

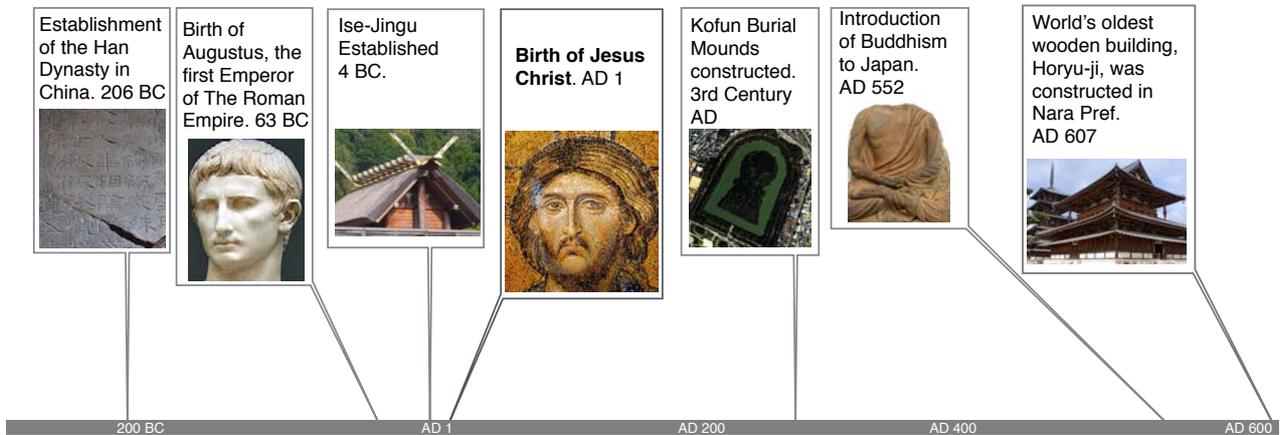
## First Steps 2

Who is Jesus?

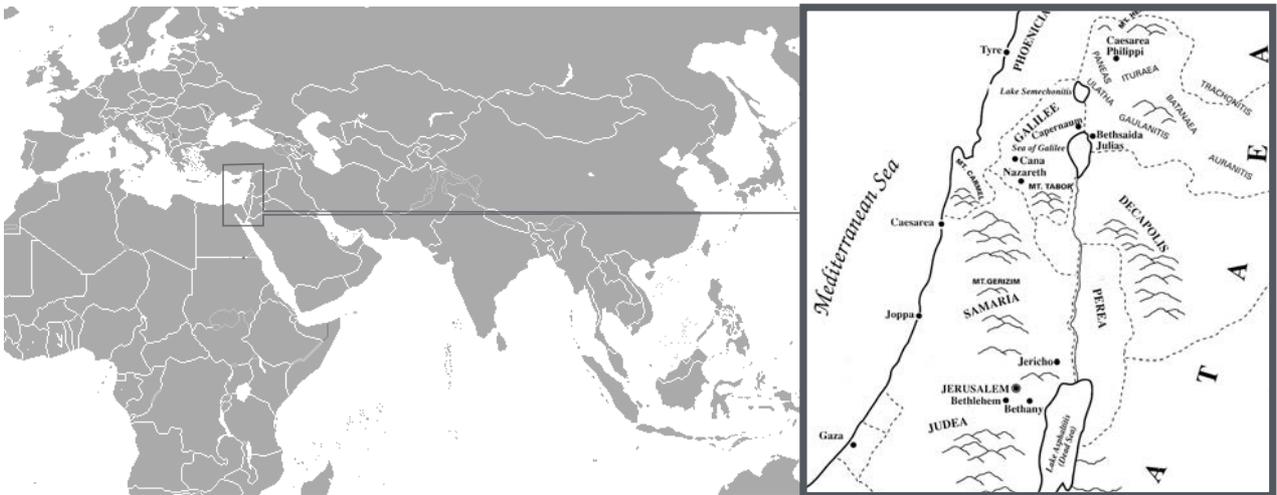


Consider: What have you heard about Jesus Christ?

Jesus was a historical person, born about 2000 years ago.



Jesus was born in a small town called Bethlehem, located in Israel.



General Facts about Jesus:

- Jesus was poor with few earthly possessions.
- Jesus never married nor did he have children.
- He made his living as a carpenter until he was 30 years old.
- From age 30 to 33, Jesus spent his time traveling around, teaching people about God.
- At age 33 he was executed by crucifixion by Roman and Jewish leaders.
- Jesus never wrote a book, yet more books have been written about him than anyone else in history.
- Jesus never traveled overseas, yet his name has been preached in every corner of the world.

In the Bible there are four historical books about Jesus' life, called the gospels. The titles of these books are: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They give insight into Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

The gospels were written by eyewitnesses (Matthew and John) and men who interviewed eyewitnesses (Mark and Luke), and these accounts were carefully preserved throughout history. There are no other ancient books that are as historically accurate or well-preserved as the gospels (see the appendix at the end of this lesson).

## Jesus' Life

To understand the life of Jesus, let's look at *what Jesus did* and *what Jesus taught*.

*What Jesus Did:*

1. Jesus performed miracles: he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, caused the lame to walk, walked on water, calmed storms, and raised the dead.



### **Matthew 15:30**

*And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them...*

2. Jesus showed love and compassion to everyone, including those of low status and those viewed as social outcasts at that time--women, children, tax-collectors, the poor, prostitutes, widows.



### **Mark 1:40-42**

*And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.*

*Note: A leper was a person who suffered from a disease of the skin that was highly contagious. Once contracted, a leper would never touch or hug his spouse or children again. In the first century, lepers were forced to leave the city, their family, and friends, and live in a leper colony outside the city limits. When entering the city for shopping, a leper had to yell in a loud voice to warn people he was coming. It was an extremely lonely and shameful life.*

While most people ran from lepers, Jesus not only showed compassion to this man, but he even touched him.

3. While Jesus lived on this earth he remained perfect, pure, and sinless.



### **1 Peter 2:22**

*[Jesus] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*

4. Jesus traveled around Israel teaching people about God and God's Kingdom.



### **Mark 1:14-15, 38-39**

*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." ... And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.*

*What Jesus Taught:*

Jesus taught in a variety of places and ways. One of his most common teaching methods involved the use of a specific kind of story called a parable, meant to point to a greater truth and meaning.



### **Mark 4:1-2**

*Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables...*

1. Jesus taught us to love God and others



### **Mark 12:29-31**

*Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

2. Jesus taught that he was the divine Son of God

**Mark 14:61b-62**

*Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."*

*Note: Thousands of years before Jesus' birth, God promised to send a savior, called "the Christ" and "the Son of God." Jesus was the fulfillment of these prophecies. (See "First Steps: Step 4".) Like in Mark 14 above, Jesus often referred to himself by using the title "Son of Man"--which points to a prophecy in the Old Testament about the Christ.*



*Consider: What sticks out or surprises you about the life of Jesus?*

**Jesus' Death**

The historical account of Jesus' death can be read in all four gospels. After an illegal trial in the middle of the night, Jesus was executed by crucifixion on a Friday afternoon.

**1. Why was he killed?**

The Jewish leaders did not accept Jesus as the Son of God and wrongfully rejected his authority. Here is an account of the Jewish leaders expressing why they sought to kill Jesus:

**John 10:33**

*The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."*

**2. Jesus predicted his own death:****Mark 8:31**

*And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.*



*Consider: Usually we don't hear people talk about their death in the specific ways that Jesus did. What do you think it says about Jesus that he was so specific about how he would die and rise again three days later?*

It is remarkable that Jesus was detailed about how and when he would die, and that he would rise again. The fact that Jesus was so specific (and that he was correct!) points to something greater. Jesus wasn't just a human like you and me, but he is something wholly greater.

**3. Why did Jesus have to die?**

In one instance where Jesus predicted his own death he said this:

**Mark 10:45**

*"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Jesus uses the word "ransom" here to describe our sin in terms of an un-payable debt. Jesus taught that man's sin is like a debt that we are unable to pay. For example, in one parable, Jesus told the story of a servant who was trying to settle a debt with his master.

**Matthew 18:24-27**

*"When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt."*

In the time of Jesus, a talent was equal to about two years' wages. The amount of money the servant owed his master was completely impossible to pay, yet he still tried to tell his master that he would pay the debt!

Jesus' death was the ransom that paid our debt.

4. We can benefit from his death through faith.



### **John 3:16**

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

## **Jesus' Resurrection**



*Consider: What are some key differences between Jesus and other leaders of major religions?*

There are many differences that could be discussed when comparing Jesus and other religious leaders, but the most important difference is that Jesus is still alive today.

Just as he predicted, three days after he was killed, God raised him from the dead. Jesus' resurrection is recorded in all four gospels and Christians believe it to be a historical fact. In one book of the Bible, the author is so confident that Jesus' resurrection is true, that he encourages skeptics to talk to the many (500+) people who saw Jesus after his resurrection.



### **1 Corinthians 15:3-6**

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.*

*Note: When the Bible says "fallen asleep" here, it is a polite way to say that some of these people have passed away. "Cephas" and "the twelve" refer to Jesus' disciples, who were with him during his three years of ministry.*

Evidence for the resurrection

- The story is written in God's Word, which is wholly reliable and true.
- Jesus' tomb was empty and his body was never found.
- The following facts are unexplainable outside of the resurrection of Jesus:
  - His brothers (James and Jude) thought Jesus was crazy but changed their minds about him.
  - His disciples boldly proclaimed who Jesus was, to the point that many of them died as martyrs for him.
  - His enemies (such as the Apostle Paul) converted to worship him.

Christianity is about the story of God's great love for you, shown through Jesus' amazing life, death, and resurrection.

Right-standing with God and eternity in heaven can be received by faith in Jesus Christ.

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To prepare for "First Steps: Step 3," take some time this week to familiarize yourself with the lesson. Also, if there is time, start to read about the good news of Jesus in the book of Romans.

Appendix: Are the Gospels historically reliable?

Bible scholars defend the historical authenticity of the gospel documents. There is a plethora of evidence. Here are a few facts:

- 5000+ ancient Greek manuscripts, some dating to less than 100 years of the originals.
- These are 99% accurate.
- Not only is there no contradictory archaeological or historical evidence, current excavations continue to uphold the gospel details.
- The Gospels were written by eyewitnesses (Matthew & John) and men who interviewed eyewitnesses (Mark & Luke) and carefully preserved by men willing to die for the Truth.