

# Lesson 1 - Introduction to the life of Christ

The life and ministry of Jesus Christ is recorded in the first four books of the New Testament. These four books are known as *The Gospels*. Each gospel is written from a different perspective, with a different purpose, and for a different audience. We will use all four gospels together to trace the life of Christ from manger to ascension.

## **The Gospel of Matthew (Christ as the King of the Jews)**

Matthew, also called Levi, is the writer. His account of the life of Christ has to do with Christ the King and His kingdom. His intended audience was the Jewish people therefore he wrote of things Jews would be interested in (i.e. the genealogy, birth, infancy, and early life of Christ in Nazareth).

- The word "Kingdom" is used 56 times in the book of Matthew.
- It is the only book in which you will find the words "The Kingdom of heaven."
- There are about 60 references to the Old Testament in Matthew, more than all others combined.

## **The Gospel of Mark (Christ as the Saviour)**

The writer was John Mark. He was the nephew of Barnabas<sup>1</sup>, and it would seem that he was a convert of Peter<sup>2</sup>. He was also a companion of Paul and Barnabas.

- The gospel was written primarily to the Romans. The Romans would not be interested at all with the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, so Mark omits this from his gospel.
- He presents Christ as a man of power and actions. The words "straightway", "forthwith", and "immediately" appear 40 times in this short gospel.
- Christ is presented as obeying His Father's will.

## **The Gospel of Luke (Christ as the Son of Man)**

Luke was a physician<sup>3</sup>. Luke does not question the deity of Christ; his purpose is to bring out the perfect humanity of Christ as a parallel to His deity. This gospel is primarily directed to the Greeks and presents the tender human compassion of Christ.

- The quote "Son of Man" is used 82 times in the four gospels.
- Luke also gives us 20 miracles – 17 of which are miracles of healing.
- Dr. Luke gives us the longest account of the virgin birth.

## **The Gospel of John (Christ as the Son of God)**

John and his older brother James were the sons of Zebedee<sup>4</sup>. John addressed his gospel account to the world. The words "believe", "trust", and "receive" appear almost 100 times in John. There is only one parable in the book of John (10:1-6); there are only seven miracles in John.

The following 15 things are recorded only in John:

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1) The first miracle                 | 6) The discourse on the bread of life  |
| 2) The healing of the nobleman's son | 7) The woman taken in adultery         |
| 3) The new birth of Nicodemus        | 8) The man born blind                  |
| 4) The Samaritan woman               | 9) The discourse on the good shepherd  |
| 5) The healing of the impotent man   | 10) The raising of Jarius's daughter   |
|                                      | 11) Jesus washing the disciples' feet  |
|                                      | 12) The house of many mansions         |
|                                      | 13) Discourse on vine & the branches   |
|                                      | 14) The High Priestly prayer of Christ |
|                                      | 15) The appearance of the risen Savior |

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 4:10

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 5:13

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 4:14

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 4:21, Mark 1:19, Luke 5:10

## Section #1 –Christ before His birth

The Bible teaches Christ's eternal existence throughout its pages. Here are a few verses that teach that Jesus Christ is God and existed with God in eternity:

**John 5:18 - Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his \_\_\_\_\_, making himself \_\_\_\_\_ with God.**

**Philippians 2:6 - Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:**

**John 17:5 - And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own \_\_\_\_\_ with the glory which I had with thee \_\_\_\_\_ the world was.**

### *Christ in the Old Testament (Pictures)*

We find Christ revealed in the Old Testament age in the following 3 ways:

1. In types and symbols
2. In pre-incarnate appearances
3. In Old Testament prophecy fulfilled by Christ.

#### Digging Deeper

Find more information about Christ in the Old Testament on page 76.

### *Christ as Creator*

If Christ's existence begins with Mary conceiving by the Holy Spirit, then it precludes Him from being equal with God. It removes Christ from the role of Creator and makes Him a created being like us. The following verses point out that Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things and not a product of creation:

#### Key Terms

- **Types of Christ** refer to pictures in the Old Testament which point to Christ in the New Testament.
- **Pre-incarnate** refers to Christ before His birth in Bethlehem or before His 'incarnation'.

**John 1:1-3, 14 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All \_\_\_\_\_ were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was \_\_\_\_\_. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.**

**Colossians 1:15-17 - For by \_\_\_\_\_ were \_\_\_\_\_ things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were \_\_\_\_\_ by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and \_\_\_\_\_ him all things consist.**

Christ's creative work was man's first Bible. From creation man can know the following 4 things:

1. The glory of God
2. His handiwork
3. His eternal power
4. His Godhead.

**Romans 1:20 - For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:**

**Psalms 19:1 - The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.**

## **Section #2 – The world at Christ’s birth**

From the closing of Malachi to the opening of Matthew, there is a period of 400 years where there was no further revelation from God. The Old Testament closed with a great need; that need was supplied in the New Testament.

### ***A Jewish nation under Roman rule***

Israel, along with much of the known world, was a nation under suppression. Rome would often allow and even assimilate alien cultures and religions in order to keep the peace among its conquered subjects. Rome, however, was also known for its brutality to any who would speak against or act against its interests.

The Roman Republic existed for almost 500 years from 509-27 B.C. The Roman Republic was replaced by the Roman Empire in 27 B.C. and controlled Palestine until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Rome had tolerated the Jews and their religion for many years, but the Romans lost patience and settled the matter. Christ was born under the reign of Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus (27 B.C. – A.D. 14). Herod the Great (37 – 4 B.C.) was ruler of Palestine during the birth of Christ and ordered the execution of babies.

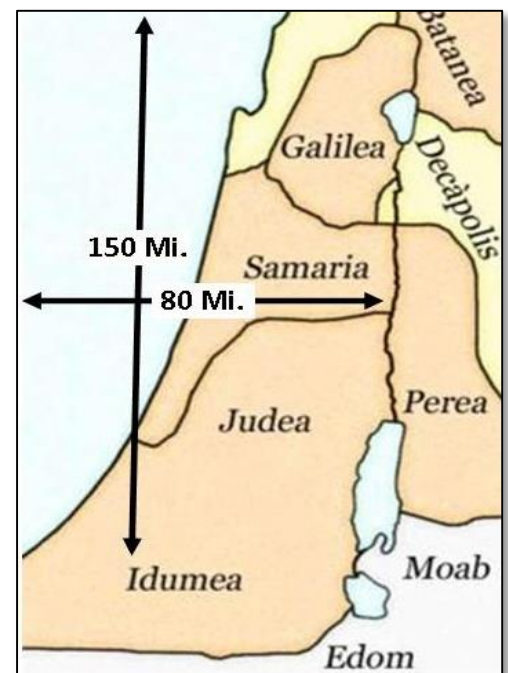
### ***A Map of Christ's world***

At the time of our Lord, Palestine (roughly the size of New Hampshire) was no longer divided into tribal divisions (Reuben, Judah, Simeon, etc); it was politically divided into five land areas:

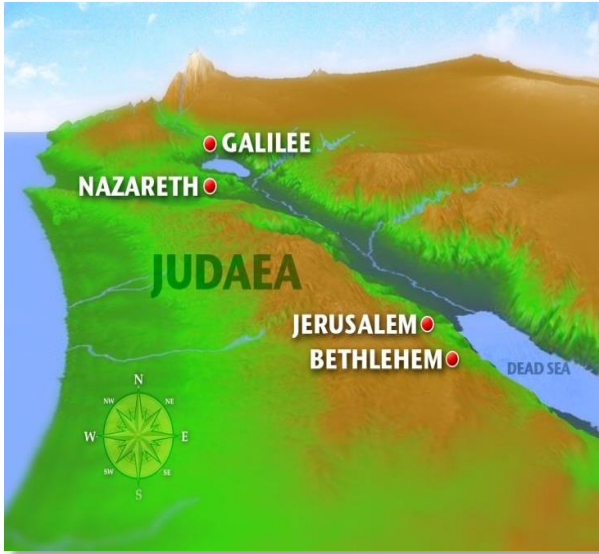
1. Judea
2. Samaria
3. Galilee
4. Decapolis
5. Perea

Herod the Great, who slew the babies in Bethlehem following Christ's birth, died in 4 B.C. Under authority from Rome his three sons were left to rule various districts<sup>1</sup>.

- *Herod Archelaus*, being the eldest, inherited the title King, and ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumea.
- *Herod Antipas* was made Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.
- *Herod Philip II* was made Tetrarch of the region of Decapolis.



<sup>1</sup> Luke 3:1 - Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,



## Important Cities in Christ's world

### Jerusalem

David chose Jerusalem for his capital, and it remained the political center of the nation throughout Christ's life. Five hills formed its base at 2,600' above sea level. Only from the north was it without natural protection. The journey from Galilee was about three days on foot.

### Bethlehem

Bethlehem is the birthplace of our Lord. Bethlehem is located just six miles from Jerusalem. At the time of Christ it was known for raising lambs that would be used in the temple sacrifices.

### Samaria (Town and Area)

The city of Samaria is 31 miles north of Jerusalem. John 4:9 records that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. This goes back to the books of 2 Kings 17:23-34; and Ezra 4:1-24. Assyria took the Northern Kingdom into captivity in 722 B.C. The Assyrians exported all the upper class Jews and imported a class of their own who were loyal. Intermarriage brought about a people who were not strictly Jewish. When the Jews came back and rebuilt the temple, the Samaritans opposed them and got the work stopped for over a decade.

### Galilee

Galilee is the town where Jesus spent the greatest part of His life and ministry. The Galileans were not as pure blood as the Jews of Judea, but they were zealous patriots.

### Nazareth

Nazareth was the home of Joseph and Mary.

**Luke 2:39 - And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into \_\_\_\_\_, to their own city \_\_\_\_\_.**

It was here that the angel announced to Mary the birth of the Messiah. Joseph brought Mary and Jesus here after their sojourn in Egypt<sup>1</sup>, and here Jesus grew into manhood. His long and intimate association with this village made Him known as "Jesus of Nazareth."

**Luke 4:16 - And he came to \_\_\_\_\_, where he had been brought up: and, as his \_\_\_\_\_ was, he went into the \_\_\_\_\_ on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.**

### Capernaum

Capernaum lies 81 miles from Jerusalem on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus found most of His disciples in Capernaum and made it the headquarters of His earthly ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 2:19-22

## Religion in Christ's world

The Greeks worshipped idols, gods, and goddesses. Among them were Zeus, the chief ruling god; Apollo, the god of light; and Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

The Romans also worshipped idols and emperors. Though they had hundreds of gods, some of the main ones included Jupiter, the god of the sky; Pluto, the god of the underworld; and Venus, the goddess of love.

**Judaism** was and is still today the religion of the Jews. It was the most important religion during the birth of Christ. No other religion is so closely related to Christianity. Judaism furnished the framework of Christianity - ONE GOD.

## Society in Christ's world

Several classes formed the background of human relationships during the earthly life of our Lord.

### The scribes

Since the law was the essence of Judaism, it was necessary to have the law understood and applied to the changing situations of life. New Testament scribes were scholars whose task was to preserve and to teach the interpretations of the law and to deduce the exact application of it for every circumstance in life.

### The Pharisees (Separated ones)

The Pharisees numbered about 6,000 in Herod's day and had great influence. They were the most vital Jewish party at the time. The synagogue was their special sphere of ministry. They were the separatists of their day and as such, withdrew from evil associations and places of political leadership. They observed the law, which they constantly expanded by means of the oral law. There were over 600 points of the law they were to keep.

### The Sadducees

The name is believed to have been derived from Zadok, the High Priest of Solomon's time<sup>1</sup>. They were the aristocratic and priestly party among the Jews, the rival of the Pharisees. They denied the existence of spirits, a resurrection, and immortality of the soul. They were modernists and secularists who came into existence during the silent years and fell out of existence after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

### The Herodians

The name came from the family of Herod. These people were political rather than religious and derived authority from the government of Rome. They were adverse to any change in the political structure. They regarded Christ as a revolutionary and thus hated Him<sup>2</sup>.

**Mark 3:6 - And the \_\_\_\_\_ went forth, and straightway took counsel with the \_\_\_\_\_ against him, how they might destroy him.**

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 2:35 And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host: and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 22:15-22;

**Languages in New Testament**

**Hebrew** was carried over from the Old Testament period. All Jewish males were taught to speak Hebrew.

**Aramaic** was the common language spoken by the average person.

**Greek (Koine)** was read and understood in the civilized world and was used to write the New Testament.

Mark 8:15 - *And he charged them, saying, Take heed, \_\_\_\_\_ of the leaven of the \_\_\_\_\_, and of the leaven of Herod.*

## The Synagogue

The synagogue of Judaism was established during the captivity to replace the temple. The Jews continued to use it even after they were released. It took only ten heads of families to organize a synagogue. It was used for religious services, educational activities, and social gatherings.

The Sanhedrin was the great council of the Hebrews. In the times of Christ and the Apostles, the Sanhedrin as frequently mentioned as being the supreme Jewish court of justice (Matt 5:22; 26:59; Mark 14:55; 15:1; Acts 4:15,21; Luke 22:66-71; John 11:47). It was made up of the High Priest, those who had been High Priest, members of privileged families of the High Priests, Elders, Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. Its jurisdiction was restricted to Judea proper at the time of Christ so they had no authority over Him as long as He was in Galilee.

### Names for the Jewish People

**Jew:** short for Judea, the region around Jerusalem, where most pure-blooded Jews lived.

**Hebrew:** refers to their religious heritage from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham was the first to be called this. (*Genesis 40:15; 43:32*)

**Israelite:** refers to their national identity. (*Exodus 4:22; Numbers 20:14*)

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## Review - Lesson 1

**We learned that the Life of Christ is told in four separate gospels. Can you explain why there are four gospels?**

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**We learned that Christ is eternal and existed as God before the creation. We also learned that Christ is pictured in the Old Testament in several ways. Name three ways that Christ is pictured in the Old Testament:**

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**We also learned about some important cities in Christ's life. Can you match the city with its importance?**

\_\_\_\_\_ This was the hometown of Joseph and Mary. Jesus grew up here.

\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus was born here. It is just 6 miles south of Jerusalem.

\_\_\_\_\_ Christ made his headquarters for His earthly ministry here.

\_\_\_\_\_ This was and is the political center of Israel. The temple was located here.

## Your Thoughts

**Did anything stand out to you in this lesson?**

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## Your Questions

**Did you think of any questions to ask your discipler or Pastor from this lesson?**

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