

Jesus

Passages from the
Gospel Records

With Concise Commentary
by Ron Jones

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with Brief Commentary
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Preface

This is a book about Jesus of Nazareth taken from passages of the gospel records written by four of Jesus' disciples, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew and John were part of the twelve apostles. The apostles were personal representatives appointed by Jesus himself to speak his truth to the world. These men were eyewitnesses of the events of the life and words of Jesus. Mark and Luke were close associates of two apostles. Mark assisted Peter the apostle in ministry. Luke assisted Paul the apostle who was appointed by Jesus as the 13th apostle on the Damascus Road.

The purpose of this book is to give you a clear picture of the life, teachings, claims, death and resurrection of Jesus as presented in the gospel records by these four disciples.

I have taken passages from the four gospels that show clearly the words and life of Jesus and added some brief commentary. Each passage from the gospels is identified by chapter and verse at its end so it can be readily found in the Bible. In a few places I have also added some references in brackets [] to help make the text more understandable. Because the passages are arranged by themes, they do not necessarily appear in chronological order.

My desire is to let the writers of the gospels who actually knew Jesus or who knew those who knew Jesus speak to you what they saw and heard about Jesus some 2000 years ago. I believe it is the only way you can know and understand Jesus for yourselves.

May God show you the true identity of Jesus as described in the gospel records!

Ron Jones

The Character of Jesus

Jesus is often portrayed in the movies as a somber, dedicated man with piercing eyes, traveling the countryside accomplishing his mission with little emotion. Jesus was not like that at all. He had many positive characteristics which were experienced by those he encountered. The gospels give many instances where the character of Jesus can be seen.

Jesus, a man of compassion

Suffering from disease is a part of life. In ancient times, it was a major difficulty in most people's lives. Without the knowledge and sterile environment of modern medicine most were affected by illness in them or in someone they loved. When Jesus saw their pain, he was moved with compassion for them. His healings came from his heart for people.

And it came to pass that he went into a city called Nain. Many of his disciples and many people went with him. Now when he came near to the gate of the city, there was a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother. She was a widow and many people of the city were with her. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her, "Do not cry." He came and touched the coffin and those that were carrying him stood still.

He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." The dead man sat up and began to speak and Jesus gave him to his mother. There came a fear on all and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us and God has visited his people." This news about him spread throughout all Judea and the entire region around it. (Luke 7:11-17)

Jesus, a man of love

Love which comes from God is defined as valuing someone so highly that you give of yourself to help him or her. This kind of love Jesus exhibited throughout his life and ministry. This kind of love motivated Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of people. Just before he died, Jesus spoke to his disciples about the love he showed them and the need for them to show love to each other. Jesus said,

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12-13)

Love means sharing. If you value someone, you want him or her to share in whatever is valuable to you. What was most valuable to Jesus was the love that he shared with God the Father in heaven (in his glory). It was the kind of love a father and son share in a family, yet

infinitely greater. Jesus desired that his disciples would share together with him in heaven this incredible love. In fact, he prayed to the Father that this would be so.

“Father, I wish that they [his disciples] also, whom you have given me, would be with me where I am [when I am in heaven] that they may behold my glory, which you have given me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these [disciples] have known that you have sent me. And I have declared your name to them, and will declare it so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17: 24-26)

Jesus, a man of joy

People often think that Jesus wasn't happy or joyful. They see him only as one committed to accomplishing His Father's will, enduring the cross, and making the sacrifice for man's sin. They think that joy was not a part of Jesus' life nor did it need to be. The reality is that Jesus had a continual joy throughout his life, one that strengthened and sustained him throughout the sacrifices he had to make. What was this joy? It was the joy of loving and being loved by his Father in heaven. This kind of love that he shared with his Father, which can be seen in the passages above, gave him this joy.

As we saw, Jesus desired to bring his disciples into the family relationship that he and the Father shared together. In the family of God, they would experience joy while here on earth, and later eternal joy and happiness in heaven. Jesus said,

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Continue in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall remain in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. These things I have spoken to you so that my joy might be in you and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:9-11)

Earlier in his ministry, Jesus had sent seventy of his disciples out to preach the gospel on a short-term ministry. When they returned, he was filled with joy in what they were able to accomplish for the glory of God and for his Father's wonderful plan to use such ordinary people to accomplish his divine purposes.

And the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us through your name.” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I give you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are recorded in heaven.”

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in his spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight. All things have been handed over to me by my Father and no one knows who the Son is except the Father and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him. (Luke 10:16-22)

Jesus, a man of humility

Jesus taught that the most important goal in life was serving others. Leaders were given authority in order to watch over people and care for them. They were not given it so that they might use people for their own purposes. This is true servant leadership. This is the way Jesus wanted his disciples to lead others.

Jesus called them [the disciples] to himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you.

Whoever will be great among you shall be your servant. Whoever wants to be chief among you shall be the servant of all. For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45)

Behind Jesus' love was great humility. He was willing to humble himself before others in order to minister to their needs. At his last meal with his disciples, he took the position of a Roman slave and washed their feet to teach them this attitude. Before he died, he wanted to teach them that their lives should be directed toward meeting the needs of others before they met their own needs.

Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

During the evening meal, the devil put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from dinner and laid aside his garments. He took a towel and wrapped himself around the waist. Then, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around his waist.

Then he came to Simon Peter. He said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "What I do you do not now realize, but you shall understand hereafter." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet and is clean everywhere. You are clean, but not all of you." For he knew who would betray him; therefore he said, "You are not all clean."

After he had washed their feet and had taken up his garments and sat down again, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master. Neither is he that is sent greater than the one that sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." (John 13:1-17)

Jesus, a man of passion for God's honor

Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover celebration. When he arrived at the temple, he saw that the money-changers who were supposed to be selling animals for sacrifice at reasonable prices were cheating the people by selling them at exorbitant prices. They were only interested in making a profit and thus turned the temple area into a marketplace. His passion for the integrity of God's temple and for the welfare of God's people caused him to drive the moneychangers out and demonstrate God's anger toward them for this selfish practice.

The Jewish Passover was near and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves and the money-changers sitting there.

When he had made a whip of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple and the sheep and the oxen and poured out the coins of the money-changers and overthrew the tables. He said to them who were selling doves, "Take these things out of here and do not make my Father's house a house of merchandise." And his disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house has consumed me."

Then the Jews answered him, "What sign do you show us since you do these things?" Jesus said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

When therefore he had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to them and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. (John 2:13-22)

Jesus, a man of great commitment

The three and half years that Jesus ministered to people before his death were filled with days and days of long hours, teaching and healing people as he traveled through various cities and villages of Galilee and Judea, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. Jesus' passion for helping people enter the kingdom of God kept him focused on fulfilling the great mission his Father had sent him on. Matthew recounts these activities,

Jesus went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every kind of sickness and disease among the people. His fame spread throughout all Syria and they brought to him all who were ill with various diseases and pains and those who were demon-possessed and those who were having seizures and were paralytics and he healed them. Great multitudes of people followed him from Galilee and from Decapolis and from Jerusalem and from Judea and from beyond Jordan. (Matthew 4:23-25)

Jesus, a man of prayer

In the midst of Jesus' ministry, he always took time to pray to God his Father. Jesus did this not as a ritual or obligation, but because he trusted his Father to lead and empower him for ministry. Jesus would often take an extended time by himself to pray. Mark records,

Rising early in the morning before daylight, he [Jesus] went out to a solitary place and prayed. Simon and those with him followed after him. When they had found him, they said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." He said to them, "Let us go into the nearby towns so that I may preach there also for that is why I came." And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and cast out demons. (Mark 1:35-39)

Matthew records another time of pray,

And immediately Jesus compelled his disciples to get into a boat and to go before him to the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. When he had sent them away, he went up into a mountain by himself to pray. When evening had come, he was there alone. (Matthew 14:22-23)

The Miracles of Jesus

Jesus' public ministry of three and a half years consisted of traveling, preaching, healing, and performing other miracles. Through his preaching and miracles he revealed his divine identity as the Son of God and his love for people.

Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of sickness and disease among the people. His fame spread throughout Syria. They brought to him sick people that were afflicted with various diseases and pains, those who were possessed with demons, those who were having seizures, and those that were paralyzed. He healed them. (Matthew 4:23-24)

Jesus heals a man with leprosy.

Leprosy was a dreaded disease in ancient Israel that slowly ate away one's skin. It was so contagious that lepers had to be isolated from society. When Jesus touched a leper and healed him, he showed not only his power, but also his love. Uninfected humans never touched lepers.

A leper came to him, knelt down and earnestly asked him, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing. Be clean." As soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed. He sternly warned him and sent him away, saying, "See that you say nothing to anyone. Go your way. Show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." But he went out and began to make it known everywhere so much so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city. He was outside in uninhabited areas and they came to him from everywhere. (Mark 1:40-45)

Jesus heals a paralyzed man.

Everywhere Jesus went huge crowds followed. Four men brought their paralyzed friend to be healed by him, but there were too many people around. Driven by their faith in who Jesus was and what he could do for their friend and using their ingenuity, they carried him up on the roof and lowered him down right in front of Jesus. Jesus saw their faith and used the opportunity to teach everyone that he had the power not only to heal, but also to forgive the paralyzed man's sin.

The response of the leaders of Israel to Jesus' forgiving of the paralytic demonstrated that they realized that he was claiming to possess the authority that belonged to God alone. They thought he was speaking blasphemy because they did not believe that he was the Son of God.

After some time he [Jesus] entered Capernaum and it was heard that he had come home. So many people gathered together that there was no room to receive them, not even at the door. He preached the word to them. Some came to him bringing one who was paralyzed, carried by

four men. When they could not come near to him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was. When they had broken it up, they let down the bed on which the paralyzed man lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

But there were some scribes sitting there who were thinking, "Why does this man speak such blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" When Jesus perceived what they were thinking, he said to them, "Why do you think these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?' But so that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, I say to you, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go your way to your house.'" Immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went out before them all. They were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus feeds five thousand people at one time.

Many of Jesus miracles were performed when he saw the needs of others. There is no more fundamental need than the need for food. A huge crowd had followed him all day and it was too late to send them away without providing something for them to eat. So Jesus again demonstrated his love for people and his divine ability to meet their needs by multiplying food for all of them.

After these things Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. A great multitude of people followed him because they saw his miracles, which he did on those who were diseased. Jesus went up to a mountainside, and there he sat with his disciples. The Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. When Jesus lifted up his eyes, and saw a great crowd of people who had come to him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread that these people may eat?"

This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here, who has five barley loaves and two small fish. But what are these among so many?"

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in the area so the people sat down. There was about five thousand. Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to the disciples. The disciples distributed them to those who were sitting down, and they did the same with the fish as much as they wanted. When they were filled, he said to his disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing may be lost."

Therefore, they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above what had been eaten. When the people saw the miracle that Jesus did, they said, "This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world." When Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him king, he departed again into a mountain by himself alone. (John 6:1-15)

Jesus walks on the water during a storm.

Many people over the ages have claimed to heal others when in fact, they couldn't. But one thing no one has ever been able to do is command nature. This separated Jesus from all other men who ever lived. When Jesus took control of the sea and the wind, he showed beyond a shadow of a doubt that he was the divine Son of God.

And immediately Jesus made his disciples get into a ship, and go before him to the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain by himself to pray. When the evening came, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea [of Galilee], being tossed by waves, for the wind was against it. In the fourth watch of the night Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It's a spirit!" and cried out for fear.

Immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I. Do not be afraid." Peter answered him and said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." And he said, "Come." When Peter came down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. Beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me." And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him. He [Jesus] said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they came into the ship, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the ship worshiped him, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God." (Matthew 14:22-33)

Jesus heals the servant of a Roman centurion.

Many kinds of people were attracted to Jesus and what he was able to do for them or those whom they loved that were in pain. But Jesus was more than a healer and offered far more than healing their physical bodies. He offered eternal life, the healing of their relationship with God.

Those to whom Jesus responded always had the same characteristic, genuine faith in him as the messiah, the Son of God. This was true not only of some of the Jews, but also some of the Romans. Roman soldiers were everywhere keeping the peace. In the passage below, a Roman centurion (officer who was over a hundred soldiers) came to Jesus desperate for help.

Now a certain [Roman] centurion's servant, who was valued by him was sick and about to die. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly saying, "He is worthy for you to do this for him, for he loves our nation and he has built us a synagogue."

Then Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him saying, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not think that I was worthy to come to you, but say a word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard these things he was amazed at him and turned around and said to the people that followed him, "I say to you, I have not found so great a faith even in Israel." And

those who were sent, returned to the house and found the servant who had been sick well.” (Luke 7:2-10)

Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus.

The power Jesus possessed was never more obvious or amazing than when Jesus actually raised someone who had died. Death is the one true reality that grips all human beings. It is the one final irreversible event that no man can change. But Jesus was no ordinary man. He had the power to bring a person back to life with his divine power!

When Jesus crossed over again by boat to the other side many people gathered to him while he was by the lake. One of the rulers of the synagogue named Jairus came to him. When he saw him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly saying, “My little daughter lies at the point of death. Please come and lay your hands on her so that she may be healed and she will live.” Jesus went with him. (Mark 5:21-24)

While he was speaking, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house a certain man who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid, only believe.”

He permitted no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John (the brother of James). And he came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue and saw the commotion and those who were weeping and wailing greatly.

When he had come in, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead, but is sleeping.” They laughed at him scornfully. But when he had put them all out, he took the father and the mother of the child and those who were with him and entered in where the child was lying. He took the child by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cumi” which means “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” Immediately the child arose and walked, for she was twelve years old and they were greatly astonished. (Mark 5:35-42)

Jesus raises his friend, Lazarus, from the dead.

Jesus had developed a friendship with Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. When Lazarus became sick and died, Jesus raised him from the dead. This incredible miracle became one of the most widely circulated of his ministry. As a result, many came to trust him as Savior.

Then when Jesus came, he found that he [Lazarus] had been in the tomb four days already. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. Many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him, but Mary still sat in the house. Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know, that even now, whatever you will ask of God, God will give it to you.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother shall rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, even if he should die, shall live. Whoever lives and believes in me

shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who comes into the world." (John 11:17-27)

Jesus, again deeply emotional, came to the grave. It was a cave and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of the one who was dead, said to him, "Lord, by this time he will have a stench for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?" Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was laid.

Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me. Because of the people who are standing by I said this so that they may believe that you have sent me." When he had spoken, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." He who was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. His face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him and let him go." Then many of the Jews who came to Mary and had seen the things, which Jesus did, believed in him. (John 11:38-45)

The Claims of Jesus

Jesus was not like any other religious leader the world has ever seen. Other religious leaders did not heal people whenever they chose. Other religious leaders did not walk on water or still rainstorms. If God were to become a man what would he be like? He would be like Jesus.

In fact, Jesus taught that he was the Son of God. He taught that he had a Father who was God. What did he mean? Were there two Gods, a Father and a Son? Was Jesus a lesser God from God the Father? Was he a man who became Godlike? Jesus taught that there was only one God. He also taught that God was not like human beings, he was a trinity, three persons in one God.

Those three persons were Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. How God can be like this is a mystery, but that is what Jesus taught. This is evident in the command Jesus gave to his disciples as he tells them to baptize new followers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus specifically used the singular “name” rather than the plural emphasizing their one nature and being as God.

Jesus came and spoke to them,

“All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. And, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus claims to be the Christ, the Son of God.

In the Old Testament of the Bible, God had promised his people, a deliverer. The Hebrew word for deliverer is “messiah.” The Greek word is “Christ.” The Christ was to be sent by God to bring his people and anyone else who would accept him into his kingdom. The Christ was to be the Son of God.

“Son of God” describes the fact that Jesus was not only a man, but also God. He had a human mother, but no human father. His Father who is a spirit was God. His “conception” occurred by a supernatural miracle of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was aware that he was the Son of God. During his ministry, he took his disciples aside and asked them who they believed he was. He wanted to make sure they had grasped his true identity as the Son of God. When they did understand this he blessed them for it.

He [Jesus] said to them, “Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:15-17)

Jesus claims to be one with God the Father.

Jesus claimed that as the Son of God he was one with God the Father. The Israelites who believed in only one God as Jesus did, knew that he was claiming to be that one God and not another god. Jesus never disputed this understanding of his teaching about himself. When he said, "I and the Father are one." The Jews understood his bold claim to be of the same nature as God and wanted to invoke the penalty for blasphemy, death by stoning since they didn't believe him.

It was the feast of the dedication and it was winter at Jerusalem. Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then the Jews came around him and said to him, "How long do you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you did not believe. The works [miracles] that I do in my Father's name bear witness of me. But you do not believe because you are not part of my sheep [believers in Jesus]. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give to them eternal life and they shall never perish. Nor shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from my Father, for which of those works do you stone me?" The Jews answered him, "We do not stone you for a good work, but for blasphemy because you, being a man, declare yourself to be God." (John 10:22-33)

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to the apostles in his resurrected body. Thomas, one of them, was not present. When he was told of it, he had doubts whether Jesus really appeared. But, when he later saw Jesus, he immediately worshiped him as his Lord and God. Thomas, being an Israelite, believed in only one God. He was worshiping Jesus as the same God as the Father. Jesus accepted Thomas' worship as a true recognition of his identity.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came [after he resurrected]. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I shall see in his hands the mark of the nails and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

After eight days his disciples were inside and Thomas was with them and the doors were shut. Then Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be to you." Then he said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger and behold my hands. Reach here your hand and thrust it into my side. Be not unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God." Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen me, have you believed? Blessed are the ones that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:24-29)

Jesus also claims to be a man, a human being.

When human beings sinned against God, they brought upon themselves a penalty of eternal separation from God. In order to save human beings from this penalty, the Son of God had to become a human being and pay the penalty as a substitute for those who would turn to him by

faith. Jesus was fully human. The messiah was to be both the “Son of God” and the “Son of Man.” The “Son of Man” was a title used of the messiah, which revealed Jesus’ humanity.

There was a rich man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector. He tried to see Jesus, but could not because of the pressing crowd and because he was short. He ran to the front and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him. He said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” He hurried and came down and welcomed him joyfully.

When they saw it, they all murmured, saying, “He has gone to be a guest of a man who is a sinner.” Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I will give him back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “This day salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man [Jesus] has come to seek and to save those who are lost.” (Luke 19:2-10)

Jesus' earthly life showed that he was a real human being. His human characteristics were true of his human nature and body. Jesus was born and grew up physically and mentally as any boy would grow into a man.

And it came to pass in those days that a decree from Caesar Augustus went out that a census should be taken of the entire [Roman] world. This census was first made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to be enrolled in the census, every one into his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David. He went to be enrolled with Mary who was engaged to him and was pregnant. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. She brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. The grace of God was upon him. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:40, 52)

Like any human being, Jesus became hungry and tired as he spent so much time on the road preaching and healing.

Then he [Jesus] came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus, being wearied from his journey, sat on the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (for his disciples had gone away to the city to buy food). (John 4:5-8)

Jesus Christ was one person with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. His human nature is distinct from his divine nature and his divine nature is distinct from his human nature. Jesus was not half man and half God. He was both fully God and fully man. This is the

key truth that must be remembered in understanding the true identity of Jesus Christ. Therefore, he has both divine (“Son of God”) and human (“Son of Man”) titles that apply to him at the same time.

Jesus claims he came to save people from their sins.

Jesus taught that people have sinned against God and have been condemned by God with a penalty of death for their sins. He declared this when he was speaking to those who would not believe that he was the messiah, the Son of God, and who would not believe that they were condemned for their sins.

And he [Jesus] said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am he [the messiah, the Son of God], you shall die in your sins.” (John 8:23-24)

Jesus called his death on the cross a “ransom.” When Jesus lived, slavery existed. A “ransom” was a payment given to free a person from being a slave. God the Father sent Jesus to pay the penalty for the sins of those who would believe and thus free them from condemnation.

But Jesus called them [his disciples] to him, and said,

“You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you, but whoever will be great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever will be chief among you, let him be your slave. Even as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28)

The Death of Jesus

All four gospel records give many details about the death of Jesus. In his last days, Jesus had to face the mounting opposition of the Jewish leaders who refused to believe his claims that he was the Son of God and who feared his power over the people. This opposition became so strong it resulted in his being judged and condemned by the Jewish authorities as a blasphemer worthy of the death penalty. Once this was done, they brought Jesus before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who alone was given the power by Rome to inflict this ultimate penalty in their country.

Jesus is brought to trial before the high priest.

The Jewish leaders arrested Jesus and immediately brought him before their religious authorities, the high priests, elders, and council. In their minds, Jesus' crime was claiming to be the messiah, the Son of God when he was not. At first, they tried to bring false witnesses against him, but were unable to find any testimony consistent with another or substantial enough. Finally the high priest confronted Jesus directly desiring to get him to voice his claim outright so they could condemn him.

And those that had laid hold of Jesus [when they arrested him] led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. Peter followed him from afar to the high priest's palace, and went in and sat with the servants to see the final outcome. Now the chief priests, elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death. They found none. Even though many false witnesses came, they still found none. At the end two false witnesses came who said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" The high priest arose and said to him, "Do you answer nothing? What are these witnesses saying against you?" But Jesus held his peace.

The high priest answered, "I charge you by the living God that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "Yes, it is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, from now on you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy. What further need do we have of witnesses? Now you have heard his blasphemy. What do you think?" They answered, "He is guilty of death." Then they spit in his face and beat him. Others struck him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ. Who is the one who struck you?" (Matthew 26:57-68)

When morning had come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. When they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. (Matthew 27:1-2)

Jesus is brought to trial before the Roman governor.

Once Jesus had been condemned for blasphemy they took him before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, for judgment. The Romans had taken the power of capital punishment away from the Jewish leaders so they had no choice if they wanted to get rid of Jesus. Pilate saw this as no more than a religious dispute among Jews, a troublesome people in the minds of the Romans. However, Pilate could not afford any kind of uprising by the Jews over one of their own claiming to be a king that could possibly be an affront to the Roman Emperor himself. So Pilate eventually complied.

Jesus stood before the governor and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." When he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" He did not answer him one word so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the people a prisoner whom they wished. They had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you wish that I release to you? Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that they had delivered him because of envy.

When he sat down on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let him be crucified." The governor said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they cried out the more, saying, "Let him be crucified."

When Pilate saw that he could not prevail, but rather a disturbance was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person. You will see to it." Then all the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them. (Matthew 27:11-26a)

Jesus is condemned to die.

Jesus, not being a citizen of Rome, could be condemned to the terribly cruel fate of crucifixion. Roman citizens could not. Crucifixion began by a scourging of the condemned with a whip made of leather strands with pieces of bone at their tips. If that wasn't cruel enough, Jesus was mocked and humiliated by the soldiers who dressed him up like a king with a crown made of thorns and laughed jokingly at his appearance. Then they led him away to be crucified.

When he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall and the whole band of soldiers gathered around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. When they had weaved a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and a reed in his right hand and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the

head. After they had mocked him, they took the robe off of him and put his own garments on him and led him away to crucify him. (Matthew 27:26b-31)

Jesus is nailed to a cross and crucified.

Crucifixion involved hammering nails into the hands (at the wrists) of the prisoner onto a piece of wood that stretched across his arms. He was then lifted up onto the top of a large stake already in the ground. With his feet nailed to it, he was left to desperately push his body up to keep from dying of asphyxiation. Eventually, he couldn't do it any longer and his body would drop down and death would soon follow. Matthew records the crucifixion of Jesus as follows:

They crucified him and divided his garments, casting lots that what was spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled, "They divided my garments among them and upon my clothing they cast lots." They sat down and watched him there. They set up over his head his accusation, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Then there were two thieves crucified with him, one on the right and another on the left.

Those that passed by reviled him, swinging their heads and saying, "You that destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In the same way, the chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked him saying, "He saved others. He himself he cannot save. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him. He trusted in God. Let him rescue him now, if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Matthew 27:35-43)

Jesus, when he had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up his spirit. The veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The earth quaked and the rocks split. The graves were opened and many bodies of the saints who slept arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection. They went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those with him who were watching Jesus saw the earthquake and those things that happened, they were filled with fear, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God." (Matthew 27:50-54)

Jesus is buried in a rich man's tomb.

Because the Sabbath was a few hours away and dead bodies would defile the Sabbath, bodies would be taken down quickly without all the regular burial procedures. Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, wanted to make sure his master's body was taken down from the cross and buried honorably. He went to Pilate and requested Jesus' body and placed it in his own new tomb.

When evening came, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also Jesus' disciple. He went to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock. He rolled a great stone at

the door of the tomb and departed. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the tomb. (Matthew 27:57-61)

The Jewish leaders were not satisfied that Jesus' death had finally stamped out his leadership and movement. They remembered that Jesus had claimed that he would rise from the dead so they did everything they could to keep anyone from tampering with Jesus' body. They requested a Roman guard at the tomb and had a Roman seal put on it. The punishment for breaking the seal and suffering the wrath of the Roman government was enough to keep people away.

The next day that followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together before Pilate saying, "Sir, we remember that while he was still alive, that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' Command therefore that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away and say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead.' Then the last error will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard. Go your way and make it as secure as you can." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting up a guard. (Matthew 27:57-66)

The Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus had predicted that he would die and be raised up on the third day. This would be proof that he was who he claimed to be, the Son of God. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and many others so they could give eyewitness testimony that he was alive from the dead.

Jesus is declared risen by an angel at the tomb.

The burial of Jesus' body on Friday evening had been hurried. They had quickly wrapped his body mixing in myrrh and aloes, but it had not been properly anointed, as was the Jewish custom. So, some of the women that followed Jesus came to the tomb on Sunday morning for that purpose. Even though Jesus had predicted his resurrection, his disciples had not fully grasped what he meant. When they came to the tomb, what they saw startled them.

After the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. There was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. The guards shook in fear of him and became as dead men.

The angel said to the women, "Fear not, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay. Go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. He will go before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I have told you." (Matthew 28:1-7)

Jesus appears to women near the tomb.

The women followed the direction of the angels and headed for the place where the other disciples were. On their way they ran into Jesus, making them the first witnesses of the resurrected Christ.

They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to bring his disciples the message. As they went to tell his disciples, Jesus met them, saying, "Greetings." They came and held him by the feet and worshiped him. Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers that they should go into Galilee and there they shall see me." (Matthew 28:8-10)

Jesus appears to his disciples.

Jesus later appeared to his eleven disciples to show them that he had definitely risen from the dead. It was an intimate setting where they could be sure he was really Jesus, alive from the dead. He even gave them an opportunity to see him test his resurrection body by asking them to give him something to eat. Jesus also wanted to help them understand that all that

happened to him over the last week had all been predicted in the Old Testament hundreds of years before this time.

As they [the disciples] spoke, Jesus himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were terrified and frightened and thought that they had seen a spirit. He said to them, "Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." When he had spoken this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they still did not believe yet rejoiced and wondered, he said to them, "Do you have any food here?" They gave him a piece of a broiled fish. He took it and ate it before them.

He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and said to them, "Thus it is written and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you. Wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are endowed with power from on high." (Luke 24:36-49)

Jesus ascends into heaven.

Luke tells us in his Book of Acts that Jesus taught his disciples for forty days and nights after he had resurrected from the dead. When Jesus had completed his training of the apostles, the time had come for him to return to the Father by ascending into the spiritual realm of heaven. Luke records,

And he led them out as far as Bethany and lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he blessed them, he departed from them and was carried up into heaven. They worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. (Luke 24:50-53)

An Invitation from Jesus

Jesus came to give people the opportunity to enter into a personal relationship with him. He likened that relationship to a shepherd and his sheep. Jesus said that he was the good shepherd who cared deeply about his sheep, so much so that he was willing to lay down his life for them. When Jesus laid down his life at the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of people, he gave them the opportunity to come to him and receive forgiveness and become a part of his spiritual flock. Jesus said,

"I am the good shepherd and I know my sheep and my sheep know me. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep [Gentile believers] who are not of this fold [Jewish believers]. I must also bring them and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Therefore, my Father loves me because I lay down my life that I might take it again." (John 10:14-17)

"My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. I give to them eternal life and they shall never perish; neither shall any one snatch them out of my hand. My Father who gave them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." (John 10:27-30)

Jesus invites people to come to him for salvation.

Jesus proclaimed,

"Come to me all you who labor and are 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 shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

To come to Jesus involves trusting in Jesus.

Jesus said that people "come" to him by believing in him, that is, by trusting that he is the Son of God who died on the cross for the sins of people, and that he will give them eternal life if they trust in Him. Jesus said,

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned. But the one who does not believe is condemned already, because he [or she] has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

To come to Jesus involves turning away from sin.

Jesus was very specific about the issue of sin in people's lives. Sin is violating God's moral standards. Jesus offered forgiveness for sins only if people repent, that is, turn away from sin and follow him. This was necessary if they wanted to enter his kingdom and receive eternal life.

From that time Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

Jesus said that if people did not turn to him and believe in him, they would die in their sins. Dying in their sins meant divine judgment. Divine judgment meant punishment forever away from the presence of God. Jesus said,

"For if you do not believe that I am he [the messiah, the Son of God], you shall die in your sins." (John 8:24)

Jesus cried out with a loud voice and said, "He who believes in me, does not believe in me, but in him [the Father] who sent me. The one who sees me sees him who sent me. I have come as a light into the world that whoever believes in me should not remain in spiritual darkness. If any man hears my words, and does not believe, I do not judge him. For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

The one, who rejects me and does not receive my words, has one who judges him. It is the word that I have spoken that shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken from myself, but the Father who sent me gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. I know that his commandment is eternal life. Whatever I speak therefore is what the Father has spoken to me." (John 12:44-50)

Trusting in God is not enough, you must trust in Jesus.

Many people assume that it doesn't matter what they believe about Jesus. As long as they "believe in God and love him" they will go to heaven. But Jesus did not teach that belief. Jesus taught that God the Father desired that he, God the Son, would also be honored and glorified. Anyone that does not honor the Son cannot honor the Father who sent him. Jesus said,

"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:22-24)

Jesus taught that he is the only way to salvation and eternal life. There is no other way to heaven or living with God forever.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

To come to Jesus involves asking him to save you.

The Gospels record that the people that came to Jesus all did the same thing. They believed that he was who he claimed to be; they turned from their sins; they trusted him to save them; and they asked him to save them. An example of this is the last person Jesus saved before he died. He was a criminal on a cross hanging next to Jesus.

He had sinned against God and man and had received the just penalty of his crimes. Yet God in his mercy gave him the opportunity while facing death to hang on a cross next to God's own Son. This man realized who Jesus was and humbled himself before the Son of God. He turned from his sin, trusted Jesus, and asked Jesus to save him. Jesus responded to the man's faith as he always did, promising him that he would receive eternal life with the Son of God forever. This is what Luke records,

And also two others who were criminals were led away with him to be put to death. And when they came to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right, and the other on the left. (Luke 23:32-33)

And one of the criminals who hung there was insulting him, saying, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us." But the other one rebuked him, saying, "Don't you fear God since you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed suffer justly, for we receive what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Jesus proclaimed that he came to earth to bring the "good news of the kingdom of God." Luke records,

And he said unto them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other towns also for that is why I was sent." (Luke 4:34)

The word "gospel" means good news. "The kingdom of God" refers to the loving and benevolent rule of God over his people both now and forever in his presence. The good news that Jesus brought was that ordinary people could come into a love relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father by turning from their sins and embracing Christ by faith. Thus they would enter his kingdom as children of God and experience all the privileges and blessings their heavenly Father provided for them through the death of his Son.

This good news that Jesus preached in the first century is still being preached by his disciples today. If you choose to repent of your sin and ask Jesus to save you and you commit to following him, he will come into your life and bring you into his spiritual kingdom.