Pharisees remain blind in unbelief.
3. Answers will vary, but some religions view Jesus as only a prophet and nothing more. Others think of him as a wise teacher or a good example to follow. Some think of him as a social rebel who opposed Rome.

READ: Read responsively the words of the psalm.

him? What is Peter’s correct answer to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” How does Peter know Jesus’ true identity?

Who Do You Say That I Am?

1. When Jesus revealed his identity as the Messiah to the people of Israel, many wanted to destroy him, yet others believed in him. **Read John 4:25-42.** How does Jesus reveal his identity to the Samaritan woman? How does she respond to the revelation? What was the response of the people of that town of Sychar?
2. **Read John 9:35-41.** Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. How and when does he reveal his identity to the newly sighted man? How does the man respond? Who ends up remaining blind in this account?
3. So many people in the world today remain blind to Jesus’ true identity. Consider the many contemporary religions and world-views. What are some of today’s views and opinions—outside of the Christian faith—concerning Jesus? Are there false views of the Savior even among those who call themselves Christians? Why do you think so many people reject Jesus as Lord? How might some of these false opinions be used as a “bridge” to explain Jesus’ true identity? Suppose someone who held one of these other beliefs about Jesus asked you, “Who do you say that Jesus is?” How would you answer?

Psalm 2:7-12

1. *The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;*
2. **Today I have begotten you.**
1. *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,*
2. **And the ends of the earth your possession.**

SING: Sing (or speak) aloud the words of the hymn in unison.

READ: Have someone read the Closing Prayer or read the prayer in unison.

- ① *You shall break them with a rod of iron*
- ☑ **And dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.**

- ① *Now therefore, kings, be wise;*
- ☑ **Be warned, O rulers of the earth.**

- ① *Serve the Lord with fear,*
- ☑ **And rejoice with trembling.**

- ① *Kiss the Son,*
- ☑ **Lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,**

- ① *For his wrath is quickly kindled.*
- ☑ **Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**

Hymn

(Tune: O Mein Jesu, Ich muss Sterben 87 87 D)

Stricken, smitten, and afflicted, see him dying on the tree!

'Tis the Christ, by man rejected;

Yes, my soul, 'tis he, 'tis he!

'Tis the long-expected Prophet,

David's Son, yet David's Lord:

Proofs I see sufficient of it:

'Tis the true and faithful Word.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, as your disciple Peter confessed, we too believe that you are the Messiah of Israel and the Son of the living God. Keep us faithful in that confession and strengthen us in faith through the study of your Word. By the power of the Spirit, help us to be bold witnesses for you so that many others will come to know and worship you as Lord. Amen.

Were *you* there?

This Bible study in 6 sessions for Lent or any of the time focuses on the declarations made by the people who were there as witnesses of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. Each week will look at the statements made in Scripture by the crowd, Caiaphas, Pilate, Peter, the chief priests and the centurion at the cross, helping us to place ourselves at the scenes of Christ's final days and ponder what we would do if we were there. Each session includes Scripture readings, questions for discussion, prayers and suggested activities.