



## Talks

# GLUE – Session 3 – Christ

## Recapping from Session 1 – Creation

So far, God has made human beings to be co-creators with him in the world. God and humans are together working to bring order out of chaos and everything is good and right and lovely. Perfect

## Recapping from Session 2 – Collapse

Because of human pride humans have separated themselves from God and from each other. God is pure and perfectly holy and we are not. We have got ourselves into a mess.

## Recapping from Session 3 – Community

God chooses a community to bless and influence the world that the world might know that God is God. God promises this community that they will bless the world. God's presence is in temple.

### 1. The world of Jesus

Over the Christmas period I wrote and produced a video called the Beatbox Nativity. It was hugely popular but the content – the Bible story – caused extreme reactions from a small group people. They wanted to rubbish it, to pull it off-air, to criticise it – in a word, to 'kill' it.

Thousands of years ago God chose a community and promised them that the world would be blessed through them. A hope emerged that God's chosen or 'anointed' one would emerge who would lead the people into freedom from their enemies and establish God's rule once and for all. This person was called Messiah or Christ. And so the people of God waited. But for 400 years there was radio silence. It was as if God had abandoned them. There had been no new prophecies about this person and no new revelations from God. Would it ever happen? The world was still a mess and the people of God in Israel were in a mess themselves.

Two thousand years ago, the area we know as Palestine was occupied by perhaps the most brutal empire the world had ever known – The Roman Empire – and it was into this political and social chaos that Jesus was born.

Jesus began his public ministry at the age of 30 and Israel was still an occupied territory; God seemed to be absent and the people of God had split into multiple factions. Four of these factions were The Herodians, The Pharisees, The Essenes and The Zealots.

#### 1. The Herodians

The Herodians, led by King Herod, thought like this. "It doesn't look like this Messiah fella' is going to turn up. I'm the king and I reckon we might as well get on with The Romans. So what if Caesar says he is God?"



# Talks

## GLUE – Session 3 – Christ

We should collaborate with The Romans – bow down to Caesar if necessary – and have a peaceful life. It's got to be better than resistance?"

### 2. The Pharisees

Then there were the Pharisees. They went around telling everybody this. "So you want the Messiah to turn up? Well, he would turn up but you lot are not holy enough. It's your fault. If only you miserable sinners obeyed every one of his commands to the letter, then he would turn up. It is your lack of obedience that we are in this mess. So get holy."

### 3. The Essenes

Then there were the Essenes. They thought, "We need to separate ourselves from the rest of society. Let's go and form a community out in the desert, away from the rest of the world and its bad influences. Then, perhaps the Messiah will come."

### 4. The Zealots

Then there were the Zealots. "You want to know why the Messiah hasn't come? Well, it's because we need to fight. Draw your swords! We must resist the Romans and if we fight them then surely God will be on our side and raise up for us a saviour – The Messiah – who will come and kick Roman butt and establish his Kingdom."

## 2. The King has come

So it was into this mess that Jesus came. He modelled what it meant to put God and others above self. If you want to see how God would behave – look at Jesus.

1. He demonstrated that God's plan had never changed – that God brings order out of Chaos.
2. He inaugurates a new creation – a new way of being for the world.
3. He invites us to join in with God's mission in the world.

The story of Jesus walking on water encapsulates these three things. It was not just a demonstration of power but it is symbolic of what he came to do.

#### Read Matthew 14:22-32

1. The water represents chaos.
2. Where else is God over the water? Genesis! (Note: It is I = The IAM is here)

Then he does an extraordinary thing. He invites Peter to get out onto the water with him. Jesus is inviting Peter – the person on whom Jesus would later build the church – to join in with him in bringing order out of chaos. Peter starts to sink and Jesus grabs his arm and pulls him up. Now some Christians say that this is a story about faith – if only Peter had had enough faith then he wouldn't have sunk. Yes, it took faith for



# Talks

## GLUE – Session 3 – Christ

Peter to get out of the boat but the point was that Peter sank and Jesus was saying, “You can’t do this on your own, you need me.” Then the waves were calmed. This is a hugely symbolic image of what Jesus came to do and what he called his followers to do too.

While Jesus was going around teaching and doing good stuff he began to tick people off.

Jesus said to the Herodians, “You don’t redeem and restore and renew the world by collaborating with a brutal empire – and you certainly don’t bow down to Caesar. What’s all that about?”

Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You don’t redeem and restore and renew the world by telling people that they are unholy. In fact you are the ones who are unholy! You tell people that they’re going to hell but I tell you that you are twice the sons of hell than they are!” Strong language eh?

Jesus said to the Essenes, “You don’t redeem and renew and restore the world by being separate from it. What are you doing out there in the desert? You’re the people of God and you’re called to be in the world – like salt or light.”

Jesus said to the Zealots, “Put your swords away. Do you think I came to start a revolution with swords? Is that God’s way? Is that the way of love and peace and grace and mercy?”

So within three years of ministry Jesus had managed to offend just about every political faction and so the ‘chosen people’ plotted to have Jesus killed. In fact they tried a few times to either stone him or throw him off a cliff.

Eventually they get Jesus arrested and to a trial – first with the Jewish authorities and then with the Roman overlords. At Jesus’ trial a strange thing happens. They can’t seem to pin a single thing on him – nothing.

### 3. The trial of all trials

When I was about 8 years old I was sat with my mate Matthew on the back seat of ‘Nelly’ the school bus. In the car behind two punks started sticking up two fingers up at us. So, giggling, we returned the favour. However, the deputy head who was driving the bus heard what we had done (no doubt from some snivelling tell-tale – probably that Melanie Parfitt). Anyway, when we got back to school the deputy head asked both Matthew and I if we had done the dastardly deed. I confessed but Matthew denied doing it. The next morning in school assembly I was made to stand up and was publicly shamed in front of the whole school. And as a punishment the head teacher asked all the pupils not to speak to me for a day. (you can say ‘ahh’ now)

I’m not entirely sure that the punishment fit the crime, and although it hurt deeply, I was after all, guilty.

Think for a moment. If your whole life stood trial – do you think that anyone from any period in your life could come up with a single thing that you ever did wrong? If it was me I’m sure the authorities would have to come up with some sort of system to manage the queues!



# Talks

## GLUE – Session 3 – Christ

When Jesus stood trial for his life a very strange thing happened. No-one could think of a single thing he had ever done wrong in his entire life – nothing. Someone was like, “Oh yes, I remember when Jesus did that terrible thing, you know the one where... oh, no, that wasn’t Jesus, it was Bernard,” or “I remember! Yes, that time when Jesus said that shocking thing to... oh, no, wrong again, that was Barbara.” They couldn’t come up with a single charge apart from one...

They did manage to come up with one accusation that stuck. Jesus had made the outrageous claim that *he* was God. In first century Palestine that was blasphemy, a no-no, and a crime punishable by death. And so because of this one thing – and because of nothing else - Jesus was tortured and then crucified.

There’s not much I want to say about crucifixion other than it was a death so horrible and so cruel that even the Romans eventually banned it.

Jesus’ friends and his followers completely deserted him – he clearly wasn’t the one everyone thought was going to lead the people into freedom. Fishermen went back to their boats, etc. Even Peter who said he’d follow Jesus anywhere eventually fled when he was recognised as a mate of Jesus. Then three days later the tomb in which Jesus body had been laid was empty.

## 4. Resurrection

God had been putting a plan into action that was bigger and better and more exciting than anyone imagined. Even his closest disciples hadn’t fully understood what was going on. At his trial some of them, especially the Zealots, still thought that Jesus was going to lead a physical revolution – that the Romans would be overthrown and that God’s Kingdom or rule would be established by force. But their hopes were crushed when Jesus was executed.

However, when the tomb was found empty they started to put things together – especially things Jesus had said. Remember in the last session how God’s presence was in the temple and how important the temple was to the Jewish community? Jesus had mentioned that The Temple would be destroyed and rebuilt in three days. They hadn’t clicked that he was talking about himself. And of course, The Temple was where God presided. Click?

You see God’s plan had never changed. His plan was and has always been about restoring, renewing and redeeming this world – and his plan has always involved humanity. He promised that this chosen people of God would bring about change in the world, that they would be his agents or ambassadors and that through them God’s Kingdom would be established.

To truly fulfil this calling God needs to be connected with humans in such a way that we would see the world through God’s eyes. In the same way that Jesus lifted Peter out of the water, we humans needed to be connected to God. Try as we might, we won’t be able to do the job on our own.

And so, God’s plan was to set the people free – not as they expected, from the bondage of the Romans – but set free from sin. God’s plan was to close the gap between himself and humans so that we could work together to redeem, restore and renew the world. Jesus lived and died so that God could come and live in



# Talks

## GLUE – Session 3 – Christ

human beings – make his home in us, commune with us, help us, guide us – for the very purpose of bringing order out of chaos in the world – the chaos in our own lives and in the lives of those around us. How cool is that?

In other words God's plan was to make everyone holy so that God could literally hang out with them or in them. This is what Jesus came to do and he achieved it. This is why it mattered that he had done nothing wrong. Do you see that? If Jesus had been guilty of a single sin then he couldn't have saved anyone. Click???

Jesus' life, death and resurrection had made this possible. It shifted things in the spiritual realm – for the whole world – for everyone - forever.

And of course, the tomb was empty because death could not hold a person who had done nothing wrong. Jesus' resurrection was a sign that things had changed – forever.

Sometimes I hear Christians explaining the gospel as this, "Jesus Christ died for our sins (full stop)." But to my mind and from my reading of the Bible this is just part of a much bigger story – the overarching story (posh title - The Grand Meta-narrative). And if we ignore the bigger story then we are missing out. Some might add an extra line such as this, "Jesus Christ died for our sins so that we could live forever and not go to hell." Again, this seems to tap into a wider story but it's not quite the whole picture. I would say, "Jesus Christ died for our sins that we might be made holy so that God could come and live in us to help and guide us as we work together to redeem, restore and renew the world." Okay, so that was a bit of a mouthful but you get my point?