



6 Studies for Advent

Please Note the following:

1. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
2. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP**

Study 1 – Fallen Condition Focus

(Sermon on 1st December 2024)

Before we begin: What is Advent? Why is it important?

The Dictionary Definition is: the arrival of a notable person or thing.

In Christianity: It is the arrival of our Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the World. In the Church, it is the first season of the Church Year (not the calendar year) and is the lead up to Christmas, marked by the four Sundays preceding Christmas Day. This year those four Sundays are: 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd December.

Advent is important because without the Birth of Jesus – we do not have a Saviour to fix the punishment for sin – we do not have forgiveness and eternal life – we can't have Good Friday and Easter Sunday; unless Jesus is first born!

Before you begin:

We live in a fallen world and we all have a fallen condition (sin and death) which we inherited from Adam and Eve, because of their sin and rebellion against God.

God gave us His Word to complete us for the purposes of His glory. The implication is that because of our fallen condition we are incomplete. We lack the equipment required for every good work because ***“all have sinned and fall short of God's glory”*** (Romans 3:23)

The Apostle Paul wrote ***“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope”***

The purpose of this study is to introduce a **concept** called ***“fallen condition focus”***.

The concept is that our fallen world and our fallen condition cries out for God's help and God responds to this fallenness with the truths in His Word and gives us hope through His grace in sending Jesus.

So, as we look at **ANY** Bible passage if we have a ***“fallen condition focus”*** (FCF) we will see a) the fallen condition of the original recipients of the passage (e.g., what fallen condition did the Israelites have); and b) we will see how God's Word and

the Holy Spirit addresses that fallen condition; and c) we will see how we share that fallen condition with those original recipients; and d) we will see how we gain hope and a remedy for this fallen condition through **God's grace in sending Jesus**.

So, a definition of “**fallen condition focus**” (FCF) is: *“the common problem of sin and rebellion (fallenness) that people today share with the people in the Bible passage and how the solution to this common problem points to **God's grace in the Gospel of Jesus** – i.e. Jesus' life, death and resurrection as the remedy to this fallen condition.”*

For example, if we read Romans 6:23 which says “**all have sinned and fall short of God's glory**”; the fallen condition we share with the original recipients of Paul's letter to the Romans is that, just like the Romans, we sin, as does all humanity. The result of this fallen condition of universal sin is that we all fall short of God's glory, showing the broken relationship between humanity and God. This common fallen condition we all share, cries out for salvation through Jesus.

If we look at each Bible passage like that; we will hopefully get much more out of the passage.

1. We've probably read **Genesis 3:1-24** many times before; but this time read the verses using a “**fallen condition focus**”. Write a list of the fallen conditions we share with the people in the passage.

a. Fallen Condition of temptation and sinful desires: *The temptation to sin often comes through doubt, deception, and misrepresentation of God's intentions. The serpent (Satan) entices Eve by casting doubt on God's command, making her believe that disobedience would bring greater benefit. Adam and Eve then give in to their **desire** for knowledge and power, leading them to sin. We, too, face **temptations** that distort the truth, make us question God's goodness, and appeal to **our desires for self-interest**. Our fallen nature then leads us to make choices that go against God's will.*

b. Fallen Condition of shame and hiding from God: *After eating the fruit, Adam and Eve immediately realize they are naked and they feel **shame**. They then hide from God, showing how sin creates **a separation between humanity and God**. In the same way as Adam and Eve tried to **hide** from God, we also experience*

feelings of **shame, guilt, and alienation from God when we sin**. Often our fallen condition leads us to attempt to hide from God rather than seeking reconciliation.

- c. **Fallen Condition of Blame and Avoidance of Responsibility:** When confronted by God, Adam blames Eve for giving him the fruit and he blames God for giving him Eve, and Eve blames the serpent. Instead of taking responsibility for their actions, they deflect blame onto others. We too can play the **blame game**. We blame God for not stopping us or blame someone else for leading us astray. **Instead of owning our sin and mistakes and taking responsibility**, we blame others or make excuses: – I was tired, I was confused, I didn't fully understand, everyone else does it, it's only a small sin; God will understand or Satan made me do it!
- d. **Fallen condition of Consequences for Disobedience:** The Fallen condition results in **various consequences**: pain and suffering in childbirth (for women), painful toil in work (for men), and a cursed ground that produces thorns and thistles. Spiritual death (separation from God) enters the world, and physical death becomes inevitable; humans cannot live forever as designed! Just as Adam and Eve experienced pain, suffering, and death as a consequence of their sin, all humans are born into a world marked by suffering, toil, and death. Sin brings about both physical and spiritual death, creating a broken relationship with God and with others. **There are always consequences for sin!**
- e. **Fallen condition of separation from God:** After their fall, Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden and were prevented from eating from the Tree of Life. This is symbolic of **separation from God** and a **broken relationship** with God. It is also the **loss of eternal life** that they were designed to have. Because we inherit Adam and Eve's sin and death (Romans 3:23; 5:12; 6:23), we are born into sin, which also separates us from God and leads to us dying one day. This separation cries out for Jesus to save us, redeem us and restore our broken relationship with God!
- f. **Fallen condition of desiring autonomy and rebelling against authority:** Adam and Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit was driven by their desire to be like God, knowing good and evil. They were not content to rely fully on God; they

wanted autonomy and independence from God and His authority; and they wanted to decide for themselves what was right or wrong. Human beings still struggle today with this desire for autonomy. We often want to make our own rules and live according to our rule and our desires rather than submitting to God's authority. **This rebellion against God's sovereignty is a key part of the fallen human condition.**

2. Is there a solution to the fallen condition in the passage?

*Praise God there is a solution to the fallen condition given in Genesis 3:15. This verse is often called **protoevangelium** – the first Gospel or the first announcement of the Good News.*

*In this verse, God is dishing out the punishment for breaking the rule ‘not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ and He is speaking to the serpent (aka Satan). In this verse, God reveals that there will be an ongoing conflict between the serpent’s descendants (symbolizing sin and evil) and the woman’s descendants (symbolizing those who follow God); **a spiritual war!***

Importantly, God promises that one day an offspring (descendant) of the woman “will crush the serpent’s(Satan’s) head” even though the serpent (Satan) will strike the woman’s offspring’s heel. This offspring of the woman is referring to Jesus who would ultimately crush Satan’s power and provide a way for humankind to be right with God.

Satan thought he had defeated Jesus – when Jesus was crucified and died. But this was all part of God’s wonderful plan to allow Jesus to die to take the punishment of sin off us and on to Himself – and then to rise from the dead three days later – to show He has power to forgive sins and the power to overcome even death! In this way Satan’s power (and head) was crushed! And people have a way to be forgiven and to have eternal life, through Jesus!

3. Read **Genesis 4:1-16**. What are the fallen conditions in the passage?

Fallen condition of jealousy and envy: *Cain became **envious** of Abel when God accepted Abel’s sacrifice and rejected Cain’s. This **jealousy** led Cain to **resentment** and **anger**! We can be like Cain and get jealous or envious when we see someone favoured or blessed in ways that we are not. We can start to feel inadequate or to resent the other person or we can start to see God as unfair. These feelings can often affect our relationships and lead to further sins, as was the case with Cain!*

Fallen condition of anger and hatred: Cain's jealousy turned to anger and hatred. God warned Cain that sin is crouching at his door, but Cain ignored the warning! Instead, he deceived Abel, lured him to the field and killed him! Like Cain, we can struggle with uncontrolled anger and hatred. Sin can grow in our hearts when we fail to deal with the anger we have. The Apostle Paul says, "in your anger, do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Fallen condition of refusing to acknowledge sin: After murdering his brother, Cain denies all responsibility. When God asked Cain 'where is your brother, Abel' – Cain replies "I don't know, am I my brother's keeper?" Like Cain, instead of confessing and repenting our sins, we try to avoid responsibility for our actions, which worsens our separation from God. Denial is not just a river in Egypt!

Fallen condition of murder and violence: Cain's jealousy and anger escalated to violence and then to murder. Even though we may not resort to physical violence or murder, we can have underlying emotions like hatred and anger, and a desire for a person to be harmed. We might even resort to other forms of 'violence' like verbal abuse, bullying or emotional or relational "murdering" (Matthew 5:21-22) of others through betrayal or unkindness.

Fallen condition of consequences of sin: After Cain murdered his brother Abel, God pronounces a curse on Cain; he is to be 'a restless wanderer on Earth' – he will have no peace and is alienated from God and others! Just as Cain experiences alienation from God and the land, sin results in separation from God and relational breakdowns with others. Whether it's through guilt, shame, or damaged relationships, sin disrupts peace, harmony, and community.

Fallen condition of retribution: After Cain hears God's judgment, he fears others might kill him in retaliation for Abel's murder. We often fear retribution and judgment when we sin, and the consequences of our actions can lead to anxiety, shame, and a sense of being hunted or exposed. Fear, rather than peace, becomes a significant part of our fallen experience.

4. Is there a solution to the fallen condition in the passage?

Despite Cain's sin, God shows mercy by placing a mark on him to protect him from being killed by others. Similarly, even in the midst of our fallen condition, God's mercy and grace are still evident. Though we deserve judgment, God extends His grace to prevent ultimate destruction. Cain's protection shows that, despite our sins, God provides a way to live, even when we fall short. And this of course, ultimately points to Jesus!

5. Read **Genesis 11:1-9**. What are the fallen conditions in the passage?

Fallen condition of pride and arrogance: *The people wanted to build a city with a tower that reaches the Heavens, so that ‘we can make a name for ourselves’. Their goal is to achieve fame, power and self-sufficiency. This shows pride and self-glorification, a desire to make themselves great apart from God. **They want to establish their own identity and security, independent of God's authority and purpose for them.** Human beings still struggle with the **desire for self-exaltation, wanting to be recognized, accomplished, or independent from God.** People often seek status, recognition, and power as a way to define their worth, rather than seeking God's glory in all they do!*

Fallen condition of disobedience to God's command: *Instead of obeying God's command to ‘fill the Earth’ (Genesis 9:1) and spread out, they want to settle in one place and make a name for themselves. Sometimes, we prefer our own plans and desires instead of God's plans and guidance.*

Fallen condition of self-sufficiency: *The people believe they can achieve safety and success through their own efforts, rather than relying on God. This reflects a desire for control and independence from God's provision and guidance. Human beings often have a tendency toward **self-reliance**, trying to solve problems, secure future success, and achieve peace without relying on God. This is often seen in the desire to control circumstances or to trust in one's own strength and abilities rather than in God's power.*

Fallen condition of humankind's unity without God: *The Tower of Babel shows humankind's ability to unite in defiance against God's will. Whilst unity is a good thing; when it's based on human pride, disobedience and self-glorification, at the exclusion of God; it's not a good thing and is in fact, sin!*

Fallen condition of usurping God's sovereignty: The Tower of Babel is an attempt to usurp God's sovereignty, to act as though humans can reach the divine or equal God in power and glory. That's Satan's aim too! Humankind often seeks to challenge or redefine God's authority, trying to elevate itself through technology, knowledge, or ideology. This reflects the deep-seated pride of the human heart.

6. Is there a solution to the fallen condition in the passage?

In verses 7 and 8, God intervenes: ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other. ⁸ So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

God's intervention suggests a couple of ways that indirectly give a solution to the fallen condition:

- a. **God's Sovereignty:** Humankind's attempt to build a tower to heaven was an act of self-glorification, but **God shows that He alone is sovereign**. So, one solution to the fallen condition, then, is **a recognition of God's supreme authority over all human endeavors**.
- b. **Humility and Dependence on God:** The scattering of the people indicates that their attempt at self-sufficiency was futile. Humanity is dependent on God for direction and success [ask Jonah how running away, worked for him]. True security, significance, and unity come only through submitting to God's will rather than trying to achieve greatness independently.

7. Read **Exodus 32**. What are the fallen conditions in the passage?

Fallen condition of idolatry: Despite God's clear commandment in Exodus 20:3-5, the Israelites were quick to turn to physical representations of gods. This reflects humankind's tendency to substitute the one true God with something tangible that they can control, relate to or understand!

Fallen condition of impatience and lack of trust in God: Instead of waiting for God's guidance and trusting that Moses would return to them as promised, they acted on impulse. People today can be the same; they seek quick solutions or make impulsive decisions when they don't feel that God is answering their prayers quickly enough.

Fallen condition of disobedience and rebellion: After hearing that the Israelites have turned to idolatry, God tells Moses to go down to them because they have “acted corruptly.” God is angry and is ready to destroy the people because of their disobedience. People’s tendency to **disobey God** and **rebel** against His commands is a major consequence of the fallen condition. The Israelites had just received the law (Exodus 20), and yet they quickly break it by turning to idolatry. This shows how easily people can fall into sin and disregard God’s instructions. People today are the same; they struggle with **rebellion** against God's commands, often choosing to live according to their own desires or cultural pressures rather than adhering to God's Word.

Fallen condition of lack of spiritual leadership: In Moses’ absence, Aaron, the high priest, is left in charge. Instead of standing firm and telling the people to trust God, Aaron caves in to their demands and even takes a part in making the golden calf. His leadership failure is contributing factor to the people’s idolatry. This is a common problem today where religious and secular leaders can fail in their duty to lead with integrity, pointing people to God’s truth.

Fallen condition of the desire for immediate gratification: The people wanted a visible god they could worship immediately rather than waiting on the Lord and Moses’ return. This is common today too with people seeking instant results or immediate pleasures, often at the expense of deeper, more meaningful relationships with God and others.

Fallen condition of lack of reverence to God: When the people created the golden calf, they claimed that it is the god that brought them out of Egypt! They give credit to a false god for the work that God alone did. **Lack of reverence for God** leads to the devaluation of His actions and character. The people do not honor God as the true deliverer; they instead place their trust in a false representation. The same thing happens today when people either misunderstand or diminish the importance of God’s role in their lives and give credit to someone or something else or reduce God’s actions to pure chance/luck!

8. Is there a solution to the fallen condition in the passage?

*Exodus 32:11-14 – ¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. “Lord,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people ¹³ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.’” ¹⁴ Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. **Moses intercedes on behalf of the people and reminds God of His promise Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that they would have many descendants and the Promised Land. God would be breaking this promise if He destroyed them all! And so, the Lord relented from destroying all of them!***

9. The fallen condition continues in the New Testament. **Read Luke 15:11-32.**

What are the fallen conditions in the passage?

Fallen condition of rebellion and selfishness: the younger son demands his inheritance early, essentially wishing that his father were dead. He leaves home and blows all his wealth on loose living (Luke 15:12-13). Just like the younger son wanted to be free from his father’s authority, people today often seek to live their lives without God, turning to sinful behavior, materialism, and pride in an attempt to find happiness and fulfillment apart from God. God is no longer King of their life; they are their own king!

Fallen condition of empty and destructive pursuits: the younger son spends all his money and wasteful (prodigal) living! He is eventually left with nothing and ends up feeding pigs. He was that desperate he longed to fill his stomach with what the pigs were eating! People today often seek satisfaction in material possessions, relationships, or pleasures that promise fulfillment but ultimately leave them feeling empty and unsatisfied.

Fallen conditions of pride and self-righteousness: The older son, when he hears that his younger brother has returned and is being celebrated, becomes angry and refuses to join the feast. He expresses his frustration, feeling that his loyalty and hard work have not been properly rewarded (Luke 15:25-30). But how much does

the older son really care for his younger brother; he doesn't go looking for his younger brother, when he goes off with his inheritance! There are two lost sons in the story; not one! People today can also struggle with **pride and self-righteousness**, thinking that their own good deeds or moral behavior make them more deserving of God's favor than others, especially those who have lived in rebellion. This can lead to a lack of empathy and a judgmental attitude toward others.

Fallen condition of lack of compassion and understanding: The older son is focused on his own sense of fairness and refuses to show any compassion or understanding toward his brother. He cannot understand why his father would celebrate the return of someone who had wasted his inheritance (Luke 15:28-30). People today can be similarly **self-centered** and unable to rejoice in the redemption of others because they are consumed with their own grievances or sense of fairness. We saw this with Jonah recently – he couldn't understand why God would show the Ninevites mercy!

Fallen condition of self-deception and pride: At the beginning of the story, the younger son's **self-deception and pride** kept him from recognizing his need for repentance until he was in dire circumstances. Often, people fall into sin because they are blind to the consequences or think they can handle things on their own. People today often continue down a path of sin, deceived by their own pride, thinking they can fix things or that they don't need God until they reach a point of crisis or despair.

10. Is there a solution to the fallen condition in the passage?

The first step to addressing this fallen condition is **repentance**. The younger son recognizes his sin, acknowledges that he is unworthy to be called his father's son, and decides to go back and seek forgiveness (Luke 15:17-19).

The **father's response to the son's return is key to the solution**. The father runs to the son, embraces him, and forgives him completely. This demonstrates God's mercy and willingness to forgive those who repent and return to Him, regardless of their past failures.

There is also the **opportunity for reconciliation and celebration**. The father pleads with the older son to join the celebration, reminding him that everything the father has is already his. The father expresses that it is right to rejoice because the

younger son was lost and is now found, and that there is a need for compassion and reconciliation. God always leaves room for reconciliation; the older son had that opportunity; sadly, it seems, he might not have taken it; we're not told in the passage for sure?

11. **Read Luke 18:9-14.** What are the fallen conditions in the passage?

Fallen condition of self-righteousness and pride: The Pharisee stands in the temple and prays loudly, boasting about his religious works and comparing himself favourably to others, especially the tax collector. He says, "I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector" (Luke 18:11). **Self-righteousness** and **pride** are central to the Pharisee's attitude. He believes that his religious observance and moral behavior make him superior to others. This reflects the tendency in human nature to **compare ourselves to others** and feel justified or superior when we think we are morally better. Like the Pharisee, many people today fall into the trap of **self-righteousness**, believing that they are justified before God by their own actions and good deeds. We tend to compare ourselves with others, forgetting that **God's standard of holiness** is far beyond anything we can achieve on our own. The parable teaches that **humility** and **recognizing our need for God's mercy** are essential for being justified before God. We cannot earn righteousness through works alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are saved by grace through faith for good works not by good works!

Fallen condition of spiritual blindness: The Pharisee, in his prayer, fails to recognize his own sin and need for God's mercy. His focus is on what he does right, rather than humbling himself before God and acknowledging his sins. He is spiritually blind to the reality of his own shortcomings. **Spiritual blindness** affects many people today, as people may be unaware of their own sinfulness or unable to recognize their desperate need for God's forgiveness. It is easy to become complacent or self-satisfied in our spiritual lives, thinking that we are righteous because we compare ourselves to others or rely on our good works.

Acknowledging our own sin and recognizing our dependence on God's grace is essential for spiritual renewal.

Fallen condition of lack of humility: The Pharisee prays with a sense of entitlement and pride, thanking God that he is not like other sinners. In contrast, the tax

collector humbly **beats his chest** and prays, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Fallen condition of the unawareness of true spiritual need: Many people today, like the Pharisee, are unaware of their deep **spiritual need**. They may be living morally upright lives according to society’s standards but fail to recognize that only **God’s grace** can justify them. People often fail to see that **sin** is not just about outward behavior but **a matter of the heart**. We all fall short of God’s perfect standard, and without a **humble recognition of this**, we cannot be justified.

12. Is there a solution to the fallen condition in the passage?

The **tax collector’s humility** in the parable provides the solution. Jesus says that the tax collector, who humbled himself and asked for mercy, was justified. **Humility before God** is necessary for spiritual growth and transformation. This aligns with Jesus’ teaching that “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

13. How might the following passages help with our fallen condition:

Matthew 5:3 – Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. *The poor in spirit are those who recognize their spiritual poverty; that is, they understand their inability to save themselves or to live righteously on their own. They are aware of their sinfulness and their need for Jesus as a Saviour.*

Matthew 6:33 – But first seek His kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. *Jesus directs us to prioritize God’s kingdom (His will, His righteousness) over our personal desires and earthly concerns. By making God’s work and righteousness our first concern, we align our hearts and lives with His purpose. This is a call to spiritual focus, where our efforts are centered on seeking God’s will rather than being consumed by material needs. Jesus encourages us to trust that God will take care of our physical needs when we put Him first. By trusting in God and focusing on His kingdom and righteousness, we can find peace and freedom from anxiety. When we stop focusing on ourselves and our worries, and instead place our lives in God’s*

hands, we experience His peace that surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:6-7).

Luke 13:3 – I tell you no! But unless you repent, you too will perish!

The fallen condition requires us to repent – that is do a U-turn – such that instead of heading away from God and rebelling – we do a U-turn and turn back to God, say sorry for our fallen condition and ask Jesus to forgive us! If we don't repent and continue to head away from God; then

Acts 3:19 - Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord

The purpose of repenting is so that our sins are wiped out and so that we can have times of spiritual refreshment from the Lord. If we don't repent, we remain in this fallen condition where our sins are unforgiven!

Romans 8:22-23 - ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

It's helpful to know that it's not just Creation (under a curse from the Fall) that is groaning like the pains of childbirth, but we human beings are groaning with the fallen condition. There is a solution in that as believers we are God's adopted children and we are waiting for the adoption to be finalized when are bodies are redeemed (bought back to God) for eternity, when Jesus returns one day!

1 John 2:15-16 - ¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

The solution to the fallen condition, is to not love the world or its trappings – they can suck is in and we can end up making worldly things our priority

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

A solution to the Fallen condition is to remember that we are God's handiwork and we are created in Christ Jesus to do good works. And God has even

prepared those good works for us to do. These good works don't make us a Christian but they are our way to thank God for forgiveness we have in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Our fallen condition can be helped when we realize that Jesus has made us as a new creation. We are born again, born from above from the Holy Spirit. We need to remember our old life/ways are gone and we start afresh with Jesus.

Galatians 5:22-23 ⁻²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

When we become a Christian, we receive the Holy Spirit which transforms us our lives from the inside out. So, one way to combat the fallen condition is to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. All the fruit are positive. It's worth asking which of the fruit we are having trouble exhibiting? Ask God to help

What's the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

Identifying the shared fallen condition, we have and adopting the solution to the fallen condition that God offers in each Bible passage we read.



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Luke 15:20b - *"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."*

This is a picture of how God accepts repentant sinners back/into His Kingdom.

Finish in prayer: Dear God, thank You for Your Word and the truths we've learned today. Please help us to see the ways sin affects our hearts, relationships, and

lives. Show us where we fall short and help us recognize the areas we need to grow. Thank You for Your grace and forgiveness through Jesus. We ask for Your strength to live in obedience and to rely on Your mercy every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Study 2 – A Promised Prophet

(Sermon on 8th December 2024)

Before you begin: What is a prophet?

*Dictionary Definition: a person sent by God to **teach** people and **give them messages from God***

***In Hebrew:** a person divinely inspired by God to either rebuke the conduct of kings and nations or predict future events.*

Read Deuteronomy 18:14-22

1. How are the nations occupying the Promised Land described? (v14)

They practice sorcery (a type of magic where spirits, especially evil ones, are used to make things happen) and divination (the skill or act of saying or discovering what will happen in the future). When the Israelites enter the Promised Land, God says they are not permitted to use sorcery or divination; they are to rely totally on God!

The reason the Canaanites were kicked out of the Promised Land was because of these occult practices. That's why God warns the Israelites not to practice them!

If we read this verse with a fallen condition focus (FCF) from the last study, we can see where people of today share the fallen condition that v14 is warning about. The reason that God forbid these actions is because people would be consorting with the powers of darkness and evil.

Today we have things like: astrology, clairvoyants, psychics, fortune tellers, tarot cards, reading tea-leaves. Not only is it impossible to predict the future with these practices but God forbids His covenant people (including us) to have anything to do with it.

2. What does God promise in verse 15? What reason is given for this in verse 16? (see also Exodus 20:19 and Deuteronomy 5:23-27)

Moses tells the people that God promises to raise up from among them, a prophet, like Moses; and they must listen to him!

The reason given in verse 16 is because the people did not want to deal directly with God because they said at the Mount of Horeb "let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die".

Exodus 20:19 – The people said to Moses “speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die”

Deuteronomy 5:23-27 - ²³ When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leaders of your tribes and your elders came to me. ²⁴ And you said, “The Lord our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a person can live even if God speaks with them. ²⁵ But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer. ²⁶ For what mortal has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? ²⁷ Go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey.”

3. What does God say He will do in verses 17 and 18?

*The Lord God agrees with the people and tells Moses “what they say is good” God promises to raise up for the people a prophet among their fellow Israelites and God says **He will put His words in to the prophet’s mouth** and the **prophet will tell the people everything God commanded the prophet to say!***

4. How will God make the people accountable in verse 19?

God will call to account anyone who does not listen to God’s words that the prophet speaks in God’s name.

5. What warning and consequences are given in verse 20?

If a prophet speaks anything in God’s name that God did not command or speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet will be put to death!

6. What evaluation process for a prophet is described in verses 21 and 22? How might this evaluation process work for us today when people give us a prophecy?

The evaluation process is that if the prophecy spoken in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, then the message was not spoken by the Lord. This means today, we need to put people’s prophecies on the shelf and wait. If they come to pass, then they are from the Lord; if they don’t, then we reject that person as a false prophet. Obviously, under the new covenant of grace, we don’t stone them, which simply reject their prophecy.

7. **Ponder:** Who might the promised prophet of verse 15 be? (cf. Matthew 21:11; Luke 2:25-35; John 1:24-25; Acts 3:22 and Acts 7:37)

Matthew 21:11 – The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” – As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowd believed Jesus was/is a prophet

*Luke 2:25-35 – ²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For **my eyes have seen your salvation**, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” ³³ The child’s father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “**This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel**, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” – When Jesus’ parents brought baby Jesus to the Temple, and Simeon saw the infant, he knew he had seen God’s salvation and that Jesus was destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.*

John 1:24-25 – ²⁴ Now the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” Here, the Pharisees question John the Baptist as to why he baptizes if he is not the Messiah or the promised Elijah to come (Malachi 4:5) or THE PROPHET mentioned in Deuteronomy 18. As it turns out, John the Baptist was the promised Elijah to come and the forerunner to Jesus, the Messiah, the King and the Prophet.

Acts 3:22 – For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you’. Peter explains clearly that Jesus is the prophet that God said He would raise up like Moses from Deuteronomy 18.

Acts 7:37 - *“This is the Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.’”* Stephen, before he was stoned to death, explains clearly that Jesus is the prophet that God said He would raise up like Moses from Deuteronomy 18.

Read Matthew 5:17-18

8. How does this passage relate to Deuteronomy 18:14-22?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that He has NOT come to abolish the Law or the Prophets [in other words the Holy Scriptures, God’s Word], but to fulfil them! Jesus promises that, until Heaven and Earth disappear, not even the smallest letter [jot or yod] nor stroke of a pen [tittle], will disappear from God’s Law, until everything that is accomplished as God planned and promised.

The way that Jesus fulfilled the Law is to do what no human could do, by obeying the law perfectly!

*This passage from Matthew 5:17-18 relates to Deuteronomy 18:14-22 in that Jesus fulfils the prophecy and promise that God gave to Moses. **Jesus IS the promised prophet like Moses; Jesus IS the fulfilment of God’s Law and He fulfils it so perfectly that everything in God’s Law and Prophets, down to the smallest letter and stroke of the pen, will be fulfilled perfectly and accurately by Jesus!***

Read Matthew 17:1-13

9. How does this passage relate to Deuteronomy 18:14-22?

Jesus took Peter, James and John up a mountain, where Jesus was transfigured and met Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the Prophets). In this encounter, God spoke from a cloud saying “This is my Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!”

This passage relates to Deuteronomy 18:14-22 in that it confirms that Jesus is not only the fulfilment of the prophecy and promise that God would raise up a prophet like Moses but also that Jesus is the complete fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets (Holy Scripture); and that Jesus has both divine authority and divine approval! God, the Father, also tells the disciples that they must listen to Jesus!

Read John 5:45-47

10. How does this passage relate to Deuteronomy 18:14-22?

*In John 5:45-47, Jesus is talking to the Jewish leaders who oppose Him and He says this: ⁴⁵ **“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is***

Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Here Jesus is saying that Moses wrote about Him; i.e., that He (Jesus) is the promised prophet from Deuteronomy 18. Jesus says, He doesn't have to accuse them, He can let Moses accuse them because they don't believe Jesus is the promised prophet that Moses wrote about. And if they don't believe Moses whom they have always had their hopes set on, how are they going to believe what Jesus says?

*Jesus did not call these religious leaders to a new or a different faith. He called them to believe what Moses, what the Scriptures, what His works, what John the Baptist each testified about Jesus: that He is the Messiah, the Son of God and God the Son. If they refused to believe this overwhelming testimony, it was unlikely they would believe Jesus' own **words**.*

We can't really get a clearer confirmation of the Deuteronomy prophecy than this!

Read Acts 3:17-23

11. How does this passage relate to Deuteronomy 18:14-22?

Peter speaks to his fellow Israelites and says:

¹⁷ "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'

Here Peter confirms that Jesus is the promised Messiah whom God said through the prophets would suffer. Peter also again, confirms that Jesus is the promised prophet like Moses, as per Deuteronomy 18.

We can't really get a clearer confirmation of the Deuteronomy prophecy than this!

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

12. How does this passage relate to Deuteronomy 18:14-22?

In this passage Jesus is compared to Moses.

Jesus is greater than Moses because:

- *Just like a builder has greater honour than the house itself – Jesus is the house of God – the Temple itself. Moses only points to God’s House!*
- *Moses was a faithful servant over God’s house but Jesus is God’s Son and the Son over the house!*
- *Moses bore witness to Jesus (in Deuteronomy 18) – therefore Moses pointed to Jesus’ coming and the fulfilment of all God’s promises*
- *Jesus is not just another prophet, but the **ULTIMATE** prophet!*

Read Acts 7:35-37

13. How does this passage relate to Deuteronomy 18:14-22?

In this passage, Stephen gives a review of Israel’s history. And he spends some time talking about Moses. Stephen says: ³⁵ “This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶ He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

³⁷ “This is the Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.’

*Stephen points out the Israelites have a habit of rejecting or not listening to God’s prophets. Stephen again, confirms the words from Deuteronomy 18, that Moses gave the Israelites, that God would raise up a prophet like him, from among the Israelites. Stephen later on in verses 52-53 is scathing: ⁵¹ “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² **Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—** ⁵³ you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”*

14. **Ponder:** What does it mean to you that Jesus is the fulfilment of the promised prophet from Deuteronomy 18:14-22? How does that challenge the world we live in, which offers many alternative truths and a myriad of ideologies and philosophies?

When we say that Jesus is the fulfillment of this promised prophet of Deuteronomy 18:14-22, it means that Jesus is **the definitive and final Word of God** to humankind. His life, teachings, death, and resurrection reveal God's truth in its most complete and perfect form. As such, Jesus doesn't just point to the truth—**He is the truth** (John 14:6). The coming of Jesus represents the **culmination** of God's plan of salvation and revelation, which began with the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament.

In the world today, truth is often subjective and relative to a person's context. People are increasingly being encouraged to find their own truths based on their own personal experiences, cultural context, or philosophical ideologies. Jesus' claim as the ultimate fulfillment of God's truth stands in stark contrast to the idea that truth is whatever we decide it to be! In contrast, Jesus' truth is authoritative revelation of God!

By Jesus being the ultimate prophet and the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. Jesus answers the tough questions of life, like: "what is the meaning of life?"; "what is truth?" (as Pontius Pilate asked); "is there a God?"; "is there life beyond this life on Earth?"

By Jesus' fulfilling Deuteronomy 18, God is saying "His will and His truth are not up for negotiation" and that Jesus is God's means by which all who believe in Him can be saved for Heaven (John 3:16) and that Jesus is the only way to Heaven, Paradise (John 14:6).

Our response has to be "to listen to Him!" (Deut 18:15b)

What's the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

Jesus is the fulfillment of the promised prophet that Moses spoke about – we must listen to Him.



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Deuteronomy 18:15-The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

Finish in prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of Your Word and for revealing to us the truth of Jesus as the promised prophet in Deuteronomy 18. Thank You for sending Him to speak Your words of life and salvation. Help us to listen to Him and follow His teachings faithfully. May His voice guide us in all things, and may we share His message of hope and truth with others. We ask for Your strength and wisdom to live according to His example. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

Study 3 – A Promised King

(Sermon on 15th December 2024)

Before you begin: What is a King? What responsibilities should a King have before God?

***Dictionary definition:** The ruler of an independent state, especially one who inherits the position by right of birth. For example, Solomon inherited the throne from his father, David. Our current King, Charles III, inherited the throne from Queen Elizabeth II as Charles was the eldest child.*

A King's duties before God are:

- 1. Uphold justice and righteousness – Psalm 72:1-4; Proverbs 29:14*
- 2. Leading in obedience to God's Word – Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 2 Chronicles 26:4*
- 3. Promoting and protecting worship – 2 Samuel 6:12-15; 1 Kings 8:27-30*
- 4. Seeking God's guidance in leadership – James 1:5; 1 Kings 3:5-14*
- 5. Caring for the poor and needy – Psalm 82:3-4; Proverbs 31:8-9*
- 6. Maintaining peace and security – 1 Timothy 2:1-2 and Psalm 144:1*
- 7. Humility and dependence on God – 1 Peter 5:5-6; 2 Chronicles 7:14*
- 8. Promoting the Gospel and the Kingdom of God – Matthew 6:33 and Luke 4:43*

That is why King Charles III is known as the "Defender of the Faith"

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17

1. What is the current situation for King David? (v1)

King David is in a good position: settled in his palace and the Lord had given him a period of rest from the around him.

2. What's troubling King David? (vv2-3)

David can see that he is very comfortable living in a house made of cedar, whilst the ark of the covenant (containing the 10 commandments, a jar of manna and Aarons' budding staff) which is the symbol of the presence of the Lord with His people, remains in the portable tabernacle tent! David consults the prophet Nathan about this situation with a view to building a "house" for the Lord; i.e., a Temple.

Nathan tells David that whatever he has it mind, he should go ahead and do it because the Lord is with David!

But Nathan may have spoken presumptuously.

3. What message comes from God to the prophet Nathan for David? (vv4-11)

The message comes back from God to Nathan for King David:

- *David, don't presume you're the one who should be building a house for God to dwell in because God has not dwelt in a house since God brought the Israelites up out of Egypt*
- *Instead, God has always moved from place to place whenever the tabernacle tent was moved and erected each time the Israelites were on the move*
- *God also points out that He has never questioned the Israelites, by asking them: "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"*
- *God tells Nathan to tell David that it was God who took David from shepherding his flock to make him ruler over God's people, Israel. And God has been with David wherever he went and has cut off all David's enemies. God promised to make David's name great (which it is – because we all know David is the greatest King, Israel ever had)*
- *God also promises to establish a permanent place for His people, so that they can have a home and not be disturbed by travelling anymore. God said He would make sure Israel are not oppressed and will have rest from their enemies.*

4. What promise does God make in verses 12 to 15? Which future King(s) is/are being referred to?

V12 – God says He will 'raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and will establish his kingdom'.

*Prophecies/promises in the Old Testament can have a **near** (immediate or almost immediate) fulfillment or a **far** (future date beyond the time of the prophecy/promise) fulfillment. In this case, the near fulfilment is David's son, Solomon and the far fulfilment is Jesus, who is a descendant of King David.*

*V13 – God says that David's offspring will be the one who builds a house for God's Name, and this throne of his will be established forever. Again, this has a **near fulfilment**, in that **David's son, Solomon**, is the one who builds God's temple. But Solomon's throne doesn't last forever, because eventually the people of Southern Israel are carried off to exile in Babylon, and the people of Northern Israel were carried off to Assyria. Today, there isn't even a King of Israel (North or South). So,*

*the forever kingdom has a **far fulfilment** in our **Lord Jesus**, the King of Heaven and Earth, who reigns forever, as the promise said!*

V14 – [I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands.] As a near fulfilment, all the kings of David’s line, from Solomon to the exile, were sinful and at times punished by God when God allowed various enemies of Israel to have victories over them. But the far fulfilment is that the ultimate descendant of David, Jesus, was not a sinner like all of David’s descendants, yet “God made Him who had no sin, sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21) and ironically, He was punished by a rod yielded by man and punished with floggings inflicted by human hand.

V15 – [But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.] God’s love was not taken away from Solomon, despite His sin. Even though Jesus was forsaken by God the Father, at the cross, God’s love was never taken away, and Jesus rose in glory on the third day!

5. What promise does God make in verse 16? Which King is being referred to? *God promises that David’s house and David’s Kingdom will endure forever; and His throne will be established forever! As we said earlier, eventually the Kings of Southern Israel (Judah) came to an end when they were exiled to Babylon (587BC). But when Jesus left Heavenly glory and became incarnate and born of the virgin Mary – Jesus was from Mary and Joseph’s family line; and both of them were descendants of David. So, Jesus fulfils the promise of being a forever King in David’s line, because He is alive and rules Heaven and Earth forever!*

Read Matthew 22:41-46

6. How does this passage relate to 2 Samuel 7:1-17?

Jesus was making the Pharisees think. In the previous chapter, Matthew 21, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he was hailed “The Son of David”. This title was traditionally used for God’s promised Messiah. So, by the people hailing Jesus as “The Son of David”, they were basically saying Jesus was/is the Messiah; a title Jesus clearly and openly accepted; even encouraged in Matthew 21.

Jesus asked the leading question “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son, is He?”

Jesus’s point is that the Messiah is more than merely David’s Son; He is according to the quote in verse 44 from Psalm 110, actually David’s Lord because David calls the Messiah his Lord!

So, in verse 45, Jesus asks the provocative question: “If David calls Him, ‘Lord’, how can he be His son?”

The answer is Jesus is both David’s son in human terms being born of Mary, a descendant of David – but Jesus is also David’s Lord, in Heavenly terms, having temporarily left Heavenly glory to be born of a virgin.

This passage from Matthew 22:41-46 is related to 2 Samuel 7:1-17 in that here in Matthew 22:41-46, Jesus is claiming He is the Messiah and David’s Son and David’s Lord and the fulfilment of God’s promise of a forever King on David’s throne.

7. Ponder: What was Jesus proving to the Pharisees? (cf. Psalm 110:1)

*Jesus was proving to the Pharisees that they can’t think about His mission in traditional terms. Jesus was demonstrating that the Messiah was not just a **human** descendant of David **but also divine**. Jesus is pointing out that the Messiah, while a descendant of David (a human), is also Lord, meaning He has **divine authority** and is **more than just a human king**.*

*Jesus was also subtly claiming that He is the fulfillment of Psalm 110. Since David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, refers to the Messiah as "Lord," this means that Jesus, as the Messiah, has authority over David himself. Jesus is asserting His own divine nature and identity as the one David spoke about, thereby revealing His **unique position as both Son of David and Lord**.*

*The Pharisees had a limited understanding of the Messiah. They thought of Him only in terms of a **political and military leader** who would come from the line of David. By quoting Psalm 110, Jesus is challenging their narrow view and showing them that the Messiah must be a **spiritual and divine ruler**, a concept they had not fully comprehended.*

8. What is the significance of Jesus being both the Son of David and the Lord of David? How does this influence our view of His kingship in our lives?

***As the Son of David:** this highlights Jesus’ **human lineage**, and His **fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and Promised King in David’s line**.*

*Also, by having a human lineage, he **connects to humanity**, making Him approachable, relatable and able to identify with our human condition and struggles.*

***As the Lord of David:** It shows Jesus has a **divine nature**, which makes Him not just a human King. It also makes Him **eternal** and **having ultimate authority**. **Being divine also means He is sinless** which is critical if He is to be able to take the*

punishment for sin off people and grant forgiveness. And **being divine, He is also eternal**, so even when He is crucified and dies and is put in the grave; death cannot hold Him down and His resurrection means people can have eternal life!

How does this influence our view of His kingship in our lives?

- a. It means Jesus is both **approachable** (as a human King) and **sovereign** (as Lord of Heaven and Earth).
- b. His **humanity** allows us to approach Him with confidence, knowing that He sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15). We can trust in His care, empathy, and willingness to help us through life's struggles.
- c. His **sovereignty** extends beyond our understanding, and He has the **power** to guide, protect, and redeem us. His kingship means we can **trust His authority** over every aspect of our lives—our future, our decisions, and our circumstances. He is the Lord and Shepherd of Psalm 23!
- d. He is able to bring that **perfect balance of justice and grace** into our lives, making Him the ideal ruler of our lives.
- e. We are called to submit to His **rule and authority**, not because He is an oppressive king, but because He is a **gracious King** who offers us salvation and transformation. He invites us to live under His reign, experiencing the **blessings** of His eternal Kingdom while also living out the **justice and righteousness** that He embodies.
- f. He is both **a personal and global king**. He is not only able to bring us personal salvation and a personal relationship with Him; but He is also able to transform the world by transforming people's hearts.

Read Acts 2:29-36

9. How does this passage relate to 2 Samuel 7:1-17?

In this passage Peter is talking about King David and Jesus as in 2 Samuel 7. Peter says that King David died and was buried and still in the grave to this day. But David knew God had promised that one of David's descendants would be placed on his throne, namely, the Messiah, Jesus. Peter says that in one of David's Psalms, Psalm 16:10, David wrote that the Messiah would not be abandoned to the realm of the dead, and nor would his body see decay. In other words, the Messiah would be resurrected. Peter goes on to say that Jesus was raised from the dead and is alive, and the Apostles were all eye-witnesses and that Jesus is now at

the right hand of the Father in Heaven. Peter goes on to say that God has poured out His Holy Spirit of truth to Peter's listeners.

Peter also quotes from Psalm 110:1 explaining that when David wrote this Psalm, David hadn't ascended to Heaven, but David knew that the Messiah, Jesus, in Heaven was/is his Lord. And in case they didn't quite get his point, Peter says in verse 36: Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!

*Acts 2:29-36 relates to 2 Samuel 7:1-17 in that Peter confirms that Jesus is the promised forever King of 2 Samuel 7 and the promised Messiah. **Jesus is both the fulfillment of the promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 and the eternal King who reigns over all**, as proclaimed in Acts 2. This connection not only affirms Jesus' divine authority but also demonstrates how **the Old Testament promises** find their ultimate expression in the **resurrected Christ**.*

10. **Ponder:** What was Peter proving to his fellow Israelites? (cf. Psalm 110:1) *Peter is proving that Jesus is the fulfilment of Psalm 110:1 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17 – by being both Lord (of our lives) and the Messiah, as Peter states in verse 36.*

11. How might the Israelites have felt after hearing verse 36? (see verses 37-39) *The Israelites might feel just a tad convicted! According to verse 37, they were cut to the heart and asked Peter what they should do. The answer is in verse 38; Peter tells them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins!*

Read Acts 13:22-23

12. How does this passage relate to 2 Samuel 7:1-17? *In Acts 13, Paul is speaking, and as is often the case in Acts, the Apostle speaking to the people. Often gives an overview (helicopter view) of Israel's checkered history. In these verses Paul speaks about how David, was the next King after Saul and that God described David as 'a man after my own heart', and that David would do everything God wanted him to do! Paul goes on to say that from David's descendants, God brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as He promised. These verses from Acts 13 relate to 2 Samuel 7 in that Acts 13:22-23 is confirming that Jesus is the promised forever King and Messiah of 2 Samuel 7.*

Read Romans 1:1-6

13. How does this passage relate to 2 Samuel 7:1-17?

Romans 1:1-6 describes Jesus in the same way as 2 Samuel 7 does; God promised a King and Messiah beforehand through His prophets. And Paul is saying that Jesus in terms of His earthly life is a descendant of David, but spiritually speaking, Jesus is the Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead and is Lord.

Read Revelation 22:16

14. How does this passage relate to 2 Samuel 7:1-17?

In the final chapter of the Book of Revelation, Jesus Himself declares who He is: "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

Jesus as the root and offspring of David – fulfils Isaiah 11:1

Jesus as the bright morning star - fulfils Numbers 24:17

15. In light of these Bible passages, what does it mean for Jesus to be the King of your life today? What areas of your life may need to come under His rule?

For Jesus to be King of our life, it means:

- a. We need to have a **personal relationship** with Him*
- b. We need to **acknowledge His authority** over our lives*
- c. We need to **submit our lives to Him and acknowledge He is sovereign***
- d. We need to **live out Kingdom values** -characterised by love, humility, selflessness, justice, mercy and forgiveness; a lot of which are counter-cultural.*
- e. We need to **be servant of all** (Mark 9:35) and sacrificial (John 15:13)*

What areas of our life may need to come under His rule:

- a. **Examine our hearts** – is there fear, anger, bitterness or unforgiveness. These must be repented*
- b. **Align our will with His will***
- c. Be **peacemakers** in our relationships; not peacebreakers or peace fakers.*
- d. Being **good stewards** of the gifts and possessions God has blessed us with*
- e. **Submitting our lives** – our plans, our family, our future to Him*
- f. Are we **seeking first God's Kingdom and righteousness**?*
- g. Are we building up **treasures** on Earth or in Heaven?*

16. What does it look like in your daily life to acknowledge Jesus as the King of your heart?
- a. *Acknowledge Jesus as King through **daily prayer** and surrender our hearts to Him each day*
 - b. ***Submit our plans** to Him daily? Ask, what would Jesus think, say or do?*
 - c. ***Align our thoughts and desires to His will** by allowing His truth to shape our thinking and our desires. This means **regularly immersing ourselves in God's Word** so that we learn what He values and desires!*
 - d. *Desire each day to **bring glory to Him** and not to ourselves!*
 - e. ***Obeying** His commands*
 - f. *Thinking how we might **serve** God and others each day*
 - g. *Regularly **confess** our sins and **repent***
 - h. *Ask God to show us **ways we can love others** each day*
 - i. *Ask God to give us **Gospel opportunities** to share our faith in Jesus*

17. If Jesus is the eternal King of our lives, how does His reign affect our view of our present struggles, our future hope, and our calling to live as citizens of His kingdom?

***Our present struggles:** we must accept that as followers of Jesus will have struggles in this life; but Jesus promises to be with us to the very end of the age. We also know that our present struggles are temporary*

***Our future hope:** Because of Jesus, we are forgiven of our sins (if we repent and believe) and we have the certain hope of Heaven to look forward to*

***Our calling to live as citizens of His Kingdom:** Our citizenship is in Heaven (Phil 3:20) we are Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20) and are called to live in a way that reflects the values of His reign. This includes living lives marked by love, justice, mercy, humility, and holiness. Our actions and words should point others to the reality of Jesus' reign. Whether at work, in our neighborhoods, or in our families, we are called to represent Jesus and His kingdom values.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

God's promised King is King Jesus – we are called to acknowledge Him as Lord and King of our lives!



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16)

Finish in prayer: Lord Jesus, we thank You for the promises You made to David and for the fulfillment of those promises in You, our eternal King. Thank You for being both the Son of David and the Lord of all, reigning in power and grace. We recognize You as the King of our lives and ask that You rule over our hearts, our decisions, and every part of our lives. Help us to live in submission to Your reign, trusting in Your faithfulness and looking forward to Your eternal Kingdom. May we honour You as our King in all we do. In Your precious name, we pray. Amen.

Study 4 – A Saviour to be Born

(Sermon on 22nd December 2024)

Before you begin: What is a Saviour?

***Dictionary definition:** a person who **saves** someone or something from danger or difficulty*

It begs the question: ‘What does the Saviour to be born, save us from?’. Answer: from sin and death which we all inherit from Adam and Eve (i.e., our inherited fallen condition)

Bible definition:

*In **Hebrew** [יָשַׁע yaw-shah] the word literally means to be in open or ample space in such a way as to be **delivered from danger or distress**.*

*In **Greek** [σωτήρ so-tare] This name was given by the ancients to **deities**, especially tutelary [custodial] deities, to princes, kings, and in **general to men who had conferred signal benefits upon their country**, and in the more degenerate days by way of flattery to personages of influence. It **literally means deliverer** and in the New Testament is used as **a title for Christ!***

Read Isaiah 7:12-17(especially v14)

1. What is the promise?

The Lord Himself promises to give a “sign”.

*The “sign” will be that a **virgin** shall conceive and bear a **son** and his name shall be **Immanuel***

*This is one of the most famous prophecies regarding the birth of Jesus the Messiah in the Bible. It also illustrates a principle of prophecy, that prophecy may have both a **near** fulfillment and a **far** fulfillment.*

The near fulfillment

The near fulfillment of this prophecy centered around King Ahaz, Jerusalem, and the attack from Israel and Syria. For Ahaz, the sign centered on this time span.

Simply put, God would give Ahaz a sign that within a few years, both Israel and Syria would be crushed. This was a sign of deliverance to Ahaz.

Many commentators think that this was immediately fulfilled when a young woman in the royal household shortly married, conceived a son, and unknowingly naming him “Immanuel.” Before this boy came to eat solid food, Israel and Syria

would be defeated. It is also possible that God is just referring in a figurative way to a year or two period of time.

The name 'Immanuel' was a rebuke to Ahaz. If 'God is with us,' then why should he have feared the enemy?

The 'sign' of the child, therefore, constitutes an indication that the all-sovereign and all-knowing God has the situation completely in hand, and it rebukes the king's lack of faith in him."

The far fulfillment

The virgin in verse 14 looks forward to the Virgin Mary, who conceives a child – from God – through the Holy Spirit – and this child is "God with us" (Immanuel)

2. What does the name "Immanuel" mean? Why is that important?

The name "Immanuel" which means "God with us", is important because it shows that the boy born was from God and placed in Mary's womb, and not from Mary's fiancée (betrothed husband) Joseph. Being a child from God and not conceived by human intercourse, means that the child is born sinless and is able to keep all of God's commands perfectly. This means when the child Jesus grows up to be a man – He is able to be the perfect sacrifice for sin – and takes the punishment for sin – off of humans – and onto Himself. Therefore, Jesus is able to pay for the punishment of sin – once and for all. **Without the virgin birth, there is no proper sacrifice and payment for sin – and God's wrath for the sin of the world is not satisfied!**

Read Isaiah 9:6-7

3. What does God promise to give? How is He described?

A child is born. A Son is given. And no ordinary Son! But God's Son.

He is described as:

Having the government on His shoulders – He is King of Heaven and Earth – not just the King of Israel!

Wonderful Counsellor – the word for wonderful has overtones of deity and supernatural and being amazing! Jesus is the One fit to guide our lives and should be the Christian's immediate resource as a counselor. Jesus can help us with our problems. Jesus may use the presence and the words of another Christian to do it, but Jesus is our Counselor!

*How we need Jesus as our **Counselor**! “It was by a Counsellor that this world was ruined. Did not Satan mask himself in the serpent, and counsel the woman with exceeding craftiness, that she should take unto herself of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in the hope that thereby she should be as God? Was it not that evil counsel which provoked our mother to rebel against her Maker, and did it not as the effect of sin, bring death into this world with all its train of woe? Ah! beloved, it was meet that the world should have a Counsellor to restore it, if it had a Counsellor to destroy it.” (Spurgeon)*

*Jesus is our **Counselor** in the sense that as God the Son, He takes counsel with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our good. The High Council of the Godhead brought forth our salvation. “Hence you read in the book of Zechariah, if you turn to Zech 6:13, ‘The council of peace shall be between them both.’ The Son of God with his Father and the Spirit, ordained the council of peace. Thus, was it arranged. The Son must suffer, he must be the substitute, must bear his people’s sins and be punished in their stead; the Father must accept the Son’s substitution and allow his people to go free, because Christ had paid their debts. The Spirit of the living God must then cleanse the people whom the blood had pardoned, and so they must be accepted before the presence of God, even the Father. That was the result of the great council.” (Spurgeon)*

The Great Counselor guides our lives. “Remember, there is nothing that happens in our daily life, but what was first of all devised in eternity, and counselled by Jesus Christ for our good and in our behalf, that all things might work together for our lasting benefit and profit.... Oh, how strange providence seems to you and to me! Does it not look like a zig-zag line, this way and that way, backward and forward, like the journeyings of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Ah! my brethren, but to God it is a straight line. Directly, God always goes to his object. And yet to us, he often seems to go round about.... Let us learn to leave providence in the hand of the Counsellor.” (Spurgeon)

Mighty God – Jesus, the Messiah is **Mighty God**: He is the God of all creation and glory, the LORD who reigns in heaven, the One worthy of our worship and praise. In Isaiah 10:21, the prophet Isaiah uses the exact same phrase to refer to Yahweh: ‘The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Might God’. Therefore, this is a clear statement in v6 of absolute deity of Jesus, the Messiah. “If Christ were not the Son of God, his death, so far from being a satisfaction for sin, was a death most richly and righteously deserved. The Sanhedrin before which

He was tried was the recognised and authorized legislature of the country. He was brought before that Sanhedrin, charged with blasphemy, and it was upon that charge that they condemned him to die, because he made himself the Son of God.” (Spurgeon)

Everlasting Father – *The idea in these Hebrew words is that Jesus is the **source or author of all eternity, that He is the Creator Himself**. It does not mean that Jesus Himself is the Person of the Father in the Trinity.*

Prince of Peace - *He is the One who makes peace, especially between God and man. Ultimately, Jesus makes peace when He satisfied God’s wrath on the cross and proclaimed, “It is finished!”*

“Whenever, in short, it appears to us that everything is in a ruinous condition, let us recall to our remembrance that Christ is called Wonderful, because he has inconceivable methods of assisting us, and because his power is far beyond what we are able to conceive. When we need counsel, let us remember that he is the Counselor. When we need strength, let us remember that he is Mighty and Strong. When new terrors spring up suddenly every instant, and when many deaths threaten us from various quarters, let us rely on that eternity of which he is with good reason called the Father, and by the same comfort let us learn to soothe all temporal distresses. When we are inwardly tossed by various tempests, and when Satan attempts to disturb our consciences, let us remember that Christ is The Prince of Peace, and that it is easy for him quickly to allay all our uneasy feelings. Thus, will these titles confirm us more and more in the faith of Christ, and fortify us against Satan and against hell itself.” (Calvin)

Read Genesis 3:15

4. What promise is given?

This promise is the first mention of the Good News (the Gospel) of Jesus. It is referred to as Proto-Evangelium. Here, as God dishes out the punishment to the serpent for his involvement in tempting and lying to Eve and bringing about sin and disobedience; God promises that there will be enmity (hostility) from now on between the serpent and his offspring (i.e., Satan and his evil demons) and the woman and her offspring. This means there will always been a spiritual war between evil and good. God also promises that one of the woman’s offspring will

crush the serpent/Satan's head even though the serpent/Satan will bruise the woman's offspring's heal. The woman's offspring looks forward to Jesus coming. When Jesus died on the cross, Satan thought he had a victory and had 'bruised Jesus' heal' but actually Jesus had 'crushed Satan's head' because Jesus was able to get rid of the two problems that Satan brought into the world – sin and death. Jesus removed the punishment for sin by His death on the cross and removed the problem of death by His resurrection!

Read Micah 5:2

5. What promise is given?

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

Here, Micah [735BC] refers to the little town in Judah, called Bethlehem Ephrathah. Note: there is another Bethlehem in Galilee in the North of Israel belonging to the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15; Judges 12:8,10). Therefore, it's important that Micah identifies the one in Judah.

Bethlehem will be the birthplace for a ruler of Israel. This ruler's origins didn't begin in Bethlehem – his origin was 'from old, from ancient times' – pointing to his existence from the beginning of time – at Creation.

There is much symbolism in the name Bethlehem...

- *Bethlehem was King David's hometown – so it's fitting that the descendant of David who will be the forever King, is born there too; as was Jesus' earthly Father, Joseph.*
- *Bethlehem means "House of Bread" – and Jesus refers to Himself as "the Bread of Life" (John 6:35)*
- *Bethlehem was famous for shepherds and sheep-raising. The shepherds in Bethlehem were often considered outcasts, some accused of stealing and they also were a bit stinky because they slept out in the fields with the sheep at night; yet these same shepherds were the first to hear from the angels the Good News of a Saviour being born. This shows that Jesus came so that everyone, no matter what status in life, could have the opportunity to be saved for Heaven. Also, Jesus referred to Himself as the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11) and we are His "sheep" who have gone astray – and we are the sheep that the Good Shepherd lay down His life for!*

- *Bethlehem was 10miles from Jerusalem and the Temple where the sacrifices for sin were made. The lambs produced at Bethlehem were used for sacrifice at the temple; pointing to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World” (John 1:29) and Jesus also describes Himself as the Temple, that if destroyed, He will rebuild in 3 days (John 1:19-21).*

Read Malachi 3:1

6. Who is being promised here?

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.

Here God speaks to the prophet Malachi [430BC] and promises a) a messenger who will prepare before me [God]; and b) then the Lord, whom people have been waiting for and seeking, will come to His temple and He will also be a messenger of a covenant [an agreement between God and humankind]

The first messenger is fulfilled in John the Baptist who prepares people for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, by telling people to turn back to God and repent of their sins!

The second messenger is fulfilled in Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, who comes to His temple. This is fulfilled – when a) Jesus brought to the Temple in as an infant; b) when He is 12 years old; c) when He cleanses the temple from traders and d) as He is the Temple!

Read Luke 1:26-56

7. What does the angel tell Mary?

The angel tells Mary that she is “highly favoured” [full of grace] and that “the Lord is with her” (v28)

Mary was in a unique position and blessed by God as the woman God chose to bear the Son of God.

8. How did Mary react in verse 29 and why? How does the angel help in verse 30?

Mary was a) greatly troubled by the angel’s words and b) wondered what kind of greeting this was, from the angel! Why? She was most likely very surprised by the angel’s words and wondering ‘why me?’. This also showed her humility, which may have been one of the reasons God chose her in the first place!

The angel helps her in verse 30 by explaining to her that she does not need to be afraid because she has 'found favour with God'.

9. How does the angel describe this promised child in verses 31-33? What does the name "Jesus" mean?

The child will be a son named Jesus which means "Saviour" or "He saves". He will be 'great' and will be called 'The Son of the Most High' (=Son of God); and God will give Him the throne of His father (ancestor) King David; and Jesus will reign over Jacob's (Israel) descendants forever; and His kingdom will never end!

These words from the angel are all fulfilments of prophecy (see 2 Samuel 7:12-13).

10. What is the answer to Mary's question in v34?

Mary's question to the angel is: "How will this be, since I am virgin?". Mary is betrothed to Joseph and they haven't slept together, so Mary is puzzled how she will be able to have a child. This is a fulfilment of Isaiah 7:14 – the sign of a virgin conceiving and giving birth to a son, named Immanuel!

11. What miracles are described in verses 35 and 36?

The miracle is that Mary will conceive her son through the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High God who will overshadow Mary. This means the child will be from God, rather than from human origin; and so, the child is divine and perfect and sinless and the Son of God!

*The word **overshadow** means "to cover with a cloud," as in the cloud of Shekinah glory (Exodus 16:10, 19:9, 24:16, 34:5, 40:34) or the cloud of transfiguration (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7, Luke 9:34).*

The angel also tells of another miracle in that Mary's cousin Elizabeth is also going to have a child in her old age. Elizabeth's child will not be God's Son, but the miracle is that God has enabled Elizabeth to conceive even though she is either beyond child-bearing age or has been unable to have a child due to other biological problems.

12. What wonderful promise does the angel make in verse 37? Do you find comfort and encouragement in this?

V37 says "for no word from God will ever fail". In other words, "nothing is impossible for God"(KJV) and "if God says something will happen, it will happen".

There is great comfort in knowing that God's Word and God's Promises – just simply cannot fail. We can 100 percent totally take God at His Word!

13. What do you make of Mary's response in verse 38?

She simply says that she is the Lord's servant, which means the Lord is her Master! It was not her position to debate or question the Lord's decision; but simply by faith, accept the Word of the Lord, from the angel! She simply states, 'May your word be fulfilled'. We can learn a good lesson from Mary here, to simply accept what God says without doubting or questioning!

Also, being pregnant, out of wedlock, would leave Mary in a very vulnerable position. Technically, according to Jewish Law, she could be stoned to death, but in Mary's time, this was not enforced. Nevertheless, she would be ostracized by the community if she had a baby out of marriage! But she simply trusted God had it all covered!

14. When Mary visits Elizabeth (who is also pregnant), why did the baby in Elizabeth's womb leap when Mary entered the house?

Elizabeth's unborn child is John the Baptist.

The unborn baby in Elizabeth's womb (John) recognized the unborn baby in Mary's womb (Jesus) and leapt for joy! This can only be the work of the Holy Spirit.

This picture of two women being blessed and full of joy is amazing in a culture where often women were second class citizens; but not in God's eyes. This picture is counter-cultural of the day.

15. What do you make of Elizabeth's reaction in verses 41b-45?

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

*Elizabeth believed the word of the Lord given to her husband Zechariah when he was in the temple. In the temple, Gabriel told Zechariah that their promised son **would make ready a people prepared for the Lord** (Luke 1:17). Elizabeth believed that, and also believed that the baby in Mary's womb was the **Lord** who Elizabeth's son would prepare the way for (**the mother of my Lord**). This faith was in Elizabeth because she **was filled with the Holy Spirit** (V41b)*

*Elizabeth recognized that Mary's faith played an active role in receiving the promise. God promises should never make us passive; they should prompt us to seize them by faith. Elizabeth wanted to encourage Mary's faith, so she declared **"Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"***

16. What are the key themes of Mary's song (The Magnificat) in verses 46-55? *In Mary's Song (The Magnificat – called this because in KJV it begins “my soul magnifies the Lord – and Latin=Magnificat), Mary's Song (The Magnificat) in Luke 1:46-55, can be broken down by as follows:*

1. **Praising God - Verses 46-47:** Mary begins with a declaration of praise, glorifying (magnifying) the Lord. She rejoices in God her Saviour, acknowledging His greatness and the joy He has brought her.
2. **Gratitude for God's favour on her - Verse 48:** Mary expresses gratitude that God has looked favourably upon her humble state. She recognizes that future generations will call her blessed for being chosen for such an important role.
3. **God is merciful - Verse 50:** Mary highlights God's mercy, noting that His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation.
4. **God has done great things - Verses 49, 51-53:** She praises God for His mighty deeds and the holiness of His name. God's power is evident in the wonderful things He has done. Mary speaks of God's actions in the world, where He scatters the proud, brings down the mighty, and exalts the humble. The hungry are filled, while the rich are sent away empty, signalling God's reversal of worldly power structures. God is a God of reversal of fortunes!
5. **God remembers His people and His promises - Verses 54-55:** She praises God for helping Israel, remembering His mercy to His people, fulfilling the promises made to their ancestors. Mary concludes by affirming that God has been faithful to His covenant with Abraham and his descendants, ensuring that His mercy endures.

*Mary's song/prayer is **God-centred and thankful**; not Mary-centered. We can learn from this about how we pray.*

17. How does Mary's song reflect her understanding of God's character and work in this world?

Mary also shows here her knowledge of God's Word! She understands God to be Holy and powerful; merciful and faithful to His covenant promises; a God of reversal of fortunes; a God of justice; and the one who initiates salvation!

18. What does Mary say about God's mercy in verse 50?

God's mercy is from generation to generation. He always shows mercy to everyone who worships Him (CEV). This means God's mercy is available to all generations;

it's not limited to Israel. God's mercy is available to those who have a humble and respectful awe of Him, showing that the fear of the Lord—a deep reverence and submission to His will—is key to receiving His mercy. By highlighting God's mercy, Mary underscores that mercy is an essential part of God's nature. He is compassionate and willing to forgive and show kindness to those who revere Him, even though they may not deserve it.

19. What comfort do you find in Mary's song?

There is comfort in knowing that God is merciful and faithful in His promises; and has concern for the humble and oppressed; and is able to reverse the fortunes – scattering the proud and upholding the oppressed; and knowing we have the certain hope of salvation because of the birth of Jesus!

20. What does verse 55 say about God's promises?

God's promises are forever!

21. Compare Mary's song with Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. How are they similar?

Similarities:

1. Praise for God's Power and Holiness:

- **Hannah's Prayer:** "My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance." (1 Samuel 2:1)
- **Mary's Song:** "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Luke 1:46-47)

*Both women begin their prayers with expressions of **rejoicing** and **praise** for God, recognizing His greatness and holiness. They glory in God's salvation, showing deep joy and gratitude.*

2. God's Reversal of Human Fortunes:

- **Hannah's Prayer:** "The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more." (1 Samuel 2:4-5)
- **Mary's Song:** "He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble." (Luke 1:51-52)

Both prayers reflect a **reversal of fortunes**, where God lifts up the humble and brings down the powerful. Hannah speaks of the weak becoming strong and the hungry being satisfied, while Mary emphasizes God's action in humbling the proud and exalting the lowly. This theme of **social justice**—where God overturns the established order to favour the oppressed—is central to both prayers.

3. **God's Faithfulness to His Promises:**

- **Hannah's Prayer:** "The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts." (1 Samuel 2:6-7)
- **Mary's Song:** "He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and to his descendants forever, just as He promised our ancestors." (Luke 1:54-55)

Both prayers recognize that God's actions in the world are in line with His **faithfulness** to His promises, particularly to Israel. Hannah speaks of God's sovereign power to give life and to exalt, while Mary praises God for fulfilling His covenant promises to Abraham and his descendants.

4. **Humility and Gratitude:**

- **Hannah's Prayer:** "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God." (1 Samuel 2:2)
- **Mary's Song:** "For He has been mindful of the humble estate of His servant." (Luke 1:48)

Both women express their **humility** and gratitude to God. Hannah declares that there is no one like the Lord, and Mary acknowledges that God has favoured her despite her humble status. Their humility highlights their recognition of God's grace and favour.

5. **God's Justice and Defense of the Righteous:**

- **Hannah's Prayer:** "He will guard the feet of His faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness." (1 Samuel 2:9)
- **Mary's Song:** "He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty." (Luke 1:53)

Both prayers emphasize that God will **defend the righteous** and bring justice to the wicked. Hannah speaks of God guarding the faithful and punishing the wicked, while Mary praises God for providing for the hungry and sending away the rich, who often represent the unjust.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:20

22. What does this say about God's promises?

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so, through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Jesus is the ultimate fulfilment of ALL of God's promises.

23. What does that mean about God's promise that Jesus will come again? (cf. Acts 1:11 and Hebrews 9:28)

Acts 1:11 says: "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Because we know God ALWAYS keeps His promises, we can be CERTAIN that Jesus will come back in the clouds, just like in ascended to Heaven in the clouds!

Hebrews 9:28 says: So, Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Jesus came the first time to die on a cruel cross and take away the punishment of sin. When He comes the second time; He won't come to make salvation possible by dying on a cross again; He will come to bring salvation by bringing people who are saved (by believing in Him) to Heaven to be with Him. Again, because we know God ALWAYS keeps His promises, we can be CERTAIN that Jesus will bring us to Heaven with Him, when He returns!

What's the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

God promised Jesus, our Saviour – and God always keeps His promises!



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V35 - "And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.'"

Finish in prayer: Lord, we thank You for the example of Mary's faith and obedience in accepting Your calling. Just as she trusted Your plan for her life, help us to trust in Your will and remain faithful in all circumstances. Like Elizabeth, may we recognize Your presence and rejoice in Your goodness. Fill our hearts with praise, just as Mary's song reflects Your mercy and justice. We pray that we, too, would be vessels for Your work in this world, and that Your Kingdom would come through our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Study 5 – A Saviour Born

(Sermon on Christmas Day 2024)

Before you begin: Why is Christmas Day important to you?

A special day to celebrate God's love for us. God lovingly allowed His Son to leave Heavenly glory to come to this Earth and step into human history, so that He could complete God's rescue mission. Without Christmas Day, we would not have a Saviour born and without a Saviour born, we don't have His death for the punishment for sin (and forgiveness) and we don't have His resurrection for eternal life.

Christmas allows us to join together with family, friends and Church Family and celebrate God's love in Jesus!

Read Isaiah 52:7

1. What is the prophet Isaiah looking forward to and what is so beautiful?

Isaiah is looking forward to the ONE who will bring peace between humanity and God; will bring the Good News of reconciliation and bring about salvation. There is no better news than knowing that this ONE (Jesus) can bring about our salvation – by offering forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Heavenly peace.

God (through Isaiah) is saying there is nothing more beautiful than when people come proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Jesus! There is nothing more important than sharing this Good News and Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to share this Good News because that's basically what Christmas is about – the Good News of Jesus!

Read Psalms 24:1-10

2. What does it mean that "**the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it**" (v.1)?

How does this relate to the birth of Jesus, who is the Creator of the world (John 1:1-3)?

It means that the Lord is the sovereign creator of everything and it reflects the biblical truth that the entire creation is an expression of God's glory. Everything God made reflects His power, wisdom, and beauty.

According to John 1:1-3 – Jesus is the Word of God; He was there at creation; and through Him (the Word) everything was made! On that first Christmas Day, God's Word, Jesus, became flesh and came to dwell with humankind – this fulfils His role as Immanuel – "God is with us"

3. What does Jesus' birth teach us about God's sovereignty over all creation?

*God is able to **enter into time and space** – and **step in human history**. It shows He is **in control of all things**. He enabled His Son, through the Spirit, to enter the womb of the virgin, Mary, and be born as a human being, yet also, fully God and therefore sinless and perfect. As Philippians 2:6-8 says:*

*⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

*God's sovereignty is shown in the **fulfilment of the OT prophecies about Jesus' birth** (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7 and Micah 5:2)*

*God's sovereignty is shown in **God's control of nature and it's use for His purposes**. Like the star leading the wise men (Matthew 2:2) and the heavenly choir of angels praising and announcing Jesus' birth (Luke 2:13-14)*

*God's sovereignty is shown in **God's care for the marginalized** – like the shepherds (Luke 2:8-12)*

*God's sovereignty shown in the fact that **His Kingdom is Heaven and Earth and everlasting** (Luke 1:32-33)*

4. In verses 3-4, the psalmist says that only those with "**clean hands**" and a "**pure heart**" can approach God. How does Jesus, being the sinless Son of God, fulfill this requirement on our behalf?

The Bible says we are all sinners and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23) so none of us can approach a Holy God on His Holy mountain with clean hands or pure hearts. But because Jesus is fully God (as well as fully human) – He is perfectly sinless and can approach God on our behalf, and also satisfy God's requirement for obedience of God's law!

5. In light of the Christmas story, how do we understand the phrase "those who do not lift up their souls to an idol" (v.4)? How does the birth of Jesus call us to turn away from idols and focus on Him as the true Saviour?

The birth of Jesus – God's Son – the Holy One of God – challenges people to come and worship Him – and put away worshipping any idols, any other gods, any other person or thing (materialism, wealth, career, sport) – and come to the ONLY one who can make us right with God and approved by God.

6. What promises are there in verses 5 and 6? How is this possible?

- *There is a promise of **blessing** – this includes spiritual, physical and relational well-being. First and foremost, we get the blessing of being right with God as a gift from Jesus – not something we earn of ourselves. This is only possible because Jesus purchased salvation for us*
- *There is a promise of **vindication** – instead of being found guilty of our sins and punished for them – Jesus makes it possible for us to be declared not guilty of our sins and freed from punishment. Sin and death are no longer a problem to us.*
- *There is a promise of being part of a generation of people who seek the Lord; i.e. we are **God's children!***

7. How do verses 7 to 10 relate to Jesus as the King of Glory?

- a. *Jesus is described as **King of Glory** (verses 8, 9, 10) – because He left Heavenly glory. When He left Heaven, He was the ultimate expression of God's glory.*
- b. *The Psalm **calls for people to worship Jesus as the King of Glory** – verses 7 and 9 say 'lift up your heads' and 'gates and doors are called to be open up' to welcome and worship Him*
- c. *Jesus as the King of Glory is described as '**strong and mighty**' and '**mighty in battle**' – showing that He has **all power and authority and victory over sin, death and Satan***
- d. *Jesus as the King of Glory is described as '**the Lord Almighty**' this means He is **sovereign over ALL things** – the Heavens, the Universe and the Earth. He is **the King of kings** (Revelation 19:16); **the Lord of lords** and ruler over creation (Colossians 1:16).*

Read Micah 5:2

8. What promise is given?

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Bethlehem will be the birthplace for a ruler of Israel. This ruler's origins didn't begin in Bethlehem – his origin was 'from old, from ancient times' – pointing to his existence from the beginning of time – at Creation.

There is much symbolism in the name Bethlehem...

- *Bethlehem was King David's hometown – so it's fitting that the descendant of David who will be the forever King, is born there too; as was Jesus' earthly Father, Joseph.*
- *Bethlehem means "House of Bread" – and Jesus refers to Himself as "the Bread of Life" (John 6:35)*
- *Bethlehem was famous for shepherds and sheep-raising. The shepherds in Bethlehem were often considered outcasts, some accused of stealing and they also were a bit stinky because they slept out in the fields with the sheep at night; yet these same shepherds were the first to hear from the angels the Good News of a Saviour being born. This shows that Jesus came so that everyone, no matter what status in life, could have the opportunity to be saved for Heaven. Also, Jesus referred to Himself as the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11) and we are His "sheep" who have gone astray – and we are the sheep that the Good Shepherd lay down His life for!*
- *Bethlehem was 10miles from Jerusalem and the Temple where the sacrifices for sin were made. The lambs produced at Bethlehem were used for sacrifice at the temple; pointing to Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World" (John 1:29) and Jesus also describes Himself as the Temple, that if destroyed, He will rebuild in 3 days (John 1:19-21).*

Read Luke 2:1-21

9. Why do you think Luke emphasizes the historical details in verses 1-5?

By grounding the story of Jesus' birth in concrete historical context, Luke emphasizes that the birth of Jesus is not a myth or legend, but a real event that took place in history. He provides specific historical markers, such as the census under Caesar Augustus and the role of Quirinius as governor of Syria, to tie the birth of Jesus to a known time and place. This reinforces the idea that Jesus' birth is part of the real history of the world, not some abstract spiritual event.

By referencing these known historical figures and events, Luke places the incarnation of Christ within a framework that could be verified by contemporary readers. It is a reminder that God entered history in a particular time and place, as opposed to being a purely spiritual or timeless concept. This makes the story more credible and verifiable to the audience.

Luke's detailed attention to historical facts helps reinforce that **Jesus' birth is the fulfillment of God's promises** in the Old Testament.

- **The Prophecy of the Messiah's Birth in Bethlehem:** Luke emphasizes that Joseph and Mary travelled to **Bethlehem**, the **town of David**, because it was a requirement of the census. This detail ties Jesus' birth to the **prophecy in Micah 5:2**, which foretold that the **Messiah would be born in Bethlehem**. Jesus, who is from the **line of David**, was born in the town of David, **fulfilling the prophecy** that the Messiah would come from David's lineage.
- By focusing on these historical details, Luke underscores the **sovereignty of God** in orchestrating these events, ensuring that all the **prophecies** about the Messiah would be fulfilled at the right time and place, even through the seemingly mundane process of a **Roman census**.

The historical backdrop emphasizes that the **birth of Jesus was not an isolated spiritual event** but a **moment in the midst of ordinary history**. The census, a **secular Roman decree**, was used by God to fulfill His plan for the Messiah to be born in **Bethlehem** (Luke 2:4). This also shows that **God works through history** and human events—whether they appear secular or significant—to bring about His will.

God's Sovereignty over World Events: The Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus, who issued the decree for the census, was the most powerful ruler of the time. But Luke shows how even the **power of Rome** was being used to bring about God's plan. The fact that Jesus was born in **humble circumstances**—not in a palace, but in a manger in Bethlehem—reinforces the theme that **God's ways are not our ways**, and His purposes are often realized in ways that appear **unexpected and humble**.

By referencing **Caesar Augustus** and **Quirinius**, two significant political figures of the Roman Empire, Luke also emphasizes that the **message of Jesus** is meant for the **whole world**.

- **The Roman World and the Census:** Caesar Augustus' decree required that **everyone in the Roman Empire** return to their hometowns to be registered. This shows that Jesus' birth, although occurring in a small, seemingly insignificant town, was **connected to the entire Roman world**. Luke is making a subtle statement that Jesus is the **Savior not only of the Jewish people but of the entire world**.
- The **universality of the census**—affecting all people, regardless of their social status—parallels the **universal scope of Jesus' mission**. Jesus came to save **all people**, regardless of their political or social standing, and Luke emphasizes this point throughout his Gospel.

Luke's focus on historical details also serves to show that **Jesus, though divine, was fully human** and experienced the same realities as other people in history.

- The **census** was a political and bureaucratic act, and Joseph and Mary were not exempt from it. They had to travel to Bethlehem because of this government decree, despite the **challenges it presented** (Mary was pregnant and near her time of delivery). This emphasizes the **humble, human nature** of Jesus' birth—Jesus was not born in the lap of luxury, but in a very real, **historically grounded context**.
- This historical setting underscores the **humility** of the incarnation—God entering the world not with royal grandeur or political power, but as a baby, born to a young couple, in the midst of an empire that did not even recognize Him as King.

10. In verse 7, the birth of Jesus is described in humble circumstances. What does this tell us about God's choice of how to bring the Saviour into the world? *Jesus' birth in humble circumstances shows us:*

- a. *God's reversal of human expectations: If we were to imagine the **birth of a king**, we might expect grandeur, wealth, and power. We would expect a **royal palace**, servants, and splendor. But God chose to bring His Son, the **Messiah**, into the world in a way that **defies earthly conventions**. The **birth of Jesus** in a manger symbolizes that God's kingdom is **not of this world**, and that His values are radically different from the values of earthly rulers. Jesus' life and teachings constantly challenged the norms of power, wealth, and status. The humble birth*

signifies that the **way of God** is not the way of power and prestige, but the way of **service, humility, and love** (Matthew 20:26-28). Jesus, who is King of Kings, enters the world as a **vulnerable baby**, demonstrating that **true greatness in God's eyes** is found in humility, not in human achievement or status.

- b. Jesus' birth in such **humble circumstances** shows that God identifies with the **poor, the marginalized, and the outcasts**. Jesus was born to a young, poor couple, and placed in a **manger**, a feeding trough used for animals. This indicates that God is not distant from human suffering and poverty but is present in the most **lowly and humble circumstances**. **Jesus' humble birth** is a foretaste of His ministry, where He consistently reached out to the **poor, the sick, the sinners, and the oppressed**. From the beginning of His life, Jesus shows that **God cares for the lowly**, and His Kingdom is open to everyone, regardless of social status, wealth, or power. The **manger** where Jesus was laid symbolizes that Jesus **entered the world in poverty and lived a life of humility**. He identified with those who had no status, no wealth, and no power, thus making it clear that the Gospel is for all people, especially the marginalized (Luke 4:18, Matthew 11:5).
- c. The humble circumstances of Jesus' birth also show that God's **Sovereign Plan** for salvation was not dependent on human expectations or actions. Although the world might expect a powerful, wealthy king, God chose a humble, poor setting for the birth of His Son. This was part of God's **divine strategy** to demonstrate that His Kingdom would be different from the kingdoms of this world. God's choice to send Jesus in such a humble way teaches that **God's ways are not our ways** (Isaiah 55:8-9). His plan for salvation was not about human effort, but about the **grace and power of God**. By being born in such lowly circumstances, Jesus exemplifies that salvation is a **gift from God, not something earned or achieved by human merit**. The fact that Jesus was born in a stable points to God's **sovereign will**—nothing, not even the lack of space in an inn, could thwart His plan for salvation. The **humility of the birth** points to the **humility of the Savior** who would later die on the cross for the sins of the world (Philippians 2:5-8).
- d. Jesus' humble birth is also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies that indicated the Messiah would not come with earthly grandeur, but in a way that would surprise many. For example, in **Micah 5:2**, it was foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, a small and seemingly insignificant town.

*The humble birth in a manger also **fulfills the prophecy of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53**, who would not come as a mighty warrior or king, but as a man of sorrows who would be despised and rejected by others. Jesus, the Messiah, did not come to dominate the world but to serve and to suffer for the sake of humanity.*

- e. The humble circumstances of Jesus' birth send **a powerful message of inclusion**. There was no room in the inn, but the Savior of the world was still made welcome by the humble shepherds and, eventually, by the magi. The lowly nature of Jesus' birth symbolized that He was born for everyone, not just the elite or powerful.*

*The shepherds, who were considered among the lowest in society, were the first to hear the good news of great joy (Luke 2:10-11). The **Gospel is AN INVITATION TO ALL and is meant to be proclaimed to all people**, especially those who are rejected or forgotten by society. Jesus' birth in humble circumstances shows that no one is excluded from God's love, and that Jesus came for the humble and the brokenhearted (Luke 4:18).*

11. How does the humble setting of Jesus' birth challenge our own expectations of what greatness and success look like?
 - a. **Greatness in Humility, Not Power**: Jesus was born in a stable, not a palace, showing that true greatness is found in humility, not in wealth or power.*
 - b. **Success in Service, Not Status**: Jesus came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45). Success in God's eyes is about serving others, not achieving personal status.*
 - c. **Value of the Lowly**: The humble birth in a manger emphasizes that greatness is not about social rank or appearance, but about heart and character.*
 - d. **God's Ways Are Different**: Jesus' birth shows that God's definition of success is often the opposite of worldly definitions—success isn't about domination or fame but about **obedience to God's plan**.*
 - e. **Inclusion Over Exclusion**: The humble setting speaks of God's desire to reach the marginalized—His Kingdom is open to the poor, the meek, and the humble (Matthew 5:3).*
 - f. **God Works in Unexpected Ways**: The quiet, humble birth of Jesus shows that **God often works through the unnoticed and ordinary**, upending our expectations of what is important or powerful.*

12. When the angel appears to the shepherds, the angel says the birth of Jesus is '**good news**'. Why is Jesus' birth '**good news**'?

Jesus' birth is good news because it answers the bad news that we are all born with an inherited fallen condition – of sin and death. We can't stop sinning – we die spiritually and physically – and our sin separates us from a right relationship with God. Jesus death and resurrection are the good news that fix our fallen condition and belief in His good news gets us right with God and into Heaven!

13. Why do you think the shepherds were first to hear about Jesus' birth?

To show the Kingdom of God is for everyone – including the lowly, the outcasts and the marginalized. And to point to the need we all have for the Good Shepherd. All are welcome in Jesus' Kingdom!

14. What does '**peace**' mean in verse 14?

- Peace here means **reconciliation between God and humanity**. Through the birth of Jesus, God is offering peace to the world by removing the barrier of sin. Jesus' coming marks the beginning of God's plan to restore the broken relationship between Himself and humanity, achieved through Jesus' future life, death, and resurrection (Romans 5:1).
- It also hints at **peace on earth**—the hope for **restoration** and **wholeness** in the world. Jesus' coming initiates the **Kingdom of God**, where peace is meant to flourish among people, overcoming conflict, violence, and injustice. This peace is not just the absence of war, but the presence of **God's shalom**—a comprehensive peace that includes **justice, harmony, and well-being** for all (Isaiah 9:6-7). In 1914 – the Germans and Allies stopped fighting on Christmas Day because they remembered the Prince of Peace. That's what is possible if people take the Prince of Peace seriously.
- The peace proclaimed in Luke 2:14 is also a **personal, inner peace** that comes from knowing God and being at peace with oneself. Through Jesus, individuals can find freedom from **anxiety, fear, and guilt**, and experience **a peace that surpasses all understanding** (Philippians 4:7).
- The phrase "**peace to those on whom his favor rests**" shows that this peace is a **gift of God's grace**, offered to those who receive and accept it. It's not a peace everyone automatically receives, but a peace granted to those who are in a **right relationship with God**, made possible **ONLY** through Jesus.

15. **Ponder:** Does verse 14 give us our response to Christmas Day?

Oh Yes. The peace Jesus brings to us, can be passed on to others!

16. Does the shepherds' response in verses 16 to 18 show us anything?

When the shepherds heard what the angels said about Jesus, verse 16 says they "hurried" to find Mary and Joseph and the baby. There was an urgency to go and worship Him. And once they'd seen Jesus, they couldn't help but 'spread the word concerning what had been told about this child'.

When we really fully understand what Jesus gives us – we should have a) an urgency to tell others about Him and b) we should go and spread the Good News of Jesus! It is truly life-saving news – the difference between life and death – between Heaven and Hell!

17. What can we learn from Mary's response in verse 19?

Mary treasured all these things [about Jesus] in her heart. Is Jesus in our heart? Is He the ONE we treasure over and above anyone and anything else. Is He our first priority?

18. **Ponder:** Does verse 20 give us our response to Christmas Day?

The shepherds glorified and praised God for all the things they saw and heard about that first Christmas Day. Surely that's our response – glorify and praise God – for the gift of Jesus – Saviour – Prince of Peace – the way, truth and the life!

19. Why was Jesus' circumcised on the 8th day in verse 21?

Circumcision was a regulation of the law and part of God's covenant agreement with Abraham to show the Israelites were God's people. The law was instituted in Genesis 17:12 and reinforced as law in Leviticus 12:3. Even though Mary and Joseph the earthly parents of the Son of God, it did not remove their requirement to follow God's Law. Remember Jesus grew up to say that "He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17)

20. In what ways can we celebrate the birth of Jesus in a way that reflects the humility and simplicity of His birth, rather than focusing on materialism or worldly expectations?

a. Prioritize worship of Jesus over Christmas and beyond

- b. Share the Good News with others – share in words and in actions*
- c. Foster peace and reconciliation in all our relationships*
- d. Look to serve others instead of ourselves*
- e. Reflect on the nativity story and its meaning*
- f. Create family traditions that reflect Jesus' character: kindness, giving, servant hearted, humility*
- g. Simplify decorations and gifting*
- h. Practice gratitude and contentment*
- i. Limit consumerism*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **this study**?

The Birth of Jesus is GOOD NEWS



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Luke 2:19 - But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, who was born in humble surroundings to bring salvation to the world. We praise You for Your love, which came down from heaven to dwell among us. Like the shepherds, may we respond with joy and gratitude, spreading the good news of His birth. We thank You for the peace, hope, and grace that Jesus brings to our lives. Help us to keep our hearts focused on Him, reflecting on the true meaning of Christmas. May we honour Him with our lives, today and always. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Study 6 – A Saviour Adored

(29-Dec-2024)

Before you begin: What does adoration mean?

Dictionary definition: Deep love, respect and admiration

Read Luke 2:22-52

1. What do Joseph and Mary do in verses 22 to 24? Why? (see Exodus 13:1-2; Leviticus 12:1-8)

*Joseph and Mary were **obedient** to the purification rules stipulated in God's Law. They **consecrated** their firstborn male child.*

Having given birth, Mary was ceremonially unclean for seven days. Then on the eighth day the boy is circumcised (see Luke 2:21).

The mother is to bring the child to the priest and bring a lamb for burnt offering – if she can't afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons. Mary and Joseph could not afford a lamb; this shows they were poor!

*Exodus 13:1-2 - The Lord said to Moses, ² "**Consecrate to me every firstborn** male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal."*

*Leviticus 12:1-8 - The Lord said to Moses, ² "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. ³ **On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised.** ⁴ Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. ⁵ If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.*

⁶ "When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. ⁷ He shall offer them before the Lord to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.

"These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. ⁸ But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean."

2. What does this say about Joseph and Mary?

This shows Joseph and Mary are obedient to the Law, even though they are the parents of God's Messiah

3. What does verse 24 say about Joseph and Mary's circumstances? (see Leviticus 12:8)

The sacrifice they offered was the minimum required, which showed they were poor.

4. Simeon's prophecy in verses 25 to 32 declare Jesus is the "**light for revelation to the Gentiles**" and the "**glory of your people Israel**" (verse 32). What do these titles reveal about the universal significance of Jesus? (cf. Isaiah 42:6)

The phrase "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" means that Jesus will be a light that shines in the darkness of this sinful world (John 1:5) which exposes sin and calls people out of their spiritual darkness into God's wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus describes Himself as 'the light of the world' (John 8:12) and calls people to follow Him and they will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of Israel. The phrase "glory of your people Israel" means God's glory is revealed to Israel in the form of Jesus, as God's Son becoming a human being. It also means Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise of a Messiah.

Jesus is available to all nations – whether Jew or Gentile.

Isaiah 42:6 – says that Jesus will be: "a covenant for the [God's] people and a light for the Gentiles."

5. How does Simeon say that Jesus will 'affect' people in verses 34 to 35a?

Simeon says Jesus is destined to 'cause the falling and rising of many in Israel' and to be 'a sign spoken against'.

Jesus' teachings and claims [that He is the Son of God and the Messiah] caused many to reject Him and fall [like Judas]; and also caused many to believe in Him and rise [Peter denied Jesus but repented]. Even though, He fulfilled God's promises and prophecies, and performed many miracles, He was 'a sign spoken against' [literally a target to shoot out – especially by the religious leaders who continually plotted against Him] and so it 'revealed the thoughts of many hearts'

6. What specific prophecy does Simeon direct at Mary in verse 35b?

Simeon says, 'a sword will pierce her soul'. Mary, as Jesus' mother, had to watch her son face rejection, suffering and crucifixion.

7. Why is it significant that both Simeon and Anna, who were elderly and devout, were among the first to recognize Jesus as the Messiah?

In our culture, elderly people are sometimes invisible and written off as not useful. But Simeon and Anna exhibit two things of great importance that the younger generation can do with, namely: great faith and close personal relationship with God.

The fact that Simeon and Anna were among the first to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, shows God's grace and His care for all people – young and old – rich and poor. Everyone is valued in God's Kingdom!

8. In verse 38, Anna spoke about Jesus birth fulfilling the hopes of Jerusalem's redemption. What does she mean and how is it still relevant today?

Just like the people of Jerusalem who needed a Redeemer to 'buy' them back to God; people today need a Redeemer to 'buy' them back to God.

9. **Ponder:** What can we learn from Simeon and Anna's example of devotion and faith?

Simeon and Anna waited faithfully on God's promises. Even though there was a long delay in God fulfilling His promises, they remained faithful, devoted their lives to God and waited patiently! We too, can learn that God answers in His own perfect time and in His own perfect way!

10. We don't have many details about Jesus' childhood, but what are we told in verse 40?

We are told that Jesus grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

11. Jesus (aged 12) stayed back at the temple (verse 43). Why do you think Jesus, even at this young age, was so focused on His Father's house and His mission?

*At age 12, Jesus began to **understand His divine identity** and His unique relationship the God the Father. In Jewish culture, a boy at 12 would be approaching his Bar Mitzvah, beginning His adult responsibility for His own faith.*

*Jesus was also **now connected to His Mission** and so He spent time with the rabbis in the Temple, preparing for His ministry.*

*There was also **a desire by Jesus to be in His Father's presence**. The Temple was not just a physical location but also a spiritual location that represented the presence of God!*

12. **Ponder:** What does it look like in your life to seek God's house (His presence) above all else?

Here are some ways it can look like in our life when we seek God's House:

- a. Prioritizing time with God – praying and reading God's Word*
- b. Aligning our hearts with God's will – 'your will, Father, not my will'*
- c. Having a heart for worshipping God and worshipping with God's people*
- d. Having a desire for fellowship with the Body of Christ*
- e. Living in obedience to God's Word and trusting God's Word*
- f. Cultivating a heart that hungers and thirsts to be like Jesus*
- g. Allowing God's Word and Spirit to transform us*
- h. Being Mission-minding – wanting others to come and join us in loving and following Jesus!*

13. What does verse 49 reveal about Jesus' understanding of His relationship with God the Father?

Jesus understood His divine identity and His special unique relationship with His Father, God. In Judaism of that day, a boy began to learn his father's trade at about 12 years of age. Jesus fulfilled this by instructing the teachers in the temple.

14. In these verses in the temple, we see the family dynamic and the obedience of Jesus to His parents (verse 51). Read the following verses; how do they teach us our priority:

Psalm 27:4

One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

Our priority, like Jesus, is to seek the Lord and dwell in His House all the days of our life!

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Our priority for us as we deal with the next generation.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

How can we show adoration for the Saviour



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Luke 2:49:

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

Finish in prayer: Lord Jesus, we thank You for revealing Yourself as the Saviour from the very beginning of Your life. Like Simeon and Anna, we praise You for being the promised Redeemer, the light to the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel. We worship You for Your humility, Your wisdom, and the way You fulfilled God's plan of salvation. As we reflect on Your early years, help us to grow in wisdom and favour with God and others, and to honour You in all we do. May our hearts be filled with awe and gratitude, as we continually seek Your presence and worship You, our Saviour and King. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke
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Resources:

Christ centred preaching (Bryan Chapell)

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)