

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 5

Luke 21-24; Acts 1

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General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Monday

Luke 21

This chapter begins with Jesus talking to his followers about giving. Giving from the heart means more than giving a lot. It is not the size of the gift that counts so much as what the giving costs the giver.

When, if ever, have you 'given until it hurts'? What emotions or feelings did it evoke in you? Do you think you are giving enough of yourself and/or your material wealth for God's work? How much is enough?

The rest of the chapter is describing what happened to the temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 66-72 and warning people against forgetting God while they wait for the end times to come. Luke warns his listeners to be prayerful and stick with what Jesus taught regardless of personal cost. It may appear like all is lost but don't give up and don't get caught up in what is happening around you.

Are there times when you feel that you have forgotten God and become caught up in what is happening around you? What would help you to get back on track? Consider seeking answers in prayer or by talking to a spiritual leader whom you trust.

Tuesday

Luke 22

The high priests and religion scholars were looking for a way to do away with Jesus. He was very popular with the crowds so they had to be careful. Their solution was to buy-off Judas. Jesus saw through Judas and knew what was coming but did nothing to stop him.

Why do you think Jesus let Judas go ahead with the betrayal and let the events that followed unfold as they did?

After the meal Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray, as was his custom. He knew what was coming and asked God if there could be any other way. He scolded the sleeping apostles and told them to pray that they not fall into temptation. This could be considered an indication that he himself was tempted to give up the difficult task before him. Then later in the chapter Peter denies Jesus three times after vehemently saying he would never deny Jesus. When he realized what he had done, he broke down and cried.

Think of a time when you were tempted to give up or to take the easy route even though you felt it wasn't right. If you were able to stick to the more difficult way -What gave you the strength to resist temptation? Or if you decided to take the easier way what effect did it have on you? And what could have helped you to make a better choice?

Wednesday

Luke 23

This chapter describes Jesus trial and sentencing first before Pilate, then Herod, then back to Pilate who can find nothing to warrant his being put to death. The religious authorities are adamant, however, and Barabbas is released while Jesus is sent to be crucified. It is interesting that in Luke's account the ones who declare him innocent are the Roman authorities, the criminal being crucified with him, the Roman centurion and the crowd which leaves feeling grieved. Luke also tells us of Joseph of Arimathea's tender attendance to the burial of the body.

What do you think Luke is trying to tell us by relating these details? What difference in meaning does it make when compared to the accounts found in Mark (Chs 14, 15) and Matthew (Chs 26, 27)?

Have you ever been unjustly accused of something? How did you respond? OR Have you ever stood up to defend another who was unjustly accused? How were your efforts received - by the defendant? By the accusers?

Thursday

Luke 24

Luke's account of the resurrection appearances has all of the encounters happening in one day and they resemble each other in that the disciples did not immediately recognize Jesus until their 'minds are opened'.

Why do you think the disciples did not recognize Jesus right away? What do you think Luke's purpose was in describing these encounters in this way?

Luke's report of Jesus' eating and drinking is an early insistence that the resurrection is not just some vague Greek notion of immortality of the soul and he seems to want to make a distinct connection between the risen Christ and the historical Jesus.

What does resurrection mean to you? Do you make any distinction between the risen Christ and the historical Jesus?

Friday

Acts 1

The book of Acts is actually a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. It is written by the same author and picks up where Luke leaves off by continuing the story of how the apostles and disciples live the gospel message into the next generation.

This first chapter takes care of practical things like choosing a replacement for Judas. Peter has taken leadership and two people have been proposed to fill the vacancy, Justus and Matthias. The method of deciding who God chooses is to "cast lots" or draw straws.

There is much debate in present times about how God works in the world and how to discern God's will. Do you think God still works through such methods as 'casting lots' or drawing straws? How do you discern God's will for your life?