

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #17 – Adult Bible Study – 2025 & 2026**

**Discovering the Bible**

**February 3 & 4, 2026**

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**Review – The Savior**

1. With Jesus' birth, the long-awaited Messiah – Christ – Savior is born into the world
2. The focus here was on the “birth stories” of Jesus as told in Matthew, Luke, and John
3. These stories locate Jesus in the larger story of what God is doing in the world through the people whom God has chosen to be the vehicles or means by which God redeems/saves
4. Matthew and Luke share about events, people, and angels; John shares from a philosophical/theological perspective
5. The God of Israel has become Human in order to live among Humanity and save it/us

**The Ministry**

1. General Thoughts
  - a. This section of our study focuses on the events of Jesus' life that occurred in the small geographic region of Palestine and in the brief period of about 3 years
  - b. In what Jesus does and says we see how God lives and moves in the human world
  - c. Though “the Gospels” comprise less than 10% of the biblical text, the information they contain is the heart of Christian faith
2. Mark 1:1-20
  - a. Of the 4, Mark is the only Gospel that says nothing of Jesus' birth
  - b. Mark also is the shortest and most “to the point” Gospel
  - c. Most scholars believe that Mark (not an original Disciple) summarized information that he learned from Peter
  - d. V1 states the gospel message briefly: it is Good News about and from Jesus, who is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God (another way of saying “God himself”)
  - e. Mark immediately ties Jesus in to the story of Israel with a quote from the prophet Isaiah
  - f. Then Mark tells of John (the Baptizer) who was seen as the last prophet of the Messiah until the Messiah himself arrived on the scene
  - g. Jesus is baptized, not out of the need to be forgiven and cleansed, but as an identification with the People of Israel
  - h. God proclaims Jesus' identity via a visit from the Spirit
  - i. Jesus begins his public ministry in a private setting during which he deals with the temptation common to all humanity: to follow an evil path rather than a righteous one
  - j. Then Jesus begins to publicly proclaim the arrival and/or presence of God's Kingdom and invites/commands people to recognize it and live by its truth
  - k. Next, Jesus calls 12 people to come along with him as witnesses to his work and apprentices of his way of living in the present reality of God
3. Matthew 3:13-4:17
  - a. Matthew and Luke apparently used Mark's gospel as the basis of their own, and then added more material
  - b. Here we have a retelling of Jesus' baptism, and an expansion of Jesus' temptation in the desert
  - c. In the temptation, Jesus:
    - i. Affirms that God is the source of life, not mere food
    - ii. Affirms that life in the Kingdom is not about showy miracles or extreme experiences
    - iii. Affirms that his purpose is to serve God, not himself
  - d. Matthew connects Jesus' life and work to the prophets of Israel's past, and casts Jesus' work as the bringing of God's light into a sin-darkened world
  - e. And Matthew affirms what Mark also states: that everything about Jesus is involved with proclaiming and revealing the presence of God in the world

4. Luke 4:14-30
  - a. Jesus goes to his home town synagogue, and proclaims his purpose and work. This is Jesus “vision and mission” statement!
  - b. Jesus’ work is a continuation and fulfillment of the work God has been doing all along, as captured in the words of Isaiah: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*
  - c. Rather than accept Jesus, however, his own people reject him
5. Mark 1:21-39
  - a. One of Jesus’ main activities was to heal people
  - b. Here, Jesus heals a man “with an unclean spirit,” a woman with a fever, and those suffering from various diseases and possession by demons
  - c. More than the miracles themselves, what impresses people is Jesus’ apparent authority and power – *“They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, ‘What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.’”*
  - d. One pattern of Jesus life is going back and forth between engagement and disengagement – he spends time with people, and also alone with God
6. John 6:1-14
  - a. People are following Jesus, seeking healing for themselves and the opportunity to see others healed
  - b. Here occurs the only miracle attested by all 4 Gospels
  - c. Much of Jesus’ ministry occurs in locations around the Sea of Galilee (aka of Tiberias, or Lake of Chinnereth or Gennesaret)
  - d. Jesus feed 5000 with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish
  - e. Here is a prefiguring of sorts of the Last Supper (which also occurred at the time of Passover)
  - f. The theological statement is clear: Jesus is God among Us, who not only feeds but rescues (think back to the story of Passover and Wandering in the Wilderness)
7. Matthew 16:13-20
  - a. This scene is located in Caesarea Philippi, northern Israel, south of Mt. Hermon, where there were many shrines to many Gods, making Jesus’ question to Peter all the more significant: *“But who do you say that I am?”*
  - b. As is so often the case, Peter speaks: *“You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”*
  - c. Jesus’ answer (“and on this rock I will build my church”) can be taken two ways, and the difference between them is crucial:
    - i. Either Peter himself is the rock (the Roman Catholic answer)
    - ii. Or, the faith that Jesus is Messiah is the rock (everyone else’s answer)
  - d. The key question, however, is about Jesus: is he Messiah/Christ/Savior, or not?
8. John 3:1-21
  - a. Not all Jews rejected Jesus. Nicodemus, a “Jew’s Jew,” Pharisee and leader, seemed to see and accept who Jesus was
  - b. Here are some of the most quoted and studied statements of Jesus – at least in recent Protestant and western theology
  - c. To see, know, understand, and accept Jesus is like a second birth
  - d. Jesus’ work is the work of love, God’s love
  - e. Jesus’ work is meant for everyone, not only the Jews
  - f. Jesus’ work is about giving life and defeating death

### Questions for Your Life Today

- A. From all of these stories and events, which words of Jesus most powerfully speak to you today?
- B. For you, who is Jesus, and what does having faith in Jesus mean to you?
- C. Jesus proclaimed the actual and real presence of God in our world today, not just for some time in the future when we “go to heaven.” How does this influence your own religious belief and practice?

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*Primary Source: Discovering the Bible: A New Generation, published by The Kerygma Program, Pittsburgh, PA. Boyd Lien, author.*