

We now begin a study of the life of the greatest man who ever lived. Jesus Christ was much more than a man. He was and is the Son of God. The story of His human existence is told in the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) commonly called the gospels. But in a larger sense the whole Bible revolves around Christ. As early as the first book in the Bible God promised Abraham that in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed. This promise was fulfilled in Jesus.

Furthermore in our last lesson we learned that many of the Old Testament prophecies foretold the coming of the Messiah. We shall find in future study that the entire New Testament tells us about Christ, His teachings and His church.

The four gospels are separate biographies of Jesus. While they overlap in some respects, each mentions some things not related in the others. Matthew

shows that Jesus was the promised Messiah and often quotes the prophets to show how Christ fulfilled their predictions. Mark emphasises the things Jesus did more than His teachings. Luke depicts the humanity of Jesus by describing His interest in the suffering of man. John writes to prove the deity of Christ and in recording the things that Jesus did says that they were written "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

John the Baptist

It is proper to say something here about the harbinger of Christ. John the Baptist was a cousin of Jesus who should not be confused with John, the apostle, author of the gospel of John. The American Standard Version sometimes refers to him as John the Baptiser which is really more accurate. He was a forerunner of Christ and as prophesied by Isaiah, he came to "prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (Matt. 3:3).

John was an unusual man, dressing in camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey! He preached in the wilderness and baptised in the River Jordan those who came to him. He informed the multitudes that he was not the Christ, but that they should look for one who would come after him. Fearless in denouncing the sins of the time, he called on the

people to repent. After he immersed Jesus at the high point of his career, he gradually faded in importance until he was arrested and beheaded by King Herod. As great a man as he was, Jesus says of him, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11) Truly the Lord's church was not to be built upon John the Baptist, but upon Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world.

The Pre-existence of Christ

The Son of God existed in the beginning with the Father. We are told, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) In verses 14-17 of the same chapter we learn that the Word was Jesus Christ. Thus, when God said in the creation, "Let us make man in our image," (Gen. 1:26), Christ was there. As God's only begotten son He was sent to earth to redeem the world from sin.

The Birth of Jesus

Jesus was born about 4 B.C. Because of a chronological mistake when our present method of reckoning time from His birth was begun, He was not born in the year 1 A.D. as might be supposed. His mother was the virgin Mary who conceived by the Holy Spirit of God. Thus He was both human and divine, born of a human mother and a divine father. His human genealogy shows that He was of royal

birth, a direct descendant of King David. His kingdom, however, was destined to be spiritual rather than temporal as was David's.

Circumstances caused Jesus to be born in Bethlehem in fulfilment of the prophecy of Micah who had said of that city, "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." (Micah 5:2) A Roman pronouncement required Mary and her husband, Joseph, to go to Bethlehem for a special census. Arriving there they could find no room at the inn which necessitated their finding quarters in a stable. There, in the most humble of all places, the baby Jesus was born to be wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.



The birth of the Son of God was announced by angels to shepherds in the countryside who immediately went to

Bethlehem to see the young child. In the meantime, wise men from the East (the Bible doesn't say there were three) followed a star until they found the newborn infant. On the way they enquired of King Herod where the Messiah was to be born. Herod, fearing for his throne, issued an edict that all children from two years of age and under should be slain.

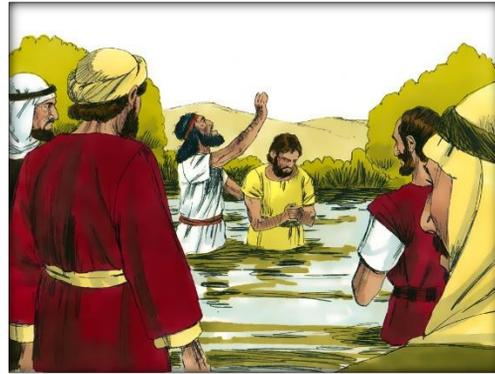
But he did not succeed in killing Jesus as he had hoped because Joseph, being warned by God, took Jesus and His mother and fled into Egypt.

His Childhood

Joseph and his family remained in Egypt until the death of Herod. When they returned they went to Nazareth in Galilee rather than to Bethlehem in Judea where Jesus had been born. Galilee was the most northerly province in Palestine while Judea was the farthest south. In between lay Samaria. The early life of Jesus was spent at Nazareth where He learned the carpenter's trade. At the age of twelve He went to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary. There they lost Him to find Him later in the temple discussing difficult points of the law with the teachers. We know nothing more of His boyhood except that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (Luke 2:52.)

His Baptism

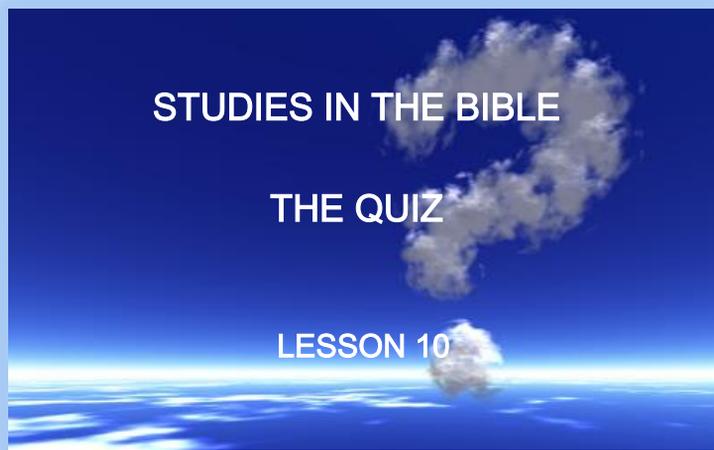
At the age of thirty Jesus was baptised by John in the Jordan River. John, knowing that Jesus was without sin, hesitated to baptise Him. But Jesus insisted, saying that "it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (Matt. 3:15) Since Jesus was sinless He was not baptised for the remission of sins as were those converts on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:38)



Sometimes artists picture John sprinkling water on the head of Jesus, but the actual record shows that he immersed Him. (See Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10) When Jesus came up out of the water the spirit of God in the form of a dove descended on Him and a voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11.) God thus attested to the deity of His Son.

Beginning of His Ministry

Following His baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness where He fasted forty days. At the end of this time the devil appeared, tempting Him in various ways. But Jesus did not yield, nor did He ever succumb to the temptations of sin. Thus at His crucifixion He was a spotless offering for the sins of man. Christ first came to public attention in Cana in Galilee when He performed His first miracle, that of turning water into wine. He soon was to perform many other miracles. Shortly afterwards Jesus moved to Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee and there made His home during most of His personal ministry which we shall study at our next lesson.



Seek and ye shall find

Fill in the blanks:

1. The four biographical books which tell us about Christ are _____, _____, _____, and _____.
2. They are commonly called the _____.
3. _____ the _____ was a cousin of Jesus.
4. His food was _____ and wild _____.
5. He was arrested and beheaded by King _____.
6. Jesus was born about the year _____ in _____.
7. Herod tried to kill Jesus so Joseph fled with his family to _____.
8. When they returned they settled in _____ in the province of _____.
9. Jesus visited Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary at the age of _____.
10. Jesus was baptized by _____ in the river _____.
11. He performed His first miracle at _____.
12. Afterwards he made His home at _____ by the Sea of Galilee.

The visit of the shepherds is told in Luke 2:8-20. After each statement write the number of the verse in which it is found:

1. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." _____
2. "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." _____
3. "Glory to God in the highest." _____

4. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem." _____

5. "But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." _____

Following is the account of the baptism of Jesus from Matt. 3:13-17. Fill in the blanks in the scripture:

Then cometh Jesus from _____ to Jordan unto _____, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be _____ of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all _____. Then he suffered him. And Jesus when he was baptized went up straightway _____ of the _____: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a _____, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Read the account of the temptation of Christ in Matthew 4:1-11. Write true or false after each statement.

1. Jesus fasted in the wilderness for sixty days and nights. _____

2. The devil told Him that if He was the Son of God to turn those stones into meat. _____

3. Next the devil took Him into the holy city and set Him upon a pinnacle of the temple. _____

4. The devil also quoted a scripture when he told Christ to cast Himself down. _____

5. Jesus replied, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." _____

6. Next the devil took Jesus down into a deep valley. _____

7. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if Jesus would but worship him. _____

8. Jesus yielded to this third temptation of the devil. _____

LESSON 10 – ANSWERS

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Fill in the blanks:

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2. They are commonly called the Gospels.
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6. Jesus was born about the year 4 B.C. in Bethlehem.
7. Herod tried to kill Jesus so Joseph fled with his family to Egypt.
8. When they returned they settled in Nazareth in the province of Galilee.
9. Jesus visited Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary at the age of twelve.
10. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan.
11. He performed His first miracle at Cana.
12. Afterwards he made His home at Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee.

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1. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." 10
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4. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem." 15
5. "But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." 19

Following is the account of the baptism of Jesus from Matt. 3:13-17. Fill in the blanks in the scripture:

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| 1. Jesus fasted in the wilderness for sixty days and nights. | False |
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| 3. Next the devil took Him into the holy city and set Him upon a pinnacle of the temple. | True |
| 4. The devil also quoted a scripture when he told Christ to cast Himself down. | True |
| 5. Jesus replied, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” | True |
| 6. Next the devil took Jesus down into a deep valley. | False |
| 7. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if Jesus would but worship him. | True |
| 8. Jesus yielded to this third temptation of the devil. | False |