



Life of Christ I

International Alpha Bible Course
by Ralph Vincent Reynolds

LIFE OF CHRIST

PART I

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INTERNATIONAL ALPHA BIBLE COURSE

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THE FOUR GOSPELS

A. THE FOUR GOSPELS

In our study of the life of Jesus Christ, we are limited mainly to four small books written in Greek, which are called the Gospels. These give us four accounts which may be described as biographies of Jesus Christ. As we shall see, each gives a distinctly different aspect and picture of the life and ministry of Jesus. To gain a full knowledge of Jesus, we must study and compare these four records.

One fact should be borne in mind in approaching the Gospels. The church got along for years without any Christian literature. The earliest Christian writings are the epistles of Paul. Probably not until after AD 60 or 65 were there any Gospels such as we have today. We must take account of those trained verbal memories cultivated in the East. A Jewish saying was that the good disciple was like “a plastered cistern which loses not a drop.” We must also remember that these four Gospels were written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

1. **Gospel:** The word *Gospel* comes from the Anglo-Saxon *God-spell*, or *God-story*, from which we get “good story,” or “good tidings.”
2. **Synoptic Gospels:** The first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are known as the Synoptic Gospels. These give a record of the same or parallel accounts of the life and work of Christ. John is completely different. The Synoptic Gospels emphasize the works of Jesus, while the fourth Gospel emphasizes the words of Christ.
3. **Four Different Aspects:** In order to give the four aspects of Jesus Christ, as presented by the four Gospels, I quote from *New Testament Survey*, by Clarence Benson:

Each of the Gospel writers presents a different aspect of the Messiah. One writes of His kingship; another of His ministry; a third, His humanity; a fourth, His deity. In this, they complete the picture, using a fourfold characterization of Old Testament prophets:

Matthew: Christ the King—‘Behold the King’ (Zechariah 9:9) Mark: Christ the Servant—‘Behold my Servant’ (Isaiah 42:1) Luke: Christ the Man—‘Behold the man’ (Zechariah 6:12) John: Christ the Son of God—‘Behold your God’ (Isaiah 40:9)

B. THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

1. Author

The author was Matthew, who was one of the twelve disciples. He is also called Levi. He was a publican who collected taxes for the Roman government. As a result, he was hated by his countrymen and looked upon by them as being a great sinner. Undoubtedly he was a wealthy man, which was shown by the great feast he had in his own house. As a publican, he was accustomed to keeping accounts and wrote from a businessman’s point of view. His language was plain and direct.

References: Matthew 10:3; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27-29.

2. To Whom Addressed

This Gospel was addressed to the Jews. This is seen by the fact that there are sixty references to the Jewish prophecies and there are forty quotations from the Old Testament. Matthew emphasized Christ’s mission to the Jewish nation:

“Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6).

“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

3. Date

It is not certain whether Matthew or Luke was written first, both of which followed the writing of Mark’s Gospel. The date is placed between AD 60 and AD 70.

4. Purpose

The purpose of this Gospel was to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the kingly Messiah of Old Testament prophecy. The picture of Jesus, as given in this Gospel, was that of a king.

5. Key Words

- a. *Fulfilled*—This word was repeated to indicate that the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Christ.
- b. *Kingdom*—The word *kingdom* is found fifty times in the Gospel. The expression “kingdom of Heaven” is found thirty times.

C. THE GOSPEL OF MARK

1. Author

The author was John Mark, the son of Mary of Jerusalem. His Jewish name was John, but his Roman name was Mark. He was a relative of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). His mother was apparently a prosperous woman, and the church often met in her home (Acts 12:12).

Mark is considered a convert of Peter, who spoke of him as being, “Marcus, my son.” Ancient tradition certifies that Mark was a companion of Peter. The book was also called “Peter’s Gospel” by some ancient writers. It is thought that Peter furnished much of the material. Irenaeus wrote, “Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us the things that had been preached by Peter.”

Mark had accompanied Barnabas and Saul on their first missionary journey. Because he turned back at Perga, he became the reason the apostles parted company on their second journey. Barnabas was determined to give him a second chance, and Mark made good. The apostle Paul recognized this and spoke of him as being profitable (II Timothy 4:11).

John Mark spent his last years in Alexandria, Egypt, where he founded a church and served as its bishop until he met a martyr’s death.

2. To Whom Addressed

This Gospel was addressed to Roman Christians. The explanation of Jewish words and customs indicates the author wrote to Gentiles.

3. Date

The date is placed between AD 50 and AD 60. It was the first of the four Gospels written, and both Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark's Gospel.

4. Theme

This Gospel pictures Jesus as being Christ, the servant.

5. Key Word:

The key word in Mark's Gospel is *straightway*.

6. Style

The style is vivid, picturesque, and full of action. There are nineteen miracles recorded: eight, showing power over disease; five, power over nature; four, power over demons; two, power over death.

D. THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

1. Author

This Gospel was written by Luke, the beloved physician, (Colossians 4:14) who was a native of Antioch and a Greek. He was a close companion of Paul for seventeen years after his coming into Macedonia. He remained with Paul until his death. Students see the stamp of Paul's doctrine. Undoubtedly Luke received much information from Paul.

2. To Whom Addressed

This Gospel was addressed to Theophilus, a high ranking Greek (Luke 1:3). We find that Jewish customs are explained and Greek names are substituted for Hebrew.

3. Date

The date is placed between AD 60 and AD 70.

4. Purpose

The purpose of this Gospel was to give an orderly narrative of the life of Christ. The theme was to picture Jesus as being the *Son of Man*.

5. Key Verse

"That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:4).

E. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1. Author

This Gospel was written by John, the beloved disciple. He was the son of Zebedee and Salome, who appears to have been a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Although he was spoken of as being the beloved disciple because of his affectionate nature, he was by no means effeminate. He was a man of courage, energy, and enthusiasm. He was a disciple of John the Baptist before he became a disciple of the Lord. He was present at the raising of Jairus' daughter, the transfiguration, and the agony in Gethsemane.

John made Jerusalem his headquarters for many years and cared for Mary, the mother of Jesus, until her death. He later made Ephesus his headquarters. During the reign of Domitian, he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos. He was freed and permitted to return to Ephesus about AD 96. It is assumed that he lived to be over 100 years of age.

2. To Whom Addressed

This Gospel was written to the church.

3. Date

It was written about AD 97, some thirty years after the Synoptic Gospels were written.

4. Purpose

The purpose and theme of this Gospel was to show the deity of Jesus Christ.

5. Key Verse

“But there are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

THE GEOGRAPHY OF PALESTINE

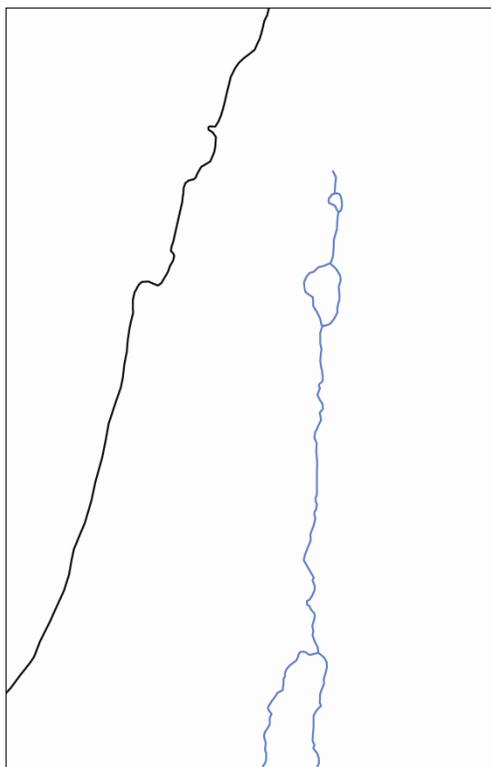
A. PALESTINE

Every student of the four Gospels should study the geography of the ancient land of Palestine. It would be impossible to be familiar with the life of Jesus unless one is also familiar with the country where Jesus lived and ministered.

The position of the land of Palestine is striking. Situated at the eastern end of that great inland sea which the ancients regarded as being in the middle of the earth, this land, while a part of Asia, is closely connected to Africa and came, in time, to greatly influence the continent of Europe. Cut off from the mighty empires of the East to a large extent by the desert, it lay astride the great highways upon which the trading caravans and invading armies traveled. Because of this location of being a bridge connecting three continents, the people of Palestine were forced into the currents of world politics.

The outline map of Palestine is one of the easiest to draw. A fairly even line gives us the coastline, with Mount Carmel jutting into the sea. That even line betrays the low lying shores, unbroken by safe harbors, and gives us one of the external factors in the Jewish aversion to the sea. In the midst of the land surface there needs to be placed two irregular loops to represent the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea and connecting these, an irregular line, the River Jordan. For the most part, the land of Jesus was that little strip of country between the River Jordan and the Great Sea.

The land of Palestine was a small country, only about 140 miles long and about forty miles wide. Even this narrow land is divided into strips fairly well marked in character. Bordering the sea is a plain district which was never closely identified with the real life of the Jews. It contained the great highways, north and south. To the east lay the foothills, and then the mountains, where lay the real strength of Judaism.



From west to east:

1. Maritime Plain
2. Foothills
3. Mountains
4. Jordan Valley
5. East Jordan Country—
Perea

Cutting across this strip of mountainous country was the Plain of Esdraelon. In addition to being a very fertile region, this plain provided routes for the highways, which, after skirting the shore of the Great Sea on the way from Egypt, here struck inland to the ancient trading center Damascus, and thence on to the empires of the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers.

In the days of Jesus, there were the three chief districts:

1. Galilee, to the north
2. Samaria
3. Judea, to the south

These divisions had their roots in history. Galilee and Judea were Jewish, while Samaria was inhabited by a people who, while racially allied to the

Jews, were despised and hated by them. When traveling north and south between Galilee and Judea, the Jews generally crossed the Jordan and traveled through Perea, rather than passing through Samaria.

The Jordan depression is one of the most remarkable geological phenomena on the earth's surface. From the point where the Jordan River leaves the Sea of Galilee to the place where it enters the Dead Sea is sixty-five miles. The Jordan has a barrier of cliffs on either side, two to fifteen miles apart. The plain of Jericho, immediately north of the Dead Sea, is fourteen miles wide.

By its windings, the Jordan is about 200 miles long. It varies in width from eighty to 180 feet. Its depth is from five to twelve feet. During its course, it falls over 3,000 feet, an average of twenty-two feet per mile.

The Sea of Galilee is twelve and one-half miles long, seven and one-half miles wide, and lies 700 feet below sea level. The Dead Sea is forty-eight miles long with a maximum width of ten miles. Its surface is 1,292 feet below sea level and reaches a depth of 1,300 feet.

B. THE MAP OF PALESTINE



FOUR HUNDRED SILENT YEARS

Before the student begins a study of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, he should have some idea of the events that took place during the four hundred years of time between the Old and New Testaments. These years were full of wars, uprisings, blood-shed, and tragedy for the Jews. We must remember that the little country of Palestine was a bridge linking three continents, and frequently armies invading a foreign country had to pass over this bridge. During these four centuries, armies tramped up and down the highways of Palestine, and there was war and confusion without rest.

For the purpose of our study here, we shall begin with the conquest of Alexander the Great.

A. ALEXANDER THE GREAT

In 333 BC Alexander of Macedonia became master of the Persian Empire and a year later he took possession of Palestine. His aim seems to have been to spread the Greek culture. Greek colonies were soon scattered all over the then known world. Hellenism (the word comes from Hellas, meaning Greece) began making itself felt in every walk of Jewish life, especially in the Jewish settlements outside of Palestine. Jews began to affect the use of Greek words in their conversation and to give their children Greek names.

Alexander treated the religion of the Jews with reverence. When he had later conquered Egypt and built the city of Alexandria, he invited the Jews to live there. His invitation was accepted and a large colony of Jews soon grew up in Egypt.

While still a young man, Alexander died in Babylon, a victim to vice and drink. Alexander left no heir to his throne, and his empire was divided into four kingdoms. Palestine became the scene of constant warfare. For a century the country was tossed back and forth between the Ptolemies, who ruled over Egypt, and the Seleucids, who ruled over Syria. Finally, in 198 BC the Syrians drove the Egyptian army back to the Nile and formally annexed Palestine.

B. ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

In 175 BC a ruler arose in Syria whom the prophet Daniel had foreseen. He was Antiochus Epiphanes and was known as Theo Epiphanes, "The god made manifest." Everything Greek became a passion with Antiochus. Hellenism had proven very attractive to the worldly minded Jews and many followed in its path. A sect, however, arose in opposition to the Hellenists. They called themselves Godly or Pious.

It was falsely reported that Antiochus had been killed in battle and preparation was made in Jerusalem for a revolt. When Antiochus heard of the intentions of the Jews, he returned to punish the Jews mercilessly. The Pious were slaughtered, the Temple was looted, and a sow was offered on the altar. Antiochus turned in fury against the Jewish religion. He proclaimed that all Jewish religious customs must cease. Observance of Sabbaths, clean and unclean food, circumcision, and sacrifices to their God would no longer be allowed. Any person in whose possession a copy of the Law was found was punished by death.

Antiochus slaughtered 40,000 inhabitants of Jerusalem, and sold many others into slavery. On another occasion, the streets literally ran with blood, and the city was laid waste as he slew the men and took the women and children captive.

Officers of Antiochus went everywhere seeking victims. They erected altars, called the Jews into a congregation, and then demanded them to sacrifice to Antiochus. At Modine lived an aged priest named Mattathias and his five sons. When he was commanded to offer sacrifice, he refused. He killed a timid fellow who started to obey their orders and then ran his sword through one of the Syrian officers.

C. JUDAS MACCABEUS

Mattathias fled into the wilderness with his five sons and gathered around him a band of desperate zealots. They went up and down the countryside destroying the hated altars and putting to death the renegade Jews who had sacrificed on them.

Mattathias died soon after the beginning of the rebellion and was succeeded by one of his sons, Judas, who proved a genius in warfare. Judas won the name of Maccabaeus, "The Hammerer." Judas won his first victory over the Syrians as he surprised them in the hills north of Jerusalem. He armed himself and his men with the weapons of the slain. He won four decisive victories and struck out at surrounding enemies as well. Antiochus Epiphanes died with the galling realization that Palestine had defied him and won.

The Syrians were utterly driven from the land in 143 BC and Palestine was at last free.

D. CONQUERED BY ROME

Simon, the last of the five sons of Mattathias, was succeeded by his son John Hyrcanus, the high priest. Drunk with his new-found power, this man undertook cruel and costly wars against his neighbors. He invaded Samaria on the north and Idumea on the south. He forcibly converted the Samaritans and the Edomites to his own sort of Judaism.

John Hyrcanus was succeeded by his son Aristobulus, who continued the wars of conquest and added Galilee to the kingdom.

Aristobulus was succeeded by his brother Alexander, whose chief interests were war and pleasure. The Jews rebelled and drove him into exile, but in a little while they called him back. Instead of showing gratitude, he crucified 800 Pharisees, after slaying their wives and children before their eyes.

Alexander was succeeded by his widow, Alexandra. When she was an old woman of seventy-three, one of her sons, Aristobulus II, started a civil war. Hyrcanus, the rightful heir, lost in the first encounter. By taking the advice of a certain Idumean prince named Antipater, Hyrcanus tried to continue the contest. He got an army of 50,000 Arabs and forced Aristobulus to take refuge in Jerusalem.

In 65 BC the Roman general Pompey defeated a large portion of the former empire of Syria. He now turned to Palestine, which was the bridge connecting Asia and Africa. The Jews, divided into three parties, played directly into the Roman's hands. Aristobulus was entrenched in Jerusalem under siege by Hyrcanus and his Arab army. The Pharisees were sick of the evils which the kings had brought them and were ready to get rid of royalty entirely. All three sent deputations to Damascus where Pompey was encamped.

The three requests gave Pompey a perfect excuse for invading Palestine. The Arab army fled immediately. Aristobulus surrendered to Pompey, but his followers refused. They entrenched themselves on the Temple hill and it took three months to force them to surrender. Pompey took advantage of their religious scruples and attacked them on the Sabbath Day when they would not strike a blow in their defense.

Pompey massacred 12,000 Jews. He entered the inner courts of the Temple and trampled right into the Holy Place. The Jews never forgave him for this action.

Finally, Pompey lost his hold over the Roman Empire and was succeeded by the great Julius Caesar. Until now, Antipater had largely remained in the background. Antipater was a man of great shrewdness. He had thrown in his lot with Caesar and now came in for a rich reward. He was made procurator over Judea. Four years later he was poisoned and his power fell into the hands of his son, Herod, one of the craftiest men that had ever ruled over Judea.

THE TIMES OF JESUS

A. HEROD THE GREAT

Herod, called “the Great,” became king of the Jews in 37 BC. He was able, he was cruel, and he ruled over most of Palestine.

Herod was heartless towards those who opposed him. He loved and married Mariamne, a princess of the Hasmonean house. But because he believed that she was plotting against him, he had her murdered at Samaria in 29 BC. All rivals were ruthlessly swept aside. Fearing his own sons born of Mariamne, he had them murdered. He died a maniac, after years of horrible suspicions and remorse.

Herod was a great builder and administrator. He was an admirer of Greek culture. He built an amphitheatre in Jerusalem and various large public structures through the East. He built the cities of Sebaste and Caesarea. Though he hated the Jews, he paid respect to their religion and built the Temple, the greatest they ever possessed.

The new Temple was Herod’s crowning work. Repeated sieges had left the sacred place almost in ruins. Feeling that it was his duty to rebuild the sanctuary, he enlarged the narrow summit of Mount Moriah by building a huge stone platform around it, supporting the structure on piers and arches. This platform was about a thousand feet square and covered the site of both the old Temple and the ancient palace of Solomon. Around the edge of this platform, Herod erected beautiful cloisters of marble, roofing them in with cedar from Lebanon. On a high level stood the Temple proper, a beautiful, seventy-foot-long structure of which the Jews were very proud. The Temple had foundation blocks which were covered on their outer faces with pure gold.

In 4 BC Herod died leaving an order that all the leading Jews be butchered so that the people might mourn at his funeral. However, no attention was paid to the command, and Herod was buried amid the rejoicings of the populace.

B. THE SUCCESSORS OF HEROD

Herod left his kingdom to his three sons:

1. Archelaus—Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea
2. Herod Antipas—Galilee and Perea
3. Philip—Northeast Territory

Augustus, the Roman emperor, confirmed this arrangement. Archelaus, however, proved to be so bad that in AD 6 he was banished to Gaul and his territory was put under a procurator who was subject to the legate of Syria. The procurators lived at Caesarea, though on festival occasions they came to Jerusalem and lived in Herod’s palace which came to be called the Praetorium. The most famous of these procurators was Pontius Pilate (AD 26-AD 36).

C. RELIGIOUS PARTIES

1. Sadducees

The Sadducees were members of the ancient aristocracy. They were primarily political and were interested in maintaining the prosperity of the secular state. Religion was secondary. The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the body and future rewards and punishments, maintaining that the soul perishes with the body. They denied the existence of angels and spirits. They felt no need of a divine providence, but relied on their own resources. Their opposition to Jesus was based mainly upon political grounds.

2. Pharisees

The Pharisees resisted foreign influence and were zealous for their traditions. They were a religious party, whose fundamental principle was complete separation from everything not Jewish.

The characteristics of the Pharisees may be stated thus:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Scrupulous observance of the Law | |
| b. Belief in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of | the body, and future rewards and punishments |
| c. Messianic expectations, which included the literal reign | of God upon earth |
| d. Belief in angels and spirits | |
| e. Belief in divine providence, but along with this, the free- | dom of man's will |
| f. Separation of themselves from the mass of the people | |
| g. Patriotism of a religious nature, their ideal being the | kingdom of David |

The Pharisees opposed Jesus on religious grounds.

3. Herodians

The Herodians were supporters of the government of the Herods, holding that a foreign governor was a better guarantee for protection of life and property. They were like the Pharisees in belief.

4. Zealots

The Zealots were also like the Pharisees in belief, but insisted on war against Rome. Various revolts promoted by them were unsuccessful and severely punished. The spirit nurtured by this party broke out in the war against the Romans which terminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

D. THE MESSIANIC HOPE

The Jews were a people intensely nationalistic in spirit. They were accustomed to looking back upon their history with its evidences of divine intervention and guidance. For centuries they had been buffeted and oppressed. The Exile had left its permanent impression. The years after the return had led to alternating hope and despair.

Their hope for the future was mainly expressed by the Messianic Hope. There were two main elements in this hope, which were:

1. The kingdom of God
2. The Messiah

From the beginning, Israel's prophets had foretold the coming of the Messiah who would bring in a new day. For them the kingdom of God meant the kingship of God—His reign, rather than His realm, an era when God would re-establish the Jewish kingdom and destroy their foreign conquerors. With this hope coexisted the view that this kingdom would be established in most concrete form upon earth with a king who would be a descendant of the Davidic line.

E. THE SYNAGOGUE

The word *synagogue* meant in the original "assembly" or "congregation." The synagogue originated during the exile in Babylon, when the Jews would congregate on the banks of streams to read the Law and pray. They prayed facing Jerusalem with outstretched arms.

The synagogue building had no particular size or structure, except it was longer than wide. It was built beside a running stream or on the highest hill in or near the town. The end which contained the Law always faced Jerusalem. The entrance was always in the end farthest from Jerusalem, so those entering faced Jerusalem.

The officers of the synagogue were:

1. Elders of the congregation
2. Ruler of the synagogue—the presiding rabbi
3. Reader—no set person
4. Receivers and distributors of alms
5. Minister—the one who looked after the Law and furniture
6. Men of leisure—consisted of ten men who did not work but were appointed in order that the meeting could go on

The order of service was generally:

1. Began when ten were present
2. Recitation of the “Shema”—Deuteronomy 6:3-9; Deuteronomy 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37
3. Responsive prayer, standing facing Jerusalem
4. Reading of Scriptures
 - a. Law read every three years
 - b. Prescribed portion every Sabbath
 - c. Any other portion of Scripture could be read
5. Sermon by a member of congregation, seated
6. Blessing pronounced by the rabbi, the congregation responding

The hours of prayer were the third, sixth, and ninth hours.

Synagogues were scattered all through Palestine at the time of Jesus.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. PROPHECIES OF HIS COMING

Scripture References:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me” (Malachi 3:1).

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5).

“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come” (Matthew 11:13-14).

Those who held to the Messianic Hope believed that the reign of the Messiah would be preceded by the appearance of a forerunner. In the Orient a herald went before the king, calling the people together to repair the roads, which were usually very poor, that the royal party might pass safely. John was such a herald calling the people to repent. John’s mission was to summon the people to make ready the way for the Lord. Every deep ravine must be filled in and every hill, leveled; the curved places in the road must be made straight and the rough places, smooth.

B. JOHN’S BIRTH

1. Time

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea . . . the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness” (Luke 3:1-2).

This gives a fixed and definite date for the beginning of John’s ministry which would be between AD 26 and 27, since the reign of Tiberius began around AD 12. John’s birth would have been thirty years earlier, for he began his ministry at thirty years of age.

2. Parentage

John’s parents were Zacharias and Elizabeth. They were humble, pious people who lived near Hebron. Zacharias was an aged man and belonged to the lower class of priests. They had no children, and this was a reproach to them. They felt the humiliation of childlessness, but had now reached the age when expectation and prayers for fruitfulness were abandoned.

3. Miraculous Birth

“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John” (Luke 1:13).

By the casting of lots, Zacharias was called to perform the priestly duty in the Temple of placing incense upon the coals of the altar of sacrifice. This duty was considered sacred, and the priest upon whom the office fell was esteemed highly blessed.

As Zacharias stood praying, the archangel Gabriel stood on the right side of the altar. Gabriel declared his divine mission. When Zacharias questioned about it, he was struck dumb until the birth of the baby son.

When John was born, relatives insisted that he be named Zacharias. However, Zacharias called for a writing tablet and wrote that his name would be John. Immediately, the tongue of Zacharias was loosed. He fell to uttering praises to God and to prophesying the speedy coming of the Messiah.

C. JOHN'S BOYHOOD

We know little about the boyhood and youth of John. Undoubtedly he lived a normal boyhood and was taught in the local synagogue. Since both parents were of the priestly lineage (Luke 1:5), we conclude that John spent his early years preparing for the priesthood. John was brought up as a Nazarite. He drank no wine or strong drink, and his hair was never cut.

Before he began his ministry, he retired into the wilderness.

D. JOHN'S APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER

Sometimes during his youth, John retired into the desert; adopted the life of an ascetic; restricted his diet to wild fruits, locusts, and wild honey; and applied himself to study and communion with God. He used a camel's skin for clothing.

When he emerged from his retirement, he was regarded as a holy man. His appearance with disheveled hair, raiment of camel's skin held in place about his body by a leathern girdle, bare feet, bare arms, and an uncropped beard must have been very striking. He spoke with such earnestness, wisdom, and pious zeal that crowds flocked out to hear him, to be convicted and converted.

E. JOHN'S MESSAGE

"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord, makes his paths straight" (Matthew 3:2-3).

John's message was simple:

1. Repentance
2. Preparation for the kingdom of Heaven
3. Baptism by immersion

John spared no one but denounced sin wherever it was to be found. He denounced the Pharisees, the religious leaders, as well as sin in the life of Herod Antipas.

It was a time of great wickedness. In the Roman Empire, there was great immorality. Violence, robbery, insults, murders without trial, and cruelty were charged against Pilate's administration. The Pharisees emphasized separateness, but not true holiness. They prided themselves with being descendants of Abraham, but lost sight of the necessity of personal character.

John's message was the one needed, and crowds went to the Jordan to hear him preach. He preached for about six months before Jesus came to him to be baptized. John plainly declared that he was not the Messiah and that he was unworthy even to unloose the thong that bound the sandal to His foot—an office which slaves performed for their masters.

John prophesied of the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 3:11).

It should be noted that although John preached the coming of the kingdom of Heaven, he himself did not become a member of that kingdom. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).

It also should be noted that John preached and baptized, but he did no miracles. "And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle" (John 10:41).

Another fact that should be noted about his ministry is that he remained very humble. He was never jealous of Jesus; he was satisfied to fulfill his calling. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

F. JOHN'S DEATH

"And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison" (Mark 6:27).

John's reputation was so great that even Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, went to the Jordan to hear him. Herod heard him gladly and had great respect for John. Very likely he was brought under great conviction and did many things to live a better life.

However, John boldly denounced the great sin of Herod's life. Herod had married the daughter of the king of Arabia. He tired of her and began to live with Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, Herod Philip. (Herodias had a daughter, Salome, and they both were very ambitious.)

When John denounced him publicly, Herod had him arrested and cast into the fortress prison at Machaerus. This was a fortress rebuilt by Herod the Great on the east shore of the Dead Sea. John was placed in one of the dungeons beneath this fortress. Herod had no intention of killing John, for in his heart he admired John and accepted his teachings as divinely inspired. Herodias, however, hated John and plotted to destroy him.

When Herod had a great festival on his birthday and a large crowd of the rich and nobility had gathered, Herodias saw her opportunity. Salome danced shamelessly in wild lascivious motions which won the applause of the drunken revelers. When Herod told her she could ask anything to the half of his kingdom, she asked for the head of John the Baptist.

Herod could have refused, for John's head was worth more than half of his kingdom. But nevertheless, he consented and had John the Baptist beheaded. John was still a young man, thirty-one or thirty-two years of age.

After his death, some of his disciples carried on his ministry, for when Paul went to Ephesus he found some of John's disciples (Acts 19).

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

Text: Matthew chapters 1 and 2; Luke chapters 1 and 2.

A. THE ANNUNCIATION

Scripture References:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law” (Galatians 4:4).

God ordained that His Son be born of a human mother in order that He might live a complete human life.

Mary, a virgin of Nazareth, was chosen for the honor of becoming the mother of the Son of God. Six months after the angelic announcement foretelling John the Baptist’s birth, an angel informed Mary that she was to be the mother of the Redeemer. The Holy Ghost would overshadow her, and the child would be born the Son of God. Mary had been favored by God with the privilege earnestly desired by Jewish women—the honor of giving birth to the Messiah.

Mary was betrothed to a godly man named Joseph. When Joseph found that Mary was with child, he planned to put her away until he learned from an angel that the Child was begotten of the Holy Ghost and would be virgin-born.

The student should note that “virgin birth” is not the same as the “immaculate conception,” a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church which teaches that Mary was born without the taint of original sin.

B. THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOUR

1. Date

The birth of our Lord was timed perfectly. Paul wrote that Jesus was born in “fulness of time” (Galatians 4:4). God is never late or early; He is always right on time.

God apparently planned that the exact day should not be known because of the tendency to worship holy days and places. It is possible, however, to have an idea of the approximate time of Christ’s birth. Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the empire. This was scheduled for 8 BC, but it is known that this census was taken in Egypt in 6 BC, and very likely was taken in Palestine in the following year, 5 BC. Herod died in 4 BC, and Herod was still living when Jesus was born. John began his reign in the fifteenth year of Tiberius at the age of thirty, making his birth fall in 5 BC. Very likely John was born in the spring of 5 BC, and Jesus was born six months later in the fall of the same year.

We do not know the day and the month of His birth. It took place while the flocks were still in the open pasture. Therefore, it had to be in late summer or early fall, no later than October.

December 25 was the date of the Roman pagan feast of Saturnalia. It was a time of great revelry and debauchery. It was a time of good will when no criminal was executed and friends gave gifts to one another. For this whole day the slaves enjoyed their freedom. The Christians took advantage of this holiday to spend the day celebrating the birth of our Lord.

2. Place

In taking the census, it was commanded that the Jews should enroll in their native towns. Joseph and Mary were both descendants of David, whose native city was Bethlehem. This was in fulfillment of prophecy. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2).

Bethlehem is located six miles south of Jerusalem. It was a beautiful town surrounded by terraces covered with vines and fruit trees. Near this town, Rachel died in childbirth. It was also the town of Ruth and Boaz.

When Joseph and Mary reached Bethlehem, they found the town crowded with the many who had come for the enrollment. As there were no accommodations to be found, they were forced to spend the night in the open courtyard where the animals were housed.

3. The Praises of Angels

On the plains east of Bethlehem were humble, Judean shepherds who were watching their flocks. It was to these most humble men that God revealed His best and highest.

An angel suddenly stood before them and a great light shone around them. The angel calmed their fears with the joyful news. "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Hastening into Bethlehem, the shepherds found Mary and Joseph, with the newborn Babe lying in the manger, just as the angel had said. Mary had had no one to minister to her. She herself had wrapped the Child in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. The shepherds made known what had been spoken to them about the Child. All were astonished at these things, but Mary treasured what she heard and meditated on them.

C. CIRCUMCISION AND PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

When eight days passed, Jesus was circumcised according to the law of Moses (Leviticus 12:3). At that time, He was named. The parents usually selected the names of their children, but God through Gabriel named Him Jesus (Jehovah-Saviour).

According to the Law, the purification of the parents and redemption of the first born son took place forty-one days after the birth (Leviticus 12:6). In the presentation in the Temple, the rich were to bring a lamb; the poor were to bring two young pigeons. Mary's gift would indicate their humble circumstances.

There was in Jerusalem a godly man named Simeon. It had been revealed to this aged man that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Anointed. When Joseph and Mary entered to present Jesus to the priest, Simeon took Jesus into his arms and blessed God. Simeon praised God in poetic prophecy. The years of his prayers and patient waiting were at last rewarded. His years of study of the prophecies had permitted him to see the suffering Redeemer where as others sought only a temporal King.

Simeon's hymn (Luke 2:29-30) may be divided into three stanzas:

1. Recognition of the approaching end of his life with thanksgiving and prayer for a peaceful end
2. Declaration of the infant Saviour, an universal Light for all nations and the true glory of Israel
3. Prophecy of the suffering at Calvary and the personal sorrow of Mary

The prophetess, Anna, of the tribe of Asher and of a prominent family, had been a widow for eighty-four years after being married seven years. This meant that she was over one hundred years old. Deeply moved by the words of Simeon, she burst into thanks and praise to God and spoke about the infant Jesus.

D. COMING OF THE WISE MEN

Gentile scholars came to Jerusalem and inquired where they might find the King of the Jews, whose birth had been announced to them by a strange star. These men were students of science, especially of astrology and religion. They came from the East, very likely from Persia, Arabia, or Babylonia.

When the wise men inquired concerning the place of Messiah's birth, King Herod called a meeting of the priests and scholars, who informed him that Bethlehem was to be the birthplace of the King. Herod immediately planned to destroy Him and instructed the wise men to bring word when they had found Him. However, they were warned in a dream and returned to their own country by another way. The parents of Jesus were warned by an angel and fled to Egypt.

Joseph and Mary were no longer in the stable but were living in a house. When the wise men left Herod, they again saw the star which guided them to the house. They entered, saw the babe with His mother, fell down, and worshipped. They then opened their treasure chests and presented gold and costly spices. Frankincense was an odorous gum. Myrrh was a gum used in the orient as a perfume, spice, medicine, and for embalming.

When the wise men failed to return, Herod was angry and ordered that all the children of Bethlehem, age of two and under, should be killed.

Joseph and Mary remained in Egypt until the death of Herod. They then returned to Galilee and settled in Nazareth.

E. THE VISIT TO JERUSALEM

Scripture References:

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

While we are told very little about the boyhood days of Jesus, there are two verses that tell us of His growth and development.

The Jewish child's education began in the home. As soon as the child could talk, the mother taught him the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4, 9; Numbers 11:13-21; 15:37-41). The father was responsible to teach his son the Torah. We can be certain that Joseph and Mary were diligent in their responsibilities. The formal education began at the age of six in the local synagogue. From six to ten years of age, the chief textbook was the Old Testament.

Only once are we given a glimpse of Jesus' childhood. This was an occasion when He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. He was twelve years old. When His parents started back to Nazareth, they traveled one whole day before they discovered that He had been left behind. They hastened back and found Him on the third day in the Temple sitting at the feet of the learned doctors. Everyone was amazed at the wisdom and knowledge of this twelve-year-old Boy.

The reply He gave His mother revealed that even then He was conscious of His identity and mission: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49).

It should be noted that He submitted to His parents and obeyed them (verse 51).

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Text: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:26-34.

A. BEFORE HIS BAPTISM

We know little about the boyhood and youth of Jesus. Undoubtedly, He attended the local synagogue at Nazareth and attended school like other Jewish boys. He was only twelve years old when He astonished the doctors in the Temple with His wisdom. His reply to His parents tells us a great deal: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). We are told that He was obedient and submissive to His parents (Luke 2:51). As Jesus was growing up, He grew not only physically, but in wisdom (intellectually), and in favor with God (spiritually) and man (socially) (Luke 2:52).

We know that He worked at the carpenter trade, for it was asked concerning Him, "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3). We can picture Him toiling and perspiring over the carpenter's bench. We should be thankful that He experienced hard work and knew what it was to be weary.

Jesus began His ministry and was baptized when He was thirty years of age (Luke 3:21-23). Sometime during the intervening eighteen years, Joseph died, for there is no mention of him after Jesus began His ministry. The first miracle at Cana also hints that Mary looked to Jesus as being the head of the home. He was the eldest and as such He would have the responsibility of the home after Joseph's death.

B. PURPOSE OF THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Certainly Jesus was never baptized for the remission of sins, for He was sinless.

Usually John would examine the candidates before baptism. The penitents would come with humble confession of their sins and the manifestation of deep contrition. Jesus made no such confession of guilt nor showed any sorrow. Jesus came with such purity and peace that it caused John to draw back with a feeling of unworthiness and sin.

The real reason for Jesus being baptized was expressed by Himself. "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

Jesus was born under the Law, and in His infancy was circumcised and redeemed. He later paid the Temple tax. It was fitting that He should fill out all the ordinances of the Arahamic Covenant to completion. He came not to destroy the Law, but to fill it out and give it a deeper meaning (Matthew 5:17). Throughout His life, He fulfilled the Law that He might save them who were under the Law.

The first words of His ministry were, "Suffer it to be so now."

C. JOHN'S RECOGNITION OF THE MESSIAH

Scripture Reference:

"And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:33).

Undoubtedly John knew Jesus as a cousin, but he did not know Jesus as being the Messiah. Although he was reluctant to baptize Him, he still did not know His true identity. However, John knew that he himself was the forerunner of the Messiah and that God had given him a definite sign by which he could recognize Him.

When Jesus came up out of the water, there was the visible manifestation of the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him. There was also the audible manifestation of the voice from Heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

It would seem that the vision and voice were seen and heard by John and Jesus alone. John saw the Spirit, heard the voice, and bore permanent witness to the deity of Jesus.

There are two errors that we must avoid here:

1. Here, some say, is seen the Trinity, the three persons in the Godhead. This is not true. There was a threefold phenomenon in the upper room, but this was no proof of the Trinity. Although they could feel the Holy Spirit, see tongues of fire and hear tongues, there was only one Spirit. Likewise, the two manifestations at Jordan do not prove the Trinity.
2. Some say that Jesus was only human up to this point and it is then He became divine. However, Jesus was divine from the conception in the womb of the virgin. Again, Jesus was fulfilling the righteousness of the Old Testament. Every prophet and king had to be anointed as they entered into their ministry. Here Jesus was being anointed prophet, priest, and king.

D. THE ORDER OF EVENTS

We must remember that John did not say, "Behold the Lamb of God" when Jesus was baptized. The first chapter of John's Gospel makes this very plain.

What was the order of events?

1. Jesus was baptized and straightway led into the wilderness.
2. Jesus was tempted for forty days.
3. Jesus returned to Jordan and stood among the crowd (verse 26).
4. The next day John said, "Behold the Lamb of God" (verse 29).
5. The next day John also said, "Behold the Lamb of God," and two of his disciples followed Jesus (verse 37). These disciples were Andrew and John, the beloved disciple. Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus.
6. The day following, Jesus went forth into Galilee after calling Philip and Nathanael.

As we carefully study the story, we note that John said, "Behold the Lamb of God" when Jesus returned from the temptation and, of course, John recognized Him.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

A. JESUS WAS TEMPTED IN EVERY POINT

Scriptural References:

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

We must literally accept the truths stated in the above Scriptures. There is no temptation that comes to man that Jesus has not already experienced. The sufferings and temptations of our Lord covered the entire field of weakness and tendency to yield to sin— physical, mental and spiritual.

This truth carries a great source of strength and victory. Jesus knows and understands because He encountered the same struggle. Because He gained the victory, there is victory for everyone.

There were two times in His ministry when He was tried the greatest:

1. In the wilderness following His baptism
2. In Gethsemane

Gethsemane will be studied in a later lesson; it is chiefly the temptation in the wilderness that we shall consider here. Although these were the two greatest trials and testings, the life of our Lord was one of continual cross-bearing and testing.

B. THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS

References: Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.

The place of the temptations was in the wilderness. According to tradition, the temptations took place on a mountain, some six or eight miles from the place of baptism, some fifteen hundred feet above the Jordan Valley. Adam met his temptation in a beautiful garden; Jesus met His temptation in the barren waste with poverty and hunger.

It may seem strange that immediately following the experience of baptism and anointing, there should be an experience such as this. Frequently a time of great peace, joy, and communion with God is followed by depression, doubt, and discouragement. Just as night follows day, storms follow sunshine, temptations and battles follow blessings and exaltations.

There was a divine purpose in the temptation immediately following the blessing. This is expressed in the statement, “And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness” (Mark 1:12).

Although God never tempts any man with evil, He permits temptation to come (James 1:13). It is God’s will that every man be tested and tried. It would seem that greater the ministry of a man, greater is the temptation that he must encounter. Thus it was true with our Lord.

C. THREEFOLD TEMPTATION

Scriptural Reference:

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, and is of the world” (I John 2:16).

All that is in the world may be summed up by this threefold evil:

1. Lust of the flesh
2. Lust of the eyes
3. Pride of life

Both Eve and Jesus were tempted in this threefold manner.

Eve’s Temptation (Genesis 3:6)

1. The tree “was good for food” — lust of the flesh
2. The tree “pleasant to the eyes” — lust of the eyes
3. The tree “desired to make one wise” — pride of life

Christ’s Temptation (Matthew 4:3-5):

1. “Command this stone that it be made bread” —lust of the flesh
2. The devil showed unto him “all the kingdoms of the world” —lust of the eyes
3. “Cast thyself down from hence, for . . . he shall give his angels charge over thee” —pride of life

Eve yielded to temptation because Satan succeeded in planting a doubt in her heart: “Yea, hath God said?” (Genesis 3:1). The devil tried to do the same thing with our Lord. At Jordan, the voice from Heaven had declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Now the devil suggested a great doubt by the use of an *if*: “If thou be the Son of God” (Matthew 4:3 and 6).

Jesus won the victory by using the Word of God. “It is written” brought the victory each time (Matthew 4:4, 7 and 10). This teaches us the great lesson that we also may have the victory by the use of God’s Word.

D. A DEEPER INTERPRETATION OF THE TEMPTATION

Although the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness may be explained by the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, there is a deeper meaning here that we must not overlook.

Jesus was tempted to use:

1. His power to satisfy self, to minister to Himself
2. His power as a sign of His power, to display His power for show only
3. Worldly means to gain power

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Jesus came to minister to others. Jesus was no ascetic. He came “eating and drinking.” Yet, if He had yielded to the suggestion, the very purpose of His coming would have been defeated.

We should pay careful attention to the lessons to be learned here. Only too often a man’s ministry is defeated because he yields to the temptation of ministering to himself, to make a display of his ministry and gift, and to permit his ministry to be defeated by a carnal ambition of using wrong means to gain power.

E. FREEDOM FROM TEMPTATION FOR A SEASON

Scriptural Reference:

“And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season” (Luke 4:13).

This Scripture teaches us that the temptation continued later. The devil left Jesus alone only for a season.

Let us carefully note the order of events, for this is the way it happens in the lives of true Christians.

1. Baptism—blessing
2. Temptation—testing and suffering
3. Strength—ministered unto by angels
4. Later the battle is renewed

THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Text: Matthew 4:18-22; 10:2-11; Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Luke 5:1-11; 6:12-19; John 1:35-51.

A. CALLING THE APOSTLES

The word *disciple* means “learner” and is applied to all followers of Jesus Christ. All the apostles were disciples, but not all disciples were apostles.

The word *apostle* means “one sent forth on a mission” or “a missionary.” Jesus knew that He must have trained workers to carry on His ministry and work. These apostles were to be fellow laborers with Him in founding His church and in evangelizing the world.

Why were twelve chosen? Twelve was God’s governmental number. The number would indicate that Jesus was about to establish the kingdom of God. As there were twelve sons of Jacob who became the founders of the nation of Israel, so were the twelve apostles to become the founders of the church.

B. THE NAMES OF THE APOSTLES

The Synoptic Gospels each give a list of the twelve men whom Jesus chose to be with Him. This list is also given in the first chapter of Acts.

The student should study these lists carefully and be familiar with the names of the apostles. Here are the four lists:

MATTHEW

1. Simon Peter
2. Andrew
3. James
4. John
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. ThomasMatthew
8. Matthew
9. James, son of Alphaeus
10. Thaddaeus
11. Simon, the Cananaean
12. Judas Iscariot

MARK

- Simon Peter
- James
- John
- Andrew
- Philip
- Bartholomew
- Thomas
- James, son of Alphaeus
- Thaddaeus
- Simon, the Cananaean
- Judas Iscariot

LUKE

1. Simon Peter
2. Andrew
3. James
4. John
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Matthew
8. ThomasMatthew
9. James, son of Alphaeus
10. Simon, the Zealot
11. Judas, son of James

ACTS

- Peter
- James
- John
- Andrew
- Philip
- Thomas
- Bartholomew
- James, son of Alphaeus
- Simon Zelotes
- Judas, brother of James

12. Judas Iscariot (to this list was added Matthias)

C. CALLED TO BE DISCIPLES

There were three definite calls given to the apostles as follows:

1. **They were called to be disciples (learners).** As disciples they were still able to follow their vocation of fishing, etc.
2. **They were called to be ministers.** Here they had to make a greater dedication: to leave their occupations and vocations and to give their full time following and being taught by Jesus.
3. **They were called to be apostles.** This took place after the resurrection of Jesus, for they had to be a witness of His resurrection in order to qualify for apostleship; at this time they were commissioned.

Let us study the first call as recorded in the first chapter of John's Gospel (John 1:35-51):

Apparently Andrew and John were disciples of John the Baptist. One day they were standing on the bank of Jordan when John the Baptist pointed them to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God." This personal witness led them to follow Jesus. Suddenly Jesus turned, looked at them and asked, "What seek ye?" They answered, "Rabbi (teacher), where dwellest thou?" Jesus called them with the simple invitation, "Come and see."

Immediately, these two disciples, Andrew and John, sought their brothers, Peter and James. Andrew was the first to find his brother, Simon. The inference is that John afterwards found his brother James. Simon was given a new name by Jesus, Cephas or Peter, which meant a stone. This name was a constant reminder of what Jesus expected Simon to become.

The second day, Jesus prepared to leave for Galilee to begin His ministry. However, he first called Philip. The call was simple: "Follow me." This was sufficient for Philip. Undoubtedly, Andrew and Simon knew Philip and brought him to Jesus. At once Philip began to work for Jesus and sought his friend, Nathanael. Again the invitation was a simple one: "Come and see."

When Jesus returned to Galilee and attended the wedding at Cana, He had six disciples: Andrew, Simon Peter, John, James, Philip and Nathanael. Very likely these disciples were with Him at the wedding at Cana. However, at this stage they were still just disciples and continued with their occupation of fishing.

D. CALLED TO BE FULL TIME MINISTERS

We now study the second stage or step in the call of the disciples—the call to give up all and dedicate their full time to the service of the Master. This took place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and the story is given in each of the Synoptic Gospels.

In Mark 1 and Matthew 4, we read that Jesus found Peter and Andrew casting a net into the sea and addressed them immediately. "Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going a little farther, He found James and John who were mending their nets. Jesus also called them and they responded as quickly as the first pair. They left their father and the hired servants to look after the boats.

Luke gave a longer story. Walking by the lake, Jesus found two empty boats since the fishermen were washing their nets. He entered into Simon's and had him put out to sea a little so that He could speak to the people who had followed Him. Then He told Peter to put out his nets. Peter demurred, as they had just come in from a night of futile fishing. However, Peter obeyed and brought in such a net full that they were all amazed. Peter was overcome by his own unworthiness. Peter cried,

“Depart from me, I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Jesus then called them to be fishers of men, and they forsook their nets.

E. CALLED TO BE APOSTLES

This account is given in the twenty-first chapter of John’s Gospel.

FIRST YEAR OF MINISTRY

A. IMPORTANT EVENTS IN CHRIST'S FIRST YEAR

We are listing in chronological order some of the most important events in the first year of Jesus Christ's ministry. These events begin with the baptism of Jesus Christ and end with the beginning of the second Passover. This takes in a period which was more than a year. Jesus was about thirty years of age.

The purpose of this study is to give the student a general idea of our Lord's ministry during this first year. No attempt is made to list all of the events, only some of the most important. In each case, only one reference is given although the event may often be found in more than one Gospel.

This year is sometimes called "The Year of Inauguration":

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. The baptism of Jesus at Bethabarba. | Matthew 3:13-17 |
| 2. The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. | Matthew 4:1-11 |
| 3. The testimony of John the Baptist. | John 1:19-51 |
| 4. The marriage feast at Cana in Galilee. | John 2:1-11 |
| 5. Jesus visited Capernaum. | John 2:12 |
| 6. Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover. | John 2:13 |
| 7. Jesus cleansed the Temple. | John 2:13-25 |
| 8. Jesus ministered to Nicodemus. | John 3:1-21 |
| 9. Jesus ministered to the woman at the well. | John 4:1-42 |
| 10. At Cana, Jesus healed the nobleman's son in Capernaum. | John 4:46-54 |
| 11. Jesus went to Nazareth where He preserved His life by a miracle. | Luke 4:28-30 |
| 12. The call of four disciples: Simon and Andrew, James and John. | Luke 5:1-11 |
| 13. He healed a demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum. | Luke 4:31 -37 |
| 14. Jesus healed Peter's wife's mother. | Luke 4:38-44 |
| 15. Jesus stilled the storm. | Mark 4:35-41 |
| 16. Jesus healed the demoniac in Gadara. | Mark 5:1-20 |
| 17. Jesus healed the daughter of Jarius. | Mark 5:21-43 |
| 18. He healed the paralytic at Capernaum. | Luke 5:18-25 |
| 19. He called Matthew to be a disciple. | Luke 5:27-32 |

B. THE ITINERARY OF THE FIRST YEAR OF MINISTRY -----

C. THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Scriptural References:

First Cleansing: John 2:13-22

Second Cleansing: Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:44-46



Jesus cleansed the Temple twice during His ministry. The first time is recorded by John and took place at the beginning of His ministry. The second time is recorded in each of the Synoptic Gospels and took place near the end of His ministry, the day after His triumphal entry. There seemed to be a divine purpose in these two incidents taking place at

the beginning and end of His ministry. In the first cleansing Jesus was able to proclaim His true authority and to announce His identity as the Messiah. He also was able to announce His stand in opposition to the corruption in the religion of the Jews and clearly show that He would not compromise with evil. By cleansing the Temple, He earned the bitter hatred of Annas and Caiaphas. The second cleansing announced the end of His ministry by bringing about His arrest and trial.

About a month before the Passover, the money-changers would open their booths. Each Jew had to pay the Temple tribute of the half-shekel. When the pilgrims began to arrive in Jerusalem, the money changers would move within the Temple. They generally charged about twelve percent for the exchange of Jewish coins for the various foreign coins. The annual revenue to the Temple from this source was about seventy-five thousand pounds.

Under Annas, the ex-high priest, a market was established in the Temple for the sale of sheep, oxen, doves, and pigeons. These animals had to be inspected by examiners who charged exorbitant fees. Sometimes a lamb or dove was sold for five or six times its value. The whole business was a system of graft and was a terrible desecration to the Temple.

When Jesus looked upon this awful desecration, He was filled with righteous, wrathful indignation. He took a few pieces of cord and wove and plaited them into a whip. He drove out the sheep and oxen from the Temple court. Then he quickly overthrew the tables of the money-changers.

When we understand the anger and opposition that was aroused, we can see the tremendous miracle that took place. This was a supernatural act. There was something about the appearance of Jesus that caused the whole crowd to be afraid of Him. From the natural side we should remember that this was a very popular act, as the people hated these markets and would approve and applaud what was done. Undoubtedly, it caught the money-changers by surprise, and they did not have time to organize opposition.

It is to be expected that this act would soon be challenged. His enemies were careful not to antagonize the public. They came to Him with cunning, trying to set a trap for Him. "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" (John 2:18). In other words, they asked for the badge of His authority. Jesus did not walk into the trap, but answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Jesus referred to His own body, for He knew that the hatred He had stirred up by this act would cost Him His life. At His trial, His enemies changed His words and quoted Him as saying, "I will destroy" (Mark 14:58), and "I can destroy" (Matthew 26:61). Jesus did not say this; He said, "You destroy this temple"

In the application, there are a few lessons that we may learn from this incident in our Lord's ministry:

1. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost and must never be desecrated. Christ's attitude will be the same towards the person who desecrates his body as His attitude was towards those who desecrated the Temple.
2. A definite stand must always be taken against sin. There can be no compromise.
3. If we are filled with the Holy Ghost, our reaction to sin and corruption in the professing church should be the same as Christ's.

SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY

A. IMPORTANT EVENTS IN CHRIST'S SECOND YEAR

We are listing here a few important events in the second year of Christ's ministry. This period was from the beginning of the second Passover to the beginning of the third Passover. Jesus was about thirty-one years of age.

This year is sometimes called "The Year of Popularity":

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Jesus went from Capernaum to Jerusalem for the Passover. | John 5:1 |
| 2. Jesus healed the cripple at the Pool of Bethesda. | John 5:2-9 |
| 3. Jesus returned from Jerusalem to Capernaum. | John 6:1 |
| 4. Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. | Luke 6:6-11 |
| 5. Jesus went from Capernaum to the Mount of Beatitudes. | Mark 3:13 |
| 6. The twelve apostles were ordained. | Mark 3:13-19 |
| 7. Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. | Matthew 5, 6, 7 |
| 8. He returned to Capernaum. | Matthew 8:5 |
| 9. The widow's son was raised at Nain. | Luke 7:12-15 |
| 10. The feet of Jesus were anointed by the sinful woman. | Luke 7:36-47 |
| 11. Jesus toured Galilee. | Luke 8:1 |
| 12. Jesus revisited Nazareth and is again Rejected. | Mark 6:1-6 |
| 13. The Twelve are instructed and sent forth. | Matthew 10:1, 5-42 |
| 14. Jesus feeds five thousand with five loaves and two fish. | John 6:1-4 |
| 15. Jesus walked on the sea. | John 6:15-21 |

B. THE ITINERARY OF THE SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY ----



C. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS REVEALS HIS DEITY

Jesus was definitely concerned that His disciples should have a revelation of His deity. During His third year of ministry while at Caesarea Philippi, He asked them who He was (Matthew 16:15).

From the very beginning of His ministry, however, and especially from the first miracle at Cana, His entire life and ministry pointed to His deity. There are three prerogatives only possessed by God Himself. If Jesus possessed these prerogatives, then it is quite conclusive that He was God.

1. Jesus Accepted Worship

“Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him” (Matthew 14:33).

“Then came she and worshipped him” (Matthew 15:25).

“And they worshipped him” (Luke 24:52).

2. Jesus Christ Forgave Sin

“And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven” (Luke 7:48).

“Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mark 2:5).

3. Jesus Is the Creator

Jesus showed that He is the Creator by:

- a. Turning water into wine John 2:1-11
- b. Feeding the five thousand John 6:1-13
- c. Walking on the water John 6:19
- d. Quieting the storm Mark 4:39

Jesus Christ possessed a dual nature: divinity and humanity. He was God-man, the Word-incarnate. Many times He acted and spoke as a man; many times He acted and spoke as God. As we study the four Gospels and the life of Jesus, this truth is constantly evident.

THIRD YEAR OF MINISTRY

A. IMPORTANT EVENTS IN CHRIST'S THIRD YEAR

We are listing a few important events in the third year of Christ's ministry. This period was from the beginning of the third Passover to Palm Sunday. This is a few days less than one year. Jesus was about thirty-two years of age.

This year is sometimes called "The Year of Opposition":

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Jesus went to Phoenicia. | Mark 7:24 |
| 2. He healed the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman. | Matthew 15:21-28 |
| 3. Jesus went from Phoenicia into Decapolis. | Mark 7:31 |
| 4. He healed the deaf and dumb man. | Mark 7:32-37 |
| 5. Jesus fed more than four thousand with seven loaves and few fish. | Matthew 15:32-39 |
| 6. Jesus went to Bethsaida. | Mark 8:22 |
| 7. Jesus healed a blind man. | Mark 8:22-26 |
| 8. Jesus went from Bethsaida to Caesarea Philippi. | Matthew 16:13 |
| 9. He went to Mount of Transfiguration. | Luke 9:28 |
| 10. Jesus was transfigured. | Matthew 17:1-13 |
| 11. The demoniac son was healed. | Mark 9:17-27 |
| 12. Jesus returned to Capernaum. | Mark 9:30-33 |
| 13. The seventy disciples were instructed and sent out. | Luke 10:1-16 |
| 14. Jesus went from Capernaum through Samaria to Bethany. | Luke 17:11 |
| 15. The ten lepers were healed near Samaria. | Luke 17:12-16 |
| 16. A woman taken in adultery was brought to Jesus. | John 8:3-11 |
| 17. Jesus attended the Feast of Dedication. | John 10:22-39 |
| 18. Jesus went to Bethabara. | John 10:40-42 |
| 19. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. | John 11:1-54 |
| 20. Jesus visited Zaccheus, chief of Publicans. | Luke 19:1-28 |
| 21. Blind Bartimaeus was healed. | Mark 10:46-52 |
| 22. Jesus arrived at Bethany again six days before the Passover. | John 12:9, 9-11 |
| 23. Jesus enters Jerusalem, welcomed by the multitude. | Matthew 21:1-11 |

B. THE TRANSFIGURATION

Scriptural References: Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36

The scene that took place on the Mount of Transfiguration was one of the most wonderful ones during the three years of our Lord's ministry.

Shortly before this, Jesus had announced that He must go to Jerusalem, be rejected by the elders and chief priests, and be killed (Matthew 16:21). He also said that He would be raised the third day. His disciples could not understand this and became dejected, depressed, and discouraged. Peter rebuked the Lord, and said, "This shall not be unto thee" (Matthew 16:22). Jesus recognized the influence of the tempter in this and rebuked Peter, "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men?" (Matthew 16:23).

Man's way is always that of pampering and preserving self. God's way is that of self sacrifice. The way of the cross leads to glory and to eternal life; the way of self-preservation leads to death. These truths the disciples could not comprehend.

Jesus desired to encourage them and at the same time draw the curtain back and allow them to catch a glimpse of the glory to come. Jesus took the three most spiritual of His disciples, Peter, James and John, by themselves, into a high mountain. Evidently the other disciples were not yet ready to witness such a glorious scene. Jesus took these disciples into the home of Jairus when He raised his daughter from death. Later in Gethsemane, Jesus took them farther than the others. As we shall see, however, even these three disciples were unable to fully comprehend what they witnessed.

C. THE ITINERARY OF THE THIRD YEAR OF MINISTRY



Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Life of Christ I

Lesson One

1. Name the three Synoptic Gospel.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

2. Name the two Gospels which were written by men who had not been numbered among the twelve disciples.
 - a.
 - b.

3. What aspect of Jesus is given in each of the Gospels?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

4. To whom was each of the Synoptic Gospels written?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Life of Christ I

Lesson Two

1. What is the size of the country of Palestine?

2. Describe the surface of Palestine from west to east.

3. Write a description of the Jordan Valley.

4. How large is the Dead Sea?

5. What is the altitude of the Dead Sea?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Life of Christ I

Lesson Three

Fill in the blanks with the correct word:

Antiochus	Maccabeus	Pompey
Antipater	Palestine	Syrians
Babylon	Pharisees	Jews
Herod the Great		

1. Alexander the Great died in _____.
2. Judas _____ was called "The Hammerer."
3. _____ offered a sow on the altar of the temple.
4. Aristobulus crucified eight hundred _____.
5. _____ is the bridge connecting Asia and Africa.
6. _____ massacred twelve thousand Jews.
7. Pompey made _____ procurator over Judea.
8. _____ was the son of Antipater.
9. The _____ were driven from Palestine by Judas Maccabeus.
10. Pompey attacked the _____ on the Sabbath Day.

3. Write a paragraph explaining the truth: "Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are."

Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Life of Christ I

Lesson Nine

1. From memory, list the names of the twelve disciples.

- | | |
|----|----|
| a. | g. |
| b. | h. |
| c. | i. |
| d. | j. |
| e. | k. |
| f. | l. |

2. The apostle Peter received three distinct calls. Give the scriptural reference where these three calls are given.

- a.
- b.
- c.

3. Write a clear definition of the following terms:

- a. disciple

- b. apostle

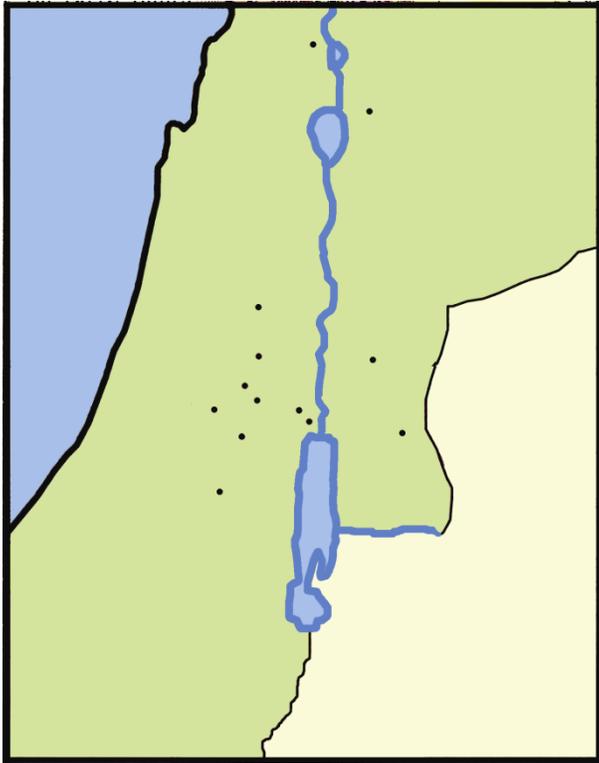
Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Life of Christ I

Lesson Ten

Locate the following places on the map:

- Bethlehem
- Bethsaida
- Caesarea
- Caesarea
- Philippi
- Cana
- Capernaum
- Damascus
- Dead Sea
- Decapolis
- Galilee
- Jerusalem
- Jordan River
- Nazareth
- Sychar



Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Life of Christ I

Lesson Eleven

Give scriptural reference to show that the ministry and teaching of Jesus revealed His deity. Give two references with Scriptures for each of the following:

1. Jesus accepted worship.

a.

b.

2. Jesus forgave sin.

a.

b.

3. Jesus is the Creator.

a.

b.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Life of Christ I

Lesson Twelve

1. List the three experiences Peter, James, and John had that the other disciples did not have:

a.

b.

c.

2. Why did the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration take place?

3. What truth was taught on the Mount?

4. Why were the three disciples unable to fully comprehend what they witnessed?