



Series Companion Term 4 2018



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Fulfilled: Luke 19-24

Welcome to your Term 4 series companion. Let me remind you of how to make the most of it throughout the term. One thing I'd encourage you to do is to keep this series companion tucked inside your Bible and bring them both along with you each Sunday. As you listen to the Bible talk, keep an eye on the questions in that week's study and take notes on the pages of the study. It'll help you to listen AND have the added bonus of meaning you're much better prepared to contribute well in your DNA group during the week.

This term you'll notice a completely new format to the series companion. The studies themselves are known as "Swedish Method" studies which some of you will be familiar with from a few years ago. These studies use a set of stock questions that work for any passage of the Bible. The questions stay the same each week but because the passage changes, so should your answers (if they don't you're doing something wrong!). You'll find a sample study on pages 4-5 to get you started.

But when we've used the Swedish Method in the past some people have found the questions haven't given enough direction to explore the passage properly. For this reason I've put in some hard yards to provide "chapter notes" before the study each week. I hope these provide sufficient guidance to make your Swedish experience even more of a blessing than a trip in a Volvo or up a fjord!



Pete Thompson
October 2018

How to be growing followers of Jesus as you study God's Word...

In community

It's good to study the Bible by yourself but it's even better to do it with friends. Bible study is best when it happens in the context of community. Bible study shouldn't be just an unrelated add-on to the rest of your busy life, it should be an essential part of an integrated whole—Christian friends doing what Christian friends do. There are two key ways we should be making use of God's word in community: "word to life" and "life to word".

Word to life

When we study the Bible together we're letting God set the agenda. That's very important! We listen to God speak in the Bible, we work hard to help each other understand exactly what he's saying, and then together we apply what God is saying to our lives in the confidence that our loving Creator and Redeemer knows what's best for us. The important thing to remember is that we actually need each other throughout this whole process. It's great to study the Bible together!

Life to word

The second crucial way that we should be making use of the Bible in community is in day-to-day conversation, starting with the everyday happenings of our lives and applying the gospel to those situations. The great thing is that the better we get at moving from "word to life", the better we'll get at moving from "life to word" and the more our communities will be shaped by the gospel of Jesus! So enjoy—make the most of it—and let's watch as God shapes us to be more and more like his glorious Son!



Sample study

Preparation Questions

Use these questions to help you work through the passage and discover what God is saying and how it applies to your life. Do this on your own so that you're ready to share your thoughts when you gather with others.

Read the chapter



BIG IDEA

- How would I summarise the central message of this passage?

Pay close attention to the logical flow of the passage. If it contains direct teaching (e.g. the NT letters), the most helpful tool in your kitbag is to follow the linking words (e.g. "therefore", "so", "but"). If your passage is more descriptive, the logic (and therefore the point) will be less explicit so you'll need to focus on the flow of the story to work it out. You'll also want to keep an eye out for significant themes which may be highlighted by repetition or by the use of metaphors or significant words or word families.



WINDOW

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about what God is like and what he's done?

The Bible is God's "special revelation". In it he reveals himself to us so that we can know him. So the Bible is like a WINDOW through which we can see the most glorious view ever beheld—a view of God himself. When we read the Bible we should be keeping the authors purpose in mind—to know him—rather than coming with our own agendas.



MIRROR

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about myself or my circumstances?

The Bible also acts like a MIRROR. As we read God's word and discover what he is like, we should also be looking to discover ourselves. A mirror allows us to see features and parts of ourselves that we wouldn't otherwise (and perhaps would rather not!) see. The Holy Spirit uses God's word to shape the way we think about ourselves and our circumstances. The Bible corrects our distorted views with the main purpose of helping us to relate rightly to God and our neighbour.



GOSPEL

- How does this passage relate to or contribute to my understanding of the gospel and what it means to live according to the gospel?

The Bible, like all good stories, has a shape to it. It has a focus. It has a hero. God's self-revelation is fulfilled in Jesus. So no matter what part of the Bible we're reading we'll only fully understand it when we grasp how it points us to Jesus and enlarges and deepens our understanding of the gospel. Some tools to help in discovering this dimension of a passage are the SALVATION HISTORY tool (asking "what role does this passage play in the grand story of the bible?"); the TYPOLOGY tool (asking "how is this person (or group or situation) a type (or anti-type) of Jesus?"); and the THEMES tool (asking "what gospel themes are central to this passage?"). This can also be a good time to think about personal application—i.e. If this is true about Jesus and his gospel, then what difference should it make to my life?



QUESTIONS

5. What questions has this passage raised for me that remain unanswered?

One of the key skills in Bible discovery is to be inquisitive. Asking questions will help you get the most out of any passage. Whenever you feel any mental discord reading a passage it's a sign that there's still more to discover, so dig in! Any questions that remain unanswered are worthy of group discussion. Such questions might be logical ("I just don't get how the whole passage fits together"); theological ("this doesn't seem to match with my understanding of what the Bible teaches elsewhere"); semantic (I'm not sure I really know how those words are being used); etc...



RESPONSE

6. How should I respond to this passage in my thoughts, attitudes & behavior?

This is perhaps the most important and most neglected aspect of Bible discovery. God has given us his word for a purpose—so that we can know him and be inwardly and then outwardly transformed by our relationship with him. The challenge is that we are insecure and resistant to the hard work of transformation. Because of our insecurity we're reluctant to admit to ourselves and admit to each other what needs to change. Because of our pride and laziness we'd rather deal with "general truths" that are easy to hold at arms length than let the truth come home. But the good news is we CAN change and community is the God-given context for growing followers of Jesus. You should spend more time discussing and praying through this question than any other.



SHARE

7. Who could I share all this with beyond my DNA group?

One of the big obstacles to growing as followers of Jesus is that we don't take our discoveries with us as we go about our everyday lives. And the best antidote to this problem is to be sharing our discoveries with others. Sharing with others is an awesome way of reinforcing our discoveries and driving them deeper down into our lived experience. In addition to the personal benefit, our discoveries have huge potential to deepen our relationships with our friends and to spur them on to be growing followers of Jesus too!



PRAY

Pray for one another in response to what you've discovered in God's word and what you've shared.

Prayer is an ESSENTIAL dimension of every aspect of DNA. Prayer transforms what would otherwise be introspective reflection (preparing on our own) or interpersonal dialogue (talking to each other) into something truly spiritual.

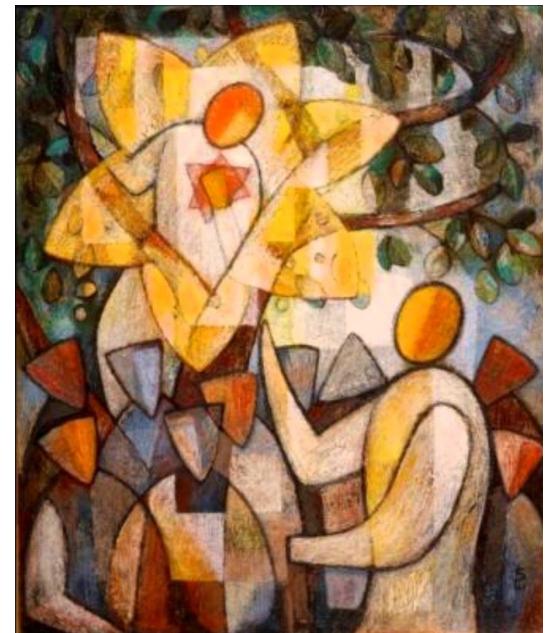
We will only "discover" the powerful truths of a passage if God opens our eyes to see. We will only "nurture" one another effectively if our discussion is shaped by the wisdom of the gospel. We will only "act" purposefully and powerfully in response to God's word if the Holy Spirit enables true heart change.

So make sure that prayer isn't a rushed activity at the end of your time together. Pray as you prepare. Pray at the beginning, during, AND at the end of your time together. Pray for yourselves and for each other throughout the week. Anyone should feel free to initiate prayer. Everyone should be encouraged to participate in prayer.

And one final piece of advice, don't fall into the trap of "sharing prayer points". It chews up valuable time and tends to put our concerns ahead of God's concerns. If its really important it will have come up already in response to God's word. And if it hasn't you can always just pray for it off the cuff—no point in everyone hearing it twice!

Luke 19 Chapter Notes

Chapter 19 begins with a story that ties in beautifully with the question asked by the perplexed disciples in 18:26 “who then can be saved?” and fulfils Jesus promise that “what is impossible with man is possible with God”. The story of Zacchaeus’ encounter with Jesus reveals that God can do the impossible - he can save anyone! Zacchaeus’ response to Jesus is the exact opposite of the rich ruler’s response - joy instead of sadness, release (handing over) instead of captivity (holding on), salvation instead of condemnation, the respected man of wealth on the outer, the filthy rich man welcomed as a son of Abraham. Jesus’ friendship with Zacchaeus and the scandal it causes (see v7) brings to mind another questionable friendship made in Jericho many years earlier when salvation came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab. Jericho, the entry point to the promised land, is a place where God does the impossible and the walls come tumbling down.



Verse 11 is very helpful and should guide the way we read the parable of the ten minas (a unit of currency). Jesus tells this parable because of his proximity to Jerusalem and because he wants to correct people’s expectations concerning what is about to happen. in other words, the parable is about Jesus’ departure and later return and what his followers should do in-between. Jesus, is the man of noble birth who is about to go to a distant country (heaven) to be appointed king and then to return. He entrusts his wealth to his servants giving them explicit instructions to “put this money to work”.

Verses 14-15a are a bit confusing and one of those details that to us may seem unnecessary (the parable would flow quite easily without them). But given the purpose of the parable is to instruct the people on what is (and isn’t) about to happen (remember v11), the significance of verses 14-15a is easy to appreciate. Jesus wants the people to understand that his rejection by the Jewish leaders, their refusal to acknowledge him as their king, and even their handing him over

to death, doesn't change the fact that he is in fact their king. As we've seen many times in Luke's gospel, the author's primary concern is to assure his readers of all that HAS BEEN fulfilled.

The focus of the parable is on what the king expects from his servants while he's gone. Having made his expectations clear before his departure, he calls his servants to account upon his return. The first servant has been both faithful and fruitful. He has used the king's wealth wisely and worked hard to gain a tenfold increase in its value. The king commends him and rewards him not with the relatively small responsibility of more money but with the far greater role of ruling over ten cities. In a similar way, the second servant who managed to achieve a fivefold increase with his mina receives a comparable reward. This shows that the king is a fair ruler. It's also worth noting that the first two servants are both suitably humble about their achievements, not claiming that they've achieved anything themselves but instead saying "your mina has earned...". They understand that the original mina was entrusted to them for this very purpose and they have only done their job (see 17:10).

The third servant stands in stark contrast to the first two. Not only has he failed to achieve a return with the mina entrusted to him, he didn't even try! He didn't obey his master's clear instruction to "put this money to work". In verse 21 he explains that he was driven by fear, believing that his master was a hard man, maybe even a greedy man. But this picture of the master doesn't match with what we've seen so far in the parable and the servant's words reveal more about his own cowardice than his master's character. In using the servant's words against him, the master is not agreeing to the false characterisation but pointing out that even if it were true, the servant has still failed to act wisely. The master's controversial decision to take back the one mina and give it to the first servant is explained in verse 26 – the master has a greater concern than "fairness", he is looking for a return, he is building a kingdom, and he apportions his wealth accordingly.



The final verse of the parable is one that most of us probably find very confronting and seems perhaps even to confirm the opinion of the third servant that the king is a hard man. Do his enemies really deserve death?! If we feel this way, then it's likely that we need to shift our thinking about two things – the seriousness of rebellion against the king, and the right of the king to judge his subjects – even to claim their lives. If Jesus were merely a human king his rights would be debatable. But Jesus is the great king of all the world and to question his rights over us is itself a sign of our reluctance to revere, serve and worship him as we should.

In the second half of the chapter, Jesus finally reaches his destination – Jerusalem. For ten long chapters he has been marching resolutely to the city of David to make his claim of kingship over it (see 9:51). Jesus' entry to Jerusalem is made up of three striking features: 1) his mastery of the situation as seen in his knowledge about the colt; 2) the fulfilment of multiple scriptures identifying Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah (e.g. Zechariah 9:9, Psalm 118:26 & Isaiah 55:12); and 3) the contrast between the crowd's joyful welcome and Jesus' tears and prophecy of judgment. It is clear from Jesus' actions in the temple and the Jewish leaders' response that there's about to be a showdown. One way or another, judgment is about to fall.

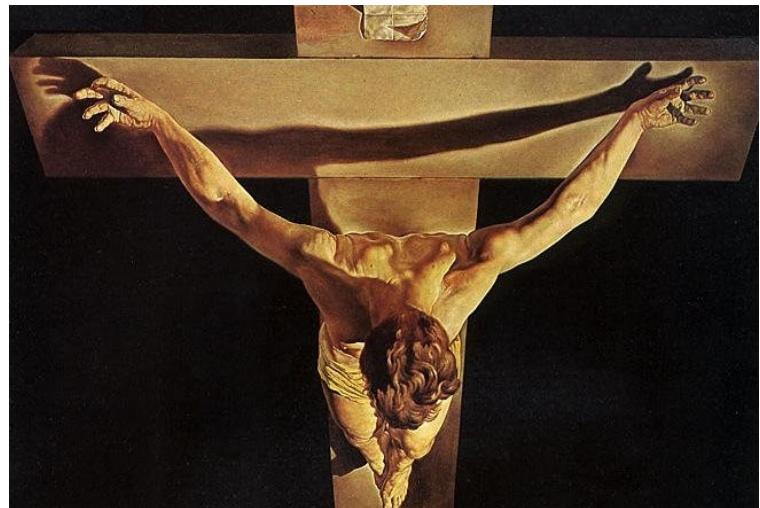
UNIFYING THEMES

As Jesus approaches and enters Jerusalem, the themes of salvation and judgment are tightly interwoven. On the one hand, Jesus restores a turncoat tax collector and foreshadows the heavenly reward of his righteous servants, but on the other hand he violently ejects profiteers from the temple and vividly depicts Jerusalem's coming demise for failing to recognise and welcome him as her Saviour. All of this foreshadows what is about to happen on the cross – God's chosen instrument of simultaneous salvation and judgment. Jesus' long journey to Jerusalem will only be complete when he hangs limply from the cross, his final breath spent, crowned with thorns, adorned with scars, praised with insults & mockery – that he might take the judgment for all those outrageous sins and indeed for the sins of the world.

A SONG FOR REFLECTION

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,

*In my place condemned he stood;
Sealed my pardon with his blood.
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*



1

The King's Welcome

Preparation Questions

Use these questions to help you work through the passage and discover what God is saying and how it applies to your life. Do this on your own so that you're ready to share your thoughts when you gather with others.

Read Luke 19



BIG IDEA

- How would I summarise the central message of this passage?



WINDOW

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about what God is like and what he's done?



MIRROR

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about myself or my circumstances?



GOSPEL

- How does this passage relate to or contribute to my understanding of the gospel and what it means to live according to the gospel?



QUESTIONS

- What questions has this passage raised for me that remain unanswered?



RESPONSE

- How should I respond to this passage in my thoughts, attitudes & behavior?



SHARE

- Who could I share all this with beyond my DNA group?



PRAY

Pray for one another in response to what you've discovered in God's word and what you've shared.

Luke 20 Chapter Notes

Chapter 19 ended with the ominous news that the Jewish leaders were trying to kill Jesus but were being thwarted by his popularity and the public nature of his ministry. It seems from the comment in 19:48 that they were actually considering cold-blooded murder! But at the start of chapter 20 they decide to take a less hands-on approach to Jesus' death and begin a campaign to catch him in a trap made of his own words in the hope that they might be able to get rid of him by more "legal" means (see for example 20:20). For the next two chapters all the action unfolds at the temple and is clearly bracketed by Luke between 19:47-48 and 21:37-38.

In chapter 20 Jesus answers a series of questions posed by various groups of leaders but all with the same purpose – to trick him into saying something that will give them a reason to have him killed. But Jesus, even though his life is in serious danger, is far from daunted. In fact, every time a new question is asked Jesus fends it off and then goes on the attack against his would-be accusers.

The first question is a combined effort of three groups: the chief priests, teachers of the law (a.k.a scribes), and the elders, and concerns the source of Jesus' authority. It's hard to tell whether "these things" the leaders refer to in their question include the initial driving out of the sellers in 19:46 or only the content of his teaching referred to in 20:1. There's no doubt that both were displays of Jesus' authority and it seems best to have them both in view. It is also hard to tell from the Jewish leaders' question what their own view was about the source of Jesus' authority. Do they believe that Jesus is unable to do "these things" under his own authority, or are they trying to get him to publicly declare that he does these things under his own authority and thus give them cause to accuse him of blasphemy?

Either way, their question about Jesus' authority is a dangerous one. If Jesus were to answer it he would face a similar dilemma to the one his counter-question creates for the leaders. So seeing the trap, Jesus turns the question around and manages to remove himself from the spotlight, making John his crash-test dummy. This is a very clever move by Jesus because John's role was to point to Jesus as the Messiah. So Jesus is really asking them "was John's prophecy *about me* valid?" After considering their options in verses 5-6, they can only plead ignorance in verse 7 and Jesus escapes their trap. Jesus: 1, religious leaders: 0!

But Jesus doesn't just escape, wipe his brow (phew!) and lie low. He takes the attack right up to his adversaries! Jesus' parable of the tenants is a very direct indictment of

Israel's religious leaders – both past and present. In the past, God sent servants (prophets) to lead Israel to repentance and faith but time and again they refused to listen or obey. The current religious leaders are even worse. Verse 14 suggests that they actually recognise Jesus as God's Son but refuse to acknowledge him or bow to his authority. In fact, they do the opposite - throwing him out of the vineyard and killing him in order that they might rule in his place. The compare & contrast with the fall and fallout of Genesis 3 is probably intentional. Sin is always about trying to take God's place.

No-one who hears the parable is in any doubt what it's about. The people are distressed at the idea that the owner of the vineyard (God) will transfer their inheritance as God's people to others. "God forbid!" they say. But Jesus replies "On the contrary, God *foretold!*" and quotes from Psalm 118 to make his case. As in the parable, the inheritance rightly belongs to the son & heir. Having a share in the inheritance is only possible for those who have a share in the heir. By rejecting the "cornerstone", the leaders are bringing judgment down on themselves because the building's foundations are compromised and the house (or temple?) can no longer stand. The leaders are offended and are only prevented from inadvertently fulfilling the parable there-and-then by their fear of what the people would do to them.

The religious leaders' next question is asked by undercover spies but Jesus isn't duped by their show of sincerity or fooled by their flattery. Again he spots the trap and employs the strategy of responding to their question with a question of his own. By drawing their attention to Caesar's image on the coin, Jesus is making a very rich point. The owner of property would often mark it with his image. Since the coin bore the mark of Caesar, if Caesar wanted it back, that was his right. In the same way, anything that bears the image of God belongs to God and if he wants it back, then that is his right too. And there is only one thing that bears the image of God – hence the spies stunned silence.

The final group who challenge Jesus with a question are the Sadducees. Their question about the resurrection seems designed to score them points over their rivals the Pharisees but also to discredit Jesus' teaching and authority. While perhaps a less dangerous question than the previous two, in a situation of such heightened tensions, any false step taken or weakness shown by Jesus could prove disastrous. Luke's mention of the Sadducees non-belief in resurrection is all that we need to understand the nature of their question. They are expecting that Jesus will have to admit that in light of their question resurrection makes no sense.

This time, Jesus chooses to answer the question more directly. His answer is brilliant and two features stand out: 1) the clarity with which Jesus discerns and then

undermines the Sadducees false assumptions about resurrection life; and 2) the way he grounds his argument in terms that would make sense to the Sadducees and leave no room for counter-arguments.

1) It's clear from the Sadducees' question that they assume life after the resurrection will be the same as life before it and the success of their question/argument hangs on this assumption. Jesus very quickly undermines the assumption and explains that the marriage of men and women is an aspect of life that will be transformed at the resurrection. The logical connection between verses 35 & 36 is that the purpose of marriage is to form a family, including having children. But in heaven, where no-one will die and we will all belong to God's family, neither children nor families will exist and so marriage, at least marriage between a man and a woman, will also become redundant. Jesus' reference to the resurrected being "like the angels" addresses another of the Sadducees "unbeliefs" and challenges them to reconsider their whole theological system (the Sadducees tended to reject many of the more "spiritual" and less "rational" aspects of Judaism).

2) Jesus' answer also takes another of the Sadducees' idiosyncratic beliefs into account – the idea that only the Torah (the first five books of the Bible, sometimes called "the books of Moses") spoke with the full authority of God. This is why Jesus chooses to back up his teaching about the resurrection from the account of the burning bush in Exodus 3:6. At first it seems like a funny passage to choose (compared to more obvious OT passages like Daniel 12:2, Job 19:25 or Psalm 16:10), but in light of Jesus' audience it's the perfect choice. Jesus makes the point that in calling himself "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac & and the God of Jacob" (which in the Old Testament is a way of saying "the God who keeps his promises"), God is inferring that those who have died are somehow alive, and will one day fully participate among God's people in God's place under God's rule – a promise that will only be fulfilled in the resurrection age.

Having answered the Sadducees question about the resurrection, Jesus now asks a question of his own. Jesus' question is about something that concerned all Jews – who is the Messiah? The commonly agreed answer to that question was that the Messiah would be a son of David who would restore the kingdom of Israel to its former glory under David & Solomon. In quoting David from Psalm 110, Jesus' point is not that the Messiah *isn't* descended from David but that he is *more than* a descendant of David. As the parable of the tenants makes clear, Jesus is the Son of God (20:13). Jesus is fully aware that many believe he is the Messiah (see for example 18:38 and 19:38) but he is also aware that their concept of Messiah is too small – it focusses on too small a king and too small kingdom.

As Jesus moves on to condemn the false leadership of the teachers of the law in 20:45-21:4 it is likely that he still has Psalm 110:1 in mind. Because of their hypocrisy and abuse of power, the teachers of the law are among the enemies that will be placed under the Messiah's feet. Jesus' observation about the widow's gift is mostly a continuation of his criticism of the teachers of the law who "devour widow's houses". In other words, the reason that the widow has so little to give is that the leaders have neglected their responsibility to look after her. In addition to this, the widow stands as a positive example of someone who is "giving to God what is God's" (20:25), rather than a token contribution given only for show.



UNIFYING THEMES

Chapter 20 is all about Jesus' identity as the Messiah who is also the son of God. It is also about the opposition that Jesus faces from the religious leaders who reject his authority and will try to undermine it any way they can. Their goal is clear: 'they hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor' (20:20). But Jesus is more than a match for his enemies, outwitting them at every turn and showing that he is a far better leader for God's people.

A SONG FOR REFLECTION

*Now Jesus sat by the offering plate as people brought their money
The rich they filled the collection plate, the widow gave her penny
But she's out-given all the rest, her gift was all that she possessed
Not what you give but what you keep is what the King is counting*

2

Q & A

Preparation Questions

Use these questions to help you work through the passage and discover what God is saying and how it applies to your life. Do this on your own so that you're ready to share your thoughts when you gather with others.

Read Luke 20



BIG IDEA

- How would I summarise the central message of this passage?



WINDOW

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MIRROR

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about myself or my circumstances?



GOSPEL

- How does this passage relate to or contribute to my understanding of the gospel and what it means to live according to the gospel?



QUESTIONS

5. What questions has this passage raised for me that remain unanswered?



RESPONSE

6. How should I respond to this passage in my thoughts, attitudes & behavior?



SHARE

7. Who could I share all this with beyond my DNA group?



PRAY

Pray for one another in response to what you've discovered in God's word and what you've shared.

Luke 21 Chapter Notes

Chapter 21 is made up of Jesus' prophecies about coming judgment and has some clear similarities to 17:20-37. These include:

- warnings to not be deceived about false Messiahs
- a clarification about the delay of the final judgment
- description of great signs preceding and accompanying God's judgment
- warnings against being distracted and taken unawares

But chapter 21 also contains some new material not covered in chapter 17:

- the temple location which prompts the disciples comments & Jesus' teaching
- details about the persecution and testimony of believers
- the focus on the destruction of Jerusalem



In light of these comparisons, it seems likely that Jesus has two distinct audiences in view in this chapter – both his current generation for whom the teaching about Jerusalem is especially relevant, and future generations who need to be alert for Jesus' return and the final judgment.

Although the two judgments are somewhat interwoven in the chapter, it's possible to discern the following order of events:

1. False Messiahs & false prophets will come (verse 8)
2. A time of betrayal, persecution & martyrdom for believers ("But before all this" – verse 12)
3. Jerusalem under siege, defeated and its people dispersed (verses 20-24)
4. A time of relative peace during which complacency will become the chief danger (verses 34-36)
5. A time of political, climatological & cosmic turmoil (verses 10-11 & 25-26)
6. Jesus' return (verses 27-31)

Out of these 6 developments/movements the hardest to nail down in terms of timing is number 5. Verses 10 & 11 could be related to the fall of Jerusalem but it's clear that in verse 12 – "but before all this..." the eschatological (big theological word for "end times") clock gets wound back. This seems to make it most likely that the signs described in verses 25-26 are picking up on the same events as those in verses 10-11.

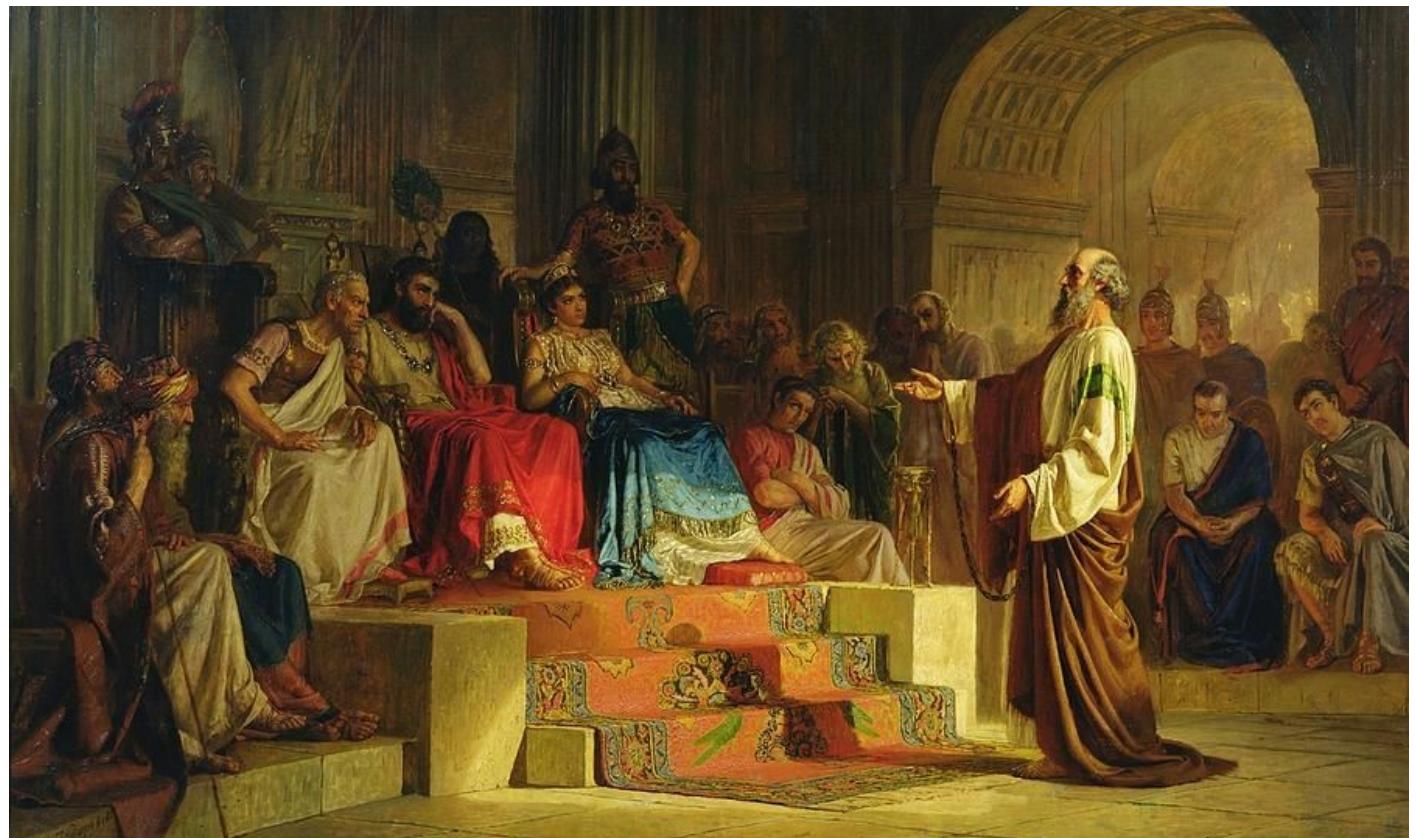
Jesus' words in verse 32 pose another difficulty for our understanding of the passage. The obvious problem with a straightforward reading is that it would mean that time has proven Jesus wrong! Many generations have passed and yet all these things have not been fulfilled – some have, but not all. So is there a different but still valid way to understand what Jesus means? The key variables in the saying are "this generation" and "these things". To what could these phrases refer? Whilst it would be convenient to limit the scope of "these things" to the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem, the fact that Jesus clearly states "ALL these things" and the following reference to "heaven and earth will pass away" make this unlikely. "These things" includes BOTH the judgment on Jerusalem and the final judgment when Jesus returns and all the signs that will accompany both.

So that leaves us to consider the meaning of "this generation". Again, the obvious meaning is the generation of Jesus and the disciples he is talking to, but the theological implications of Jesus being wrong are too difficult to tolerate and in any case other explanations are available. There are two main alternatives. The first is that Jesus is combining the judgment on Jerusalem and the final judgment and saying that they are one drawn out event - "the times of

the Gentiles" (verse 24) – and that the beginning of this event guarantees the end. On this reading, the generation that experiences the fall of Jerusalem in some sense also experiences "all these things". The second possible option is that although Jesus does say "THIS generation" he is referring to a future generation and making the point that once the final judgment (along with all its preliminary signs) begins it will be over swiftly – within a generation. Although this may at first seem like an odd use of the phrase "this generation", it's an interpretation that actually follows on quite well from verses 25-31 and is therefore the most likely.

One of the dangers of a passage like this is that it can create a lot of speculation about when Jesus will return and unhelpful guessing about whether current day wars and natural disasters are signs of the end. I say unhelpful because Jesus is very clear in this passage and others that our focus should be on fruitful, expectant waiting rather than fruitless, speculative predictions. Verses 12-19 & 34-36 are a case in point.

Verses 12-19 clearly apply in the first instance to the 12 disciples and to those who would join them in the early years of the church. Jesus' warning that "they will hand you over to synagogues" and the following description of Jerusalem's fall have particular relevance for the first century. Yet throughout history, wherever the gospel has gone out it has met opposition and often persecution



at the hands of those who are offended or threatened by its message. And so these verses are full of comfort and encouragement for people who find themselves in such dire circumstances. Jesus knew what his followers would face and assured them that they would have all that they need – the words, the wisdom, the courage – to testify to Jesus, to persevere through suffering and in the end to prevail. The assurance that some will be put to death and yet not a hair will perish is a beautiful reminder that God doesn't save us *out of* our trials, he saves us *through* them.

But it is the warning of verses 34-36 that probably have even greater relevance for those of us following Jesus in 21st Century Australia. Complacency, distraction and worldly concerns may well be more powerful enemies than the full frontal assault of persecution. Note that just as he does in the parable of the sower/seed/soils (Luke 8:14) Jesus warns against *both* the temptations and terrors of the world which have the power to undermine our trust in Jesus to the extent of making us unprepared for his return and unable to stand before him when he returns as Judge. I'm convinced that this is a warning that most of us don't take anywhere seriously enough!

UNIFYING THEMES

Chapter 21 is all about being ready – both for Jesus' return and for all the trials and temptations that will beset his followers while we wait. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd who is about to lay down his life for his sheep but he does even more than that – he warns his flock about all the dangers coming their way and by his comforting, encouraging and cautionary words prepares them to escape and endure until he returns.

A SONG FOR REFLECTION

So I will rise, and in the air

Behold the glory of the King

I will not fear to meet him there

I know my life is hid with him

3

Two Endings

Preparation Questions

Use these questions to help you work through the passage and discover what God is saying and how it applies to your life. Do this on your own so that you're ready to share your thoughts when you gather with others.

Read Luke 21



BIG IDEA

- How would I summarise the central message of this passage?



WINDOW

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about what God is like and what he's done?



MIRROR

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about myself or my circumstances?



GOSPEL

- How does this passage relate to or contribute to my understanding of the gospel and what it means to live according to the gospel?



QUESTIONS

5. What questions has this passage raised for me that remain unanswered?



RESPONSE

6. How should I respond to this passage in my thoughts, attitudes & behavior?



SHARE

7. Who could I share all this with beyond my DNA group?



PRAY

Pray for one another in response to what you've discovered in God's word and what you've shared.

Luke 22 Chapter Notes

Apart from the first 6 verses, all the events of Chapter 22 take place in a single night – the final night of Jesus’ obedient, courageous mortal life. This deliberate slowing down of the story (which continues in chapter 23) is Luke’s way of highlighting the significance of these events. The chapter begins by relating events that occurred during the time of Jesus’ ministry at the temple which was outlined at the end of the previous chapter. While Jesus was teaching in the temple, one of his twelve disciples and closest companions, Judas Iscariot, influenced by Satan himself, decided to commit the ultimate betrayal.

While conflict with the religious leaders and their desire to have Jesus killed has been a major theme of the story, up until now they have been unable to find a way. It seems that human enemies alone are not sufficient to get the job done. So Satan, who has not appeared in the story since way back in chapter 4, chooses this “opportune time” (4:13) to re-enter the fray. It’s tempting to see Judas as a mere puppet responding to Satan’s will and some have even suggested he is worthy of sympathy. But the fact that both Luke and Jesus himself refer to Judas as a traitor (6:16 & 22:48) leaves no doubt that he was complicit in Jesus’ betrayal.

While motives are always complex and difficult to determine, it seems likely from 22:4 that Judas was at least in part driven by greed and may well be the ultimate example of Jesus’ warning in 16:13 – “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” This motive finds strong support in the combination of accounts in Mark 14:1-11 & John 12:1-11 describing Judas’ reaction to Jesus being anointed with expensive perfume by Mary at Bethany only a few days earlier.

Given Jesus’ pattern of arriving at the temple to begin teaching to large crowds early in the morning, it was clear that the opportune time for Judas to hand Jesus over, “when no crowd was present” (22:6), would be at night on the Mount of Olives (see 21:37-38).

Jesus’ instructions to his disciples about preparations for the Passover meal in verses 7-13 bear a striking resemblance to his earlier entry into Jerusalem (19:28-34). In both cases two disciples are sent ahead with very specific instructions about what they will find and what they are to do. Both scenes also involve other characters who somehow act just as Jesus says they will. While it’s possible that Jesus had arranged

both events in advance, to believe that would be to miss the point. Luke is subtly and yet powerfully showing that even though all the forces of evil – both human and spiritual – are conspiring against Jesus to bring about his death, Jesus is the maestro in complete control of all that is unfolding. Whatever happens, it will only happen according to Jesus' plan.

The scene that unfolds around the table in the upper room is full of both theological significance and incredible tenderness. Theologically, Jesus is instituting a new covenant – an agreement which is nothing less than the foundation of a new people of God. Just as the first Passover meal had featured a lamb whose blood was smeared on the door frames of the Israelite houses throughout Egypt to protect their firstborn sons from the wrath of God's destroying angel and secure their rescue from the harsh slavery of Pharaoh, so this new Passover retains all the same features and yet transcends each one of them. Here, Jesus, the firstborn son and lamb of God, offers himself – body & blood – scarred and smeared on the cross in the place of his disciples, to bear God's wrath against their sin and so to graciously, freely and willingly secure their forgiveness, redemption and eternal freedom. In familiar yet revolutionary terms, Jesus is describing a breathtaking act of ultimate significance for the entire world.

And yet the scene is also incredibly intimate. Jesus is about to face the most unimaginable trial and yet he isn't thinking of himself, he's full of tender concern for his friends. But then again, that makes complete sense because the trial itself is the ultimate expression of his love, and these twelve (yes, even that one) are the ones he loves the most. Jesus' concern for his friends is made all the more poignant by the jarring note of discord and self-interest that enters with the knowledge that one who is present will betray him and by the ensuing tussle between the disciples about which of them is the greatest in verses 21-24. But Jesus doesn't respond to the disciples' squabbling with rebuke, instead he gently corrects them and redirects their focus by presenting his loving service as the model of true greatness and even commending them for their faithfulness to him: "You are those who have stood by me in my trials" (verse 28). How bitter-sweet it must have been for Jesus to say those words knowing that none of them, not even Peter (verses 31-34), would be able to stand by him in the hours to come.

Jesus' instructions in verses 35-38 are also part of his concern for his friends' welfare. While he has been with them he has been able to provide for them and protect them. Jesus knows that things are about to get ugly – for himself: "what is written about me is reaching its fulfilment"; and also for them: "he was numbered with the transgressors". He wants them to be prepared for any situation!

As Jesus and the twelve head out to the Mount of Olives (the site of the garden of Gethsemane), their action is both routine – “as usual” (verses 39) – and full of foreboding. Whereas previously they had gone there to sleep, this time they are armed men marching into battle. The fact that no one is there when they arrive doesn’t mean the battle hasn’t begun. The battle begins immediately as Jesus commands his troops to pray against their enemy and Jesus himself leads the struggle. The words of Jesus’ prayer clearly express the intensity of the battle. Jesus desperately wants to avoid drinking from the cup of God’s wrath. He wants out. But he wants to do his Father’s will even more. The Father is full of compassion for his anguished Son and responds to his prayer by sending an angel to strengthen him. The description of Jesus’ sweat being like drops of blood falling to the ground reinforces the image of battle. But Jesus is the only one fighting. The disciples, “exhausted from sorrow”, have been unable to stand by Jesus in his final trial.

All of a sudden, the relative quiet of the hillside olive grove is broken by the intrusion of a crowd of armed men led by Judas who has come to earn his thirty pieces of silver – the compensation decreed for the accidental death of a slave (see Exodus 21:32 & Matthew 26:15). The irony is thick: Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God is accorded the value of a dead slave and his death is anything but accidental. And then the kiss. It’s hard to fathom what Judas was thinking. We know from the accounts of Matthew & Mark that the kiss was a pre-determined signal so that in the darkness the mob would know who to arrest (Matthew 26:48). But the signal didn’t have to be a kiss. Jesus’ question of Judas: “are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”, expresses both his heartbreak at Judas’ treachery and his incredulity at Judas’ brazen cynicism.

The disciples respond to the threat posed by the crowd by bravely drawing their two swords, one of them (Peter according to John’s account) strikes out without Jesus’ permission but Jesus immediately calls a stop to the violence and heals his enemy’s wound. It seems that Jesus had earlier encouraged his disciples to arm themselves for their own protection, not his. Jesus fully intends to go willingly with his cowardly captors. His comment that “darkness reigns” refers to their cowardice in not arresting him during the daytime, not their control of the situation, but is probably also a reference to the deep moral darkness of this significant moment in salvation history.

The chapter concludes with Jesus being taken to the house of the High Priest to be questioned by the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Ruling Council which had religious but not civil authority). In the last hours before sunrise as Jesus waits for the Sanhedrin to convene, the spotlight falls directly on Peter and the dwindling flame of his courage

and commitment to Jesus. Peter who had so confidently declared his complete devotion to Jesus in the upper room and backed his words with action in the garden, is overwhelmed by the darkness and hopelessness of the situation. If Jesus has given in (as he seems to have), what is the point of continuing to fight? If all is now lost, what is the value of even being associated with Jesus? And so not once, not twice, but three times, Peter disowns Jesus. It's so easy to rationalise and excuse unfaithfulness isn't it? Until the rooster crows, and it dawns on you what you've done. And the one you love, the one who has always loved you, the one who even in that moment is loving you to the very end, looks you straight in the eye. And the question for us is, how easily do we disown Jesus? How reluctant are we to be known as his disciples? How quiet are we when we could speak up in his defence? How fearful are we to face even the slightest negative consequence of being numbered, along with him, among the transgressors? The shame should bring us to bitter tears.

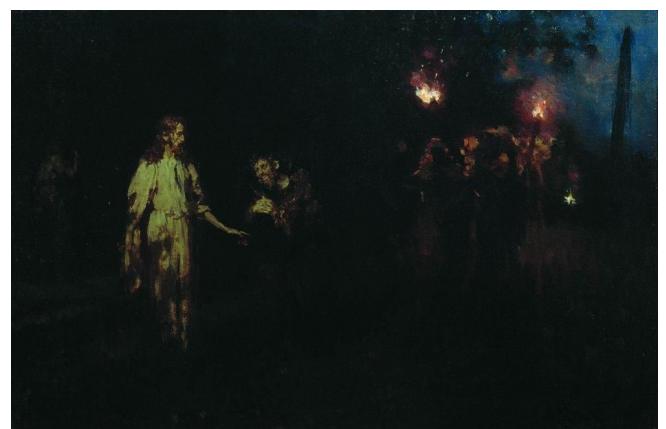
With Jesus now completely on his own he is set upon, both verbally and physically by the guards and then, once they have assembled, he is brought before the Sanhedrin. Their questions are direct: "Are you the Messiah? Are you the Son of God?" They want Jesus to indict himself by making what they have already decided would be blasphemous claims. Jesus picks up on their prejudice in his first answer when he says "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer." They are not interested in investigating or verifying the truth or falsehood of his claim, they have already decided that he is guilty.

UNIFYING THEMES

This chapter is full of incredible irony and pathos as all of human history draws painstakingly and inexorably to the moment that is both its nadir and its climax. Just as he has predicted many times in earlier chapters, Jesus is betrayed, arrested, mocked, beaten and accused. Throughout it all his love for his all-too-human disciples is on display.

A SONG FOR REFLECTION

*Consider Christ, that he could trust his Father,
In the garden of Gethsemane
Though full of dread and fearful of the
anguish;*



4

Darkness Reigns

Preparation Questions

Use these questions to help you work through the passage and discover what God is saying and how it applies to your life. Do this on your own so that you're ready to share your thoughts when you gather with others.

Read Luke 22



BIG IDEA

- How would I summarise the central message of this passage?



WINDOW

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about what God is like and what he's done?



MIRROR

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about myself or my circumstances?



GOSPEL

- How does this passage relate to or contribute to my understanding of the gospel and what it means to live according to the gospel?



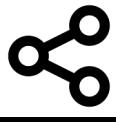
QUESTIONS

5. What questions has this passage raised for me that remain unanswered?



RESPONSE

6. How should I respond to this passage in my thoughts, attitudes & behavior?



SHARE

7. Who could I share all this with beyond my DNA group?



PRAY

Pray for one another in response to what you've discovered in God's word and what you've shared.

Luke 23 Chapter Notes

Luke 23 tells the tale of Jesus' trial before Pilate and Herod (& Pilate again) and his subsequent crucifixion, death and burial. It is a bleak chapter full of noise and chaos and characterised by a pervasive sense of Jesus' complete desertion. He stands alone before his accusers, there is no one to speak in his defence, and the little support or acknowledgment he receives is from the weak, the powerless and the condemned. Or in the cases of the Centurion and Joseph of Arimathea: too little too late.

The chapter begins with the Sanhedrin, having quickly reached their foregone conclusion of Jesus' guilt on religious grounds, leading him off and presenting him to Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, in order to have him convicted of a crime punishable by death. This goal, however, is a difficult one for them to achieve because Pilate & Herod only have jurisdiction over crimes that violate Roman law. This explains the thrust of the Jewish leaders' accusations in verses 2 & 5 and also explains Pilate & Herod's refusal to find Jesus guilty and their reluctance to have him punished. Three times, in verses 4, 14 & 22, Pilate declares that he finds no grounds for the charges brought against Jesus and in verse 15 he concludes that Herod agrees with his judgment.

One of the main features of the trial is Pilate's obvious desire to have Jesus released, or at least not to be the one who declares him guilty. From Luke's account it's hard to be sure of Pilate's motives but it could be as simple as not wanting to put an innocent man to death and perhaps some fear at the personal consequences of doing so (see Matthew 27:19-24). But whatever is behind Pilate's desire to have Jesus released, it is outweighed by his desire to avoid a riot that such a decision might cause. "With loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided to grant their demand." (verse 23). Ultimately Pilate acts out of self-interest, albeit under duress, and "surrenders Jesus to their will."

A second feature, or perhaps "non-feature", of the trial is how little Jesus says and does or at least how little his words and actions feature in Luke's account. From the moment that Jesus hands himself over in the garden he becomes a very passive figure in Luke's portrayal of events. This is not to say that Jesus is in any sense weak or powerless, but rather that in the garden he actively surrendered his will to his Father and then surrendered his fate into the hands of his enemies. There is an evil momentum building throughout the chapter and Jesus allows himself to be caught

up in its surging flow because he knows that somehow behind it and through it all his Father is at work and his will is being done.

At some point on the road to the place called the Skull (“Golgotha” in Aramaic) which was just outside Jerusalem’s city walls, the soldiers take Jesus’ cross from his shoulders and a man called Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry it behind him. At one level, Simon simply seems to have been in the wrong place at the wrong time! But at another level it seems likely that Luke had a very good reason to include this detail in his account. Twice previously, in 9:23 & 14:27, Jesus says that discipleship must include taking up one’s cross and following him. And yet here, at the very moment when all Jesus’ disciples have fallen by the wayside and no one is willing to carry their cross and follow him, a new “disciple” appears, virtually out of nowhere. Luke’s precise intention in making this connection is unclear (an indictment on the twelve? a note of hope for the future?) but the specific mention that Simon carried the cross “behind Jesus” is too much of a coincidence to be unintentional for an author as careful and clever as Luke.

But Simon wasn’t the only one following Jesus. A large crowd including women who mourned for him also followed. Jesus’ words to these “daughters of Jerusalem” are his first significant utterance since his arrest and they indicate that the control and concern he had displayed earlier in the upper room and in the garden have not deserted him. Jesus explains that his death, though itself an expression of God’s judgment, will also result in a more permanent judgment against the nation whose leaders have rejected him. This prophecy and lament for Jerusalem is a restatement of 21:20-24, made all the more dramatic by its proximity to Jesus’ crucifixion.

Also travelling the road out of the city with Jesus were two other “dead men walking”. Luke rolls the brief description of the actual act of Jesus’ crucifixion in with that of the criminals to accentuate his humiliation. He is indeed, as Isaiah prophesied, “numbered with the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12). Jesus’ humiliation is reinforced by the stream of insults, taunts and mockery that are hurled at him from every side in verses 35-39. Rulers sneer, soldiers mock, a sign above Jesus’ thorn-crowned head scornfully declares him “King of the Jews”, and one of the criminals hurls insults at him. The repeated taunt for Jesus to save himself if he is the Messiah/ King of the Jews is unintended irony on an epic scale. The very reason that Jesus doesn’t save himself is because he is the Messiah. The criminal’s added appeal “and us”, though facetious, is exactly what Jesus is doing – saving his people – but doing it by *not* saving himself.

In contrast to all this ugly irony and misunderstanding, Jesus’ interchange with the second criminal is breathtakingly, heartbreakingly beautiful. In the face of his

imminent and deserved death, this man fears God because he understands that death's sting is in God's righteous judgment of his sin. Somehow, whether by word of mouth, intuition or some other means, he also knows that Jesus is an innocent man. More than this, he grasps that if Jesus "has done nothing wrong", then maybe he is indeed who he claims to be – the Messiah, the King of the Jews. And finally, if Jesus is the Messiah, God's promised King, and God's promises never fail, then maybe, just maybe, Jesus can answer this criminal's dying plea: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom". And that's how salvation happens, isn't it. A sinner throws himself on the mercy of a sovereign saviour in faith that God's power and gracious love are sufficient to cover the multitude of his sins. And Jesus is both willing and able: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The three hours of unnatural darkness that immediately precede Jesus' death are reminiscent of the 9th plague's three days of darkness recorded in Exodus 10. The significance of this is of course that the 9th plague was followed by the 10th – the plague on the firstborn, the event of simultaneous salvation and judgment that became known as The Passover and that Jesus had just celebrated with his disciples only hours before. The timing is incredible. The tearing of the temple curtain is equally significant in its symbolism. It's unclear whether it was the inner curtain which separated the inner court from the holy of holies, or the outer curtain which separated the inner and outer courts that was torn. Given that the symbolism of the inner curtain being torn seems to fit better with Jesus' death and what it achieved, it is the more likely option. Jesus' death removes the barrier/curtain between God and man caused by sin and opens the way to a restored relationship. It is also the case that in his death Jesus makes the temple no longer necessary as either a place where sacrifices are made or where God can meet with his people.

With his work finished, complete with accompanying signs and symbols, Jesus summons a final burst of energy and with a loud voice and perfect faith relinquishes his spirit into his Father's hands and breathes his final breath. Luke then describes a variety of reactions to the manner of Jesus' death and the signs that surrounded it. The Centurion agrees with the second criminal that Jesus was a righteous man, innocent and therefore unjustly killed. This must have been a terrible realisation for the Centurion who had supervised Jesus crucifixion! The main body of the crowd are also distressed but it is not clear exactly how much they have understood of the events they've just witnessed. What is clear from the beating of their breasts is that there is at least a general sense of sorrow and possibly regret at what has taken place and any part they had in it. The final group mentioned are the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and are described as standing at a distance, watching. This description seems insignificant at first but this is far from the case because the

women's later testimony concerning what they saw was extremely important for the verification of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. In any case, their relative inactivity is balanced by the description of their surveillance and preparations in verses 55-56.

The final scene of the chapter recounts the details of Jesus' burial by a man named Joseph. In a couple of short verses Luke provides a helpful sketch of Joseph's background, standing, character and theological convictions. The portrait is of a considerate, courageous and trustworthy man. Matthew supplies a few extra details including that Joseph had actually become a disciple of Jesus, that the tomb in which he laid him was Joseph's own tomb, and that another member of the Council, Nicodemus, had helped Joseph to place Jesus' body in the tomb. All this would have had to be done fairly quickly because there were only 2-3 hours between Jesus' death and the beginning of the Sabbath at sundown.



UNIFYING THEMES

This chapter establishes Jesus' innocence, the guilt of his Jewish accusers and the complicity of his Roman judges. These facts are far more than forensic evidence or historical detail however – they have deep theological significance. Jesus, the innocent Messiah and Son of God, died on the cross to pay the required ransom and redeem guilty sinners from slavery to sin and from the wrath of God. This salvation is free to all who seek his mercy and call on his name no matter who they are or what they've done: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Truly I tell you," says the King, "today you will be with me in paradise."

A SONG FOR REFLECTION

*I take comfort in the hope of the thief upon the cross
For I'm as worthy of as little love as he
Like this man I won't despair, life's ahead, what joy we'll share
There is grace awaiting me, awaiting me*

5

Death & Sorrow

Preparation Questions

Use these questions to help you work through the passage and discover what God is saying and how it applies to your life. Do this on your own so that you're ready to share your thoughts when you gather with others.

Read Luke 23



BIG IDEA

- How would I summarise the central message of this passage?



WINDOW

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about what God is like and what he's done?



MIRROR

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about myself or my circumstances?



GOSPEL

- How does this passage relate to or contribute to my understanding of the gospel and what it means to live according to the gospel?



QUESTIONS

- What questions has this passage raised for me that remain unanswered?



RESPONSE

- How should I respond to this passage in my thoughts, attitudes & behavior?



SHARE

- Who could I share all this with beyond my DNA group?



PRAY

Pray for one another in response to what you've discovered in God's word and what you've shared.

Luke 24 Chapter Notes

Luke 24 Chapter Notes

Luke 24 picks up exactly where the previous chapter left off, after the Sabbath day's rest. In spite of everything, life can and must go on...

Although we usually talk of Jesus being dead for three days, the women make their way back to the tomb only about 36 hours since they were last there (this in no way undermines the biblical references to Jesus being dead for three days because the Jews always counted part days as full days). Returning to the tomb, it is the women's intention to use the spices and perfumes they had prepared on the Friday to get Jesus' body ready for its proper burial. But they never get the chance.

When they arrive at the tomb they discover the stone rolled away from the entrance and the body gone from the place that they'd seen it laid. The women are understandably confused but before they have time to come up with an explanation they fall to the ground in fright because of the sudden presence of two men who are clearly not just men but angels – angels who deliver news that is even more startling than the gleaming clothes they wear! Their announcement is somewhat abrupt but what it lacks in bedside manner it makes up for in earth-shattering importance. The general tone of their message is that the women should have known better because Jesus had clearly told them he would rise on the third day. But it's only now, confronted by the evidence of an empty tomb and the angels' message, that Jesus' earlier words begin to make sense to them.

The fact that the first recorded witnesses to the empty tomb are women is a point that would have undermined the credibility of the resurrection accounts. This is because women were generally considered less educated and therefore less reliable. A woman's testimony was inadmissible in a first century legal case. So the fact that Luke and the other gospel authors all agree and report that the women were the first people to hear and pass on the good news of Jesus' resurrection points towards the historical reliability of the gospel accounts. Much of the rest of the chapter also has this "ring of truth" as it recounts the slow unfolding of understanding among the disciples about Jesus' resurrection.



The next people to hear the good news are the eleven and the other disciples who are with them – we can't be sure how many. They hear the news from the women who had been to the tomb, three of whom are now named – an important point for making it possible to check for historical accuracy in the early years of the gospel's circulation. But the women's report is dismissed as nonsense – the word used here is a strong one most commonly used to describe the delirious ravings of the very sick! It is likely that the disciples believed the women had become overwhelmed by their grief and had lost touch with reality. Apart from the fact that the dead stay dead, the only understanding of resurrection at the time was of a general resurrection of all people on the final day. To accept that Jesus had risen from the dead would have required the disciples to re-evaluate the most basic facts of both life and faith. To conclude that the women were talking nonsense was a much more reasonable response.

And yet... Peter – yes, hopeless, hopeful Peter – just couldn't help himself. So off he raced to the tomb. But even when he got there and saw for himself – no body, only the strips of linen Jesus had been wrapped in – he still couldn't grasp it. What did it all mean? But Luke chooses not to provide an answer, not for Peter at least who he leaves to puzzle it out on his own. Instead the author takes us to a rural scene where two of the group who had been with the Eleven and heard the women's tale are walking to a village called Emmaus a few hours down the road from Jerusalem.

As they walk and talk, Jesus himself appears for the first time, from where who knows!? It's hard to know exactly what it means that the two travellers "were kept from recognising him". One possibility is that Jesus' resurrection body had some quality that altered his appearance or influenced people's perception of his appearance sufficiently to make him not immediately recognisable, even to those who had known him well. This theory is strengthened by two other passages (John 20:14 & 21:4) that describe resurrection appearances where Jesus isn't recognised at first sight. Whatever the reason, the two disciples allow Jesus to join them on the road but are pulled up short by his enquiry into the topic of their conversation. Cleopas' response in verse 18 is like asking Jesus whether he's been living under a rock, which in a sense he has, but Jesus plays along and asks them to tell him all about it.

When the two disciples reach the end of their tale Jesus rebukes them for their folly and unbelief but there is something quite gentle and almost playful about the way he speaks to them. He seems to be enjoying his anonymity and is no doubt relishing the moment when they realise who he is. Don't you wish you'd been there as Jesus "explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself"?! The two

disciples are clearly fascinated and are keen to hear more from their very knowledgeable companion so they “urged him strongly” to stay with them in

Emmaus which he does.



There is little doubt that it is the familiarity of Jesus’ routine of giving thanks, breaking the bread and distributing it to them that lifts the veil from the disciples’ eyes. A person’s mannerisms, habits and body language are all factors that can help us to recognise someone

who may be otherwise obscured from our view. Verse 31 uses a funny play on words to highlight the fact that when Jesus is with them they can’t see him and as soon as they him, he is no longer with them. Jesus’ new ability to appear out of nowhere and to disappear just as quickly is obviously a feature of his resurrection nature and points to the likelihood that life after resurrection while having a degree of continuity with one’s former life, will also feature some significant differences!

With their eyes now open to the reality of Jesus’ resurrection and his presence with them on the road, Cleopas and his friend replay their journey with great delight and quickly rush back to the other disciples in Jerusalem to share what has happened and to confirm the good news: “It is true! The Lord has risen”. But it’s not long before their testimony becomes largely redundant because Jesus himself teleports into their midst! the disciples are suitably freaked out by this but Jesus is determined to convince them that it really is him back from the dead so he shows them the wounds on his hands and feet, invites them to touch him and tops it all off by eating a piece of fish in front of them.

But Jesus doesn’t just want his disciples to see that he is alive again, he wants them to grasp that his suffering, death and resurrection have all been in fulfilment of the Scriptures and are the heart of God’s plan for salvation to reach to the ends of the earth. It is essential that they grasp this because they are the ones who are going to take this gospel of repentance for the forgiveness of sins to the world. So Jesus

"opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures", commissions them for their apostolic ministry and commands them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit who will enable their mission.

Luke fittingly ends his gospel where it began – in the temple in Jerusalem. After witnessing Jesus' ascension into heaven the disciples return to the temple, joyfully praising God to await the promised gift and embark on the mission Jesus has given them to ensure that the gospel reaches the ends of the earth. Hmm... it's almost as if this gospel need a sequel...!

UNIFYING THEMES

This chapter is all about Jesus' resurrection from the dead in fulfilment of the scriptures and in accordance with God's sovereign plan to save the world. It is also all about the good news of the resurrection gradually becoming known and accepted among Jesus' disciples and the appearances of Jesus which confirmed the truth of this good news. Finally it is about Jesus commissioning his disciples to be his witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit to the ends of the earth.

A SONG FOR REFLECTION

Christ is risen from the dead

Trampling over death by death

Come awake, come awake

Come and rise up from the grave

Preparation Questions

Use these questions to help you work through the passage and discover what God is saying and how it applies to your life. Do this on your own so that you're ready to share your thoughts when you gather with others.

Read Luke 24



BIG IDEA

- How would I summarise the central message of this passage?



WINDOW

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about what God is like and what he's done?



MIRROR

- What did I discover (or recover) in this passage about myself or my circumstances?



GOSPEL

- How does this passage relate to or contribute to my understanding of the gospel and what it means to live according to the gospel?



QUESTIONS

5. What questions has this passage raised for me that remain unanswered?



RESPONSE

6. How should I respond to this passage in my thoughts, attitudes & behavior?



SHARE

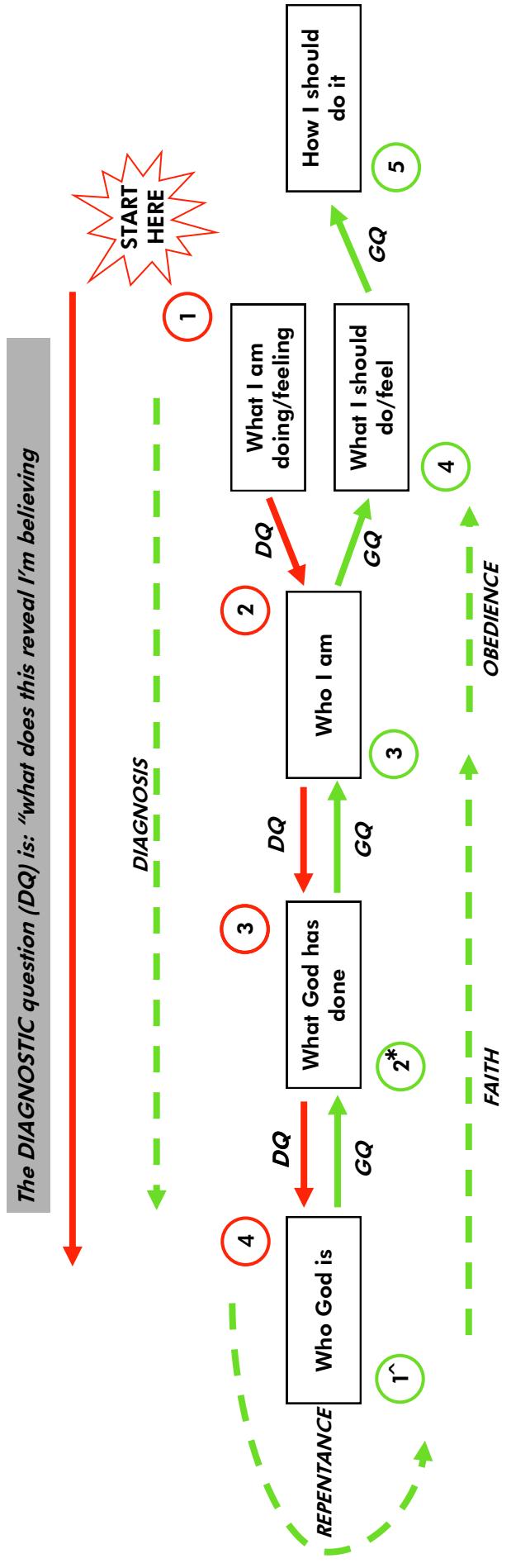
7. Who could I share all this with beyond my DNA group?



PRAY

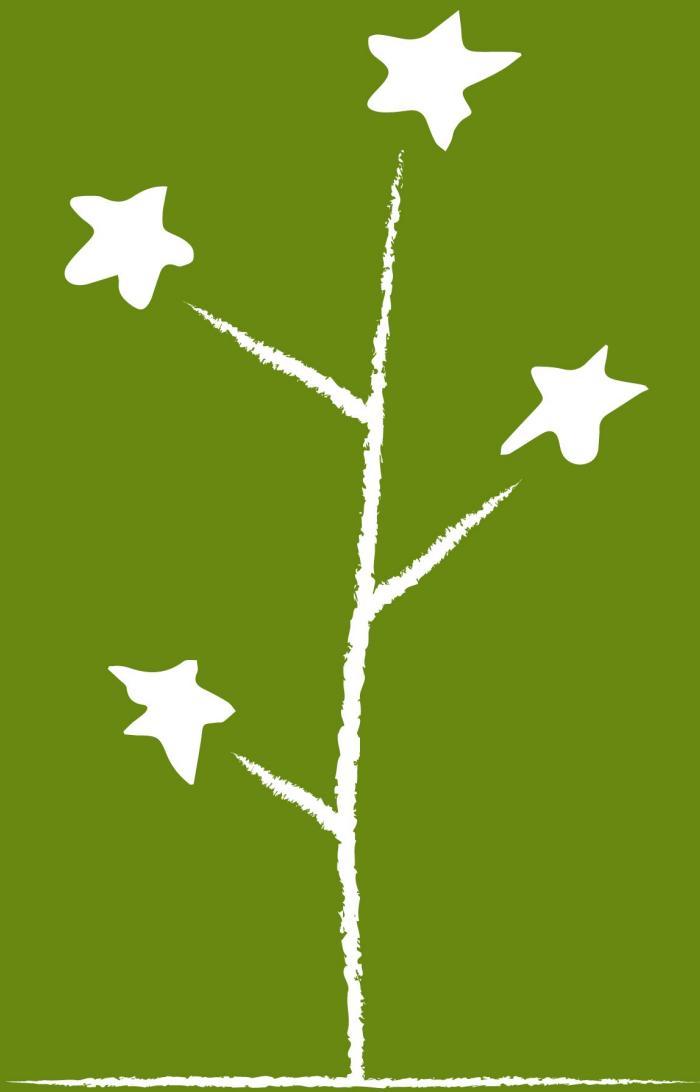
Pray for one another in response to what you've discovered in God's word and what you've shared.

5 questions for gospel growth (gospel-centred diagnosis, repentance, faith & obedience)



- ^ NOTE: to help at this point you may want to consider "the 4Gs" which are a helpful summary of God's character: God is...
 - GREAT: so we don't have to be in control
 - GLORIOUS: so we don't have to fear others
 - GOOD: so we don't have to look elsewhere
 - GRACIOUS: so we don't have to prove ourselves

* NOTE: the focus here should be on Jesus and making him the hero of your story. Consider the 5 elements of the gospel: Jesus' incarnation, his life, his death, his resurrection & his return as one or more of these elements may be most relevant to your circumstances at a particular time.



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