

BIBLE OVERVIEW 4.

Life of Jesus

1 Corinthians 10:11-12

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

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BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

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BIBLE OVERVIEW

22. JESUS	5-59
Matthew: Jesus the King	12-14
Mark: Jesus the Servant	15-17
Luke: Jesus the Man	18--21
John: Jesus the God	22-24
Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn compared	25-26
Chronology of Life of Jesus	27-30
Geography in Palestine	31-32
a. Birth	33-34
b. Baptism & Temptation	35-36
c. Miracles	37-40
d. Disciples and Teachings	41-49
e. Crucifixion	50-55
f. Resurrection	56-57
g. Ascension and present	58-58
End of Book Reflective Questions	59

BIBLE OVERVIEW

22 . JESUS

MAIN EVENTS: Birth, Life, Death & Resurrection of Jesus

MAIN PEOPLE: Jesus, His followers

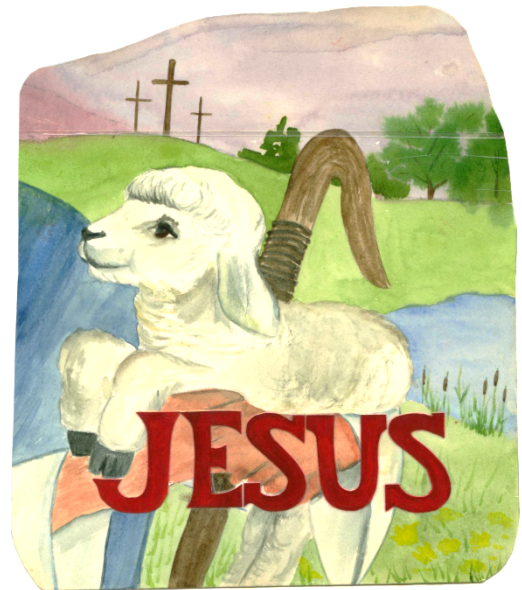
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

BIBLE VERSE: *John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

TIME: Approximately 4 BC to 30 AD

WORLD EVENTS AT THIS TIME: Rome rules the world

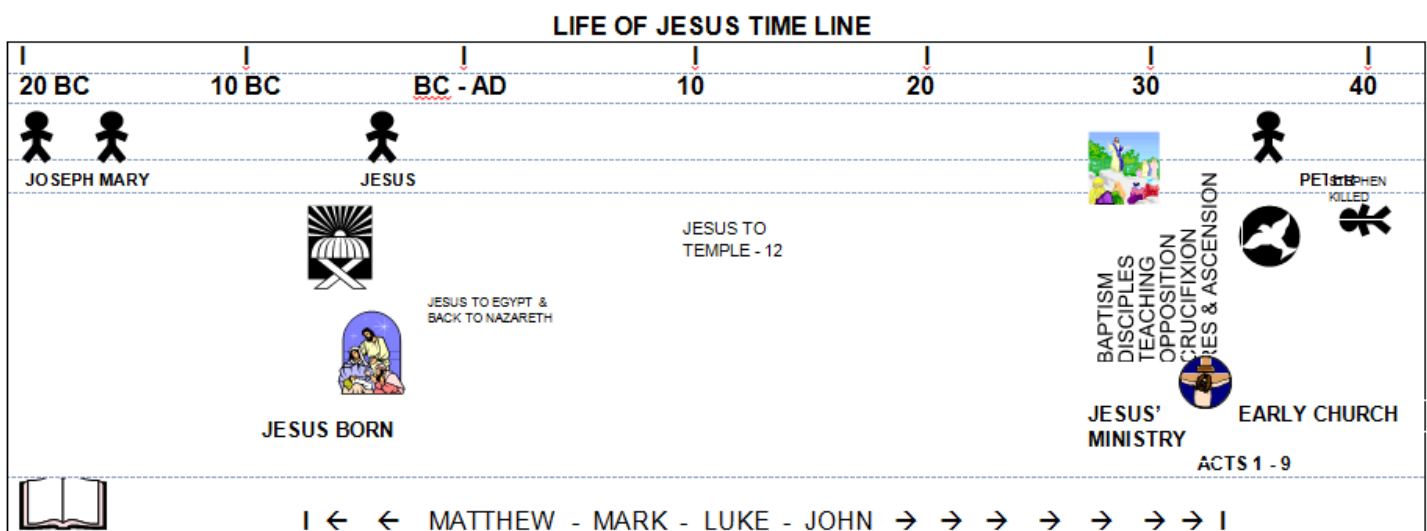
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Palestine



With this stage in Bible history we leave the Old Testament and enter the New Testament. So far we have seen man's failure and need of salvation. Now we see God's solution to that need. God Himself left heaven to come to earth to die on the cross in our place and then to come back to life, proving He had conquered sin and death.

Four Gospels show Jesus' life from different angles. In Genesis 3:15 God foretold the ages-long battle between Satan and God, and how God Himself would come to earth to defeat Satan and sin. That was done by Jesus and the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 fulfilled.

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the highlight of the Bible and of all world history. It is the most important event ever. Before this event, everything in history and the Bible pointed to His first coming. After His ascension everything in history and the Bible was dependent on what He had done. He is the high point, the central point, the main focus of all history and all life. Jesus should be the central point, the most important person in your life as well.



JESUS BEFORE HIS BIRTH

If you were a Jew living during the time Jesus was born, what would you know about the coming Messiah? What would you have understood about God coming to earth? These are interesting and thought-provoking questions. Understanding what Jews then knew about God who would visit earth as Jesus is very important to understanding the life of Jesus.

THE TRINITY The early church councils decreed “there is only one God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are 3 eternal and coequal persons, the same in substance but distinct in personality.” God the Father (John 6:27; Ephesians 4:6), God the Son (Hebrews 1:8) and God the Spirit (Acts 5:3-4) are one God (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14) in three persons. The Bible says no man has seen God the Father at any time (John 1:18; I John 4:12). The Spirit’s role is not to manifest Himself but to focus on the Son (John 16:13-14). Therefore it is always God the Son who is visible God in the Bible, both the Old and New Testament.

THEOPHANIES, occurrences of God appearing to man, are recorded in the Old Testament. Usually written “Angel of the LORD,” it always refers to God the Son (Jesus before His birth - Genesis 16:13; 22:15-18; 24:7; 32:24-32; Hosea 12:4). Therefore Jews who knew their Bible in Jesus’ time would have known that God had appeared to man in the past, and would again. There is more information, though, than just appearances of God to man.

TYPES There is more in the Old Testament about God the Son than just what is actually said about Him (Luke 24:27). There are pictures of Him as well. These pictures, called types, are like shadows in reverse. You see the shadow first (Old Test.) and then the real thing (New Test.). For example, David is a type (picture) of Jesus in that there are many parallels between them, things in David’s life which show more about Jesus. Jesus Himself used the serpent on the pole as a picture of Himself (John 3:14) and He used Jonah the same way (Matthew 12:40). Much information about God the Son can be gleaned from studying the pictures of Jesus contained in things like the Tabernacle, priesthood, offering system, holy days, etc.

PROPHECIES The rabbis list 456 Messianic passages in the Old Testament. These give more precise information about God the Son and His coming to earth, than types. For example, the Bible said He would come from a woman’s seed (Genesis 3:15); born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), from the line of Abraham (Genesis 12:3,7; 17:7; 22:18), from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), the house of David (Psalm 132:11; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Jeremiah 23:5), and the seed of Isaac (Genesis 21:12). He was prophesied to be born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1) and preceded by John the Baptist (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3). Many, many other prophecies about His life, person, ministry, message, works, death and resurrection also abound. The odds are astronomical that even just a few of these could have been coincidentally fulfilled. Only God could have foretold and fulfilled all these.

THE SON OF GOD AS HUMAN He had a human body (Galatians 4:4; Luke 2:52; I John 1:1; Matthew 26:12) but was sinless (Hebrews 4:15). He also had a human soul and spirit (Matthew 26:38; Luke 23:46). As a man He got hungry (Matthew 4:2), thirsty (John 19:28), tired (John 4:6), sad (John 11:35) and tempted (Hebrews 4:15). He had human names (Matthew 1:21) and died a human death.

THE SON OF GOD AS DEITY He was called God (Hebrews 1:8; Matthew 16:16; 26:61-64). He was omnipotent (Matthew 28:18), omniscient (John 1:48), omnipresent (Matthew 18:20) and unchangeable (Hebrews 13:8). He was life (John 1:4) and truth (John 14:6). He did the works of God: create (John 1:3), sustain nature (Colossians 1:17), forgive sin (Luke 7:48), raise the dead (John 5:25), judge sin (John 5:27) and send the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). He accepted worship by men (Matthew 14:33) and angels (Hebrews 1:6). He claimed equality with the Father (John 14:23;

10:30). Over and over He claimed to be sent from God (John 4:34; 5:37; 7:16; 7:28-29; 8:16; 8:26; 9:4; 11:42; 14:24; 16:28; 17:18; 17:23).

CONTRASTS IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST Jesus was both God and man. He was hungry (Matthew 4:12) yet He fed multitudes (John 6:1-14). He was thirsty (John 19:28-29) yet gives the water of life (John 4:10-14; 7:37). He was tired (John 4:26) yet gives rest (Matthew 11:28). He prayed (Matthew 14:23) yet answers prayer (John 14:3,14). He was sold for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-15) yet redeems the world (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 2:2). He had nowhere to lay His head (Matthew 8:20) yet He created all things (John 1:3). He died yet He gives life (John 6:51,44). He was killed (Hebrews 2:14) yet destroys death (1 Corinthians 15:26, 54). He lay down His life, then He took it up again (John 10:17-18).

If you had been alive when Jesus was born you'd have to decide: Did you believe the accounts of God Himself coming to earth? Would He come again as the prophecies said? Would you bow down and make Him Lord and God of your life? Would you recognize Him as God and man in one - the God-man Messiah? Most of the people living then rejected the truth and turned from Him. Most still do. What about you? The facts are in. They haven't changed.

If He is God, that means He has everything in the universe under His control -- including your life and mine. HE is the king of the universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19). He is God and He is king. Make sure He is your king.

PROOF JESUS IS GOD

Did a man named Jesus really live in Palestine 2,000 years ago? Certainly, there is no doubt or question about that. No secular historian disbelieves that, for it is a proven fact of history. Many historians of Jesus' day wrote about Him. What is of much debate, however, is if He was God or not. Was He just a man like everyone else, or was He really and truly God? Did He just say He was? Or did His followers later write in such a way to make Him seem to be God when He had no such claims? The implications of these answers are great. How can we as Christians be sure? Let's look at some proofs of His deity from within and without the Bible.

LORD, LUNATIC or LIAR

First, there is no doubt that **Jesus claimed to be God**. The whole tenor of His life points to that. He verbally claimed to be God many, many times (John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5; etc.). He accepted worship as if He were God. He claimed to be able to forgive sin (Mark 2:5). Now, what are we to make of someone who claims to be God? What would you say if your neighbor started claiming to be God? There are three options or possibilities about such a person. He is crazy, a **lunatic**, for he truly thinks he is God but is wrong. He knows he isn't God but tries to convince everyone he is anyway, thus he is a **liar**. Or he really is God and **Lord** of all! Lord, lunatic or liar are our options. Just a good man, a fine teacher, a moral example -- these are not options for one who claims to be God! If He is a lunatic or liar He doesn't qualify as a good, fine person. If He is Lord He is overqualified and far more than just a good, fine person. Thus He is either God to be worshipped and obeyed or an impostor to be forgotten and ignored.

FULFILLED PROPHECIES

To prove He is Lord we turn to the Bible, not to passages about miracles and claims that could possibly have been made up by writers after His death, but to Old Testament Prophecies whose fulfillment could not have been faked. Listed below are 61 Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah with their fulfillment in the New Testament also recorded:

1. Born of the seed of woman: Genesis 3:15 (Galatians 4:4, Matthew 1:20)

2. Born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14 (Matthew 1:18,24,25; Luke 1:26-35)
3. Son of God: Psalm 2:7; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 2 Samuel 7:12-16 (Matthew 3:17; 16:16 (Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35))
4. Seed of Abraham: Genesis 22:18; 12:2-3; (Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16)
5. Son of Isaac: Genesis 21:12 (Luke 3:23,34; Matthew 1:2)
6. Son of Jacob: Numbers 24:17; Genesis 35:10-12; (Luke 3:23,34; Matthew 1:2; Luke 1:33)
7. Tribe of Judah: Genesis 49:10 (Luke 3:23,33; Matthew 1:2; Hebrews 7:14)
8. Family line of Jesse: Isaiah 11:1, 10 (Luke 3:23,32; Matthew 1:6)
9. House of David: Jeremiah 23:5; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 132:11 (Luke 3:23,31; Matthew 1:1; 9:27)
10. Born at Bethlehem: Micah 5:2 (Matthew 2:1; John 7:42; Matthew 2:4-8; Luke 2:4-7)
11. Presented with gifts: Psalm 72:10; Isaiah 60:6 (Matthew 2:1,11)
12. Herod kills children: Jeremiah 31:15 (Matthew 2:16)
13. His pre-existence: Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 102:25 (Colossians 1:17; John 1:1-2; 8:58; Revelation 1:17)
14. He shall be called Lord: Psalm 110:1; Jeremiah 23:6 (Luke 2:11; 20:41-44)
15. Shall be Immanuel (God With Us): Isaiah 7:14 (Matthew 1:23; Luke 7:16)
16. Shall be a prophet: Deut 18:18 (Matthew 21:11; Luke 7:16; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40)
17. He shall be a priest: Psalm 110:4 (Hebrews 3:1; 5:5-6)
18. He shall be a judge: Isaiah 33:22 (John 5:30; 2 Timothy 4:1)
19. He shall be a king: Psalm 2:6; Zechariah 9:9; Jeremiah 23:5 (Matthew 27:37; 21:5; John 18:33-38)
20. Special anointing of the Holy Spirit: Isaiah 11:2 (Matthew 3:16-17; 12:17-21; Mark 1:10-11)
21. His zeal for God: Psalm 69:9 (John 2:15-17)
22. Preceded by messenger: Isaiah 40:3 (Matthew 3:1-2; 3:3; 11:10)
23. Ministry to begin in Galilee: Isaiah 9:1 (Matthew 4:12,13,17)
24. Ministry of miracles: Isaiah 35:5, 6a; 32:3,4 (Matthew 9:32,33,35; 11:4-6; John 5:5-9)
25. Teacher of parables: Psalm 78:2 (Matthew 13:34)
26. He was to enter the temple: Malachi 3:1 (Matthew 21:12)
27. He was to enter Jerusalem on a donkey: Zechariah 9:9 (Luke 19:35,36,37; Matthew 21:6-11)
28. "Stone of Stumbling" to the Jews: Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14; 28:16 (1 Peter 2:7; Romans 9:32-33)
29. "Light" to Gentiles: Isaiah 60:3; 49:6 (Acts 13:47,48a; 26:23; 28:28)
30. Betrayed by a friend: Psalm 41:9; 55:12-14 (Matthew 10:4; 26:49-50; John 13:21)
31. Sold for 30 pieces of silver: Zechariah 11:12 (Matthew 26:15; 27:3)
32. Money to be thrown in God's house: Zechariah 11:13 (Matthew 27:5)
33. Price given for potter's field: Zechariah 11:13b (Matthew 27:7)
34. Forsaken by His disciples: Zechariah 13:7 (Mark 14:27, 50; Matthew 26:31)
35. Accused by false witnesses: Psalm 35:11 (Matthew 26:59-61)
36. Dumb before accusers: Isaiah 53:7 (Matthew 27:12-19)
37. Wounded and bruised: Isaiah 53:5; Zechariah 13:6 (Matthew 27:26)
38. Smitten and spit upon: Isaiah 50:6; Micah 5:1 (Matthew 26:67; Luke 22:63)
39. Mocked: Psalm 22: 7,8 (Matthew 27:31)
40. Fell under the cross: Psalm 109:24-25 (John 19:17; Luke 23:26; Matthew 27:31-32)
41. Hands and feet pierced: Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10 (Luke 23:33; John 20:25)
42. Crucified with thieves: Isaiah 53:12 (Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27,28)
43. Made intercession for His persecutors: Isaiah 53:12 (Luke 23:34)
44. Rejected by His own people: Isaiah 53:3; Psalm 69:8; 118:22 (John 7:5,48; 1:11; Matthew 21:42,43)
45. Hated without a cause: Psalm 69:4; Isaiah 49:7 (John 15:25)
46. Friends stood afar off: Psalm 38:11 (Luke 23:49; Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:55-56)

47. People shook their heads: Psalm 109:25; 22:7 (Matthew 27:39)
48. Stared upon: Psalm 22:17 (Luke 23:35)
49. Garments parted and lots cast: Psalm 22:18 (John 19:23-24)
50. To suffer thirst: Psalm 69:21; 22:15 (John 19:28)
51. Gall and vinegar offered Him: Psalm 69:21 (Matthew 27:34)
52. His forsaken cry: Psalm 22:1 (Matthew 26:46)
53. Committed Himself to God: Psalm 31:5 (Luke 23:46)
54. Bones not broken: Psalm 34:20 (John 19:33)
55. Heart broken: Psalm 22:14 (John 19:34)
56. His side pierced: Zechariah 12:10 (John 19:34)
57. Darkness over the land: Amos 8:9 (Matthew 27:45)
58. Buried in rich man's tomb: Isaiah 53:9 (Matthew 27:57-60)
59. Resurrection: Psalm 16:10; 30:3; 41:10; 118:17; Hosea 6:2 (Acts 2:31; Luke 24:46; Mark 16:16)
60. Ascension: Psalm 68:18a (Acts 1:9)
61. Seated at right hand of God: Psalm 110:1 (Hebrews 1:3; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34,35)

No one else in history ever came near to fulfilling these, and no one ever can since the birth records and tribal records of all Jews were destroyed in Jerusalem in 70 AD. The fulfillment of these prove the authenticity of the Bible as God's Word as well as the fact that Jesus is God.

The probability of just 1 through 8 coming true would be 1 in 10 with 16 0's. (If each chance is a silver dollar and they were laid down side-by-side on the state of Texas, they would cover the whole state 2' deep! One is marked, all others not. Blindfold a man and let him walk anywhere, chances he'd pick marked one are the same as the first 8 prophecies just happening!

THE RESURRECTION

In actuality, the proof of the deity of Jesus rises or falls on the truth of His **resurrection**. He said He would come back to life, then claimed to have done so. His followers clearly claimed the same thing for them. Were they right? First, it stands to reason to assume that something like resurrection from death to an eternal body isn't something a person would just make up! It would be too unbelievable, too unprovable, too far out for someone to have just made it up.

If Jesus didn't come back to life, what else could have happened to his body? Some say the disciples stole His body, but how would they gain courage to preach that they didn't have before? Why would they give up their lives for something they knew was a lie? So, others say, enemies stole the body. Then they would have said so and showed it to disprove the resurrection when that was first claimed. Neither theory explains the eye-witness accounts of over 500 people who saw Jesus alive after the crucifixion. More common is the swoon theory, that Jesus never really died but swooned then came 'to' later. But he was pronounced dead by experienced Roman executioners after having a spear run through His heart. He spent 3 days wrapped totally in cloth and covered with 100 pounds of spices, with no food or water. He would have had to revive, get out of the wrappings while leaving them there in the shape of a cocoon as if He were still in them, with hands pierced by nails move the monstrous rock from inside with no handholds, overpower the Roman soldiers, walk many miles on feet pierced by nails, and then prove to those He met that He had a superior, eternal body! That takes more faith than believing in the resurrection!

There is **additional proof of the resurrection**. Jesus appeared 10 times to over 500 people. If there was no resurrection how do we explain the change in the disciples, the spread of the early church, the conversion of Paul, the start of the Lord's Supper and baptism, the switch of the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday and the impact His life has had even to today. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The name of Jesus is not so much written as plowed into the history of the world." A liar or lunatic can't do that!

IF GOD BECAME MAN, THEN YOU WOULD EXPECT HIM TO:

One more line of reasoning is to ask yourself, "If God became man, what would we expect of Him?" Jesus fulfilled all we'd ask!

1. **Have an unusual entrance into life.** The virgin birth is the most unusual entrance ever. It, too, is not something someone would choose were they making the whole thing up. How would the idea of a virgin birth ever be considered if it weren't true?

2. **Be without sin.** Jesus claimed to be sinless (John 8:46). Those who witnessed His life agree to this claim: His disciples who lived with Him 24 hours a day (Peter, John, Matthew, etc.), His brothers who saw Him both in family life and with others (James, Jude), even His enemies could not point to any sin in His life (the thief on the cross, Pilate, the centurion at the cross witnessed to His sinlessness).

3. **Manifest the supernatural in the form of miracles.** Jesus claimed to do miracles, and they were attested to by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Jude and James.

4. **Have an acute sense of difference from others.** Jesus saw Himself as different, unique, and others saw Him that way, too. Even Jewish and Roman historians saw Him as not the same as other men, as does the Koran and many scholars today.

5. **Speak the greatest words ever spoken.** Jesus said His words would never pass away and they haven't! Others said that no one spoke as He did, and that is still true. Jesus is the person most quoted by religious and secular historians, teachers and philosophers.

6. **Have a lasting and universal influence.** Historians agree that Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet.

7. **Satisfy the spiritual hunger in man.** Jesus met the inner needs in Matthew, Peter, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the woman at the well, and countless others then and through the ages up to today. Truly Jesus satisfies!

8. **Exercise power over death.** Jesus claimed to have power over death and proved it by His own resurrection. He brought the dead back to life: widow of Nain's son, Centurion's servant, Lazarus and Dorcas (through Peter). (For more information along these lines see "Evidence That Demands A Verdict," by Josh McDowell.)

Was Jesus God? You'll have to decide for yourself. However, if He wasn't, then no one will ever be. If Jesus were not God, then He deserved an Oscar!

CHRIST'S CLAIMS OF DEITY

Claimed Equality With God Matthew 28:19; John 5:17-18; 12:45; 13:20; 14:1, 9

Claimed Oneness With God Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12; 8:39; John 10:30, 36-38; 17:11, 21-22; 20:28

Claimed To Be Sent By God John 4:34; 5:37; 7:16, 28-29; 8:16; 9:4; 11:42; 14:24; 16:28; 17:18, 23

Claimed To Be The Son of God Matthew 16:17; 22:42-45; Mark 12:35-37; 14:61-62; Luke 20:41; John 9:35-37; Luke 22:69-70

Claimed To Be From Heaven John 6:33, 35, 51

Claimed Attributes of God John 8:42; 16:15; 17:5; 14:6

Omniscience Matthew 11:21-22; 22:18; Luke 10:13; John 16:30-31

Omnipresence Matthew 18:20; 28:20

Omnipotence Mark 14:61-63; Luke 22:69-70; John 2:19, 10:18; 11:25-27

Forgive sin Mark 2:5,9,10; Luke 5:20-21; 7:48-49

Divine Authority Matthew 7:21-23; 28:18

Honor John 5:22-23

Pre-Existence John 8:58; 17:5

LIFE OF JESUS - AN OVERVIEW

When Jesus of Nazareth was born, no one in the entire Roman Empire cared except His parents. Jesus was born in obscurity and His ministry started in obscurity. The first year only a handful knew about Him and followed Him. Gradually, His reputation spread. He was more interested in quality than quantity, though. Still, everyone needed to have and did have a fair chance to decide on their own if they would accept or reject Him.

After the first year, His popularity hit its high point. He traveled throughout Galilee with the disciples and did miracles to prove He was the Messiah. Most would have followed Him if He would have continued to provide free food for them. Instead, He challenged them to give everything up and follow Him. The masses would have cheered a military leader who would raise an army to throw off the yoke of Roman bondage. Jesus set high standards for those who would follow Him: put Him 100% first in everything and all the time, before everyone and anything else in life. It is a high requirement, and even today not many are willing to meet it. As a result, Jesus' popularity declined.

As it declined, opposition increased. The religious leaders had been against Him from the very start. He pointed out their sin from the beginning when He cleansed the temple for the first time. Gradually, they were able to turn more and more people against Jesus. People were willing to accept Jesus as Messiah. Where they got hung up was with admitting their sin and accountability before God. Pride still keeps man from God.

As public opinion shifted, so did Jesus' message and methods. Instead of going to the people offering them His message of the coming kingdom, He spent His time training and discipling His disciples. He did less and less miracles, for the people had enough proof and didn't need more. He wasn't going to force anyone to believe. He started teaching with parables to reveal truth to His followers while also hiding it from those who wouldn't accept. Instead of going to anyone everywhere, He specialized in training the disciples to keep on when He was gone.

After the end of the third year the die was cast. Opposition increased daily. The religious leaders were committed to having Him put to death to stop Him and His message. Little did they know that that was just what was needed to assure its continuing forever.

They had their chance to decide. Now is our turn. Will you accept or reject? Are you just following for the 'free food' -- what He can do for you? Are you willing to obey His challenge of taking up your cross to follow Him? It will mean rejection and opposition for those who follow Him, too. No servant is greater than His master. Still, it's the best way to live life to the fullest, to make this one life count for eternity. Don't make the mistake they did. Give up all to follow Him.

OBSCURITY (vanishing)			POPULARITY (declining)				OPPOSITION (increasing)		
			EXTENDED MINISTRIES						
		EARLY MINISTRIES					SPECIALIZED MINISTRIES		Ascension
	OPENING							CONCLUDING EVENTS	
BIRTH	Fall 26 <u>Sp 27</u>	Sum 27	Fall 27 <u>Sp 28</u>	Sum 28	Fall 28 <u>Sp 29</u>	Sum 29	Fall 29 <u>Sp 30</u>	F.W. P.R.	
Incarnati on		Early Judean	Early Galilean	Middle <u>Galilean</u>		Later Galilean	Later Judean <u>Perean</u>	<u>Perean</u>	
	1st Year		2nd Year	I	3rd	Year	4th Year		

MATTHEW: JESUS the KING

TITLE: Named after the author
AUTHOR: Matthew, tax collector, disciple
DATE of WRITING: About 60 AD
PLACE of WRITING: Antioch of Syria
TIME COVERED: Life of Jesus
RECIPIENTS: Jews everywhere
KEY VERSE: *A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: 1:1*
KEY WORD: "Fulfill" (17 times); "kingdom of heaven" (32 times)
PURPOSE: Connect the Old and New Testaments

THEME: Jesus is the King of Israel, the promised Jewish Messiah.



Suppose you had 10 pennies in your hand shook them up, then opened your hand. What are the chances that they would all be heads? How many tries do you think it would take? On an average it would take you a little over a thousand tries! Now think of these coins as prophecies of Jesus. Pennies only have two sides – a 50-50 chance. Prophecies have many more ways of not being fulfilled than fulfilled. What if the very first time all 10 came up heads! Suppose you did it again and they were all heads, and again and again – 30 times in all and every time every penny was heads. You would think something special was going on, wouldn't you? That's just how it is with prophecies of the Messiah. He fulfilled every one of the over 300 prophecies about the Messiah. This is tremendous proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

MATTHEW WROTE TO SHOW JESUS FULFILLED PROPHECY to show that Jesus was the Messiah. "That it might be fulfilled" occurs about 20 times in his gospel. Matthew was the best-educated of all the Jews and an excellent writer. He wrote to fellow Jews, who knew the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, to show that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies. He includes 50 direct quotes from the Old Testament and 75 allusions to the Old Testament – double what any other Gospel has.

In Malachi, the Messiah is anticipated. The Old Testament closes looking for Him. *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."* (Malachi 4:5) In Matthew we see the Messiah has arrived, fulfilling these prophecies.

MESSIAH The term 'Messiah' is a Hebrew word that means 'Anointed One.' The word 'Christ' is the Greek equivalent of it. Prophets, priests and kings were all anointed. The Messiah was all in one. In Matthew, and to the Jews as a whole, the main emphasis was on Messiah as King. That's what Matthew shows his readers – Jesus is the promised Messiah-King.

I. THE KING IS REVEALED (1:1 - 9:30) The first question a Jew would ask of someone claiming to be the Messiah would be, "Are you a direct descendant of David?" Here is where Matthew starts. He gives Jesus legal status through His earthly father Joseph (1:1-7). One problem arises, and that is

that there is a curse on all the physical descendants of Jehoiachin, so how could a king come from that line? The solution is that Jesus wasn't a physical descendent of his but a legal one only. Matthew explains how this could be by explaining about the virgin birth (1:18 - 2:23). About a dozen times Matthew quotes the Old Testament to show how each step fulfilled a prophecy about the Messiah.

He then tells how ambassadors came to crown the king (3:1-17), and how He proved His sinlessness when Satan tempted Him (4:1-11). The King then sets forth His moral laws for His kingdom (5:1 - 7:25). Thus Matthew shows Jesus is the Messiah by His birth and by what He said. Next He will show His qualifications by what He did.

Miracle after miracle is listed, showing Jesus' words (8:1 - 9:30). He is not only man (genealogy and birth), He is also God (miracles)

II. THE KING IS RESISTED (10:1 - 16:12) While some accepted the message of the King, many rejected it (10:1 - 12:50). Jesus' parables of the coming Kingdom show the pattern of rejection before eventual acceptance (13:1-52). Meanwhile, the Messiah was rejected by Herod, His own family, and the religious rulers (13:53-16:12).

III. THE KING IS REJECTED (19:13 - 27:66) Because the masses rejected Him, Jesus turned his ministry to training those who believed, preparing them for when He would be gone (16:13 - 20:28). He taught them about His coming rejection and death and what would happen after.

On 'Palm Sunday' Jesus clearly showed the whole nation, by actions and words, that He was the Messiah King (21:1-11). Some accepted, but most rejected. He went on to cleanse His throne room, the temple (21:12-22) and defend His kingship against those who rejected Him (21:23 - 23:39). In the Olivet Discourse (24:1 - 25:46) Jesus foretold when His kingdom would come. In the meantime, the King was turned down and crucified (26:1 - 27:66).

IV. THE KING IS RAISED (27:66 - 28:20) The power of the King over death and sin is seen in His resurrection from the dead.

Thus Matthew shows Jesus as the Messiah King, even though the religious rulers and the nation as a whole rejected Him. What about you – is He your King?

OUTLINE OF MATTHEW

I. PREPARATION OF THE KING (King is Revealed) 1-9

- A. Person of the King 1:1-4:11
 - 1. His Ancestry 1:1-7
 - 2. His Advent 1:18-2:23
 - 3. His Ambassador 3:1-17
 - 4. His Adversary 4:1-11
- B. Purpose of the King 4:12-25
- C. Preaching of the King 5:1-7:29
- D. Proof of the King 8:1-9:30
 - 1. Exhibit 1: Power 8:1-34
 - 2. Exhibit 2: Pardon 9:1-17
 - 3. Exhibit 3: Power 9:18-38

II. PATTERN OF THE KING (King is Resisted) 10-16:12

- A. Program of the King 10:1-11:1
- B. Problems of the King 11:2-12:50
- C. Parables of the King 13:1-52
- D. Persecution of the King 13:53-16:12
 - 1. By His Own Townspeople 13:53-58

2. By Herod 14:1-36
3. By the Scribes and Pharisees 15:1-39
4. By the Pharisees and Sadducees 16:1-12

III. PREACHING OF THE KING (King is Rejected) 16:13-27:66

- A. Principles of the King 16:13-20:28
 1. About His Church 16:13-20
 2. About His Death 16:21-28
 3. About His Glory 17:1-21
 4. About His Betrayal 17:22-23
 5. About Taxes 17:24-27
 6. About Humility 18:1-35
 7. About Human Problems 19:1-26
 8. About the Kingdom 19:27-20:28
- B. Presentation of the King 20:29-28:39
 1. Power of the King 20:29-34
 2. Presentation of the King 21:1-11
 3. Purification of the King 21:12-22
 4. Confrontation with the King 21:23-22:46
 5. Rejection of the King 23:1-39
- C. Prediction of the King 24:1-25:46
 1. Destruction of the Temple 24:1-2
 2. Signs of the End of the Age 24:3-28
 3. Signs of His Coming 24:29-25:46
- D. Punishment of the King 26:1-27:66
 1. The Preparation 26:1-16
 2. The Passover 26:17-30
 3. The Betrayal 26:31-56
 4. The Trials 26:57-27:26
 5. The Crucifixion 27:27-66

IV. PROMINENCE OF THE KING (King is Raised) 28

- A. Power of the King 28:1-10
- B. Prejudice Against the King 28:11-15
- C. People of the King 28:16-20



MARK:

JESUS the SERVANT

TITLE: Named after the author
AUTHOR: Mark, young friend of Paul

DATE of WRITING: About 50 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Rome

TIME COVERED: Ministry of Jesus

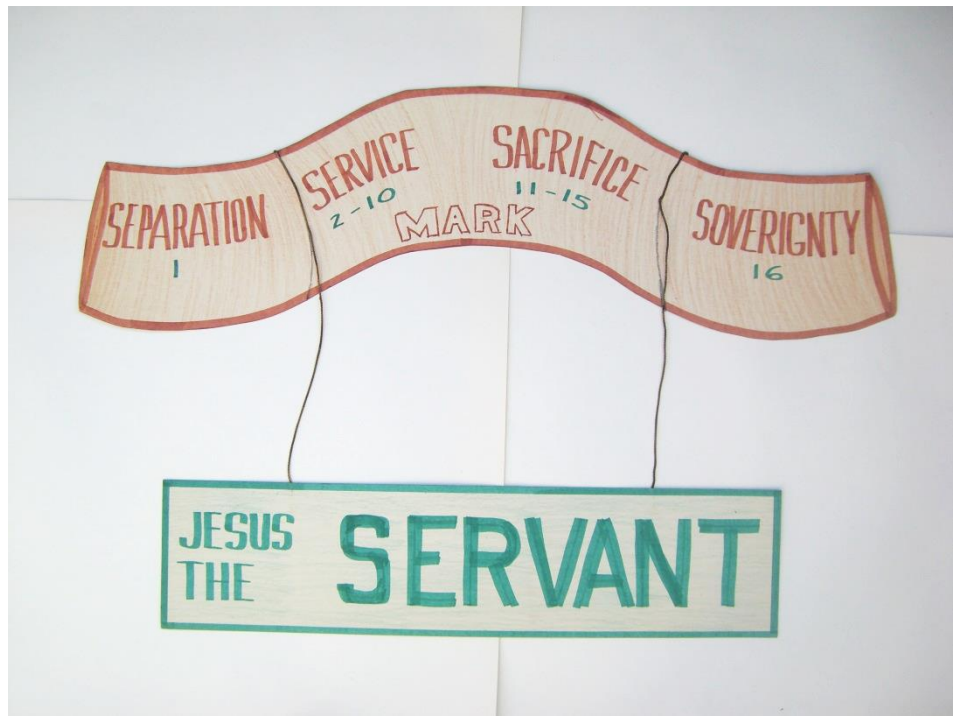
RECIPIENTS: Gentiles

KEY VERSE: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (Mark 10:45)

KEY WORD: "Straightway" (40 times in KJV; "right away" "at once" in NIV); "Multitude" (17 x)

PURPOSE: Short account of Peter's preaching (gospel tract) to distribute

THEME: Show Christ as the perfect and absolutely faithful servant



In many churches today someone who is a 'deacon' is looked up to as being in a position many aspire to, for they are often seen as occupying a level a little above others. In the New Testament, though, a 'deacon' was one who waited on tables – a servant/slave. Church leaders are to be servants of others, following the example of Jesus, the ultimate Servant. *"I did not come to be served, but to serve"* (Mark 10:45).

MARK WROTE TO SHOW JESUS WAS A SERVANT Mark, in his short gospel, paints a picture of Jesus the servant/slave. While Matthew wrote to Jews to show Jesus as the Messiah/King, Mark wrote to Gentiles to show Jesus as a servant. Mark wasn't with Jesus, although it seems the Last Supper was held in the upper room in his house. Mark wrote down what Peter taught and preached, so really the Gospel of Mark is Peter's words.

"Straightway" and "immediately" are used over 40 times in Mark. The focus is on Jesus' actions and miracles. There aren't many quotes of his teaching or recounting of parables. After all, a servant is known by his actions, not how good a servant he claims to be!

A servant is someone who will deliberately, voluntarily, sacrificially and joyfully give up their own goals in order to help someone else meet their goals. Mark shows Jesus doing just this. In life He served God by obeying Him in all He wanted, and in death He served Him by giving up His own life to redeem us.

I. SEPARATION OF THE SERVANT (1:1-13) Mark starts with John the Baptizer (1:1-8). There is no mention of Jesus' birth, parents, etc. After all, the background of a slave isn't important. Also, Mark's Gentile readers weren't as interested in that sort of thing as Matthew's Jewish readers. Jesus' baptism shows Jesus committing Himself to serve God (1:9-11) and His resisting Satan's temptations (1:12-13) show Him as being 100% obedient to His own Master only. When John was arrested the focus of attention switched to Jesus.

II. SERVICE OF THE SERVANT (1:14 - 10:52) Usually a servant/slave doesn't have servants/slaves, but Jesus did (1:14-20). He called disciples to follow Him to become servants like Him. Mark then lists a series of miracles to show that, while being a servant, Jesus was also God and could therefore call servants (1:21 - 3:12). The majority rejected this, but some believed. Those that did were with Him 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to learn from Him how to be servants (3:13-35). Jesus taught them using stories (parables), showing them the importance of serving God (4:1-34).

Next Mark shows how this Servant was sovereign over nature, demons, sickness, death, rejection and physical ailments (4:35-9:1). There are a few words of His quoted at this point, His teachings about His glory, death, hell, divorce, children and eternal life (9:2 - 10:52).

III. SACRIFICE OF THE SERVANT (11:1 - 15:47) The true test of a servant is His submission. Jesus doesn't ask His followers to do anything He wasn't willing to do – and He did the worst of all. After showing Himself to be King (11:1-11) and being rejected, He went on to teach His followers how to live like a servant after He was gone (11:12 - 13:37). A few did recognize Who He really was, and committed themselves to a lifetime of service to Him (14:1-9). However, one of His closest followers betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver – the price of a slave (14:10-11). Still, Jesus was submissive to His Master's will. He instituted the Last Supper, showing that it was His free will choice to go through with the crucifixion (14:2-52). He also submitted to His arrest and unfair trials, which culminated in His crucifixion (14:53 - 15:47).

IV. SOVEREIGNTY OF THE SERVANT (16:1-20) That seemed to be the end of the suffering Servant – but it wasn't so! The suffering was done, but not His service. He came back to life (16:1-8). Mark has very little to say about the resurrection and time after, just enough to let his readers know that it happened. He is no longer a servant, His followers are to now take over His servant chores on earth.

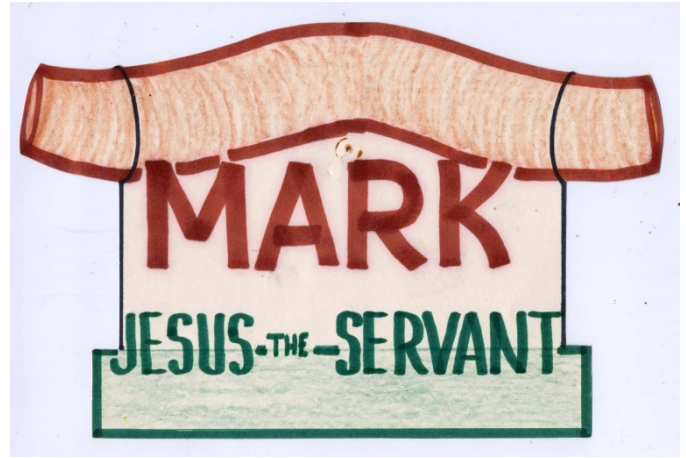
Do you see Jesus as a servant? Do you see Him as YOUR servant, Who died for you? Since He did that for us, He has the right to ask us to lay down OUR lives for Him, to die for Him by living for Him each moment of each day. He continues to serve us by interceding for us, helping and protecting us, providing for our needs and keeping us safe from Satan's destruction. He needs us to serve Him by serving each other in this life. Since He is no longer here to do it, He wants it done through us. Remember, everyone serves someone. If it isn't God, it is self, sin or Satan. Honestly, which do YOU serve? Which do your actions say you serve? How good a servant are you? What can you do to improve your service now?

OUTLINE OF MARK

I. THE SERVANT GIVES HIS LIFE IN SERVICE (A Living Example, AD 27-30) 1-10

- A. Separation of the Savior 1:1-13
 - 1. Sending of the Servant 1:1-8
 - 2. Sealing of the Servant 1:9-11
 - 3. Sinlessness of the Servant 1:12-13
- B. Service of the Servant 1:14-10:52
 - 1. Servants of the Servant 1:14-20
 - 2. Superiority of the Servant 1:21-3:12
 - 3. Staff of the Servant 3:13-35
 - 4. Stories of the Servant 4:1-34
 - 5. Supremacy of the Servant 4:35-9:1
 - a. Over a Storm 4:35-41
 - b. Over Demons 5:1-20
 - c. Over Sickness and Death 5:21-43

- d. Over Rejection 6:1-6
- e. Over the 12 6:7-13
- f. Over Herod 6:14-29
- g. Over Hunger 6:30-44
- h. Over Gravity 6:45-52
- i. Over Sickness 6:53-56
- j. Over Tradition 7:1-23
- k. Over Gentiles 7:24-30
- l. Over Deaf Mute 7:31-37
- m. Over Hunger 8:1-9
- n. Over Pharisees 8:10-13
- o. Over Sin 8:14-21
- p. Over Blindness 8:22-26
- q. Over Peter 8:27-33
- r. Over Disciples' Lives 8:34-9:1
- 6. Statements of the Servant 9:2-50
- 7. Speeches of the Servant 10:1-52



II. THE SERVANT GIVES HIS LIFE IN SACRIFICE (A Dying Savior, Final Week AD 30) 11-16

- A. Sacrifice of the Servant 11-15
 - 1. Status of the Servant 11:1-11
 - 2. Scolding of the Servant 11:12-19
 - 3. Sermons of the Servant 11:20-13:37
 - 4. Sacredness of the Servant 14:1-9
 - 5. Selling of the Servant 14:10-11
 - 6. Surrender of the Servant 14:12-52
 - a. Preparation for the Last Supper 14:12-16
 - b. Partaking of the Last Supper 14:17-21
 - c. Institution of the Lord's Supper 14:22-25
 - d. Walk to Gethsemane 14:26-31
 - e. Prayer in Gethsemane 14:32-42
 - f. Betrayal and Arrest 14:43-52
 - 7. Sentencing of the Servant 14:53-15:15
 - a. Christ before Caiaphas 14:53-65
 - b. Peter's Denial 14:66-72
 - c. Christ before Pilate 15:1-15
 - 8. Suffering of the Servant 15:16-47
 - a. Abuse by the Soldiers 15:16-20
 - b. Crucifixion of Jesus 15:21-32
 - c. Death of Jesus 15:33-41
 - d. Burial of Jesus 15:42-47
- B. Sovereignty of the Servant 16
 - 1. Surprise of the Servant 16:1-8
 - 2. Success of the Servant 16:9-18
 - 3. Seating of the Servant 16:19-20

LUKE:

JESUS the MAN

TITLE: Named after the author
AUTHOR: Luke, a Gentile doctor
DATE of WRITING: About 60 AD
PLACE of WRITING: Rome
TIME COVERED: Life of Christ
RECIPIENTS: Theophilus, then everyone
KEY VERSE: *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*" (Luke 19:10)
KEY WORD: "Son of Man" (26 times)
PURPOSE: To confirm Theophilus' faith by basing it on historical facts about Jesus (1:3-4). Then to present Jesus as the Son of Man (humanity of Jesus is emphasized) Whom Israel rejected (which opened the door for Gentiles to enter).
THEME: Give an accurate record of Jesus as the perfect God-man.



Hundreds of names are used for Jesus in the Bible, but the one He chose for Himself was "Son of Man." It's used 27 times in Luke. If Jesus would have called Himself "Messiah" then people would have thought He was claiming to be a military leader who had come to lead a revolt against Rome, for that is what the people thought the Messiah would do.

LUKE WROTE TO SHOW JESUS THE MAN The title "Son of Man" comes from Daniel's vision of God the Son coming to reveal future events to him (Daniel 7:13; 8:17). Using it is an obvious claim to deity, but also a term of identification with man. "Son of," in Jewish idiom, doesn't mean inferior or lesser. Rather, it means 'related to, part of, extension of.' Thus, when Jesus used this, and Luke focused his gospel around it, the focus was not on the connection with God as in Daniel, but with Jesus' identification with man: "Son of Man." The Messiah was to be God and man. While John focuses on Jesus as God, Luke focuses on Him as a man.

Luke was certainly the person to write about the human side of Jesus. As a doctor, he was very attuned to the physical aspect of people. As a scientist, Luke approaches his subject in a very scholarly, objective way. The miracles he includes are those of healing, and he is quite specific in his descriptions.

The fullest account of Jesus' birth, childhood and home life is in Luke's gospel. He shows Jesus' human side and feelings. Social contacts and human relationships are emphasized. His prayer life is emphasized. His interest in downtrodden and needy individuals is clearly shown as well. This is the longest book in the New Testament.

I. COMING OF THE SON OF MAN (1:1-4:13) Luke gives the most complete and detailed account of Jesus' human beginnings: birth and childhood (1:1 - 2:59). By being baptized He was identifying with humanity, calling man to repent from sin (3:1-22). While Matthew includes Jesus' royal/kingly genealogy, Luke records His human descent through Mary, all the way from Adam (3:23-38). His temptation by Satan showed He was subject to temptation as a man: hunger, pain, loneliness, pride, etc. He withstood the temptations as a man (4:1-13).

II. CAREER OF THE SON OF MAN (4:14 - 9:50) Jesus' first claims to being the Messiah were made in Nazareth, but the people there, who watched Him grow up, could only see Him as a man, not as God and man (4:14-30). To prove He was no ordinary man Jesus performed miracles to show His authority. He had power over demons, disease, disciples, defilement and deformity (4:31 - 6:11).

Jesus, by living His message, was attracting a strong group of followers, men and women who wanted to live their lives like Him. This is one reason He became a man: to show us how to live life on earth (6:12-49). As a man He cared about other people and showed His compassion by healing and feeding them (7:1 - 9:50). Then He was Transfigured to show He was more than a mere man.

III. CONFLICT OF THE SON OF MAN (9:51 - 19:27) While people were quick to take the healing and free food Jesus provided, they didn't want to follow His life style (9:51 - 11:54). To the ones who did, He taught them how to live as God wanted them to (12:1 - 19:27). He warned against hypocrisy, taught about love and salvation, even warned about His coming death.

IV. CRUCIFIXION OF THE SON OF MAN (19:28 - 23:56) His death is just what happened next. When He presented Himself as the God-man Messiah, most rejected Him. Weeping loudly because His heart was breaking over what rejection would mean to Jerusalem, He showed He knows what we feel and go through (19:28-44). He showed other emotions, too – like anger when He cleaned out the temple (19:45-48). He showed need of human companionship when lonely at the Lord's Supper (22:7-38). In Gethsemane He experienced emotional pain (22:39-46), as He did when mocked during His unfair trials (22:47-53). Peter's denial hurt, too (22:54-62). He experienced extreme physical pain when they beat and crucified Him (22:63 - 23:49). He died as a man and was buried (23:50-56).

V. CLIMAX OF THE SON OF MAN (24:1-53) But that wasn't the end of it. He came alive physically again, showing that will happen to all who follow Him (24:1-49). It was a new, resurrection body He had that replaced His earthly, human body.

How does it make you feel to think about Jesus as a man: humbling Himself to be one of us because He loved us, setting an example for us to follow, showing us God's perfect standard for us to follow, and paying for our sins on the cross? He knows what we go through when we are tempted, lonely, angry, in pain or stressed out. He understands. He's been there. Go to Him and He'll understand.

OUTLINE OF LUKE

I. COMING OF THE SON OF MAN (Preparation) 1-4:13

- A. Cousin of the Son of Man (John is Born) 1:5-80
- B. Cradle of the Son of Man (Jesus is Born) 2:1-38
- C. Childhood of the Son of Man (Jesus Grows Up) 2:39-52
- D. Call of the Son of Man 3:1-22
- E. Chronicle of the Son of Man (Genealogy) 3:23-38
- F. Challenge of the Son of Man (Temptation) 4:1-13

II. CAREER OF THE SON OF MAN (Identification) 4:14-9:50

- A. Confession of the Son of Man 4:14-30
- B. Conquest of the Son of Man 4:31-6:11
 - 1. Over Demons 4:31-37

- 2. Over Disease 4:38-44
- 3. Over Disciples 5:1-11
- 4. Over Defilement 5:12-16
- 5. Over Defectiveness 5:17-26
- 6. Over Despisers 5:27-39
- 7. Over Days 6:1-5
- 8. Over Deformity 6:6-11
- C. Companions of the Son of Man 6:12-49
 - 1. Call of the Disciples 6:12-16
 - 2. Characteristics of the Disciples 6:17-49
- D. Compassion of the Son of Man 7:1-9:50
 - 1. In Sickiness 7:1-10
 - 2. In Death 7:11-17
 - 3. In Doubt 7:18-35
 - 4. To Sinners 7:36-50
 - 5. About Finances 8:1-3
 - 6. Shown Through Parables 8:4-21
 - 7. In Storms 8:22-25
 - 8. Over Demons 8:26-39
 - 9. In Death and Despair 8:40-56
 - 10. Through the Disciples 9:1-9
 - 11. To Physical Needs 9:10-17
 - 12. Of Prediction 9:18-50

III. CONFLICT OF THE SON OF MAN (Instruction) 9:51-19:27

- A. Criticism of the Son of Man 9:51-62
- B. Commissioning by the Son of Man 10:1-24
- C. Confirmation of the Son of Man 10:25-11:13
- D. Condemnation of the Son of Man 11:14-54
 - 1. Rejection by the Nation 11:14-36
 - 2. Rejected by Religious Leaders 11:37-54
- E. Communication by the Son of Man 12:1-19:27
 - 1. About Hypocrisy 12:1-12
 - 2. About Covetousness 12:13-34
 - 3. About Faithfulness 12:35-48
 - 4. About Division and Signs 12:49-59
 - 5. About Repentance 13:1-9
 - 6. About Hypocrisy 13:10-17
 - 7. About the Kingdom 13:18-35
 - 8. About Inflexible People 14:1-6
 - 9. About Inflated People 14:7-11
 - 10. About Invited People 14:12-14
 - 11. About Indifferent People 14:15-24
 - 12. About Indulgent People 14:25-35
 - 13. About Love for Sinners 15:1-32
 - 14. About Wealth 16:1-31
 - 15. About Forgiveness 17:1-6
 - 16. About Service 17:7-10
 - 17. About Gratitude 17:11-19
 - 18. About the Kingdom 17:20-37

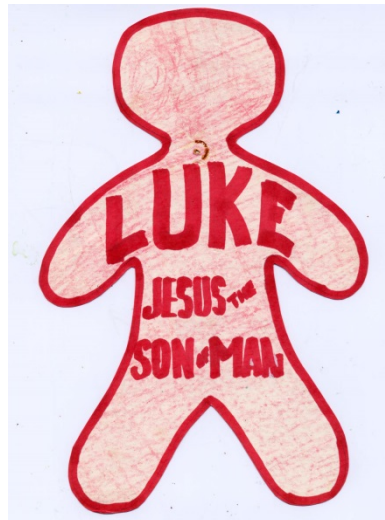
- 19. About Prayer 18:1-4
- 20. About Entrance Into the Kingdom 18:15-30
- 21. About His Death 18:31-34
- 22. about Salvation 18:35-19:10
- 23. About Faithfulness 19:11-27

IV. CRUCIFIXION OF THE SON OF MAN (Sacrifice) 19:28-23:56

- A. Crowning of the Son of Man 19:28-44
- B. Confrontation with the Son of Man 19:45-22:6
 - 1. Temple Cleansed 19:45-48
 - 2. Temple Teaching 20:1-21:38
 - 3. Judas Possessed by Satan 22:1-6
- C. Communion of the Son of Man 22:7-3:8
- D. Chastening of the Son of Man 22:39-23:25
 - 1. Gethsemane 22:39-46
 - 2. Arrest 22:47-53
 - 3. Peter's Denial 22:54-62
 - 4. Christ Beaten 22:63-65
 - 5. Christ Before Sanhedrin 22:66-71
 - 6. Christ Before Pilate 23:1-5
 - 7. Christ Before Herod 23:6-12
 - 8. Christ Before Pilate again 23:13-25
- E. Cross of the Son of Man 23:26-56
 - 1. Crucifixion 23:26-49
 - 2. Burial 23:50-55
 - 3. In the Tomb 23:56

V. CLIMAX OF THE SON OF MAN (Victory) 24:1-53

- A. Change in the Son of Man 24:1-49
- B. Consummation of the Son of Man 24:50-53



JOHN: JESUS the SON of GOD

TITLE: Named after the author

AUTHOR: John, beloved
disciple of Jesus

DATE of WRITING: About 80 -
90 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Ephesus

TIME COVERED: Life of Jesus

RECIPIENTS: Believers

KEY VERSE: *"For God so
loved the world that he gave his
one and only Son, that whoever
believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life". (John 3:16)*

KEY WORD: "Father" (121); "World" (78); "Believe" (98); "Love" (57); "Life" (52); "Son" (42)

PURPOSE: Add a written account of Jesus' life including information Matthew, Mark and Luke didn't include.

THEME: To show Jesus is God, Savior of the world.



Years after Matthew wrote to Jews to show Jesus as the Messiah, Mark to Gentiles to show Jesus as man, and Luke wrote to show Jesus as a man, John wrote and added information that wasn't covered by the others. If he hadn't done this, our knowledge about Jesus' earthly life would be much weaker, both in quantity and quality.

JOHN WROTE TO SHOW JESUS AS GOD John was the perfect one to write a Gospel, for he was one of the inner three, and perhaps the closest one to Jesus on earth, for he was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Knowing everyone would recognize John in that description means they must have been VERY close. Thus John could provide a unique perspective on Jesus' life. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called synoptic gospels because they contain roughly the same material. John, however, contains 92% new material. John's focus is on showing that Jesus is God. Six times He is called the "Son of Man."

I. DEITY OF THE SON OF GOD (1:1-18) John starts with the divine genealogy of Jesus, showing He was always God and was with God before the world was created. In fact, John says He created the world, then became man to reach us with God's message and die for our sin. Luke shows Jesus' humanity ("Son of Man") and John shows His deity ("Son of God"). These opening verses give a summary of the whole book. He then expands and fills in details showing that Jesus was indeed God.

II. DEBATE WITH THE SON OF GOD (1:19 - 12:50) Jesus was shown to be God by John the Baptizer (1:19-51) and His own miracles, such as turning water to wine (2:1-11) and cleansing the temple (2:12-25). He revealed Himself to Nicodemus (3:1-21), a Samaritan Woman (4:1-42), and a Nobleman in Capernaum (4:43-45).

Not everyone believed His claims to deity, though. Despite miracles the religious rulers disbelieved (5:1-47). When the masses found He wasn't there to wait on their needs they, too, turned (6:1-71). John then shows a series of debates between Jesus and the religious rulers (7:1 - 12:11), all showing in various ways that Jesus was God. This section culminates in Jesus' triumphal entry (12:12-50) with His claim to be the God-man Messiah.

III. DECREES OF THE SON OF GOD (13:1 - 17:26) John uses about half of his gospel to detail information about Jesus' death and resurrection. He starts with a detailed account of Jesus' teachings during His final meal on earth (13:1 - 16:33). He foretold the future and just what would happen, then He prayed for His followers (17:1-20) as He still prays for us.

IV. DENIAL OF THE SON OF GOD (18:1 - 19:42) Although He had power to resist, Jesus allowed the authorities to arrest Him (18:1-11) and put Him through a series of degrading trials (18:12 - 19:16), culminating with His death on the cross (19:17-42). Even that showed His deity in that He paid for our sins and conquered sin and death.

V. DESTINY OF THE SON OF GOD (20:1 - 21:25) The ultimate proof that Jesus is God, of course, is His resurrection (20:1 - 21:25). That shows completely and finally who He is.

It's been said that Jesus is either Lord, Lunatic or Liar. Having claimed so often to be God, there is no way He could be just a good teacher and fine example. If someone over and over claims to be God, always have existed and be able to forgive sin, He is either crazy (lunatic), lying (liar) or Who He claims to be (Lord). What is your choice?

OUTLINE OF JOHN

I. DEITY OF THE SON OF GOD (Coming) 1:1-18

II. DEBATE WITH THE SON OF GOD (Confrontation) 1:19-12:50

A. Demonstration of the Son of God 1:19-4:54

1. By John the Baptist 1:19-34
2. To John's Disciples 1:35-51
3. At a Wedding in Cana 2:1-11
4. At the Temple 2:12-25
5. To Nicodemus 3:1-21
6. By John the Baptist 3:22-36
7. To the Samaritan Woman 4:1-42
8. To an Official of Capernaum 4:43-54

B. Disputes with the Son of God 5:1-12:50

1. At a Feast in Jerusalem 5:1-47
2. At Passover in Galilee 6:1-71
3. At the Feast of Tabernacles 7:1-10:21
4. At the Feast of Dedication 10:22-42
5. At Bethany 11:1-12:11
6. At Jerusalem 12:12-50

III. DECREES OF THE SON OF GOD (Comfort) 13:1-17:26

A. Declarations by the Son of God 13:1-16:33

1. About Forgiveness 13:1-20
2. About His Betrayal 13:21-30
3. About His Departure 13:31-38

4. About Heaven 14:1-14
5. About the Holy Spirit 14:15-26
6. About Peace 14:27-31
7. About Fruitfulness 15:1-17
8. About the World 15:18-16:6
9. About the Holy Spirit 16:7-15
10. About His Return 16:16-33

B. Deliberation of the Son of God 17:1-26

IV. DENIAL OF THE SON OF GOD (Crucifixion) 18:1-19:42

A. Decision about the Son of God 18:1-11

B. Degradation of the Son of God 18:12-19:16

1. Before Annas 18:12-23
2. Before Caiaphas 18:24-27
3. Before Pilate 18:28-19:16

C. Death of the Son of God 19:17-42

1. Crucifixion 19:17-37
2. Burial 19:38-42

V. DESTINY OF THE SON OF GOD (Resurrection) 20:11-21:25

A. Delivery of the Son of God 20:1-10

B. Defense of the Son of God 20:11-21:25

1. To Mary Magdalene 20:11-18
2. To Disciples (Without Thomas) 20:19-25
3. To Disciples (With Thomas) 20:26-31
4. To Seven Disciples 21:1-14
5. To Peter and John 21:15-25

SEVEN "I AM'S" IN JOHN

1. "I am the Bread of Life": (6:35)
2. "I am the Light of the World" (8:12)
3. "I am the Door of the Sheepfold: (10:7, 9)
4. "I am the Good Shepherd" (10:11, 14)
5. "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (11:25)
6. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (14:6)
7. "I am the True Vine" (15:1, 5)



MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN:

Compared & Contrasted

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Their names are very familiar to us. They fit together in our minds, in that precise order. We are so familiar with them that we take them for granted. But why wasn't it Philip, Peter and Paul? Or just Andrew? Why four gospels? Why these four? Why a New Testament at all? It's important to know the answer to these questions to be able to correctly interpret the Gospels. The answers are quite interesting.

WHY A NEW TESTAMENT? From God's viewpoint, the New Testament was to complete the incomplete revelation of the Old (Hebrews 1:1-2; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Mal 3:1), to show the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Luke 4:21; John 13:18; 17:12; Acts 1:16), to fully present the way of salvation (John 20:31) and to give all needed information for God's people to live for Him (John 4:25; 17:8; 16:12-13; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:23-32). From man's viewpoint, it was written to have a clear and accurate record of Jesus' life on earth. The eye-witnesses were dying off and heresies were growing and spreading false teachings. Plus, Christianity was spreading and expanding, and the best way to carry the truth to faraway places was in written form.

WHY THE GOSPELS FIRST? The Old Testament shows the promises and prophecies of a coming Redeemer and why He is needed. The Gospels show that Jesus fulfilled those prophecies and met man's need. Acts shows the results of the Messiah's coming. The Epistles add further teaching about the Messiah's work and its results as well as how that applies to our daily lives. The book of Revelation shows the final culmination of all things, when all prophecies are totally and completely fulfilled with God Himself on David's throne.

WHY MORE THAN ONE GOSPEL? Various men viewed Jesus from different perspectives. They wrote to vastly differing audiences. Several writers help to confirm what the others say, and shed light on each other's accounts.

WHY FOUR GOSPELS? The Law required the testimony of 2 witnesses (Dt 19:15; Matthew 18:16). For something this important, twice the number of witnesses is given. Also, the number four in the Bible and to the Jews stands for earthly completeness: four season's directions on a compass, walls in a building, phases of the moon, etc. Together Matthew, Mark, Luke and John show the completeness of Jesus' life on earth.

WHY THESE FOUR GOSPELS? Actually several other gospels were written to help spread the message of Jesus, but aren't included in the New Testament. The four that are included were the ones God Himself chose. He inspired them and kept them perfect for us.

WHICH GOSPEL WAS WRITTEN FIRST? Most scholars agree that Mark wrote first, recording Peter's message in tract form. About 10 years later, in the 60's, Matthew and Luke wrote. They had Mark's gospel and elaborated on much of what he wrote. Then, 20 years later, John supplemented what they wrote by adding much new material focusing on the deity of Jesus.

WHO DO MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE AND JOHN COMPARE? Matthew, Mark and Luke are called 'synoptic' gospels because so much in them is 'synonymous' (similar) material. They all cover virtually the same events. John, however, includes almost all (92%) new material which they didn't cover. The synoptic focus on Jesus' outer life, giving facts about Him as a person. John goes deeper inside and focuses on showing Jesus as God. Matthew's focus is Jesus as the prophesied, mighty

King. Mark shows Him as the obedient, lowly Servant. Luke pictures Him as the perfect, ideal Man. Matthew wrote to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah (1:1; 23:37-39), Mark to spread the gospel among Gentiles (10:45), Luke to give an accurate history of His earthly life (10:10) and John to help believers to grow by trusting in Jesus' power as God (3:16).

WHY DOES MATTHEW COME FIRST? Since Mark was written first, why is Matthew put first? Thematically, Matthew links the Old Testament with the New Testament by showing that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the prophecies and is, indeed, the promised Messiah. Mark moves away from Judaism, but not completely. Luke presents Christ as the Savior of the Gentiles. John then concludes with a strong, clear declaration that Jesus is in essence God, the Savior of all mankind.

SPECIFICALLY HOW DOES THIS APPLY? The Triumphal Entry is one of the very few events in the life of Jesus that is included in all four Gospels. It was so important and so pivotal that each had to include it. We can use it as an example of their various perspectives and purposes. This shows why understanding the differences in the gospels is so important.

Matthew gives it 15 verses (21:1-11, 14-17), Mark 11 verses (11:1-11), Luke 16 verses (19:29-44) and John 8 verses (12:12-19). Mark wrote first, a short account showing Jesus as a humble servant who makes Himself available, but doesn't shove Himself on Israel. Matthew, who adds more details to Mark's story, structures his account around three prophecies which Christ then fulfilled (Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26; 8:2), quoting them and showing his Jewish readers how this further proves Jesus is the Messiah. Luke also builds on Mark's account. Doctor Luke focuses on Jesus as a man, a human being like us, but a man who was also God. He records that Jesus wept (41) as a man but also prophesied the future (43) as God. Only Luke records the religious rulers challenging Jesus the man to stop His disciples (39) as well as Jesus' response that if they are silent the stones will cry out (40) because they are proclaiming Him Messiah - God and man in one. John, writing last, doesn't repeat the details that the others have already recorded but, in accordance with his theme, shows Jesus is God. He refers to His resurrection (16) and miraculous signs He had been doing (18).

Thus it is important to understand the history of the writing of the four gospels to accurately interpret them. It is true that ALL Scripture is inspired and important for us (2 Timothy 3:16). God's Word is so special, so important, so precise, so wonderful and so life-giving that we must immerse ourselves in it all we can. Spend some time in the Bible today.



CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF JESUS

Listed below are the major events in Jesus' life in chronological order.

EVENT	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	LOCATION
Preface			1:1-4	20:30-31	
Genealogies	1:1-17		3:23-38	1:1-18	
5 BC to AD 26					
Birth of John Announced			1:5-25		Jerusalem
Birth of Jesus Announced	1:18-25		1:26-38		Nazareth
Mary Visits Elizabeth			1:39-56		Judea Hills
Birth of John			1:57-80		Judea Hills
Birth of Jesus			2:1-12		Bethlehem
Wise men visit	2:1-22				Bethlehem
Flight to Egypt			2:13-22		Egypt
Childhood of Jesus	2:23		2:22-40		Nazareth
Temple visit			2:41-52		Jerusalem
FALL 26					
John paves the way	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-20		Jordan River
Jesus begins His ministry	1:1-17; 3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-38	1:19-34	Jordan River
Temptation of Jesus	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13		Judea hills
SPRING 27					
First Disciples				1:35-51	Judea hills
First Miracle				2:1-11	Cana
Ministry in Capernaum				2:12	Capernaum
SUMMER 27					
1 st Passover, Temple, Nicodemus				2:13-3:21	Jerusalem
Early Judean Ministry				3:22-36	Judea
FALL 27					
Samaritan Woman				4:1-42	Samaria
Early Galilean Ministry	4:17	1:14-15	4:14-15	4:43-45	Galilee
Nobleman's Son Healed				4:46-54	Cana
SPRING 28					
Preaching in Nazareth			4:16-30		Nazareth
Capernaum teaching, miracles	4:12-17; 8:14-17	1:21-45	4:31-5:7		Capernaum
Disciples called (four)	4:18-22	1:16-20	5:8-11		Sea of Galilee
Healings and Deliverances		1:21-45	4:31-5:16		Capernaum
Healings, Matthew called	9:1-17	2:1-22	5:17-39		Capernaum

EVENT	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	LOCATION
SUMMER 28					
2 nd Passover, healing				5:1-47	Jerusalem
Sabbath controversies	12:1-14	2:23-3:6	6:1-11		Galilee
Many Healed	12:15-21;4:23-25	3:7-12	6:17-19		Horns of Hattin
12 Disciples Chosen	10:2-4	3:13-19a	6:12-16		Horns of Hattin
Sermon on the Mount	5:1-7:29		6:20-49		Horns of Hattin
Centurion's Servant	8:5-13		7:1-10		Capernaum
Widow of Nain's Son			7:11-17		Nain
John the Baptist's message	11:2-30		7:18-35		Galilee
Anointing of Jesus			7:36-50		Galilee
Galilean tour with disciples			8:1-3		Galilee
Warning to Scribes, Pharisees	12:22-45	3:19b-30			Galilee
FALL 28					
Teaching by the Sea	12:46-13:53	3:31-4:34	8:4-21		Sea of Galilee
Miracles by the Sea	8:23-9:26	4:35-5:43	8:22-56		Sea of Galilee
Blind Dumb Man Healed	9:27-34				Capernaum
SPRING 29					
Nazareth Rejection #2	9:35; 13:54-58	6:1-6			Nazareth
Charge to the Disciples	9:36-11:1	6:7-13	9:1-6		Galilee
Death of John the Baptist	14:1-12	6:14-29	9:7-9		Macherus
SUMMER 29					
Jesus Feeds the 5,000	14:13-23	6:30-46	9:10-17	6:1-15	Sea of Galilee
Jesus Walks on Water	14:24-36	6:47-56		6:16-21	Sea of Galilee
Bread of Life				6:22-71	Capernaum
Eating with Unwashed Hands	15:1-20	7:1-23			Capernaum
Girl, Deaf-Mute Healed	15:21-31	7:24-37			Phoenicia
Jesus Feeds the 4,000	15:32-38	8:1-9			Decapolis
Signs Demanded	15:39-16:12	8:10-21			Magadan
Blind Man Healed		8:22-26			Bethsaida
Peter Acknowledges Jesus	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21		Matthew Hermon
Death & Resurrection Foretold	16:21-28	8:31-9:1	9:22-27		Matthew Hermon
Transfiguration	17:1-13	9:2-13	9:28-36		Matthew Hermon
Demon Possessed Boy	17:14-20	9:14-29	9:37-43a		Matthew Hermon
Death Resurrection foretold	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43b-45		Galilee
Payment of Taxes	17:24-27	9:33a			Capernaum
Talk on Humility, Forgiveness	18:1-35	9:33-50	9:46-50		Capernaum

EVENT	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	LOCATION
FALL 29					
Tabernacles, Adultery Woman				7:1-8:11	Jerusalem
Light of the World				8:12-59	Jerusalem
Jesus Leaves Galilee					Galilee
Man Born Blind Healed				9:1-41	Jerusalem
Good Shepherd				10:1-21	Jerusalem
70 Disciples Sent Out			10:1-24		Judea
Good Samaritan			10:25-37		Judea
Mary & Martha Visited			10:38-42		Judea
Teaching about Prayer			11:1-13		Judea
Pharisees Criticized			11:14-54		Judea
Parables and Teaching			12:1-13:9		Judea
Sabbath Healing Defended			13:10-21		Judea
Dedication, Beyond Jordan				10:22-42	Jerusalem
SPRING 30					
Teaching about Salvation			13:22-30		Perea
Jesus Warned about Herod			13:31-35		Perea
Jesus at Pharisees house			14:1-24		Perea
Cost of Discipleship			14:25-35		Perea
Parables: Prodigal Son			15:1-16:31		Perea
Jesus on Forgiveness, Faith			17:1-10		Judea
Lazarus Back to Life				11:1-54	Bethany
Ten Lepers Healed			17:11-19		Judea
Coming of the Kingdom			17:20-37		Judea
Parables, Perseverance			18:1-14		Judea
Jesus on Divorce	19:1-12	10:1-12			Perea
Little Children Blessed	19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17		Perea
Rich Young Ruler	19:16-20:16	10:17-31	18:18-30		Perea
Crucifixion Foretold	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34		Perea
James and John Rebuked	20:20-28	10:35-45			Perea
Two Blind Men Healed	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43		Jericho
Zacchaeus Visited			19:1-10		Jericho
Parable of the Pounds			19:11-27		Bethany
Anointing in Bethany	26:6-13	14:3-9	11:55-12:11		Bethany
FINAL WEEK, SUNDAY					
Triumphal Entry	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:28-44	12:12-19	Jerusalem
FINAL WEEK, MONDAY					
Fig Tree Cursed	21:18-19	11:12-14			Jerusalem
Authority in the Temple	21:12-17	11:15-19	19:45-48		Jerusalem
The Greeks Visit				12:20-36	Jerusalem

EVENT	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	LOCATION
FINAL WEEK TUES/WED					
Fig Tree Withers	21:20-22	11:20-25			Jerusalem
Authority of Christ Questioned	21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8		Jerusalem
Parables of Warning	21:28-22:14	12:1-12	20:9-19		Jerusalem
Questions from the Jews	22:15-40	12:13-34	20:20-40		Jerusalem
Jesus Asks a Question	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44		Jerusalem
Woes Against the Pharisees	23:1-39	12:38-40	20:45-47		Jerusalem
The Widow's Mite		12:41-44	21:1-4		Jerusalem
Olivet Discourse	24:1-26:2	13:1-37	21:5-38		Jerusalem
Plots: Priests/Judas, Anointing	26:3-16	14:1-11	22:1-6		Jerusalem
The Jews Unbelief				12:37-50	Jerusalem
FINAL WEEK, THURSDAY					
Passover Feast, Lord's Supper	26:17-30	14:12-26	22:7-30	13:1-30	Jerusalem
Christ's Farewell	26:31-35	14:27-31	22:31-38	13:31-16:33	Jerusalem
Christ's Prayer for Believers				17:1-26	Jerusalem
FINAL WEEK, FRIDAY					
Gethsemane	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	18:1	Jerusalem
Betrayal and Arrest	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-56	18:2-11	Jerusalem
Jewish Trials	26:57-27:10	14:53-72	22:54-71	18:12-27	Jerusalem
Roman Trials	27:11-31	15:1-20	23:1-25	18:28-19:16	Jerusalem
Crucifixion	27:32-56	15:21-41	23:26-49	19:16-37	Jerusalem
Burial	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42	Jerusalem
FINAL WEEK, SATURDAY					
Watch at the Tomb	27:62-66				Jerusalem
FINAL WEEK, SUNDAY					
Resurrection	28:1-10	16:1-11	23:56-24:12	20:1-18	Jerusalem
Report of the Guards	28:11-15				Jerusalem
Journey to Emmaus		16:12-13	24:13-35		Emmaus Road
Appearance in Jerusalem		16:14	24:36-43	20:19-25	Jerusalem
POST RESURRECTION APP					
Appearance to Thomas				20:26-31	Jerusalem
Appearance to Seven				21:1-24	Sea of Galilee
Appearance to Eleven	28:16-20	16:15-18			Galilee
Appearance to 500, James				I Cor 15:6	Galilee
Appearance & Ascension		16:19-20	24:44-53	Acts 1:4-11	Jerusalem
Attestations of John				21:25	

GEOGRAPHY IN PALESTINE IN JESUS' TIME

In addition to understanding the chronological flow of the events in the life of Jesus, it is also important to know their geographical locations and the significance of each as well.

GALILEE was located in northern Palestine, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee. It was about 40 miles wide by 70 miles north to south. It didn't have any large towns, but had about 240 small villages. Thus, it was a very rural area. It was mostly hill country: rich, beautiful and fertile. The temperature averaged 45 to 80 degrees.

Joshua conquered the area from the Canaanites, and the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun and Issachar first settled the area. It was part of Israel after the split.

Half the inhabitants of Galilee were Gentiles and half were Jews. They were farmers, shepherds, fishermen and craftsmen. As rural people often are, they were warmhearted, generous, patriotic, practical and hardworking. They were sincere people who were open to God, but not nearly as legalistic as the Jews in Judea. This area was home to Jesus and all the disciples but Judas. It was in this area that Jesus' message found its most fertile ground, and where most of His followers came from. They then left this area to spread the word throughout the world.

JUDEA was located in the southern part of Palestine, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. It was named for Judah, the tribe that settled in this area. A ridge of tall mountains went north and south through the middle. On the west was a coastal plain and the east the Dead Sea Valley. The land was dry, barren, with temperatures 55 to 88 degrees. The rough, rugged hills were used for pasture in the north but in the south the land was too desolate to be used for anything.

Few farmers lived in Judea. Mostly businessmen and craftsmen lived in the few large cities that comprised Judea. They were more materialistic and legalistic than those in Galilee. They had a reputation for being prideful, cold and driven. They were perfectionist in all areas of life, strict on themselves and others. This applied to their religion, too. Perhaps this explains why so few from this region followed Jesus. Its main claim to fame is Jerusalem, God's special city then and His earthly capital, the only city on earth which He said was His and which He graced by His presence.

SAMARIA was the region in between Galilee and Judea. It was named after the main town of the area, Samaria. When Joshua conquered it from the Canaanites it was settled by Manasseh, Ephraim and Gad. The town of Samaria became the capital for the north (Israel) when the nation split. When the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom, they took the best Jews away and moved Gentiles in instead. This created a mixed breed of people, 'Samaritans.' The pure-blooded Jews to the north and south hated and rejected them because of their mixed blood. They would have nothing to do with them or their land.

The land of Samaria was a mix of Galilee and Judea. It was similar to Galilee but a bit rougher and less developed. They were semi-Jews in their religion. They believed the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy) but made Samaria the seat of their worship instead of Jerusalem. Without the priesthood or temple, they substituted their own rituals and beliefs. For this, too, the Jews hated them. When Jesus used a Samaritan as an example of one who showed love to his neighbor, proper Jews were shocked (parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10:29-37). The good Samaritan was kinder to the hurt Jew than the good and proper Jews who passed by on the other side. The Samaritan's benevolence is all the more meaningful in light of how he, as a Samaritan, was viewed and treated by the Jews.

Jesus had a real love for the people of Samaria. They were quick to respond to Him. He went there specifically to offer eternal life to an immoral woman (John 4). Jews never talked to Samaritans, nor even set foot on their land. A man would never talk to a woman in public, especially if the man was a rabbi, and even more so if the woman was immoral. In light of all this, Jesus'

reaching out to the woman at the well was all the more remarkable, as was her response. Many others believed in Jesus, and without any miracles done. This is in strong contrast to the Jews, who had much proof in the way of miracles but didn't show the faith the Samaritans did! And that isn't the end of the story. When Philip returned to Samaria after the resurrection a great revival broke out (Acts 8), greater than in Galilee or Judea.

Note the pattern: rich, educated, cultured urban Judea almost totally rejected Jesus; rural Galilee was more responsive, but rejected Samaria responded more than either of them. That shouldn't surprise us. The same is true today. "Not many rich" the Bible says (1 Corinthians 1:26-27). God blesses the humble, but rejects the proud and self-sufficient. "He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" (James 4:6; 1 Pt 5:5; Job 30:12; Prov 3:34). If you lived in Palestine in Jesus' day, where would you fit in?

As we go through the life of Jesus we will divide it into various sections to make it easier to understand. We will look at His birth, baptism and temptation, miracles, teaching, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

22A. JESUS IS BORN

Matthew 1:1-2:23; luke 1:1-3:38; john 1:1-18

At the right time in history, God left heaven to come to earth as a man. While there were many miraculous events that were part of this story, His actual birth was very normal. He came as a baby when He could have come as a full-grown man, like Adam. But He came to experience all we go through in life, to live just as we live, but without sin. He voluntarily set aside that part of His deity which would have made His life easier (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.) but was still God (Philippians 2:5-8). Thus He faced life as we face it, so He knows what we go through, yet He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 2:16-17).

JESUS IS BORN

GABRIEL COMES TO ZACHARIAS (Luke 1:5-25) Because of the large number of priests, they took turns serving in Jerusalem several weeks a year. The rest of the time they ministered in their own home areas: teaching, judging, encouraging and helping in any way they could. When in Jerusalem they served in the temple, helping with the sacrifices, worship and ritual duties to the thousands who came to the temple each day. The highlight of the day was in the morning and late afternoon, when a priest went into the Holy Place to trim the wicks on the lampstand and put fresh incense on the golden altar (a picture of prayers as a sweet savor ascending to God). The late afternoon was the most important of the two. Because of the special nature of these duties, priests to perform the duties were chosen by lot. Fortunate, indeed, was the priest who would be chosen once in his lifetime. Zechariah had served many years and had never been chosen before this day.

Entering God's house was a privilege but also a responsibility, for God could strike dead any who entered without His blessing. It was rumored that the angel of death would appear to them and they would die. You can imagine why Zechariah was so fearful when he saw Gabriel.

When he was told he'd have a son and disbelieved, Zechariah was letting out some of the hurt, and even bitterness, of all the years of going childless. Children were considered blessings from God, and to not have a child was a curse from God. It was an awful, terrible stigma, especially for one trying to serve God as a priest! Why would God bless many who didn't love Him with children when he and Elizabeth remained childless?

GABRIEL APPEARS TO MARY (Luke 1:26-38) It must have surprised Mary greatly for a strange man to enter her presence and speak to her. Such things were never done in her world.

MARY GOES TO SEE ELIZABETH (Luke 1:39-56) While Mary undoubtedly had the trust and understanding of her parents, she knew what the local gossip about her would be. To talk to someone also having a supernatural pregnancy would be very helpful. Perhaps someone in her family accompanied her to Elizabeth's, or she went with a caravan of local friends who were heading south. It would have taken several days, walking and camping at night, to get there.

JOHN IS BORN (Luke 1:57-80) It was the custom for a child to be named after a family member, the first son being named after the father. Refusal to do so was often interpreted as claiming the son was not his. When Zacharias didn't name his son after himself everyone was very startled! Surely Elizabeth hadn't been unfaithful? Actually God Himself was claiming this son as His in a special way by naming him. He would raise and train him, and He did.

GABRIEL APPEARS TO JOSEPH (Matthew 1:18-25) I admire Joseph greatly. Mary had a daytime appearance of Gabriel as well as several months of talking with Elizabeth. She knew she was still a virgin. All Joseph had was one dream to go by, and he staked everything on it. He wanted to marry

her despite her pregnancy, but the law forbid it and, following and obeying God, he wouldn't go against His law. While stoning for adultery wasn't practiced much anymore, it was still a possibility. Other options were open to Joseph. He could have had her publicly disgraced in the synagogue as an example to other young women, keeping his reputation intact and getting his dowry back. This would have been the legal way to get revenge, hurting back someone who has hurt you. The final option is the one Joseph had chosen: a quiet divorce where he would bear the brunt of the disgrace and reproach instead of Mary. He would lose his reputation and dowry, but Mary would be protected. Despite feeling so deeply betrayed by Mary, Joseph still chose to sacrifice himself to protect her. No wonder God chose such a man to be the earthly father to His son!

JESUS IS BORN (Luke 2:1-20) While Christmas cards often show Jesus being born in a barn, historians and scholars agree it was more likely a cave. Caves dotted the limestone hills at Bethlehem, and were used by local homes as a place to keep animals. Wood was very scarce and wasn't used to build houses, much less barns or sheds. Also, some towns had 'inns,' which were really places for traveling herdsmen to keep their flocks while they spent the night before traveling on. Only the large towns would hire someone to oversee their operation and sell feed to the traveling herdsmen. Bethlehem was not nearly large enough for an 'inn keeper.' Being born in a humble cave, though, was appropriate for Jesus' first coming. In both His birth and death He was wrapped in linen strips after having the blood wiped from His body by a man named Joseph. He was laid in the dark on a cold stone shelf in a cave, unknown and rejected by most. His entrance into life was a foretaste of His exit from this world.

Choosing shepherds to be the ones to come worship was something only God would do, for shepherds were the bottom of society, rejected and looked down on by all. They would have best understood the loss of innocent animals killed, for perhaps some of the sheep they raised were destined for temple sacrifices. David had been a shepherd on these very hills.

JESUS IS PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE (Luke 2:21-38) It wasn't mandatory for boys to be dedicated in the temple, but Mary and Joseph did it to show their respect for Who Jesus was. Mary's ritual cleansing from childbirth came first. Simeon was probably the officiating priest. That they only had pigeons for offerings showed how poor they were.

THE MAGI ARRIVE (Matthew 2:1-18) Here's another place where our Christmas cards influence our theology. The Magi were really king-makers from Persia. Hundreds would have come, with Calvary, all on white horses (and some camels to carry tents and supplies). It would have taken months to get ready and make the trip. In fact, the Greek word for Jesus is no longer 'infant' but 'young child.' Also, Mary and Joseph had moved to a house by this time. They had long since moved out of their house. They wanted to stay in Bethlehem, near Zacharias, instead of going back to Nazareth and the gossip about Mary's early pregnancy.

22B. BAPTISM & TEMPTATION

FALL 26 AD

Matthew 3:1 – 4:11, Mark 1:1-13, Luke 3:1-4:13; John 1:19-34

Jesus had a normal childhood, but didn't get married in His teens as was the custom. He lived at home until He was 30 when his cousin, John the Baptizer, began preaching and calling everyone to repentance to prepare them for the coming of their Messiah. After accepting John's acknowledgement that He was God's Messiah, He went into the wilderness to seek God's will for what was to come. There Satan tried to disqualify Him by getting Him to sin, but Jesus resisted every attempt by quoting Scripture and won the battle.

There comes a defining time in everyone's lives, a time when they have to make a touch choice about which path to take. These watershed decisions often aren't fully realized until years later. Sometimes we know we are 'crossing the Rubicon' and sometimes not. Jesus fully realized this time in His life. He had spent about 30 years working with His father, Joseph, building from stone and wood. Then God's Spirit started to stir in His spirit, drawing Him to where His relative John had been baptizing. He was well aware of where this path would lead.

It is important to understand all the historical and cultural implications of what was happening in those days to fully interpret these passages in the life of Jesus. Our purpose isn't to be exhaustive in all aspects, but to point out cultural and geographical facts that help us better understand John's ministry as well as Jesus' baptism and temptation.

THE BAPTIZER (Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18) John had grown up in the wilderness when his older parents died, living off the land. His lifestyle was similar to the Essenes and those in Qumran (who hid the Dead Sea scrolls), but he wasn't part of any group. As a Nazirite (Numbers 6) he didn't touch anything dead (including, some say, eating meat), cut his hair, or drink any fruit of the grape (wine or juice).

Unlike modern evangelists, John required the people to come find him. It often took several days travel. Then what they heard was a message of repentance. Why would people go? God's Spirit drew them. Some say it was a Sabbatical year, when there would be time for, as well as interest in, Sabbatical things. It seems like John came in the fall of the year AD 29, near Rosh Hashanah which focused on repentance.

John calls himself a 'herald.' When a king was coming into an area he would send a 'herald' ahead so the people could prepare for his visit. They would repair the roads and clean up the area to make the trip safe and easy for the king.

Baptism was familiar to the Jews. All their synagogues were built with pools or near water sources, for water was used for ritual cleansing (see Acts 16:13). Washing in water was done in a mikveh and was a picture of cleansing. Thus the Jews were familiar with what John was doing. That, too, is why he didn't think he should baptize Jesus.

THE BAPTIZED (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:19-23) It would have been very unusual for someone not to marry but to live at home into their thirties. It must have been hard to put down His tools and say good-bye to His mother and father as He followed His heavenly Father. How much was Jesus aware of what lay ahead? Did He know details or just vague generalities? Remember, He had voluntarily laid aside all the divine attributes which would have made life as a man easier (Philippians 2:6-8). He was still holy and righteous and eternal, keeping His attributes of Being. He voluntarily

decide to not use anything in His deity that would have given Him any advantage over any of us, for He went through all things we go through (Hebrews 2:18; 4:14-15). Thus His omniscience was set aside, too. That's why He spent so much time in prayer with His Father. He got His direction by the Spirit, the same as is available to all of us today. He faced temptation and Satan the same way we do, too.

THE DEVIL (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13) God's Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, which is a semi-desert area between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. It is a very dry, arid, barren place -- terrible to live in but great for solitude and privacy. Jesus went to have time connecting with His heavenly Father and preparing Himself for service. He was so intense in His prayer and communion with God that He didn't eat for the whole time, although it seems He did drink water when He found some.

Satan didn't hit Him until the 40th day of His fast. Up to that time, the body lives off stored fat, but about that time the fat is all gone and the body starts digesting its own organs to feed itself. This is starvation and soon ends in death. After the first couple days of a fast, hunger pangs are gone -- until about the 40th day when it hits VERY hard! Thus Satan's temptation to turn a stone into bread to eat was very real. There wasn't anything wrong with getting bread and eating it. Jesus Himself made bread for the 4,000 and the 5,000 by the Sea of Galilee. What was wrong was that it wasn't God's timing. Often we aren't tempted to do a thing that is right in itself, but the timing of it is wrong (marriage, sex, job change, move, purchase, etc.). Patiently awaiting God's leading is the key to it all.

Then Satan took Him (physically or mentally -- we don't know and it doesn't really matter for the opportunity was real) to highest point of the temple and challenged Him to jump down, knowing the angels would catch Him. The Jews had a belief that the Messiah would come from the highest point of the temple, and to see a man jump from there and be caught by angels would certainly impress everyone so much that they were sure to make Him Messiah then and there. Again, there was nothing wrong with being recognized as Messiah -- this was why He came. However the means doesn't justify the end. It would have meant bypassing the cross. Getting the crown without going through the cross must have been very tempting, but also very wrong. Remember that when you are tempted, not to take the easy way out.

Finally Satan used his ace card, the one he didn't think he would have to use but was prepared to in order to win. He had used it on the first sinless man, offering him a chance at being like God, and man quickly fell. Then Satan had won rulership of all the earthly kingdoms from Adam. Now he was willing to use that to bait his trap and offer Jesus instant access to ruling like God, right then, over all the earth. The problem was that it would again mean missing the cross. Also, getting his authority from Satan would mean He was under Satan -- the very one He came to dethrone.

These temptations were very subtle. They came at an extremely vulnerable time. They were all for Jesus to meet legitimate needs, but to meet them in His way and time, not in God's. They were self-focused and now-focused, not looking for what was better for others and for the long run. Satan did the same basic thing with Adam and Eve (Gen 3), and still works that way today (1 John 2:16). Watch out!

22C . MIRACLES

SPRING 27 – SUMMER 28

Matthew 4:12-23:45. Mark 1:14-3:30, Luke 4:14-8:3, John 1:35-5:47

There were many who came claiming to be the Messiah. How would people know who was really God Himself come to earth with so many counterfeits? It would be the one who had God's power, who could do only what God Himself could do. How would anyone believe Jesus could heal a soul and forgive sin? When they say Him heal a body, which they could see, they would know He could heal a heart, which they couldn't see. By His casting demons out of those who were demonized they would know His power was greater than Satan's power. So to authenticate His message, Jesus spent the first year or two doing miracles. It was God's way of showing who He was. When people believed His works, they would then believe His words.

YEAR 1: MIRACLES

Everything went "well" for Jesus during the fall of 27 AD. First He met the woman at the well, then He returned to Galilee where He was well received, and finally He made a nobleman's son well. Indeed, things were going very well at this point. John was the only Gospel writer to record these events.

WOMAN AT THE WELL (John 4:5-42) Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Jesus chose to return home to Galilee by going through the region of Samaria to the city of Samaria. He was still ministering in relative obscurity, just beginning to make Himself known to the nation Israel. As important and pressing as this work was, individual souls were even more important. God always puts people before programs.

Left alone at the well, Jesus met and spoke with a woman who came in the hottest part of the day to get water. She probably did this to be alone, for other women wouldn't think much of someone with 5 husbands, and now living with a man she isn't married to. While seeking for love, she ended up settling for lust -- a common substitute even today. Jesus knew this and sought her out to meet that need with His unconditional love.

She was shocked that a Jew, especially a man, especially a rabbi would seek her out and actually initiate a conversation with her! That just wasn't done! What's more, He asked to drink from her water bucket. Jews just didn't touch non-Jews, nor anything they touched -- He would be ceremonially unclean if He drank her water!

While He asked her for water, it was really He who wanted to give to her -- spiritual water to refresh and satisfy her for her whole life. She was confused and unsure, but certainly interested! When she finally understood just what He was offering -- eternal life -- she jumped at the chance to have it. Having ascertained to her satisfaction that He was the Messiah, God Himself come to earth, she went back to town and told everyone about His miraculous offer.

Jesus ended up staying there for several days to meet the needs of those who were interested in His free gift of salvation. It must have been really encouraging to Jesus to have this wholehearted response, especially after the opposition He was already receiving from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

Many believed and started following Jesus. This set the foundation for a great revival in that area under the leadership of Philip and other disciples after the resurrection. Truly everything went very well in this encounter by a well!

WELL RECEIVED IN GALILEE (John 4:43-45) By the time Jesus eventually got back to Galilee, word about what had happened in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast had been spreading there. Interest in someone who would drive out moneychangers from the temple was spreading fast! They also had heard about His miracles and were quite interested. Was this the Messiah? What was this all about?

In a time when there was no news coverage, no telephones, not even mail, word spread only by mouth. Still, that was quite effective. Since there was virtually nothing in the way of entertainment or excitement for the people, news about someone driving out the powerful religious rulers, who most people secretly resented, brought much attention and talk. Without much else to do, people wanted to find out all they could. Seeing the Man who had done this, as well as the miracles He reputedly did, was well worth the time and effort. Curiosity was strong, probably stronger than spiritual commitment.

NOBLEMAN'S SON MADE WELL (John 4:46-54) When Jesus got into Galilee coming from the south through Samaria, Cana was one of the first places He would reach. A royal official with a sick son, who it seemed would soon die, came to Jesus asking for help. Jesus healed his son, without even going to him. It was the first of several long-distance healings.

When the father got home and found his son had been healed at the exact time Jesus said He would be healed, the man and all his household believed. The reason Jesus did miracles was to show His message was from God.

Don't misunderstand, it's not that Jesus didn't care about people and want to see them well, for He really did. However, if that was His only, or even His main reason for healing, what about all He didn't heal? Didn't He care for them? Miracles were Jesus' 'calling card,' to show that He had God's stamp of approval on all He said. Miracles were only a means to an end, not an end in themselves. They were to show people Jesus was worth listening to, to gain Him a hearing, so He could tell them about the gift of salvation He was offering. Physical healing would last for a few years, then the person would die. Spiritual healing affected not only this life, but all eternity as well. That is what Jesus was mostly concerned about. That's why, in a little over a year, He will virtually stop doing public miracles -- people only want the physical benefits He could give (healing, free food, etc.) but weren't interested in listening to His message. Unfortunately there are many today, too, who come to Jesus only for what they can get from Him, not what they can give to Him. Jesus wants us to follow Him because we love Him and are willing to do whatever He wants no matter what. If you follow Him because He can give you peace and joy, remove your guilt, help you in times of trouble, etc., you are following Him for what you can get out of it. These are fine side benefits, but shouldn't be our main reason for serving Him. That is self-centered, not Jesus centered.

For now, though, everyone was interested in every word Jesus had to say (Luke 4:14-15). He told them to repent of their sins and follow Him, believing His good news of salvation (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15). That is His message to us today, too -- don't miss it!

MIRACLES This was the third of four major times of miracles in history. The first was during the time of Moses and Joshua, second during Elijah and Elisha's time, and the fourth will be during the Tribulation. In each case, God is authenticating His chosen messengers and showing everyone that they have His power and message.

A miracle is not a coincidence of natural happenings. It's not magic. It is overriding natural laws by a higher law. Jesus called them 'signs.' We realized they were done for a purpose -- proof that Jesus was God. The focus was not to be the miracle itself but what it taught about Jesus. If He had power over physical ills, He could also heal spiritual ills. If He could deliver from demons, He could deliver from sin. If He could give physical sight He could give spiritual sight. If He could feed with physical bread, He could feed with spiritual manna. If He could bring the physically dead back to

life, He could do the same with the spiritually dead. If He can stop a storm on an ocean, He can stop Satan's attacks against us. When we are helpless, He can deliver.

There was no single pattern: some asked to be healed, others didn't. Some had faith; others didn't even know who Jesus was. Whatever the illness, whatever the need - Jesus met it. He had total control over nature: calming the sea, cursing a fig tree, turning water to wine, catching many fish when there weren't any there a moment before – all these are done by Jesus with just a word. Miracles were a means to an end, not an end in themselves. That's why not every sick person in Palestine was healed.

Satan can do miracles, too. He can counterfeit God's power with shows of his own (Matthew 7:22-23). His power is limited by God, however. He can't stop Jesus' power. Jannes and Jambrees counterfeited and challenged Moses, but lost to God's power.

YEAR 2: PREACHING

The spring of 28 AD was a very active time in Jesus' ministry. Word about His claims of being the Messiah were spreading. Interest was high. People were starting to have to decide about Jesus' claims. Some believed, others didn't. It was a crucial time, which way would the momentum go? Would the nation accept Him as the Messiah or would they reject Him?

REJECTION IN NAZARETH (Luke 4:16-30) As Jesus tells us (Acts 1:8) we are to go to our family and friends first with His message. As Jesus found, though, they won't always be open. When Jesus went back to His hometown, Nazareth, where He had lived from approximately age 4 to 30, He was rejected. They were proud to think the Messiah came from THEIR town, but when it came time to submit to Him and follow Him in obedience, they wouldn't do that. It was too much to accept. Like today, it's easier to believe an 'expert' from another state. It's much harder to believe someone you knew from a child, someone you watched grow up, someone whose 'diaper you changed,' so to speak. We run into that today, and so did Jesus. In fact, it was so bad in Nazareth that they tried to actually kill Jesus, but He was supernaturally delivered because it wasn't the time, place or way for Him to die.

As a result, however, He moved to Capernaum to live (Matthew 4:13-16), for that is where much of His extended family lived. Many of His new followers and disciples were from there, and a good number were part of this extended family. They were accepting of Him.

CATCHING FISH (Luke 5:1-10) A faith-test for His followers there came one day not too long after Jesus moved there. Peter and others had been fishing all night, as was the custom, and came home tired and empty. They spent much time repairing and cleaning their nets and were looking forward to getting to bed when Jesus told them to go back out and drop their nets in deep water. This was the wrong place and the wrong time to fish, plus they'd have to clean their nets again. Also, they were very tired as well as discouraged. Many times the things Jesus wants us to do don't seem to make sense to us. We have our faith tests today, too.

As you know, though, they made a tremendous catch of fish! This greatly increased their faith in Jesus. Soon after, He asked Peter, Andrew, James and John to leave their fishing to spend all their time with Him, so He could teach them how to catch men as fish (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:10-11). They had enough faith and commitment to leave their successful business to serve Him. When He calls us to leave what seems satisfying and successful in our world to follow Him, we must not hesitate or hold back either.

DEMONIZED MAN IN SYNAGOGUE HEALED (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37) Another event after His moving to Capernaum was the healing of a demonized man in the synagogue. Jesus wouldn't let the demons speak, but cast them out. Everyone who saw the event became more aware of Jesus' power and authority, even over Satan himself.

PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW HEALED (Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41) After a synagogue service, perhaps the same one in which the demonized man was delivered, Peter invited the disciples home for a meal. The problem was that his mother-in-law was sick and therefore his wife was busy taking care of her. Peter often acted impulsively, without a lot of forethought or planning. Jesus bailed him out this time by healing the mother-in-law so quickly and completely that, not only was her fever gone, but her strength and energy returned immediately so she could help Peter's wife feed the surprise visitors. Jesus cares about our daily needs, our inter-personal dealings, and the burden of our daily work load.

GALILEAN TOUR WITH 4 DISCIPLES (Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44) Before long it was time to take His message to surrounding communities again, so Jesus took the 4 ex-fishermen He had called to be with Him along, as a teaching and training time for them as well. It seems too many were coming to Him in Capernaum just for healing -- what they could get out of it. They weren't interested in Him as much as themselves. Thus, it was time to go to other people who haven't heard. He went to local synagogues and spoke there, healing and delivering the demonized. Large crowds came from all over to hear and see Him.

One of the people Jesus healed was a leper (Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16). After healing Him, Jesus told him to go straight to Jerusalem as proof to the priests there that Jesus was the Messiah. Instead, he started telling everyone what had happened to him. Unfortunately many came to Jesus just for healing -- for what they could get from Jesus. As a result Jesus withdrew. He always called His followers to build His kingdom, He never submitted to follow their desires to have Him build their own little kingdoms.

PARALYTIC HEALED (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26) When He got back to Capernaum, Jesus continued teaching and supporting His verbal claims by miraculous acts. One such was healing a paralyzed man who was led down through the roof because there was no other way to get to Jesus. The clear connection between Jesus' physical and spiritual healing is seen in this event, for Jesus said He healed him physically as outer proof that He could and did heal him spiritually (forgive his sins and remove his guilt). The religious rulers were indignant, but the common people were amazed and impressed.

CALL OF MATTHEW (Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32) A despised tax collector named Matthew worked the Capernaum roads, collecting as much as he wanted and turning a portion of it over to Rome. Despite Matthew being hated by the Jews, Jesus knew his heart was empty and, when He called Matthew to leave that work and be a full-time follower of His, Matthew quickly accepted. Proof of his complete change was that he didn't even want to be treasurer of the disciples, leaving Judas to handle that job. Jesus used Matthew as an example of the kind of people He came for: those who are needy and know it. Unless we know our need and take it to Jesus, it will never be completely filled. Satan's substitutes don't satisfy.

FEASTING AND FASTING (Matthew 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39) A delegation of John the baptizer's followers came and asked Jesus why He didn't fast as they did. He explained that there will be a time for that, but now that the Messiah was here it was a time of rejoicing. And a time of rejoicing it was. Except for His rejection by those in Nazareth and the religious rulers (pride of both), Jesus is being well accepted everywhere He goes. So far.

22D . TEACHING

FALL 28 – SPRING 30

Matthew 8:23-20;34; 26:6-13, Mark 3:31-10:52, Luke 8:4-9:50, John 6:1-11:54

Despite doing miracles of healing and deliverance, most people rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Some wanted a military leader who would defeat Rome and restore their national independence. Others reacted against Jesus' call to humble themselves and repent. Still others didn't want to pay the price required to put Him first and live for Him. Because of their pride, they preferred to put their faith in their good works. So Jesus made a subtle but important switch in His focus about half way through His 3 ½ years of ministry. Instead of inviting the multitudes to follow Him and proclaiming Himself as the Messiah, He turned to those who had put their faith in Him and trained them. Teaching disciples replaced preaching to multitudes. Parables replaced miracles. Jesus even chose 12 men to train to carry on the work when He was gone. This became the emphasis of the last half of Jesus' ministry on earth.

STARTING YEAR 3

The main events during the fall of 28 AD revolved around the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was staying a little closer to home. He probably went to Jerusalem in early fall for the Feast of Tabernacles, but nothing is recorded about that visit. A subtle but distinct change has taken place in Jesus' ministry. No longer is He trying to reach the masses with His message and doing miracles in front of all to validate His words. Now He is training His disciples, preparing them to take over for Him (although they don't realize that yet). Miracles for the masses are replaced by parables for His followers. He begins using a common teaching device of all times: short stories that help explain and illustrate truth. This makes His meaning clearer to his followers. But it also hides His special truths from those who would reject and mock it.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN PARABLES (Matthew 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18) One day by the sea of Galilee Jesus told His disciples a series of parables which would explain what was happening and what would happen. He was being rejected, not because anything was lacking in Him, but because many hardened their hearts or put themselves first (parable of the sower). Still, some would accept and grow in Him, but they would be a small minority.

Even among that minority, though, the enemy would sow weeds to harm the crop. Satan will plant false disciples among the true to mislead and confuse them. Ultimately God would prevail, but it would often be hard to tell true from false followers.

The parables of the mustard seed and yeast show that the growth of the kingdom will start slow (a handful at the crucifixion), but ultimately grow to include the whole earth (during the Millennium). For those who find Him, though, Jesus says it's like finding a treasure hidden in a field or a merchant discovering fine pearls. They will give up anything and everything to have this relationship with Him. For those who find Him, that will be the best thing that ever happened to them, or to us!

JESUS STILLS THE SEA (Matthew 8:8, 23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25) Later that day Jesus got in a boat with His disciples and headed to the other side of the lake. Being tired (Jesus was every bit as human as we are and therefore knows what we go through) He fell asleep. Even a terrible storm didn't wake Him up, so the disciples did. He rebuked the storm and immediately, instantly the storm stopped. Even the rough water settled down. His disciples were amazed! They had seen

hundreds of miracles that He performed, so that didn't surprise them. However it's different when it's your neck in the noose!

GADARENES DEMONIZED MEN DELIVERED (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39) It may have been that Satan was trying to keep Jesus from His destination because he knew Jesus was invading his territory. Two men who were deeply demonized and ran naked in the graveyard, cutting themselves and breaking chains that were to hold them, were indwelt by so many demons that they called themselves 'Legion.' Jesus immediately cast them out of the men, who returned to their right mind and put their faith in Jesus. The local people wanted Jesus to leave, though, because He allowed the demons to go into a herd of pigs (unclean animals and forbidden to the Jews) who drowned themselves. The men became witnesses to him in their home area, though. They set the foundation for later work by the apostles.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56) Having accomplished what He crossed the lake to do, Jesus then went back to Capernaum, where a Jewish leader named Jairus came and asked Jesus to heal his daughter who was dying. On the way to this man's house, Jesus was interrupted by a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48). She reached out in faith and touched Him, and He healed her. This distraction, though, slowed up Jesus' progress and before He could reach Jairus' daughter, word came that she had died so there was no more reason for Him to come. Jesus went there anyway and brought the girl back to life! This was the second time He had done this (the widow of Nain's son was first; Lazarus will be the third and last). What Jesus did was resuscitate the girl so she could go on living in her earthly body until she again died. What would happen to Jesus' body was resurrection, a new body not limited to the dimensions of this earth. That's what we will get, too!

BLIND MEN HEALED (Matthew 9:27-31) Jesus healed two blind men who came to Him in faith, but told them not to tell anyone what had happened. He didn't want crowds coming just to have Him perform miracles for them. That time had passed.

DEMONIZED DUMB MAN HEALED (Matthew 9:32-34) Right after the healing of the two blind men, a demon-possessed man who couldn't talk was brought to Jesus. Jesus drove the demon out and the man could speak, praising Jesus. The people, too, praised Jesus. However, the religious rulers wouldn't believe. They couldn't deny the miracle, so they changed the source of it. They said that He had authority over demons from Satan, thus saying He was working by Satan's power, not God's. This rejection of these was so strong that they would never be open to Him. They were jealous of His popularity. They were angry when He didn't bow down to them and their laws and regulations.

Thus the shift that started a few months ago is continuing, even growing. While individuals can still come to Jesus for salvation, it seems the nation itself has rejected Him. The religious leaders have, and the majority are either against Him because they don't want to submit to Him, or are too apathetic to care one way or the other. Where do you stand?

THE TURNING POINT

The summer of 28 AD marked the middle of the 3+ years of Jesus earthly public ministry. So far, so good. There has been rejection in Nazareth and by the religious rulers, both from pride and jealousy, but the majority of the people are open and interested, coming for healing and listening to His Messianic claims. Soon that is about to change, however. Now that people know His claims, they will start hearing His demands. He didn't come just to make their lives easier and more

pleasurable. He came to call them to give all that up to follow and serve Him. That isn't nearly as popular. Still, in honesty Jesus must tell them. He didn't change or sugar-coat His call to lifelong discipleship just to have more come follow Him. The summer of 31 AD was a time of challenging those who were following Him and forcing them to make some hard choices, choices we all must make.

IMPOTENT MAN HEALED AT A POOL ON THE SABBATH (John 5:1-47) Jesus attended the 3 main feasts in Jerusalem each year which men were supposed to attend: Declaration (December), Passover (April) and Tabernacles (September). When there for the feast of Passover, exactly 2 years before He would be killed there and one year after His talk with Nicodemus, He healed a crippled man. He used this as a time to teach the people about Who He was and why He came.

SABBATH CONTROVERSIES

Disciples pluck grain on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5) On the way back from Jerusalem, while walking through Galilee, Jesus and the disciples plucked grain from the edges of the fields (an act allowed, even encouraged, by God's Law). They rubbed the shell off and ate the raw grain as they walked. The religious leaders used this to accuse them of breaking the law, for they did this on the Sabbath. Jesus broke their man-made laws, but not God's law. Jesus used the opportunity to try and show them that God was more concerned about heart attitudes than outer actions. We need to watch that ourselves.

Man with withered hand healed on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11) When Jesus entered the Capernaum synagogue, there was a man with a crippled hand there. Could He heal him on the Sabbath? Of course, Jesus said -- it's always lawful to do good and help others. Jesus then healed him. For the first time, now, though, the religious leaders start plotting how they can kill Jesus to get rid of Him. There is no other way to stop Him, and considering His claims to be true is unthinkable to them. He must be removed.

JESUS WITHDRAWS INTO THE HILL COUNTRY

He heals (Matthew 12:15-21; Mark 3:7-12) Knowing of their desire to kill Him, and that the time, place and means aren't right, Jesus moved out into the Galilean countryside. As He traveled He preached, supporting His message with miracles of healing and deliverance.

He calls disciples (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16) Arriving at the Horns of Hattin in northern Galilee, Jesus spends the night in prayer seeking God's will. In the morning, He chose 12 men from all the followers to be with Him 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This was the typical way a rabbi chose and trained disciples. As Jesus senses the multitudes turning from Him and the nation rejecting Him, plan "B" comes into play. He will start training those who will carry on the work after He is gone. A subtle shift begins from preaching and doing miracles for the multitudes to teaching and training a small group of disciples.

He preaches (Matthew 5:1 - 8:1; Luke 6:17-49) As a rabbi calling followers, Jesus tells them and all who are listening just what He demands of His followers. Instead of telling them what He will do for them, as a good politician wanting supporters would do, He tells them what He wants them to do for Him. Of course they will ultimately be the main benefactors of this, but often this message strikes against man's basic selfishness and pride. Thus the Sermon on the Mount called followers to forsake all else and follow Him completely, no matter the cost. This is the challenge He still gives to those who would follow Him today. It isn't easy, but the benefits are 'out of this world!'

TRAVELING, TEACHING AND HEALING

Centurion's servant healed (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10) When Jesus went back to Capernaum, He healed a servant of a Gentile officer in the Roman army, commending him for his great faith. Sometimes it is surprising who will believe in Jesus and who won't.

Widow's son raised (Luke 7:11-17) Jesus was always on the go these months. As he approached Nain, He brought a widow's son back to life. Bringing back the dead should be proof positive that He has power over life and death. Jesus is making sure no one is without opportunity to know and believe in Him. This miracle just couldn't be explained away!

John has some questions... (Matthew 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-35) John, who is in prison, starts wondering if Jesus really is the Messiah. He, too, expected everyone to be following Him by now, but many, including the influential religious leaders, are totally against Him and His claims. He is confused. Jesus explains to him that just because everyone isn't accepting Him doesn't mean He isn't the Messiah. It is the hardness of their hearts and their self-centeredness that keep them from humbly seeking forgiveness and living their lives for Him.

Galilee cities reject Jesus (Matthew 11:20-30) Jesus warned the places that had seen many great miracles, yet rejected Him, that they were under judgment and very accountable.

First anointing of Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50) Amidst all this gloom and rejection, there are still bright rays of hope and changed lives. While at a religious ruler's home, being treated in a barely civil manner, an immoral woman comes and pours out her life savings along with her heart at Jesus' feet. She receives Jesus' love and forgiveness,

Second Galilee tour with the 12 (Luke 8:1-3) Jesus took the 12 this time when he went from city to city. He healed a demon-possessed blind and dumb man (Matthew 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30). He told those who rejected Him that the only additional 'sign' they would receive, having rejected His miracles, would be the sign of Jonah (His resurrection)(Matthew 12:38-45). Even his family and friends started turning against Him, saying He is crazy to claim to be God (Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21).

Truly the summer of 28 AD was a turning point, and not for the better. Each must decide about Jesus' claims. What have you decided? Where do you stand?

THE 12 DISCIPLES

NAME	FAMILY	HOME	WORK	MINISTRY	DEATH
ANDREW	Son of Jonas & Joanna Brother of Peter	Bethsaida Capernaum	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); then ministered in Ephesus, Russia, Scythia Greece	Tied on an "X" cross in Scythia, preached 2 days until dead 11-30-69
NATHANAEL (Bartholomew)	Unknown	Cana	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); ministered with Philip in Asia Minor, Armenia	Flayed alive, beheaded, cast into sea by barbarian king Astyages
JAMES (son of Thunder)	Son of Zebedee**	Bethsaida Capernaum	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18)	Beheaded by Herod Antipas, 44 AD Acts 12:1-2
JAMES the Less	Son of Cleopas *	Capernaum	Fisherman	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Palestine & Egypt	Crucified in Egypt
JOHN	Son of Zebedee**	Bethsaida Capernaum	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem (Acts 3; 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Wrote John, I, II, III John, Rev, Ephesus (with Mary), Patmos	Natural death (very old) - attempts to martyr him failed
JUDAS (Jude, Thaddaeus)	Son of Cleopas *	Capernaum	Fisherman	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Assyria & Persia	Beaten to death in Persia/Syria with a large club
JUDAS (Iscaiot)	Unknown	Judea (only one not from Galilee)	Treasurer	None	Suicide
MATTHEW (Levi)	Son of Cleopas *	Capernaum	Tax Collector very well educated	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Wrote Matthew, Ethiopia & Persia	Head split open with an ax in Egypt
PETER (Simon)	Son of Jonas & Joanna Brother of Andrew	Bethsaida Capernaum	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem, leader of early church (Acts 2 - 11, 15); Wrote I, II Pt; Mark written about him, Asia Minor, Britain (?), Rome w/ wife	Crucified upside down in Rome by Nero after wife martyred
PHILIP	Unknown Greek name	Bethsaida	Unknown	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Ministered in Phrygia, Galatia, France (?), , Asia Minor	Hung against a pillar at Hieropolis (near Colossae)
SIMEON (Zealot)	Unknown	Galilee	Zealot under-ground freedom fighter	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Ministered various places	Crucified
THOMAS	Son of Cleopas *	Capernaum	Fisherman	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Parthia, Persia & India	Body run through with spear in East India

* Cleopas also called Alphaeus, probably Joseph's brother; Mary his wife was with Jesus throughout His ministry; children seem to have been Matthew & Thomas (twins?), James the Less and Judas Thaddaeus, therefore all were probably cousins of Jesus

** Zebedee's wife was Salome, the sister of Mary, children were James and John, they were cousins of Jesus

REJECTION

By the spring of 29 AD, it was clear Jesus was being rejected and, if possible, killed.. Jesus was not going to be accepted as the Messiah. The religious rulers and the nation as a whole were not going to submit themselves to His rulership in their lives. The only ones who didn't see the handwriting on the wall were the disciples. They still were under the delusion that sometime soon they would be among the top leaders in Jerusalem, next to Jesus when He sat on David's throne. Jesus knew better.

SECOND REJECTION AT NAZARETH (Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6) It was time for Jesus to return to Nazareth, His home town, to give them another chance to follow Him. Maybe His first time there they were caught by surprise. Maybe now that they've had time to think and listen. Maybe... But nothing doing! When He again spoke in the synagogue, as rabbis were allowed to do, the people were quicker and stronger in their rejection. That was their last chance, their final vote. Jesus won't go back to their synagogue again, and nothing about any kind of visit to Nazareth is recorded.

TWELVE SENT OUT

Leaving Nazareth, **Jesus sent out His twelve disciples two by two** (Matthew 9:35 - 10:15; Mark 6:7-11; Luke 9:1-5). This was not only part of their hands-on training for when He would be gone, it was also a way of reaching as many people as possible with His message. Everyone had heard one way or another, but Jesus wanted to have each one have as much opportunity as possible to believe. It's the same thing He had just done with Nazareth.

Before sending them out, Jesus went into detail telling them **what to expect** (Matthew 10:16-23). Most of His words had to do with handling rejection. He was warning and preparing them so they wouldn't be surprised. We, too, shouldn't be surprised when people reject our message. Still Jesus sends us anyway, to make sure everyone has as clear an opportunity as possible.

Then Jesus talked to them about **discipleship** (Matthew 10:24-42). After all, how were they to feel about being sent out to be rejected? Why should they even bother going? Well, a disciple shouldn't be surprised when he goes through what his Master has to go through. A disciple gives up all his own desires and goals to serve his Master. Discipleship isn't easy. It is very costly. It costs all of us. But then Jesus is giving all of Himself for His disciples. What better use of a life is there than to give it in service of God and His kingdom?

The **results** were that the disciples spread God's word with power (Matthew 11:1; Mark 6:12-13; Luke 9:6).

JOHN THE BAPTIZER DIES (Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9) Lest there be any doubt about what awaited Jesus, John is now killed. His message was rejected and he was killed to silence his words. What happens to the forerunner is what will happen to the One who sent him to prepare the way. Jesus knows this. It is obviously the beginning of the end. Now it's just a matter of time until Jesus Himself is also killed. Jesus has one year of life on earth left.

Why was Jesus rejected? Why didn't the Jews accept Him as their Messiah and King? If He would have just given without calling for anything from them they would have followed Him in a moment. Free food, healing of illness -- these everyone wants. But when He called on them then (and us now) to admit their sin and helplessness and come to Him for forgiveness and restoration, it is often more than a person in their pride will admit. Then to those who will accept His free gift of salvation, Jesus challenges them (and us) to lay down their own life and desires in order to daily serve Him and do His will instead of their own. To a self-centered person, who isn't sure about the existence of God to begin with, such a life seems utterly ridiculous! Their whole world view is entirely different, far different.

SIX MONTHS TO LIVE

Jesus, in the **FALL OF 32 AD** knew He only had 6 months to live. Jesus knew He'd die because the nation as a whole, as well as the vast majority of the people, were rejecting Him. He told His followers a couple times, but they didn't think about it until after the resurrection. Seeing Jesus activities during the fall of 32 AD in light of this takes on new light. How would He respond? What would He do? Let's see.

Despite a fresh round of **rejection by His own brothers** (John 7:2-10) and people in Samaria (Matthew 8:19-22; Luke 9:51-62), Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:11-52). While there He rescued a woman caught in adultery (John 7:53 - 8:11). He tried to tell the people to watch out for the darkness but follow His light (John 8:12-20), for in doing so they would be following God, not Satan (John 8:21-59). To show that He could remove spiritual darkness and blindness, He healed a man of physical darkness/blindness. His attitude was still that of a servant. Instead of thinking about Himself and His needs, what was fair and what wasn't, He continued to reach out to others, to minister to their needs and to try and bring them to salvation. He said He was the good Shepherd Who was going to lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:1-21). Even in His last months of life, Jesus put others and their needs first. He continued to give of Himself, committed to following God's plan and purpose for His life no matter what.

After the Feast of Tabernacles, instead of going home to Capernaum in Galilee, where the majority of His followers lived, where He could have found some solace and support, Jesus stayed in **Judea**. Since the end was near He wanted to make sure everyone had a fair chance to hear and respond. Despite the facts that their hearts were harder and there was little response from the Judeans, Jesus did all He could to reach them. Only one of His 12 disciples were from Judea, and that one was Judas. To cover more ground and reach more people, and also to continue their training, Jesus sent out 70 of His followers two by two, warning them they wouldn't always be accepted (Luke 10:1-24).

To teach His values Jesus told the **parable of the Good Samaritan** (Luke 10:25-37). He spent time with His good friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus (Luke 10:25-37) and gave them a lesson in servanthood, too. Serving others was His theme (Luke 11:1-13). Even after healing a dumb man (Luke 11:14-28) the people demanded He prove to them He was God (Luke 11:29-36). Jesus said the only proof they'd have any more would be the resurrection (the "sign of Jonah").

Jesus **condemned hypocrisy** (Luke 12:1-12) and warned them against greed (Luke 12:13-34). He encouraged them to be alert and watchful (Luke 12:35-41) as well as faithful (Luke 12:42-48). He taught them what He expected (Luke 12:49-53) and told them to watch the signs of the times (Luke 12:54-59). He called them to repentance and faith in Him (Luke 13:1-9). He did some healing, like when He healed a crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17), but the times of large numbers of healings before large groups was long past. He taught about the coming Kingdom, that it would start slow and gradually grow (Luke 13:18-21). It certainly was starting slowly.

Then, when it was time for the Feast of Dedication, Jesus again went to **Jerusalem** (John 10:22-39). His death was now just a few months away. He has spent the last months reaching out to those in need.

You see, Jesus' sacrifice of Himself didn't just begin on the cross. It started long before that. Actually it started before the world was created, when the Second Person of the Trinity volunteered to come to earth as a man and die for our sins (Revelation 13:8). His whole existence on earth was one of self-giving and sacrifice, for His enemies as well as for His friends (John 13). Knowing His time was short didn't change His life, it just intensified His focus. That should be the way it is with us, too. As He "washes our feet," so we are to "wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). We, too, are to live lives of sacrificial service for others, putting them and their needs before our own. We are to be like

our Master, laying down our lives in daily sacrifice of service to others. That doesn't mean we don't have legitimate needs of our own, nor does it mean we are to let people use us, take advantage of us and walk all over us. We are to be innocent as doves but wise as serpents (Matthew 10:16). It's not easy, in fact humanly speaking it is impossible, but with His help all things are possible. Living for self is empty and means losing everything. Living for God and others is the only way to have meaning and purpose in life, now and for eternity (Matthew 10:39). The choice is yours. Choose wisely.

JESUS' FINAL WEEKS

The end is inevitable. Jesus has been rejected and will die. Nothing will change that, for God won't do anything to force man's free will choice. However, the rest of the script needs to be read, the final events played out. Now it's a matter of waiting for the right time. The Lamb must die on Passover day, and that is still 3 months away. The waiting is always the hardest. One's mind can run to one extreme or the other. Staying focused during such a time is very hard, but that's what Jesus did during the **SPRING** of **30 AD**.

Galilee had been thoroughly evangelized. Everyone had heard about Jesus. Each had opportunity to find out more. Minds were made up. Hearts were set. Their verdict: Jesus is a nice person, the free food is great, and if He would overthrow the Romans that would be great – but to give up all and follow Him as God and Savior, that's asking too much!

Knowing this, Jesus went to **Perea** (John 10:40-42), an area east of the Jordan. Not only was He safer there (He knew it wasn't time for Him to be killed yet), but He was able to give those who hadn't heard a chance to follow Him. He did the same teaching there that He had done in Galilee and Judea. Only Luke records Jesus' teachings there. He spoke about salvation (13:22-30) and warned them about Herod (13:31-35). He performed a healing in a Pharisee's home (14:1-6) and told parables about an ambitious guest (14:7-14) and the great supper (14:15-24). After explaining about the importance of discipleship (14:25-35) He gave parables about a lost sheep, coin and son (15:1-32) and an unjust steward (16:1-13). These were spoken to show them the importance of following Jesus completely and of the judgment and loss that awaited those who didn't. He warned against covetousness (16:14-17) and answered questions about divorce (16:18). One of His best-known teachings was that of Lazarus and the rich man (16:19-31), another warning against putting faith in position and possessions. He concluded His time there teaching about forgiveness (17:1-6) and the importance of being a servant (17:7-10).

Then came a very pivotal event. In looking at Jesus' life, one can see several times when it seems He went out of His way to force the Jews to have to decide if they would accept or reject Him. The first was when He chased out the sellers and money changers the first time He came to the temple after His baptism. This hit the religious leaders where it hurt – in their wallet! They were forced to notice Him and take a stand one way or the other. Now He is going to do the same thing – do something so extreme they must notice and act one way or the other. He'll do that by bringing Lazarus back to life right under their noses, and then a few weeks later by riding a donkey into town proclaiming Himself the Messiah and King. These events couldn't be ignored.

The **raising of Lazarus** (John 11:1-44) was so obviously a supernatural miracle that none could deny it or explain it away. It was so close to Jerusalem that many people there knew Lazarus (evidently a well-to-do and influential man) and came to talk to him about what had happened to Him. When the religious rulers checked it out they couldn't find any way to explain it away. They decided Jesus and Lazarus both would have to die to stop this strange movement that was gaining so much

support. They were jealous. While most people didn't accept Jesus as Messiah and Savior, the majority did take His side in His conflict with the proud and controlling religious rulers. Having set in motion the events that would soon end in His death, Jesus then withdrew to Ephraim where it was safer (John 11:45-54) for it still wasn't time to die for sin.

Jesus made His last trip through Galilee and Samaria and **healed 10 lepers** (Luke 17:11-19). He taught about the coming kingdom (Luke 19:20-37), the importance of persistence in prayer (Luke 18:1-8) and having the proper attitude (Luke 18:9-14). Jesus visited His home area for the last time, setting His face to Jerusalem. Only He knew what was coming as He left Galilee and headed south.

Jesus then swung through Perea again, completing the work He had started there. He again **taught** about divorce (Matthew 19:1-12) and how man is to become like a little child to enter the kingdom (Mark 19:13-15). A rich young ruler came to Him and asked about eternal life, but Jesus knew He'd have to deal with His love of money before He could truly follow Jesus (Mark 19:16-22). With time getting shorter every day, Jesus focused on talking about eternal life by teaching (Matthew 19:23-30) and by use of parables (Matthew 20:1-16). He told those who would listen that He would be crucified and rise again (Matthew 20:20-28) but no one wanted to think of that, so they didn't let it really register. Pride and self-centeredness seemed to be the norm, as when Jesus rebuked James and John for this (Mark 20:20-28).

Leaving Perea, Jesus headed toward Jerusalem for His fourth **Passover** since His baptism and temptation. On the way through Jericho He healed some blind men, one of which (Bartimaeus) became a follower of His (Luke 18:35-43). Zacchaeus was another resident of Jericho that responded to Jesus' love and forgiveness and gave up all to follow Him (Luke 19:1-10). Jesus again warned His followers that the kingdom would be delayed (Luke 19:11-29), but people tend to hear what they wanted to hear. The followers of Jesus only wanted to hear about Jesus' coming rulership of Israel, and their exalted positions with Him. Thus, He in effect walked alone as He turned His face toward Jerusalem for the final events of His life on earth.

As Jesus walked toward Bethany and His final week on earth, what thoughts must have gone through His mind? Soon the waiting would be over, and the agony would begin: the rejection and suffering and pain. Jesus had faithfully carried out His life's mission on earth, even these last few months when the final choice was certain. His attitude was still one of love and patience for the people. He didn't panic, fear or flee. He persevered faithful to the very end. What a perfect example He sets for us of faithfulness during those hard times of waiting. With His help we, too, can keep a good attitude and faithfully persevere no matter what is to come.

22E . CRUCIFIXION

SPRING 30

Matthew 21:1-27:66, Mark 11:1-15:47, Luke 19:28-23:56, John 12:12-19:42

Despite Jesus' teachings about His coming death and resurrection, and in the face of several Old Testament prophecies about it, His disciples were unprepared for what happened to Jesus. The rejection of the religious leaders and the majority of the people culminated in Jesus being crucified. It was the only way the jealous leaders could silence Him. But God used the worst thing that ever happened and brought about the best thing that ever happened from it. He used that event as the means by which He Himself would pay for every sin that has ever been committed, taking our eternal torment in hell condensed and placed on Him. As perfect man He could be our substitute, as God He could endure the torment of eternity in hell condensed in a much shorter of time. The time was less, but the suffering was unimaginable. Why would He do such a thing? There is only one reason –love for us!

JESUS' LAST WEEK ON EARTH

As the time winds down in a football game, every snap & handoff takes on extra importance. As time starts to run out in a basketball game, each pass and shoot takes on special significance. There is no room for error. Little mistakes get magnified into major disasters. Every movement and every action counts. So it was with Jesus during His final days on earth. His clock was moving closer and closer to 0. No one realized that but Jesus (and perhaps Mary who anointed him at Lazarus' home). Jesus knew that each word, each activity was magnified in importance. Now, especially, there was no room for error. That which was planned before the world was even created was almost near. It was a crucial time to carry out the 'game plan' God had created. Thus the final days in Jesus' life take on special meaning. And just as the final series of plays at the end of the Superbowl which bring victory are minutely analyzed and even memorized, so the final days of Jesus deserve even more careful notice than the previous activities in His life.

It all began **Friday, March 27, 30 AD** when Jesus arrived in Bethany (John 12:1; Luke 19:28). To the others it was just another (the fourth) Passover trip to Jerusalem since John baptized Jesus. To Jesus, however, the events had much greater significance. The religious rulers had already decided they would have to kill Jesus to stop His influence from spreading (John 11:55-57). The recent resuscitation of Lazarus, in the very outskirts of Jerusalem, was something with which the religious rulers just couldn't compete. Jesus and His disciples probably went to synagogue services with Mary, Martha and Lazarus as well as other friends in Bethany. It would be His last opportunity to do this, for the next Friday He would be in the tomb.

Saturday, March 28, 30 AD was the Sabbath, so not much travel could take place. Mary, sensing what was about to happen, anointed Jesus with valuable perfume as her way of showing her love (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:2-8). It was also her way of saying good-bye. When greedy Judas complained about this 'waste' of money, Jesus rebuked him. This seemed to be a turning point for Judas, who started to make plans in his heart to betray Jesus.

The next day, **Sunday, March 29, 30 AD** was when the religious rulers planned to kill Lazarus, too (John 12:9-11). His testimony was influencing too many for Jesus.

Then came the final major turning point, when Jesus literally forced everyone to decide if they would accept or reject Him. It happened on **Monday, March 30, 30 AD**. It was like when Jim Bowie took his knife and drew a line in the dirt in the Alamo, challenging each man to stay where he was or cross the line. Jesus drew the line by clearly and publicly claiming to be the Messiah-King by coming into the Eastern gate from the Mount of Olives, riding an unriden donkey, and allowing the people to say “Hosannah” while waving palm branches, thus using symbols and following precedents that clearly claimed Him Messiah (Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19). Everyone understood this. His followers shouted their praises and support, and the religious rulers told Him to make them stop. Up to this point Jesus had told people to not tell others who He was, but now He is putting everyone in a position where they must join in His parade or turn away. Only a minority responded positively. Jesus, knowing what this meant for the Jews as well as Himself, started crying loud and long as He approached the city. The people melted away and those in town reacted with surprise and doubt (Matthew 21:10-11; Mark 11:11). Oh, a few responded, like the boys choir in the temple (Matthew 21:14-16), but the leaders and majority of the people rejected this claim to Messiahship. At least Jesus gave them one more clear, fair chance to accept Him. No one could say they didn’t know His claim. None could say they were ignorant. Jesus again spent the night in Bethany (Mark 21:17; Mark 11:11).

Jesus had three days left to minister before His death, and He made the most of them. On **Tuesday, March 31, 30 AD** He cursed a fig tree on the way down the Mount of Olives into town (Matthew 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14). While appearing to be lush and healthy, closer inspection saw it wasn’t bearing fruit. This was the purpose for its existence. It was a fake, a hypocrite. The tree, of course, was a picture of the nation Israel. When He entered the temple, He drove out the money changers once again (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18), closing His ministry in the same way He started it. He did much teaching that day (John 12:20-36) to those who would listen, then went to spend the night on the Mount of Olives (Mark 11:19). This gave Him more privacy to think and pray and it drew danger away from Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Jesus and His disciples passed the fig tree He had cursed the day before on their way into Jerusalem on **Wednesday, April 1, 30 AD**. It was dead and withered, as if it had been dead for many months (Matthew 21:21-22; Mark 11:20-25). Upon entering the temple courts, Jesus immediately got into a long and bitter dialogue with the religious rulers which took up most of the morning (Matthew 21:23 - 23:39; Mark 11:27 - 12:40; Luke 20:1-47). They kept looking for ways to publicly discredit Jesus, but He parried each thrust and drove home point after point of His which unveiled their hypocrisy and self-centeredness. When that was finally over Jesus, exhausted and saddened by their hardness, drifted into the Court of Women for some quiet reflection. There He saw something that really encouraged and excited Him. A poor woman gave all she had to God in love and devotion (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4). There were some who did love God and put Him first.

As they left the temple area, Jesus foretold its destruction and answered the disciple’s questions about when it would happen and what it would be like (Matthew 24:1-25:46; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36). He gave the clearest explanation up to that point about when He would return.

Later, in the temple again, Jesus continued to preach and teach (John 21:37-38). He again predicted His crucifixion (John 22:1). Meanwhile, the religious leaders were planning Jesus’ arrest (Matthew 26:3-5; Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:20) and taking Judas up on his offer of betrayal (Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6).

The next day, **Thursday, April 2, 33 AD**, time would expire and it would be all over.0

JESUS' LAST DAY

This was it: the moment all history had pointed to. This was the focal point of all time: past present and future. This was the key incident, the most important occurrence ever, the event which changed everything for everyone forever. Nothing ever happened, or ever will happen, that was as important as this. This was it. This was **IT**.

Thursday, April 2, 30 AD dawned like every other day. Disbelief hung over the city like a blanket (John 12:37-43). Jesus entered the temple for a final time of preaching (John 12:44-50). Meanwhile Jesus had sent some of the disciples to prepare for the Passover which those from Galilee would be observing that evening (Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13). The majority of the people, everyone else, would be observing it the following day. As a firstborn male, Jesus (and other of the disciples) had been fasting all day in preparation for the Passover.

That **evening** after sunset the disciples gathered in the upper room, probably John Mark's home. Jesus entered the room wanting and needing their support and help as He approached the cross with all its horror and suffering. Instead all He got was immature, self-centered arguing and complaining. No one wanted to serve another, and the stink of it all hung throughout the room. Jesus had to wash their hearts as well as their feet, and He warned them of what was to come (Matthew 26:20-35; Mark 14:17-31; Luke 22:14-38; John 13:1-38). No one, not even Peter, took His warnings seriously, though. Instead of heeding His rebuke, they just became fearful at the prospect of His leaving them. Instead of getting comfort from them, Jesus needed to then comfort them (John 14:1-31). He gave a final warning to Judas, and while reassuring him of His love (giving him the sop) offered Judas a way of escape from what he planned. Judas turned it down and left.

As this important evening unfolded, Jesus changed the meaning of the Passover Lamb's body given and blood shed to Himself: His body that was to be given and blood that was about to be shed (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32).

It was **late night** when the meal ended with a song (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39). As they walked through the dark, deserted streets of Jerusalem, Jesus gave His parting words to them: be like a branch attached to the vine in order to prosper (John 14:31-16:33). He also prayed for Himself, them and us today (John 17:1-26).

Despite being so tired, when they entered Gethsemane Jesus prayed. It was probably **early Friday, April 3, 30 AD**. Again He needed the disciples' support but they again failed (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46; John 18:1). Before long Judas led the arresting party to Jesus, who had gone to the exact place He knew Judas would come to looking for Him. He could have escaped arrest by His power when He said "I Am" or when Peter tried to lead an attack. Jesus knew that was not the way and resisted the temptation to take the easy way out.

At about **3 AM** He was taken to Annas for His first religious trial (John 18:12-23), then to Caiaphas at about **4 AM** (Matthew 26:57-72; Mark 14:53-70; Luke 22:54-58; John 18:18, 24-25). They were frantically scrambling to find some charge against Him that would stick. They knew they were breaking about every rule in their book for a fair trial. They were forced to act sooner than they wanted when Judas informed them Jesus knew about their plot and this would be the last chance he had to help them. At about **5 AM**, select members of the Sanhedrin who would support Annas no matter what he proposed gathered to condemn Jesus without the required waiting period, proof, fair trial, legal defense, etc. (Matthew 26:73 - 27:1; Mark 14:70 - 15:1; Luke 22:59-71; John 18:26-27). Hate and jealousy drove them. It was during this time that Satan withdrew his influence from Judas and trashed him. When the guilt and remorse accompanying the reality of what he had done hit Judas, he saw taking his own life as the only escape (Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-20).

It was now about **6 AM**. Jesus was taken to Pilate for approval to carry out the death sentence, for the Jews could not do that without Rome's OK. Pilate proved difficult for a while (Matthew 27:2-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38). He even sent Jesus to Herod about **7 AM** (Luke 23:6-12) but by **8 AM** He was back before Pilate, who eventually caved in to pressure and approved their death plot (Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:16). Every time the Jews complained to Caesar, Pilate's job became less stable. Pilate had Jesus beaten nearly to death in hopes they would consider this sufficient punishment, then he offered them Jesus or Barabbas as the holiday release, but neither of these caused the Annas-paid mob to change their mind. At **8:45 AM** Jesus was on His way to Golgotha, paraded through the streets as a detriment to others (Matthew 27:31-32; Mark 15:20-21; Luke 23:26-31; John 19:16-17). By **9 AM** He was on the cross (Matthew 27:33-37; Mark 15:22-26; Luke 23:33-38; John 19:17-22).

Crucifixion was the cruelest death man had been able to devise. It combined the maximum amount of pain for the maximum time. Relief by fainting or death was denied while awful pain continued for hours and days. Jesus had been spit on, mocked, punched numerous times by soldiers and had a crown of long sharp thorns forced down on His head. For two days He had no sleep and only one meal. His back was whipped raw, to where the bone and nerves were exposed. It had been covered with salt and a robe, which was violently pulled off for the crucifixion. From loss of body fluids Jesus was dehydrating. He was wracked with gangrene. Spikes through the great nerve centers in His wrists and ankles caused excruciating agony. Then there was the public shame of nudity before everyone, including His own mother, as well as mockery and taunts. Crucifixion caused near asphyxiation, for a person would have to pull themselves up by the nails, rubbing their exposed back against the rough wood, every time they inhaled. No wonder Jesus didn't have much to say (Matthew 27:35-50; Mark 15:24-37; Luke 23:34-46; John 19:23-39). The worst of it all, though, was God withdrawing His presence and forsaking Jesus as He poured out the consequences for every sin ever committed. All every person would experience in an eternity in hell was poured on Jesus during that time! As Satan and his demons cheered and tormented Jesus, God and His angels watched helplessly. The battle for the souls of men was on. Our eternal destiny hung in the balance. Would Jesus endure? Would He even try (He could have just called some angels to rescue Him and been relieved of His agony). For six long hours the battle raged. Finally, at **3 PM** the eternal penalty for every sin ever committed was paid. God's justice was satisfied. Jesus was the victor. His work on earth was over, accomplished 100%. "It is finished," He declared and voluntarily returned to heaven. At that very instant, the Passover lamb was killed on the altar, and the veil in the temple was torn, showing that the price was paid and every man was now invited to enter God's presence any time they wanted. All this and more was a testimony to Jesus' deity (Matthew 27:51-54; Mark 15:38-39; Luke 23:45, 47). His body was put in a grave (Matthew 27:55-66; Mark 15:40-47; Luke 23:48-56; John 19:31-42), but He Himself was alive in heaven forever, just where He told the thief He would be ("Today you will be with Me in Paradise").

He did it! He really pulled it off! The greatest victory in the history of the universe was won. One Man, fighting for all mankind, had defeated sin, Satan and death. Indeed, "It is finished!"

JESUS' LAST HOURS

This is written as if Barabbas, the man released instead of Jesus, might have written it.

"Hello! My name is Barabbas. Really it is Bar-Abba. Bar means son of and Abba means father. I was "son of the father" because my father was a well-known rabbi. My first name was very common – Jesus, the same as Joshua in the Old Testament. Thus I was Jesus Bar-abba (Jesus, son of the father) and I was fighting for the physical deliverance of Israel. My life crossed paths with

another Jesus, Bar-Joseph, Who was working for the spiritual deliverance of Israel. What a way our paths crossed!

BACKGROUND “I was an insurrectionist. I was a leader in the underground. We wanted rebellion against Rome and would murder soldiers whenever we could. Today you would call us terrorists. We called ourselves Zealots.

“I was full of hate and bitterness for anyone and everyone. If anyone wasn’t for us he was our enemy. That included this other Jesus. I first heard of Him from Simon the Zealot, who left us to be one of His disciples. When he tried to tell me about this better way of love and peace, I spit on him and walked away. I was too disgusted to talk.

“I never met that Jesus in person. He was in the same prison I was in but in a different place. There were no prison terms then. Prison was just a temporary holding place until trial, and then one was flogged, executed or released. It was April 13, 33 AD and I was awaiting execution. I had been arrested and found guilty and was to die that morning. It was to be a public, horrible death as an example to others.

RELEASE “From the Maccabean times it was the custom to release a prisoner at Passover, symbolizing the release of the Jews from Egyptian bondage. Rome carried on this practice. Evidently Pilate used this as a way to have the other Jesus released. I could hear the crowds from my cell, but not Pilate. I heard the crowds start chanting “Barabbas,” then after a pause “Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!” I assumed I was doomed. A cold chill shook me as the reality of crucifixion settled over me. I was as hard and cold as anyone, but I was still human! When soldiers then burst through my cell door and dragged me out I assumed that was it. When they opened a side door and threw me out into the street I couldn’t believe it! I quickly scampered away, but not too far. My two buddies were still there, about to be killed this day. I felt like I was deserting them, although I wasn’t about to go back inside. I was very curious about why I was released. Was it the prisoner exchange? If so, who was taking my place?

“When I saw it was this other Jesus I didn’t care. I hated Him. He was weak. He could have turned the crowds into an army and fought the Romans but didn’t. I had no respect for cowardice like that. Still, something started changing inside me. For the first time since I was a child I felt pity, sorrow for another human being. I guess it’s because I could identify with Him. He was taking my place on my cross.

TO GOLGOTHA “Then I saw Him for the first time, carrying my cross toward Golgotha. It was the whole cross, 200 pounds. An awful curse from God went with it (Deuteronomy. 21:23). Of course they made Him and my two friends go the long way, weaving up and down streets, before exiting the city. This was so more could see them. Their crimes were written on boards which were carried in front, then nailed to their cross. Funny, all He said was that He was the “King of the Jews.”

“Going outside the city pictured exclusion, rejection by God. That’s where the ‘scapegoat’ was sent. I wondered how someone who claimed to be God would handle that. Before He got there, though, it all was too much for Him physically so Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service.

EXECUTION “Golgotha was an awful place! It meant ‘skull,’ and that’s what the place looked like. It had the smell and feel of death everywhere. Some mercy was shown, though, by offering a narcotic (gall or myrrh). Surprisingly Jesus rejected it. That made me curious.

“I watched as He was stripped naked and thrown backward on to the wood. I involuntarily flinched myself as His raw, bloody back hit the rough wood. I turned away as His arms were spread and nailed, and then His feet. That was my cross. That should have been me.....

"The cross was lifted and dropped into its hole with a jarring thud. There He was. His arms and knees were flexed a bit so He could pull Himself up to allow air into His lungs. Perhaps I'd better quote what a medical doctor in your day says about crucifixion:

"The cross is placed on the ground and the exhausted man is quickly thrown backwards with his shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square wrought-iron nail through the wrist deep into the wood. Quickly he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flex and movement. The cross is then lifted into place. The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees flexed. The victim is now crucified. As he slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain--the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As he pushes himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he places the full weight on the nail through his feet. Again he feels the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the bones of his feet. As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through his muscles, knotting them in deep relentless, and throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled. He fights to raise himself in order to get even one small breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen. Hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-wrenching cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from his lacerated back as he moves up and down against rough timber. Then another agony begins: a deep, crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with cerium and begins to compress the heart. It is now almost over--the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level -- the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues -- the tortured lungs are making frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. He can feel the chill of death creeping through his tissues... Finally, he can allow his body to die... "

"That's why He didn't talk much, and when He did, it was for others: forgiveness for those doing the crucifixion and for one of my friends there with Him and assistance for His mother.

THE END COMES "Then it got dark, like midnight. Even I could feel an evil chill in the air. Even though I didn't believe in them, I couldn't help thinking that Satan and his demons were everywhere, attacking Him as He hung there in my place. He cried out, really yelled, that God had deserted Him. I found out later that during that time He was literally taking my place in hell. Then, after 3 hours of dark torture, He seemed to have peace. He said His work was done and it looked like He voluntarily died. Then the sun shone again, but an earthquake hit at that very moment. Satan and sin were defeated. The Seed of the Woman had indeed defeated the serpent, Satan himself (Genesis 3:15). What a time! I mean, it really touched me. He took my place, know what I mean?"

22F. RESURRECTION

SPRING 30

Matthew 28:1-20, Mark 16:1-20, Luke 23:56-24:53, John 20:1-12:25

Three days after the worst day the world has ever known happened, the best day ever occurred! Jesus, who had come back to life, showed Himself to his disciples and followers. Sin and death had been forever conquered, and all rejoiced in that glorious truth.

Everyone likes a story with a happy ending. Unfortunately many of life's stories don't have happy endings. This one does. Does it ever! It's been called the greatest story ever told. It certainly has the greatest ending ever told. It's great for us, for our perspective in time, for we can see the end as clearly as the start. Jesus' friends and disciples in Jerusalem on **Sunday, April 5, 30 AD** didn't know the ending.

When Jesus died and was buried, they thought that was the end of all their hopes and dreams. The only ones who remembered Jesus' promise to rise again were the religious rulers, who sealed the tomb and posted a guard of Roman soldiers outside.

Everything was quiet Friday from 3 to sunset (day 1) and from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday (day 2) for that was the Sabbath. Movement and activity were severely limited. After sunset Saturday (day 3) the women could go back to the tomb to finish covering Jesus' body with ointment (to cover the stench from decay). Travel at night was dangerous. Still, the women left before daylight to get to the tomb as soon as possible (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 1). They weren't even aware of the seal and the guards. I don't know how they expected to move the large stone!

God knew their needs even before they did. During the night He sent an angel to scare away the soldiers (Matthew 28:11-15) and move the stone – not to let Jesus out but to let the women in! As they walked the High Priest was waving the Barley Sheaf in front of the torn veil in celebration of Firstfruits. It was the first harvest, in promise of more to come. This is exactly what Jesus' resurrection was for us.

Anyway, when the women arrived at the tomb they found the stone gone for two angels were inside and one outside. They were startled, scared, confused. "Don't be afraid, He's not here, He's risen just as He said!" was their gentle rebuke and reminder. He wasn't resuscitated, whereas He'd grow old and then die again. He was resurrected – He had a glorified new body. Confused, the women returned to the upper room and told Peter and John that someone stole Jesus' body! Things had gone from bad to worse! John outran Peter for he was younger and arrived first. He stopped outside and looked around. When Peter arrived he rushed right in but was confused and didn't know what to think, either. Then John went inside and saw Jesus' linen covering like a cocoon, just lying there as if the person inside simply evaporated. The head covering was neatly folded and set to the side. While John still didn't remember Jesus' prophecies about resurrection, he did start realizing that the signs were pointing to the fact that Jesus was alive (Matthew 28:2-7; Mark 16:2-8; Luke 24:2-8; John 20:1). Wondering about this, they headed back to the upper room.

Meanwhile **Mary Magdalene**, the unmarried leader of the women, from whom seven demons had been cast out, had started back to the tomb following John and Peter. She traveled much slower and was uncontrollably weeping. She must have taken a different route, for she didn't pass the men as they returned. When she got to the tomb she just wanted to be where Jesus had last been, her way of connecting ever so slightly with the One she loved so much! One of the angels asked her why she was crying. Then Jesus Himself asked her the same thing. She, thinking He was the gardener

who had taken Jesus' body, asked where it was so she could go get it. "Mary" Jesus said and she immediately knew who He was. She fell on her knees and hugged Him, intending to never let Him out of her sight again! Jesus had to tell her that things had changed and she couldn't cling to Him physically as she had done before (Mark 16:9; Luke 24:12; John 20:2-18).

Other women, concerned about Mary Magdalene in her grief, started following her to the tomb. When they arrived they saw the same thing (Matthew 28:8-10; Mark 16:10-11; Luke 24:9-11). They returned to tell the men what had happened, but the men were very skeptical.

Sometime later, **Peter** must have gone out on his own, for Jesus appeared to him personally (1 Corinthians 15:5). It must have been a wonderful time of reconciliation for Him. After all, the last time he had seen Jesus, he had denied he ever knew Him! Nothing is recorded of this meeting, for it was a private time between Jesus and Peter.

Later that same day, though, Jesus spoke to **Cleopas** (Joseph's brother) and **Mary** (cousin of Mary, mother of Jesus). James the Less and Joseph, two followers of Jesus, were their sons. He overtook them on the road to Emmaus and ended up explaining the Old Testament pictures and prophecies about the Messiah dying and rising again (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13-32). They rushed back to Jerusalem to tell the others they had talked to Jesus, then Jesus miraculously appeared in the locked room to the **10 disciples** and whoever else was there (Mark 16:4; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-25). Thomas and Judas were missing.

A week later Jesus again appeared, this time to the **11 disciples**. Thomas had come back (John 20:26-29). Jesus did many miracles to prove He was God (John 20:30-31).

The disciples saw Jesus next in Galilee when **7 disciples** were fishing and Jesus made breakfast for them (John 21:1-24). He put Peter on the spot after he had bragged he was better than the other disciples and wouldn't deny Jesus, having him humble himself before them and take back his bragging. This also assured Peter and the others that Jesus forgave Peter. These both were necessary for him to keep on leading the disciples.

Jesus also appeared to **many others**, but only those who believed in Him. He commissioned them to take His word to everyone else (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18). One time He even appeared to a group of over **500** at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6). His brother **James**, who became a believer after His crucifixion, also saw Him (1 Corinthians 15:7) as did **many others** (John 21:25).

Then everyone ended up back in Jerusalem where Jesus **ascended** from the Mount of Olives (Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:3-14). The disciples were joyful and spread the word everywhere. It truly was a story with a happy ending. In fact, the happy ending continues on and on. It's still going on today. Despite what is going on in your life now, it, too, will have a happy ending if you believe in Jesus as your Savior. Because Jesus conquered sin, Satan and death, so will those who accept His free gift of salvation. Eternity in heaven is God's free gift to us. What could possibly be happier than that?

22G. ASCENSION & PRESENT

SPRING 30 – PRESENT

Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:44-53, Acts 1:4-11

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven in bodily form, right before the eyes of His watching disciples. It was assurance He was in heaven and would be leading His Body, the Church, from His heavenly throne. There He prays for us, defends us and continues His work on earth through those who serve Him.

The disciples all gathered in Jerusalem one last time and walked out of the city to Bethany on the Mount of Olives. They had been there many times and memories, both good and bad, flooded their minds as they walked. They knew this was the spot where God's Shekinah Glory (His literal Presence) ascended into heaven when He left the temple during Ezekiel's time. They also knew that Jesus said He would one day come to earth again, and this would be the very spot where His foot would touch ground! They knew He would soon be leaving, but how would they manage without Him? They needed Him so very much. They couldn't carry on without Him. As had so often happened over the years, Jesus answered their question before they even asked it. It was uncanny how He could read their thoughts – but then He is God, isn't He? He quickly reminded them that the Holy Spirit, Whom He had often talked about (especially at the last supper the night before He was crucified), would indwell them and do what He done for them – and do even more! He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit to come. Then the Spirit would show them what to do next. With His presence in them they would be able to manage nicely.

As He was saying these things, He started ascending into heaven. He just started going up and instantly the disciples all knew that this was good-bye. This wasn't like the other times when He temporarily left. This was the end of one chapter and the beginning of another.

Again their questions were anticipated and answered – this time by 2 angels who said that Jesus would certainly return, and it would be in exactly this same way as He went. Later, when the Holy Spirit did come and indwell all of them, He helped the disciples remember these things as Jesus had said the Spirit would.

The disciples remembered other words He spoke to them that time they ate together for the last time in the Upper Room. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." (John 14:1-4) Knowing He was going to prepare a place for them to come be with Him gave them a lot of comfort. It was further assurance they would spend eternity with Him! Knowing that will come can really help us face whatever the future may have for us!

They lost Jesus' presence at the ascension, but they gained much more than they lost. Instead of living among us, He then started lived in His people by the Holy Spirit. That is true for everyone who puts their faith in Him. Jesus had to go to heaven to assume headship over the Church (Hebrews 10:12, 13; Ephesians 4:8, 10; Psalms 68:1) as well as send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7, 14; Acts 2:33; John 14:16-19). Now that He is in heaven, He is our mediator and defender, He intercedes for us at the right hand of God (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 6:20). So we have Him inside us

now and when we die we will go to be with Him forever! That's a good deal no matter how you look at it!

END OF BOOK REFLECTION QUESTIONS

To help you get more out of this book, think about the following questions and how you would answer them. You can write down your answers if you want, or just meditate on them. The answers don't get turned in; they are for your benefit.

What most impresses you about Jesus' life?

How does Jesus' life and death show God's love for you?

Which miracles of Jesus impress you the most? Why?

Why did Jesus die for YOUR sins?

What is Jesus doing now in heaven?

How does it make you feel that Jesus is doing these things for you right now?