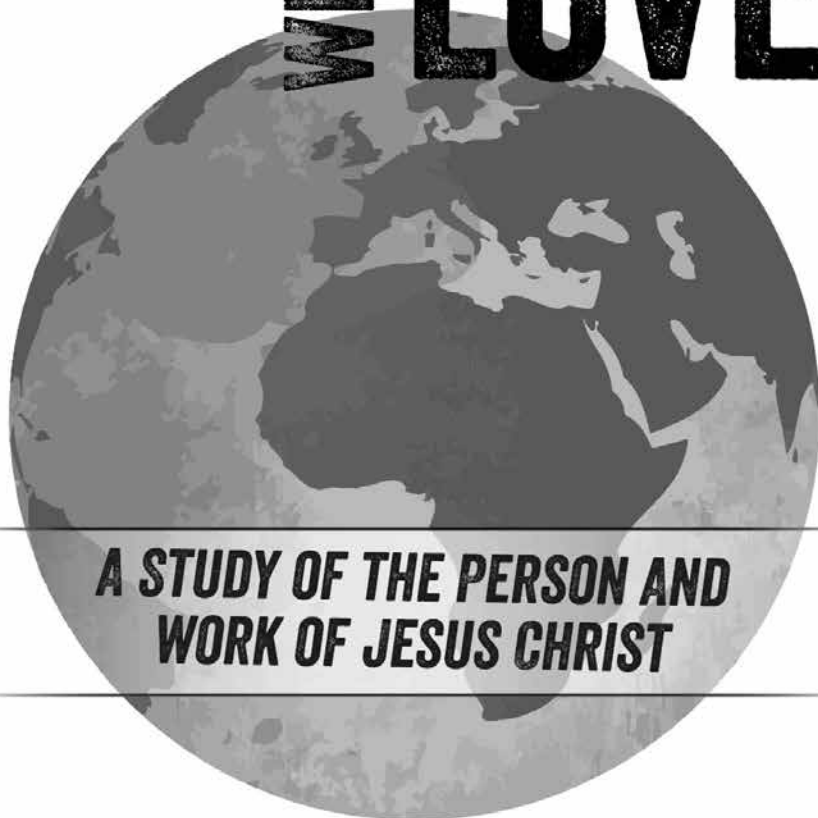


TO EARTH WE LOVE



***A STUDY OF THE PERSON AND
WORK OF JESUS CHRIST***

GIL RUGH

To Earth With Love

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Published by Indian Hills Community Church
1000 South 84th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68510-4499

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Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is history's most influential person. His birth and death receive world-wide attention and observance. Even our calendar year is based on His birth in Bethlehem, a town near modern-day Jerusalem in central Israel.

One of the more controversial aspects of His brief 33-year life on earth is the matter of His resurrection; that He returned to life from the dead.

Today some people wonder what possible significance there could be in the life of a man who lived nearly two thousand years ago in an obscure, war-torn part of the world. In a land that, even today, is not free from conflict generated within its borders and from oppression by foreign powers.

How could this one man, who owned no land or ruled no earthly nation, be significant enough to impact the people around Him during His lifetime, let alone affect the entire world through 2,000 years of history?

This study presents Jesus Christ and His memorable walk as a man on earth. The four lessons in the study are:

1. Earth Visited
2. Unique Visitor
3. Love's Plan
4. Mission Accomplished

This man's life and works have affected all mankind for all of history. What effect does He have on your life today?

L E S S O N O N E

Earth Visited

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Does man control this earth and the circumstances of life? Or, is there a God who affects our lives, and our eternal destinies? If there is a God, what is He like? What does He expect of us? How does He communicate with us?

God Has Revealed Himself in Three Ways

1. **The Creation:** Romans 1:18-20; Psalm 19:1
2. **The Bible:** 2 Timothy 3:16
3. **Jesus Christ:** Hebrews 1:1-4; John 1:1,14

The Bible says that God entered history to rescue humanity from the consequences of individual misconduct. According to the Bible, God walked the earth nearly 2,000 years ago as a man. He was a sinless, perfect man whose name is Jesus Christ. What He said and did answers man’s questions about God, and about life.

Romans 5:12

All humanity is separated from God by sin (missing God’s standard of perfection). Standing alone, no person can establish a right relationship with God.

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John 3:16; John 15:13

To clear the way of the roadblock of sin, Jesus Christ came to earth with love, offering Himself as payment for every sin of mankind, past, present and future. He became the final sacrifice made to a just and righteous God.

Exodus 12:4-7, 13; 1 Corinthians 5:7

The need for Christ's sacrifice was made clear by the men who, under God's direction, wrote the Old Testament of the Bible. Such a sacrifice, the Bible says, includes elements of the Jewish Passover:

- The lamb is unblemished, spotless
- The innocent must die for the guilty
- God's judgment will be withheld because of the sacrifice

Amazing Fact: The Virgin Birth

Matthew 1:18, 19

The Bible says that Jesus was the son of a young Jewish woman named Mary. She was married to a man named Joseph, yet according to the Bible, Joseph was not the father of Jesus.

Matthew 1:20

The Bible says that God the Holy Spirit was the father of Jesus, and that Mary remained a virgin until the birth of the child.

Matthew 13:55-56

Mary and Joseph had other children, but none were like Jesus. Only Jesus had God as His Father. Jesus had a human mother and a divine father. He was human and divine.

- He had to be human to die.
- He had to be divine so that His death would be of unlimited value.

The Humility of Humanity

Philippians 2:5-8

As God, Jesus Christ could have entered the world as a king, clothed in purple and crowned with gold. Even such a grand entry would not have suited the Creator of the universe! However, He chose to come in more humble circumstances.

Jesus came as a helpless baby, born to a poor family, hated by the king of the land, limited by His human body. He submitted to the law which He gave to men. He did not demand rights due the great God of heaven.

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law” (Galatians 4:4).

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Jesus Christ is the greatest example of humility for all time.

A Controversial Figure

Although Jesus was humble, everything He did became a controversial matter over the course of history. Consider:

His origin—in heaven

His birth—to a virgin

His teaching—of forgiveness by faith

His conduct—without sin

His death—on a cross

His resurrection—according to prophecy

His ascension—to heaven

His return—coming to earth again

Jesus left a remarkable legacy of material for discussion—all re-

To Earth with Love

corded in the Bible.

Does Jesus Christ simply occupy a place of honor in the Christian faith, much like Confucius occupies in Confucianism or Mohammed in Islam? Or, is Jesus Christ unique?

Jesus said there is no way to God but through Him. No other man has ever claimed, “No one comes to the Father but through me.”

The next lesson in this series examines Jesus Christ, a man who said He was God in the flesh.

L E S S O N T W O

Unique Visitor

They became astonished and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” (Matthew 13:54).

Jesus Christ walked on this earth nearly 2,000 years ago. Yet, the influence of His life and impact of His teachings are still felt today. Never has any one man affected human history more than He has. His greatest claim, and perhaps most controversial one, is that no one will have eternal life without believing He is the Son of God.

Either Jesus Christ was an egomaniac with a great desire to be God or He is the living God. Evaluate the facts concerning Him recorded in the Bible, then ask yourself the question,

If God Were to Come to Earth as a Man, What Would You Expect of Him?

Luke 1:26-35

His entrance into life would be unique. Jesus came as a baby, not as a king. He had a human mother and a divine father.

1 Peter 2:21-22

He would be without sin. Jesus had extreme concern for people caught in sin and was grieved by the spiritually dead condition of all people.

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Mark 3:1-5; 6:1-12

He would perform miracles. Jesus was considered a threat by the religious leaders because He had extraordinary power to perform miracles, and taught with authority.

John 7:29-34

He would be unique. Jesus did not conform to meaningless rituals and customs. Jesus was a friend to sinners. Jesus was misunderstood and mistreated by the people. Jesus was one of a kind, without like or equal.

Mark 1:27; Luke 4:22-23

He would speak the greatest words ever spoken. Jesus taught with authority. The religious leaders were threatened by His teaching.

Revelation 5:9-14

He would have a permanent and world-wide influence. Even after 2000 years, Jesus' impact on humanity has not worn off.

John 4:10-14

He would satisfy men's spiritual hunger. Jesus taught about heaven and hell, and revealed the way to eternal life.

He would have unlimited power.

Jesus had power over:

- **Nature:** Mark 4:41
- **Sickness:** Matthew 8:14-17
- **Death:** John 11:43-44
- **Sin;** and He had the authority to forgive: Luke 5:17-26

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Luke 4:32-36

He would recognize and be recognized by the spirit world. Jesus spoke with the demons.

John 5:17-18; 10:30-33

He would claim to be God. Jesus claimed to be one with God the Father.

What did others say about Him?

- God, the Father said that Jesus was His beloved Son: Matthew 3:17; 17:5
- The Holy Spirit testified of Him and glorified Him: John 15:26; 16:13-14
- The demons called Him the Son of God: Luke 4:41
- The apostles said He was the Christ, the Son of the living God: Matthew 16:16.
- Friends said He was the Christ, the Son of God: John 11:27
- Even enemies admitted that truly this was the Son of God: Matthew 27:54

John 7:40-47

There were some conflicting opinions about Jesus Christ. Some people said, “He is a good man.” Others said, “He is from Satan and is leading the people down the wrong path.”

Does this man measure up to what you would expect God to be?

Lesson three addresses the suffering and death of Jesus Christ at the hands of godless men. However, we will see that His death was necessary to pay the debt of sin we owe to a holy God.

L E S S O N T H R E E

Love's Plan

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before his shearers, so He did not open His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

Jesus Christ was loving, kind, truthful and authoritative. He was a man who offered hope and a better way of life to all who would believe in Him. How strange that He would suffer personal humiliation and physical abuse and be led away to die unjustly!

The Suffering & Death of Jesus Was Sure to Happen

- Jesus came to earth to die: Mark 10:45
- It was prophesied: Acts 2:23; Isaiah 53:5
- The Old Testament sacrifices pointed to Christ: Hebrews 10:8-12

Both Heaven and Earth are Vitally Interested In God's Plan of Redemption

- The angels desire to see it: 1 Peter 1:12
- The Old Testament saints spoke of it: Luke 9:31
- The host of heaven praised God's mighty plan and work: Revelation 5:8-14

Interest in Jesus Christ extends to all creation, because:

Jesus Christ Is Fully God and Fully Man

As God, He knew of the events that would lead to His death. As man, He displayed the strongest of all human desires—the will to survive.

Matthew 16:21

Jesus told His disciples that He would die. He shared a final meal with them, then spent His last day as a man in greater physical and mental suffering than was ever endured by any human. His suffering included:

- Betrayal by a friend: Matthew 26:20-25
- Submission to the Father's will, not to His personal desire: Matthew 26:36-46
- Being displayed as a common criminal: Matthew 26:55
- Desertion by His disciples: Matthew 26:56

Trial by Error

The religious leaders were determined to kill Jesus.

“Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. But they were saying, ‘Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people’” (Matthew 26:3-5).

Jesus Christ endured the shame and humiliation of six kangaroo courts that violated the standards of the day for fair trial, which included:

1. statement of charges;
2. witnesses to support charges;
3. punishment only after conviction.

The trials of Jesus Christ met none of these criteria. The trials of Jesus Christ were not legal, according to the Jewish religious system nor the Roman political system.

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Jesus was accused of blasphemy because He claimed to be God. By Jewish law He should die if He were not God. Although He had proven His deity many times, the Jewish leaders refused to believe.

John 19:4

They brought in false witnesses against Jesus. They abused Him although He was not convicted of any crime. He was declared innocent by Pilate, but at the demands of the people He was beaten and led away to a cross for execution.

John 19:17

He carried His own cross. He was physically exhausted by lack of sleep, loss of blood, pain and mental anguish.

What Happened on the cross at Calvary?

- Jesus Christ was crucified as a common criminal: Isaiah 53:3-12
- He was separated from God the Father: Matthew 27:46

What was the purpose of all that happened on that pivotal day in the history of mankind?

The death of Christ was:

Choice One

An unfortunate accident. His principles and methods did not appeal to the people of His day, so they killed Him. It is too bad that a good man had to die in such a manner.

Choice Two

The act of a martyr. He was faithful to His principles, had a strong sense of duty and was willing to die for it. He gave us an example of how

to stand for truth and duty even to the point of death.

Choice Three

Acts 2:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:10

For the redemption of man. The death of Christ was foreordained by God to pay the debt of death that we owe a holy God. He was the innocent dying for the guilty. His death made it possible for sinful men to have the right relationship with God.

Lesson Four, the last in this series, focuses on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Skeptics doubt the reality of that event. They say that either He was dead and did not come back to life, or He never died, yet gave the appearance of conquering death.

Think of this question: Can the evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ stand up to the skeptic's claims? Can the evidence overcome your doubts?

L E S S O N F O U R

Mission Accomplished

“Why do you seek the living One among the dead?” (Luke 24:5).

The third day following Jesus’ death, the disciples came to the garden tomb where He had been taken. They found the stone covering the grave rolled away and the tomb empty. What happened to the body of Jesus? It was obvious that the grave was empty. The question is:

How Did It Get That Way?

Four Choices

1. Christ was not dead, He only fainted. The coolness of the tomb and the spices revived Him and He left the tomb. However, the centurion said Jesus was dead (see Mark 15:39, 44, 45); the soldiers saw He was dead (see John 19:33); and Jesus said He was dead (see Revelation 1:18).
2. Only a spiritual resurrection had taken place. The disciples so wanted Jesus to be alive that they had visions and Christ lived on in their hearts. However, the facts support a bodily resurrection (see Luke 24:39-43).
3. The disciples stole the body. However, the tomb was orderly (see Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15). The disciples did not expect Jesus to be resurrected so they had no reason to simulate the resurrection (see John 20:6-9).

4. Or, a miracle (departure from natural law) took place.

We cannot, from nature, show how a miracle happens, but we can have valid proof of its happening.

The Bible clearly states that Jesus Christ rose from the dead:

“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

“To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Verifying the resurrection were:

Eyewitness Reports

How reliable were these reports?

These reports were first hand. They were a sufficient number. They were by people of good reputation.

“So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord” (John 20:19-20).

“And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also” (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

The Importance of the Resurrection

Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 6:14

The resurrection is the basis of the teaching of the apostles. It is the difference between a religious system following a dead leader and Christianity, which follows the living and resurrected Lord!

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The resurrection is integral to our salvation

Romans 6:1-6

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we can have newness of life.

Acts 2:24

The resurrection shows the power of God.

Romans 4:24, 25

The resurrection is God's seal of approval on the death of Christ as sufficient payment for the sins of mankind.

Q. How do I know the death of Jesus Christ was sufficient to cleanse me of sin?

A. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead to prove His power over sin and death.

Jesus Christ: Raised to be Praised

John 13:1; John 16:10; Acts 1:9

After Jesus finished His work on earth, He returned to His Father in Heaven. He was raised, to be praised in heaven.

Philippians 2:5-11; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22

The biblical account of Jesus Christ is in some ways beyond human understanding. It is true, though, that the eternal God came down from heaven in humility to become a man, to die for our sins. He rose from the dead, victorious as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He returned to heaven to God the Father who exalted Him over all the universe.

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2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9

The Bible says that one day, all people will bow down before Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Him will bow and acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior. Those who reject Him will bow and acknowledge Him as the righteous judge who will sentence them to eternal punishment.

He Will Return!

*Acts 1:10, 11; Zechariah 14:4; John 14:2, 3;
Hebrews 9:28; 2 Peter 3:9-13*

As surely as Jesus Christ came to earth 2000 years ago, so He will return to fulfill prophecies in the future. He will not return as the meek and humble babe in a manger, but as the great Redeemer of His people, the Ruler of the universe, the Prince of Peace.

Are You Ready for Him?

Has Jesus Christ influenced your life? All people have been separated from God by sin. We have missed God's standard of perfection—God is just and righteous. Without forgiveness, all that awaits us is an eternity in hell.

But God is also merciful and loving. He has provided Jesus Christ, so that through Him we can be put right with God the Father. Jesus Christ died in our place to satisfy the anger of God against sin.

The Bible says your sins can be forgiven and you can have eternal life by trusting, by having faith. Not by trusting in your own goodness, because you have none. Not by trusting in a church, because no church saves. But by trusting that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for your sin, that He rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God the Father.

Do you believe that Jesus paid the price for your sin when he suffered and died on the cross? Will you someday stand before Jesus Christ as a redeemed child of God? Or will you be among those condemned to suffer, away from the presence of God, forever? You see, the decision to

trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the most important decision you will ever make. Whether or not you believe in Him will affect your life today and forever.

Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24).

