

# DISCOVERY

## BIBLE STUDY COURSE

### ***Lesson Six: A Man Called Jesus***

From beginning to end, in all its various phases and aspects and elements, the Christian faith and life is determined by the person and work of Jesus Christ. It owes its life and character at every point to Him. Its convictions are convictions about Him. Its hopes are hopes which He has inspired and which it is for Him to fulfill. Its ideals are born of His teaching and His life. Its strength is the strength of His spirit (James Denney).

Jesus. What comes to mind when you hear this name uttered? This name means different things to different people, ranging from hate to indifference to joy. No individual has had such a profound effect on the lives of so many people for such a long time. Even today, two thousand years since He walked the earth, no life has nearly as great an influence on society as the life of Jesus. Think of our society and how different it would be if Jesus had never lived—our nation was founded on Christian principles by God-fearing men, many holidays focus on Jesus, churches founded on belief in Jesus cover our land, Bibles reside in nearly every home. Yes, our society would be very different if not for a man called Jesus. But who is this

#### LOOKING BACK...

*The Bible tells the story of God's love for us and His desire to save us from our sin...*

*There is objective evidence proving that the Bible is the Word of God...*

*God's Word is authoritative, providing needed spiritual direction for those who desire to serve God...*

*The Old Covenant prepared a people for the Messiah...*

*The New Covenant began with Jesus' death and teaches us what to believe and how to live...*



man and what did He accomplish in His brief existence?

### ➤ **Synopsis of Jesus' Life and Death**

To summarize the life and death of Jesus in a couple of pages is a daunting task and one that is sure to fall well short of adequately conveying the interesting and instructive features of the Gospel accounts. For this reason, readers are encouraged to take the time to read one or more of the Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) in connection with this study. Each of the Gospel accounts can be read in about two hours' time.

Jesus was born in the small Judean village of Bethlehem located about nine miles south of Jerusalem. Indications are that He would have spent His childhood there. However, Herod, the King of Judea, decided to kill Jesus, mistakenly believing this child

would be a rival to his throne. Having been warned by an angel, Jesus' parents fled to Egypt until Herod's death, and from there moved to Nazareth, a city in the district of Galilee. We know little of Jesus' childhood in Nazareth—only a brief glimpse of a trip He made with His parents to Jerusalem for the Passover when He was twelve years old (Luke 2:41–52).

**Jesus' Ministry.** At age thirty, Jesus began His formal ministry (Luke 3:23). He summed up His mission in these words: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). While many of the Jews were expecting a Messiah who

**That Jesus was an historical figure who lived in Galilee and died in Jerusalem is scarcely doubted by even the wildest skeptics. First and second century writers such as Suetonius, Tacitus, and Josephus testify to the life of a man called Jesus. Archaeological evidence also verifies His existence and His popularity among the people. Since a formal presentation of this evidence lies outside the scope of our study, readers who doubt the historicity of Jesus are encouraged to consult sources devoted to documenting the evidence for Jesus' life and death. One such work is *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* by F. F. Bruce.**

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would save the people from Roman oppression and establish an earthly kingdom, Jesus was a spiritual Messiah who came to save people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Jesus' ministry lasted about three years, ending with His death in Jerusalem.

Jesus' ministry can be summarized in two words: "teaching" and "miracles." Wherever Jesus went, He taught the people concerning the characteristics of His new kingdom and of those who would be citizens of it. One example of Jesus' teaching is found in Matthew 5-7, a passage often titled, "The Sermon on the Mount." Jesus taught in the Jewish synagogues throughout Judea and Galilee, but most of His teaching was done from hillsides or along the seashore—wherever masses would gather to hear Him. Sometimes Jesus taught in plain, easy to understand language (as in Matthew 5-7); other times He taught in parables, stories designed to convey a spiritual truth (Matthew 13; Luke 15). Jesus sometimes taught individuals, for example Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) and a woman from Samaria (John 4:1-26). However, most of Jesus' teaching was directed to twelve select disciples (later called "apostles"). These twelve men, each hand-chosen, followed Jesus wherever He went. For about three years Jesus taught and trained these men to continue His work after His death.

Accompanying Jesus' teachings were miracles, supernatural acts designed to add validity to Jesus as a teacher and to His message. Nicodemus said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3:2, NIV). As Jesus authoritatively taught the people, sometimes presenting unfamiliar teachings to the people and sometimes challenging the beliefs and practices of the day, why would anyone believe that He was speaking truth? Would you believe someone today who approached you concerning a new religious system? Not without proof that what the individual was teaching was truly from God.

The situation was no different in Jesus' day. In order to convince people that He truly was the Messiah and that His message was approved by God, Jesus worked a large number of miracles. More than thirty specific miracles of Jesus are recorded in the Gospels. In addition, other general statements like, "Jesus did many miracles in their

city,” or “And they brought all of their sick to Jesus and He healed them,” can be found. Through His miracles, Jesus showed His power over many aspects of our existence: disease, personal injury, genetic defect, chemical structure, quantity, nature, the animal world, death, Satan’s kingdom. While the miracles themselves are impressive to consider, we must keep in mind that the purpose of each miracle was to stimulate faith in the hearts of people. In keeping with this, John consistently refers to Jesus’ miracles as “signs”—they signified that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Great Prophet, and that His message was true.

***Jesus’ Death, Burial, and Resurrection.*** During Jesus’ three-year ministry, He upset many of the religious leaders of the day. Some did not like Jesus’ teachings; some were jealous of His following—but they especially feared the inevitable consequences. Jesus’ following among the masses grew steadily, as did the anticipation that He would prove to be the promised Messiah. The common belief among the Jews was that the Messiah would overthrow the yoke of Roman rule and establish a world kingdom. Although the masses were hopeful Jesus would prove to be the Messiah, the religious leaders were convinced He was an imposter. (How could the Messiah come out of Nazareth? How could a carpenter possibly forge a new kingdom that could successfully stand against the Roman Empire?)

When it seemed inevitable that the masses would soon proclaim Jesus as their Messianic King (which would be perceived as a revolt against Rome), the Jewish leaders decided the only way to save the nation from Roman punishment was to get rid of Jesus (John 11:45–53); therefore, a political decision was made to kill Him as soon as possible. Their opportunity came during Passover week. They arrested Jesus at night, held a secret trial, and then convinced the Roman governor (Pilate) to allow the execution. The accounts of the trial and crucifixion can be read in the following chapters: Matthew 26–27, Mark 14–15, Luke 22–23, and John 18–19.

Thus, after three years of formal ministry, Jesus died on a Roman cross. While on the surface this may seem like a defeat, it was actually a part of God’s plan (we will discuss this more in the next lesson). Jesus often predicted that He would die on a Roman cross.

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life (Matthew 16:21; see also John 3:14; Matthew 26:54; Luke 9:22, among others).

Therefore, Jesus' death was not a surprise, but an expectation. Jesus died willingly for the purpose of fulfilling the Old Covenant and providing salvation to humanity lost in sin.

Not only did Jesus predict His death on a Roman cross, but He also predicted He would arise from the dead after three days. He said to His disciples, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise" (Mark 9:31; see also Matthew 12:40; Mark 10:33-34). In keeping with His prediction, on the third day following Jesus' death, His tomb was found empty (Matthew 28:1-10). Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and gave them final instructions (Luke 24:34-43; John 20:19-31; Matthew 28:16-20). Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven (Luke 24:44-51; Acts 1:3-8).

Having noted a synopsis of the biblical record of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we now turn our attention to some specific characteristics of Jesus and His mission.

## ➤ **Jesus Is God**

Jesus is God. From here, there is no room for advancement. The biblical concept of "God" is an All-Knowing, All-Powerful, Ever-Present, All-Wise, All-Loving, Perfect spiritual being who created life and the universe. The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus was, and is, God. Concerning Jesus, John wrote:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1:1-4; that John is speaking of Jesus as "the Word" is especially evident in v. 14).

Paul taught that Jesus was equal with God before coming to the earth and that He willingly emptied Himself of His glory when He became a man, only later to ascend back into heaven as victor over sin and death (Philippians 2:5–11). The writer of Hebrews also affirms the deity of Jesus and His role in the creation (Hebrews 1:1–3). When Thomas saw Jesus after His resurrection, he addressed Him as “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Paul describes Jesus as “the God over all, forever praised” (Romans 9:5), and says to the Colossians, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9; see also Titus 2:3; 1 John 5:20).

As God, Jesus is eternal in nature and shares all of the attributes of divinity. By coming to the earth, God became one of us, one of His own creation. By living on the earth, God tasted the trials, temptations, longings, and pain that we endure. And by dying on a cross, God tasted death and paid the penalty for our sins. When Jesus came to the earth, God truly “made His dwelling among us” (John 1:14).

## ➤ **Jesus Is the Son of God and Son of Man**

Jesus was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4) and thus became human. John says, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (John 1:14). He was born to a young woman named Mary (Matthew 1:18; 2:11). In respect to lineage, He was of the tribe of Judah, a lineage that included such great names as David, Solomon, and Hezekiah (Matthew 1:1–16). As a human, Jesus was subject to the will of His parents (Luke 2:51) and “grew in wisdom and stature” (Luke 2:52). He had to breathe, eat, drink, grow, exercise, and learn—just like any other human. He had times of joy, sadness, laughter, and tears—just like any other human. He was subject to temptation, distress, pain, and death—just like any other human. When God “made His dwelling among us,” He became one of us.

While Jesus was born of a woman (and thus became a son of man), He was begotten by the Holy Spirit (and thus became the Son of God). When Jesus was born to Mary, she was a virgin who was pledged to marry a man named Joseph. Mary’s pregnancy came about through the Holy Spirit, not through any sexual union with Joseph (Matthew

1:18–21, 25). Therefore, Jesus was the son of Mary (a son of man) and the Holy Spirit (the Son of God). God said of Jesus, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father” (Hebrews 5:5).

Let it be clear that Jesus’ existence did not begin at His birth. He existed before this time, and exists today, as an eternal member of the Godhead. But in the midst of His eternal existence, He took on the form of a man, and in so doing became the Son of God and the Son of Man. Describing Jesus’ pre-birth state, John refers to Him as “the Word” (**logos**), a member of the Godhead, eternal in existence (John 1:1–3).

### ➤ **Jesus Is the Christ, the Messiah**

From the time that Adam and Eve fell victim to Satan in the Garden of Eden, God began preparing His creation for a deliverer. After the incident in the garden, God promised that one of Eve’s descendants would “crush the head” of Satan (Genesis 3:15). Later, God promised Abraham that through one of his descendants all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; see also Acts 3:25–26; Galatians 3:16). Before Moses died, he prophesied that God would someday raise up another prophet like himself, namely one who would bring a new law confirmed by miracles (Deuteronomy 18:15; see also Acts 3:17–26; 17:37). Thus, from the beginning, God conveyed to humanity hope for a Messianic Savior.

**As a being of dual nature, Jesus was in a unique position. As a human, Jesus experienced all the joys and pains that any other mortal would experience. This allows Him to sympathize fully with us in all our joys and sorrows (Hebrews 2:17–18). This also allows us to approach God’s throne confidently, realizing that we have an ally in Jesus who understands all that we experience (Hebrews 4:14–16). On the other hand, as the Son of God and a member of the Godhead, Jesus has a complete understanding of heaven’s needs and expectations. He understands the terrible nature of sin and its eternal consequences. Because of His dual nature, Jesus is able to bridge the gap between heaven and earth, and is in a unique position to serve as our Mediator and High Priest.**

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The prophets expanded on the Messianic theme, taking it to new heights and adding colorful detail. In order to help the Jews identify the Messiah, there were many prophecies concerning the details surrounding His birth, life, death, and resurrection.

- Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; fulfilled Matthew 1:22–23).
- Micah prophesied the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; fulfilled Matthew 2:1–6).
- David prophesied the Messiah would be resurrected after three days (Psalm 16:8–10; 30:3, fulfilled Matthew 28:1–7).
- David prophesied the soldiers at Jesus' cross would gamble for His clothing (Psalm 22:18; fulfilled John 19:23–24).
- David prophesied the Messiah's bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20; fulfilled John 19:33–36).

Isaiah prophesied much concerning the Messianic King and His kingdom. Of special note is his portrait of Jesus as the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12. Consider the graphic detail in the following excerpt.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken (Isaiah 53:4–8).



Other passages in Isaiah picturing the Messiah as the suffering servant include: 42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–9. This is but a small sampling of the more than three hundred Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah, all of which Jesus fulfilled. These passages offer evidence for the inspiration of the Scriptures and demonstrate that Jesus' ministry, from beginning to end, was a part of God's plan to provide salvation for His creation.

## ➤ **Jesus Is Our Lord**

The word "Jesus" is a proper name given by Joseph and Mary in accordance with God's instruction. The word "Christ" (or "Messiah") describes Jesus' mission while He was on the earth—He was the Messiah who came to deliver His people. And the word "Lord" describes the Christian's relationship to Jesus—He is our Master; we belong to Him, we are His subjects. By claiming Jesus as our Lord, we acknowledge that Jesus is in a position of authority. When He gives the commands, we follow them. It is important that we understand and accept this relationship. Jesus said that even some religious people would fail to reach heaven because of a refusal to submit to Him in obedience.

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:21–23).

On another occasion He asked the rhetorical question, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Jesus is rightfully our Lord because He is God (John 1:1–2), because He created us (Colossians 1:18), and because He redeemed us from sin by His death (Romans 4:7–9). Jesus is called "Lord" nearly 750 times in the New Testament, far more than any other title. He now reigns from His throne in heaven (Philippians 2:9–11) and someday will return to receive into eternal life all those who have chosen to submit to Him.

## ➤ **Jesus Is Our Savior**

Jesus, the Savior of the world, is the heart of the Scriptures. He was a teacher, a leader, a philanthropist, a moralist, and much more; but primarily, He was Savior and Redeemer. This was His mission from beginning to end. At Jesus' birth, an angel appeared to shepherds in the field and announced, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10–11). This wonderful message still thrills the hearts of God's people. John wrote, "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14).

A savior is one who rescues someone from impending danger. Jesus is the world's Savior because He offers salvation from sin and its eternal punishment. When He died on the cross, Jesus suffered the penalty for sin in our stead, and thus satisfied the righteous demands of heaven. Jesus turned the shame of the cross into a glorious victory for humanity. Paul wrote, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

## ➤ **Conclusion**

In this lesson, we have surveyed Jesus' ministry and personal characteristics with the goal of understanding His mission on the earth. Before coming to earth, Jesus was the Word, a member of the Godhead. He came to the earth as a baby born to a young virgin named Mary by means of the Holy Spirit. In so doing, He became both the Son of God and the Son of Man. Joseph and Mary named the baby "Jesus," meaning "Savior," in accordance with the Lord's instruction (Matthew 1:21).

At age thirty, Jesus began His public ministry, traveling the countryside teaching and working miracles to confirm His message. After three years, He died on the cross, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah and satisfying the righteous demands of heaven. In so doing, He became our Savior. Having risen from the grave, He now resides in heaven where He reigns as our Lord and King.

## Questions and Answers

1. In what city was Jesus born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what city did Jesus spend His childhood? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How old was Jesus when He began His public ministry? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What two words summarize Jesus' ministry? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. To whom was most of Jesus' teaching directed? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What role did miracles play in Jesus' ministry? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. During what holiday was Jesus' killed? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How was Jesus killed? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What happened on the third day after Jesus' death? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What happened forty days later? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Name three passages affirming that Jesus is God. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Who were Jesus' real parents? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Briefly describe each of the following terms as it relates to Jesus:  
God \_\_\_\_\_  
Son of God \_\_\_\_\_  
Son of Man \_\_\_\_\_  
Messiah \_\_\_\_\_  
Lord \_\_\_\_\_  
Savior \_\_\_\_\_

### **Thought Questions**

1. Why was it important for Jesus to spend so much time with His twelve disciples? In what way was this even more important than spending time with the people?
2. During His ministry, Jesus worked a variety of miracles demonstrating His power over different aspects of our existence. Do you think this was intentional? Why?
3. Why was it important for Jesus to both human and divine?

### **Additional Study Goals**

1. Re-read the entire lesson. An understanding of Jesus life and mission is central to our understanding of the New Testament.
2. Read either Matthew, Mark, or Luke.
3. Read the Gospel of John.

### **Your Questions**

In the space below, write down any personal notes or questions that you had while reading through this lesson.

### **CHARTING THE COURSE**

*What does the Bible teach about the death of Jesus? How can His death bring us life?*

*These important questions deserve the attention of every Bible student. In our next lesson, we will consider the effect of Jesus' crucifixion and how we can benefit from His atoning sacrifice.*