

JESUS

The focal point of the Gospel, the Bible, and of all human history is Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God, and on Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Although He came to earth as a man with a physical body, He was in fact the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus has always existed. He was present with God at Creation, and through Him all things were made, and in Him they all hold together.

His Earthly Life

The coming of Jesus to the earth was miraculous. It was predicted for more than 1,400 years by Old Testament prophets. Then, during the time of the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a virgin in Israel telling her that she would bear a child who would be the Son of the Most High. She did not know how this could be but consented to the Lord's will and nine months later, miraculously gave birth to Jesus Christ. Angels appeared to shepherds on the hillside that night announcing His birth as the long awaited Savior, and wise men from the East were divinely led as they came to Israel to worship him. Thus the Son of God came into the world.

At the age of 12 his parents took him to the temple in Jerusalem. When they left to go home, he stayed behind giving amazing answers to the religious leaders of that day. When his parents found him, he said to them, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" then he went back home with them and submitted to their will until the time came for his public ministry.

At the age of 30, he was baptized by the prophet John at the Jordan River, and as he came up out of the water, the Spirit of God descended upon him bodily as a dove, and God spoke audibly from Heaven, "You are my Son whom I love. With you I am well pleased." (*Lk 3:21-22 NIV*)

After spending 40 days in the wilderness fasting and praying. Satan came and tempted him to use his authority to serve himself with food, riches, and pride, but Jesus resisted them all, refuting Satan's temptations by quoting the Word of God.

From that time on, He began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." For the next three years, he taught the people the ways of God and ministered His salvation to them by performing many miracles. He healed the sick, he raised the dead, he cast out demons, he commanded the wind and waves, He multiplied food, and on a mountaintop with His closest disciples, He was changed before their eyes, with His face shining like the sun and his clothes as white as the light. Again God spoke audibly from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!" (*Mt 17:5 NAS*)

Jesus taught the people to love one another, to be just, to be pure, and to live lives of generosity and kindness. He warned against the love of money and the accumulation of

possessions. He taught them how to pray simply and directly, without wordiness or show.

He warned them against hiding behind technicalities and said that being angry with someone carried the same judgement as murder, and lusting for a woman was the same as adultery.

He taught them about the Father's love and desire to provide for us; He told people to have faith in God and to ask for the Holy Spirit. He warned repeatedly against false prophets and said we would know them by their fruit.

He said the greatest commandment was to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and the second greatest commandment was to love our neighbor as ourselves. He even said we should love our enemies, assuring us that in the end everything would be brought before God for judgement and we would receive our just reward.

And though He lived a sinless life and did no wrong to anyone, evil men and religious leaders had Him arrested and charged Him with blasphemy. He was betrayed by one of his own disciples, and brought before Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor, where he was falsely accused, and cruelly beaten. Then, when Pilate offered his release, the Jewish leaders stirred up the crowd to demand the release of a murderer instead. Thus Jesus, as the spotless Lamb of God, was led away to be killed by being nailed to a wooden cross.

And on that day in 30 A.D. the Son of God allowed Himself to be put to death to pay for the sins of Mankind. As He hung in agony before a mocking crowd, he prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" and as He died, He said, "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit." The sun went dark, the ground shook, the graves burst open, and even the soldier standing guard said, "Surely this was the Son of God!"

A member of the Jewish ruling council named Joseph of Arimathea who secretly believed in Jesus went boldly before Pilate and asked for Jesus' body which he then laid in his own unused tomb. From all outward appearances, it looked as if evil men had triumphed over good. But God reigns supreme forever, and good shall always triumph over evil in the end. When Jesus died, He went down into Hell, where He preached the Gospel to the people held captive there, boldly took the keys away from Satan, and ascended on high with a line of captives following him. And three days later, in the greatest event in human history, He bodily rose from the dead.

Angels announced his resurrection to his friends and disciples. Jesus Himself then appeared to them, talking and eating with them over a period of forty days. He reprimanded those who doubted, saying, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." (*Lk 24:38-39 NIV*)

He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem." (*Lk 24:45-46 NIV*)

He commissioned them, saying “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.” (*Mt 28: 18-20*)

He told them to wait until they had received power from on high, and having thus commissioned them, He rose up in to the air before their eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

And 10 days later, as the disciples gathered and prayed, the Holy Spirit came upon them all with power and the disciples began to publicly preach that Jesus was the Christ and to perform the same kinds of miracles that Jesus did – something that continues to this day.

What Jesus Accomplished

The full story of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension can be found in the Bible with accounts written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These events are literal and true. These accounts record the events as they happened, in many cases by eyewitnesses. They are the only reasonable explanation for the sudden appearance of Christianity on the earth which now has billions of adherents, many of whom have personally encountered Jesus in a living and real way.

And from these accounts, and from the understanding later given to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit, we understand the following things that affect our lives to this day:

First, Jesus’ death was not a mistake or an accident. It was a plan designed from the beginning of the world that would defeat Satan’s hold on Mankind, and buy men back for God. (*Jn 10:17-19*)

Second, through Jesus’ death on the cross, our sins can be eternally forgiven. The death penalty that rightfully applies to us has been satisfied by the blood of Jesus for all who repent of their sins and unite with Him. This forgiveness is not based on our own works, merit, or righteousness, but on the justice, love, and mercy of God, and it owes its existence to the obedience of Jesus, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God. (*Titus 3:5, Heb 12:2*)

Jesus’ death as a substitute for ours is called the atonement, and it is what sets Judaism and Christianity apart from every other religion on earth. And while the sacrifices of the Jews could result in the forgiveness of sins, they could only affect sins committed in the past and could never change the hearts of the people. But when Jesus, the high priest of a new and better covenant, offered Himself as a sacrifice for sins, it was not only a sacrifice for all time, it also had the power to change our hearts so that we might serve the living God. A change so real, the Bible calls it being “born again”. (*Heb 7:23-28 & 9:14, I Pet 1:23*)

Thirdly, Jesus showed us how to live. The Apostle Peter said, “For Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.” (*I Pet 2:21*) With His own life, Jesus showed us what it means to deny ourselves, and pick up our cross daily. The Apostle Peter goes on to say. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they

hurled their insults at Him he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead He entrusted himself to Him who judges justly.” (*1 Pet 2:22-23*) This is the essence of what Jesus meant when he said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny Himself, pick up his cross, daily and follow me. (*Mt 16:24*) It is epitomized by His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he died, where three times he struggled greatly with what He was about to endure, and asked the Father if there wasn’t some other way to accomplish these things. But each time he came back to the same conclusion, “Father, not my will, but thine be done” (*Lk 22:42*)

This is what it means to have the cross in our lives. Letting go of our will in order to do God’s will instead is the heart of following Jesus in spirit and in truth. It is the only way to real joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. It is the key to obeying His commands. For truly the Father sees everything, and is greatly honored by our faith in Him and His love, and He will not fail us..

Jesus’ Present Ministry

This then brings us to the most exciting part of this Gospel message: That Jesus is alive today and still ministering to people, unhindered by space or time.

The Bible tells us that Jesus came to save men’s lives, not to judge them. He is still calling people to follow Him, and He still delivers them from Satan’s bondage of every kind. The Bible says, “He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because he always lives to make intercession for them.” (*Heb 7:25*) He heals their bodies, He saves their souls, He delivers them from evil spirits, He delivers them from death, and He rules the holy angels who carry out His commands.

Best of all, He personally dwells inside every believer, making us spiritually alive by His Holy Spirit. As a result, part of us --our spirit-- is already seated with Christ in Heavenly places. This is why as born-again believers, we are aware of God’s presence, can hear His voice, and understand spiritual things.

As Jesus told His disciples on the night of the Last Supper, “I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.” (*Jn 14: 18 NIV*) We are not abandoned to try to make it through life on our own, but God is pleased to dwell in us and be with us through all that we experience in life.

His Future Ministry

Finally, it is important to know that Jesus is coming back to the earth in the very near future. The exact day and hour is unknown and can not be known in advance, but the Bible tells the signs that His coming is drawing near, and many of these are being fulfilled today.

The Bible says that in the last days people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, unholy, without love, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, treacherous, rash, and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. (*2Tim 3:1-5*)

Before His return, many false prophets will arise, believers will be persecuted and executed, and the Gospel will be preached in all nations. A man of lawlessness called the antichrist will control the whole world and demand that everyone worship him. (*Mt 24: 3-14, Rev 13, II Thess 2:1-4*)

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations will mourn. Jesus will come on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory and every eye will see Him. He will send forth His angels with a loud trumpet call to gather His chosen ones from the four winds—from one end of the heavens to the other. And He will destroy the antichrist with the breath of His mouth.

On that day, those who have died as Christians will rise from the dead, their bodies will be changed to be glorious, and they will rise to meet the Lord in the air. Then those of us who are still alive, who remain until the coming of the Lord, will be changed as well and we too will rise to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

The Bible tells us that Jesus will reign on the earth for a thousand years along with those who would not deny him during the Great Tribulation. After that the devil will be thrown into the Lake of Fire to be tormented day and night forever and ever. Jesus will judge the people of the earth according to their deeds, and if anyone's name is not found written in Jesus' Book of Life, he will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Then God will create a new heavens and a new earth. He will live among us and He will be our God and we will be His people. Jesus will sit on the Throne with His Father and His servants will serve Him. They will see his face and His name will be on their foreheads. And they will reign forever and ever.

Jesus says, "Behold, I am coming soon. My reward is with me, and I will give to every one according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and Offspring of David and the Bright Morning Star." (*Rev 22:12-16 NIV*)

"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' Let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let take the free gift of the water of life." (*Rev 22:17 NIV*)

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'

"Amen. Come Lord Jesus!" (*Rev 22:20 NIV*)