



## **The Coming of the Promised Savior**

When we think of God creating the world, we often picture God the Father working alone. However, the Scriptures are very clear that Jesus, like the Father, existed from eternity and was our creator. John 1:1-3,14 tells us, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...”* Colossians 1:16-17 continues by saying about Jesus, *“...all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”* In addition, Hebrews 1:2-3 reveals that *“in these last days he (God) has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”* As Michael Card and William L. Lane stated on page 15 of their booklet, *The Life*, *“The creation reflects the Father’s plan through the workmanship of Jesus, the Eternal Son.”*

Since Jesus was with the Father from the beginning, and God’s plan to provide a savior was in place before the creation of the world (1 Peter 1:20), why did God wait so long to send Jesus to earth? Why

not have him come earlier in Israel’s history rather than during the reign of the Roman empire as prophesied by Daniel?

The time of Jesus’ appearance on earth was an integral part of God’s plan, as we can see from Galatians 4:4-5: *“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”* Looking back at the conditions that existed during most of the first century A.D., we can appreciate God’s wisdom in selecting this time to reveal the Messiah. For example, Roman subjects benefited from a time of peace, a good road system, freedom to travel, and a nearly universal understanding of the Greek language (the original language of the New Testament), all of which helped the good news about Jesus to spread throughout the world during that generation. In addition, by this time the non-Jews (Gentiles) had plenty of time to discover that they could not save themselves through human wisdom, and the Jews had learned from experience that they were unable to save themselves by keeping God’s law perfectly.

Not only did Jesus come to earth at the right time, but beginning with his birth he fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. In his conversation with the virgin Mary in Luke 1:30-35, the angel Gabriel said, *“Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”* *‘How will this be,’* Mary asked the angel, *‘since I am a virgin?’* *The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’”* When the angel spoke to Joseph in Matthew 1:20-23, he said: *“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”* *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ –*

which means, 'God with us.'"

From these verses we see that Jesus, by being born to a virgin, was uniquely "the seed of woman" and fulfilled the promises made in Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 7:14. According to Galatians 3:8-9, 14-16, Jesus was also the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that through his seed (offspring) all nations on earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). In addition, as a descendant of Jacob, Judah and David he was the promised king who would rule on David's throne forever in fulfillment of II Samuel 7:11-17 and Isaiah 9:6-7.

Even though his birth, life and death were all consistent with the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah to come, he did not fit the kingly mold that most people were anticipating. Unlike earthly kings, Jesus' life was consistently characterized by humility, service and obedience.

Most are familiar with the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph left their home in Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem, the "city of David," in response to Caesar Augustus' order for everyone to return to their ancestral home to be registered in a census. Jesus was born while they were in Bethlehem (in fulfillment of Micah 5:2), and rather than making his appearance in a palace, he was wrapped in rags and laid in a feeding trough in a stable, the only place Mary and Joseph could find shelter.

When King Herod heard that Jesus had been born, he determined to kill him since he didn't understand that Jesus' kingdom would be spiritual rather than physical in nature (John 6:15; John 18:36), and he therefore considered Jesus to be a threat to the security of his throne. To protect Jesus from Herod's scheme to kill all of the boys under two years of age, God told Joseph in a dream to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt until Herod died. Upon their return to Israel they settled in Nazareth where Jesus grew up.

Not much is known about the first 30 years of Jesus' life on earth; in fact, beyond his infancy, the only childhood incident recorded for us is when he, at 12 years old, became separated from Mary and Joseph while they were in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. After searching for three days, they finally found him in the temple courts where he was sitting among the teachers, listening and asking them questions. Luke 2:47 tells us that "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers." After this he returned to Nazareth with

Mary and Joseph and was obedient to them. His adolescence and young adulthood were summarized in verse 52: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men."



When he was about 30 years old, Jesus began his public ministry by being baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. John was the promised messenger of God who was sent to prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus (Malachi 3:1; Luke 1:11-17), and John identified Jesus to the people as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). By keeping God's law perfectly and living a completely sinless life, Jesus alone qualified as that lamb who could pay the price for mankind's sins, once for all time (1 Peter 1:18-19; 3:18; Hebrews 9:26-27). As Jesus came up out of the water following his baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove, and the Father's voice from heaven said, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). It was almost as if God the Father was proudly telling those who were present for this event, "That's my boy!"

After Jesus' baptism he fasted for 40 days in the desert, and Satan used this opportunity to tempt him to use his power in self-serving ways. However, as difficult as it must have been to avoid doing so, Jesus never used his power for that purpose. His miracles were always performed to benefit others – both physically (such as healing) and spiritually (as evidence that he was who he claimed to be). A common theme throughout Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is Jesus' compassion for people which motivated him to feed the hungry, still the storm, heal the sick and even sometimes raise the dead. Although he healed countless victims of disease, his focus was on teaching people about his kingdom and healing their souls. When he was criticized by the religious leaders for

eating with sinners, Jesus replied that it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick (Matthew 9:12; Luke 5:31).

Jesus often combined miracles with teaching. For example, he followed up feeding 5,000 men (plus all of the women and children in the group) with five small barley loaves of bread and two small fish by declaring, *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty”* (John 6:35). In John 9, just before giving sight to a man born blind, Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world”* (John 9:5), and prior to raising Lazarus from the dead four days after his burial, Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die”* (John 11:25-26). Jesus’ compassion for Lazarus’ sisters in their grief is evident as he cried with them even when he knew he was about to bring Lazarus back to life, but the primary purpose for this miracle was so the people witnessing Lazarus’ resurrection would believe that Jesus was the Son of God (John 11:41-42).

Jesus’ teaching was unique in many ways. Mark 1:22 tells us that people were amazed at his teaching because he taught them as one who had



authority, not as the teachers of the law. In fact, the Pharisees and other experts in the law often tried to trap him by asking him difficult questions, but Jesus knew their hearts and was skillful at responding in such a way as to silence them. For example, when they asked him to choose the greatest commandment in the Law, he replied, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All*

*the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments”* (Matthew 22:34-40).

To the Jews, the most troubling of Jesus’ teachings concerned his relationship to the Father and his deity. Jesus made it clear that he came down from heaven to do the will of his Father (John 6:38), that he is *“the way and the truth and the life”* and no one can come to the Father except through him (John 14:6). John 5:18 records an incident where many of the Jews wanted to kill him because *“he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”* We read in John 8 of another time when the Jews wanted to stone him for what they viewed as blasphemy. Jesus’ statement, *“before Abraham was born, I AM!”* particularly angered them because Jesus was claiming for himself the name of God as God had revealed it to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58).

Even though many rejected Jesus altogether or else turned back and stopped following him as a result of his teachings, others were drawn to his invitation to *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30). Peter summarized the feelings of many when Jesus asked his apostles if they would be among those who deserted him, and Peter answered, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God”* (John 6:66-69).

As the number of Jesus’ followers increased, the Pharisees and chief priests of the Jewish nation were filled with jealousy and plotted to kill Jesus (John 11:53,57). They had difficulty finding a suitable time to arrest Jesus, however, because so many of the people had put their faith in him, and they were afraid of how the people would react (Luke 22:2). This was especially true after they witnessed the large crowd of Jesus’ disciples spreading their cloaks on the road, praising God and shouting, *“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord”* as he rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey (as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118:26). Every day as he taught in the temple the Jewish leaders were frustrated by their inability to arrest him *“because all the people hung on his words”* (Luke 19:48). Even the temple guards, when asked why they returned empty-handed after being sent to bring Jesus in, said *“No one ever*



*spoke the way this man does*” (John 7:46). But Judas, one of Jesus’ twelve apostles, saw an opportunity for financial gain and offered to betray Jesus into their hands for thirty pieces of silver (as prophesied in Zechariah 11:12). Jesus was not surprised by the plot to kill him, and often during his ministry he explained to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things at the hands of the Jewish leaders, be killed and on the third day be resurrected to life (Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23).

While Jesus and his apostles were eating the Passover feast prior to Judas’ betrayal later that night, Jesus showed them his love and demonstrated once again the attitude of service which characterized his life. As the meal was being served and the men were arguing over who among them was the greatest (Luke 22:24), Jesus got up and began to wash his disciples’ feet, a task of the lowliest slave. As he talked with them about what he had done, he said, *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you”* (John 13:14-15). Service to others is a thread that runs throughout Jesus’ life and teaching. Upon another occasion when James and John asked Jesus to give them places of honor in his kingdom, Jesus replied, *“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:43-45).

Knowing that his death was imminent, Jesus took the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine present at the Passover meal and instructed his disciples to use them to remember his sacrifice for them. Luke 22:19 tells us that he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and

gave it to them, saying, *“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”* He then thanked his Father for the fruit of the vine and gave it to them to drink, saying, *“This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom”* (Matthew 26:28-29).

After speaking words of encouragement to his apostles and praying for them (John 14-17), Jesus and his apostles (other than Judas, who had left early to betray him) went out to Gethsemane, a small olive grove outside the city where Jesus often went to pray. There Jesus, anticipating the agony of the suffering which he was about to face, prayed fervently, begging his Father to *“take this cup from me”* and save him from the horror which was ahead of him. That is what he wanted but, consistent with the heart of obedience which had characterized his life on earth thus far, he added, *“yet not my will but yours be done”* (Luke 22:42). Even though an angel appeared and strengthened him, he was still in such anguish that as he prayed even more earnestly, his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:43-44).

When Jesus had finished praying, Judas arrived with a crowd armed with swords and clubs. Judas had told the soldiers that he would identify Jesus with a kiss, but Jesus identified himself openly, rendering Judas unnecessary. As they began to arrest Jesus, Peter, in an effort to defend him, cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Jesus miraculously restored Malchus’ ear prior to being bound and taken away. Even though they had promised never to forsake Jesus (Mark 14:27-31), Peter and the other disciples fled in fear (Matthew 26:56), leaving Jesus to face the agony of his mock trials, beatings and crucifixion alone.



## **The Coming of the Promised Savior**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Provide an example of a Scripture which shows that Jesus was actively involved in our creation.

What conditions existed in the Roman empire during the first half of the first century A.D. which were helpful to the spread of the good news about Jesus during that time?

Even though Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, he did not fit the kingly mold most people were anticipating. Unlike most earthly rulers and leaders, Jesus' life was characterized by humility, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

John the Baptist described Jesus as the "*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). What made Jesus the only one who was qualified to pay the price for mankind's sins?

Name three of the miracles which Jesus performed.

- a)
- b)
- c)

What attitude motivated Jesus' miracles?

Did he ever use his power in self-serving ways?

Give an example of Jesus combining a miracle with teaching.

(over)

When asked to choose the greatest commandment in the Law, what was Jesus' answer?

Give an example during Jesus' ministry of how the Jews reacted to his claim to be God.

Even though many refused to follow Jesus, others were drawn to his invitation which is recorded in Matthew 11:28-30. What was that invitation?

As the Jewish leaders were filled with jealousy and plotted to kill Jesus, why did they have difficulty finding a suitable time to arrest him?

During the last Passover feast which Jesus ate with his apostles, what did he do while they were arguing over who among them was the greatest?

According to Mark 10:43-45, why did Jesus come to earth?

What did Jesus tell his disciples to eat and drink in memory of his sacrifice for them?

When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane prior to his arrest, what did he beg God the Father to do?

According to Matthew 26:56, how many of Jesus' disciples deserted him and fled when he was arrested?

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