

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Message Title: "Christmas Gifts"

Speaker: Pastor Kevin Myers

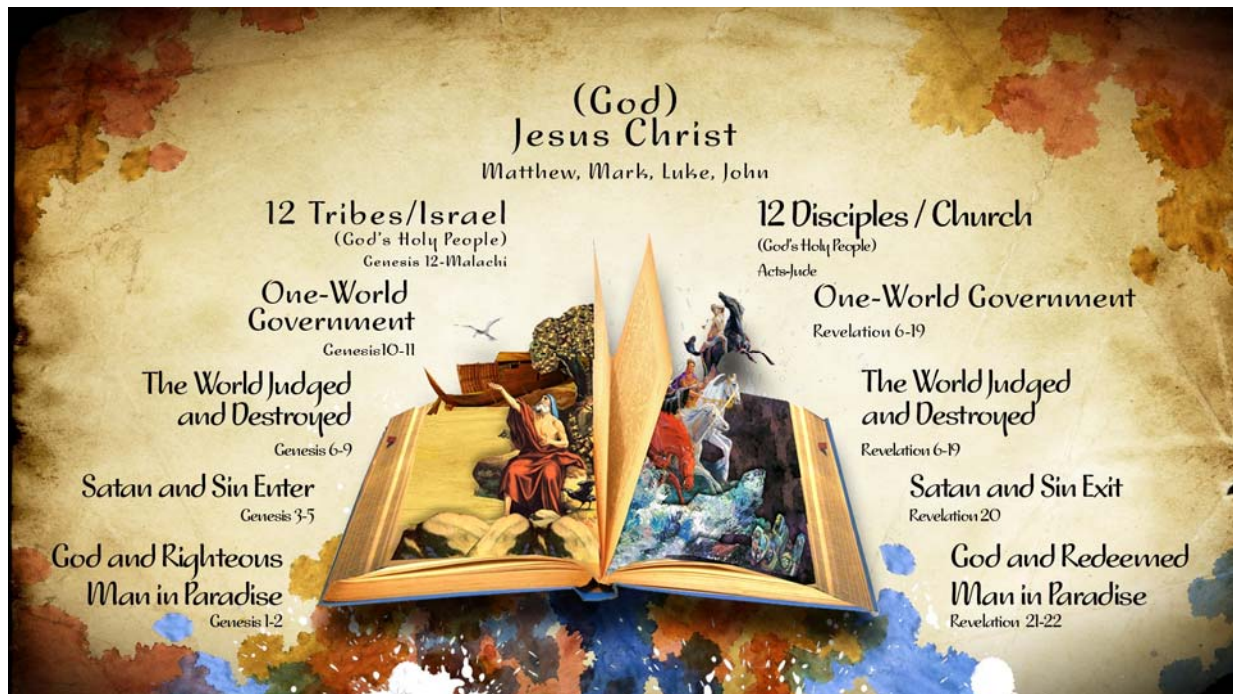
Date: March 16, 2008

Icebreaker:

Any Indiana Jones fans out there? Pastor Kevin (PK) has used clips from a couple of Indy movies to illustrate points in his messages this series. Just for kicks, what is your favorite Indiana Jones scene? Why is it your favorite?

Message Overview:

In this series, we have been examining how events in the Old Testament portion of the Bible point to future events recorded in the New Testament. We see the Bible as a whole, a record of God's redemptive plan to bring fallen man back into paradise with Him, pivoting on the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, himself God come to redeem us by His own death. Whereas the Old Testament looks toward Jesus the Messiah, the New Testament looks back to Jesus and is built on Him. And it all looks forward to His imminent return when He, the resurrected, glorified Christ, will reconcile all things unto Himself. In short, it all hinges on a babe in a manger. Merry Christmas!



Discussion:

(Leaders: Do not try to cover every question provided in this study guide, but rather review the complete list, selecting a mix of questions that work best for your group, mixing scripture research/discussion as well as personal application of the teaching principles. See the wrap-up section before diving into the discussion.)

Who is this Jesus anyway?

- Many think the story of Jesus begins with Christmas...a holy babe born in a stable to a virgin...Emmanuel, God with us. But we forget, or don't realize, that Jesus is also referred to as the long-awaited Messiah. What is a messiah? Just how long had people been waiting for Him? Read the following Scripture and identify the first promises of redemption and to whom they were made: Genesis 3:15, Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 49:9-10, 2 Samuel 7:9-16.
- Josh McDowell noted that the Old Testament contains over three hundred references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus! For just a sampling, match the following prophetic references on the left with the correct fulfillment references on the right.

• Isaiah 7:14	• Matthew 1:18
• Isaiah 50:6	• Matthew 26:62-63
• Isaiah 53:3	• Matthew 27:57-60
• Isaiah 53:7	• Mark 14:65
• Isaiah 53:9	• Luke 23:34
• Isaiah 53:12	• John 1:10-11
- Handel's MESSIAH, one of the most well-known Christmas songs of all time, is based on a prophecy of Isaiah recorded in Isaiah 9. Read the refrain found in verse 6. What does this verse tell us about who the Messiah is?
- The angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary is a familiar aspect of the Christmas story. Read Matthew 1:26-35. What claims does Gabriel make about this child that is to be born? What is significant about the fact that Jesus was born to a virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit and not by his earthly father Joseph?
- The religious rulers of Jesus' day could accept that he was a good teacher...a learned rabbi like them...but they cried blasphemy when he claimed to be the great I AM, the same God who revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:13-14, Mark 14 26:61-64). They even point blank asked him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly (John 10:24)" and witnessed his miracles. How is it possible to be in the presence of God and miss it?
- The apologist C.S. Lewis basically said that our options are to believe that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or indeed Lord as he claimed to be. Where do you stand? What has led you to your position?
- Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." Are you certain that the voice to which you are listening is that of Jesus? How do we know whether what we hear is God or somebody else?

Without faith it is impossible to please God!

- Everything we are and have—marriage, career, family—is built on our beliefs no matter what those beliefs might be. What does that mean? What’s your faith in... your ability to seal the next deal? The stock market? The extra hours you put into work? Your daily horoscope? Your intelligence? What is going to provide a lasting foundation?
- We are never going to understand the breadth and depth of God while still on earth, but He revealed enough of Himself that we can believe...just not so much that we don’t have to take a leap of faith. Why do you think that is? Where do you find yourself lacking faith? What’s holding you back?
- What is your response to Jesus’ claims to be the long-awaited Messiah, God made flesh, our Savior? Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. So, do you think you are pleasing God? In what other ways have you tried to please God?

Wrap-Up:

Leaders: Most in your group have probably already taken the leap of faith in Jesus required to bridge the gap between themselves and God. Some may still be wrestling with that decision. Try to get a feel for this during group discussion. You may sense the Holy Spirit asking you to gently probe those who are close to see if they are ready to make a decision for Christ. If they are, allow them to voice this decision and pray with them. If they’re still not quite ready, give them that freedom, but pray that God will continue to draw them this coming week. Your group may want to read through the book of John for a more in-depth look at who Jesus is (see Throughout the Week). Close in prayer together for those you will be inviting to the Easter service and for the courage to share Christ with them if the opportunity arises.

Throughout the Week: (Optional)

(Leaders: Share these optional exercises for further study and growth with your group.)

Memorize Hebrews 11:6, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

For a more in-depth look at Jesus, read through the book of John this week. Jot down phrases or verses that describe Jesus. At the end of the week read over the list out loud. What jumps out at you?

Read Matthew 26-28 and Acts 3 in preparation for next week’s message.

Appendix 1:

Old Testament Prophecies and Their Fulfillment

Following are just a few of the prophecies in the Old Testament that point to the Messiah and that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Prophecy	OT	NT
The Messiah is a descendent of Abraham, Judah, and David.	Genesis 12:3 Genesis 49:10 Jeremiah 23:5f, 33:15f	Matthew 1:2; Acts 3:25f Matthew 1:2; Luke 3:33 Luke 1:32f; 3:31
The Messiah will be born by a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18-25
The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4-7
The Messiah will be a servant.	Isaiah 42:1; 49:6,	Matthew 12:15-18
The Messiah will be a light to the Gentiles.	Isaiah 9:1-2; 49:6	Matthew 4:13-16
The Messiah will be a King.	Isaiah 9:6-7 Jeremiah 23:5	Luke 1:31-33 John 12:12-16
The Messiah will preach, heal and take the path of death.	Isaiah 53 V1 V4 V12	John 12:38 Mat 8:17 Luke 22:37
The Messiah will be crucified.	Psalms 22:7 Psalm 22:16-18	Luke 23:11, 36 Luke 23:33-36 John 19:33, 36
The stone that was rejected will be the cornerstone.	Psalms 118:22f Isaiah 28:16	Mat 21:42
The Messiah will be raised from the dead	Psalms 16:10	Luke 24:46

Appendix 2:

Genesis to Revelation Series Calendar

Message Topics:

February 3
Mirror Image

February 10
In the Beginning

February 17
Three Pivotal Promises

February 24
Why is it called the Old Testament?

March 2
Raiders of the Lost Ark?

March 9
The Lord is My Shepherd....

March 16
Christmas Gifts

March 23
Why is it called the New Testament?

March 30
Who Needs the Church?

April 6
In the End

Read Before:

February 3
(No reading – series overview)

February 10
Genesis 1-3 (& 1-11)

February 17
Genesis 12 & 15

February 24
Exodus 1-4 & 20

March 2
Exodus 25-27 & 40

March 9
1Samuel 8, 16-17, Ps. 23

March 16
Luke 2 & 4, John 3, 8 & 10

March 23
Matthew 26-28, Acts 3

March 30
Acts 1-2 & Jude

April 6
Revelation 1, 19-22

Email any questions or feedback about this Study Guide to robin.ritchie@12stone.com.