|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  | During our last lesson, we spoke briefly about the miraculous birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:20-23). I asked you to consider the amazing possibility that the all-powerful God of the entire universe would humble Himself and enter the limited body of a human being. The story of the Bible is radically different than any other religion – the Creator became one of His own creatures.  In **John 1:1-4,** we begin by thinking about the beginning, and the One who made all things. The Word of truth that came forth from God at creation and through Him, all things were created. He is the source of life for each and every one of us. In **John 1:14**, we see this amazing reality: this Word, the very God of life, became flesh and lived with us. As I said before, God must’ve had an amazing reason to do something so incredible. |
|  | After Jesus’ birth, He was raised as a child by Mary and Joseph. In the Jewish culture, a man had to be at least 30 years old before doing the work of God. So once Jesus turned 30 years old, He began His ministry work for God. As He began, He called 12 men to be His closest followers. They were not leaders, scholars, or famous – just twelve ordinary men. Sadly, the men who should’ve been excited to receive Jesus were too busy doing their religious thing. They rejected Jesus because of their jealousy and because He did not do what they expected. |
|  | Jesus quickly became well known, drawing crowds wherever He went. As we read the true stories of Jesus’ works in the New Testament, we usually see three groups of people present: people who desire Jesus to meet their needs, teachers of the law who are jealous of Him and want to discredit Him, and a group in the middle that aren’t really sure what to think. We see these three groups in **Mark 2:1-5.** This man’s friends go to great trouble to have Jesus heal their friend. But He does something different than they expect – He forgives the man’s sins. The legal teachers are angered by the claim of Jesus, and in their anger, they speak something true (**Mark 2:6,7**). They were correct when they said that God is the only one who can forgive sins. Their problem was this: they didn’t really know who Jesus was. But in **Mark 2:8-12**, He demonstrates power and authority that no one had ever seen. Jesus did supernatural things to show that He was the Creator of the universe – the One who created natural law and can overrule it. He didn’t do miracles to impress people – He did them to prove His identity and change the lives of people. Here are some examples: |
|  | **Mark 4:35-41** – **power over nature**. This time, Jesus is in the boats with experienced fishermen. There were also other boats around (eyewitnesses). At first, they are afraid of the terrible storm outside of the boat, but afterwards, they are terrified by the One inside of the boat, asking “Who is this?” |
|  | **Mark 5:1-18 – power over demons**. The spiritual powers of darkness inside of this man were too great for anyone to control **(v.1-5)**. But in the presence of Jesus, he ran and confessed the truth about the greater power: “Jesus, Son of the Most High God” **(v.6,7)**. Jesus commands the demons to depart, setting the man free and creating fear in the people **(v.11-17)**. In the face of such power, some seek separation while one seeks to stay with Jesus (v.18). |
|  | **Luke 5:12-14 – power to create new flesh**. Leprosy was one of the most feared of all diseases, forcing people into isolation. When a man “covered in leprosy” approaches Jesus, He does the unthinkable: “reached out His hand and touched the man,” instantly restoring his flesh, his nervous system, and his life. |
|  | **John 6:1-4 - Power to create matter.** In the beginning of this story, we see a great crowd of people coming to Jesus, amazed by His miraculous signs. As they get hungry, Jesus asks one of His disciples “where shall we buy bread” to feed these people? There wasn’t a noodle shop or KFC anywhere nearby, only a small boy with just a little food (**vs. 8,9**). So Jesus has the people sit down, He breaks the loaves and the fish, and in the sight of everyone present, He creates more bread and more fish (**vs. 10,11**). The people are amazed, and decide to make Jesus their national king. But Jesus did not come to be the ruler of the small Jewish nation. He had a much larger purpose with a different mission. |
|  | **John 11:38-46 – power over death**. Surrounded by supporters and skeptics, Jesus asks people to unseal the tomb of a dead man **(v.38-42)**. At His call, the dead man comes out, wrapped in grave clothes **(v.43-45)**. At such a clear display of His power, “many of the Jews … put their faith in Him.” But notice this: even though everyone was given the same evidence, some also chose to reject Jesus for fear of losing their position **(v.46-48)**.  |
|  | We only looked at a sampling of the miracles of Jesus, but it should quickly become obvious that Jesus is not just a man – He is God in the flesh (Immanuel). Especially when we see the power to forgive sin! |
|  | Children and adults enjoy make-believe stories. These are interesting and fun to read, but when we talk about eternity, we **need** to have the **truth**, not make-believe. Something to remember about these stories: Jesus had very powerful enemies, people who tried very hard to discredit his mighty works. If Jesus was a fraud, they would have quickly found out and told the world. But as you read the Bible (and other writings of those days), you will never find words that prove His works to be fraudulent. It is not enough to just look at the **powerful works** of Jesus. We also need to listen to **His words** – why did He come and what message does He have for us. Let’s look at a famous Bible passage which clarifies His central message – His purpose for coming to this world. |