

Jesus Reveals His Mission

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Jesus declared that He is the promised Messiah and predicted that like the prophets, He too would be rejected by the people.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Luke 4:14-31

Many stories are centered around a hero who fulfills an ancient prophecy, a “chosen one” who saves the world as someone predicted they would long ago. For example, in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis, the four protagonists, Lucy, Edmund, Susan, and Peter Pevensie, are predicted to fulfill a prophecy. Their friends Mr. and Mrs. Beaver tell the four siblings that there is a prophecy that says when two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve sit on the four thrones of Cair Paravel, then the reign of the White Witch will be over and evil will be defeated.¹ Such stories are compelling to us. The characters in these stories surely face a lot of opposition along the way, but they stick to their purpose and persevere in their quest as they fulfill the prophecies foretold about them.



What real-life prophecies have been foretold about believers in Christ?

Group Time

Point 1: Jesus declared He is the Messiah of Isaiah's prophecy (Luke 4:16-22).

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

That Jesus would claim to fulfill even one of the numerous Old Testament prophecies about the Christ is bold, but He did so because He is who He says He is—the Messiah who came to set the captives free from their sins. Only an all-knowing and sovereign God could have foretold the Messiah's life with such accuracy hundreds of years before the events came to pass. We serve a timeless God of complete knowledge and authority who is worthy of our trust.

God Is Omniscient: God's knowledge is _____, and as He is _____ of time, He has known from all _____ whatever will come to pass.




What are some ways the good news of Jesus addresses the suffering the world experiences today?

By declaring Himself to be the Messiah, Jesus would offend many, but that didn't stop Him. As the Messiah, He would still act in accordance with His identity and accomplish the things the Messiah was prophesied to accomplish. The people responded positively to His words, but their affirmation was short-lived.


Point 2: Jesus predicted He would be rejected like the prophets (Luke 4:23-27).

²³ And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.” ²⁴ And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

Jesus, being the divine Son of God, possessed a knowledge of others’ thoughts, so He knew those in Nazareth held some doubts about Him. The proverb “Physician, heal yourself” would have been an expression of doubt that Jesus had performed the miracles they heard He did. Jesus preempted their taunts by predicting they would reject Him, just like Israel had rejected the prophets throughout her history. Jesus’ rejection in Nazareth foreshadows His larger-scale rejection by the Jews in Jerusalem—His crucifixion.

 What doubts might arise in our own hearts as we consider the claims of Christ?

In His declaration about the people’s coming rejection of Himself, Jesus referenced **Elijah** and **Elisha**, recalling one of the worst periods of apostasy in Israel’s history. Elijah and Elisha were prophets to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, yet their work often addressed those outside of the nation. When the Israelites rejected God’s blessings, those blessings were extended to the Gentiles even though they were outside of God’s chosen people. In rejecting Jesus, the Jews would be rejecting God’s blessing, just as their ancestors had, and so, His ministry would go forth to the ends of the earth.

 Who are some people on the margins of your community, and how can you reach out to them with the gospel?



Voices from Church History

“He assumed a body capable of death, in order that it, through belonging to the Word Who is above all, might become in dying a sufficient exchange for all, and, itself remaining incorruptible through His indwelling, might thereafter put an end to corruption for all others as well, by the grace of the resurrection.”²

—Athanasius (c. 296-373)

Point 3: Jesus continued His ministry despite the people's rejection (Luke 4:28-31).

²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹ And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went away.

³¹ And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath,

Once again, the events following Jesus' sermon at Nazareth foreshadow the events that would come to pass at Jerusalem. The people, angered by His message, attempted to throw Him off a cliff to kill Him, just as the Pharisees would one day bring Jesus before Pilate and the angry crowds would shout, "Crucify Him!" But Jesus was not to die before His appointed time in Jerusalem, so in Nazareth, He passed through the crowd and left unharmed.



What comfort and encouragement should we take from the fact that Jesus passed through the crowd unharmed?

Near the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus experienced what could be described as a spectacular failure. Not only was He rejected by His hometown, but the people of His hometown, possibly including family and friends and family friends, wanted to kill Him for His words. Yet Jesus did not call it quits; He continued on with His ministry. Jesus, the ultimate ambassador of the kingdom of God, faced head-on the kingdom of this world and its opposition. In a world full of people who operate under the influence of Satan, Jesus demonstrated the boldness of God's kingdom in His faithfulness to His call even amidst rejection.

The World Opposed to God: In many instances in Scripture, the term *world* refers to an active and evil spiritual force that is in direct conflict with God and His _____. This evil world force operates under _____ control, displaying the same self-centeredness and deceit that is found within his character. Christians are called to overcome this world of spiritual evil by _____ in the Son of God.

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Isaiah 61:1-7

Unlike political leaders, the Messiah alone could speak into existence the idyllic dynamics of the new creation (vv. 1-3). Nonetheless, the Messiah graciously opts to use His people as instruments to bring about blessing and redemption to the world (vv. 4-7). The messianic community thus serves as a team of emissaries and ambassadors for the Lord's Anointed, announcing His gospel and serving others in the hope of seeing lives transformed through repentance and faith in the Messiah.

God's people were always meant to live as a royal priesthood and holy nation that mediates knowledge of His grace to the world around it (Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9). As followers of Jesus, we are indwelt with the same Spirit who anointed Jesus and are charged to proclaim the same good news that He provided through His life, death, and resurrection.



How does reading Isaiah's description of the Messiah and His mission deepen your hope for the future Jesus has purchased for His people?

Day 2: Read Isaiah 61:8-11

Every human being has an innate sense of justice, that our actions matter and that good should be rewarded and evil punished. However, this innate sense and perceived entitlement to justice does not in itself guarantee the actuality of justice. In other words, the mere desire for justice does not necessarily mean that we will see it carried out. Yet we as God's people can have confidence that in the end we will truly see justice for all. Why? Because of the immutable character of God and His unwavering promises.

After promising to bring about restoration and redemption through His anointed Servant in verses 1-7, Isaiah 61 then puts forward the assured grounding of these promises: "For I the LORD love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them" (v. 8). God made creation and made it good, and in the end, it will be good. He will settle for nothing less.



How can people's undeniable desire for justice aid our efforts in evangelism and apologetics?

Day 3: Read Luke 4:16-22

It's called "the mic drop." The phrase refers to when a speaker makes such a strong and compelling statement that it requires a prolonged pause or stage exit for full effect. Dropping the mic, whether physically or figuratively, adds a dramatic ending to bold and shocking words. In the synagogue of His hometown, however, Jesus did not end but rather began a worship gathering with nothing short of a mic drop (or perhaps more accurately, a "scroll roll").

Imagine how presumptuous, pretentious, and potentially blasphemous Jesus' claim in verse 21 must have sounded to the folks with whom He grew up. Yet as Luke records, initially this claim alone was not enough to raise their ire, which is a reaction we will see in verses 28-30. Regardless of people's attitudes, Jesus nonetheless proceeded to "drop the mic" in applying Isaiah's messianic prophecy to Himself: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (v. 21).



How can we avoid committing superficial "mic drops" when it comes to speaking to people about the gospel and its serious implications for their lives?

Day 4: Read Luke 4:23-27

After Jesus' apparent "mic drop," the people's confused and perhaps antagonistic response led Him wisely to point out the basis for their resistance. Jesus was not taken aback at all. Indeed, He proceeded to force the issue by citing two examples from redemptive history when Israel previously rejected its own prophets, Elijah and Elisha.

Because of Israel's failure to recognize God's truthful messenger at a given time, God has acted to extend His grace elsewhere, such as in the cases of the widow at Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian. Those of Israelite descent cannot, in other words, presume upon God's grace; they are not entitled to it by birth or culture. They must receive God's message with attentive, repentant ears. Likewise, we who constitute the Christian church today should not presume anything either. We must be careful to heed God's Word whenever it is being proclaimed truthfully, regardless of the messenger.



What are some illegitimate reasons that sometimes make you hesitant to respond in faith and obedience to God's Word?

Day 5: Read Luke 4:28-31

It takes a village to raise a child. And apparently it takes the same village to carry out a would-be public execution of this same child once He is grown. Despite knowing what their unbelief would lead them to do (see Luke 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; 11:17), Jesus did not hold back in His pronouncements about His messianic identity. Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father's plan, recognizing that He would not die until the appointed time (22:53; John 7:30). In verse 30, we even see God's supernatural preservation of Jesus' earthly life.

We then can observe Jesus' steadfast trust in the Father evidenced further in verse 31, which mentions almost casually how He continued onward in His ministry. Though none of us are the Messiah, we too can trust in God to complete His plans knowing that no harm will come to us unless He permits it (Luke 12:4-7).



How does this passage speak to your biggest fears about telling others that Jesus is the only true Messiah and Savior?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Jesus declared He is the Messiah of Isaiah's prophecy (Luke 4:16-22).
- Jesus predicted He would be rejected like the prophets (Luke 4:23-27).
- Jesus continued His ministry despite the people's rejection (Luke 4:28-31).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



What can we do to support those in our midst who are experiencing rejection because of their Christian faith?



Why should we be confident in announcing to others that Jesus is the promised Messiah, despite knowing that many will reject this claim?

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Trevin Wax

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AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING
This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in
Light of the Gospel

With this volume of *The Gospel Project*, the storyline of the Bible shifts from the Old Testament to the New, and we enter the era in which God begins to fulfill His promise of salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the sessions that follow, you'll take a closer look at the context surrounding the birth of Jesus, the theological parallels between Adam and Jesus (the last Adam), as well as the early ministry of Jesus.

Some of these stories will be familiar to you and the rest of your group—the Christmas story, for example, or the story of Jesus' temptation. In the familiar stories, we want to help you see aspects of the Gospel accounts that you may have overlooked. In the less familiar stories, we want to help you see the beauty of Jesus' interaction with all kinds of people with all kinds of needs and all kinds of backgrounds.

Our hope as you study the Scriptures is that you will be drawn to worship Jesus as the Savior and Lord who fulfills God's original intention for us as His people. Here we see a Jesus withstanding temptation, calling disciples, loving the unlovable, and battling the evil one. May your worship of this Savior lead you to faithful obedience to His call in extending grace and mercy and the message of salvation to those around you.

UNIT 19

SESSION 1

1. "Sin," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, gen. eds. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III (IVP, 1998) [Wordsearch].
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books, 1992), 376.
3. Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans 10, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 2

1. Thabiti Anyabwile, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Luke* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2018), 40-41.
2. Jen Wilkin, *In His Image* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 107.

SESSION 3

1. John Piper, "God Is Always Doing 10,000 Things in Your Life," *Desiring God*, January 1, 2013, www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-is-always-doing-10000-things-in-your-life.
2. Martin Luther, *The Magnificat*, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].
3. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 690.

SESSION 4

1. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 168.
2. Thomas Becon, *The Sermon of Simeon in the Temple*, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 5

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2. Gloria Furman, *Missional Motherhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 200.

UNIT 20

SESSION 1

1. Eric Mason, *Manhood Restored* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2013), 1.
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (SCM Press, 2015), 91.

EASTER SESSION

1. Basil, *On Humility* 20, quoted in 1-2 *Corinthians*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VII in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Russell D. Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 75.

SESSION 2

1. Jackie Hill Perry, *Gay Girl, Good God* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2018), 171.
2. Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1959), 9.

SESSION 3

1. Trip Lee, *Rise: Get Up and Live in God's Great Story* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2015), 47.
2. Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance* 1.12.53, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

1. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 14.44, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Jerry Bridges, *31 Days Toward Trusting God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2013) [eBook].

UNIT 21

SESSION 1

1. Fred L. Horton Jr., "Exorcism," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2003), 533.
2. Dexter Maben, "Mark," in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1290.
3. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2000), January 14.
4. Dacher Keltner, "Hands On Research: The Science of Touch," *Greater Good Magazine*, September 29, 2010, http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/hands_on_research.

SESSION 2

1. See *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, by C. S. Lewis (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 89.
2. St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. and ed. A Religious of C.S.M.V. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 35.
3. Kim Cash Tate, "Rejected by Friends, Loved by Jesus," *Desiring God*, December 29, 2015, www.desiringgod.org/articles/rejected-by-friends-loved-by-jesus.

SESSION 3

1. "Kawasaki Disease and Heart Transplant: Kendall's Story," Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, April 2012, www.chop.edu/stories/kawasaki-disease-and-heart-transplant-kendalls-story.
2. Andrew Murray, *Humility, in Humility and Absolute Surrender* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 42.
3. "John," in *Africa Study Bible* (Oasis International LTD, 2016), 1534.

SESSION 4

1. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on John* 24.23-24, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Samuel Ngewa, "John," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1286.