

“THE LIFE AND LESSONS OF
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST”

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INTRODUCTION:

1. This devotional study is titled “The Life And Lessons Of The Lord Jesus Christ.”
2. Though this study will certainly involve studying the four Gospels, it is hoped that this study will be far more than that.
3. I will strive to accomplish several tasks as intermediate goals on our way to accomplishing one grand goal.
4. The intermediate goals of this study are as follows:
 - a) To survey and examine the Biblical record of the earthly ministry, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ,
 - b) To paint a mental picture of the culture and society in which the Son of God lived and moved and taught,
 - c) To study the teachings of the Master Teacher and examine the way in which He trained His disciples, so that we might be better disciplers of young Christians in our own ministries,
 - d) To chronologically harmonize the four Gospel accounts in an attempt to trace the progress of Christ’s earthly ministry as it is recorded in the four Gospel accounts,
 - e) And to bring each reader as often as I can to a point of crisis and decision so that opportunities will be created for consciously and purposefully making decisions about life and eternity, and to attempt to persuade you to deny yourself, to take up your individual cross, and to follow Him.
5. I pray that our attempts to meet each of these intermediate goals will be blessed and used by the Holy Spirit of God in His ministry in each of our lives. The Holy Spirit’s ministry, we shall see in our studies, is to point men toward the Savior, draw men to the Savior, and to lift up and exalt the Son of God. May this same Spirit of God use our lives as tools to accomplish His grand goal.
6. Let us also pray that during this study of the Lord Jesus, as we turn our eyes upon Him from week to week, the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.
7. Our study will follow this main outline so that we can maintain order in four books of the Bible which seem to some Christians to be in complete disorder:

The Life and Lessons of the Lord Jesus Christ

- 1A. Background Information**
- 2A. Preliminary Information**
- 3A. The Incarnation Of God**
- 4A. The Childhood Of The Son Of God**
- 5A. The Baptist's Public Ministry Begins**
- 6A. The Messiah's Public Ministry Begins**
- 7A. The Messiah's Great Galilean Ministry**
- 8A. The Messiah's Jerusalem Area Ministry**
- 9A. The Messiah's Last Hours With His Disciples**
- 10A. His Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion And Burial**
- 11A. His Resurrection, Appearances And Ascension**

1A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1B. Regarding Jewish History.

- 1C. Jewish history began in Genesis chapter 12 when God called an idolater named Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and separated and set apart that man and his wife from other nations.
- 2C. In fulfillment of a promise made to him by God, with his name changed in Genesis 17.5, Abraham begat one son by his wife Sarah in his old age. The son's name was Isaac. His other sons, born to Hagar and Keturah, were not partakers of the promise made to Abraham and Isaac.
- 3C. Isaac, in turn, fathered two sons named Esau and Jacob. Only the younger, Jacob, was chosen by God as the recipient of His covenant made with Abraham and confirmed with Isaac.
- 4C. Jacob, whose name was changed by God to Israel, Genesis 32.28, fathered twelve sons. These sons went on, through the Providence of God, to be the heads, the progenitors if you will, of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- 5C. Speaking of Providence, it was through God's Providence that Jacob and his sons migrated from the Promised Land to Egypt to escape the ravages of famine. There in Egypt they grew from a large family into a nation of over two million people.
- 6C. After the passage of over four centuries, during which time their rapid growth took place, God raised up a deliverer named Moses who was used by God as a human leader to deliver the nation of Israel out of Egyptian bondage using great signs and miracles wrought by the power of God to accomplish the task.
- 7C. Having escaped through the avenue of the parted Red Sea, Israel camped at the foot of Mount Sinai and received the Law. While Moses was receiving the Law on Mount Sinai the Israelites were violating the Law at the foot of Mount Sinai. Additionally, while on Mount Sinai, Moses received instructions for the building of the Tabernacle and the Ark, which for so many years would dominate the religious life of the people.

- 8C. After one year encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai the people removed to Kadesh Barnea under the leadership of Moses, where they rebelled at God's command to enter the land of Canaan, the land that God had promised to give to the descendants of Abraham.
- 9C. For their lack of faith and rebellion, God allowed the children of Israel to wander in the wilderness of Sinai as the Shekinah glory of God led them for forty years, during which time all those over 20 years of age, all of those who participated in the rebellion, grew old and died outside the Promised Land.
- 10C. Once the new generation had entered the Promised Land and settled down, a cycle of rebellion, retribution, repentance, and restoration was repeated many times. This occurred during the times of the judges.
- 11C. Then Saul became the nation's first king, and he ruled over the nation for 40 years until his suicide during a battle against the Philistines ended his reign.
- 12C. David became Israel's second king and brought her into a Golden Age of power during his generally wise and godly reign over a 40-year period of time. God promised King David an eternal throne over Israel (called the Davidic Covenant by Bible scholars), which covenant promises that Israel's future Messianic King must be of the lineage and house of David.
- 13C. Solomon was God's choice to succeed David as king. After his 40-year reign, his son Rehoboam's incredible stupidity led to civil war and the nation's division. The northern kingdom of Israel consisted primarily of ten tribes, while the southern kingdom, dominated by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, adopted Judah as its national name. The nation of Judah continued to rule under the Davidic dynasty.
- 14C. After having 19 wicked kings who led their nation into idolatry, and after having ignored the warnings of God's prophets, and after having made a mockery of God's Law, Israel was attacked, defeated, and carried into captivity by the great and terrible Assyrian Empire in 726 B. C.
- 15C. Though Judah was on a spiritual slide, she had a number of very godly kings of the 19 she also had that caused God to delay divine punishment for another 120 years after the Assyrian attempt to subdue them.
- 16C. It was about 606 B. C., after centuries of patiently tolerating the sin of Judah, that God's anger broke forth and Judah was defeated, with her most talented citizens car-

ried, in three different waves, into Babylonian captivity by the ruthless Nebuchadnezzar.

- 17C. Years later, but still during the captivity, the Medo-Persian Empire overthrew the Babylonians and inherited charge over the Jewish captivity.
- 18C. When the 70 years of God's chastisement had transpired, the Persians granted the Jews permission to return to the Promised Land, though most of the Jewish population in Babylon chose to remain in Babylon.
- 19C. For those who returned to Palestine, there was the task of rebuilding the Temple, though not to its original splendor, and of rebuilding the wall surrounding Jerusalem. The rebuilt Temple is referred to as Zerubbabel's Temple, in honor of the man who led the Jewish people back into their land and began to rebuild the Temple. It is approximately here that the Old Testament history of Israel ends.
- 20C. Dealing now with events predicted in Scripture and verified in secular history, before the New Testament times arrived, we see the Jewish people living under Persian rule until the explosive power of Alexander the Great arrived on the scene and made most of those in the region who were educated into a Greek-speaking culture.
- 21C. After Alexander conquered the world, he died at a young age, leaving four generals to divide his kingdom between themselves. The Jewish people in the Promised Land found themselves caught between the Seleucids of Asia Minor and the Ptolemies ruling Egypt, living in a land that was fought for and subjected to intense persecution for their religious beliefs most of the time.
- 22C. During this time, the Maccabees revolted against the Seleucids and enjoyed temporary independence for the Jewish people. However, when the Romans conquered the Middle East, they crushed all opposition that stood in their way. After occupying the region, the Romans maintained iron-fisted control and were bitterly despised by the Jewish people.
- 23C. To aid their rule over stubborn Israel, which was now identified as Judea, Caesar appointed Herod the Great as king over Judea. This Idumean was a butcher, hated by the Jewish people for his depravity and the fact that he was a descendant of Esau and not Jewish, in spite of the fact that he rebuilt Zerubbabel's Temple into a lavish Temple, called Herod's Temple.
- 24C. It was this same Herod the Great who was king of Judea when the Lord Jesus Christ was born of the virgin named Mary in the little village of Bethlehem. This is approximately where the New Testament account of God's plan of redemption resumes.

2B. Regarding Jewish Institutions.

- 1C. Regardless of her spiritual condition, which was completely barren most of the time, from the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai onward, Israel was basically a theocracy.
- 2C. That is to say, God ruled over the nation, and her national institutions were, in the beginning anyway, brought into existence by God directly or by a recognized man of God.
- 3C. Examples are numerous:
 - 1D. Israel's religion was the only religion ever given to men by God and was the rule of life for that nation. The Law given to Moses atop Mount Sinai was the governing document for the nation, in theory if not always in actual practice.
 - 2D. Israel's monarchy was brought into existence by God and sovereignly ruled over by an omnipotent and wise God, as we shall clearly see in Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3, when we study the genealogies of Christ's stepfather and mother.
 - 3D. Israel's school of the prophets was introduced by the great prophet Samuel to train men to be preachers of the Word of God, in an effort to bring the nation back to God. How long the school of the prophets lasted in Jewish history is not known.
- 4C. When the original Temple was destroyed by conquering Babylonian armies six centuries before the birth of Christ, and when the descendant of David was deposed as king, Jewish life in the political and religious realms was totally disrupted.
- 5C. With the deportation of the people to a foreign land, the people began to forget their original Hebrew tongue and began speaking the local language called Aramaic, the language of their captors, the Babylonians.
- 6C. Additionally, with intermarriage with Gentiles occurring and the destruction of the genealogical records that were stored in the original Temple, information related to the Aaronic priesthood, such as who was qualified to be a priest, who was the next in line to be the high priest, etc., was thrown into disarray.
- 7C. To compensate for such chaos in their national identity and to preserve things dear to them, the following adaptations were made:
 - 1D. During the seventy years of captivity synagogues came into existence as a substitute for religious life connected to the now destroyed Temple. To this day, synagogues have continued as a central institution in Jewish life.

- 2D. To compensate for the language problems the people now had with their Scriptures, scribes came on the scene as linguists and teachers. Though originally a good idea, the scribes became so corrupt that the Lord Jesus Christ denounced these leaders, who were ordinarily held in high esteem by the common people by virtue of their education.
- 3D. The Pharisees also arose during the centuries between Testaments as a small group of intensely religious Jews who strictly adhered to the oral tradition rather than the letter of the Law as it was found written in the Word of God.
 - 1E. Pharisees were the separatists of their day, choosing to devote themselves to legalistic righteousness rather than humbling themselves before God or involve themselves in any way in matters that might bring them into contact with the despised Gentiles.
 - 2E. Pharisees had a profound impact on Jewish society, though they were always comparatively few in number. In spite of this the Lord Jesus Christ correctly castigated them for being spiritually cold and weighing down folks with rules and regulations of life that did no one any good.
 - 3E. Being writers, the Judaism found in the modern world is directly descended from the Pharisees and their Talmudic writings.
- 4D. The Sadducees were the religious modernists of Christ's time. Basically skeptical of supernatural things, they did not believe in the resurrection from the dead; they did not believe in the existence of angels, and possibly only mouthed affection toward God because they would have been social outcasts had they done otherwise.
 - 1E. A number of priests in important positions were Sadducees, though some were Pharisees as well.
 - 2E. Interestingly, the New Testament does not record the salvation of a single Sadducee, though a number of Pharisees trusted Christ.
- 5D. Then there were the Herodians. More of a political party than a religious position, the Herodians were political opportunists who supported Roman rule using Herod and looked upon Christ as little more than a political revolutionary and trouble-maker.
- 6D. The Essenes were a strict separatist sect of Jews who so completely withdrew themselves from Jewish society that their impact was negligible. The Qumran

scrolls, found in the Qumran caves near the Dead Sea, are typically relics of the Essenes of the Lord Jesus Christ's day.

7D. Lastly, there are the Samaritans. Not actually a Jewish institution, Samaritans are the descendants of the mixed-blood Jewish-Gentiles who were the product of the Assyrian captivity of the northern tribe of Israel.

1E. There was, as we shall see in our studies, intense animosity existing between Jewish people and Samaritans, dating back to their opposition of the Jews who were rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah.

2E. Additionally, the Samaritan religion, which was a concoction of Judaism mixed with paganism, refused to acknowledge Jerusalem as the place of the true worship of God, further irritating the Jews.

3E. To their credit, it must be said that the Samaritans of that era were in some way looking toward the coming of the Messiah. What kind of Messiah they expected, we are not sure. But their response to Christ in the Gospels and later to Philip in the book of Acts is astounding.

3B. Regarding Jewish Occupation.

1C. You will recall that at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry the Roman occupation of Palestine was a cold and bitter reality to the Judean population, because evidence of the tyranny of Roman occupation was commonplace.

2C. Roman garrisons and their soldiers, by Jewish standards rude, defiled, and arrogant, were everywhere.

3C. Roman tax collectors, Jewish men who were termed publicans in the King James Bible and who were looked upon by the general populace as traitors and collaborators, were squeezing as much money as they could out of the people as they operated in fashion much like modern-day debt collectors, and received a percentage of the taxes they collected.

4C. What caused the greatest problems with the Jewish people was their knowledge of their history. They knew what their high calling was. And they realized the outrage of having a filthy and defiled Gentile nation ruling over those who were the chosen people of God.

- 5C. Such requirements as being required to carry a Roman bag for one mile when a Roman soldier demanded it frustrated them to the point that they marked out one-mile markers on every road and path that led out of each city, town, and village. This was done so that when they had gone that one mile, they would then put the soldier's belongings down and go not one step farther.
- 6C. Be sure that the Jewish people looked for the Messiah. But they looked for the national salvation of their pride and ego, not salvation from sin. They wanted a Messiah who would destroy the Roman Empire and return their land to the Golden Age of Davidic and Solomonic rule.
- 7C. In other words, they wanted a Messiah who would fit their preconceived notions. They wanted a Messiah to fit their dreams of glory. They did not want a suffering Savior. They did not necessarily want a sin-bearer. They would be very surprised.

4B. Regarding Jewish Attitudes.

I have dealt with this at some length already, but certain things bear repeating.

- 1C. Toward the Romans there was a deep and abiding hatred. Obviously, then, toward those who cooperated with the Romans, the publicans and the Herodians, the depth of their bitterness was only slightly diminished.
- 2C. Toward Gentiles in general, there were widespread feelings of revulsion at the thought of having to actually touch such a person or actually eat with such a person... which they would never do under ordinary circumstances.
- 3C. Toward Samaritans, again, there was the hatred born of feeling racially and spiritually superior, but not actually having political or economic superiority.
- 4C. Toward the Messiah. Primarily, their thoughts ran toward a political Messiah Who would deliver the people from Roman slavery and dominion. Little thought was given to one's slavery to sin.
 - 1D. They wanted a Messiah to ruin the Gentiles, not save them.
 - 2D. They wanted a Messiah to exalt Israel, not humble her.
 - 3D. They wanted a Messiah to reign, not one Who would suffer and die.
- 6C. Toward the Scriptures. They made Scripture of no effect by loading it down with so much oral tradition that the tradition eventually had more authority in their lives than

the actual Scripture did. The Lord Jesus Christ, we will see, castigated the scribes and the Pharisees for such traditionalism dragging men into hellfire.

5B. Regarding Gospel Accounts.

- 1C. **Synoptic Gospels**—so called because they have a rather similar perspective of the Son of God and are dramatically different in what they emphasize than does John in his Gospel account. With Eta Linnemann, I categorically reject the notion of any so-called synoptic problem and deny that any so-called Q document ever existed.

1D. The Gospel according to Matthew.

- 1E. Matthew's given name was Levi. But when he was called to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, he apparently took for himself a new name... Matthew. He was a publican, a tax collector, prior to his calling, as we see in his own version of his calling in Matthew 9:9:

“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.”

- 2E. Matthew seems to have been the prophetic Gospel, concerned very much with the facts surrounding the Savior's fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah.
- 3E. I suggest that you, with a pen or marker, indicate that the following verses are references to Old Testament prophecies that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled: Matthew 1.22; 2.5, 15, 17, 23; 3.3; 4.14; 8.17; 12.17; 13.14, 35; 15.7; 21.4; 26.56; 27.9, 35.
- 4E. One final note on Matthew's Gospel. Though it is placed first in the New Testament, it was not the first New Testament book written. The epistle written by James may have been the first New Testament book written. The first Gospel written was likely Mark's Gospel.

2D. The Gospel according to Mark.

- 1E. This account of our Lord's earthly ministry was written by a man whose name was John Mark, John being his Aramaic name and Mark being his Greek name. In those days it was a common practice to have two such names, one to use in each language.

- 2E. This Gospel account seems to have been strongly influenced by Simon Peter, with whom Mark ministered according to First Peter 5.13. Such a two-person collaboration in writing a book of the Bible is not at all unusual, since it seems fairly certain that Jeremiah used the services of a man named Baruch to write Jeremiah and Paul used several different men in penning his inspired letters.
- 3E. Mark emphasized Christ as the Perfect Servant of God to a world dominated by slavery and servant-keeping. He also showed that as a Perfect Servant Christ has the power to do His Master's bidding, which a power-respecting Roman world would appreciate and respond to.
- 4E. To achieve this effect, Mark's Gospel account was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write an action book. He shows a Servant Who is almost always on the move, always serving, always demonstrating His power, always achieving His objectives and goals.
- 5E. A particular point of Mark's style was to load his Gospel with words such as "immediately" and "straightway." He also strung sentences together with the word "and" as a way of impressing his audience with the fact that things never stopped happening as the Perfect Servant served His Master in heaven. This is because efficient servants move quickly and quietly to get their jobs done.
- 6E. Notice, if you have not already, that Mark did not record the Lord's genealogy through either His mother or His stepfather. Why was that? Because a Roman world would neither appreciate nor understand why a servant's genealogy was important. The Roman world only cared that the servant had the capacity to serve effectively.
- 7E. The Roman world understood the principle more than we do, and the Lord Jesus Christ set the pattern for us that Paul wrote in First Corinthians 4.2:

"Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."
Mark recorded a servant who was faithful even unto death.

3D. The Gospel according to Luke.

- 1E. This Gospel was written by one who some erroneously think was the only Gentile writer of any portion of the Word of God, except the book of Acts, which he also wrote. This is unlikely, since Paul declared in Romans 3.2, that God had committed unto the Jewish people the oracles of God.

- 2E. In Colossians 4.14, the Apostle Paul referred to Luke as the “beloved physician,” which helps to explain why he showed so frequently the humane and tenderly compassionate side of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Perfect Man.
- 3E. There is nowhere in Scripture indicated that Luke was a firsthand witness of the things he wrote about in his Gospel account. But since he traveled widely, it seems plausible that he was an expert gatherer of facts and information, the Holy Spirit of God inspiring the product of his labors and absolutely guaranteeing the truthfulness and the reliability of his record.
- 4E. Although the three other Gospel accounts seem to make very little effort to give a strictly chronological account of Christ’s life, Luke 1.3 gives us good reason to trust that Luke’s is a chronological account:

“It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.”
- 5E. For this reason, I will use Luke, in this study, as the standard by which the chronology of the life of Christ is measured and tracked.

2C. The Gospel according to John.

- 1D. John’s Gospel is quite possibly the most lovely of all books in the Bible, possibly because when you read the Gospel according to John, more than the others, you actually feel as though you are there.
- 1E. That is, you can *see* the scene in the garden when the soldiers came to take Him away for trial and crucifixion.
- 2E. You can even *feel* the heartbeat of the Savior as this human author lay his head on the Savior’s breast during the Last Supper.
- 2D. There are a number of reasons why I feel John’s Gospel is unique and should be set apart from the others:
 - 1E. *First*, because there is much information in John which the other Gospel accounts do not contain. Consider the differences from the human perspective. This is possibly because John’s Gospel was written years after the first three were penned. This is also possibly because the personality of John was far more thoughtful and introverted and intimately involved in the Savior, and

we know that the Holy Spirit did use the various personalities of those whose writings He inspired.

- 2E. *Second*, because John was so much younger and so much more intimate with the Savior than were the other writers, his look back at the Son of God seems so much more personal and intimate than do the other Gospel accounts.
- 3E. It is rather interesting, in this age of suspicion and jealousy, to note that this extremely intimate portrait of the Savior came from the youngest member of the apostolic band. He was also the one the Savior seems to have chosen to spend the most time with.
- 1F. Learn a principle that we observe in the dealings of the Master Teacher as we study the ways in which He taught men to serve Him:
- 2F. You must learn very quickly the truth that you cannot and should not spend the same amount of time with each person God wants you to mentor, instruct, and disciple. Christ did not, and you should not feel guilty for doing the same thing.
- 3F. This must be so because, #1, you do not have time to devote to every person equally, #2, you must devote your time to those who are responsive and pliable to your personal ministry, #3, you must spend time with those people you know will multiply your ministry, and #4, some of those you lead will not need as much of your time as will others.
- 4F. This was the kind of ministry Christ had and even His disciples fought for His time. But in spite of the problems which must arise in our ministries because we are sinful men, we must set out to train the few to reach the many.