

### PART THREE: THE MESSAGE IN CONFLICT

Syllabus Objectives	<p><i>Knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have an understanding of the circumstances of the death of Jesus</li><li>• be able to name characteristics of the community of followers after the death of Jesus.</li></ul> <p><i>Understanding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• trace the development of the understandings of Jesus and the meaning of his life and death</li><li>• understand the relationship between faith and culture</li><li>• have an insight into the nature of Christian community life and ethical vision</li><li>• understand the importance of Jesus, his teaching, and his death, and the significance of these for the first Christians, for Christians today, and for the wider community.</li></ul> <p><i>Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• differentiate between the evidence of history and the witness of faith.</li></ul> <p><i>Attitudes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• appreciation of the place of cultural context in the preaching and development of the Christian vision</li><li>• appreciation of the significance of Jesus of Nazareth as a historical figure</li><li>• appreciation of the limitations of the historical approach to interpreting the life of Jesus.</li></ul>
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#### **Topic: 3.1 Conflict with establishment**

##### *Procedure*

**Description of content:** *Jesus' person and message as a challenge to Roman imperial values*

Review Junior Certificate RE syllabus Section B Part 4 with reference to moments of conflict in the life of Jesus.

**Role-play:** The situation is a meeting of Roman officials in Palestine to discuss the threats posed by Jesus' person and message.  
Allocate roles to different students.  
Give time for students to research and brief each other as to the points they could make at the meeting e.g.

- Jesus' notion of the Kingdom is perceived as a threat to the Roman powers in Palestine.
- Jesus' notion of power as one of service (whoever is first is last, whoever is last is first) turns imperial values upside down.
- Etc.

Using the fishbowl technique call on a number of students to take part in the meeting.

After the role-play de-brief by discussing with the whole class:

How was Jesus' person and message a challenge to the political leaders of his time in Palestine?

**Description of content:** *Jesus' vision of renewal and restoration as a threat to the Jewish religious establishment.*

**Role-play:** The situation is a meeting of religious leaders in Palestine to discuss the threats posed by Jesus' person and message.  
Allocate roles to different students.  
Give time for students to research and brief each other as to the points they could make at the meeting e.g.

- Jesus' claims about and attitudes to the Law (Torah) seem to question the Law.
- His words about destroying and rebuilding the Temple are seen as a rebellious act.
- He claims to forgive sins and so is seen as a blasphemer.
- Etc.

Using the fishbowl technique call on a number of students to take part in the meeting.

After the role-play de-brief by discussing with the whole class:

How was Jesus' person and message a challenge to the religious leaders of his time in Palestine?

Take feedback from students and conclude by emphasising -

- Jesus' intensification of norms (You have heard that it was said.... But I say to you) should not be read as being against the law (Matthew 5: 21-46)
- His rejection of divorce e.g. is done via citing Genesis against Deuteronomy
- His concern for human need superseding religious obligations (e.g. Sabbath) is not a rejection of Jewish ethics, but rather is in line with the prophet's critique of religion without morality (e.g. Amos, Hosea)
- Jesus' action in the temple (Mark 11, 15 -19; John 2, 13-22) is a challenge to the religious institution in some form
- Etc.

*Written Assignment:*

- a. Jesus challenged some key values of the Roman world in his teaching, like wealth, honour, shame, peace, power. Choose one of those values and indicate how Jesus' attitude differed from that of the Romans.
- b. Jesus frequently refers to the political and religious groups of his time. Pick one and describe his relationship with them. What do you think were the real differences between Jesus and your chosen group?

*Outcomes:*

- identify two key elements of Jesus person and message that were perceived as a threat to Roman imperial values
- identify two key elements of Jesus' vision of renewal and restoration that threatened the Jewish religious establishment.

### **Topic: 3.2 The death and resurrection of Jesus**

*Procedure*

**Description of content:**      *why Jesus was put on trial*

Review Junior Certificate RE syllabus Section B Part 4 with reference to events leading up to the death of Jesus.

Using a time line on the chalkboard/ guided meditation etc. re-construct from the Gospels the sequence of events that include both a Jewish trial and a Roman trial.

Discuss:      Why was Jesus involved in both Jewish and Roman trials?

Take feedback from students and conclude by explaining that the Sanhedrin did not have the authority to issue sentences of death, so they needed to refer Jesus to Pilate.

**Description of content:**      *Calvary as an event of history and an event of faith*

Buzz: In Palestine at the time of Jesus what was the significance of a person being condemned to death on a cross?

Take feedback from students and conclude by explaining that condemnation to death on a cross was interpreted as a sign of exclusion. It was a form of death reserved to the worse criminals and those who were considered 'outside' of God's covenant.

*Written assignment:* Research the gospel accounts of the death of Jesus and compose short diary accounts from the perspective of two of the following witnesses:

- Peter
- John the apostle
- Mary Jesus' mother
- A Roman soldier

*Description of content: the Resurrection as real experience and as an event of faith expressed through*  
– the Gospel accounts of the resurrection  
– the new self-understanding of the disciples and their sense of mission  
– their new understanding of Jesus and their search for suitable images  
– their new awareness of community  
– their understanding of Jesus as the mediator of salvation.

*Scripture Assignments:*

Read an account of the resurrection e.g. 1 Cor. 15. Possibly the oldest written testimony of the resurrection (around 38-40 CE)

Buzz: What effect did the resurrection have on Jesus' disciples?

Take feedback from students and conclude by explaining that after the crucifixion the disciples are thrown into crisis and flee for their lives. The experience of Jesus' resurrection marks a new beginning.

Read The Emmaus Story (Luke 24:13-35)

Buzz: What effect did Jesus' resurrection have on these two disciples?

Take feedback from students and conclude by emphasising how meeting the risen Jesus transforms the two disciples giving them strength to go forth and preach the coming of God.

Read extracts from the Acts of the Apostles describing how the early Christian community came to life in a new way after Jesus' resurrection e.g. Acts 2:42 etc.

Buzz: What was distinctive about the way of life in the early Christian community?

Take feedback from students and conclude by explaining how listening to the teachings of the Apostles (the Word), the meetings, the breaking of bread and prayer were the essential elements in their way of life.

View overhead of the structure of Matthew's Gospel.

Buzz: What does this structure show about Matthew's understanding of Jesus?

Take feedback from students and conclude by emphasising how the gospel moves from Jesus' name 'Emmanuel' (Mt 1:23) to his promise 'where ever two or three... I am in their midst (Mt 18:20) to his final promise 'I will be with you always' (Mt 28:18-20). Matthew emphasises how in ancient times God made a covenant to be with his people. Now the presence of Jesus risen is discovered to be the presence of God in midst of his people. Jesus is presented as the mediator of salvation.

*Research assignment* - Read the following statement:

"Historical facts, the empty grave in particular, can serve as indicators and signs for faith, but they cannot provide proof of the Resurrection. Far more important than such 'facts', however, is the existential proof of the credibility, which the witnesses of the Resurrection gave in their life and in their death for their faith." - Kasper (1976) *Jesus the Christ* New York: Paulist, p. 129.

Research the accuracy of this statement by profiling the life story of one of Jesus' disciples who witnessed the resurrection.

*Written Assignment:*

- a. In the Gospels, it is recorded that Jesus was accused of subverting the people. Do you think this was the reason for his arrest and death?
- b. Imagine you are a journalist living at the time of Jesus. Write a short account for your newspaper describing how Jesus was sentenced and put to death.

*Outcomes:*

- explain why Jesus was put on trial
- give an account of the sentencing and death of Jesus as a historical event
- outline the faith response of Jesus' contemporaries to his suffering and death
- outline the impact of the Resurrection on the disciples using evidence from
  - the Gospel accounts of the resurrection
  - their new understanding of Jesus and their search for suitable images
  - their sense of mission
  - their new awareness of community
  - their understanding of Jesus as the mediator of salvation.