

That The World May Know: The Early Church – Session 1: Everything to Lose - Nothing to Gain

Jesus the Rabbi

During Jesus' time, the term *rabbi* did not refer to a specific office or occupation. It was a term of respect meaning "great one" or "my master." Day after day, a rabbi's *talmidim* would listen, watch, and imitate their rabbi in order to learn how to interpret the Scriptures and live in obedience to God. So Jesus' disciples accompanied Him everywhere he went. They listened to His every word, watched what He did, and gained hands-on experience in seeing God work.

1. A rabbi of Jesus Christ's day encouraged his disciples to take on the "yoke of Torah," which meant to commit to obeying the Torah as the rabbi interpreted and taught it. How did Jesus Christ describe his "yoke?" How did it compare to the "yoke" of other rabbis?
Matthew 11:28 – 30
Matthew 23:1 – 4
2. As the disciples observed Jesus Christ teaching and interacting with people, how did they respond?
Mark 10:17 – 28
3. What did Jesus Christ do to ensure that His disciples "got it" —that they understood the meaning behind His parables?
Mark 4:33 – 34
4. Jesus Christ also taught his disciples through the circumstances of daily life. What lessons did Jesus Christ teach His disciples through each of the following experiences?
Matthew 14:22 – 33
Mark 4:35 – 41
Mark 5:1 – 13

Do you think the disciples ever forgot the lessons of these events?

Teaching in Ways People Understand

When Jesus Christ taught, He used word pictures and literal, concrete illustrations of familiar objects that made it easier for His listeners to understand His message. Later, as the disciples journeyed into Asia Minor to carry out His mandate, they used the same teaching method.

1. Which word picture did Jesus Christ use when calling Simon Peter and Andrew to follow Him? Why was this image meaningful to them?
Matthew 4:18 – 20
2. Jesus Christ used the familiar images of sunrise and sunset to rebuke the Pharisees and Sadducees who had come to test him regarding miraculous signs from heaven. Did they understand what He was saying?
Matthew 16:1 – 4
3. After the encounter of Matthew 16:1 – 4, Jesus Christ used another common word picture as a metaphor to describe the Pharisees and Sadducees, but His disciples did not understand His meaning. What messages was Jesus Christ conveying by using this image?
Matthew 16:5 – 12

How did Jesus Christ respond to His disciples' confusion?

What did they learn from this experience?

Confronting the "Gates of Hades"

Jesus Christ took His disciples from their familiar Jewish religious surroundings in Galilee to the equally religious but incredibly pagan city of Caesarea Philippi about thirty miles away. It was a world center of Pan worship, the location of an annual Pan festival and an assortment of other pagan shrines. Jesus Christ gave His disciples essential lessons that would prepare them for their future ministry in a pagan world.

1. Consider their location at Caesarea Philippi. Why was Peter's use of the word "living" so significant when he declared Jesus Christ to be "The Christ, the Son of the living God"?
Matthew 16:13 – 16
2. Jesus Christ was well into his ministry when He mentioned building His church on a rock—the subject of much discussion throughout Christian history. There were many "rocks of the gods" at Caesarea Philippi. What would be the symbolic meaning of His declaration, "on *this rock I will build My church*"?
Matthew 16:17 – 20
3. Jesus Christ taught not only His disciples but the crowd as well. What types of people were present when He addressed the Caesarea Philippi crowd?
Mark 8:34 – 9:1

What did Jesus Christ tell them they must do? How would people who worshipped other gods have to "deny themselves" in order to follow Him?

1 Peter 4:3 – 4
1 John 2:15 – 17

The Power of Talmidim

One reason the gospel message spread so rapidly was because Jesus Christ's disciples were not simply people who heard His teachings and agreed with them. Rather, Jesus Christ had called them to be His *talmidim*—chosen disciples who had a passion to not only know what He knew, but to put His teachings into practice and to seek to live as He lived in every way. As His *talmidim*, the disciples in turn developed close relationships with others who would also become *talmidim*.

1. Jesus Christ trained His talmidim by instruction and example, and by giving them opportunities to practice what they were learning. On two occasions He sent His disciples out into the world to minister to others. What did the disciples do?
Luke 9:1 – 9
Luke 10:1 – 20

What was the result?

2. Jesus Christ gave His disciples instructions to go into all the nations and teach others to be disciples who would obey everything He had commanded.
 - a. To whom was the message of Christ being taught?
Acts 26:19 – 30
 - b. In what ways were disciples training up new disciples?
1 Corinthians 4:15 – 17
 - c. How important was it to model the message of Jesus Christ for others?
1 Thessalonians 1:6 – 7
 - d. What were believers to imitate?
Hebrews 6:12
Hebrews 13:7

The Impact of Jesus Christ's Ascension

Forty days after Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the disciples watched as He ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9 – 12). This dramatic event provided a significant lesson in the disciples' preparation to carry the message of God's kingdom to the world. To Jews, the ascension was a powerful statement of Jesus Christ's identity and proclaimed God's ultimate victory over the world, including the defeat of Rome and paganism. To the Gentile world, the ascension conveyed a radical message that would directly challenge the practice of emperor worship.

1. Centuries before Jesus Christ came to earth as the Messiah, the prophet Daniel had a vision that would have been quite familiar to religious Jews of Jesus Christ's day. Compare the similarities between Daniel's vision and the ascension of Jesus Christ. Consider how what the disciples knew, what they saw, and what they heard would have affected them.
Daniel 7:13 – 14
Matthew 28:16 – 20
Luke 25:50 – 53
Acts 1:3 – 11
2. How would news of what the disciples had witnessed first-hand have been received by the Roman world, especially the Roman authorities?

References

1 Kings 12	2 Kings 17
Psalms 8	Psalms 9
Psalms 55	Psalms 116
Ezekiel 34	Daniel 7
Matthew 4	Matthew 5
Matthew 11	Matthew 13
Matthew 14	Matthew 16
Matthew 21	Matthew 23
Matthew 28	Mark 3
Mark 4	Mark 5
Mark 8	Mark 10
Mark 16	Luke 6
Luke 9	Luke 10
Luke 11	Luke 14
Luke 19	Luke 24
John 3	John 8
John 13	John 14
Acts 1	Acts 4
Acts 26	1 Corinthians 2
1 Corinthians 3	1 Corinthians 4
1 Corinthians 11	Galatians 3
1 Thessalonians 1	Hebrews 6
Hebrews 13	1 Peter 4
1 John 2	

Sessions in this Set

1. Everything to Lose, Nothing to Gain

The Roman Empire was not an easy place in which to share the message of the kingdom of God. If one's religious practices threatened Rome's supremacy or security, the consequences could be severe.

2. The Salt of the Earth

If Christians are to be the salt of the earth, how involved with the secular world and secular people must we be in order to be "salt" and communicate the message of Jesus Christ?

3. Where Satan Lives

All of us long for the satisfaction of finding a sense of meaning and significance in life, but we seek it in different ways.

4. The Mark of the Beast

It is encouraging when we talk with people about what Jesus Christ has done and they receive it eagerly, but sometimes people are offended when we speak publicly about our faith.

5. Hot or Cold

Consider the historic, geographic, or cultural experiences that are common to people in your community. How could you use these common experiences to help a non-believer in your community understand some aspect of the gospel message or to encourage another believer in his or her walk with God.

The Roman Empire

