

THE STORY

CHAPTER 25

Summary of Chapter:

This chapter begins with Jesus' question to his disciples as to who people say he is. Their reply is varied from John the Baptist to one of the prophets, but when asked by Jesus as to whom they think he is, Peter's reply is straight forward, "you are the Christ, the Messiah".

From this moment Jesus begins to shift his ministry from the public on to his disciples and teaches them that as the Messiah, the Son of God, he must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. The disciples had difficulty understanding this, along with many other truths Jesus taught them before he went to the cross.

We read next about the transfiguration Jesus experienced on the mountain before some of his disciples. The disciples not only saw Jesus transfigured, but also heard God's voice affirming that Jesus was his Son with whom he was well pleased.

At the Jewish festival of the "Feast of Tabernacles" Jesus once again proclaims his deity to the Jewish people, being the one sent by God, with God's authority. He told them that they did not know Him who sent him but he did, because he is from Him and He sent Jesus to them. At this they tried to seize Jesus but his hour had not yet come. Jesus made many claims along these lines of being God and being sent by God to die and be raised again and many believed in him but many took issue with what he was saying and doing.

Jesus showed he was the Son of God and had the authority of God by raising Lazarus from dead. Jesus was told that his friend Lazarus was sick and he told his disciples that this sickness would not end in death but it had a purpose from God, to glorify God and His Son. After two days he told his disciples to come with him to Lazarus because he had fallen asleep. The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant so he told them plainly that Lazarus was dead. On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been dead for four days already. Martha, Lazarus' sister, told Jesus that if he had been there earlier her brother would not have died. Jesus assured Martha that he would rise again. Mary, Martha's sister, also went to meet Jesus and also expressed her sadness that Jesus did not come earlier. When Jesus saw their sadness, he was deeply moved and wept. He went to the tomb and asked that it be opened, after which he called out to Lazarus to come out. Lazarus came out of the tomb still wrapped in the grave clothes and Jesus commanded them to take off the grave clothes and let him go. Jesus had said to his disciples and to Mary and Martha, that what he did, was to show them the glory of God.

The news about what Jesus had done spread far and wide and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin and they discussed what they were going to do with Jesus, for he was a threat to their own religion and their welfare under Rome. From that moment they plotted to take his life.

Jesus continued to specifically teach his disciples about the Kingdom of God. He taught them through a rich young man and explained how hard it is for those who treasure other things above him in their lives, to enter God's Kingdom. He also taught them the necessity of being handed over to be killed and then raised again, which they still struggled to understand.

Jesus though, had set his face to Jerusalem, the place where all this would take place. As he approached Jerusalem he again pointed his followers to his identity as their King and Messiah. He instructed his disciples to fetch a donkey on which he rode into town. His followers recognised that this was the fulfilment of prophecy of the Messiah and they shouted and sang praises to the one who comes in the name of the Lord to establish God's Kingdom.

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem and went to the temple where he drove out all who were buying and selling goods there. He told them that it is written in God's Word that his house, God's house, will be a house of prayer, but they were making it into a den of robbers.

The opposition to Jesus grew as he continued to teach in the temple during that passion week. Jesus experienced the weight of what he was about to go through and showed his humanity by asking God to save him from this hour, but he also showed his unbridled obedience to his Father and accepted that this is why he was sent, for this hour, and for God to be glorified.

The satanic forces waited and spotted a way to kill Jesus, and when they saw a weakness in Judas, one of Jesus followers, they moved in, and just as Jesus had earlier said, he was betrayed into the hands of men.

1. How would you respond to someone who asked, "Who is Jesus?"

Maybe it would be good to start a conversation with them by asking who they thought Jesus was and expect the answers to go something like: He was a good moral man; He was a wise and learned teacher; He was a prophet or man of God; He was a religious freak; He was some *dude* who lived a long time ago who had magical powers...

One might then tell that someone whom Jesus said he was, and how he showed them evidence of who he claimed to be, that he was the one God had promised to people many years before he came, that he was God himself, God's Son. He was sent by God's as a saviour for men and women from God's Judgment over them and that he proved his claims by doing what was supernatural, healing the sick, raising the dead, miraculously providing for people's needs, having power and authority over nature and the elements of nature. One could even mention how God affirmed who Jesus was at his Baptism and during his Transfiguration.

And then conclude by telling them what you believe concerning who Jesus is, how you are convinced at Jesus' identity based on what he said of himself and what he did, and because of what he has done in your life, that you believe that he is truly the Son of God.

2. What was Jesus primary mission during his life?

To glorify the name of God. In other words through his life, through his death and through his resurrection to show the excellencies of God's character, His reputation, along with their incredible meaning and worth to us as rebellious humankind.

"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify you name!"

3. What character qualities do you see in Jesus.

- A love for God
- A love for people
- A compassionate character for those in distress
- A Honourable and respectable character
- An Obedient character to God's authority, even to the point of death
- A strong and firm character concerning his values and beliefs
- A gracious character
- A patient character, especially with his disciples
- A forgiving character

4. What changes do you need to make to bring your life into conformity with Jesus' values and priorities?

Those changes may be in one's personal life, public life, family life, even in one's spiritual life.

Sanctification is the Spirit's work in us, conforming us more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ, encouraging us and convicting us to make those changes that would please God.

If no one in the group wants to share, encourage them to write it down and to make a conscience effort before the next study to conform to the likeness of Jesus in that area of their lives. It might be a good way to start the next Study by reflecting back and seeing what has been put into practice.

5. In what ways did Jesus' words and actions reveal the fact that he is equal with God?

Jesus teachings showed a superior knowledge and wisdom of the scriptures.

Jesus taught with an authority that was never seen before and people were amazed at the authoritative nature of his teaching – as if God himself were teaching them.

Jesus also proclaimed things which only God himself could proclaim, eg: the forgiveness of sin.

Jesus miracles all testified to his identity as the Son of God for they were supernaturally done. eg: calming of the wind and the waves, the raising of the dead to new life, the multiplying of bread and fish, the healing of the sick and lame.

The Transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain was a clear indication that he was divine, along with God's declaration that he was His Son at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Of course his resurrection from the dead also testifies to his divinity.

6. How would you respond to the question "How can you be sure that Jesus is God?"

We don't believe blindly in something of a mystical nature, our faith is a reasonable faith founded upon historical evidence recorded for us by historians and by what we find in God's Word.

Historical events recorded for us in Scripture, affirmed and confirmed by historians, give us a reasonable foundation to believe what the Scriptures say and teach us, concerning the identity of Jesus Christ. And so, although we have no concrete evidence that Jesus is God outside the Bible, we have enough historical pointers, with regards to events and Jesus' existence, to support that what the Bible tells us about Jesus being God, is reasonable.

7. What can you do to gain a deeper love for Jesus? Why is this so important?

One would begin asking Jesus to grow your love for him by getting to know and understand the Scriptures more and more. This would see growth in one's comprehension and understanding of the love Jesus had for you by coming to earth and rescuing us from our desperate situation by taking our judgment upon himself, and paying that in full. The greater the knowledge of God's grace in Jesus Christ, the deeper the love and appreciation one will have for him.

This is important, for the more we grow in our love for Jesus, the more we will be willing to surrender to what he wants for our lives. We will also find ourselves loving others like he loved us and sharing him with the world around us.