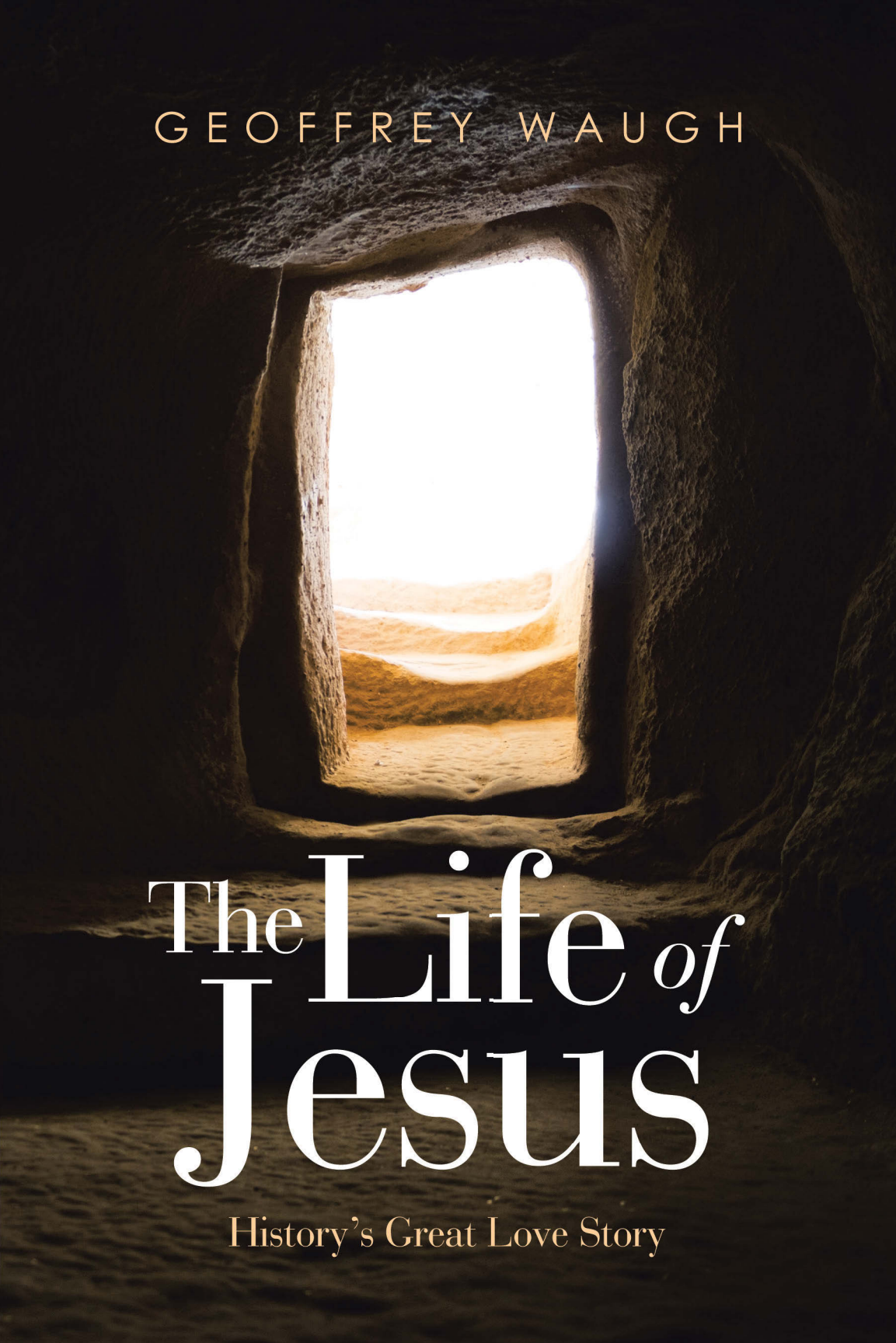
GEOFFREY WAUGH



The Life of Jesus

History's Great Love Story

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GEOFFREY WAUGH

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& ZONDERVAN

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TO MY PARENTS
WHO FIRST CAPTURED MY HEART WITH THESE STORIES
AND TO OUR CHILDREN AND OUR
CHILDREN'S CHILDREN
AND THEIR CHILDREN WHO LOVE
AND ARE LOVED ALWAYS

Endorsements

A most helpful telling of the life of Jesus using the biblical text and adding some background and charts. Anyone using this book will be enriched.
Rev Dr John Olley, Research Fellow, Morling College, Australia

Geoff Waugh has written a very helpful devotional book about the Saviour of the world who is also the loving presence in believers. Having known Geoff for over sixty years I can testify that every word written proceeds from his own heart of love for Jesus and for all God's children. He has used Scripture as his main source and has been faithful to both the divinity and humanity of Jesus as expressed in the Gospels. His use of chronology for headings and the many sub-headings makes the book simpler to absorb, even for an enquirer or new believer. I warmly commend this book.
Rev Dr Tony Cupit, Former Director, Baptist World Alliance

This is a very informative, amazing, and powerful book. Thanks to the author for investing hours of research, expressed with his masterful command of language.
Alex Johnson

This is a wonderful book and can be read over and over.
Kerry Rawson

I keep this book with my Bible. It is especially helpful when reading through the Gospels.
Cathy Hartwig

I read your book last night. This is a great book. Thanks for writing this for all of us.
Nabeel Sharoon, Pakistan, translator of this book into Urdu, Hindi, Sindhi, Pakistani Punjabi and Indian Punjabi, as on renewaljournal.com.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but may have eternal life
John 3:16

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us
and we ought to lay down our lives for one another
1 John 3:16

No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one's life for one's friends
[Jesus's words on the Jewish day he died]
John 15:13

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Preface

Why would such a good man, who loved so profoundly and helped so many people, be killed? Why did he provoke opposition?

If God walked among us in the person of his Son, why would people want to kill him? Why did so many vehemently oppose him?

That puzzled me as a boy. It still does.

The greatest love story the world has ever seen led to the excruciating death of crucifixion.

Many people have given their lives for other people as soldiers do in war. They die for others, defending home and country. But Jesus's death was different. God's Son chose to die for us because of his immense love for us. He took our place. His death gives us life. He is the perfect, sinless, eternal sacrifice for us. His blood cleanses us from all our sin as we trust in him. We are forgiven.

But why did so many good people, good religious people, hate him? That puzzled and fascinated me, so I explore that mystery in this book. I wanted to write a summary overview that people of all ages could read.

I always believed in Jesus. Even as a small boy I loved to hear and then read stories about him. He was so unique, so different. I believed his story as a boy and trusted in him. I still do and I hope you do too.

Jesus did what was good. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, set people free from addictions and evil, performed miracles, and even raised dead people. Huge crowds followed him and wanted him to be their king.

Now billions follow him, captivated by his love, the greatest love story of all. You can do that also. I invite you to simply pray something like this: Thank you Lord for all you've done. Forgive me for any wrong in my life. I trust in you and give my life to you.

Introduction

The year on our calendar or diary reminds us of when Jesus was born, approximately. We count the years from his arrival. So when you look at your diary or calendar you can be reminded again of Jesus.

They called him Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus) of Nazareth, the same name as Moses's famous general who led God's people into their Promised Land. *Yeshua* means God saves, or God is salvation.

That name comes to us in English through many translations from *Yeshua* or *Y'shua* in Hebrew and Aramaic, then translated into *Iesous* in Greek, then to *IESVS* in Latin and later as *IESUS*, as printed in the first edition of the King James Bible in 1611. Later that century 'J' replaced the 'I' so the English name became *Jesu* (vocative) and *Jesus* (nominative), but eventually as just *Jesus* in English. Other languages have translations such as *Jesu, Yesu*, and *Isa*.

Bible translations used the name *Jesus* for Joshua/Jesus of Nazareth, and the name *Joshua* for others with that same name.[1] So in English the name Jesus became unique and sacred for Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. The angel Gabriel announced his name before his birth to both Mary his mother and to Joseph who married Mary.[2] Gabriel explained that Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus) had that name because he would save his people from their sins.

The great love story had begun. Jesus came to save us and give us eternal life.

His followers recorded that story of his life and his love in the good news of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The

---

[1] *Iesous* (Yeshua) is translated as Joshua in these verses: Luke 3:29; Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8.

[2] Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21.

rest of the New Testament explores the mystery and wonder of that amazing life and love.

Scholars have a bewildering array of theories about the Bible, and about who wrote what, and when, and where, and why. I'm content to run with traditional explanations that have been used throughout history.

Jesus's unique and wonderful life, his brutal death, and his powerful resurrection, all reveal his and God's eternal love for us all. You could pause and thank him right now, even as you read this.

John's Gospel emphasizes God's eternal love revealed in Jesus. It includes the most famous passage in the Bible:

> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
>
> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.[3]

That love, powerfully shown on the cross, has transformed billions of lives, restoring believers to an intimate and eternal relationship with God.

Three physical metaphors help me to be constantly aware of, and grateful for, God's presence with us always:

1. Light surrounds you. By it you can read this. The sun always shines, even when it's hidden from us. Light shines around us though we may be unaware of it. God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. We can live in his light.
2. Blood pumps through your body right now, cleansing and healing. We may be unaware of it until reactions like alarm alert us to our beating heart. Jesus's blood cleanses from all sin, always. We can trust him for he is with us.

[3] John 3:16–17 (NKJV).

3. We may breathe without being aware of it, or we can be aware and take deep breaths, as you may have done just now! Breath purifies our lungs and body. God is Spirit and like breath or fresh breeze, he can purify us.

May the light of God's love breathe life in you right now.

We've been made in God's image to have an eternal, loving relationship with him that even transcends death. We can know and experience God's unconditional love no matter how far we stray from him. Those who stray most are often the most grateful for his forgiveness and love. We all stray in many ways and we all need forgiveness and we can and should be truly grateful.

God knows and loves us as we are. That makes praying or talking to him easy because he already knows our failures and struggles and welcomes us just as we are. The more honestly we come to him the more he can transform us.

If we have trouble believing we can at least say, "God, if you're there, help me."

Some thoughts may get in the way when we pray or want to talk to God. Just give him those thoughts. He already knows all about it and loves us as we are.

If we reject God's love and mercy by ignoring him and going our own way, we condemn ourselves to eternal darkness away from his light and love.

If we accept his love and forgiveness by believing in him, by trusting him, he gives us life, his eternal life. That makes us new. We are transformed.

Vast numbers of people worldwide of all faiths, and of none, have prayed the prayer in the popular hymn by Charlotte Elliot, 'Just as I am' which includes these adapted verses:

> Just as I am, without one plea
> But that Your blood was shed for me
> And that You bid me come to Thee,
> O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fighting and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

God welcomes us and we can all pray that prayer. A title for Jesus, as in that song, is the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away our sin.

The Life of Jesus is a vast topic with millions of books written about it. I hope my small contribution gives you a helpful overview. I quote from the New Revised Standard Version unless indicated otherwise, and include many footnotes that you can explore to discover more.

Best of all, of course, are the inspired Gospels now in over 700 different languages in Bible translations, and over a further 3,500 languages have Bible portions, especially the Gospels. Read and respond to those Gospels.

1

Birth and Boyhood

It began at the beginning, this great love story, for in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.[4]

Why did he do that? For us.

He did it for you. He loved you so much he created you to know and enjoy him now as you read this, and forever. He offers you intimate, infinite love. He created you through the wondrous union of your parents' ecstasy.

He made the earth for us to inhabit and care for and rule. He made the heavens for us to inherit, the physical firmament, and also the realms of vast, eternal glory prepared especially for us.[5]

He created us free to accept or reject his astounding love. Sadly, we went our own way. We all, like sheep, went astray. We all turned to our own way. So God laid on his Servant, his Son, all our iniquity.[6] God saves us through his Son in their great love for us all. You could pause and thank him now as you read this.

In the beginning Adam and Eve enjoyed intimate, unashamed

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[4] Genesis 1:1.

[5] John 14:1–6; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

[6] Isaiah 53:6. See Isaiah 52:13–53:12, the fourth Servant Song, along with Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–7.

relationship with God and each other. Then, like us, they believed lies and went their own way, losing Paradise. But God still blessed and sustained them and their descendants who chose to love him and live for him. Sadly, only a few did.

Noah and his family loved and obeyed God, and he rescued them from the great flood. People ridiculed him for obeying God and building a huge boat on dry ground, not even in a dry dock. The rainbow became the sign of God's covenant to Noah and his descendants including us.

Abram, a wealthy sheik from the wide, fertile Tigris and Euphrates valleys in western Asia, north–east of the Arabian Peninsula (now Iraq), loved and obeyed God. Renamed Abraham (God's friend) he journeyed to the Promised Land, now called Israel from the name given to his grandson who wrestled with an angel or with the Lord.[7] Circumcision became the covenant sign for them and for their descendants through whom God would provide his salvation for us all.

Abraham and his descendants walked that verdant Promised Land as did Jesus and his followers. So did our family for a month in December–January, 1981–82.[8]

King David reigned there for forty years from around 1000 BC, described as a man after God's own heart who would do what God wanted.[9] That's an amazing picture of God's love and grace for flawed people like David. His descendants ruled from his capital, Jerusalem, till the fall of their kingdom to Babylon. The human Jesus was descended from David through Mary, as was Mary's husband, Joseph, also a descendant of the royal line of David.

God blessed his people through history when they remained faithful to him, but sadly, like us, they often went their own way, not God's way. The northern kingdom of Israel fell captive to Assyria by 722 BC, as did the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon from 597 BC. Cyrus of Persia allowed the exiles in captivity to return in groups

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[7] Genesis 17:5; 32:28; 35:9–10.

[8] See *Exploring Israel* in General Books and Biography on renewaljournal.com

[9] 1 Samuel 13:13–14; Acts 13:22

from 538 BC, then speaking Aramaic, a Semitic language similar to their Hebrew Scriptures. They became known as Jews, a term derived from the former kingdom of Judah.

Alexander the Great's conquests established Greek culture and language in Israel from around 333 BC, eventually sparking the Maccabean revolt from 165 BC, with the Jews gaining independence from 134 BC.

Their independence lasted less than a century till 63 BC when warring brothers appealed to Rome, and Roman armies then invaded and killed twelve thousand people, including temple priests, in the siege of Jerusalem. Rome then ruled its province of Judea, also named from the previous kingdom of Judah.

Those searing memories simmered strong in the Israel of Jesus's day when Jews longed for their Messiah to deliver them. Radicals often attacked the Roman occupying armies. Rome retaliated swiftly and brutally. Their armies slaughtered thousands, with hundreds nailed to crosses as in a rebellion led by Judas the Galilean in AD 6 when Jesus was a boy.[10]

Jesus's elderly relatives, the old priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, lived near Jerusalem. Zechariah had been literally dumfounded while offering incense in the temple during his roster when the angel Gabriel told him they would have a son to be named John. Zechariah spoke again nine months later at his son's birth when he announced that the boy's name was John.[11]

Six months after that temple encounter, Gabriel appeared again, this time to Mary in the northern hills of Nazareth. He announced that Mary would conceive by the Holy Spirit, and her son would be called Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus), meaning God saves or God is salvation.

Mary's pregnancy created a problem for her espoused husband–to–be Joseph. Being a good man, he decided to separate or divorce quietly and not make a fuss now that Mary was pregnant. An angel intervened in a dream and explained about the miraculous pregnancy

[10] Acts 5:36–37.

[11] Luke 1:5–24.

and that Mary's son would be named Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus) because he would save his people from their sins. Matthew wrote that it fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy:

> 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
> and they shall name him Emmanuel'
> which means, 'God is with us.' (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 9:6)

The great love story burst into history through that holy, miraculous conception. Excited at her news, Mary journeyed about one hundred kilometers (sixty–four miles) south to visit her relatives Elizabeth and Zechariah near Jerusalem. Old Elizabeth declared that her baby John leapt in her womb when she heard Mary's news.[12] Mary stayed with Elizabeth and her mute husband for three months till John was born (when Zechariah spoke again). They believed Gabriel's word that John would, in the spirit of Elijah, announce the coming of the Lord. Those two women, supernaturally blessed, carried the wonder of God's loving purposes in their wombs.

This came in the fullness of time.[13] Previous history pointed to Jesus's coming as the Messiah, the Christ, God's Son. We date our diaries and calendars from that birth.

His Birth

Historian Luke gives us details of the birth. The Roman Empire declared a census, and all the men (the ones they counted then) had to go to their place of origin. Joseph, descended from King David, had to go to Bethlehem, David's home town. So pregnant Mary journeyed south once again, this time with Joseph, to Bethlehem, which nestled in the hills twelve kilometers (eight miles) south of Jerusalem. Today Bethlehem is like a southern suburb of the modern, sprawling city of Jerusalem.

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[12] Luke 1:26–45.

[13] Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10.

Luke's story identifies the time of that census and Jesus's birth. Around five hundred years later in AD 525 a monk named Dionysius Exiguus introduced the AD system (*anno domini*, Latin for "in the year of the Lord") with BC used for the years "before Christ." Modern reckoning places Christ's birth at around 4 or 6 BC. In recent years many publications use the alternative Common Era, CE, and before the Common Era, BCE. It's significant that the Common Era dates from the time of the birth of Jesus.

Relatives in crowded Bethlehem had no room in their guest room, so Joseph and Mary used a stable and rested their tiny baby boy in an animals' feeding box, a manger. Modern translations correctly note that there was no room in the guest room, so Mary gave birth to her firstborn son in the stable. "She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them."[14] The tradition of no room in the "inn" dates from the King James Version translation of 1611.

Shepherds in the nearby hills around Bethlehem had quite a night! They saw and heard an angel announce the unique birth, directing them to the baby in the manger. The angel announced a Saviour, the Messiah and Lord, born in the town of David. To their further astonishment, a host of angels suddenly appeared as well, all giving glory to God.

Those shepherds found the baby in the stable and began telling everyone the amazing things they had seen and heard. It's interesting and significant that the unblemished lambs being prepared for the annual sacrifices in the temple were born and shepherded among the flocks of Bethlehem. A title for Jesus is the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for us.

People in those times often overlooked shepherds, regarding them as inferior, as was young David before them in those same hills. There Samuel anointed David to be king, and there David's greater Son was born king.[15]

---

[14] Luke 2:7 (NIV).

[15] 1 Samuel 16:11–13.

Joseph and Mary stayed on in Bethlehem, Joseph's ancestral town. Carpenters could find work readily for there were always homes and furniture needing to be built or repaired.

Surprisingly, about a year or just over a year later, wise men, astrologers from the East, turned up at their home in Bethlehem. They had been tracking an unusual star and believed it signified the birth of a great king. Naturally, they went to the capital, Jerusalem, looking for the new king, to King Herod's astonishment and alarm. The scholars he consulted said that their great king would be from Bethlehem. Scholars were familiar with the messianic prophecies of Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah (both prophesying about the promised Messiah), speaking and writing before the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722 BC, but promising a remnant would return who would see God's eternal kingdom established. They knew Micah 4:1–5 and 5:1–5 (without chapter and verse then, as those were added to Greek and other translations from 1551). It included this prophecy:

> 2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
> who are one of the little clans of Judah,
> from you shall come forth for me
> one who is to rule in Israel,
> whose origin is from of old,
> from ancient days.
> 3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time
> when she who is in labour has brought forth;
> then the rest of his kindred shall return
> to the people of Israel.
> 4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength
> of the Lord,
> in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
> And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
> to the ends of the earth;
> 5 and he shall be the one of peace. (Micah 5:2–5)

Another well–known messianic prophecy from seven hundred years before its fulfilment, about a great Davidic king, declared:

> For unto us a Child is born,
> Unto us a Son is given;
> And the government will be upon His shoulder.
> And His name will be called
> Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,
> Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
> [7] Of the increase of His government and peace
> There will be no end,
> Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
> To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
> From that time forward, even forever.
> The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.
> (Isaiah 9:6–7 NKJV)

The Wise Men and their entourage saw the star shining over the house in Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem, and worshipped the baby king there. They gave Mary and Joseph valuable gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, which certainly helped them through their sudden refugee status.

A dream warned those international visitors not to report back to Herod, as he had requested, so they took another route back east, bypassing Jerusalem.

An angel appeared again to Joseph in a dream, warning him of Herod's plan to destroy the baby king. The angel told Joseph to escape to Egypt and stay there until he was told to return. They packed quickly and left that night.

Matthew tells how in his fury, Herod killed the boys up to two years old in Bethlehem. Herod had a reputation for killing anyone threatening his rule, including three of his own sons and one of his wives.

Jewish historian Flavius Josephus described the infamous king Herod the Great as a successful builder in his youth who became

increasingly paranoid and ruthless during the final decade of his thirty–six year reign. He renovated and expanded the Second Temple built by returning exiles around 516 BC, restoring it to the size of the First Temple built by Solomon, and his teams eventually doubled the size of the sandstone Temple Mount with the Antonia fortress at its northern end. His many palace fortresses included one in Jerusalem and another at Masada by the Dead Sea, the place of the last stand of Jews against the Roman invasion of AD 70. Herod the Great, from an Idumaean father, raised as a Jew, governed under Rome's rule.

His Boyhood

The young boy became a refugee, around a year old, escaping Herod's wrath by fleeing with Mary and Joseph to Egypt. So it is likely that Jesus had an early multi–cultural and multi–lingual boyhood among the Jewish diaspora based in Cairo in Egypt. They remained there until after Herod's death.

Then in another dream, an angel informed Joseph of the death of those who wanted the child killed, and directed him back to the land of Israel. God warned him in a dream so he did not return to Judea where Archelaus, Herod's son, ruled, but instead returned again to Nazareth in Galilee.

The family became well–known around Nazareth. The trade of carpenter can also be translated as builder, artisan, stone worker, and metal worker. Jesus (Joshua) and his brothers James (Jacob in Greek), Joseph, Simon and Judah (or Jude) would learn the family business and care for their sisters. Imagine your older brother being as wise, honest, caring and loving as was Jesus. The townspeople knew him as a carpenter and the son of a carpenter.[16]

As adults, after Jesus's death and resurrection, those brothers and other relatives, such as Mary and Mary's sister and her sons, joined the company of Jesus's followers. James (Jacob) and Judah (Jude)

[16] Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55.

wrote short, strong, practical, pastoral letters to guide believers, now included in our Bibles.

Jesus walked to Jerusalem regularly. Devout Jews journeyed to Jerusalem for each of their three major feasts, Passover and Pentecost around April-May, and Tabernacles in September-October. Jesus attended the Passover feast as a boy of twelve, spending extra days in the temple after the annual festival, discussing the Scriptures he had come to fulfil. The scholars were amazed at his understanding and his questions.

Boys of twelve, then as now, could recite large passages of their Scriptures including from the Torah (the five books of Moses) and the Psalms, as well as the Prophets. They would be questioned about their understanding and could submit their own questions to the priests and scholars. No wonder Jesus stayed an extra three days in those temple discussions, and was surprised that his "parents" didn't know where he would be. He gave them a loving reminder about his heavenly Father when Mary said "Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."[17]

A pure, strong, alert and gracious boy, Jesus studied his destiny as revealed in the Scriptures, and continually embraced his Father's loving purpose for him. Growing as a teenager, he remained loyal and subject to his human parents while always fulfilling his heavenly Father's will.

He would know the significance of those annual Passover celebrations. They not only recalled God's mighty and loving mercy in saving his people from slavery in Egypt, but also pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of God's Son as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Exodus 12 tells the story of the first Passover.

> The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of
> Egypt: 2 This month shall mark for you the beginning
> of months; it shall be the first month of the year for
> you. 3 Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the

[17] Luke 2:41–52.

> tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each
> family, a lamb for each household. [4] If a household
> is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest
> neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided
> in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. [5]
> Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year–old male;
> you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. [6] You
> shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month;
> then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall
> slaughter it at twilight. [7] They shall take some of the
> blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel
> of the houses in which they eat it. [8] They shall eat the
> lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over
> the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. [9] Do
> not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted
> over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs.
> [10] You shall let none of it remain until the morning;
> anything that remains until the morning you shall
> burn. [11] This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded,
> your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand;
> and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the
> Lord. [12] For I will pass through the land of Egypt
> that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in
> the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals;
> on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I
> am the Lord. [13] The blood shall be a sign for you on
> the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will
> pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when
> I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:1–13)

The unblemished lamb, killed in the late afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan (the first month) would be eaten at the Passover or Seder meal on fifteenth of Nisan that same evening because the new day began after sunset.

Nisan 15 was the first day of a week of the Feast of Unleavened

Bread which Jesus and his family and friends would celebrate annually in Jerusalem, beginning with the Passover meal, eating the sacrificial Paschal lamb.

Passover, a spring festival, begins at the full moon after the northern vernal equinox. In the Northern Hemisphere the vernal equinox falls around March 20 or 21 as the sun crosses the equator going north, the first day of the month of Nisan.

So the Feast began on the fifteenth and ended on the twenty–first of Nisan (usually early April). All leaven, whether in bread or other mixture, was prohibited and they ate only unleavened bread. It symbolized both the Hebrews' suffering while in bondage and their haste when they left Egypt in the Exodus.

Jesus participated in the annual festivals in Jerusalem, particularly those associated with the three festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Through his youth and into manhood Jesus would journey to Jerusalem at least three time each year to celebrate these feasts, as did all the devout men of Israel.

God gave Moses the dates and details of the annual festivals, as summarized in Leviticus 23. Here is a brief overview of those festivals.

Passover (Pesach) – Nisan 14–15 (March/April).

Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamotzi) – Nisan 15–22.

First Fruits (Yom Habikkurim) – Nisan 16–17.

Pentecost (Shavuot) – Sivan 6–7 (May/June).

Trumpets (Yom Teruah) – Tishri 1 (September/October).

Atonement (Yom Kippur) – Tishri 10.

Tabernacles (Sukkot) – Tishri 15–22.

The Spring Festivals

The Spring Festivals included a week at Passover and a day at Pentecost.

(1) Passover. The festival year began with the full moon at Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month (Nisan 14) when the unblemished lamb was slain, celebrating how the angel of death "passed over" the homes with the blood of the lamb on their door posts and lintel.

(2) Unleavened Bread. This feast began on the next day (Nisan 15) and lasted for seven days. They ate only food without yeast or leaven for that week.

(3) First Fruits. Celebrated on the day after the Sabbath, they brought the early crops of wheat and barley to wave the sheaf before the Lord.

They sacrificed Passover lambs on the fourteenth of Nisan, then the first day of Unleavened Bread was the fifteenth of Nisan, with the Feast of First Fruits celebrated after the Sabbath during that festival week.

(4) Pentecost. On the Sunday following the seventh Sabbath (fifty days after the Passover Sabbath) they offered two loaves of bread with leaven/yeast and new meat offerings, marking the beginning of the summer harvest.

The Autumn/Fall Festivals

The Autumn/Fall Festivals included more than a week of celebrations.

(5) Trumpets. The first day of the seventh month (Tishri 1) was celebrated with blowing the ram's horn. The trumpet was the signal for the field workers to come into the temple.

(6) Atonement. This highest of holy days fell on the tenth day of the seventh month. A day of fasting and sacrifices, it was the only time once a year when the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the golden mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies behind the thick curtain in the tabernacle, and then later in the temple. A goat was dedicated to God and released

into freedom, symbolically carrying the people's sins away, never to return. That's how we got the term scapegoat.[18]

(7) Tabernacles. The fifteenth day of the seventh month commenced a week of celebrating in booths, a reminder of God's care for them during the forty years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. He led them there with a pillar of fire at night and a bright cloud above the tabernacle. He leads us by his Spirit.

So each year Jesus would celebrate the obligatory annual feasts in Jerusalem. This involved at least a week there for the Passover Festival in March/April, and for the Feast of Tabernacles in September/October. The Feast of Pentecost fell on a Sunday, fifty days after the Passover Sabbath.

A Winter Festival

The Feast of Dedication (Hanukah) in December celebrated the cleansing of the temple in 165 BC when olive oil burned for eight days during the Maccabean revolt against the Greek Empire. Jesus attended this optional feast before his final Passover sacrifice the following April.

Throughout his youth and into manhood, Jesus would journey south with his family and friends from Galilee, along the wide Jordan valley, to Jericho and up the hills into Jerusalem for the three main annual festivals of a week at Passover, a weekend at Pentecost, and over a week at Tabernacles.

They would visit relatives in and around Jerusalem, including Mary's relative Elizabeth, her husband Zechariah, and their anointed son John who was filled with the Spirit from his birth. John knew that Jesus was unique and sinless, but he did not realize that Jesus was indeed the longed-for Messiah until the Spirit of God came upon Jesus when John baptized him.

[18] Leviticus 16; 23:26–32; Numbers 29:7–11.

2

Ministry Begins

Jesus was controversial from the beginning.

He survived many assassination attempts. Two kings, father and son, wanted to kill him. His own townspeople attempted to push him over a cliff. Furious people in Jerusalem tried to stone him more than once. Religious leaders plotted to kill him many times.[19]

But Jesus chose the time, day and place of his sacrificial death on a cross.

Tension rose. Many believed that the famous, radical young prophet, from the rural hills of the village of Nazareth in the north, was the long awaited Messiah, the Christ. That ancient title Messiah (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek) meant God's Anointed One. People hoped that their Messiah would free them from the tyranny of the Roman Empire and establish his everlasting kingdom. He did, but not as they expected.

Some people, like the Zealots, wanted to fight to free their nation. Roman soldiers savagely crucified these insurrectionists as a public demonstration of the futility of opposing their Empire. One disciple of the young prophet was Simon the Zealot.

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[19] Matthew 2:13; Luke 13:31; Luke 4:29; John 8:59, 10:31; Matthew 12:14, 26:4; Mark 11:18; Luke 19:47.

Other people, such as many Jewish leaders, co–operated with their Roman overlords, hoping to keep the peace and prevent further invasion and destruction. One of the radical prophet's disciples was Matthew who had been a tax collector for Rome. People regarded tax collectors as traitors.

Other disciples of the popular prophet ran a productive fishing business in Galilee, owning boats and employing many fishermen. Some of them returned temporarily to their business after the traumatic and confusing events of their leader's arrest, torture and public execution.

This radical young prophet annoyed the Jewish leaders. He broke many of their strict religious laws and traditions. He freely welcomed all kinds of people, and was widely known as a friend of prostitutes and sinners, including traitors like tax collectors. He visited their homes. He welcomed sinners to join him in the homes of strict religious leaders who were shocked, appalled and angered.

Jewish historian Josephus noted Jesus's popularity in his account of Jewish history. The *Testimonium Flavianum* (the testimony of Flavius Josephus), the name given to the passage in his *Antiquities of the Jews,* written around AD 93–94, says this (probably edited):

> About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

There's a lot of debate about the dates of Jesus's ministry and death, but one sequence often used is that the first Passover in his ministry was possibly around AD 28 with the crucifixion around early April of AD 30. Scholars debate many other possibilities.

Jesus's public ministry began when he was around thirty years old, after his baptism in the Jordan River, and after forty days fasting in the Judean desert, where he rejected strong temptation. The Jordan flows from the freshwater Lake of Galilee, 210m (700 feet) below sea level, for 100km (60 miles) through the 10km (six mile) wide Jordan valley to the Dead Sea, 1400 feet below sea level. This lowest place on earth is about 50km (35 miles) south east from the mountain city of Jerusalem at 2,500 feet.

The following map from Bible History Online gives a useful picture of Jesus's travels and ministry. Jesus and thousands of others often walked over one hundred kilometers or around seventy miles between Galilee and Jerusalem, especially for the three main annual Feasts.

Website and publication use is permitted with a link to Bible History Online: https://bible–history.com/.

https://bible–history.com/maps/palestine–nt–times.

Israel in the New Testament

Bible History Online

I arrange my summary of Jesus's life and ministry in these sections:

Birth and Boyhood
Ministry Begins
First to Second Passovers
Second to Third Passovers
Passover to Pentecost

This chapter gives you a brief overview of those years involving the three Passovers, and then it describes events around the first of those three.

There are many possible sequences and chronologies. One sequence is that Jesus's ministry included these three Passovers.

First to Second Passovers

The first Passover occurred after his family, and some of his disciples, attended a wedding in Cana where he performed his first miracle of turning water to wine. His family, and some early disciples, then went to Capernaum on Lake Galilee, and joined the crowds going down the wide Jordan valley to Jericho and up the hills to Jerusalem for the Passover. John the Baptist and Jesus were both preaching to the crowds and calling people to turn to God. Jesus explained about faith and new birth to Nicodemus, and returned to the Jordan to preach. His disciples also baptized people as a sign of repentance. When Jesus knew that his growing popularity concerned and threatened the Pharisees, he chose to withdraw, and returned to Galilee through the hills of Samaria where he talked with the Samaritan woman and to the villagers there.

Jesus began his early ministry in Galilee around his base at Capernaum on the north west of the Lake of Galilee. He enlisted his first disciples who then joined him, as did many others, including women who supported them.

The main ministry in Galilee included sending his twelve close disciples on mission, and it covers most of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee.

Second to Third Passovers

The second Passover followed the beheading of John the Baptist in prison, and when Jesus withdrew with his disciples across the lake. Crowds, who were gathering for the Passover pilgrimage, followed them around the northern shore, and he healed the sick, preached, and fed them from a boy's lunch. They wanted to make him their king immediately, but he withdrew to the hills to pray, and later walked on the stormy water, and joined the disciples in their boat which immediately reached the shore. This time at the Passover in Jerusalem tension rose sharply as Jesus clashed with religious leaders.

The final ministry in Galilee culminates in the Transfiguration in the mountains near Caesarea Philippi where he talked with Moses and Elijah about his approaching departure from the earth. Jesus prepared for his last journey to Jerusalem. He sent seventy of his followers on mission to the places he was about to visit on his final journey to Jerusalem.

His last journey through Galilee and Judea included visits to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles around September/October, and for the Feast of Dedication in the winter of December, now called Hanukkah.[20] His final journey to Jerusalem for the Passover in April followed raising Lazarus from death in Bethany, and encounters with Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus in Jericho.

In that later ministry in Judea Jesus continued his final journey to Jerusalem through Jericho in the southern Jordan, up to the hills of Bethany, and on to nearby Jerusalem.

[20] John 7:1–52; 10:22–42.

Passover to Pentecost

The third and final Passover involved Jesus's death and resurrection. He then appeared to many of his followers during forty days until his ascension.

Peter, the leader among the disciples, preached at the Pentecost Feast, fifty days after the Passover Feast, and around three thousand people believed. Peter broke strict Jewish laws when he preached later in the spacious home of the Roman centurion Cornelius in Caesarea. He told how the good news of God's grace is for everyone, not only for Jews.

Peter summarized Jesus's ministry this way:

> Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand
> that God shows no partiality, [35] but in every nation
> anyone who fears him and does what is right is
> acceptable to him. [36] You know the message he sent to
> the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—
> he is Lord of all. [37] That message spread throughout
> Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that
> John announced: [38] how God anointed Jesus of
> Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how
> he went about doing good and healing all who were
> oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. [39] We
> are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in
> Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him
> on a tree; [40] but God raised him on the third day and
> allowed him to appear, [41] not to all the people but to
> us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who
> ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.
> [42] He commanded us to preach to the people and to
> testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge
> of the living and the dead. [43] All the prophets testify
> about him that everyone who believes in him receives
> forgiveness of sins through his name. (Acts 10:34–42)

Jesus's ministry probably covers those three Passovers, as John's Gospel suggests: the first Passover described in John 2, the second in John 6:4, and the third (the Last Supper and crucifixion) in John 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; and 19:14. All the Gospels describe that final week in great detail.

This book gives you a condensed overview of some key biographical events in Jesus's life and ministry. It is one of many possible sequences, and correlates with various harmonies of the Gospels, as listed in the first Appendix.

The Gospel writers give us Gospels, not a biography. They proclaim the good news of the Saviour of the world. So they do not always clarify the sequence of events. You can read the details of all the events in the Gospels themselves.

I find it inspiring to read a chapter of a Gospel each day, beginning with chapter one on the first day of the month, for convenience, and roaming as led. I like to note a key thought from the reading in my diary each day.

This book provides you with a harmonized story of God's love shown to us in Jesus the Messiah, God's Son, who reveals God's love and glory.

The following summary of Jesus's life and ministry includes those three Passovers. The first occurred during his early ministry in Judea in the southern Jordan valley after his baptism there.

Early Ministry in Judea

John the Baptist, the rugged wilderness prophet wearing camel's hair tied with a leather strap, eating a diet of a range of locusts, sweetened with wild honey, came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.[21] He called people to get ready, to turn from sin, and be baptized in the Jordan River.

Jesus came to be baptized, obeying his Father's requirement. He

[21] Leviticus 11:22; 2 Kings 1:8; Malachi 4:5–6; Matthew 3; 11:7–11; Mark 1:1–8; Luke 1:15–17; 3:2–20; John 1:23.

surprised John, who felt that Jesus should baptize him, but Jesus insisted on obeying his Father. As he came up from the water, the Spirit of God came upon him like a dove. John saw it and then realized that Jesus was indeed God's Anointed One, the Messiah, God's Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When God's Spirit filled Jesus, God said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."[22]

Jesus, the Anointed One, conceived miraculously by God's Spirit, was now anointed, empowered, and baptized by and in God's Holy Spirit for ministry. During his forty days of prayer and fasting at the beginning of that ministry, he was tempted to misuse that anointing and power to feed himself, to rule the world, and make a display. He resisted temptation, quoting relevant Scriptures. Then his ministry began, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit.[23]

Jesus was fully man (not super–boy or super–man). He was indeed God's Son, but he emptied himself of his rights and became fully human. Now, anointed and empowered by God's Spirit, he began his ministry in the power of the Spirit of God. Later on, he empowered his followers with his authority in the same way, with the same Spirit of God empowering them.[24]

Jesus's early ministry in Judea began with his baptism, his fasting and temptations, and inviting followers to be with him in both Judea in the south, and Galilee in the north.

Many people are familiar with Jesus calling disciples around Galilee, but may forget that some of the disciples began following him in the southern Jordan valley among the crowds responding to John the Baptist, and also to Jesus when he taught and healed people there.

Multitudes moved freely along the wide, fertile Jordan valley with its freshwater river flowing from Lake Galilee. This was the main trading and travelling route, especially during the annual feast times in Jerusalem.

At the beginning, both John the Baptist and Jesus preached in the Jordan valley, and Jesus's disciples also baptized people who

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[22] Matthew 3:17; Luke 3:22.

[23] Luke 4:1, 14, 18–19.

[24] John 1:32–34; 14:12; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1–4; Philippians 2:5–11.

responded. The crowds who followed Jesus grew rapidly, especially as John referred to Jesus as being the Messiah, God's Son.[25]

Andrew and his brother Simon, whom Jesus called Peter, believed John's word about Jesus, and met him there. Jesus invited Philip and Nathanael to join him, and soon the word spread. Two others among those who followed Jesus from the time of John's baptizing were Joseph and Matthias.[26]

John rejoiced that Jesus's fame and popularity increased. He insisted that Jesus must increase while he, John, must decrease. So when Jesus journeyed before and after that first Passover following his baptism, increasingly large crowds joined him, seeking healing, and listening to him teach about God's kingdom.

Before that first Passover, a group of them returned to Galilee. Jesus joined his family with some of his disciples at the wedding in Cana where they ran out of wine, possibly due to the growing number of Jesus's followers. Jesus turned water into the best wine after his mother urged him to do something to help. This was his first miraculous sign after his empowering at his baptism. He provided the best wine. Today people often refer to that at weddings. After the wedding, Jesus and his family, and new followers, went on to Capernaum on Lake Galilee.

Following that journey north, Jesus and an increasing number of his followers returned along the Jordan valley heading towards Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Jesus taught the growing crowds, and his disciples baptized many followers who believed in Jesus as their Messiah.

That visit to Jerusalem probably included the famous discussion with the religious leader Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who talked with Jesus at night, possibly to avoid the huge daytime crowds. Nicodemus later clashed with many of the Sanhedrin, the ruling Jewish council, by supporting Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles the following year, and then the next year he helped another believer, Joseph of Arimathea, place Jesus's body in the tomb.[27]

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[25] John 1:29–34; 3:22–30; 4:1–3.

[26] John 1:35–51; Acts 1:21–23.

[27] John 3:1–21; 7:50–51; 19:39–42.

People followed Jesus in many ways. Large numbers came for healing and help. The young travelling Rabbi's teaching and stories attracted huge crowds. He taught with unusual authority and continually explained how to live life in God's kingdom. His parables fascinated people and were easy to tell to others. Their meaning and significance, however, often puzzled people, including his closest disciples. So Jesus regularly explained their true significance to those who really wanted to understand and live kingdom life.

Even though Jesus was very popular and attracted a huge following, he also challenged and confronted people, especially small–minded people stuck in their traditions, and unwilling to grasp God's vast love for all people, especially for sinners, and for outcasts, and outsiders.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus often rebuked his disciples for their narrow–mindedness, and their arguments about who was the greatest or the best among his followers. Jesus insisted that the greatest were those who served, and who laid down their lives for others, and who truly desired God's glory, not their own glory. Self–denial, not self–indulgence, was his way, and the way of God's kingdom.

Jesus reprimanded his closest followers when they wanted exalted positions, and when they wanted to punish opponents, and when they kept children away, and especially when they doubted him, or lacked faith.

They, like us, were slow learners. Even on his last night with them at the Last Supper, they still argued about who was greatest or best, or most effective. Jesus confronted them, even then, by washing their dusty feet, something anyone of them could have done, but apparently none did.[28]

Throughout his life and ministry Jesus often commended those with faith in him, those who served, and those who honoured, loved, and lived for God.

You can study discussions of the biographical sequence of Jesus's life and ministry. Internet Archive gives free downloads of Giuseppe

[28] Luke 22:24–27; John 13:1–17.

Ricciotti's classic, scholarly book, *The Life of Christ* (1947). He gives a detailed chronological sequence of Jesus's life and ministry (translated from Italian): https://archive.org/details/thelifeofchrist_201911.

Scholarly opinions differ widely concerning the sequence of these events, but in this book I follow early traditional views, as one likely option.

3

First to Second Passovers

The temple on the eastern ridge of Jerusalem stood at the heart of Jewish life. Solomon's Temple (built around 950 BC) was destroyed in 586 BC by Nebuchadnezzar who took many captives to Babylon. Jews, released from captivity under Cyrus of Persia seventy years later, then built the smaller Second Temple from 516 BC. Herod the Great later expanded it.

Herod's Temple, begun in 20 BC, enlarged the temple to its original size and doubled the size of the Temple Mount to around thirty–five acres with the Roman garrison, Antonia Fortress on its northern edge. It took forty–six years to complete, which may place Jesus's first Passover after his baptism at some time after AD 26. That corresponds with him being around thirty at the beginning of his public ministry, with the date of his birth identified as about 6 or 4 BC.[29]

After that first Passover following his baptism, Jesus, and his growing band of disciples, returned to the south Jordan valley where both he and John the Baptist were preaching, proclaiming God's

[29] Luke 3:1–2, 23; John 2:20.

kingdom and urging people to turn to God. Jesus's fame grew. Concerned religious leaders in Jerusalem doubted that the young prophet and miracle–worker from Nazareth could be the longed–for Messiah. When Jesus heard of their concerns and opposition, he quietly withdrew north again, through the inland mountain route to Samaria.

There he met the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, between the surrounding hills, and then he stayed there for two days explaining God's kingdom to the Samaritans. This surprised even his disciples, for Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus often shocked people with his love and compassion for all people, especially for the neglected and the outcasts.

Back in Cana, Jesus healed a royal official's son from Capernaum with a word. The official believed him and found his son well on his return home.

John 5 tells of Jesus's brief, controversial visit to Jerusalem for one of the feasts, possibly Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. Jesus healed a cripple on a Sabbath at the Pool of Bethesda. The religious leaders angrily interrogated the man because he carried his rolled–up mat on a Sabbath. They couldn't understand God's love and compassion that transcended their man–made rules and legalistic interpretation of Scripture.

Early Ministry in Galilee

The Early Galilean ministry began when Jesus returned to Galilee after John the Baptist was imprisoned.

> Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake. (Matthew 4:12–13)

> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The

> time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.' (Mark 1:14–15)
>
> Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. (Luke 4:14)

Jesus called his first disciples who began to travel with him. He returned for a visit to Nazareth where his explanation of his own mission and of God's great love for all people of all nations offended the townspeople. They were so furious they tried to kill him by pushing him off a cliff, but he walked away.[30]

People crowded around Jesus. Many just wanted to touch him to be healed, and they were.[31] Sometimes Jesus and his disciples had no time to eat because of the vast crowds seeking healing.[32] Sometimes they slipped away for time out, time alone. Jesus often rose before dawn to pray alone and sometimes spent all night praying in intimate fellowship with his Father.[33]

Jesus established his ministry base at Capernaum on the lake, where the brothers Andrew and Peter, and the brothers James and John, had their busy fishing business. Jesus taught in their synagogue, cast out an unclean spirit and healed Peter's mother–in–law. People were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with such authority and reports about him spread widely.[34]

Jesus called Matthew (also named Levi) from his tax collecting booth in that area, and Matthew left his profitable business to travel with Jesus. Both Matthew and John, his disciples, eventually wrote about Jesus's teaching and miracles during their journeys together.

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[30] Matthew 4:18–25; Luke 4:15–30.
[31] Mark 5:56; Matthew 14:36.
[32] Mark 3:20; 6:31.
[33] Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42; 6:12.
[34] Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–37.

Matthew records Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, the first of five discourses in Matthew (See *Kingdom Life in Matthew*, with a free PDF on links in renewaljournal.com). Luke records similar teaching in the Sermon on the Plain.

Here are summary highlights from the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus's radical teaching. God's way of love, as demonstrated in Jesus, confronts and transforms life and society.

The beatitudes turn things upside down. Those who pursue and live out God's kingdom reign are truly blessed. The first are last, and the last, first. The humble and the servants are the greatest in God's kingdom. Jesus judged people by their heart and intentions. Those who reject or resist God's love for them and for all people are in danger of being condemned to eternal darkness, away from God's light. We are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. We must forgive others just as God fully forgives us.

Jesus completed the law and the prophets in himself, and living by the golden rule of doing to others what you want them to do for you, fulfils all the law and prophets.[35]

The Lord's Prayer is a model of how to pray, not a means of vain repetition. Current versions of it include words such as these, which you could pray now as you read:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us away from temptation and deliver us from evil,
For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus challenged us to live according to God's kingdom and his righteousness above all else, and then God would meet our needs. If we live by his teaching it's like building our house on rock, not on sand.

People were amazed and awestruck by Jesus's teaching because he

[35] Matthew 5–7; Luke 6:17–49.

taught them as someone with ultimate authority, and not like others who quoted other people. Jesus taught and demonstrated God's way of love for everyone.

Conflicts with religious leaders increased because Jesus associated freely with sinners and healed people on the Sabbath. The strict rules and traditions of religious leaders prohibited them from associating with people who were regarded as unclean, and prohibited them from doing any kind of work on a Sabbath. Jesus reminded them that even on Sabbath days, priests would offer sacrifices, boys were circumcised on the eight day, and people would rescue animals, and water them as needed, and would help children who fell into a ditch or hole. Jesus revealed God's love, justice, and compassion in all that he did, including healing them on Sabbath days.

Main Ministry in Galilee

The main Galilean ministry continues from the Sermon on the Mount to the death of John the Baptist (Matthew 8–14). Matthew alternates his narratives about Jesus with passages of Jesus's teaching as in this adapted lectionary summary.

> Christ's design for life in God's kingdom:
> The call of the first disciples (Mt 4:12–23),
> The sermon on the mount (Mt 5–7).
> The spread of God's kingdom:
> The call of Levi/Matthew (Mt 9:9–13),
> The mission sermon (Mt 9:35–10:42),
> The mystery of God's kingdom:
> The revelation to the simple (Mt 11:25–30),
> The parable sermon (Mt 13).
> God's Kingdom on earth and the Church:
> Feeding 5000, Canaanite woman, Peter's confession (Mt 14–17),
> The community sermon (Mt 18:15–35),

Authority and invitation (at the final Passover):
The final parables, the greatest commandment (Mt 20–24),
The final sermon (Mt 25).

Jesus's parables upset people. He continually turned things around. For example the Good Samaritan story praised the hated Samaritan (Jews despised them) and condemned the respected religious leaders.[36]

Some of Jesus's most famous stories grew from opposition to his teaching and from his compassion for everyone, especially for sinners. Three well known examples are the stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (the prodigal son).[37] Why did Jesus tell those stories? Luke tells us why. Jesus welcomed the despised tax collectors regarded as traitors, and the notorious sinners including prostitutes, often eating with them. Religious leaders and scholars strongly criticized Jesus for that, so he responded with those stories.

Jesus told many parables or allegories drawn from everyday life. For example, he talked about seed sown on hard, stony, weedy, and good ground. He explained that God's Word at times fell on hard–hearted people, or shallow–minded people, or worldly–wise people, or open–hearted people, with varying results. It produced good fruit in good lives.

After praying all night, Jesus chose twelve disciples from among his many followers, and commissioned them to preach, heal the sick and cast out unclean spirits, just as he did.[38] When we were children, we sang a song about that, based on Matthew 10:2–4, to the tune of "Bringing in the Sheaves." It lists the names of the disciples:

There were twelve disciples Jesus called to help him,
Simon Peter, Andrew, James, his brother John,
Philip, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alpheus,
Thaddaeus, Simon, Judas and Bartholomew.

[36] Luke 10:25–36.
[37] Luke 15.
[38] Matthew 10:1–15; Luke 9:1–6.

> Jesus calls us too, Jesus calls us too.
> We are his disciples. I am one; are you?
> He has called us too, He has called us too.
> We are his disciples, we his work must do.

The author of that common domain song is unknown.

Jesus sent his disciples and others to preach and heal, showing God's love and compassion for everyone. Many women travelled with Jesus and his team, and supported them with food and clothing. Some of them were from rich families.[39]

John the Baptist in prison sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he were truly the Messiah, so Jesus summarized what he did in healing and teaching as evidence of his messiahship.[40]

Jesus constantly showed his great love for all people by forgiving and healing them, so large crowds flocked to him.

> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)

> Many crowds followed him, and he cured all of them. (Matthew 12:15)

> And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the market–places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed. (Mark 6:56)

> And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. (Luke 6:19)

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[39] Luke 8:1.

[40] Matthew 11:2–6.

The Gospels give us many accounts of Jesus healing people, and setting people free, and even raising the dead.

He taught and travelled from his base in Capernaum, visiting many towns and villages. He healed a centurion's servant with just a word at the soldier's request. Jesus praised him for his faith and his understanding of authority. At Nain he raised a widow's son from death.

He stilled a storm on the lake after his alarmed disciples woke him from his sleep. Across the lake he set two demonised madmen free. Back again at Capernaum he healed more people including forgiving and healing a paralysed man on his mat, let down through the roof by four friends, because they could not get in through the crowd. Having a former carpenter there would be handy for roof repairs! Religious leaders criticized him for forgiving sin, calling it blasphemy.

Jesus healed a woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years and raised the synagogue's leader Jairus's twelve year old daughter from death. As he left their house, two blind men followed him into the next house and he healed them because they believed. After they left, other people brought him a man afflicted with a dumb spirit whom he healed, but religious leaders accused him of using occult power.[41]

Later, Jesus set free a blind and dumb man, but again Pharisees accused him of using occult power. Jesus strongly warned them not to accuse the Holy Spirit like that, or they could not be forgiven. Jesus reminded them that his casting out evil or unclean spirits showed that God's kingdom and authority came in him.[42]

John wrote his Gospel around seven powerful signs that demonstrated Jesus's true nature and glory. John focused on Jesus's teaching, built around these signs of his power and authority.

Around the first Passover:

Turning water into wine (2:1–12).
Healing the nobleman's son (4:46–54).
Healing the man at Bethesda (5:1–47).

[41] Matthew 9:18–34; Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56.
[42] Matthew 12:22–45; Luke 11: 14–26.

Around the second Passover:

Feeding the five thousand (6:1–4).
Walking on water (6:15–21).
Healing the blind man (9:1–41).

Around the third Passover:

Raising of Lazarus (11:1–57).

John's Gospel calls these events "signs," and shows how Jesus explained that his signs pointed to his divinity and authority as the Son of God.

John also gives us the "I am" statements of Jesus. His Greek manuscript used the strong emphasis, *ego eimi – I alone am,* or *I myself am*. These sayings of Jesus are unique and challenging claims. Those pictures or metaphors upset many people.

"I am the bread of life … and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away." (John 6:35, just before the second Passover, March/April)

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12, at the Feast of Tabernacles, September/October)

"I am the door/gate for the sheep … I am the door/gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture." (John 10:7, 9, at the Feast of Dedication, December)

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11, at the Feast of Dedication, December)

"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25–26, at Bethany before the final Passover)

> "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6, at the Last Supper)
> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine–grower. … I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:1, 5, at the Last Supper)

When Jesus clashed with scholars in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles he declared, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). That infuriated them so much they picked up stones to throw at him, but he slipped away from them.

4

Second to Third Passovers

Final Ministry in Galilee

The Final Galilean ministry began after John the Baptist was beheaded.

Following Herod the Great's death, Emperor Augustus divided Herod's kingdom among three of his sons. Archelaus ruled Samaria, Judea and Idumea, for about nine years until Emperor Augustus replaced him with governors from Rome, including the procurator Pontius Pilate, who ruled the enlarged province of Judea during AD 26–36. Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea and ruled during the ministry of Jesus. Philip, tetrarch of territories north and east of the Jordan River, was divorced by his wife Herodias who then married Antipas.

John the Baptist publicly rebuked Antipas. The vassal king acted quickly and savagely against any sign of opposition or rebellion. He imprisoned and later beheaded John, although he respected and feared him. His daughter's dance at a state banquet for his birthday pleased Antipas so much that he publicly offered her what she desired,

and at her mother's instruction she asked for John's head. Antipas regretfully complied because of his public vow.

When Jesus heard of John's death, he sailed privately to a solitary place near Bethsaida on the north of the lake. It followed a time when he had sent his followers on mission in pairs, and they excitedly reported back about people being healed and set free.

Large crowds had gathered because it was near Passover, and multitudes were assembling for the journey from Galilee along the Jordan valley to Jerusalem. The crowds followed the boat with Jesus and his disciples around the northern shore of Galilee. Jesus had compassion for them, healed the sick, taught them and fed the crowd of over five thousand from a boy's lunch, the first of two times he fed crowds miraculously. They wanted to make him their king then and there.

He sent the disciples off in their boat and went to the hills to pray alone. That night he returned to them, walking on the water, as did Peter when he looked at Jesus. Jesus held him when he sank. As they walked into the boat together the wind ceased and they were all immediately at the shore. The amazed disciples worshipped him declaring, "Truly you are the Son of God."[43]

Later, Jesus journeyed north to Tyre and Sidon on the Mediterranean, where he healed the Canaanite's daughter, even though that was beyond his mission to Israel. Jesus then travelled back to Lake Galilee and healed, taught, and fed four thousand men plus the women and children. He moved on to the Decapolis, ten towns south east of Galilee, healing and teaching.

The crowds, and even Jesus's disciples, expected him to be their triumphant king, a conqueror who would free them from Roman rule and establish his kingdom in Israel (John 6:15; Acts 1:6). But his everlasting kingdom differed from their ideas.

The tyranny of Rome's empire, and the heavy taxes imposed on subject people, stirred resentment and anger among many Jews. They

[43] Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21.

longed for their promised Messiah to set them free, and the crowds saw in Jesus a great hope for a new, powerful, free and just kingdom.

Jesus emphasized that God's eternal kingdom was in our hearts by faith in himself as God's Son and our Saviour.

Jesus prophesied his death three times

Jesus told his disciples three times about his approaching death and resurrection, but they didn't understand. Confused and distressed they were afraid to ask him about it:

> First, at Caesarea Philippi. (Matthew 16:21–28; Mark 8:31–38; Luke 9:21–27)
>
> Second, in Galilee. (Matthew 17:22–23; Mark 9:30–32; Luke 9:43–45)
>
> Third, near Jerusalem. (Matthew 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34; Luke 18:31–34)

(1) Jesus's Galilean ministry culminated in taking the disciples away from the crowds into the hills north of Lake Galilee. At Caesarea Philippi, toward Mt Hermon, Jesus told them about his impending death. After praying, Jesus asked his disciples who people thought he was. Popular opinions ranged from him being John the Baptist raised from the dead, to Elijah, or another prophet raised to life. When Jesus asked them what they thought, Peter, their natural leader, declared that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Christ, the messianic king, anointed by God to come and establish his eternal kingdom.

Jesus reminded Peter that God had revealed that to him. Then Jesus told them he would be going to Jerusalem again and would be arrested, tortured and killed. Peter strenuously objected to that idea, and earned a sharp rebuke from his loving Lord.

Six days later Jesus climbed further into the mountains with Peter,

James and John, and was transfigured, shining in heavenly glory. He talked with Moses and Elijah about his approaching departure from the earth.

Both Moses and Elijah had left the earth in unusual ways. Moses saw the Promised Land from the mountains of Nebo, south-east of the Jordan valley, after he had led the Israelites for forty years. God talked with him as a man talks with his close friend. Moses handed his leadership to Joshua, who led the Israelites into their Promised Land. Moses went off alone with God, who buried his body. Now Moses, on that mountain at the transfiguration, was in the Promised Land, seeing the fulfilment of his calling, and his prophecy about a great prophet to come, now fulfilled in Jesus, God's Son.[44]

Elijah had been taken up to heaven by a whirlwind, when horses and a chariot of fire separated him from his disciple Elisha, who then continued in that anointed and powerful ministry of signs and wonders. John the Baptist had come in the spirit of Elijah, and now Elijah was there talking with Jesus about how Jesus would fulfil his messianic mission through his atoning death. Many scholars interpret that encounter as Moses and Elijah representing the law and prophets, which were all fulfilled in Jesus.

Peter, James, and John witnessed the Transfiguration where Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about his coming departure, and God spoke from the cloud of glory: "This is my Son, my Beloved, whom I love; listen to him." (Matthew 17:1–8; see Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36; 2 Peter 1:16–18)

The Transfiguration, a pivotal event told around the middle of the Gospels, marks the beginning of Jesus's final journey to Jerusalem, and to his death. (Matthew 16:21; cf. Mark 8:31–32; Luke 9:21–22)

(2) After the Transfiguration as they journeyed south, Jesus again predicted his death. "They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed,

[44] Deuteronomy 18:15.

after three days he will rise.' But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him." (Mark 9:30–32)

Matthew says that the disciples were greatly distressed. Luke adds that his disciples did not understand, and the meaning was hidden from them. (Matthew 17:22–23; Luke 9:43–45)

(3) Finally, as they approached Jerusalem, Jesus told his disciples what would happen to him there.

> And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, 'See we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.' (Matthew 20:17–19; cf. Mark 10:32–34; Luke 18:31–34)

Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man, not only to show his humanity, but it was also a messianic title from the book of Daniel. There, one like a son of man is given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed.[45]

Later Ministry in Judea

During his lengthy final journey south, Jesus commissioned seventy of his followers to go in pairs ahead of him to tell about God's kingdom, heal the sick and cast out unclean spirits.[46] They experienced God's power in their ministry like Jesus did in his.

As the crowds, and also the opposition increased, Jesus attended two further feasts in Jerusalem, the Feast of Tabernacles in September/October and the Feast of Dedication in December.

(1) The seven day Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths (Sukkot),

[45] Daniel 7:13–14.

[46] Luke 10:1–24.

around September/October, celebrated the end of the summer harvests and also God's care for his people when they lived in booths during the Exodus from Egypt. When Jesus's brothers were leaving for that feast they encouraged Jesus to go public in Judea because he spent most of his time in Galilee away from the hub of religious life and authority in Jerusalem. At that time his brothers did not fully believe he was actually the promised Messiah. Later on, after his resurrection they did believe, and they became leaders in the church. Two of them wrote the brief letters of James and Jude.[47]

Jesus went late, and secretly, to that Feast of Tabernacles. Some leaders wanted him arrested and executed. During the feast they sent temple guards to arrest him, but the guards were astounded by him and did nothing.

Each afternoon of that festival week the priests poured out a libation of water and wine at the temple altar, and during the last and greatest day of the feast (possibly when the water was being poured out) Jesus boldly proclaimed, "If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within them." (John 7:38) He was describing what the Holy Spirit would do in believers' lives.

Arguments about Jesus ran hot. Some people thought he was the prophet that Moses predicted. Others believed he was the promised Messiah. The temple guards, sent to arrest Jesus, returned without him, saying that no one spoke like he did. The Pharisees accused the guards of being fooled by Jesus. Nicodemus, however, defended Jesus's right to be heard. They argued with him declaring that in the Scriptures no prophet would come from Galilee.[48] Apparently they had not done their homework or carefully researched Jesus's birthplace.

John's Gospel tells how, the next day, as Jesus taught in the temple, the Pharisees and teachers of the law brought in a woman caught in adultery. They wanted to trap Jesus reminding him that their law

[47] Mark 3:20–21; John 7:1–10; James; Jude.

[48] John 7:37–52; Deuteronomy 18:15–19.

said she should be stoned. Jesus reminded them of their own sin, saying that those without sin could throw the first stone, a statement often adapted now such as, "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."

Then Jesus wrote in the dust. I wonder what he wrote! My guess is that he wrote Scriptures identifying their sins. They dropped their stones and left, beginning with the eldest, who probably had failed the longest. Jesus showed God's immense love, telling the woman that he did not condemn her. He also told her to stop sinning, which was what he consistently told everyone.

Jesus saw a beggar, blind from birth, so he spat on the ground, made mud, and smeared it on the man's eyes. He sent him down to the Pool of Siloam to wash. It was on a Sabbath, and Pharisees were furious about the healing. They heatedly interrogated the man and his parents. That man believed in Jesus, so he was excommunicated by the religious leaders.

(2) The winter Feast of Dedication in December, now called Hanukah, celebrated the Maccabean victory over the Seleucid–Greeks in 165 BC when olive oil burned in the cleansed temple miraculously for eight days till more oil could be made. The feast celebrations still include lighting eight lamps (one each day) on a large menorah in the Western Wall Plaza.

Jewish leaders challenged Jesus at that feast to clearly declare if he really was the Messiah, the Anointed One. Jesus again reminded them that the miracles he did in his Father's name revealed who he was as God's Son. That infuriated them, and they picked up stones to stone him to death for blasphemy. He slipped away from them.

Jesus returned to the Jordan River valley, where John had been baptizing. Large crowds came to hear him and believed in him.

Later, after Martha and Mary sent him a message asking him to come and heal Lazarus, Jesus returned to Bethany where he raised Lazarus from death. That news spread like wildfire. It infuriated the antagonistic Jewish leaders, who then wanted both Jesus and Lazarus dead. So from then on, they planned to kill Jesus. Caiaphas, the high

priest, said that it was better for one man to die for the people than for the nation to be destroyed.[49]

Jesus withdrew to the hills around Ephraim. He continued to heal people, including ten lepers at the Samaritan border, who discovered their healing as they obeyed in faith and went to report to the priests. Only one of them, a Samaritan, gratefully returned to thank Jesus.

Later, Jesus journeyed to Jericho where he healed many, including blind Bartimaeus, and he ate with the despised tax collector Zacchaeus. Crowds grew as he continued up the ranges toward Jerusalem. The crowds that followed Jesus expected that God's kingdom would come immediately, through him.[50] It did, but not as they expected.

When Jesus and his disciples reached Bethany on the southern slopes of the Mount of Olives just east of Jerusalem, they often stayed there with Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary.

The curious, adoring crowds continued to grow, wanting to see both Jesus and Lazarus. From there Jesus walked the mile into Jerusalem during his final week, often returning to Bethany at night.

The religious leaders didn't want to kill Jesus during the Passover Feast as they thought that would cause a riot among the people, because Jesus was so popular, and many people were convinced he was their Messiah. Jesus, however, chose to give himself to them on the day that the Passover lambs were killed.

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[49] John 10:41–42; 11:1-55.

[50] Luke 19:11.

5

Passover to Pentecost

The week known as Holy Week, or Passion Week, fills a third of each of the Gospels. It includes Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, cleansing the temple, debates and conflict with Jewish leaders, meals at Bethany, the Last Supper, agonizing prayer in Gethsemane, his trials by religious and political leaders, his flogging, crucifixion, burial and then his victorious resurrection on what we call Easter Sunday.

I give more detailed biblical descriptions of that week in my books *Crucified and Risen* and *The Lion of Judah,* with free PDFs on renewaljournal.com.

Although Jesus fulfilled many significant Scriptures in Holy Week, the Jewish scholars could not see it, and even his own followers did not understand it until he explained it after his resurrection.

So the most momentous week in history unfolded as another week involving the annual Passover celebrations, with huge crowds filling Jerusalem. That final dramatic week in the crowded city and areas surrounding Jerusalem burst into open conflict with religious leaders and scholars. They criticized Jesus for allowing the noisy crowds to shout his praises.

Excited crowds cried out, "Hosanna," meaning, "Lord save us."

They longed for a Messiah who would free them from Rome. The Roman garrison in the Antonia Fortress on the north side of the temple remained on high alert for any unrest or uprising, especially during the crowded feast days.

> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. [9] The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

> [10] When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' [11] The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.' (Matthew 21:8–11 NIV; see Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:28–40; John 12:12–19)

Jesus rode a donkey down the slopes of the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron brook, and into the temple area on the eastern side of the capital. He fulfilled a well–known prophecy:

> Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
> Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
> Lo, your king comes to you;
> triumphant and victorious is he,
> humble and riding on a donkey,
> on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9; Mt 21:5)

Jesus wept while everyone was rejoicing:

> As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this

> day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.' (Luke 19:41–44)

Jesus saw its doom looming. About forty years later in AD 70, Roman armies sacked the city, destroying its buildings and slaughtering its people.

Tensions with the powerful religious leaders and scholars simmered, and exploded early that week.

Jesus immediately clashed with temple authorities by cleaning out the temple courts of unscrupulous merchants, who raised huge income for the temple from Passover crowds needing sacrificial animals.

Each day early that week, Jesus taught in the temple area, consistently clashing with the religious hierarchy, who tried to trap him such as asking him about paying taxes to Rome. Jesus lifted the argument to declare the eternal values of God's kingdom.

Pharisees followed hundreds of laws and traditions based on Scripture, but Jesus summed up the commandments in two, to love God and love others. Sadducees courted political favour and denied life after death, angels and demons, but Jesus reminded them that God is God of the living, including their ancestors who died.[51]

Jesus confounded religious scholars, showing the flaws in their beliefs, pointing out that their Scriptures spoke of him, but they could not see that. For example, the rejected stone discarded by the builders became the capstone or cornerstone, the most important stone of all.[52]

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[51] Mark 12.

[52] Lk 20:17–18; Ps 118:22; Isa 28:16; Rom 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6.

Jesus told a story of a vineyard owner sending his servants, and then his only son, to get his due portion, but the tenants mistreated them, and killed many including his son. The owner would severely punish them. Religious leaders realized that the story was aimed squarely at them.

Each night, early that week, Jesus and his closest disciples walked the mile to Bethany, and ate with friends there. Those visits included a meal where Lazarus's sister Mary poured very expensive, fragrant oil over him. Some disciples criticized her excess, but Jesus praised her for her lavish love, which would be told throughout the world, as in the Bible and also here, and that she had prepared his body for burial.[53] That fragrance would stay on his body for many days.

To the rulers' delighted astonishment, one of Jesus's followers secretly agreed to betray Jesus to them quietly, away from the crowd. The rulers did not want to kill Jesus during the Passover feast to avoid a riot, but that is exactly when Jesus gave himself to them, when Passover lambs were slain. That day began for Jews at sunset to the next sunset when Jesus's wounded, slaughtered body would lie in a new tomb, carved from a limestone hill nearby.

Before his arrest, torture and execution, large crowds had excitedly welcomed him. But a few days later he was dead.

As I pondered this I realized it still happens. Millions trust him, believe in him, and follow him, but others reject him and his word. Many government authorities oppose him and his teaching, imprisoning and killing his followers. Many advocates of various religions kill his followers. Many media outlets attack his teaching and authority, and condemn those who quote him. Many Christians criticize and attack other Christians who differ from them.

Good confronts evil. I realized that Jesus confronts and challenges us all because we all fall short of his standards and requirements. We must see our own failure, and trust God for forgiveness and life. He gives eternal life.

That's why he chose to die for us, out of his great love for us all.

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[53] Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8.

He took our place. He took our guilt and sin upon himself, and died in our place. He then rose victorious over death and offers eternal life to all who trust in him.

The high priest and the chief priests of the ruling Sanhedrin were determined to kill this dangerous, radical young man. Driven by jealousy of his popularity, and the threat that his popularity may lead to a possible uprising, and severe Roman retaliation, the religious leaders wanted him dead, and this threat removed.

Eventually they did have him killed. But Jesus gave himself to them knowing he would be publicly crucified when the Passover lambs were killed. Although the religious leaders did not want to kill Jesus during the feast, and Pilate did not want to kill Jesus at all, Jesus chose to die during the feast on the Preparation Day, when the sacrificial Pascal Lambs were slain, the day before the special Passover Sabbath.[54] He himself is the eternal Lamb of God who takes away our sin.

Jesus ate the Passover, the Last Supper, on the same Jewish day that he died. He ate his Passover meal with his closest disciples knowing it would be his last meal with them before his death the next afternoon. He would fulfil the meaning of the Passover as the unblemished Lamb of God, slain for us all.

He gave that meal new meaning. We call it the Last Supper. He told them the bread was his body, and the wine was his blood. He fulfilled its meaning and significance. He was giving his perfect body as a sacrifice for us all. He told them to remember him each time they did that. It includes what we now call communion or the Eucharist (Thanksgiving), and can be part of our eating and drinking together in our homes, as it was in the early church.

The disciples didn't understand the significance of that meal, and even argued about who among them was the greatest. Jesus silenced that discussion by washing their feet, dressed like a servant, with a towel around his waist, which he used to wipe their feet. That confronted them. Peter objected, but Jesus told him he must accept it,

[54] Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 18:28; 19:14, 31, 42; and Matthew 27:62.

and that the greatest was a servant, and they must follow his example and love and serve one another.[55]

Jesus shared his heart with his closest friends there, and prayed for them. He promised that he would always be with them again by his Spirit within them.[56]

That meal ended with singing a psalm. Traditionally the Passover meal concluded with singing one of the Hillel psalms of praise, Psalms 115–118. Perhaps they sang the salvation song, Psalm 115, so full of prophecies Jesus was about to fulfil.

> 9 O Israel, trust in the Lord!
> He is their help and their shield.
> 10 O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord!
> He is their help and their shield.
> 11 You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!
> He is their help and their shield.
> 12 The Lord has been mindful of us; he will bless us;
> he will bless the house of Israel;
> he will bless the house of Aaron;
> 13 he will bless those who fear the Lord,
> both small and great.
> 14 May the Lord give you increase,
> both you and your children.
> 15 May you be blessed by the Lord,
> who made heaven and earth.
> 16 The heavens are the Lord's heavens,
> but the earth he has given to human beings.
> 17 The dead do not praise the Lord,
> nor do any that go down into silence.
> 18 But we will bless the Lord
> from this time on and for evermore.
> Praise the Lord! (Psalm 115:9–18)

[55] Luke 22:24–27; John 13:1–17.

[56] John 13–17.

During that meal Jesus sent Judas to do what Judas had already planned to do, betray him to the priests. Following their meal, the group went out with Jesus past the temple, across the Kidron brook, to the Olive Grove of Gethsemane on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives, just east of the city. There Jesus prayed earnestly, "Not my will but yours be done."

There in the Garden or Grove of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed alone in agony. His exhausted disciples fell asleep. Jesus's sweat was infused with blood.

He asked his Father if this cup could pass from him, but added, "Not my will but yours be done." A little later, when Peter fought the mob, Jesus stopped him, saying that he must drink the cup his Father gave him.

Some scholars see his prayer as a prayer to be delivered from premature death. The letter to the Hebrews describes that possibility this way:

> 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and
> supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one
> who was able to save him from death, and he was
> heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although
> he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he
> suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became
> the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, 10
> having been designated by God a high priest according
> to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7–10)

Judas led a mob there armed with weapons to arrest Jesus, who surrendered himself to them. The mob fell backwards at Jesus's awesome presence. Peter sliced the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant, but Jesus rebuked Peter and healed the ear, his last healing act, showing his love for his enemies.

The Trials

Jesus endured three religious and three civil trials, including two beatings and more personal abuse, leaving him savagely wounded and weakened, so much that, strong as he was, he could not carry the crossbeam to his execution as other prisoners did. This summary describes some of those tense, rushed events including the hurried and illegal late–night to early–morning meeting of the partial Sanhedrin, the executive council of the priests. The Sanhedrin of seventy priests collaborated with Rome and was accountable to Roman officials. Annas, a former high priest, and his son–in–law Caiaphas, the current high priest, were part of the influential Sadducee priestly families, acceptable to and appointed by Roman officials.

(1) Trial with Annas, father–in–law of the High Priest

Soldiers of the temple guard arrested Jesus in Gethsemane late at night and bound him. They took him first to Annas, who quizzed Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus reminded Annas that he had spoken freely and openly, never secretly, and that Annas could ask those who heard him. One of the temple guard, shocked by that answer, struck Jesus's face, earning a rebuke from Jesus who had said nothing wrong. The rough, hostile treatment of Jesus had begun. Annas then sent the bound Jesus to Caiaphas.[57]

(2) Trial with Caiaphas, the High Priest

After that initial interrogation, they took Jesus to be officially judged by the high priest and a small group of angry elders involved all night from the arrest in Gethsemane.

Two of Jesus's followers were there. One of them, known to the high priest (possibly Nicodemus, who had supported Jesus in the Sanhedrin, or the story's author), arranged for Peter to come in. Peter had followed at a distance and later he warmed himself at the

[57] John 18:12–14, 19–24.

charcoal fire in the high priest's courtyard until he was challenged there and denied knowing Jesus.[58] Then Jesus turned and looked at Peter, who then remembered how Jesus had told him that Peter would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crowed twice. At the rooster's second crowing, Peter went away and wept bitterly.

Many chief priests, elders, and scribes, had been hastily assembled. Jesus remained silent as witnesses argued and disagreed about what he had said. Finally Caiaphas asked Jesus if he was the Messiah, the Son of God, and Jesus affirmed his statement. They regarded that as blasphemy and the high priest tore his own robes in rage. They condemned Jesus as worthy of death. They spat on him, blindfolded him, and struck him, asking him to prophecy and say who did it. The guards then took him and severely beat him.[59]

A medical doctor described the two floggings this way:

> Jesus's beatings were particularly severe, beyond what a condemned prisoner would ordinarily experience. Jesus was beaten by Jewish temple guard soldiers prior to being placed into Roman custody. He was then again beaten and scourged by Roman soldiers. The "whole cohort" of Roman soldiers participated in mocking and severely beating him. He was severely flogged, spat on, blindfolded and hit with a rod used as a mock royal scepter. (Matt. 27: 27–31, John 19: 1–3)

The severity of Jesus's initial beatings while in Jewish custody should not be overlooked. Thomas McGovern, M.D., makes an interesting observation about Luke's description of Jesus's first beating while in Jewish custody. "Now the men who were holding Jesus under guard began to mock him and beat him." (Luke 22: 63) Luke uses the Greek verb *derontes* (δέροντες) for the phrase "and beat him." The Greek root of this word is the same for skin, *derma* (δέρμα), and carries the primary meaning of "to flay the skin." "To

[58] John 18:10–11, 14; Luke 22:49–62.

[59] Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:63.

beat" is a secondary meaning. When the word is used to describe a beating or whipping, it implies a heightened severity of thrashing and cudgelling. Luke as a physician seems to use specific language to precisely describe the severity of Jesus's beating.

Since the Sanhedrin would have executed Jesus if they had opportunity to do so, it seems likely that his beating from the temple guard would have been particularly severe. The maximum penalty short of death by Jewish law was forty stripes (Deut. 25: 3). Jewish courts had autonomy in corporal punishment and could lash offenders at their discretion without Roman interference. Roman soldiers were free to beat condemned prisoners without restriction, the only stipulation being that the prisoner should not be beaten to death prior to crucifixion.

Accordingly, it is traditionally held that Jesus was scourged twice. The first beating was in the home of Caiaphas the High Priest, the second by Roman soldiers under order of Pontius Pilate.

[Bergeron, Joseph W.. *The Crucifixion of Jesus*: A Medical Doctor Examines the Death and Resurrection of Christ. St. Polycarp Publishing House. Chapter 6: The execution of Jesus.]

(3) Trial with the Sanhedrin

By dawn, the chief priests had consulted elders, scribes, and the council, a partial group of the seventy member Sanhedrin, which had authority to pass judgement. They had asked Jesus if he was the Messiah, the Son of God, and he affirmed their words. Furiously, they condemned him to death. Joseph from Arimathea was one of the few council members who disagreed with their judgement.

Previously, in a heated Sanhedrin debate, Caiaphas had advised them that it was better to have one person die for the people than for Rome to attack and destroy the nation. (Luke 22:63-71; 23:1, 50-51)

(4) Trial with Pilate, the Governor

The council bound Jesus and took him to Pilate, the Governor, because they did not have authority to execute him. (Mark 15:1)

Seized with remorse at this development, Judas flung back his thirty pieces of silver that the priests had given him to betray Jesus, and he went out, and hanged himself.

Pilate came out to meet the angry assembly. They accused Jesus of perverting the nation, forbidding people to pay taxes, and declaring himself the Messiah, a king. Pilate asked Jesus if he really was the king of the Jews, and Jesus affirmed his statement. Pilate concluded from his interrogation that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. But the priests insisted that Jesus was dangerous and had stirred up the people by his teaching in the province of Judea, beginning from Galilee.

(5) Trial with Herod Antipas

Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, was in Jerusalem for the feast. That gave Pilate an opportunity to pass Jesus to Herod for his judgement. Herod had wanted to see Jesus for a long time and he hoped to see him do some miracle. He questioned Jesus at length but Jesus said nothing. The chief priests and scribes accused him vehemently. Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus and put an elegant robe on him to send him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate, who had been enemies, became friends.[60]

Previously, Herod had beheaded John the Baptist, and he had wanted to kill Jesus also, but Jesus had told the religious leaders to tell that fox that he, Jesus, would finish his work and then go to Jerusalem.[61] Now in Jerusalem Herod finally met him, but treated him with contempt. So the frustrated, angry group of his accusers, with the temple guard, returned their prisoner to the governor.

(6) Second Trial with Pilate

Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but the fanatical religious leaders strenuously opposed it. They did not enter the governor's fortress palace because they would have been ritually defiled, and they wanted to eat the Passover meal that night.

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[60] Luke 23:6–12.

[61] Luke 13:31–33.

Pilate went out to them, and told them to judge Jesus by their own law, but they objected loudly because they wanted him crucified. Then Pilate entered his headquarters again and interrogated Jesus further about his kingdom. Pilate's wife sent him a message, warning him to have nothing to do with that just person, because she had had a bad dream about him.

Then Pilate tried another ploy. Each year at their Passover festival, he offered to release a prisoner. He offered them the choice of a notorious prisoner named Jesus Barabbas, or their victim Jesus Christ. The chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to shout for Barabbas, and to have Jesus killed. A riot was beginning, so Pilate gave in, washed his hands of the whole affair, and handed Jesus over to the soldiers to be flogged and crucified.[62]

Many people are familiar with the flogging or scourging of Jesus by the Roman soldiers. That was normal practice for victims before crucifixion. The film *The Passion* graphically portrays Roman scourging, although even that depiction does not show the full horror of the scourging from head to foot of the victim, as can be seen in the image of a crucified man on the Shroud of Turin, savagely whipped and wounded from shoulders to feet.

A Jewish flogging was limited to forty lashes,[63] but Roman soldiers had no limit, except that the victim should survive the flogging before being crucified. Roman soldiers scourged with a flagellum, a whip of leather strips with pieces of lead or bone sewn into the ends. They scourged the entire body. Jesus's flogging would have been brutal because he was being executed as the king of the Jews and would be regarded by the Roman soldiers as a rebel defying their Roman Empire.

The governor's soldiers then took Jesus into the headquarters and gathered the whole Jerusalem cohort, normally 480 soldiers. They stripped him, put a scarlet robe on him, shoved a crown of thorns on his head, put a reed in his right hand and knelt down, mocking him.

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[62] Matthew 27:15–26.

[63] Deuteronomy 25:3.

They spat on him and struck him on the head. After they mocked him they put his own clothes on him and took him out to crucify him.[64]

(7) Trial in Heaven

Additional to the rushed human trials, I want to include the ultimate, eternal verdict of heaven by the Judge of the whole earth. The courts of heaven declared Jesus to be the pure, perfect offering, the one and only substitute for our sin. God accepted the sacrifice of his Son in our place, our Redeemer, our Saviour, and our Lord. Paul wrote, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (1 Corinthians 5:21)

Isaiah's servant song declared it:

> Surely he had borne our infirmities
> and carried our diseases;
> yet we accounted him stricken,
> struck down by God, and afflicted.
> But he was wounded for our transgressions,
> crushed for our iniquities;
> upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
> and by his bruises we are healed.
> All we like sheep have gone astray;
> we have all turned to our own way,
> and the Lord has laid on him
> the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-5)

The hosts of heaven declared it:

> Then I looked and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice:

[64] Matthew 27:27–31.

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honour and glory and blessing!"
(Revelation 5:11 NKJV)

Crucifixion

Romans ruled forcefully with an iron rod. They crucified thousands of rebellious slaves and criminals, such as 6,000 crucified in the Spartacus rebellion of 70 BC, and 500 people a day in the Jewish rebellion of AD 70. Roman citizens were exempt from the degrading punishment of crucifixion. The Romans used crucifixion for six centuries until Emperor Constantine outlawed it around AD 313.

The conquering Romans made sure their victims suffered maximum agony and humiliation on thousands of crosses, suffering publicly and slowly in excruciating pain to their last agonized breath. That's how we got our English words *excruciate* (ex–crux – out of the cross) and *agony* from the Greek word *agon* (struggle or contest).

Roman soldiers could torture and mock their hapless victims before they crucified them. Jesus was brutally scourged, mocked, reviled, and then crucified. Previously strong and healthy, he suffered excruciating pain, shock and weakness. He did not have enough strength to carry the crossbeam, as the other victims did. He had been more brutally tortured than usual.

The three victims that day each carried their crossbeam (patibulum) to the place of public execution. Jesus was then too weak to do that, so the solders forced Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, to carry it. The cross in Scripture can mean both the crossbeam and the whole gruesome structure. Most common was the Tau structure, like a capital T. Victims were nailed to the crossbeam and hoisted onto the tree trunk or stake and their feet nailed to it. An artistic invention is the block of wood attached to the front of the cross to support feet, but Roman soldiers did not add it. Another symbolic artistic invention is the crown of thorns on Jesus's head

on the cross. Thorns were used in the prior torture, and then Jesus's clothes were put back on him, until removed again at the crucifixion.

Usually four soldiers would crucify each victim, supervised by a centurion. That day they crucified three, with Jesus in the middle. Romans crucified their victims along the main road just outside a town or village where it could be seen. They lopped trees and their victims carried the crossbeam to the dreadful execution site where they were nailed to the crossbar and hoisted onto a tree, a tree trunk, or a stake. Peter later wrote that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree.[65] The execution site just outside Jerusalem's city wall was called the place of the skull with graves nearby. There are tombs and graves just outside the Old City wall even today.

Spectators taunted the central victim, who had a sign above him declaring in Aramaic, Greek and Latin that he was the king of the Jews. The soldiers divided their victims' clothes among themselves, and gambled for Jesus's tunic because it was woven as one whole garment. Religious leaders and soldiers scoffed at him as a Messiah and king who couldn't save himself or others.[66]

They didn't know that by this very sacrifice of his perfect life, he would save all who trust in him.

He was crucified about nine o'clock, and darkness came over the land from noon. The Lamb of God died around three o'clock, the time the unblemished Paschal Lambs were being slain in the temple that afternoon.

Eye–witnesses saw and heard the horrendous spectacle. John, saw it. He was there with faithful women including Jesus's mother Mary, her sister (usually identified as Salome, John's mother), Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.[67]

This crucifixion account follows the traditional sequence of the statements that Jesus made while dying during six agonizing hours, including quoting Psalms 22:1 and 31:5.

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[65] 1 Peter 2:24; also Acts 10:39; 13:29.

[66] Luke 23:35–37.

[67] Matthew 27:55–56; Mark 15:40–41; Luke 23:49.

1. *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*
   As they crucified him, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) He continued to demonstrate love and forgiveness.

2. *Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.*
   One of the criminals kept on deriding Jesus but the other criminal rebuked him and believed in Jesus, pleading, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) That was a very public conversion moment for a guilty man seeking life. God's love, grace, mercy and forgiveness are available to us all as Jesus demonstrated even while dying – especially by dying.

3. *Woman, behold your son; behold your mother.*
   When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing with her, he said to his mother in Aramaic, "Dear woman, here is your son" and said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." (John 19:26-27) That disciple, the author of the story, usually identified as John, took Mary to his home.

4. *My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*
   Darkness covered the land from noon to three in the afternoon, the time when Passover lambs were being slaughtered. Jesus loudly quoted the start of a messianic Psalm: "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" - "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That Psalm continues: "All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him' … They pierced My hands and My feet …They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Some people thought he was calling for Elijah. (Matthew 27:45-49; Mark 15:34; Psalm 22:1, 7-8, 16-18 NKJV)

5. *I thirst.*
   At the excruciating end of his life Jesus gasped, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28). A jar of sour wine was nearby so someone put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. (John 19:28-29; Psalm 22:15; 69:3,21) It's interesting that Israelites used hyssop to put blood on their doorways at their first Passover in Egypt.

6. *It is finished.*
   When Jesus knew that all he had come to do had been done, he received the wine, and he said, "It is finished." That can be translated as, "It is accomplished." (John 19:30)

7. *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*
   Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46; Psalm 31:5), and breathed his last, quoting from Scripture. The greatest loving sacrifice in all of history was done, completed, finished, accomplished, and fulfilled.

The supervising centurion declared that the central victim was indeed innocent, and was God's Son.

Here is a summary of those words from the cross.

Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)
Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)
Woman, behold your son; behold your mother. (John 19:26–27 NKJV)
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; Psalm 22:1)[68]
I thirst. (John 19:28; Psalm 21:15–16; 69:21)
It is finished. (John 19:30)
Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. (Luke 23:46; Psalm 31:5)

[68] The Aramaic can be translated "My God, my God, for this purpose you have spared me." (The Passion Translation)

Traditionally, these seven statements have been called words of

forgiveness,
salvation,
relationship,
abandonment,
distress,
triumph, and
reunion.

Eventually the soldiers smashed the legs of the two victims still alive so they died quickly, no longer able to push up from their spiked feet to gasp more breath. Religious leaders wanted them off the crosses before that Passover Sabbath began at sunset. The central victim was already dead so a soldier pierced his side and heart with a spear, to be sure. Blood and water serum gushed out.

The mystery deepened rapidly. Matthew reported that the thick curtain in the temple was split from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split, and tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life, and came out of the tombs after Jesus's resurrection, and went into the city, and appeared to many people.[69]

The prophet Isaiah foretold the extreme suffering of the Messiah in his Servant Songs.[70] The last of those songs graphically describes the suffering of God's Servant, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

> Who has believed what we have heard?
> And to whom has the arm of the *Lord* been revealed?
> [2] For he grew up before him like a young plant,
> and like a root out of dry ground;
> he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
> nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
> [3] He was despised and rejected by others;
> a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;

[69] Matthew 27:51–52.

[70] Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12.

and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.
[4] Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
[5] But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
[6] All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the *Lord* has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
[7] He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
[8] By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
Who could have imagined his future?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people.
[9] They made his grave with the wicked
and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.
[10] Yet it was the will of the *Lord* to crush him with pain.
When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the *Lord* shall prosper.
[11] Out of his anguish he shall see light;
he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.
The righteous one, my servant, shall make many
righteous,

and he shall bear their iniquities.
[12] Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:1–12)

I tell events in this book in more detail in my book *The Lion of Judah*, with a free PDF on renewaljournal.com**.** There I include extra passages including some from Paul's letters, and from various passages in the New Testament, including The Revelation. Matthew and John witnessed these events personally. Mark may have seen some of it in Jerusalem. Luke gathered his reports from eye–witnesses for his two books, the *Gospel of Luke* and *The Acts of the Apostles*.

Joseph of Arimathea, assisted by Nicodemus, received permission to take Jesus's body from the cross, and placed the body in his new tomb, carved from a limestone hill nearby. He wrapped Jesus's body in a large linen sheet with a cloth around his head. He had a huge stone rolled in front of the tomb. The next day the chief priests received permission to seal the stone, and to keep a guard of soldiers on watch to prevent anyone from stealing the body.

Resurrection

Rumours began to spread that Passover weekend.

Most people thought that the unbelievable rumours were impossible, and said so.

Only a few, very few at first, thought the crucified Messiah was alive. A month later some of his followers still doubted that it had actually happened, and that he really was alive.[71]

Crucified, as thousands were, their Messiah and King then

[71] Matthew 28:17.

appeared mysteriously during forty days from the full moon at Passover until his ascension beyond the clouds.

On the third day, he mysteriously appeared to many of his friends. That day and evening he explained to them how the Scriptures said that the Messiah had to suffer.

These mysterious events transformed the lives of the people involved, and shaped the history of the world. This story covers the most momentous events in history because it not only affected those involved then, but also changed the lives and eternal destiny of countless millions throughout history.

This chapter includes a brief overview of those resurrection appearances.

Resurrection Sunday

Mary Magdalene – Mark 16:9; John 20:11–18.
The Women – Matthew 28:9–10; Mark 16:1–11.
Cleopas and friend, Emmaus Road – Mark 16:12–13; Luke 24:13–34.
Simon Peter – Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5.
The Disciples – Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36–49; John 20:19–23; 1 Corinthians 15:5.

(1) Mary Magdalene

After the Passover Sabbath, Mary, her sister (usually identified as Salome), and Mary Magdalene went to the tomb at dawn and found the large stone rolled away, and the body gone. An angel in the tomb told them that Jesus was alive: "He is risen, as he said."

The angel sent the women to tell the others, so Mary Magdalene rushed back, and told Peter and John, who ran to the tomb, and found it empty with the linen cloth there, and the head cloth folded near it.

Mary Magdalene stayed on at the tomb, weeping. She looked inside the tomb and saw two angels who asked her why she was

weeping. Then she saw a man she thought was the gardener, who also asked her why she was weeping, so she asked him if he had moved the body. Jesus said, "Mary."

Astonished, she cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher'). Jesus also told her to go and tell the news to the others.

(2) The Women

The women later reported that there had been an earthquake and a large angel had rolled away the stone. The guards were terrified and became like dead men.

Angels appear often in Scripture, usually as strong young men, never with wings. Cherubim and Seraphim and some heavenly creatures are winged.

Jesus appeared to the women after they had seen the angel at the tomb, and were rushing back. He instructed them to tell the others, and that he would see them also in Galilee.

(3) Cleopas and Friend on the Emmaus Road

That same day Cleopas and his friend walked about seven miles to Emmaus. Jesus joined them as they walked, but they did not recognize him, and they told him about the crucifixion, and the strange events of that morning. Jesus reminded them from the Law and all the Prophets that the Messiah had to suffer, and then enter his glory. They invited him for a meal, and as he gave thanks they realized who he was, but he disappeared. Immediately they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the others.

(4) Simon Peter

Cleopas and his friend found the disciples and others gathered together. The disciples said the news was all true and that Jesus had also appeared that day to Simon Peter.

(5) The Disciples behind locked doors

That evening as the disciples met behind locked doors, Jesus appeared to them. At first they were startled and afraid, thinking he was a ghost. He said, "Shalom," and showed them his hands and side, and invited them to touch him, and see he really was alive. He ate their cooked fish with them. They were overjoyed. He reminded them that he had previously told them that what was written about him in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, had to be fulfilled, and that repentance and forgiveness would be preached in his name to all nations.

He breathed on them saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." He told them he would send them what his Father had promised but that they should wait until they were clothed with power from on high.

40 Days (Acts 1:3)

Disciples with Thomas, one week later – John 20:24–29.
500 at once – 1 Corinthians 15:6.
James – 1 Corinthians 15:7.
Galilee Shore – John 21:1–25.
Galilee Mountain – Matthew 28:16–20.
Eating with disciples – Acts 1:4–5.
Ascension – Mount of Olives – Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:6–9.

(6) The Disciples with Thomas, one week later

Thomas missed that first night, did not believe it, and would not believe unless he could touch Jesus's wounds. A week later they all met again. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and said, "Shalom." He invited Thomas to touch his hands and side, and to stop doubting, and believe. Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:24–29)

(7) 500 at once

Paul later reported, "After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:6)

(8) James (and Paul's vision)

Paul also reported, "Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:7–8) James, the brother of Jesus, became a key leader in the church of Jerusalem, and wrote a pastoral letter now included in Scripture.

(9) Galilee Shore

Afterwards, Jesus appeared to seven of his disciples by the Lake of Galilee. Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John, and two other disciples, had been fishing unsuccessfully all night. Early in the morning Jesus stood on the shore and told them to throw their net on the right side of the boat. When they did, they couldn't haul in the net because of the large catch.

John said, "It is the Lord!" and Peter grabbed his cloak and swam about 100m to the shore. The others followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish. At the shore they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread. Jesus told them to get some of their fish. They discovered they had 153 large fish but even with so many the net was not torn. They all ate together.

When they had finished, Jesus asked Peter three times if Peter loved him, and Peter said he did. Peter was hurt when Jesus asked him the third time. Each time Jesus commissioned Peter to feed his sheep or lambs. Jesus said that when Peter was old he would stretch out his hands and others would dress him, and take him where he did not want to go, indicating how Peter would die. Tradition says Peter was crucified in Rome, and asked to be crucified upside down because

he was not worthy to die like Jesus did. A rumour spread that John would not die, but Jesus did not say that. When Peter asked about John, Jesus said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." (John 21:23)

(10) Galilee Mountain: The great commission

When eleven disciples met Jesus on a mountain in Galilee, even though some doubted, Jesus gave them what we call the Great Commission:

> All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go 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 obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:16–20)

(11) Eating with disciples

Jesus met with his disciples many times during those forty days, and while they ate together in Jerusalem, he told them to wait there until God's power came upon them.

> While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.' (Acts 1:4–5)

(12) Ascension

Jesus took his disciples out to the vicinity of Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them

and was taken up into heaven. There, on that mountain overlooking Jerusalem, he told them they would not know the times or dates the Father has set, but he gave them his final promise:

> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Then he ascended and a cloud hid him. While they looked up intently, two men in white stood beside them and told them that this same Jesus will come back in the same way they saw him go into heaven.

Jesus's promise about the Holy Spirit was dramatically fulfilled ten days later at Pentecost. His followers were filled with the Holy Spirit, and when Peter preached boldly that day, around three thousand people believed. The church grew rapidly.

Believers met in homes and also worshipped in the temple until persecution drove many of them out of Jerusalem. Stephen, the first of many martyrs, was stoned to death near the temple, just outside the city wall. Everywhere they went they told the good news of Jesus, God's Son, and multitudes believed.

They prayed for new believers to be filled with God's Spirit. Philip preached and prayed powerfully for large numbers in Samaria, and then Peter and John came and laid hands on the believers and the Holy Spirit came upon them also. Samaritans were included among the believers.

Saul had been persecuting believers, but a bright light blinded him, and he heard Jesus speak to him on the road to Damascus in Syria, where he was headed to persecute more believers. One of those believers, Ananias, prayed for Saul who was then healed and filled with the Spirit. He quickly became an effective evangelist and missionary, renamed Paul, known as an apostle to the Gentiles.

Peter eventually broke strict traditions and preached in the home of the centurion Cornelius. His whole household believed and God's

Spirit was poured out on them while Peter was preaching to them. The good news kept spreading through the Roman Empire.

Some believers had visions of Jesus or of angels as Paul did, or as John did when imprisoned on Patmos. John recorded those visions for us in the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ, now the last book in the Bible. It includes these inspiring revelations:

> Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, [13] and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. [14] His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, [15] his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. [16] In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two–edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.
>
> [17] When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, [18] and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. (Revelation 1:12–18)
>
> Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. [12] His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. [13] He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. [14] And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white

and pure, were following him on white horses. [15] From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. [16] On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. (Revelation 19:11–16)

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' [6] Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. [7] Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. (Revelation 21:5–7)

'It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.'

[17] The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'
And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.'
And let everyone who is thirsty come.
Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.
(Revelation 22:16–17)

Conclusion

The life of Jesus is history's great love story. The overview in this brief book points you to the great good news of who Jesus is and what he did. That story is told best in the Bible, God's inspired word.

I hope this brief commentary points you again to that God–breathed living word. It gave me fresh insights as I researched the harmonized story of these gospels.

Many writers discuss the popular five love languages: affirmation, service, gifts, time and touch. Jesus profoundly demonstrated all these in various ways.

He affirmed and admired faith, especially faith in him for healing and help. He served daily and showed it dramatically by washing his disciples' feet. He gave his life for us and ultimately he gives eternal life to all who believe. His three years of quality time with his followers prepared them to serve. His touch brought physical and spiritual healing and freedom to multitudes.

I love the way John summed up the reason for writing his Gospel.

> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)

That is my prayer for you, my reader.

God's glory filled the human Jesus. His disciple John wrote "we have seen his glory … full of grace and truth." At the Last Supper, on the Jewish day he died, Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." And the letter to the Hebrews adds, "He is the reflection

of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being." (John 1:14; 14:9; Hebrews 1:3)

God walked among us in the person of his one and only Son. Some believed in him and followed him. Many did not. It's the same today.

Here is my echoing sonnet I penned over fifty years ago.

> Sin stalks the soul, and permeates the whole
> Of life lived here where we, while bound by fear,
> Hunt far and near for freedom to appear
> From pole to pole with our minds in control.
> That worthy goal seems mockery. Sin stole
> Our freedom dear, left pain and woe to sear
> Each life, a mere heartache, or sob, or tear,
> Like a lost mole, blind, dirty in its hole.
> God's love stepped in to fight and conquer sin
> Through Christ who bled and died and rose as Head
> Supreme of all who claim Him Lord. Our fall,
> Clamour and din may end in Him. We win
> Release from dread, freedom, life from the dead,
> Unbound from gall, in answer to His call.

Discussion Questions

Chapter 1: Birth and Boyhood

1. What is one of your favourite Christmas carols and why?
2. What surprises you most about the Christmas story?
3. What challenges you about the boyhood and youth of Jesus?

What would you like people to pray about for you?

Chapter 2: Ministry Begins

1. Why do you think Jesus's public ministry began after his baptism?
2. What puzzles you about Jesus's ministry? (e.g. casting out spirits)
3. What challenges you about being a disciple of Jesus?

What prayer would you appreciate receiving?

Chapter 3: First to Second Passovers

1. Why do you think John 3:16 is so popular and well known?
2. Who can you identify with in Jesus's ministry? (e.g. Nicodemus, Samaritan woman, disciples, religious leaders)
3. What do you think challenged Jesus's disciples?

What prayer would encourage you just now?

Chapter 4: Second to Third Passovers

1. What impresses you most about Jesus?
2. What challenges you most about Jesus?
3. What surprises you most about Jesus?

What prayer would help you just now?

Chapter 5: Passover to Pentecost

1. What shocks you most about the crucifixion?
2. What challenges you about Jesus's death and resurrection?
3. What interests you most about the Holy Spirit?

What prayer support would you like now?

Author

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He taught in schools and Bible Colleges in Papua New Guinea and in the South Pacific with Baptist and Churches of Christ missions and led short–term missions in Africa, Europe, South–East Asia, and in the South Pacific islands.

His books and the *Renewal Journals* are available with PDFs on the Renewal Journal website – renewaljournal.com.

Geoff and Meg are blessed with three adult children and eight grandchildren, and also with great–grandchildren.

Appendix 1

Chronology with Jerusalem festivals

Birth and Boyhood of Jesus

Description	Location	Scripture
The Divinity of Christ	.	Jn 1:1–5
Birth of John the Baptist announced	Jerusalem	Lk 1:5–25
Betrothal of the Virgin Mary	Nazareth	Mt 1:18 Lk 1:27
The annunciation of the birth of Jesus	Nazareth	Lk 1:26–38
about 120 miles (190 km) – about two weeks travel		
The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth	Judah	Lk 1:39–55
about 120 miles (190 km) – about two weeks travel		
Her return to Nazareth	Nazareth	Lk 1:56
Joseph's vision	Nazareth	Mt 1:20–25
Birth and infancy of John the Baptist	Judah	Lk 1:57–80
about 90 miles – about ten days travel from Nazareth, and 5 miles (8 km) south of Jerusalem		
Birth of Jesus	Bethlehem	Lk 2:1–7
Adoration by the shepherds	Bethlehem	Lk 2:8–16
Circumcision	Bethlehem	Mt 1:25 Lk 2:21
about 5 miles – about half a day's travel		
Presentation and purification	Jerusalem	Lk 2:22–29
The Genealogies	.	Mt 1:1–17 Lk 3:23–38
about 5 miles – about half a day's travel		

Description	Location	Scripture
Adoration by the wise men	Bethlehem	Mt 2:1–12
Flight into Egypt	Egypt	Mt 2:13–15
Massacre of the innocents	Bethlehem	Mt 2:16–18
about 100 miles (160 km) – about ten days' travel		
Return to Nazareth	Nazareth	Mt 2:19–23 Lk 2:39
Childhood of Jesus	Nazareth	Lk 2:40
about 90 miles (145 km) – about ten days' travel		
With the teachers in the Temple	Jerusalem	Lk 2:41–50
about 90 miles – about ten days' travel		
Youth of Jesus	Nazareth	Lk 2:51–52

From John the Baptist to the First Passover

Description	Location	Scripture
Ministry of John the Baptist	Bethabara	Mt 3:1–4 Mt 1:1–8 Lk 3:1–6 Jn 1:6–15
Baptisms by John	Bethabara	Mt 3:5 Mk 1:5 Lk 3:7
First testimony of the Baptist to Christ	Bethabara	Mt 3:11,12 Mk 1:7,8 Lk 3:15–18
Baptism of Jesus by John	Bethabara	Mt 3:13–17 Mk 1:9–11 Lk 3:21,22
Temptation of Jesus Wilderness Of Judea	Judea	Mt 4:1–11 Mk 1:12,13 Lk 4:1–13
John the Baptist's second testimony	Bethabara	Jn 1:19–35
Call of the first disciples	Bethabara	Jn 1:35–51
First Miracle at Cana	Cana	Jn 2:1–11
Visit to Capernaum	Capernaum	Jn 2:12
First Passover: Cleansing the Temple	Jerusalem	Jn 2:13–25
Discourse with Nicodemus	Jerusalem	Jn 3:1–21

From the First Passover to the Second Passover

Description	Location	Scripture
The Baptist's last testimony	Aenon	Jn 3:22–36
Jesus visits Samaria	Sychar	Jn 4:1–42
Return to Cana	Cana	Jn 4:43–46
Nobleman's son healed	Cana	Jn 4:46–54
Brief visit to Jerusalem	Jerusalem	Jn 5:1–47
Miracle at pool of Bethesda	Jerusalem	Jn 5:1–47
John the Baptist in prison	Machaerus	Mt 4:12,17 Mk 1:14,15
Jesus preaches in Galilee	Galilee	Lk 4:14,15
Jesus preaches at Nazareth	Nazareth	Mk 6:1 Lk 4:15–30
Jesus preaches at Capernaum	Capernaum	Mt 4:13–16 Lk 4:31
Call of Andrew, Peter, James and John	Capernaum	Mt 4:18–22 Mk 1:16–20 Lk 5:1–11
Miracle draught of fishes	Capernaum	Lk 5:1–11
Demoniac healed	Capernaum	Mk 1:23–27 Lk 4:33–36
Peter's mother–in–law healed	Capernaum	Mt 8:14,15 Mk 1:29–31 Lk 4:38,39
Many sick and diseased healed	Capernaum	Mt 8:16,17 Mk 1:32–34 Lk 4:40,41
Retirement for solitary prayer	Galilee	Mk 1:35 Lk 4:42
Circuit through Galilee	Galilee	Mk 1:35–39 Lk 4:42–44
Miraculous Healing of a leper	Galilee	Mt 8:1–4 Mk 1:40–45 Lk 5:12–16
Retirement for a solitary prayer	Galilee	Mk 1:45 Lk 5:16
Miraculous Healing of a paralytic	Capernaum	Mt 9:1–8 Mk 2:1–12 Lk 5:18–26
Call of Matthew (Levi) Discourse at the feast	Capernaum	Mt 9:9–17 Mk 2:13–22 Lk 5:27–39
Disciples pluck the ears of corn	Galilee	Mt 12:1–8 Mk 2:23–28 Lk 6:1–5

Description	Location	Scripture
The man with a withered hand healed	Capernaum	Mt 12:9–14 Mk 3:1–6 Lk 6:6–11
Retirement for solitary prayer	Galilee	Lk 6:12
Call of the Twelve Apostles	Hill of Hattin?	Mt 10:2–4 Mk 3:13–19 Lk 6:13–16
Sermon on the Mount	Hill of Hattin?	Mt 5–7 Lk 6:17–49
Parable of House on rock or sand	Hill of Hattin?	Mt 7:24–29 Lk 6:47–49
Centurion's servant healed	Hill of Hattin?	Mt 8:5–13 Lk 7:1–10
Widow of Nain's son raised	Nain	Lk 7:11–17
Message from John the Baptist	Capernaum	Mt 11:2–19 Lk 7:18–35
Jesus tells of John the Baptist	Capernaum	Mt 11:2–19 Lk 7:18–35
The sinful woman	Capernaum?	Lk 7:36–50
Parable of two debtors	Capernaum?	Lk 7:41,42
Galilee tour with the twelve	Galilee	Lk 8:1–3
Demoniac healed	Capernaum	Mt 12:22
Blasphemy against Holy Spirit	Capernaum	Mt 12:24–37 Mk 3:22–30
The unclean spirit	Capernaum	Mt 12:43–46
Jesus's relatives	Capernaum	Mt 12:46 Mk 3:31
Parables: The Sower	Galilee	Mt 13:1–9,18–23 Mk 4:1,14–20 Lk 8:4,11–15
Parables: The Tares	Galilee	Mt 13:24
Parables: The Mustard seed	Galilee	Mt 13:31 Mk 4:30
Parables: The Leaven	Galilee	Mt 13:33 Lk 13:20,21
Parables: The Candle	Galilee	Mt 5:15 Mk 4:21 Lk 8:16
Parables: The Candle	Galilee	Mt 5:15 Mk 4:21 Lk 11:33

Description	Location	Scripture
Parables: The Treasure	Galilee	Mt 13:44
Parables: The Pearl	Galilee	Mt 13:45
Parables: The Drawnet	Galilee	Mt 13:47
Parables: Seed grows secretly	Galilee	Mk 4:26–29
Jesus calms the storm	Lake Galilee	Mt 8:24–27 Mk 4:37–41 Lk 8:23–25
Gergesene demoniacs set free	Gergesa	Mt 8:28–34 Mk 5:1–15 Lk 8:27–35
Parables: The Bridegroom	Capernaum	Mt 9:15
Parable: Cloth on old garment	Capernaum	Mt 9:16 Mk 2:21 Lk 5:36
Parable: new wine in old skins	Capernaum	Mt 9:17 Mk 2:22 Lk 5:37,38
Woman with issue of blood	Gennesaret	Mt 9:18 Mk 5:22 Lk 8:41
Jairus's daughter raised	Capernaum	Mt 9:18 Mk 5:22 Lk 8:41
Two blind men healed	Capernaum	Mt 9:27,30
Dumb spirit cast out	Capernaum	Mt 9:32,33
Mission of Twelve Apostles	Capernaum	Mt 10:1 Mk 6:7–12 Lk 9:1–6
Death of John the Baptist	Machaerus	Mt 14:1–12 Mk 6:14–29 Lk 9:7
Feeding of the five thousand **Second Passover crowds gathering**	Bethsaida	Mt 14:13–21 Mk 6:30–44 Lk 9:12–17 Jn 6:1–13
Jesus walks on the water	Lake Galilee	Mt 14:25 Mk 6:48 Jn 6:19
Bread of Life discourse	Capernaum	Mt 14:34 Jn 6:26–70

From the Second Passover to the Third Passover

Description	Location	Scripture
Opposition of Scribes and Pharisees	Capernaum	Mt 15:1
Discourse on Pollution	Capernaum	Mt 15:2–20 Mk 7:1–23
Healing the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman	Phoenicia	Mt 15:21–29 Mk 7:24–30
Deaf and dumb man healed	Tyre, Sidon	Mk 7:32
Healing of many sick people	Decapolis	Mt 15:30,31
Feeding of the four thousand	Gennesaret	Mt 15:32–39 Mk 8:1–9
Parable of the leaven of Pharisees	Gennesaret	Mt 16:1–12 Mk 8:14–22
Healing of the Blind man	Bethsaida	Mk 8:23–27
Peter's confession of Christ	Caesarea Philippi	Mt 16:13–21 Mk 8:27–30
First prediction of the Passion	Caesarea Philippi	Mt 16:21–28 Mk 8:31–38 Lk 9:22–27
The transfiguration	Mt. Hermon	Mt 17:1–8 Mk 9:2–8 Lk 9:28–36
Healing the demoniac child	Mt. Hermon	Mt 17:14–21 Mk 9:14–27 Lk 9:37–42
Second prediction of the Passion	Galilee	Mt 17:22,23 Mk 9:31 Lk 9:43,44
The coin in the fish's mouth	Capernaum	Mt 17:27
Lesson on docility	Capernaum	Mt 18:1–14 Mk 9:33–37 Lk 9:46–48
Lesson on forgiveness	Capernaum	Mt 18:15 Mk 9:43
Lesson on self–denial	Capernaum	Mt 18:18
Parable of the unmerciful servant	Capernaum	Mt 18:23–35
Trip to Jerusalem through Samaria	Samaria	Lk 9:51,52
Jealousy of the Samaritans	Samaria	Lk 9:53
Anger of the 'sons of thunder'	Samaria	Lk 9:54–56
The feast of Tabernacles	Jerusalem	Jn 7:2–10

Description	Location	Scripture
Discourses	Jerusalem	Jn 7:10–46
Officers sent to arrest Christ	Jerusalem	Jn 7:30,46
The adulteress	Jerusalem	Jn 8:3
Discourses	Jerusalem	Jn 8:12
Christ threatened with stoning	Jerusalem	Jn 8:59
Blind man healed and discourses	Jerusalem	Jn 9:1-41
Christ the Door; the Good Shepherd	Jerusalem	Jn 10:1-21
Mission of the seventy	Judea	Lk 10:1–16
Return of the seventy	Judea	Lk 10:17–24
Parable of the Good Samaritan	Judea	Lk 10:30–37
Visit to Martha, Mary	Bethany	Lk 10:38–42
Jesus teaches his disciples to pray	Judea	Lk 11:1–13
Parable of importunate friend	Judea	Lk 11:5–8
Mute demoniac healed	Judea	Mt 12:22–45 Lk 11:14
Pharisees' blasphemy rebuked	Judea	Mt 12:22–45 Lk 11:14
Discourses: repentant Ninevites	Judea	Mt 12:41 Lk 11:29–36
Providence to birds and flowers	Judea	Lk 12:1–12
Parable of the rich fool	Judea	Lk 12:13–21
Parable of servants watching	Judea	Lk 12:35–40
Parable of the wise steward	Judea	Lk 12:42–48
The murdered Galileans	Judea	Lk 13:1–5
The barren fig tree	Judea	Lk 13:6–9
Healing of woman with an infirmity	Judea	Lk 13:10–17
Feast of Dedication	Jerusalem	Jn 10:22–30
Attempt to stone Jesus	Jerusalem	Jn 10:31-39
Jesus retires across Jordan	Peraea	Jn 10:40-42
Are there few that be saved?	Peraea	Lk 13:23–30
The message to Herod	Paraea	Lk 13:31–33

Description	Location	Scripture
Healing of the man with dropsy	Peraea	Lk 14:1–6
Parable of the great supper	Peraea	Lk 14:15–24
Parable of tower, warring king	Paraea	Lk 14:28–33
Parable of the lost sheep	Peraea	Mt 18:12,13 Lk 15:1–7
Parable of the lost coin	Peraea	Lk 15:8–10
Parable of the prodigal son	Peraea	Lk 15:11–32
Parable of the unjust steward	Peraea	Lk 16:1–13
Parable of the rich man and Lazarus	Peraea	Lk 16:19–31
Parable of the unprofitable servants	Peraea	Lk 17:7–10
Sickness of Lazarus	Bethany	Jn 11:1–10
Jesus goes from Peraea to Bethany	Peraea	Jn 11:11–16
Miraculous Resurrection of Lazarus	Bethany	Jn 11:17–46
The council: Advice of Caiaphas	Jerusalem	Jn 11:47–53
Jesus retires to the town of Ephraim	Ephraim	Jn 11:54
Last journey to Jerusalem	Samaria border	Mt 19:1 Mk 10:1 Lk 17:11
Healing of the ten lepers	Samaria border	Lk 17:12–19
Parable of the unjust judge	Samaria border	Lk 18:1–8
Parable: Pharisee and the publican	Samaria border	Lk 18:9–14
The question of divorce	Samaria border	Mt 19:3–12 Mk 10:2–12
Jesus blesses little children	Samaria border	Mt 19:13–15 Mk 10:13–16 Lk 18:15–17
The rich young ruler	Samaria border	Mt 19:16–22 Mk 10:17–22 Lk 18:18–23

Description	Location	Scripture
Parable: Labourers in the vineyard	Samaria border	Mt 20:1–16
Third prediction of the Passion	Samaria border	Mt 20:17–19 Mk 10:32–34 Lk 18:31–34
Request of James and John	Samaria border	Mt 20:20–28 Mk 10:35–45
Healing of Blind Bartimaeus	Near Jericho	Mt 20:29–34 Mk 10:46–52 Lk 18:35–43
Jesus at the house of Zacchaeus	Jericho	Lk 19:1–10
Parable of the pounds	Jericho	Lk 19:11–28

Holy Week: Confrontation

Description	Location	Scripture
The supper in Simon's house	Bethany	Mt 26:6–13 Mk 14:3–9 Jn 12:1–9
Mary anoints Jesus	Bethany	Mt 26:7–13 Mk 14:3–8 Jn 12:3–8
Triumphal entry into the city	Jerusalem	Mt 21:1–11 Mk 11:1–10 Lk 19:29–44 Jn 12:12–19
Survey of the Temple	Jerusalem	Mk 11:11
Retirement to Bethany	Bethany	Mk 11:11
Withering of the barren fig–tree	Olivet	Mt 21:18–19 Mk 11:12–14
Second cleansing of the Temple	Jerusalem	Mt 21:12–17 Mk 11:15–19 Lk 19:45–48
Retirement to Bethany	Bethany	Mt 21:17 Mk 11:19
The lesson of the fig–tree	Olivet	Mt 21:20–22 Mk 11:20–25
Discourses in the Temple:	Jerusalem	Mk 11:26
The rulers' question	Jerusalem	Mt 21:23–27 Mk 11:27–33 Lk 20:1–8
The parable of the two sons	Jerusalem	Mt 21:28–32
Parable of the wicked husbandmen	Jerusalem	Mt 21:33–46 Mk 12:1–12 Lk 20:9–19
Parable of the wedding garment	Jerusalem	Mt 22:1–14
The subtle questions		
1) of the Pharisees – the tribute money	Jerusalem	Mt 22:15–22 Mk 12:13–17 Lk 20:20–26

Description	Location	Scripture
2) of the Sadducees – the resurrection	Jerusalem	Mt 22:23–33 Mk 12:18–27 Lk 20:27–39
3) of the Lawyer – the great commandment	Jerusalem	Mt 22:34–40 Mk 12:28–34
Our Lord's counter question	Jerusalem	Mt 22:41–46 Mk 12:35–37 Lk 20:41–44
Scribes and Pharisees denounced	Jerusalem	Mt 23:13–33
The widow's mite	Jerusalem	Mk 12:41–44 Lk 21:1–4
The coming of the Greeks	Jerusalem	Jn 12:20–36
The departure to the Mt of Olives	Olivet	Mt 24:1–3 Mk 13:1–3
Prediction 1: the destruction of Jerusalem	Olivet	Mt 24:3–28 Mk 13:3–23 Lk 21:5–24
Parable of fig–tree and all the trees	Olivet	Mt 24:32,33 Mk 13:28,29 Lk 21:29–32
Prediction 2: of the second coming	Olivet	Mt 24:28–51 Mk 13:23–37 Lk 21:24–36
Parable of the householder	Olivet	Mk 13:34
Parables:– The ten virgins	Olivet	Mt 25:1–13
Parables:– The talents	Olivet	Mt 25:14–30
Parables:– The sheep and the goats	Olivet	Mt 25:31–46
The Sanhedrin in council	Jerusalem	Mt 26:3–5 Mk 14:1–2 Lk 22:1–2
Compact of the traitor	Jerusalem	Mt 26:14–16 Mk 14:10,11 Lk 22:3–6

The Last Supper

Preparation of the Passover	Jerusalem	Mt 26:17–19 Mk 14:12–16 Lk 22:7–13
Washing the apostles' feet	Jerusalem	Jn 13:1–17
The breaking of bread	Jerusalem	Mt 26:26 Mk 14:22 Lk 22:19
'One of you shall betray me'	Jerusalem	Mt 26:21 Mk 14:18 Lk 22:21 Jn 13:21
'Is it I ?'	Jerusalem	Mt 26:22–25 Mk 14:19
Giving of the bread	Jerusalem	Jn 13:26,27
Departure of Judas Iscariot	Jerusalem	Jn 13:30
Peter warned	Jerusalem	Mt 26:34 Mk 14:30 Lk 22:34 Jn 13:38
Blessing the cup	Jerusalem	Mt 26:27,28 Mk 14:23,24 Lk 22:17
The discourses after supper	Jerusalem	Jn 14:1–16:33
Christ's prayer for his apostles	Jerusalem	Jn 17:1–17:26
The hymn	Jerusalem	Mt 26:30 Mk 14:26

Gethsemane and Trials

The agony	Gethsemane	Mt 26:37 Mk 14:33 Lk 22:39 Jn 18:1
The thrice–repeated prayer	Gethsemane	Mt 26:39–44 Mk 14:36–39 Lk 22:42
Sweat and angel support	Gethsemane	Lk 22:43,44
The sleep of the apostles	Gethsemane	Mt 26:40–45 Mk 14:37–41 Lk 22:45,46
Betrayal by Judas	Gethsemane	Mt 26:47–50 Mk 14:34,44 Lk 22:47 Jn 18:2–5
Peter smites Malchus	Gethsemane	Mt 26:51 Mk 14:47 Lk 22:50 Jn 18:10
Jesus heals the ear of Malchus	Gethsemane	Lk 22:51
Jesus forsaken by disciples	Gethsemane	Mt 26:56 Mk 14:50
Jesus led to Annas	Jerusalem	Jn 18:12,13
Jesus tried by Caiaphas	Jerusalem	Mt 26:57 Mk 14:53 Lk 22:54 Jn 18:15
Peter follows Jesus	Jerusalem	Mt 26:58 Mk 14:54 Lk 22:55 Jn 18:15
The high priest's adjuration	Jerusalem	Mt 26:63 Mk 14:61
Jesus condemned, buffeted, mocked	Jerusalem	Mt 26:66,67 Mk 14:64,65 Lk 22:63–65
Peter's denial of Christ	Jerusalem	Mt 26:69–75 Mk 14:66–72 Lk 22:54–62 Jn 18:17–27
Jesus before Pilate	Jerusalem	Mt 27:1,2 Mk 15:1 Lk 23:1 Jn 18:28
Repentance of Judas	Jerusalem	Mt 27:3
Pilate comes out to the people	Jerusalem	Jn 18:29
Pilate speaks to Jesus privately	Jerusalem	Jn 18:33

Pilate orders him to be scourged	Jerusalem	Mt 27:26 Mk 15:15 Jn 19:1
Jesus crowned with thorns	Jerusalem	Mt 27:29 Mk 15:17 Jn 19:2
'Behold the man'	Jerusalem	Jn 19:5
Jesus accused formally	Jerusalem	Mt 27:11 Mk 15:2 Lk 23:2
Jesus sent by Pilate to Herod	Jerusalem	Lk 23:6–11
Jesus mocked, arrayed in purple	Jerusalem	Lk 23:6–11
'Behold your King'	Jerusalem	Jn 19:14
Pilate desires to release him	Jerusalem	Mt 27:15 Mk 15:6 Lk 23:17 Jn 19:12
Pilate's wife message	Jerusalem	Mt 27:19
Pilate washes his hands	Jerusalem	Mt 27:24
Pilate releases Barabbas	Jerusalem	Mt 27:26
Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified	Jerusalem	Mt 27:26 Mk 15:15 Lk 23:25 Jn 19:16

Crucifixion

Simon of Cyrene carries the cross	Jerusalem	Mt 27:32 Mk 15:21 Lk 23:26
They give Jesus vinegar and gall	Golgotha	Mt 27:34 Mk 15:23 Lk 23:36
They nail him to the cross	Golgotha	Mt 27:35 Mk 15:24,25 Lk 23:33 Jn 19:18
The superscription	Golgotha	Mt 27:37 Mk 15:26 Lk 23:38 Jn 19:19
1) Father, forgive them	Golgotha	Lk 23:34
His garments parted, and vesture allotted	Golgotha	Mt 27:35 Mk 15:24 Lk 23:34 Jn 19:23
Passers–by rail, the two thieves revile	Golgotha	Mt 27:39–44 Mk 15:29–32 Lk 23:35
The penitent thief	Golgotha	Lk 23:40
2) Today you will be with me ...	Golgotha	Lk 23:43
3) Woman, behold your son. ...	Golgotha	Jn 19:26,27
Darkness over all the land	Golgotha	Mt 27:45 Mk 15:33 Lk 23:44,45
4) My God, my God, why ... ?	Golgotha	Mt 27:46 Mk 15:34
5) I thirst	Golgotha	Jn 19:28
The vinegar	Golgatha	Mt 27:48 Mk 15:36 Jn 19:29
6) It is finished	Golgotha	Jn 19:30
7) Father, into your hands ...	Golgotha	Lk 23:46
Rending of the veil	Jerusalem	Mt 27:51 Mk 15:38 Lk 23:45
Graves opened, saints resurrected	Jerusalem	Mt 27:52
Testimony of Centurion	Golgotha	Mt 27:54 Mk 15:39 Lk 23:47
Watching of the women	Golgotha	Mt 27:55 Mk 15:40 Lk 23:49
The piercing of his side	Golgotha	Jn 19:34

Taking down from the cross	The Garden	Mt 27:57–60 Mk 15:46 Lk 23:53 Jn 19:38–42
Burial by Joseph of Arimethea, Nicodemus	The Garden	Mt 27:57–60 Mk 15:46 Lk 23:53 Jn 19:38–42
A guard placed over the sealed stone	Garden	Mt 27:65,66

Resurrection

Description	Location	Scripture
Women carry spices to the tomb	The Garden	Mt 28:1 Mk 16:1,2 Lk 24:1
The angel had rolled away the stone	Garden	Mt 28:2
Women announce the resurrection	Jerusalem	Mt 28:8 Lk 24:9,10 Jn 20:1,2
Peter and John run to the tomb	Garden	Lk 24:12 Jn 20:3
The women return to the tomb	Garden	Lk 24:1
The guards report to the chief priests	Jerusalem	Mt 28:11–15
RESURRECTION APPEARANCES		
1) To Mary Magdalene	Garden	Mk 16:9,10 Jn 20:14–18
2) To the women returning home	Garden	Mt 28:9–10
3) To two disciples going to Emmaus	Emmaus Road	Mk 16:12 Lk 24:13
4) To Peter	Jerusalem	1Co 15:5 Lk 24:34
5) To 10 disciples in the upper room	Jerusalem	Lk 24:33 Jn 20:19–23
6) To 11 disciples in the upper room	Jerusalem	Mk 16:14 Jn 20:26–29
7) To 500 at once	Unknown	1 Cor 15:6
8) To James	Unknown	1 Cor 15:6
9) To 7 disciples at the lake shore	Galilee	Jn 21:1–11
10) To 11 disciples on a mountain	Galilee	Mt 28:18–20
11) To disciples eating together	Jerusalem	Acts 1:4–5
12) THE ASCENSION	Mt of Olives Bethany	Mk 16:19 Lk 24:50–51 Acts 1:6–9

This chronology and charts are adapted and used with permission from Believe: http://mb–soft.com/believe/txh/gospgosp.htm.

Appendix 2

Alternative Chronology

Some scholars argue for a crucifixion on the Thursday of Holy Week, followed by two Sabbath days, the Passover Sabbath on Friday and the regular Sabbath on Saturday.

That chronology could correlate with Jesus's predictions:

> For just as Jonah was for three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:40)

> Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. 32 For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. 33 After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.' (Luke 18:31–33)

Some scholars point out that a Sabbath for Jews is not only a Saturday, but may also refer to special Sabbaths, when no work could be done, such as on the Passover Sabbath. Following their lunar month, the Passover on Nissan 15 would fall on different days of the week, but still be a sacred Sabbath.

That discussion sent me checking the plural Sabbaths in Matthew 28:1 about the women going to the tomb after the Sabbaths. It is plural

in Greek and can be used for either Sabbaths or Sabbath, as also in Matthew 12:1, about Jesus and the disciples plucking and eating grain on the Sabbaths.

The Bible passages may allow for a crucifixion on the Thursday of Holy Week. Singular or plural, the women found the stone rolled away on the first day of the week after Sabbath.

That Friday may have been a special Passover Sabbath, not just the Saturday. John writes about the next day after the crucifixion being a special Sabbath, as in John 19:31.

Some scholars argue persuasively for a late Nisan 14 on Wednesday or Thursday in AD 31.

Many scholars, however, see the special Passover Sabbath as on the Saturday. Celestial calendars indicate that Nisan 14 fell on Friday on April 7 in AD 30, and on Friday April 3 in AD 33, alternative dates for the crucifixion, based on the dates from the new moon of those years.

Irrespective of the day, the great significance is that the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was crucified on the Day of Preparation for the Passover, the day on which the Passover lamb was killed, so that after sunset the Passover could be celebrated on the next Jewish day beginning after sunset.

Appendix 3

The Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the great love story of Jesus. They do not write biography, although much of their good news is biographical. They tell the story of God's love revealed perfectly in Jesus.

Matthew tells the love story

A despised, hated tax collector for Rome, Matthew admired Jesus and left his lucrative business to travel on foot with Jesus and the growing crowd of his followers. A staunch Jew, Matthew likely wrote his love story in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the Middle East at that time.

They copied their Scriptures (our Old Testament) in Hebrew scrolls, but from the time of the Jews return from captivity in Babylon, around 538 BC, they spoke Aramaic, a Semitic language similar to Hebrew, which spread through the Middle East. It became the native language of Palestine used by Jesus and his followers.[72] Matthew quotes liberally from the Hebrew Scriptures, showing that Jesus fulfilled their prophecies. Matthew's story was reproduced in common Greek, used widely at that time following Alexander the Great's conquests.

Matthew the evangelist wrote especially for Jews. He begins his gospel presenting Jesus Christ as the son of David, the son of Abraham. He ends his gospel with the Great Commission declaring

[72] Matthew 1:21, The Passion Translation.

that Jesus sends his followers into all nations. In Jesus, God's covenant embraces the whole world.

This radical evangelistic missionary gospel shocked traditional Jews. Matthew insists that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, backing up his claims with many quotations from the Old Testament. He argues that Jesus did not do away with the Scriptures, but fulfilled them.[73] He emphasizes the missionary nature of Jesus's ministry and of his church.

This gospel continually confronted the Jewish Christian community as well as other Jews. Here is a persistent and urgent call to mission. The good news is for all people, not only for Jews.

Matthew begins his Gospel telling of the coming of Jesus the Messiah who proclaims God's kingdom. The figure of Jesus the Messiah is announced by John the Baptist, as prophesied.

The beginning of the ministry in Galilee shows Christ's design for life in God's kingdom, again fulfilling prophecy. Chapters 5–7 gather the words of Jesus together in The Sermon on the Mount in which we are challenged to seek first the kingdom of God. Here is the kingdom charter, the ethics of kingdom living. The chapters that follow demonstrate God's kingdom in the works of Jesus.

Matthew gathers the discourses of Jesus as teaching segments throughout his narrative. He often uses the phrase "kingdom of heaven" for kingdom of God in typical Jewish reverence for the word *God*.

Jesus's ministry is summarized in Matthew 4:23 as teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness. This statement introduces the words and works of Jesus in chapters 5–9. Then in Matthew 9:35, the same statement is repeated. Here it introduces the mission of Jesus's followers.

The mission discourse, commencing from Matthew 9:35, tells of Jesus's plan for the spread of God's kingdom. His disciples will continue his ministry. They will proclaim the kingdom of God.

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[73] Matthew 5:17.

The chapters following the mission discourse show the radical nature of the mystery of God's kingdom. This mystery is revealed by Jesus to those committed to him, but concealed from others, as indicated in the parable discourses of chapter 13.

Matthew, the only gospel writer to use the word church, points out that Jesus's church has his authority.[74] The church is the agent of God's kingdom, and manifests the kingdom in the world.

Tensions with the keepers of Israel's traditions reached flash point and boiled over into Jesus's arrest and execution. That is the volatile setting in which Jesus pressed his authority and invitation as the ministry ends. The king is crowned with thorns and crucified. Apparent defeat in death is then turned into the amazing victory of resurrection. Christ the King reigns. We all ultimately acknowledge his reign in the end. In Jesus's victory we see God's kingdom fulfilled.

The mysteries of the passion of Jesus, his death and resurrection and the promise of the Holy Spirit conclude with the astounding claim in the Great Commission that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus, God's Son, the Messiah. He commissions us to make disciples of all nations. He is with us to the end.

Mark tells the love story

Probably as a young man in Jerusalem, Mark knew and hung around Jesus and his followers. His love story is a condensed version, the shortest account, and possibly the first cab off the rank. It's likely that Matthew and Luke both used much of Mark's story in their similar stories, now called the three Synoptic Gospels.

Mark may have been the young man, he alone refers to, who ran off leaving his linen sheet with the mob who grabbed him in Gethsemane, when Jesus was arrested late at night. His family may have lived in a big house where many met to pray and it may have had the large upper room where Jesus ate the Passover. Mark, possibly

[74] Matthew 16:18–19; 18:17–18.

known as John Mark, joined Paul and also Mark's cousin, Barnabas, and then joined Barnabas again on missionary journeys, and was with Paul in Rome. He travelled with Peter who called him "my son," and probably gave him most of the information he used in his Gospel. Jerome, a leader in the early church, told how Mark established the church in Alexandria in Egypt.[75]

Mark gives a vigorous, concise account of Jesus. The narrative moves swiftly. A brief prologue leads immediately into Jesus's ministry as he appears proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom of God. Kingdom life fills the pages.

Central to that drama is the cross. Mark has been described as a passion narrative with an introduction. Jesus is introduced as the Son of God in the first verse. Chapters 1–8 reveal the mystery of the Son of God seen in Jesus's three year ministry, based in Galilee.

Then the drama shifts in chapter 8, with Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Jesus immediately predicts his death and prepares his disciples for it. The Messiah must sacrifice his life. The way of the Son of Man is the way of the cross. Chapters 11–16 describe that final week in Jerusalem.

Holy Week, the last week of the earthly life of Jesus, may be summarized this way as a general guide. The different Gospels record different events, each one telling the Gospel, the good news, in their own way. So this arrangement is just an estimate of the sequence of the momentous developments in Holy Week.

This summary of events in Holy Week follows the outline in Mark's Gospel:

Palm Sunday – Day of Demonstration
Mark 11:1–11 (Zech 9:9) – Jesus enters Jerusalem

Monday – Day of Authority
Mark 11:12–19 – fig tree rebuked, temple cleansed

[75] Mark 14:12–16, 50–52; Acts 1:12–14; 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:36–39; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13; and http://www.ldolphin.org/johnmark.html.

Tuesday – Day of Conflict
Mark 11:20 – 13:36 – debates with leaders

Wednesday – Day of Preparation
Mark 14:1–11 – anointed at Bethany

Thursday – Day of Farewell
Mark 14:12–42 – last supper

Good Friday – Day of Crucifixion
Mark 14:43 – 15:47 – trials and death

Saturday – Day of Sabbath
Mark 15:46–47 – tomb sealed

Easter Sunday – Day of Resurrection
Mark 16:1–18 – resurrection appearances

These passages remind us of events from the most momentous week in all history, and indeed in all eternity. The Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, took our sin upon himself, died in our place, and conquered death. He alone is the Saviour of the World. All who believe in him, all who trust him, will not die but live forever with him.

Luke tells the love story

Physician and historian, Luke gives us unique accounts of the earliest days in Jesus's life. The only Gentile author in the Bible, he addressed his two books, Luke–Acts, to his Gentile friend Theophilus. He provides carefully researched historical insights into Jesus and his followers. He alone records Jesus's famous and confronting parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.[76]

[76] Luke 1–2; 10:25–37; 15:11–32.

Doctor Luke carefully researched the accounts of healing and miracles. He joined the teams on Paul's second and third missionary journeys though Turkey (then called Asia, or Asia Minor) and Greece, and on their fateful trip to Rome which included being shipwrecked on Malta. He carefully described those adventures in the "we passages" in Acts. Paul valued him highly.[77]

Luke wrote with a different emphasis from the other writers of the New Testament who all grew up steeped in Israel's traditions. He writes especially for his community.

Luke the historian describes Jesus's central place in human events. Jesus is the Saviour of the whole world. No one is excluded from God's offer of salvation in Jesus. The poor, despised and outcasts (such as Gentiles) are especially invited into the kingdom of God. Luke gives a clear, ordered account of the spread of God's kingdom in the ministry of Jesus (Luke's Gospel) and in the early church (The Acts of the Apostles).

Luke the pilgrim makes "journey" a strong theme in both his books. He tells of events along the way, on the road. This especially applies to Jesus's final journey to Jerusalem. That last journey began after Peter's declaration that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus explained that it involved his death and resurrection.

Luke the missionary, who often accompanied Paul, tells of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, first in Jesus, then in his followers, and then in the church's missionary expansion. Luke refers to the Holy Spirit often in both his gospel and The Acts of the Apostles.

Luke the doctor emphasizes Jesus's compassion and healing power for all who came to him. His gospel abounds with stories of Jesus's care for people. He includes many accounts of Jesus's compassion for the poor and for outcasts.

Luke the evangelist tells of Jesus's saving power and includes some of the most famous parables which summarize the good news of God's kingdom. Parables of the prodigal son, the lost coin, the Good

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[77] Acts 16:10–17, & 20:5–21:18, & 27:1–28:16; Colossians 4;14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24.

Samaritan, the rich man and Lazarus, and the rich fool, are unique to Luke's evangelism story. So are the accounts of the Samaritan leper, the sinful woman who anointed Jesus's feet, and Zacchaeus. These were despised people who responded to Jesus.

If you have a Bible with section headings containing cross references, as in the Good News Bible and New Revised Standard Version, you can easily locate the passages unique to Luke. They have no cross references. Those passages give a feel for Luke's emphasis in telling the good news about the kingdom of God.

John tells the love story

He may have been Jesus's young cousin, a son with his older brother James, of the successful fisherman Zebedee, who employed others in his business in partnership with Simon and Andrew. John's mother may have been a sister to Jesus's mother, Mary, identified by early church leaders as Salome. She wanted Jesus to allow her sons to sit beside him in his new kingdom. She was with John and with Mary at the crucifixion where Jesus committed his mother into John's care. John writes about the disciple whom Jesus loved, usually identified as John himself, who reclined on Jesus's chest at the last supper.[78]

John's Gospel and his three letters emphasize God's love revealed in Jesus. Famous verses like John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16 describe that love:

> For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16)

> We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. (1 John 3:16)

[78] Matthew 20:20–21; 27:56; John 13:23; 19:25.

John was an eye–witness to the ministry of Jesus. He belonged to the inner circle of disciples with his brother James and with Peter the natural leader. John may have been the youngest of the disciples.

Throughout his Gospel, John emphasized that he recorded what he had seen and heard. He states early in the Gospel that he, with others, witnessed the life of Jesus the Christ, the Logos, the living Word of God.

John describes how he was there at the crucifixion witnessing that stupendous, agonizing death. He emphasizes that he wrote so that his readers would believe in Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God.

Appendix 4

The Shroud of Turin

The Shroud of Turin is the most intensely investigated religious artefact in history. Many scholars believe it may be the linen cloth that was wrapped around Jesus's body. Its faint image shows the horrendous wounds of a crucified man, with wounds exactly matching the description of Jesus's death.

Carbon dating in 1988, from a tiny corner of the Shroud, dated the sample between AD 1260 and 1390, but some investigators argue that the sample came from repaired cloth.

Physicist, and founder of the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP), John P. Jackson, proposed that the image features of the Shroud of Turin were produced by radiation emanating from the body in the Shroud at the moment of resurrection. It does not have paint segments.

You can find his name and many Shroud articles and pictures on Google. I include links on my renewaljournal.com from the main page. It may, or may not be the shroud used for Jesus, but does remain a graphic and disturbing image of a crucified man.

The linen cloth, around fourteen feet by three and a half feet, has the faint double image, front and back, of a man with crucifixion wounds, and some burn marks where it was scorched in a fire in 1532. Although faint as a negative, it is clearer when viewed as a positive with darks and lights reversed.

The wrist is punctured with blood running down the arm as would happen for a victim nailed and hanging from the wrists on a crossbeam. The original Greek words for hand can also include the wrist.

Detailed investigation found over 120 scourge marks typical of wounds from the Roman instrument whip known as the flagrum with thongs to which small balls of lead or bone were attached. The victim has a large puncture between his ribs on his right side from which blood and watery serum flowed, visible only by ultraviolet fluorescence photography.

Puncture wounds on his head are consistent with a rough cap of thorns rather than a wreath of thorns depicted by medieval artists. The blood on the Shroud contains a high level of bilirubin, a substance associated with severe physical trauma. It has no signs of decomposition, meaning that the body was removed from the Shroud soon after death. It has traces of pollen from plants growing only around Jerusalem, some of which are extinct since antiquity. Microscopic traces of dirt at the foot of the man match limestone found in the area of Jerusalem.

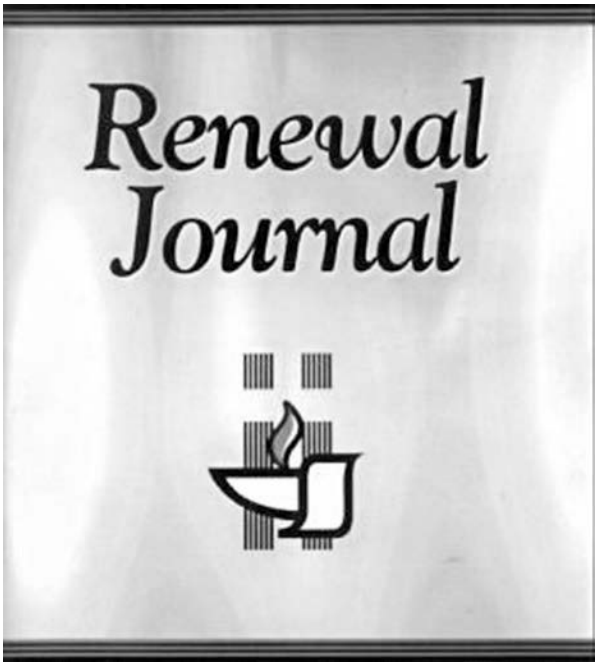
See Google for many articles and images from the Shroud of Turin including more details on renewaljournal.com.

We do not base our faith, or hopes, on an artefact. Although controversial, it does provide confirmation of the brutal torture and trauma of the crucifixion that Jesus suffered.

Akiane Kramarik became famous for her paintings and poetry, begun at age four, when she started having visions of Jesus and heavenly scenes. An interesting video shows the correlation between the face on the Shroud of Turin and the painting of the vision of Jesus by Akiane, as included in an article about the shroud on renewaljournal.com.

Visions are subjective and open to interpretation, but we live in a time when increasing numbers of people, especially Muslims, are having visions of Jesus that often bring them to trust him as their Saviour and Lord.

Appendix 5



Logo: lamp & parchment, basin & towel, in the light of the cross
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