



The life of Jesus

His life and his message



This is the story and the message of Jesus Christ

*By Oscar McCoombe-Lopez
Year 8*



We all admire Jesus Christ for his wisdom, for his love and for his courage.

It may be expected that someone, so important had a privileged childhood. Yet Jesus was born in in the town of Nazareth, a quiet little town where most people were farmers and shepherds. His mother was Mary and his father Joseph, a good man and a humble carpenter.

One day, while Mary was at home, an angel suddenly appeared.



"Mary I am Gabriel. God has sent me to you. Soon you will have a son. He will be a great king one day and he will be loved by everyone. He will be called the son of God. He will do great things for the people."

In those days, the king of the land decided that everybody should be counted and documented. So Joseph had to take Mary to his town of Bethlehem to get registered.

Joseph and Mary had a long and difficult journey ahead to Bethlehem. Mary travelled on top of a donkey and Joseph walked next to her.



After many days of walking in the desert they finally reached Bethlehem. It was already dark when they arrived in town. They needed a place to rest and spend the night, but all the places were full and nobody gave them a place to stay. Joseph found an empty stable. It was warm, and there was plenty of straw to lie on.



That night an exciting, wonderful thing happened: Mary and Joseph had a baby! But this wasn't just any baby, he was Baby Jesus! He was the son of God.

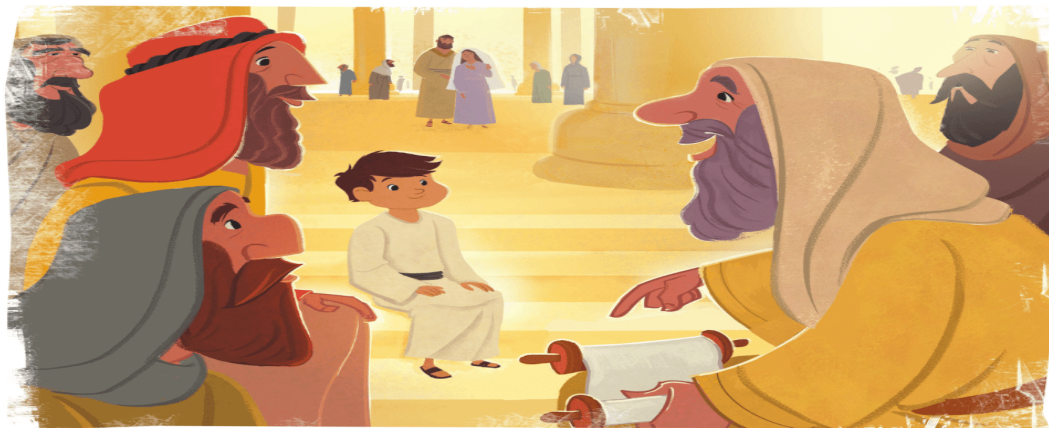
A star guided men from the East to the young child. They believed that this new star was leading them to someone important.



Nazareth was the place where Jesus grew up. He never showed any desire for power or wealth but focussed instead on what he knew to be wise – to follow a life of love, sincerity and commitment to our heavenly Father.

Every year Joseph would bring his family to Jerusalem for the special celebration called the Passover. It's a long trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem. Most of the people walk, and it takes them about three days to get to Jerusalem.

From a young age, Jesus already wanted to talk to teachers in the temple. He would listen to them and ask questions.



Jesus at the Temple (Luke 2:40-52) • Unit 19, Session 4 • © 2016 LifeWay ©K to Print

When Jesus was 30 years old, he was baptized by John into the waters of the Jordan River. He then began preaching.



Unlike some other people, Jesus tried to make his advice understandable to the common man, sometimes using stories (parables) or symbols, but always keeping his message simple, straightforward and practical.

Jesus dealt with many aspects of human life but the one that he spent longest on, was the need for love. His focus was not just on the love for our friends and family, but something much more challenging:



"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)

He spoke of a love for those who we want to hate. This love requires effort, and strain.

It is the easiest thing in the world to hate, to let the desire for revenge grow in our hearts.

To be truly happy we must love even if we are hated for it. Love and do not hate, for surely love is the only path to peace, freedom and happiness.

For Jesus it was not enough just pretending to love others, we had to truly feel it in our hearts. Because even if you feel hate in your heart and don't show it, you are just as guilty as those who commit their sins in daylight. It is only sincerity that can inspire men to greatness.

For Jesus it was important not only that we try to reach these standards of love and sincerity but also that we realise the occasions when we do not. Once we have understood

what we have done wrong we can ask for forgiveness, and then make a serious effort to correct our mistakes. It is only when we do this that we can truly be a follower of God.

Jesus told this parable:



"Two men went up to the temple to pray. One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, killers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Having shown men how they should live loving, sincere, humble lives, Jesus also began telling them about how they should think of God.

Jesus told us to think of God as our Father, as a loving, kind, generous parent who has given us life and will provide for us in the times ahead.



"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Jesus was not alone. He chose 12 men that would travel with him. They would be his closest followers and become the primary teachers of the message of Jesus. They were called the apostles.



Jesus and these new disciples would travel a lot. In Galilee they stopped at Nathanael's hometown of Cana. There Jesus went to a big wedding feast and performed his first miracle. He turned water into wine.



Jesus Turned Water to Wine (John 2:1-12) • Unit 23, Session 1 • © 2017 LifeWay OK to Print

Throughout his time on Earth Jesus passed on his wisdom to others, encouraging them to give up the pointless pursuit of treasures on earth. He taught that a loving, healthy relationship with God and with our fellow human beings would produce a much more fruitful and useful life.

Jesus' life is a testimony to the sincere love that he had for those around him. Time after time we are told of how Jesus helped those who could not help themselves.



"Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them." (Matthew 15:30)

Jesus did many miracles. He fed thousands of people with only a few small fishes and a few loaves of bread. He healed the sick and even raised the dead. A few months later some people brought their children to see Jesus. The apostles tried to keep them away. But Jesus told his apostles:



"Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to persons like them.' Then Jesus took the children in his arms, and blessed them"

Jesus rode to Jerusalem on a donkey. When he got near the city, a large crowd of people came out to meet him. Most of them took off their coats and put them on the road. Others cut off branches from palm trees and put them on the road.



Yet not everyone who came into contact with Jesus appreciated his teachings or his healing powers. A group of people, called Pharisees, became particularly upset with him. These Pharisees claimed to be religious and holy, yet Jesus knew that in their hearts they were as guilty as anyone else, and Jesus condemned them for it.

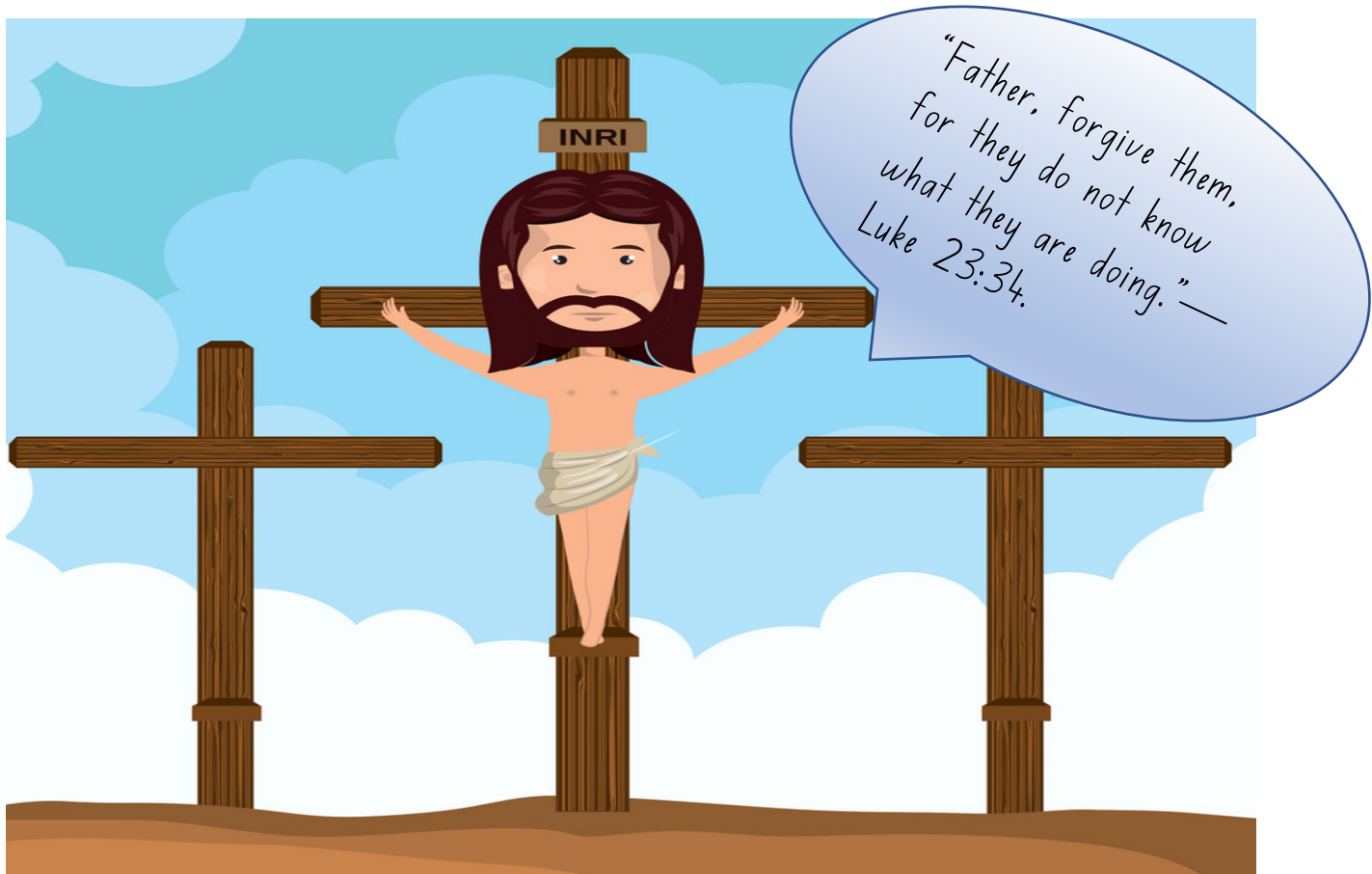


God doesn't care about rituals and sacrifice; all that matters is a sincere love for God and for man. You should pay more attention to helping others and less attention to rules and regulations.

Within only a few years of starting his ministry, when he was just thirty-three years old, Jesus was arrested and handed over to the Romans who were ruling Israel at that time.

After an unfair trial Jesus was condemned to death by crucifixion. This method of killing prisoners was a horrendous, slow death where the body was nailed to a wooden cross and put on display in front of the crowds.

While he was dying, in the midst of unbearable pain, Jesus asked God that these men would be forgiven.



Although he was buried in a tomb guarded by Roman soldiers, his body disappeared.

The reason for this disappearance is that Jesus was raised to life again.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he confirmed his identity as the Son of God.



"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, a woman called Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. The angel said to them:



"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.'

Jesus was wise and honourable, being persecuted only because some people disagreed with his views. His life is a testimony to the spirit of God.

Jesus' death acts like a sacrifice for us. Instead of each of us being punished for all that we have done, Jesus symbolically died in our place.

The life of Jesus is truly extraordinary and his short time here on Earth has impacted more people than anyone else in history. Jesus taught us to love, and he loved. He taught us to be sincere, and he was sincere. He taught us that God was our Father, and he truly was the child of God.

Jesus was more than just a teacher, he was also unique in his nature. He united the essence of God and man within himself, being both divine and human.

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