

A SIX-SESSION INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

Christian Intro

Reading Luke's Gospel alongside the Old Testament promises
it fulfils.

*The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and
repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all
nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

LUKE 24:46-47

MICHAEL RUSSELL

The course at a glance

1 Good reasons to be Christian?

Appendix A — ‘Two Ways to Live’: a quick summary of Christianity

Appendix B — More on Luke’s method for Christian confidence

2 Who is the Christ?

Appendix — How reliable are the documents of the Old Testament?

3 A man suffers to forgive sins

4 The Christ suffers for sins

5 The Christ rises from the dead

Appendix A — The third-day pattern in the Old Testament

Appendix B — The historical evidence for Jesus’ resurrection

6 Forgiveness of sins for all nations

Appendix A — Why repentance and forgiveness had to be preached

Appendix B — Why the preaching began at Jerusalem

Good reasons to be Christian?

THE COURSE

1. Over six weeks, this course aims to give an introduction to Christianity. The course is called ‘Christian Intro’. So it’s not ‘Anglican Intro’ or ‘Catholic Intro’ or ‘Baptist Intro’: we won’t cover issues that are special for Anglicans or Catholics or Baptists.

THE BIBLE

2. We will only need one book, the Bible. Since the Bible is so central, let me say a few things about it. The Bible isn’t one book; it is 66 books. You can see all the titles of the 66 books on the contents page of your Bible. *[Turn to the contents page of a Bible now.]* The books have many different authors, spanning many hundreds of years. Yet Christians claim that the Bible has one message.
3. The Bible is divided into two major sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word Testament means an agreement, or a contract, or a deal. So the New Testament is the New Deal that comes with Jesus.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

4. Our course focuses on the Gospel of Luke, a book of the New Testament which describes Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Today we want to look at Luke’s introduction. So turn to the contents page and find the book of Luke. I’m going to read Luke chapter 1, verses 1 to 4. *[See if you can find the start of Luke in your Bible now.]*

LUKE’S AIM

5. The first four verses in Luke are the introduction. They tell us Luke’s aim as he writes his book. Let’s read it now:

LUKE 1:1–4

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us,² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.³

Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

6. Notice the big aim which Luke has. In verse 4, Luke tells us his aim. He is writing ‘so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.’ Luke is trying to give us confidence in Christianity. He is helping us to be sure that Christianity is true.

LUKE'S METHOD

7. Notice next *how* Luke aims to bring us to certainty. Luke wants to convince us by writing an orderly account [verse 3]. That means he has carefully chosen what he will write and how he will write it.
8. He wants to write an orderly account of 'things fulfilled among us' [verse 1]. This means that he will point out how Jesus did things which were said about him long before he lived.
9. Luke also wants to make us sure of Christianity by writing a book which is carefully researched. For that reason, he uses reliable witnesses, 'those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants' {of Jesus} [v. 2]. That is, Luke talked to lots of people who had seen Jesus, before he wrote his book.
10. From this introduction, we see two big reasons for Christian confidence. Luke's first reason is the idea of *things fulfilled*. It is the idea that the key things of Jesus' life were already said before he lived. Key things in Jesus' life were there in the Old Testament long before he was born. So we'll look at the Old Testament during this course. The point is that the timing of the Old Testament gives us great confidence in Christianity. The outline of Jesus' life was completed around 400 years before he was born.
11. The second reason for Christian confidence is the statements by eyewitnesses. There were many people who saw Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Luke has drawn on the most reliable of these: Luke spoke to those who saw and served Jesus from the start. These witnesses agree that Jesus lived the life which the Old Testament said he would live (and said it before he was born).

OUR COURSE'S METHOD IS LUKE'S METHOD

12. This course will copy Luke's method. We will look at what the eyewitnesses said about Jesus, and we'll look at how the Old Testament predicted those things. As we do that, Christian teaching will become clear.
13. To look at what the eyewitnesses say, we're going to read Luke's Gospel. That will be the homework over the six weeks of the course. This homework is vital. We can't know that a story is false if we haven't even read the news report. So I encourage you to do the reading. At the start of each session, there will be a chance to ask questions about the homework. For the first week, I want us to read Luke 1–2.
14. To look at the Old Testament, we will spend lots of the course time reading key parts of the Old Testament. We will look in the Old Testament at the things Jesus told us to look at.
15. Any questions?

BIG IDEA

There are good reasons for believing in Christianity. Two reasons are the predictions of the Old Testament about Jesus, and the eyewitness statements that these predictions came true.

Homework: read Luke 1–2, and come next week with questions.

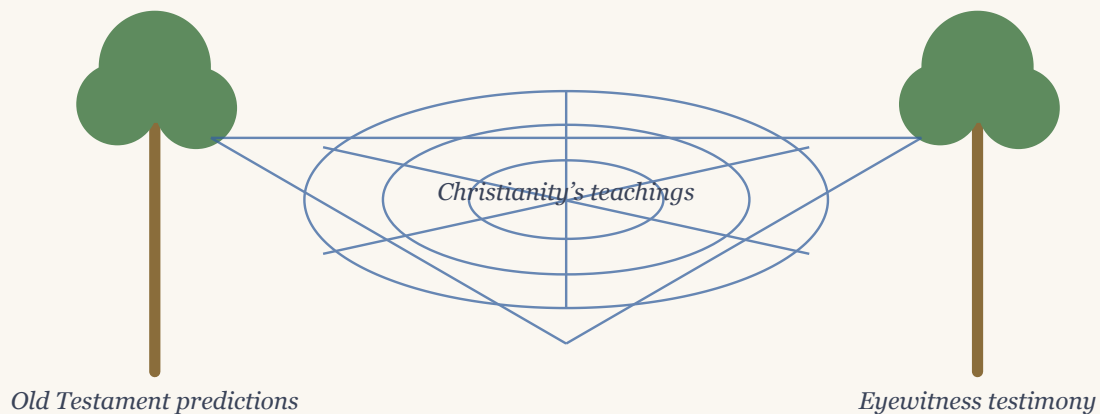
Appendix A to Session 1 — ‘Two Ways to Live’: a quick summary of Christianity

1. It is my experience running this course that some stay for the whole six weeks, while others leave after one week.
2. I want you all to stay. But in case that doesn’t happen, this appendix gives a summary of the whole Christian message. For copyright reasons, I can’t reproduce the whole summary here. The full presentation of ‘Two Ways to Live’ can be found at twowaystolive.com.
3. *[At this point, the presenter explains the ‘Two Ways to Live’ pictures.]* The six steps rest on these passages:

Revelation 4:11 · Romans 3:10–12 · 1 Peter 3:18 · Hebrews 9:27 · 1 Peter 1:3 · John 3:36

Appendix B to Session 1 — More on Luke’s method for Christian confidence

A PICTURE OF LUKE’S METHOD



Luke's method: the web of Christian teaching, hung on two testable 'trees'.

1. The things Luke has said about his method can be drawn in a picture. Luke's method can be compared to a spider's web, hanging from two trees.
2. The inner part of the diagram is the web, which shows how the teachings of Christianity relate to each other. The strands of the web represent Christianity's teachings. For example, two teachings in Christianity are that God is powerful, and that God made the world. They are consistent, and so their web strands cross.
3. In his introduction, Luke is pointing us to the trees in the diagram. They show us Christianity's links to our world. If there were no such trees, we could not know whether Christianity were true. That's not to say that Christianity would be wrong. But we just couldn't test it. We couldn't even work out its probability (its chance) of being true. We could know that Christianity is possible in an *imaginary* world. But it might be like the film *The Lord of the Rings*: it might be *possible*, but not real. We wouldn't know whether it is true in our world.
4. The two trees represent testable aspects of Christian teaching. We can test if the Old Testament speaks about Jesus' life in advance. We can test if the witnesses sound reliable and real.
5. Many religions are like a spider's web with no trees: the religions might agree with themselves, but there's no way to be 'certain of the things you have been taught'. For example, the Karma of Buddhism is possible in an imaginary world. When we do bad things, bad things might always come back to us, in this life, or in a future life. But we can't test whether this teaching is true in our world. We can't see the links between past lives and future lives of people. It is not a testable concept. So Buddhism would have a picture of a spider's web with no trees to hold it up.
6. So a big point to take away is this difference in Christianity from most other religions. Christianity is different because you can test it.

Who is the Christ?

RECAP

1. Last week we looked at the start of Luke's Gospel. We found that Luke provides two major reasons to believe in Christ: the Old Testament predictions about Jesus, and the eyewitnesses to what Jesus said and did.
2. There was also homework to read Luke 1–2 and come with questions. So does anyone have questions?
3. Luke's Gospel finishes in a similar way to how it starts. Let's read Luke 24:44–48.

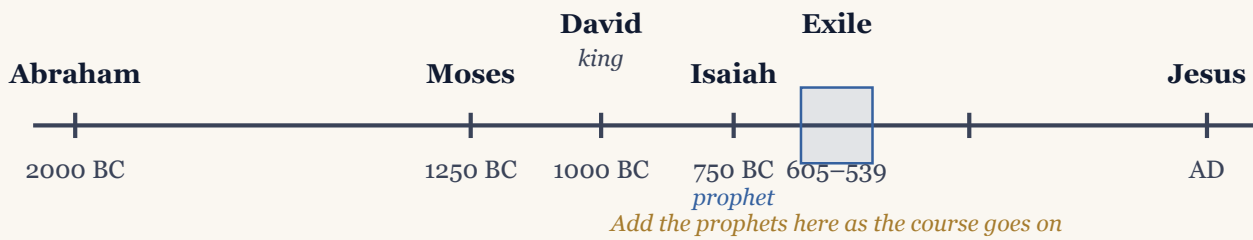
LUKE 24:44–48

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things."

4. Our two key reasons for believing are here. 'The Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms' in verse 44 is Jesus' way of speaking of the Old Testament. In verse 48 he tells the disciples that they are the witnesses that these things happened to Jesus.
5. The titles for our next five sessions come from verses 46–47. The topics are: 'Who is the Christ?', 'A Man Suffers to Forgive Sins', 'The Christ Suffers for Sins', 'The Christ Rises from the Dead', and 'Forgiveness of Sins for all Nations'.

WHAT IS A CHRIST?

6. The first thing we are told in verse 46 is Jesus' *title*. Let's read verse 46: '*The Christ* must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.' This term 'Christ' is a title given to Jesus. It is obviously important; for one thing, the religion is called Christ-ianity. What does it mean?
7. The Greek word 'Christ' is the same as the Hebrew word 'Messiah'. It means 'the anointed one', or 'the king'. The point is that the Old Testament speaks of a special king. And it predicts certain things about this king.
8. Today, we're going to see how this king is predicted in the Old Testament. But first, we need to know the Old Testament's timeline. *[See the timeline below.]* Notice that David was an important king around 1000 BC. Notice also that Isaiah was an important prophet, who wrote in about 750 BC. We're going to read something that God said to David first. Then we'll read something that Isaiah said about David's offspring.



The Old Testament timeline. Keep this page marked: later sessions will ask you to add Daniel, Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah.

9. So first, we'll read about David. Find 2 Samuel 7:16. Here's what God said to David:

2 SAMUEL 7:16

¹⁶ *Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.*

10. In this verse, a house doesn't mean a building. It means David will have descendants who will also be kings; he'll be the first in a 'royal family'. One of David's sons will be king. And one of David's son's sons will also be king. And so on. And this will go on forever.
11. We need to pay close attention to this word, 'forever'. In this passage, it is applied to the throne of David. It means that there will always be a place for one of David's family to be king. This 'throne of David' will last forever.
12. About 250 years later, Isaiah speaks about this same throne. Here we get the big idea for today's study: the Old Testament promises a king, descended from David, who will rule forever. He's called the Christ.
13. Let's read it in Isaiah 9:6-7.

ISAIAH 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

14. Notice three things. First, this passage is about a king. Verse 7 says 'he will reign'. That means he will rule. He will be king. Second, this king is descended from David, verse 7. That's part of being 'on David's throne', as we saw in 2 Samuel 7. So this king is part of David's house. Third, this king will rule forever.
15. That might seem strange at first. Because to rule forever, you have to live forever. But that's what Isaiah says. It's more than just that the throne will last forever. This one king will rule forever. This is the promised king that is sometimes called the Messiah. He's sometimes called the Christ.

16. You might have noticed that at the start of Luke's Gospel, we are told that Jesus is this person. We are told in Luke 1:32–33, where an angel says this about Jesus:

LUKE 1:32–33

*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him **the throne of his father David,**³³ and **he will reign** over the house of Jacob **forever**; his kingdom will never end.*

17. This is said in the same way that Isaiah said it, 750 years earlier.
18. We find it put more simply in Luke 2:11.

LUKE 2:11

*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is **Christ** the Lord.*

19. When you read further this week, you might also wonder why there is a long genealogy in Luke 3. A genealogy is a word which means a list of ancestors. Let's read Luke 3:23 now.

LUKE 3:23–38 (EXTRACTS)

²³ Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli,²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, [...] ³¹ the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, **the son of David,**³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, [...] the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

20. So this family list¹ shows that Jesus is descended from David. This is one important reason that the family list is given: to show that Jesus qualifies to be the Christ. It's important because the Christ had to be descended from David.
21. The question for us is a simple one: will we have Jesus as our King?
22. Any questions?

BIG IDEA

The Old Testament promises a king, descended from David, who will rule forever. He's called the Christ.

Homework: read Luke 3–9, and come next week with questions about what you've read.

¹ Note that the Luke account probably traces Jesus' blood descent through Mary: Heli was probably Joseph's father-in-law, while the Matthew account probably traces the 'line of the throne', a line which can move, for example, from father to nephew. So Jacob was probably Joseph's actual father.

Appendix to Session 2 — How reliable are the documents of the Old Testament?

1. There was a translation of the whole Old Testament into Greek. It's called the LXX, and it dates from between the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. (So the Old Testament must have been finished before Jesus came, since there was a translation of it well before he came.)
2. There is a record of the team being assembled to perform the LXX translation. There were 72 translators (so technically, it should be the LXXII, but the LXX is easier). This record gives us confidence in the date of the translation.
3. Until 1947, the only full Old Testament or full Old Testament books that we had in Hebrew (the original language) were copies dating from about 1000 AD (called the Masoretic Text, MT).
4. In 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. These date from between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD. They include a full copy of Isaiah in Hebrew.
5. So the Dead Sea Scrolls took us back 1000 years in our knowledge of some of the Hebrew originals. The surprise was that the text from 1000 AD was very close to the Dead Sea Scrolls of around 0 AD. This increased our confidence in the MT (which we use to translate the Old Testament).
6. Further, portions of the LXX were found within the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is an extra piece of evidence that the Old Testament was finished before the Dead Sea Scrolls were written. (And thus evidence that the Old Testament was finished before Jesus.)
7. So when we try to work out the original text of the Old Testament, we compare the LXX, the Dead Sea Scrolls (where relevant), the MT and a few other sources to check that we've got it right. We've got quite a few checks available to us.
8. To work out the date of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the methods used included handwriting styles, evidence from pottery and coins found with the scrolls, and carbon-14 dating of the linen coverings on the manuscripts. This is typical of how such manuscripts are dated.

For the purposes of the course, point 1 is probably most important: we are extremely confident that everything in our Old Testament was written before Christ arrived, since we have the LXX.

A man suffers to forgive sins

INTRO AND RECAP

1. Our last session had the title, ‘Who is the Christ?’ We saw that the Old Testament promised a king, descended from David, who will rule forever. He’s called the Messiah. He’s called the Christ. We saw that those two titles mean the same thing.
2. There was homework to read Luke 3–9 and come with questions. So does anyone have questions from their reading?
3. It’s at the end of Luke that we receive an outline of what the Old Testament says about the Christ. We looked at this at the start of last session, but here is part of it again; let’s read Luke 24:46–47.

LUKE 24:46–47

⁴⁶ *He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name [...]”*

4. In this session we’ll focus on a key idea from the verses: the idea that the Christ had to suffer to bring forgiveness of our sins.
5. We’ll understand this well by looking at a concept called the guilt offering.

THE GUILT OFFERING

6. Let’s read Leviticus 5:17–19 and Leviticus 7:1–2. Leviticus was written about 1250 BC (see the timeline in Session 2).

LEVITICUS 5:17–19

¹⁷ *If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible.* ¹⁸ *He is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed unintentionally, and he will be forgiven.* ¹⁹ *It is a guilt offering; he has been guilty of wrongdoing against the LORD.*

7. To understand Christianity, we need to understand the concept of sins. So notice in verse 17 that sins are deeds which go against the LORD’s commands. Even when we don’t know it, we are guilty when we break the commands. It’s a thing we all do, break God’s commands, and so we all need a guilt offering.
8. To make this guilt offering, a priest would kill a ram (a male sheep), and that action turned away God’s anger from the sinner. So God and the sinner were reconciled. That’s what the word atonement means. When God

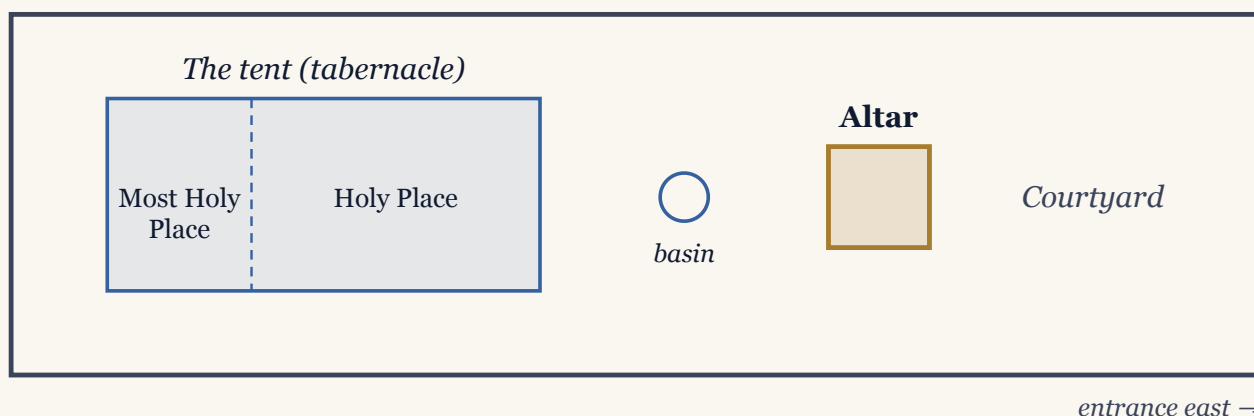
and the sinner are reconciled, they are brought back into relationship, so that they are ‘at one’. ‘At-one-ment’ has been achieved.

9. The next reading explains more of how the offering is made.

LEVITICUS 7:1-2

¹ These are the regulations for the guilt offering, which is most holy: ² The guilt offering is to be slaughtered in the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, and its blood is to be sprinkled against the altar on all sides.

10. Look at the plan of the tabernacle below. (A tabernacle is a fancy word for a tent.) The altar stood in the courtyard, in front of the tent. Try to imagine how the guilt offering was made.



The tabernacle and its courtyard. The guilt offering was slaughtered at the altar, its blood sprinkled against the altar's sides.

PROPHECY: A MAN'S LIFE WILL BE A GUILT OFFERING

11. About 500 years after God told Moses to set up these offerings, God gave Isaiah a very important promise. The year was about 750 BC, and Isaiah predicted that a man's life would be given as a guilt offering. So certain is this prediction, that Isaiah writes some of it in the past tense. Let's read it in Isaiah 53:9-12.

ISAIAH 53:9-12

⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a **guilt offering**, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

12. So this man will die: Isaiah says he will be with the rich in his death (verse 9). He will suffer (see verse 10). But this suffering and death will be important in God's sight: the LORD will make his life a guilt offering. In this way, the man will bear the iniquities of many (verse 11). [Iniquities are sins.]
13. Bearing sin is not something anyone wants to do. It's the idea of paying a penalty for what we've done wrong. So when a murderer goes to prison for 20 years, they are bearing their sin for 20 years. Now the penalty which our sin deserves is a bloody death. And so we need someone else to die this death for us. Because if no one else dies for our sin, we have to die for our sin ourselves.

JESUS' LIFE WAS A GUILT OFFERING

14. Now 750 years after this prediction, Jesus died on the cross. He was innocent of any violence, and of any deceit (a deceit is a lie), just like Isaiah 53:9 said. So he became the guilt offering, verse 10.
15. Just before his death, Jesus quoted this passage in Isaiah 53 and applied it to himself. Let's turn to Luke 22:37, and read it there.

LUKE 22:37

It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.

16. 'He was numbered with the transgressors' is written there in Isaiah 53:12. Can you see it? So Jesus explicitly claimed to be this man, the man who was the guilt offering for many people.
17. So now, we don't offer rams any more. We don't offer more rams because Jesus was the *final* guilt offering. Now it is his offering of himself, and nothing else, which brings forgiveness of sins.
18. It's like all my sins are standing between me and God. [*Take a book and hold it between you and the light. The sins are the book. God is the light.*] But Jesus on the cross took those sins onto himself. [*Place the book onto your other hand, allowing you to 'see' the light.*] Because Jesus has done that, I'm able to be friends with God. God is no longer angry with me. And that offer is open to everyone. And that's marvellous.
19. Let's finish by reading some of the story of Jesus' death. I want to read from Luke 23:8–25. This will help us see how those Old Testament predictions were fulfilled in concrete terms.

LUKE 23:8–15

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. ⁹ He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. ¹² That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies. ¹³ Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death.”

Pilate and Herod admit that Jesus had ‘done no violence’, as Isaiah 53:9 predicted.

LUKE 23:16–25

¹⁶ “Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.” ¹⁸ With one voice they cried out, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!” ¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. ²¹ But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” ²² For the third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.” ²³ But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate decided to grant their demand. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

So Jesus was ‘numbered with the transgressors’, as Isaiah 53:12 predicted.

20. The question for us again is simple: will Jesus’ guilt offering pay for our sins, or will we bear it ourselves? The Bible urges us to take Jesus as our guilt offering.
21. Any questions?

BIG IDEAS

We need a guilt offering so our sins can be forgiven. It was promised that a man would be that guilt offering.

Homework: read Luke 10–19. Come with any questions, from that section or other parts of Luke.

The Christ suffers for sins

RECAP AND INTRO

1. One of the points of these studies is to make it easier to read Luke for yourself and get more out of it. The Old Testament material gives us background and explanation of what Jesus means when he talks about himself. Of course, you'll only get the benefit of this if you read Luke's Gospel. So let me again encourage you to be doing that.
2. Now you might recall that in Session 3, we saw that we need a guilt offering so our sins can be forgiven. It was promised that a man would be that guilt offering.
3. Two weeks ago in Session 2, we saw a different kind of man promised. This man was the Christ. He would be the King, the man descended from David who would rule the world forever.
4. So we have two people who look like they'll do quite opposite things.
5. Today, we're going to see from the Old Testament that these two men in fact had to be one and the same man. The one man has these two roles. We'll see that **the Christ had to die for our sins**.
6. Before we look at this, does anyone have any questions from the homework? Any questions from Luke 10–19?

METHOD

7. We're going to see that the predicted 'Christ' and the predicted 'Guilt-Offering-Man' had to be *the same person*. We're going to see that they both had to be fully God as well as fully human.
8. First, we'll see that the Christ had to be God.

THE CHRIST HAD TO BE GOD, SINCE HE WILL BE WORSHIPPED FOREVER

9. Let's read a passage from Daniel 7, where we see the Christ had to be God.
10. Daniel was living and writing around 600–550 BC. *[Write the name 'Daniel' at the right point on your timeline from Session 2. He is in exile, so he belongs on the left-hand side of the exile box.]*
11. This is what he wrote while he was in exile in Babylon:

DANIEL 7:13–14

¹³ *In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.* ¹⁴ *He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

12. In the vision, Daniel sees ‘one like a son of man’. That means he sees a creature that looks like a human. This ‘one like a son of man’ has a kingdom that will not pass away. He’s a king who has authority over all peoples. So this person is the Christ: the Christ is the only one who will have a kingdom over all peoples forever.
13. We also learn that all people worship this Christ forever. This means that God must be pleased to let the Christ be worshipped forever. But there is only one God in the Bible. God will let no one but himself be worshipped forever. So the Christ in fact is God.

THE GUILT-OFFERING-MAN HAD TO BE GOD, SINCE ONLY GOD CAN PAY FOR THE GUILT OF THE WHOLE WORLD

14. We’re now going to see that Isaiah’s Guilt-Offering-Man also had to be fully God.
15. Let’s look at Psalm 49:7–9.

PSALM 49:7–9

⁷ *No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—* ⁸ *the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough—* ⁹ *that he should live on forever and not see decay.*

16. The idea is that no payment by any person is enough to bring someone eternal life.
17. Yet this is what the Guilt-Offering-Man is said to do. ‘The punishment that brought us peace was upon him’ (Isaiah 53:5). ‘The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all’ (Isaiah 53:6). ‘The LORD makes his life a guilt offering’ (Isaiah 53:10). Somehow this Guilt-Offering-Man provides sufficient payment to bring peace with God for others. Somehow his life is sufficient payment to deal with the iniquity (sin) of others. How can this be true?
18. The answer is that this man’s life must be different. Since no (normal) man can pay for the life of another, this man’s life must be of greater value than any other human. And since this man pays for the lives of many people, his life must be infinitely more valuable.
19. But no one’s life is infinitely more valuable than normal men’s, except the life of a man who was also God. So if Isaiah 53 is true, then the man spoken of must be fully God. As well as being fully human (‘a *man* of sorrows’, Isaiah 53:3), the Guilt-Offering-Man also had to be fully God.
20. This is why the doctrine of the Trinity is so important in Christianity. The Trinity is the doctrine that one God exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In particular, we see here why Jesus, while a human, also had to be God, ‘God the Son’. For if he were not fully God, his sacrifice would not be enough to pay for the sins of the whole world. Jesus had to be fully God, as well as fully human. [N.B. he had to be fully human, for it is only fair that a human pays for the sins of other humans.]

THE GUILT-OFFERING-MAN IS THE CHRIST

21. Both the Guilt-Offering-Man and the Christ had to be fully God and fully man. Thus they are the same person: the man of whom Isaiah 53 spoke had to be the Christ. That's the big point of this session. Since the man of Isaiah 53 had to suffer and die for sins, the conclusion is that the Christ must do this also. The Christ had to die for our sins, in the manner of Isaiah 53.
22. But before we conclude, we will look at a couple of places in Luke's Gospel where Jesus claimed to be God. Let's see if what we've looked at helps us understand Luke better.

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

23. Let's begin with Luke 5:20–25, where Luke implies that Jesus is God.

LUKE 5:20–25

²⁰ *When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."*²¹ *The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? **Who can forgive sins but God alone?**"*²² *Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"*²³ *Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'*²⁴ *But that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...**"* He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."²⁵ *Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.*

In this passage, Jesus forgives sins, and proves that he has authority to do so. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were right to think that only God should do this. After all, if I sin against you, you'll be upset if someone else forgives me. Only you can forgive me, since you were the one wronged. That's true unless the person who forgives me actually made you and owns you. God and only God is the one [besides you] who can forgive me for sinning against you. And so Jesus is here claiming to be God, when he claims that he can forgive all of a person's sins.

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE 'SON OF MAN' OF DANIEL 7 — TO BE GOD AND CHRIST

24. Now Jesus calls himself the Son of Man a few times. Let's read Luke 22:67–71 to see an example.

LUKE 22:67–71

⁶⁷ *"If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us."* Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me,⁶⁸ and if I asked you, you would not answer."⁶⁹ *But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at **the right hand of the mighty God.**"*⁷⁰ *They all asked, "Are you then **the Son of God?**"* He replied, "You are right in saying I am."⁷¹ *Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."*

25. This is the last time that Jesus calls himself ‘the Son of Man’ before he dies. He makes it clear that all along he has been referring to Daniel 7 whenever he called himself ‘Son of Man’. Before this passage, we could not be sure. ‘Son of Man’ could just have been a general term for humans, like ‘mankind’. But now Jesus makes it clear. For the first time, he speaks of himself as the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God. So now the allusion to Daniel 7 is clear, for in Daniel 7 the Son of Man is led into the presence of God.
26. Those who heard this knew Jesus was claiming to be the Christ and claiming to be God. So they asked if that’s what he meant. ‘Are you then the Son of God?’ they asked. And Jesus said Yes! So Jesus applies Daniel 7 to himself: he claims to be God and he claims to be the Christ.

THE BIG IDEA

27. Let’s return to the big idea as we finish. The Old Testament writers wrote (slightly vaguely) about people who would come sometime to rescue God’s people. One is the Christ in Session 2, the king descended from David who would rule forever. In Session 3, we looked at the Guilt-Offering-Man, the man who would die for our sins. Today we’ve seen that they had to be the same man, since both had to be fully God. What Jesus was trying to tell people was that HE was this man. The Old Testament writers were talking about HIM.
28. He was claiming that he was this King who would die for sin, this one who was God as a human.

BIG IDEA

It was predicted that the Christ had to die for our sins. That’s what Jesus came to do.

Homework: read Luke 20–23, and come with questions.

The Christ rises from the dead

INTRO AND RECAP

1. We saw over Sessions 2–4 that the eternal King of the universe would also suffer and die for our sins. Today we're going to look at the fact that the Christ wouldn't stay dead. He had to be resurrected.
2. But before we look at what that means, does anyone have questions from the homework? Any questions from Luke 20–23?

THE CHRIST HAD TO BE RAISED FROM THE DEAD

3. Now we looked in Session 2 at the promised Christ. He's the man who will rule the whole world forever. But last week we saw that this same man had to die. Did you notice the problem: how can someone rule forever, if they are going to die?
4. There's only one possible answer: it's clear that the Christ will have to *rise from the dead*, to begin his eternal rule. What's more, he will have to rise with a body that *cannot die*. Because anyone who will rule forever must also live forever. Since the Christ will rule forever, he must rise from the dead and then rule forever. One way to say this is that the Christ had to be resurrected. So what we are going to look at now is some of the Bible's teaching on resurrection.

WHAT IS A RESURRECTION?

5. The passage we will read is Daniel 12:2–3. The author, Daniel, was living and writing around 600–550 BC.

DANIEL 12:2–3

² *Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.* ³ *Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.*

6. Here is the idea of resurrection: it's the teaching that one day there will be a judgment. At this judgment, everyone will come back from the dead. Everyone will then live forever in some sense. But some will have 'life forever', while others have 'shame forever'. This is another way to speak of 'heaven' and 'hell'. This day when the dead rise is called 'the resurrection' in the Bible. So the idea of 'resurrection' isn't first about Jesus. It is firstly an idea about the judgment day for everyone. Let's read Luke 14:13–14 to see how the Bible speaks about the resurrection:

LUKE 14:13–14

¹³ *But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,* ¹⁴ *and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid **at the resurrection** of the righteous.*

7. This passage speaks of the resurrection, but it's not talking about Jesus. The resurrection is not just about Jesus, it's about all the righteous. The resurrection is everyone's judgment day.

THE CHRIST WILL LIKELY RISE FROM THE DEAD QUICKLY

8. So what about the Christ — if he has to rule forever, when will he get this immortal body that he needs for his immortal reign? We discover in Psalm 16 that the Christ will likely be resurrected before everyone else. The passage is Psalm 16:8–10. King David is writing, and the date is around 1000 BC:

PSALM 16:8–10

⁸ *I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.* ⁹ *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,* ¹⁰ *because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.*

9. In verse 10, David speaks about his confidence for the future. The first thing he says is that he won't be abandoned to the grave: he knows that he will not stay dead forever. The second thing he says is similar, but adds something more. He speaks about God's 'Holy One'. That's another way of speaking of the Christ, the Messiah. David says that God won't let his 'Holy One' see decay. The Christ won't rot in the ground.
10. But we've seen in previous sessions that the Christ has to die. So here's the thing: unless God does some miracle [and stops the dead Christ's body from decaying in the ground], the Christ can't stay dead long. If he did stay dead too long, his body would rot. And that's what David said won't happen: God won't let the Christ's body rot. So we expect that after the Christ dies, he will rise from the dead *quickly*.

THE OLD TESTAMENT STRONGLY SUGGESTS THAT THE CHRIST HAD TO RISE FROM THE DEAD ON THE THIRD DAY

11. There is a pattern surrounding the mention of 'the third day' in the Old Testament. For the details, see Appendix A to this session. The pattern is that the third day is characterised by climactic reversals from death to life.
12. With this 'third day' pattern in mind, we can return to the resurrection of the Christ. We know that the Christ must be raised with a resurrection body, so that he can reign forever. We know it is likely that he will be raised *quickly* (as we saw above). Now we add the pattern regarding the third day.
13. Together, this leads us to a suggestion which the Old Testament makes about the Christ. The Old Testament strongly hints that the Christ will be raised on the third day. And this is what in fact happened.

JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD ON THE THIRD DAY

14. Let's finish by reading how Jesus was historically raised on the third day. It's in Luke 23:54–24:8.

LUKE 23:54–24:8

⁵⁴ *It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.* ⁵⁵ *The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.* ⁵⁶ *Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.* ^{24:1} *On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.* ² *They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,* ³ *but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.* ⁴ *While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.* ⁵ *In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?”* ⁶ *He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:* ⁷ *“The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and **on the third day** be raised again.”* ⁸ *Then they remembered his words.*

15. Notice that it was the third day when Jesus was raised. The Jewish day started at sunset. So the Preparation Day was the first day (23:54). The Sabbath (Saturday) was the second day, and they rested (23:56). He was raised Saturday night (the third day), so that on the Sunday morning the stone was rolled away (24:2). Jesus had been raised on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures. The implication is that now Jesus will be King of the universe forever. He is now the king of the world forever, because he cannot die again. This is what the disciples went on to preach to all people.
16. Just after Jesus rose from the dead he tried to explain to his disciples what it all meant.

LUKE 24:44–48

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” ⁴⁵ *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.* ⁴⁶ *He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,* ⁴⁷ *and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* ⁴⁸ *You are witnesses of these things.”*

17. He's telling them that they've just seen what the Old Testament was promising would happen.
18. They were supposed to respond by going off, telling the world and offering forgiveness on behalf of the king.
19. So the question comes to us: do we believe that Jesus is king?
20. Any questions?

BIG IDEA

The Christ will rise from the dead on the third day as the king of the world forever.

Homework: finish reading Luke's Gospel.

Appendix A to Session 5 — The third-day pattern in the Old Testament: 'climactic reversal from death to life'

1. We can say more about the timing of the Christ's resurrection. In the Old Testament stories, the *third day* is a day with some surprising patterns. The first surprise is how often 'the third day' time stamp is mentioned. There are 69 references to 'third day' or 'three days' in the Old Testament.² By comparison, there are only 14 references to 'two days' or 'second day'. There are only 8 references to 'fourth day' or 'four days'. So the Old Testament makes a lot of 'three days' and 'the third day'. We can conclude that something is being communicated. The day contains special meaning. But what is that meaning?
2. We can see the meaning by looking at the pattern of events on the third day. There are fourteen passages in the stories of the Old Testament which use the phrase 'on the third day'. Of these, nine stories have a person saved from death that third day.³ This is surprisingly high. Compare this sample with the twenty-four passages where the Old Testament speaks of 'the next day'.⁴ Only 2 out of 24 passages on the 'next day' have such an event, where a person is saved from death. This is much less than 9 out of 14 on the third day.
3. Our point is that the careful reader can notice a special theme in 'the third day' stories. This pattern is the 'climactic reversal from death to life'.
4. Let's read a story to get the idea. Consider this story in Genesis 22:1–19. It's a story from Abraham's lifetime, around 2000 BC.

GENESIS 22:1-13

¹ Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." ³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ **On the third day** Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. ⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." ¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

5. In this story, the third day was the day when Abraham was to kill Isaac. God had decreed Isaac's death, so Isaac was as good as dead. Yet, in the climax to the story, Isaac's life is spared on the third day. It is a reversal from death to life on the third day.
6. A shorter story occurs in 2 Kings 20. This story comes from around the year 710 BC.

2 KINGS 20:1-6

¹ In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover." ² Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, ³ "Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. ⁴ Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: ⁵ "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. **On the third day** from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD. ⁶ I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.'"

7. Hezekiah had been told by God that he would die. Yet in a great climax, on the third day he is well enough to go to the temple.
8. There is another passage in the Old Testament which links the resurrection of the dead with the third day. This passage is not a story, but a predictive prophecy. The passage is Hosea 6:2, and was written around 730 BC.⁵

HOSEA 6:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.

The passage is a poem. The first half of each line is preliminary; the second half is the climactic prediction for the future. For example, ‘he has torn us’ is preliminary, a statement of the past. But ‘that he may heal us’ is the climactic prediction for the future. Just so, in verse two, ‘after two days he will revive us’ is preliminary. ‘On the third day he will raise us up’ is the climactic prediction for the future. So the third day is predicted to be a day of raising up.

9. We do not have time to cover all the stories in question. The point is that the Old Testament points to the third day as a day of climactic reversal from death to life.

² Excluding dates.

³ Genesis 22:4, 40:12, 42:17; Exodus 19:11; Joshua 9:17; Judges 20:30; 1 Samuel 30:1; 2 Kings 20:5; Esther 4:16.

⁴ Genesis 19:34; Exodus 9:6, 18:13, 32:6, 30; Numbers 11:32, 16:41, 17:8, 33:3; Joshua 5:11; Judges 6:38, 9:42, 21:4; 1 Samuel 5:3, 11:11, 18:10, 20:27, 30:17, 31:8; 2 Samuel 11:12; 2 Kings 8:15; 1 Chronicles 10:8, 29:21; Jonah 4:7.

⁵ I have used the ESV because I think it is a better translation at this point, closer to the idea of resurrection which is present in the original Hebrew.

Appendix B to Session 5 — The historical evidence for Jesus’ resurrection

1. Notice the following historical points about Jesus’ resurrection:
 - a. **Jesus was laid in a well-known tomb.** It was owned by Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent man (see Luke 23:51, Matthew 27:57, Mark 15:43, John 19:38). This would have been a checkable detail. If the disciples were making up a hoax (a trick), they would not have included this. But they did include it, so it’s less likely a hoax. It’s more likely that Jesus really did rise.

b. The tomb was empty (Luke 24:3, Matthew 28:6, John 20:2). If Peter and the others made up a grand hoax, the body had to be somewhere. It wasn't in the tomb, so where was it? Maybe the Romans or Jews took it. But no: if that were true, they would have produced the body when Christianity grew. They hated Christianity. And if they had the body they could have stopped it. With no risen Christ, there is no Christianity. So why didn't the Romans or Jews produce the body? The only answer is this: they didn't have it. It was somewhere else. So where was it? Did the disciples have it? If they did, how did they get it? They must have snuck past the Roman guards to get the body, as some say. But why would they try? Robbing graves held a death sentence. So that's hard to believe. But assuming they did try, how did they succeed? It is not credible that the guards fell asleep, long enough for the huge stone to be rolled away, and for Jesus to be carried off. The guards faced severe penalties for falling asleep. So the best historical option is this: Luke is telling the truth. Jesus really rose from the dead.

c. Women's testimony was used. Mary Magdalene is the first witness of the empty tomb (Luke 24:10, Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1, John 20:1). But why would the writers make that up if they were writing a hoax? You see, a woman's testimony was worthless at the time. It was not accepted in a court of law. So why make it up? All the more, why choose Mary Magdalene, a woman of dubious background? If women's testimony was invalid, how much more this woman's. So if Luke were writing a hoax, he would not have written this. That is, the female witnesses make the account sound true to life. They give us confidence in Luke's story. And so they give us confidence in the resurrection of Jesus.

d. The risen Jesus appeared many times to many people. There were at least 12 appearances of the risen Jesus to more than 500 people. Notice especially 1 Corinthians 15:6, which records an appearance of Jesus to 500 people, 'most of whom are still alive'. The point of the phrase 'most of whom are still alive' should be clear. If the readers of the letter weren't sure about the resurrection, they should go and ask one of the witnesses. There were still plenty around. This would not be written if the whole thing were a hoax.

e. The disciples' lives were profoundly changed. This is for me the most persuasive historical fact. The history we have points to massive transformation in the disciples. They devoted the rest of their lives to preaching the risen Christ. Many died for so doing. And here's the key point: they knew whether it was a hoax or not. They knew whether they had the body of Jesus. So their actions are evidence that there was no hoax. Why die for a religion you know is a lie? It's not like a modern suicide bomber. They don't have evidence that their religion is true. But these disciples did. They were convinced from what they had seen that Jesus rose from the dead.

f. The recorded early killings of Christians. The Roman historian Tacitus records Christians being burnt to death by Nero (i.e. Nero blamed Christians for the Great Fire of Rome). This fire is known to have occurred in AD 64. Here's a quote from Tacitus (which is not in the Bible):

But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome... Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

That is, Christianity was large in following around 30 years after Christ's death (Christ died either in AD 33, or perhaps AD 30). It was large enough that Nero could blame Christians for the Great Fire of Rome. What's more, Christianity was persuasive enough that these Christians would continue to assert that they were Christian, even when they could have denied it (they 'pleaded guilty').

Yet it was in the mid-50s AD that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. That's not long before the great fire. In 1 Corinthians, Paul claimed that there were 500 witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, most of whom were still alive. I don't think these witnesses would have been hard to find. Just track down one of the major churches (the church in Rome had such apostles), and you'd find an eyewitness.

The point is that the martyrs of AD 64 could have checked out whether Christianity were true before they went to their deaths. Now if I knew I was going to my death for my faith, and the faith was checkable, I would definitely do the check. The most reasonable conclusion is that many of these Christians had done the check. The eyewitnesses confirmed that they had seen the risen Jesus. And so that's why Nero could find lots of Christians to execute. Thus the most reasonable inference from the swift growth of Christianity is that Jesus really rose from the dead.

2. There are no good alternative explanations of the historical data.

Some suggest a hoax by the apostles. Others suggest the Jews crucified the wrong man. Others that Jesus was not dead, but recovered in the tomb. Others that the body was stolen. Others that the women went to the wrong tomb. Others still suggest a hallucination by all the disciples. These can all be answered:

Hoax by apostles — but the early leaders were often at odds; see the arguments above.

Mistaken identity (this is from the Koran) — but the High Priest would not have allowed the Romans to crucify the wrong man.

'Swoon' theory (Jesus didn't die, but recovered in the tomb) — crucified people don't walk anywhere again, including to Emmaus.

Stolen body — a variation of the hoax theory; conceived at the outset and sustained?

Wrong tomb — the women were nearby at the entombment.

Hallucination or vision — but this would scarcely overcome their sense of shame at the 'accursed' crucifixion.

3. Scholars are desperate for another option besides the Christian one. They're desperate for Christianity to be wrong. But they can't find a good alternative. See that in the number of the suggestions. See that in how wild some of the suggestions are. Hallucinations? Were there 500 people hallucinating together? No, the best explanation is the simplest: Jesus in fact rose from the dead.

Forgiveness of sins for all nations

INTRO AND RECAP

1. Last week we looked at the resurrection of the Messiah. The big idea was that the Christ had to rise from the dead on the third day. The meaning of this resurrection was simple: Christ was raised so now he is ruler of the world forever.
2. Before we continue, does anyone have any questions from reading Luke's Gospel?
3. Today's big idea is that the forgiveness of sins is open to all people, to people from all nations. We receive it by calling on the name of the Lord.
4. To stop you being surprised, let me tell you this about our final session: at the end, I'm going to invite you to become a Christian if you haven't already done so. You won't have to respond out loud, but I'm still going to ask. So be ready for that. I'll invite you to join me in a silent prayer. But before we get to that, we have a lot to cover.
5. Today we will start with the last idea which Jesus gave his disciples, taken from the key verse in our course. In Luke 24:46–47, Luke wrote this:

LUKE 24:46–47

*He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ **and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem."*

6. It's the section in bold that we will cover today. We will leave the questions of preaching and Jerusalem to an appendix.

OUR METHOD

7. We will address these topics by reading three passages from the Old Testament. One thing the passages have in common is that they speak of the same point in time. But they have other things in common too. We will use the common points to draw the same conclusions that Jesus drew.

THREE PASSAGES WHICH SPEAK OF THE SAME EVENTS

8. Our first passage comes from the book of Zechariah. Zechariah wrote around 500 BC, after the return from exile. *[Write Zechariah on your timeline, to the right of the exile box.]* God is speaking.

ZECHARIAH 12:10–13:1

¹⁰ “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. ¹¹ On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. [...] ^{13:1} On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.”

9. Our second passage is Joel 2:28–32, probably written about 600 BC. *[Write Joel on your timeline. Add a question mark after your entry, since we are not sure of Joel’s dating.]*

JOEL 2:28–32

²⁸ And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. ³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ³² And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

10. The third passage is Ezekiel 36:25–27, also written around 600 BC. *[Write Ezekiel into your timeline. Ezekiel writes from exile, on the left side of the exile box.]*

EZEKIEL 36:25–27

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

THE COMMON ELEMENTS IN THE PASSAGES

11. Notice that all of these passages speak of a time when God will pour out a spirit on his people in a new way (Zechariah 12:10, Joel 2:28, Ezekiel 36:26). They all speak of people’s behaviour being changed because of the Spirit (Zechariah 12:10–14, Joel 2:28, Ezekiel 36:27). Zechariah and Ezekiel both speak of people being cleansed from impurity (Zechariah 13:1, Ezekiel 36:25). Joel says this same thing in a different way. He speaks of people being ‘saved’, or of ‘deliverance’ (Joel 2:32). He’s talking about being saved from sins. He’s talking about that same cleansing as Zechariah and Ezekiel. Through these common elements we can see that the same events are being discussed in all three passages.

HOW TO BE SAVED

12. So here's an important conclusion: once the Spirit has been poured out, everyone can have their sins forgiven.
13. Joel 2:32 tells us what to do, if we want this forgiveness. We need to 'call on the name of the LORD'. It's the turning away from whomever or whatever we were following before. It's the turning to the LORD, the God of the Bible who we have been learning about in these studies. As we have learned (see Session 4 especially), this turning to the LORD is also a turning to Jesus Christ.
14. Even though this is an Old Testament promise, it applies to us. This is clear in Joel 2:32: '*everyone* who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.' Since we live in the time promised by Joel (the time after the Spirit comes), this promise is in force. Since you and I are part of *everyone*, we can call on the name of the LORD and be saved.
15. Are there any questions, before we apply all of this to ourselves?

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

16. In the book of Acts, we read of the time when the Spirit was poured out, as Joel, Ezekiel and Zechariah predicted. Peter preached a very important sermon. Peter explained the meaning of Jesus' life and death, and the meaning of the Spirit's coming. He told people how they should respond. To finish this course, we will read Peter's sermon, and apply it to ourselves.

ACTS 2:1–39 (EXTRACTS)

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ ²² Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. [...] ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. [...] ³⁶ Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

17. In this passage, we read things that we looked at in today's session and in past sessions. In the verses I've skipped, more is said that we have already studied in this course. It would be worth reading this passage again at home, if you want to revise what we've done.

A CHALLENGE TO ACCEPT JESUS

18. But Peter finishes with a challenge, and it's a challenge that this course will finish with.
19. The challenge is to accept Jesus. It's a challenge to repent. It's a challenge to call on the name of the Lord and be saved. It's the most important decision anyone can make in life. It's the difference between heaven and hell. It's also the difference between a good earthly life and a bad earthly life. That's the challenge I want to put before us now. If you haven't already, this is the thing you should do: repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit if you do so.
20. In Peter's day, people were baptized immediately. If you want to get baptized, talk to me and we'll get that organised. But right now is a good time to do the most important thing, a thing which baptism symbolises: right now is a good time to *repent*.
21. So here's what I'll do. I'm going to ask if you have any questions. Then I'll take us through a prayer which you could say right now to give your life to Jesus.
22. Does anyone want to ask questions, before I lead us in a prayer?

A PRAYER TO ACCEPT JESUS

A PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I'm sorry that I have sinned against you. I don't deserve your gift of forgiveness. I repent of my sins. Thank you for sending Jesus to die in my place. Thank you that he rose again, as ruler of the world forever. Please forgive me. Please send your Spirit into me. Please change me, that I may live with Jesus as my ruler. Amen.

23. The words aren't special, but the ideas are important. So pray along in your own mind now, if you want to.
[Repeat the prayer.]

YOUR PRAYER WILL BE HEARD

24. If you've prayed that prayer, for the first time, and you meant it, then God has heard you. You've been given forgiveness through Jesus' death. Well done. Let me say that you can be sure that God has heard you. He did the hard thing, and came to earth as a man to die for your sins. He'll do the easy thing, and accept your prayer. He's forgiven you. Whether you feel the same or different doesn't matter; that just depends on what kind of person you are. You can be sure that you have moved from death to life.

BIG IDEA

Forgiveness of sins is available to all people. We receive it by calling on the name of the Lord.

25. I'd like to finish with a prayer for all of us. *[Give thanks for the time you've spent together over six weeks; pray for God's spiritual blessings on all present. Ask if people want to meet again to look at another part of the Bible. It's over to you.]*

Appendix A to Session 6 — Why repentance and forgiveness in Christ's name had to be preached

THE NEED FOR PREACHERS

1. We saw in Session 6 that forgiveness comes through repentance, the calling on the name of the LORD. But we can make a conclusion about preaching from this fact. Jesus said that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all nations'. How might he have deduced this from the Old Testament?
2. Consider two points. First (as we saw in this session), to be saved, people need to call on the name of the LORD. What's more, if they haven't heard of him, they can't call on his name. So everyone in the world needs to know this God who became man, and who died for their sins. And they can't know without being told about the LORD. They need to hear of his name. They need the news preached to them.
3. Second, there are promises in the Old Testament about all nations receiving the blessings of God (e.g. Genesis 12:3, Joel 2:28).
4. When we put these two facts together, we see that preaching of the LORD's name must occur in all nations, so that these promises of God can be fulfilled.

Appendix B to Session 6 — Why the preaching began at Jerusalem

THE CHRIST TO BE KILLED IN JERUSALEM

1. A key passage to start with is Zechariah 12:10–13:1.

ZECHARIAH 12:10–13:1

*“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of **Jerusalem** a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”¹¹ On that day the weeping in **Jerusalem** will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. [...] ^{13:1} On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of **Jerusalem**, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.”*

2. In Zechariah 12:10, God is speaking of himself being pierced. In fact, the plain reading is that God is to be *killed*, since after piercing him, the people then ‘mourn for him’. Given what we have seen in our course so far, it should be clear that the passage speaks of the time when the Christ will be killed.
3. What’s more, we see from Zechariah 12:10–11 that the Christ will be killed in Jerusalem. Notice from those verses that the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* pierce the Christ. After killing him, they also mourn for him in *Jerusalem*.

THE SPIRIT TO BE POURED OUT IN JERUSALEM

4. In Zechariah 12:10, the pouring out of the Spirit occurs on ‘the inhabitants of Jerusalem’.

THE PREACHING TO BEGIN AT JERUSALEM

5. Since forgiveness of sins is to come through preaching the name of the LORD (see Appendix A to Session 6), and since this ‘fountain’ for cleansing of sin is opened in Jerusalem (Zechariah 13:1), we conclude that the preaching had to begin at Jerusalem.

FULFILMENT

6. In terms of fulfilment, Jesus was killed in Jerusalem (just outside the city). Also, Peter preached to the residents of Jerusalem after Jesus’ death. He accused them of evil in killing the Christ. And in one day, 3,000 people ‘were cut to the heart’ (Acts 2:37, 41). They mourned bitterly, just as Zechariah had predicted.
7. Further, Jesus knew about this Zechariah passage, and so he told his disciples to stay in Jerusalem, until they received the Spirit. This is at the very end of Luke’s Gospel:

LUKE 24:49–52

*Jesus said, “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them.⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to **Jerusalem** with great joy.*

8. In Acts chapter 2, this promise is fulfilled when the Spirit is received by the disciples in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

LUKE 24:46-47

BY MICHAEL RUSSELL · timelinetochrist.org