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THE LOOKOUT

DECEMBER 2022

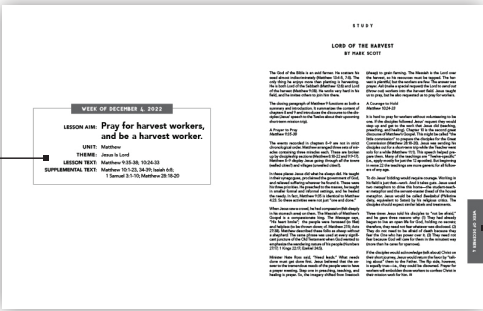
Unit: Matthew

Theme: Jesus Is Lord

Overview: Saying that “Jesus is Lord” can be difficult for someone living in a democratic republic. The paradigm of a democracy runs counter to living in a kingdom. Lordship implies that someone else is in charge. Perhaps the earliest Christian confession was “Jesus is Lord” (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Romans understood that to be a reference to a king. But Matthew’s audience used other titles to indicate the same; examples include “Christ” or “Son of God.” In this unit, students will learn from the disciples that Jesus is Lord of the harvest, they will learn from the miracles that Jesus is Lord of creation, they will learn from a parable that Jesus is Lord of judgment, and they will learn from the Magi that Jesus is Lord of all.

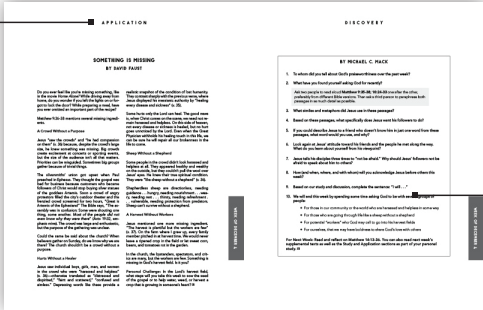
HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 11, 2022

LESSON AIM: **Rely on the Lord
of Creation to save
and sustain you.**

UNIT: Matthew

THEME: Jesus Is Lord

LESSON TEXT: Matthew 14:13-36

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Matthew 11:25; John 6:5-21; Hebrews 1:3;
Revelation 3:14

LORD OF CREATION

BY MARK SCOTT

There are five miracles in this lesson text—the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus walking on water, Peter walking on water, the calming of the storm, and the healings at Gennesaret. Only the Lord of Creation could demonstrate his power over that creation.

The setting for these miracles is the third Passover. This is the one Passover in Jesus' public ministry that he did not attend in Jerusalem. He provided his own simple Passover meal in the wilderness. It contrasted greatly with King Herod's elaborate feast in the previous context. It was a simple meal of "fish and chips" in the desert.

The Lord of Creation Provided for His New Community

Matthew 14:13-21

Jesus wanted to withdraw from the crowds when he heard about the beheading of John the Baptist. He sailed eastward across the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee, but he still could not get away from the crowds. Jesus sought a *solitary place* ("desert" in the sense of "uninhabited"), but the people forded the waters that fed the Sea of Galilee and actually reached the Lord's destination before Jesus did. Jesus turned his depression into service and expressed his *compassion* on the people by healing them.

As the day wore on, stomachs began to growl. The disciples advised Jesus to send the crowds into the neighboring villages to purchase food. After all, they were in a *remote place* (same word for solitary place earlier). Jesus must have stunned the disciples by saying, "*You give them something to eat.*" The disciples had already scouted out the situation. They found a boy who had five small, pancake-shaped pieces of bread and two pickled fish. We know these details because all four Gospels tell this story.

Jesus asked for the boy's lunch. He organized the people into groups of fifties and hundreds and had them sit down on the green grass. Jesus took the lunch and, with words that sound like they belong in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper, he blessed the bread and somehow started multiplying it. The disciples shared in the miracle as they distributed the food to the crowd. Three things were stunning—the number of people fed (at least 5,000), the number of leftovers, and the number of baskets picked up. Twelve disciples carrying twelve baskets might indicate that Jesus was providing bread from heaven for his new community.

The Lord of Creation Exercised His Power Over the Waters

Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus dismissed the disciples and the crowd. This must have been a major undertaking since the crowd wanted to take Jesus by force and make him king (John 6:15). Jesus went up on the mountain to pray. During his devotions a storm arose—not an uncommon occurrence on this lake which is 654 feet below sea level. The disciples were trying to row west and the storm blew them south into the deepest part of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus discerned their struggle and sometime between 3 and 6 a.m. he came to them walking on the water.

The storm instilled fear in the disciples, and when they saw what they perceived to be a *ghost* (phantom), it added to their unease. Jesus said, "*Take courage [cheer up]! It is I*" (literally, "I am"). Also, "*Don't be afraid.*" Only Matthew told about Peter's miracle. "*If it's you,*" the disciple said, which has the sense of, "Let's suppose it is you." Peter was not interested in getting out of the boat until he was persuaded that it was Jesus and not the supposed ghost. Jesus responded with one of his favorite words, "*Come.*" Peter did something no other human has ever done. He walked on water for a short time. Peter trusted the Lord of Creation's word more than the boat. Of course, Peter withdrew his gaze from Jesus and started to sink. He prayed immediately and earnestly, "*Lord, save me!*" Jesus may well have laughed as he pulled Peter up out of the water and said, "*You of little faith.*"

Peter and Jesus got into the boat and the storm miraculously calmed. The disciples did not respond to the storm or to Peter's ability to water walk. They confessed that Jesus was God's Son. In the Old Testament, the God of the Bible hovers over the waters (Genesis 1:2). The disciples knew they had just seen God in action.

The Lord of Creation Healed People of Diseases

Matthew 14:34-36

The boat landed at the town of *Gennesaret*. This was a small town on the western shore of Galilee. Word spread quickly that Jesus was there. People tried to grab just a tassel of Jesus' clothing. Those who did were healed.

Jesus worked his way up the shoreline to Capernaum where the next day he would give his sermon on the bread of life (John 6). Jesus provides, Jesus displays, and Jesus heals because he is Lord of Creation. ■

APPLICATION

YOU'RE NOT TOO SMALL — OR TOO BIG — TO TRUST IN GOD

BY DAVID FAUST

My friends who are trained in mechanical and electrical engineering want to know how everything works. They enjoy taking things apart and putting them back together again. Not me. If my laptop works, my car runs well, and the furnace keeps my house warm, I am happy to trust the technicians with the details.

I understand, though, why miracles mentioned in the Bible make readers wonder, "How did that happen?"

My wife and I lead a small group for seekers and new believers. A young man in our group remarked, "I have questions about almost every line I read in the Bible." A chapter like Matthew 14 makes him wonder, "How could Jesus walk on water and feed thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish?"

Feeling Small

The Bible isn't the only information source that expands what we consider possible. The James Webb Space Telescope was launched on Christmas Day, 2021, and began sending images back to earth in July 2022. Stronger and quicker than its predecessor, the Hubble Space Telescope, Webb is producing mind-boggling images of distant galaxies. You don't have to be an astronomer to be amazed by the vivid colors and massive size of what we're discovering in deep space.

One of Webb's first images showed a patch of sky the size of a grain of sand held at arm's length, but it revealed thousands of galaxies in a tiny sliver of the universe. How tiny we are—and how little we understand about the universe where we live!

The psalmist David didn't have a telescope, but he spent a lot of nights outdoors tending sheep, and the stars filled him with wonder. He told God, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:3-4).

Thinking Big

After calmly declaring, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," the Bible's opening chapter says almost matter-of-factly, "He also made the stars" (Genesis 1:1, 16).

Isaiah urged, "Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?" (Isaiah 40:26). Then he goes on to say that "the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth . . . gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:28-29). Our planet is a tiny speck in the vast universe, and there are approximately 8 billion people on earth, but our heavenly Father cares about each person and counts the hairs on every head (Matthew 10:30).

Believing God

Science can take us only so far. The more we learn about the universe, the humbler we should become. "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

I can't explain how Jesus performed miracles, but it makes sense that the inventor of H₂O would know how to walk on it and the designer of fish would have no problem multiplying them. We may not comprehend the "how" of biblical miracles, but the "why" is clear. Jesus' miracles motivate us to believe and find "life in his name" (John 20:31).

Nobel prize-winning physicist Werner Heisenberg, a pioneer of quantum mechanics, put it like this: "The first gulp from the glass of natural sciences will make you an atheist, but at the bottom of the glass God is waiting for you."

Personal Challenge: Explain to a believer, seeker, or unbeliever why you believe in the existence and the love of God. What evidence compels you to believe? ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How did you acknowledge Jesus before others last week?
2. If you were to ask Jesus to do the seemingly impossible for you, what would it be?

Ask two people to read aloud **Matthew 14:13-36** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to paraphrase the passage in as much detail as possible.

3. What do you notice about Jesus' relationship with God the Father in this passage?
4. What do you notice about his relationship with his disciples (the Twelve)?
5. What do you notice about his relationship with the crowds?
6. How did Jesus provide for the disciples?
 - How did he empower them?
 - How did he encourage them?
 - How did he challenge them?
 - How did he comfort them?
7. If you had been one of the disciples, what would you have learned about Jesus through the events of this passage?
8. What do you learn about yourself from this passage?
9. How will you explain to a believer, seeker, or unbeliever why you believe in the existence and the love of God? What evidence compels you to believe?
10. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Matthew 25:31-46**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. **L**