

discover
EASTER



STUDY GUIDE

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EASTER



CoffeeBreak





We thank Barbara Van Gelder for writing the original lesson material for this study (1995). This revised edition incorporates updates and alterations by small group leaders, staff, and other participants.

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ISBN 978-1-59255-731-8

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How to Study

The questions in this study booklet will help you “do it yourself” and discover together what the Bible says.

Questions are the key to Bible discovery. Through questions you search for the writers’ thoughts and ideas. The questions in this study guide are designed to help you in your quest for answers. You can and should ask your own questions too. The Bible comes alive with meaning for many people as they uncover the exciting truths it contains. Our hope and prayer is that this guide will help the Bible come alive for you.

The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Step 1.

Read through each Bible passage several times. Allow the ideas to sink in. Think about the meaning of the passage.

Step 2.

Answer the questions in the “What does it say?” section of the study guide lesson, drawing your answers from each passage. Write answers in your own words. If you use Bible study aids such as commentaries, Bible handbooks, or Internet sites, do so only after completing your own personal study. Answering the questions before the group meets enables you to remember what you have discovered and to prepare for the group conversation.

Step 3.

Fill in the “Conversation” boxes with your questions and thoughts. Include questions that you would like to discuss with the group, topics that you would like to learn more about, and ideas from the passage that have made an impact on you. For example, in the “Conversation” boxes, you might include answers to questions like these:

- What is this passage saying to me?
- How does it challenge me? Comfort me?
- Is there a promise I can claim?
- For what can I give thanks?

Step 4.

Have fun talking with others about what you have discovered!

Step 1.

Step 2.

Step 3.

1 **Isaiah 1**
Judgment and Justice

Getting Started
The prophecy of Isaiah beautifully reveals the amazing, surprising God who is the Lord of heaven and earth. Let's see what the opening chapter of Isaiah shows about this God, and how he calls his people to live.

What Does It Say?

1. Isaiah 1:1
What does Isaiah tell us about himself and his book in the opening verse?

2. Isaiah 1:2-9
What charge does God bring against his people? Describe their situation.

3. Isaiah 1:10-15
In the Old Testament, God set up a sacrificial system that became part of Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord. Animals such as bulls, lambs, and goats would be sacrificed to atone for ("cover over") sin. The purpose of this type of sacrifice was to bring the people close to God and seek his forgiveness. Ultimately the sacrifices pointed to Jesus' death for our sins once and for all (Heb. 10:10, 9:26-28).
New Moon feasts (usually the first day of the month in the Hebrew lunar calendar) and

Let's talk about ...

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Introduction

As we approach Easter and the spring of the year, it's a wonderful time to discover or rediscover the story of new life in Jesus. In this study we invite you to follow Jesus' journey to the cross and on through his resurrection. We'll study closely together what happens to Jesus, and along the way we'll look into the lives of some of the other people who witnessed these events.

This study is based mainly on the accounts of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection in the gospel of Matthew. Matthew was one of the twelve disciples chosen and trained by Jesus to carry out his mission here on earth. Matthew was an eyewitness of Jesus' teaching and miracles, and the purpose of his gospel account was to bring the good news of Jesus to his readers, both Jew and Gentile. This study also focuses on a number of Old Testament prophetic passages to help us understand Jesus' role as the promised Messiah in God's plan of salvation for all who believe.

These lessons dig into a lot of biblical content to show the magnitude of God's redeeming love for his people. Throughout your study, try to keep your focus on Jesus as you encounter prophecies, events, and friends and enemies of Jesus. God bless and guide you as you draw closer to Jesus Christ, our living King!

Glossary of Terms

Aaron—God appointed him to be the first high priest of Israel. Aaron was Moses' older brother.

Abraham (also called Abram)—the father of the Jewish people (Israel), who were set apart to be God's holy nation. Abraham is also called the father of all believers (see Gen. 11:26-25:10; Rom. 4:11-17; Gal. 3:6-14, 29).

atonement—comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to cover over,” implying a sacrifice to make amends for wrongdoing. In Old Testament times an animal was sacrificed to atone for sin (Lev. 16). Christ's death was the final sacrifice, providing atonement for all who believe in him.

baptism—the ritual act of immersing a person in or sprinkling with water. In the Christian faith, baptism is an outward sign of an inward washing or cleansing. It is a symbol of our inclusion into God's people through the cleansing from sin that Jesus accomplishes in us through his sacrifice on the cross and the gift of his Spirit.

blasphemy—claiming to be God; also scoffing or reviling the name of God, speaking irreverently of God.

bles—to show favor and kindness.

covenant—an agreement (promise) between two parties. Early in Israel's history, God promised to be the one God of the Israelites. The Israelites were to obey and worship God. Part of the covenant between God and Israel included sacrifices; whenever the Israelites sinned, an animal was to be killed in place of the guilty party. In this way the covenant could continue. Jesus came to offer himself as the final sacrifice to reconcile God and people forever, a better covenant than the old one (see Luke 22:20; Rom. 5:8-11; Heb. 9:11-15).

disciples—followers of Jesus (as in John 8:31). The twelve disciples (Matt. 10:1-4) were followers Jesus selected at the beginning of his ministry to travel with him and to learn from him.

eternal life—the state of being forgiven and loved by God. Eternal life begins when one receives Jesus Christ by faith as Savior and Lord. Having eternal life does not mean believers will never suffer physical death but that they will enjoy fellowship with God both in this life and in the perfect, never-ending life we will have when God raises us from the dead.

faith—“confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1). True, saving faith consists of knowledge and confidence: a sure knowledge by which one accepts as true all that

God has revealed in the Bible, and a confidence that all one's sins are forgiven for Christ's sake.

Feast of Unleavened Bread—a Jewish feast that celebrates the Lord's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. This feast takes place for seven days after the celebration of Passover.

forgiveness—pardoning, giving up the desire to punish.

Gentiles—any people who are not Jewish.

high priest—in Jesus' day, the political head and leader of the Sanhedrin. Also the head of all the priests in Old Testament Israel. This priest represented Israel before God; the high priest offered sacrifices for the sins of the people.

Holy Spirit—the third person of the Trinity, one with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, works true faith in believers' hearts, and empowers them to live holy lives. The Spirit's presence in believers' hearts guarantees that they will receive all of God's promises (John 16:5-15).

holy—separated for service to God; perfect and blameless.

hosanna—an expression of praise that means "Save!"

intercede (intercession)—to plead on behalf of someone in trouble, to try to settle differences between two parties, or to act as a mediator. Jesus and the Holy Spirit intercede for believers before the Father in heaven (Rom. 8:27, 34).

Israel—God's chosen people, later known as the Jews.

Jerusalem—Israel's capital city, where God's temple is located. It was the spiritual center for the nation of Israel.

Jews—descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac; God's chosen Old Testament nation (also called Israelites, Hebrews).

justify (justification)—to make right with God. Jesus' sacrifice for our sake pays for our sin so that we can be justified before God through faith in Jesus as our Savior.

manna—"bread from heaven" provided by God and eaten by the Israelites during their years of wandering in the desert before they entered the promised land (Ex. 16:4, 13-35).

Mary Magdalene—a follower of Jesus whom he had cured of demon possession (Luke 8:2), also one of the first to see Jesus after his resurrection.

Messiah—the promised deliverer of God's people who would come to rule in peace, justice, and righteousness forever. Jesus, the Son of God, came to be this deliverer. He fulfilled all the Old Testament promises about the Messiah, which even included suffering for all God's people to save them from sin.

Moses—the great leader of God’s people when God freed the people from slavery in Egypt. Moses received the Ten Commandments and recorded all the laws given by God for the people to live by.

Passover—the annual religious festival celebrated by the Israelites to commemorate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 12).

Pharisees—the religious leaders and teachers of the Jews. They exercised great political influence. This elite group emphasized precise obedience to scriptural and traditional law. They hated Jesus and wanted him killed because he saw through their self-righteousness and challenged and threatened their authority.

(Pontius) Pilate—Roman governor of Judea who sentenced Jesus to be crucified.

prophet—one who speaks God’s message; a term generally used to refer to Old Testament preachers of God’s Word to the nation of Israel, many of whom foretold the future as revealed to them by God’s Spirit.

redeem—to buy something back; to save it from destruction by offering something valuable in exchange. Jesus redeemed us by offering his life as payment for all our sins.

resurrection—in reference to Christ, this refers to his return to life after being crucified, dying, and being buried.

righteous—being declared guiltless by God through faith in Christ for his finished work on the cross.

Sanhedrin—the Jewish high court (or council), made up of Sadducees, Pharisees, elders, and teachers of the law. The high priest presided over the Sanhedrin, which had authority in religious matters pertaining to Jewish law.

scapegoat—a goat used in the Old Testament ritual of atonement (Lev. 16); after another goat was killed for the sin offering, this live goat was symbolically burdened with all the people’s sin and sent away into the wilderness, representing the removal of sin from the community. Both of these animals served as symbols of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sake. His shed blood provides us with forgiveness of sins, and all our sins are transferred to him as the scapegoat sent out from God’s people and abandoned to die. (Jesus died outside the city of God’s people, Jerusalem, bearing the weight and curse of all our sins—see Ps. 46:4; Gal. 3:13.)

Son of Man—a title Jesus often used in reference to himself. This term was also well known as a reference to the Messiah (see Dan. 7:13-14).

1 **Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34; Matthew 21:1-11; 26:1-5, 14-35** Up to Jerusalem

Getting Started

Our study begins with the last few weeks of Jesus' life here on earth. For almost three years, Jesus has had an active ministry of teaching and healing while also training his twelve disciples. At this point, according to Matthew 19:1, Jesus has left Galilee and is in the region of Judea, where large crowds have followed him.

In this first lesson we see Jesus focusing his ministry more and more toward his coming crucifixion than he has done before. He prepares his disciples for the difficult events that lie ahead.

What Does It Say?

1. **Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34**

- a. What does Jesus share with the twelve disciples?

- b. Why do you think Jesus mentions the connection between the upcoming events and “everything that is written by the prophets” (Luke 18:31)?

Let's talk about . . .

2. **Matthew 21:1-11**

- a. What does Jesus send two of his disciples to do? Why?

b. How does the crowd respond to Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on a donkey?

c. What might the people be expecting now?

For conversation ...

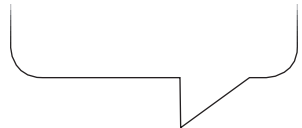
3. Matthew 26:1-5, 14-16

a. What does Jesus again predict? On what timetable?

b. Which disciple plays a crucial role in handing Jesus over? What appears to be his motivation?

4. Matthew 26:17-30

a. What is Jesus preparing to do?



b. What does Jesus say will happen to him? How do the disciples respond?

c. What does Jesus say about the bread?
About the wine?

I wonder about...

5. Matthew 26:31-35

a. What do these verses tell us about the relationship Jesus has built with his disciples?

b. What do these verses tell us about Peter and the other disciples?

Taking It Home

- a. Prior to the events of this lesson, Jesus has focused his ministry on teaching and healing and on training his disciples. What is becoming his emphasis now? What might this shift mean?

- b. How is Jesus showing great care and concern for his disciples at this time?

There's more to Easter than bunny rabbits and colored eggs. In fact, the real story of Easter is the world's most amazing love story. God loves us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to set things right again in this broken world. This story tells of Jesus, the promised Messiah of God's people, suffering unspeakable cruelties and dying on a cross. But it also tells of hope, because Jesus did not remain in the grave. He rose again on the first Easter to conquer the power of sin and death for all who believe!

Discover Easter is a six-lesson study of the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. It also includes a brief study of Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. This material is intended for small group Bible study, but it can also be used profitably for personal study. Guides for leaders and group members are available.

The approach to Bible study in this series emphasizes discovery (the reader discovers what the Bible has to say by asking questions and seeking answers from the passage studied). This is an effective and enjoyable way to study God's Word.

For a complete list of titles in the Discover Your Bible series, call toll-free 1-800-333-8300 or visit www.FaithAliveResources.org.

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