

THE BASIC THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT JESUS

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Introduction

Many years ago, someone penned these words about Jesus.

“Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher.

He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While he was dying his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth – his coat. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today he is a centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.”

Jesus is a historic person

Jesus did not arrive unexpected. The prophets in the Bible had predicted that a person would come who would save the world. They predicted where he would be born. They had foretold how he was going to be born. They had prophesied about the life he would live and even what would happen at his death. Nobody had so far fulfilled any of these predictions. But when the time was right, Jesus was born into this world, a real person of flesh and blood.

Where did it happen?

Jesus was born in a small occupied country, called Palestine, made up of Galilee, Samaria and Judea. It is not more than 125 miles (208 kilometers) long and 50 miles (83 kilometers) wide, situated at the eastern end of the Roman Empire.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, where his parents had gone to be registered for the national taxation. After a stop in Egypt for a few years, the family settled in Nazareth in Galilee.

The country was full of various types of people. There were Roman soldiers everywhere, controlling the occupation. Among the Jewish population, there were Zealots, who were individuals who fought against the occupation. Religious leaders, some in separate groups called the Pharisees and the Sadducees, were discussing theological differences with great fervor. Geographically, the Samaritans, who were despised by everyone, were living between the Galileans in the north and the Judeans in the south.

When did that happen?

Jesus was born approximately 7 B.C. A monk, who several hundred years later, calculated the calendar predominantly used in the world today, got his figures somewhat wrong. The ruler in the land, King Herod the Great died in 4 BC, when Jesus was approximately three years old.

The Birth of Jesus

In the first book in the New Testament it states, *This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 1:18). The conception of Jesus was something unique. It was a miracle because it was not the result of a sexual relationship.

An angel came and told Mary that, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God* (Luke 1:35). This does not mean God provided the male chromosomes for the developing fetus. It does not say that God is the biological father of Jesus. God is not male, nor female. He is the Creator of all things and stands over his creation. The miracle is about a birth without a father. It means that Mary became pregnant through a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon her. Why is the virgin birth so significant? It means that our salvation, though it came through a human, is totally of God. Just as the virgin birth is a work of God, you and me receiving salvation is a work of God. We cannot receive salvation unless God calls us and the Holy Spirit convinces us (John 3:3-6).

The virgin birth shows us that Jesus entered into our human experience, though without sin.

His Childhood

There are not many stories about Jesus as a child. As a baby he went with his parents to the Temple. We are told that from a baby *Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people* (Luke 2:52).

When he was twelve years old Jesus went with his parents to the annual celebration at the Temple in Jerusalem. His parents did not know, but he stayed behind in Jerusalem. Three days later, after frantically looking for him all that time, they found him debating with the Jewish leaders, right in the temple. When his parents wondered if he did not care they had been worried, he responded, *“But why did you need to search?” he asked. “Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?”* But they didn’t understand what he meant (Luke 2:49-50).

His Baptism and Temptations

When Jesus turned 30, he went to the river Jordan, where a man named John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing. John viewed himself as a man preparing the way for the coming Savior, and when he met Jesus, John realized that the man he expected was Jesus. When John baptized Jesus, God spoke from heaven and proclaimed and declared, *This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy* (Matthew 3:17).

Jesus went into the desert, where he was tempted for 40 days and 40 nights by the enemy, Satan. Jesus overcame all the temptations by responding to them with the Word of God.

Early Ministry

Returning from the desert, Jesus began his ministry. Jesus was a great person to be with. People walked miles to be with him. These were people from very different backgrounds, who normally had nothing in common.

Some were fishermen, while others were prostitutes, tax collectors, judges and Roman soldiers. Some people, who came to both listen and question him, were individuals who had spent their entire lives, studying the Holy Book – what we today know as the Old Testament. He was equally at home in the temple as he was in the home of a despised tax collector.

While he was a carpenter with no theological training, he could attract and teach a man like Nicodemus, who possessed the highest theological training. Women followed him and were an important part of his movement. Jesus respected them and they were devoted to him. Sometimes Jesus was surrounded by little children, jumping up to sit on his lap. Jesus was a man for all types of people.

He made God real to ordinary people. To Jesus, God was not some strange world ruler far away, but he was his father. Jesus even called him *Abba* (Daddy). He often took time to go aside to pray to his father. He said, *I do nothing but what I see the father do. I always do those things that please my father.* He claimed that he and his father were one. Many, who met Jesus, felt they had come into contact with God. Jesus made God truly accessible for the first time in their lives.