

Unit 2 Reading Guide Answer Key

New Testament: God's Plan Fulfilled

Chapter 4: The Life and Teachings of Jesus

Article 16: The Birth of Christ

1. The infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke are primarily theological statements about the person and mission of Jesus Christ. In other words, the accounts of Jesus' birth and early life focus on explaining who Jesus is, rather than what happened.
2. The Gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogy traced through Joseph's family. Notice that it begins with Abraham, the father of the Jewish faith. The Gospel's Jewish audience would have felt an immediate connection to Jesus when the Gospel identifies him as a "son of Abraham" (1:1).
3. Although Jewish genealogy was traced through the fathers, there are four women, besides Jesus' mother, Mary, mentioned: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and "the wife of Uriah" (Bathsheba).
4. Matthew's genealogy makes a point of recognizing the important role that Gentiles played in Jewish history.
5. Emmanuel is a Hebrew word meaning "God is with us." For the Jewish community, the presence of God was found in the Ark of the Covenant, which was kept in the Holy of Holies in the Temple.
6. In contrast to the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Luke's infancy narrative emphasizes Jesus' humble beginnings and breaks down social barriers.
7. The humble circumstances of Jesus' birth, the recognition of the poor shepherds, and the Gospel's emphasis on women must have made an impression on Luke's diverse audience. His infancy narrative, and much of the rest of his Gospel, places no importance on economic or social status.
8. Luke takes Jesus' ancestry all the way back to Adam. It is his way of telling his Gentile audience that, yes, Jesus is a son of Abraham, but he is also a descendant of our very first parents. That points to a truth that will be fully revealed later in Jesus' ministry, that both Jews and Gentiles are included in God's plan of salvation.

Article 17: In the Flesh

1. The term Incarnation comes from a Latin word meaning "to become flesh." It refers to the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Divine Son of God, becoming human.
2. Through the Incarnation, Jesus Christ became truly man while remaining truly God. He is the New Adam who heals the sin of our first ancestors and the divide that came about as a result.
3. Because Jesus is both truly human and truly divine, he is the perfect mediator between humanity and God.
4. A mediator is a person who acts as a "middle man" or a "go-between" between two or more parties to help bridge gaps of misunderstandings or language barriers, or bring about reconciliation.
5. Another way the New Testament describes the reconciling work of Christ is by giving him the title, the New Adam (or "the last Adam"). Paul gives Jesus this title in his First Letter to the Corinthians and in his Letter to the Romans (see 1 Corinthians 15:45).



6. God created Adam to live in union with him in a state of original holiness and justice, but Adam chose to sin. Jesus Christ became the New Adam; he embodied the union of God and humanity that was intended for the first Adam. In doing so, Jesus allowed the grace of salvation to become available to us all.
7. Mary is the Mother of God because she is the mother of Jesus Christ, who is one person with two natures, divine and human. Because she carried the Son of God in her womb, she is given the title of Theotokos, a Greek word meaning “God-bearer.”
8. In 2002, Pope Saint John Paul II found it “fitting to add . . . a meditation on certain particularly significant moments in his public ministry” and added the Luminous Mysteries (“On the Most Holy Rosary,” October 16, 2002).

Article 18: Bearing the Burden

1. Intentionally letting go of the things you really want can be an act of self-denial. Sometimes it can be very painful. But it can also lead you to become more selfless, more empathetic to other people’s losses, and more generous. Jesus embraced poverty and encouraged his followers to do so.
2. The problem of wealth is not the money itself, but the ease in which it can distract us from doing God’s will. By giving it away, sharing it with others, we free ourselves to focus on what is of lasting value: the building up God’s Kingdom.
3. Did Jesus really believe that Peter was “Satan”? Nothing else in the Gospels leads us to think that. Recall that Jesus sometimes used hyperbole, or exaggerations, to make a point. He wanted his disciples to know that his Passion and death were essential elements of his mission.
4. Christ also wanted them to know that sharing in his sacrifice is part of a disciple’s mission as well. Right after this incident, Jesus made it clear that there is a cost for being his follower: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).
5. It is difficult enough hearing that being a follower of Jesus Christ requires sacrifice in order to help others. On top of that, Jesus informs his disciples that they might also be persecuted as well.
6. When the Gospels were written—some forty to seventy years after Jesus’ death and Resurrection—Christians were increasingly persecuted by both the Jewish and Roman authorities.
7. There are numerous places where Christians have experienced terrible waves of persecution. In some parts of the world today, merely identifying yourself as a Christian requires great bravery.
8. Christ’s entire life was a work of redemption that revealed the Father’s love for us. His poverty, his sacrifice, his willingness to endure persecution, and his selfless love show us how we are to live our lives.

Article 19: Grabbed from the Grave

1. Before his Resurrection from the dead, the Son of God also offered hints to his power over death, as in these three accounts of raising people from the dead.
2. The faith of Jairus and the (hemorrhaging) woman plays an essential role: God’s presence is always there for us, but we must actively reach out and participate with God to change our lives.
3. Many scholars attribute the similar accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke to Luke and Matthew’s use of Mark’s Gospel as a source for their writings.



4. It might seem odd to us that Matthew mentions the presence of flute players at the home when Jesus arrives. However, knowing about the cultural practices of the time helps us understand. In this case, Jewish families followed a set of customs when someone died.
5. The Gospel of John is the only Gospel that tells the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (see 11:1–44). Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary, are close friends of and deeply loved by Jesus (see 11:5).
6. For Martha, Jesus is the Lord, but she does not see him as the Lord over life and death. Jesus leads her toward a deeper faith and understanding of who he is.
7. The most striking and terribly ironic aspect of the raising of Lazarus is that it acts as the breaking point that leads to Jesus' death.

Chapter 5: Jesus' Death: Four Perspectives

Article 20: One Threat in Five Events

1. The three synoptic Gospels include Jesus quoting the prophet Jeremiah, through whom the Lord said, "Has this house which bears my name become in your eyes a den of thieves?" (Jeremiah 7:11). By repeating this quote, Jesus is condemning the leaders of his time for refusing to care for the aliens, orphans, and widows, as well as for their greed.
2. In the cleansing of the Temple, Jesus publicly challenges their authority and questions their integrity. It is not surprising that they see him as a very dangerous threat.
3. By including this anointing account (by a woman) just before Jesus' death, the Gospel authors are making the point that Jesus is the Messiah who saves us from sin. It also foreshadows his role as the high priest who offers the sacrificial lamb—himself (see Hebrews 5:1–10).
4. Jesus' acceptance of women's equal participation in public and religious life and his promotion of their dignity is another way he is a threat to the Jewish leaders.
5. John's Gospel does not mention Judas meeting with the chief priests, but he does mention the influence of the Devil (see 13:2), as does Luke (Luke 22:3). Judas is a warning to Christians not to assume that just because we follow Christ we are above temptation.
6. Recall that John places Jesus' Crucifixion on Passover to symbolize his role as the slaughtered lamb. Second, the Last Supper meal in John does not include Jesus establishing the Eucharist; there is no mention of bread and wine.
7. Instead, John records a set of speeches by Jesus in which he prepares the Apostles to continue his work after his death and Resurrection.
8. Chief priests were Jewish priests of high rank in the Temple. They had administrative authority and presided over important Temple functions and were probably leaders in the Sanhedrin.

Article 21: Why They Killed Jesus

1. Jesus' presence and teachings threaten the very livelihood of all those associated with the Temple, particularly the chief priests.
2. Mark and Matthew explicitly say that the Sanhedrin found Jesus guilty of blasphemy (see Mark 14:64 and Matthew 26:65). Luke and John don't use that word, but certainly imply it.



3. Luke's Gospel describes the charges against Jesus with the most detail. "We found this man misleading our people; he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Messiah, a king" (23:2).
4. The chief priests also claim that Jesus was "inciting the people to revolt" (23:14). In all four Gospels, Pilate addresses the accusation that Jesus is "the king of the Jews."

Article 22: Carrying the Cross

1. They humiliate Jesus by hailing him as "King of the Jews," spitting on him, and beating him even more—a description much like the treatment of the suffering servant prophesied by Isaiah.
2. Compared to the other Gospels, John tends to focus more on Jesus' divinity and portrays him as all-powerful and in control of his destiny.
3. Like Simon, we are also called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and help carry his cross, to participate in his mission. That is why Christians display crosses on our necklaces, T-shirts, and the walls of our homes, so that we never lose sight of Jesus' mission.
4. The Stations of the Cross consists of fourteen events and is commonly used as a mini-pilgrimage as the individual or group moves from station to station.

Article 23: Crucifixion and Death

1. To crucify someone, soldiers would attach the victim's arms to the crossbeam using rope, nails, or both. They would raise up the beam and fasten it to the post or tree, then nail or tie down the victim's legs. Depending on how it was done, death by crucifixion could come in hours, or it could be sadistically drawn out to last days.
2. [Otherwise,] the weight of the body pulling down on the arms made it increasingly difficult to breathe. If they wanted a victim to die faster, they might break his legs so that he could not support himself. In that case he would soon die of suffocation. Others could die of thirst, hunger, exhaustion, exposure to the elements, heart failure, or any combination of these factors.
3. Crucifixion was intended to be a humiliating and painful death and was purposefully done in public view so that many people would see it. A sign was hung around the neck or placed above the victim to identify the person's crime.
4. All of this was done to deter others from committing the same crime. It was a Roman form of terrorism used to frighten the population into submission.
5. Some of the other details in the Gospel accounts are connected to Old Testament foreshadowing. For example, all four Gospels include the scene in which the soldiers cast lots to divide Jesus' garments among themselves.
6. [Recall that] the sanctuary was an area of the Jewish Temple called the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant, the place in which God symbolically resided, was kept. Only the high priest could pass behind that veil, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement.
7. When Jesus died, he atoned for all our sins, so the veil was torn and the presence of God was laid bare for all to see. With no veil to cover it, all of humanity had access to God's presence.
8. (The Gospel of) John reports that instead of breaking Jesus' legs, as they did with the others crucified with him, the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, and blood and water flowed from the wound.



Chapter 6: Resurrection and Ascension

Article 24: Nothing in the Dark?

1. Just as the prophet Jonah was hidden for three days in the belly of a fish, so too was Jesus hidden for three days in the “belly” of the Earth.
2. All four Gospels name Joseph of Arimathea as the person who buried Jesus, but their descriptions of him vary. John says that Joseph was secretly Jesus’ disciple (see 19:38). In Matthew, Joseph is described as a wealthy man (see 27:57) who laid Jesus in his own new tomb.
3. His body was then wrapped in a linen burial cloth and laid in Joseph’s tomb. It was also the custom to anoint the body with spices and oils.
4. There is a detail about Jesus’ burial that only the Gospel of Matthew includes. Matthew tells us that Pontius Pilate placed a guard at the tomb (see 27:62–66). In this account, the chief priests and Pharisees warn Pilate about Jesus’ claim that he would rise three days after his execution (see 16:21).
5. They are worried that the disciples will steal the body and claim that Jesus is raised, which will cause problems for them if the word spread to others. We learn that these guards are frightened when the Resurrection occurs (see 28:4).
6. The Apostles’ Creed says that after his death and prior to his Resurrection, Jesus “descended into hell.” This means that Jesus “experienced death and his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there”¹ (CCC, number 632).

Article 25: What Is Resurrection?

1. The Resurrection is the bodily rising of Jesus from the dead on the third day after his death on the cross. He is not simply resuscitated back to the same life he had before; rather, Jesus truly dies, passes through and conquers death, and returns to a new and different life.
2. Mortal bodies will get old, die, and decay, but a glorified body is eternal and incorruptible (see 1 Corinthians 15:42). This could explain why some of the disciples find Jesus unrecognizable after his Resurrection (see Luke 24:15–16; John 20:14, 21:4).
3. The New Testament writers offer many witnesses who testified to the Resurrection including the eleven remaining Apostles, Mary Magdalene and the other women, and the two disciples outside Jerusalem.
4. Besides the numerous witnesses, there are a few other things that point to the Resurrection being an authentic historical event.
5. Jesus lived in a patriarchal society where women were considered subordinate to men. They thought so little of women’s testimony that women were not allowed to be used as witnesses in court. Yet, in all four Gospels, the first witnesses of the empty tomb were Mary Magdalene and the other women.
6. If the disciples were going to lie about it, naming the women as witnesses would have been a terrible idea. The only logical reason the evangelists would do this is because it really happened.
7. Another aspect to consider is the dangerous situation that Jesus’ followers found themselves in immediately before and after his Crucifixion. Why would they continue to put their lives in danger for a lie?



8. The only reasonable explanation for all this evidence is that the early Christians experienced the true presence of the Risen Christ. This event forever changed their lives and they dedicated themselves to spreading the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection. The Resurrection is the source of our faith.

Article 26: Resurrection Appearances

1. When Jesus sat at the table, "he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them" (Luke 24:30). It was then that their eyes were opened, but as soon as they recognized him, he vanished.
2. Looking back, they realized that their hearts were "burning [within us]" the whole time they were with him (24:32).
3. A "burning" heart, then, is one that is filled with passion and excitement and guides us toward goodness.
4. Another thing the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection teach us is how we might respond to the reality of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. John's Gospel offers us at least four different examples of the disciples' faith responses to the Resurrection:
5. The beloved disciple (John) believes before he sees Jesus. The response of belief is highlighted because it is the response of "the beloved disciple."
6. The second response is the example of Mary of Magdala herself. It was only when Jesus called her by name that she realized who he was (see 20:11–18). This is the response of confusion. Like Mary, we sometimes struggle to find God in our lives, even when he is right in front of our face.
7. When (Thomas) heard about Jesus' Resurrection, he said to the others, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (20:25).
8. Thomas shows us the response of doubt. Note that doubt is not portrayed as a bad thing in this account. Only when someone can honestly state their doubts can they effectively address them.
9. The fourth faith response comes from all of Jesus' followers who never had the privilege of seeing Jesus' physical human presence on Earth—including us! This is the response of faith without seeing.
10. Jesus had accurately predicted that Peter would deny knowing him three times (see John 18:15–18, 25–27). After the Resurrection, Jesus offers Peter a chance to affirm his love for him. Just as Peter had denied him three times, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him.

Article 27: The Ascension

1. Though some of the ancient people believed their body kept them from the spiritual world, Jesus' Ascension tells us the opposite: he ascended into Heaven with a body.
2. Recall that before Jesus ascended into Heaven, he promised to send the Holy Spirit. This is why the Ascension is closely tied to Pentecost, for it means that Christ's Ascension has cleared the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit.
3. At that time, the Jewish People understood God to be in the heavens above the sky, so it was appropriate to describe Jesus as being lifted "up" as he returned to Heaven.
4. They believed that the boundaries of Heaven and Earth sometimes crossed over each other. The Old Testament records numerous appearances of angels on Earth.
5. The Ascension is a reminder that Heaven and Earth merge all around us, and that by following Jesus on Earth, we will also follow him into our heavenly home.



Unit 2 Reading Guide Answer Key

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Endnote Cited in Quotations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition

1. Gen. 2:17.

