Know the Key Teachings About Christ

Life of Jesus

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"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

—Matthew 16:13

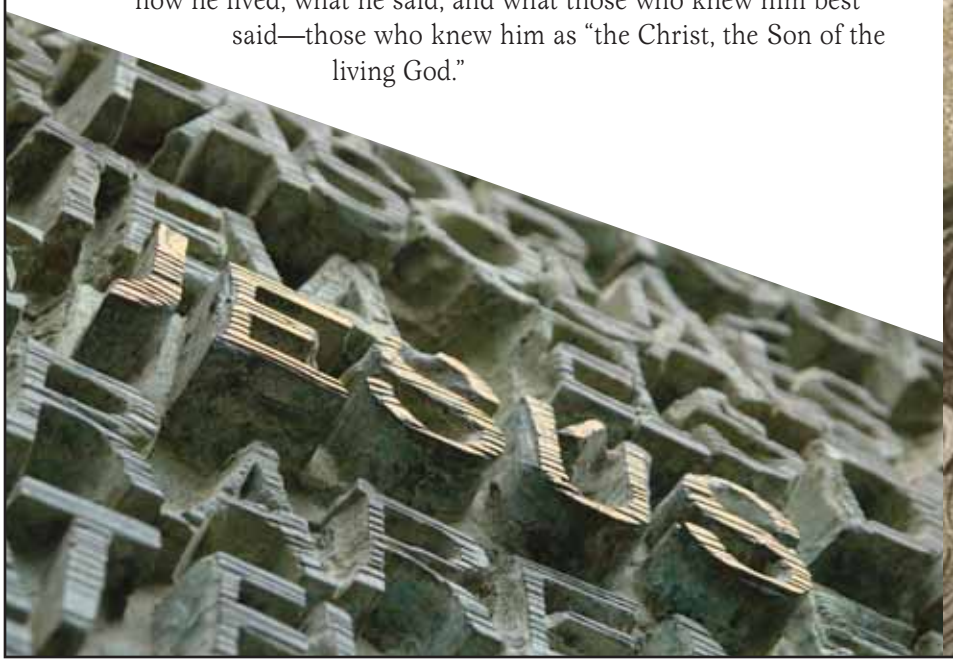
Jesus asked this question about himself to his disciples around 2,000 years ago. His disciples replied with answers based on things they knew or had experienced: "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (v. 14).

People in Jesus' day had expectations about who he was and arrived at their conclusions based on those expectations. Today it is not very different. People gather ideas about Jesus from many places: from television and movies, from books and newspapers, from family, school, and office conversations. Some of these ideas are right on the mark—others miss the mark entirely.

Some people say Jesus was just a popular preacher or a guru of ethical living. Others say it is not even important to know who Jesus is. But for people who have given their lives to Jesus and have experienced life in a new and wonderful way, the question about Jesus' identity is of greater-than-life importance.

After asking about what other people say, Jesus turned to his disciples and asked, "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" (v. 15). Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16).

What does it mean that Jesus is "the Christ" and "the Son"? It means that he is much more than a popular preacher, a prophet, or a wise teacher. Who is Jesus? The following pages will answer this fundamental question. To understand who Jesus is, it is important to understand what he taught, how he lived, what he said, and what those who knew him best said—those who knew him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God."



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Title: Life of Jesus Product Code: 717X ISBN-13: 9781596363373

1. Who is Jesus?

WHAT JESUS SAID

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."—John 14:6

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."—John 6:35

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"—John 8:12

See also Matthew 11:27–29; John 8:58; 10:30.

WHAT THOSE WHO KNEW HIM BEST SAID

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.... From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."—John 1:1–4, 14–17

John was one of Jesus' closest friends and earliest followers who was at the scene of Jesus' execution.

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."—1 Peter 1:18–20

Peter, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, wrote this to Christians in the first century AD.

See also Matthew 16:16; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3.

WHAT GOD THE FATHER SAID

"While [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'"—Matthew 17:5

God the Father spoke plainly about Jesus.

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WHAT NATURE SAID

"Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'"—Mark 4:38–41

The natural world obeyed Jesus' commands because he is its Creator.

See also Matthew 14:13–33.

Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee by Rembrandt

WHAT THE DEMONS SAID

"In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 'Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!'"—Luke 4:33–34

The spiritual world recognized Jesus and his power.

See also Matthew 8:29; Mark 5:6–7.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

"We may note in passing that He was never regarded as a mere moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met Him. He produced mainly three effects—Hatred—Terror—Adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval."—C.S. Lewis, Oxford and Cambridge professor and former agnostic (1898–1963)

"I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison."
—Napoleon Bonaparte, French Emperor (1769–1821)

"Why don't the names of Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius offend people? The reason is that these others didn't claim to be God, but Jesus did."—Josh McDowell, Christian Evangelist and Apologist

"He possessed neither wealth nor influence. His relatives were inconspicuous, and had neither training nor formal education. In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature, walked upon the billows as if pavement, and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His service. The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone. The names of the past scientists, philosophers, and theologians have come and gone; but the name of this Man abounds more and more. Though time has spread nineteen hundred years between the people of this generation and the scene of His crucifixion, yet He still lives, Herod could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him."—from "The Incomparable Christ"

Summary: Jesus was more than human. In fact, he was human and divine at the same time—the Son of God. He is the Creator who entered his creation.

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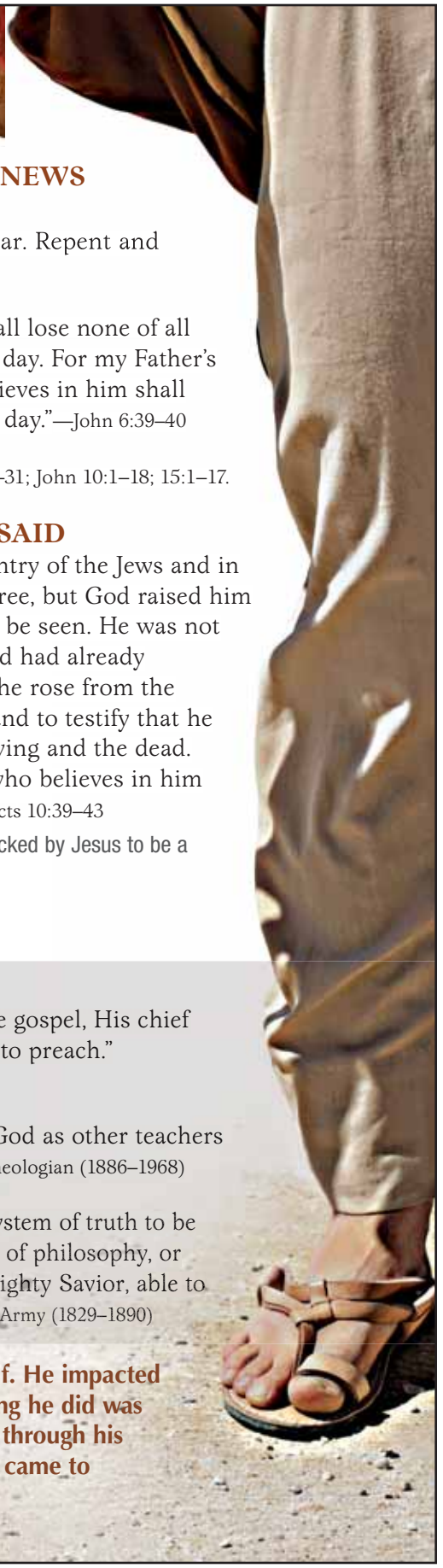
2. What was his message?



WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIS GOOD NEWS (THE GOSPEL)

"The time has come.... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"—Mark 1:15

"And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."—John 6:39–40

See also Matthew 4:23–24, 5:1–7:29; Mark 4:1–34; Luke 15:1–31; John 10:1–18; 15:1–17.

WHAT THOSE WHO KNEW HIM BEST SAID

"We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."—Acts 10:39–43

Spoken by Peter, one of Jesus' best friends, who was hand-picked by Jesus to be a leader after Jesus' death and resurrection.

See also Acts 2:14–41; 3:11–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

"The real truth is that while He came to preach the gospel, His chief object in coming was that there might be a gospel to preach."
—R.W. Dale, Congregationalist minister (1829–1895)

"Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as other teachers of religion do, He is himself the way."—Karl Barth, Theologian (1886–1968)

"The Gospel that represents Jesus Christ, not as a system of truth to be received, into the mind, as I should receive a system of philosophy, or astronomy, but it represents Him as a real, living, mighty Savior, able to save me now."—Catherine Booth, Cofounder of the Salvation Army (1829–1890)

Summary: The center of Jesus' message was himself. He impacted the world like no other human in history. Everything he did was good, and the greatest good he accomplished was through his death and rising from the dead. The good news he came to announce was also what he came to accomplish.

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3. Why did he come?

WHAT JESUS SAID

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."—John 3:17

"I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."—John 10:7–10

See also Matthew 5:17; Mark 2:17; 10:45; Luke 12:49–51; 19:10; John 7:28; 9:39; 12:46.

WHAT THOSE WHO KNEW HIM BEST SAID

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst."—1 Timothy 1:15

Written by the apostle Paul who was viciously anti-Christian until a life-changing encounter with the resurrected Jesus.

See also John 1:11–12; 1 John 3:8.

WHAT THE PROPHETS SAID

"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted."—Isaiah 53:4

Spoken by Isaiah, a prophet who saw what the Messiah (the Christ) would do more than 700 years before Jesus was born.

See also Genesis 49:10; Malachi 3:1–4.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

"The essence of Jesus' ministry was to bring the divine power into all the realms of death and thereby to call into question the finality of death. Light in the darkness, the mocker of the grave, divine love in the most godforsaken places, Jesus throws off balance the whole world of the small soul."—Robert Barron, Professor of Systematic Theology, Mundelein Seminary

"Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today he is the centerpiece of the human race and the 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 ever were 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."—Attributed to James Allen Francis, Doctor of Divinity (1864–1928)

Summary: Jesus came to save the world.

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4. Why did he die?

The Flagellation of Our Lord Jesus Christ by William A. Bouguereau

WHAT JESUS SAID

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."—Matthew 16:21

"'Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."—Luke 24:25–27

WHAT THE FIRST CHRISTIANS SAID

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."—Romans 3:21–26

Paul wrote this to Christians in Rome, approximately AD 56.

WHAT THE PROPHETS SAID

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him.... On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity."—Zechariah 12:10; 13:1

Spoken by the prophet Zechariah, approximately 400 years before Jesus, foretelling what would happen to the Messiah, the Christ.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

"If Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be, and He did die on a Cross at a point of time in history, then, for all history past and all history future it is relevant because that is the very focal point for forgiveness and redemption."—Josh McDowell, Christian Evangelist and Apologist

"No man ever loved like Jesus. He taught the blind to see and the dumb to speak. He died on the cross to save us. He bore our sins. And now God says, 'Because He did, I can forgive you.'"—Billy Graham, Christian Evangelist and Author

Summary: The Messiah's death was predicted long before he walked the earth. As the Messiah (the Christ), Jesus willingly allowed himself be put to death on the cross. In this way, he was sacrificed for the sins of all people. By dying a criminal's death through a miscarriage of human justice, Jesus balanced the scales of God's justice for the debt owed by the human race. Because of this, all who trust in him can be forgiven and receive salvation.

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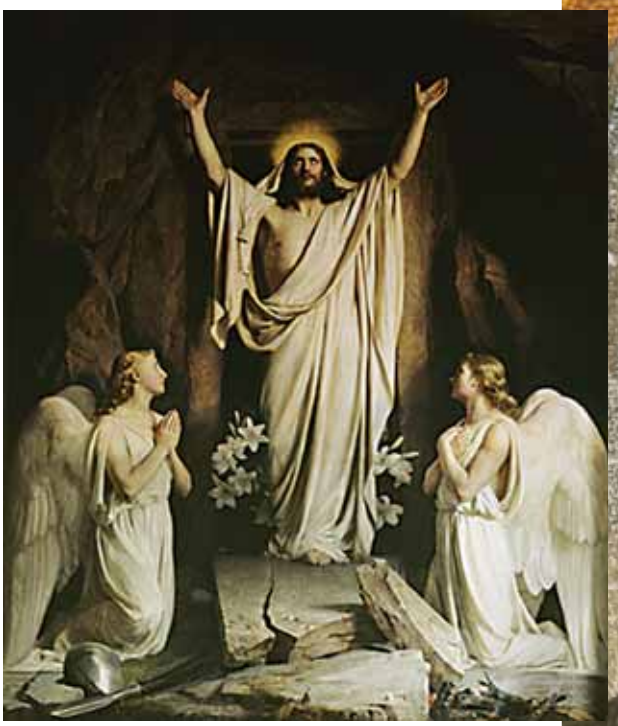
5. What about the empty tomb?

WHAT JESUS SAID

"[Jesus] said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'"—Luke 24:44–48

"A week later [after the empty tomb was discovered] his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'"
—John 20:26–28



The Resurrection by Carl Heinrich Bloch

WHAT THE MESSENGERS AT JESUS' EMPTY TOMB SAID

"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightening stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!'"—Luke 24:1–6

Like these the first messengers, the first Christians went on to boldly proclaim that Jesus had risen!

WHAT THE FIRST CHRISTIANS SAID

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that

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he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time."—1 Corinthians 15:3–6

This was the testimony that the apostle Paul passed on to believers.

See also Matthew 28; Mark 16; John 20, 21; Acts 1:1–11; 2:22–36; 3:15–22; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8; Colossians 3:1; 1 Peter 3:18–22.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

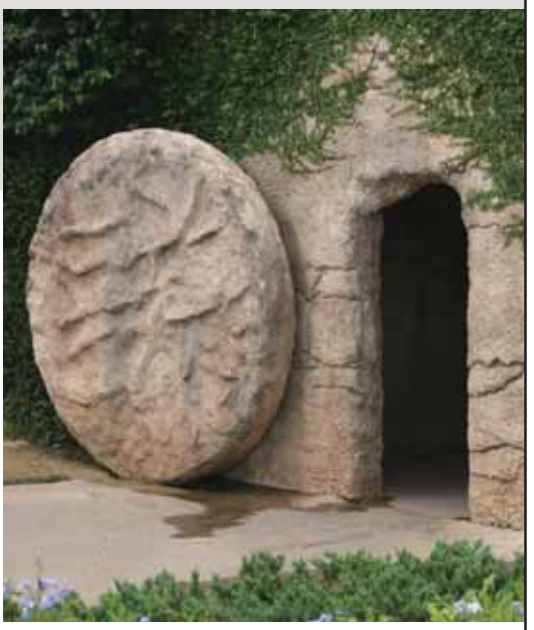
"The Resurrection is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in the Acts. The Resurrection, and its consequences were the 'gospel' or good news which the Christians brought."—C.S. Lewis, Oxford and Cambridge professor and former agnostic (1898–1963)

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross, upon his impeachment by the principal men among us, those who had loved him from the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive on the third day, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him."
—Josephus, Jewish historian (c. AD 37–100)

"[The Resurrection] is truly of great importance in Christianity; so great that His being or not being the Messiah stands or falls with it: so that these two important articles are inseparable and in effect make one. For since that time, believe one and you believe both; deny one of them, and you can believe neither."—John Locke, English philosopher (1632–1704)

"Confucius' tomb – occupied
Buddha's tomb – occupied
Mohammed's tomb – occupied
Jesus' tomb – EMPTY."
—G.B. Hardy, Canadian scientist

Summary: There is no other adequate explanation for the empty tomb and the subsequent events than that Jesus rose up alive from the grave. He was seen by many people, and that many of those same people saw him rise up into heaven.



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Time Line of the Life of Jesus

4 BC–AD 26

Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Luke 2:1–7
Jesus is presented in the temple. Luke 2:21–38
Mary and Joseph flee with their child Jesus to Egypt to escape King Herod's persecution. Matthew 2:13–18
The family returns to the hometown of Nazareth. Matthew 2:19–21
Jesus grows up in Nazareth. Matthew 2:22–23
At age 12, Jesus amazes teachers of the Jewish law. Luke 2:41–50

AD 27

Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist. Matthew 3:13–17
Jesus is tempted by Satan but does not sin. Matthew 4:1–11
Jesus calls his first disciples. John 1:38–51
Jesus changes water to wine (first miracle). John 2:6–10
Jesus is in Jerusalem for the annual Passover celebration. John 2:13
Jesus cleanses the temple of sellers who had made the holy place into a market. John 2:14–16
At Cana, Jesus heals a royal official's son. John 4:46–53
Jesus ministers in Galilee. Matthew 4:13–17

AD 28

Jesus reads from Isaiah and is rejected. Luke 4:14–30
Jesus heals people with various diseases and those possessed by demons. Luke 4:31–41
Jesus heals and forgives the sins of a paralyzed man. Luke 5:17–26
Jesus is in Jerusalem for Passover. John 5:1
Jesus heals a crippled man at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. John 5:2–9
Jesus calls the tax-collector, Levi (Matthew), to be his follower. Luke 5:27–32
The Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. Matthew 5:1–7:29
Jesus heals a centurion's servant. Matthew 8:5–13
Jesus raises a widow's son from the dead. Luke 7:12–15
Jesus calms a storm. Luke 8:22–25
Jesus heals Jairus's daughter and the woman with a hemorrhage. Mark 5:21–43
Jesus heals a blind man. Matthew 9:27–34

AD 29

Jesus sends out the 12 apostles to heal diseases and drive out evil spirits. Matthew 10:1–42
The teachers of the law accuse Jesus of being out of his mind and using Satan's power. Mark 3:20–27
King Herod beheads John the Baptist. Matthew 14:3–12
The 12 apostles return. Luke 9:10
Jesus miraculously feeds 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Mark 6:38–44
Jesus walks on water. Matthew 14:25
Jesus is in Jerusalem for Passover. John 6:4

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AD 29

Jesus heals a deaf man who cannot speak. Mark 7:32–37
Jesus restores sight to a blind man. Mark 8:22–26
Peter declares that Jesus is the Son of God. Matthew 16:13–20
Jesus predicts his death. Matthew 16:21–28
The Transfiguration. Luke 9:29–36
Jesus heals a boy with an evil spirit. Mark 9:17–27
Jesus again predicts his death. Matthew 17:22–23
Jesus sends out 72 disciples. Luke 10:1–16
Jesus forgives a woman caught in adultery. John 7:53–8:11
Jesus heals a man born blind. John 9:1–41

AD 30

Jesus heals a crippled woman. Luke 13:11–13
Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. John 11:1–46
Jesus heals 10 men with leprosy, but only one returns to give thanks. John 11:1–46
Jesus predicts his death for a third time. Matthew 20:17–19
Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus. Mark 10:46–52
Jesus stays with Zacchaeus, a wealthy and repentant man. Luke 19:1–10
Mary anoints the feet of Jesus. John 12:1–9

Palm Sunday and the week following

Palm Sunday: Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem.
Monday: Jesus clears the temple.
Tuesday: Jesus teaches in parables.
Wednesday: Jesus rests.
Thursday: Jesus celebrates Passover, the Last Supper, and is betrayed by his disciple Judas Iscariot.
Friday: Jesus is arrested by Roman authorities, crucified on the cross, and buried in a tomb.
Friday afternoon, Saturday, Sunday morning: Jesus' body lies in the tomb.
Sunday: Jesus rises from the dead.

Appearance of the Risen Christ

Jesus' tomb found empty by the women. Luke 24:1–8
Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. John 20:11–18
Jesus appears on the road to Emmaus. Luke 24:13–35
Jesus appears to 10 of his disciples. John 20:19–24
Thomas doubts, but is convinced when he sees and touches the risen Christ. John 20:26–28
Jesus appears to 500 people at the same time. 1 Corinthians 15:6
Jesus instructs Peter as Jesus prepares to leave his disciples. John 21:15–53
Jesus gives the Great Commission and ascends to heaven. Luke 24:50–53

This dating assumes Jesus was born approximately 4 BC. All dates are approximate.

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Beliefs about Jesus

Belief	Meaning	Scripture	Importance
God's Unity	There is only one God.	Deuteronomy 6:4 Exodus 20:2–3 Isaiah 43:10–11	God is eternal—he has always existed. There is one Creator of the universe.
Trinity	There is only one God, but he exists eternally in three Persons: Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit.	Matthew 3:16–17 Matthew 28:19 2 Corinthians 13:14	As Trinity, God's nature is relational and in unity.
Christ's Virgin Birth	God the Son became a human being through a supernatural conception in the Virgin Mary's womb.	Matthew 1:18–23	Jesus did not inherit the sin nature that all other human beings have.
Christ's Sinlessness	Jesus never sinned.	2 Corinthians 5:21 Hebrews 4:15 1 Peter 2:22	Christ's sinlessness means he is able to represent us before God and to provide our salvation.
Christ's Deity	Jesus Christ is, in essence, God. He was not just a wise teacher or a good man—he is God.	John 1:1 Colossians 2:9 Hebrews 1:8	Because Jesus is both God and human he is able to mediate between God and humankind. He is the only way for us to be restored spiritually to God.
Christ's Humanity	Jesus Christ was fully human and fully divine.	John 1:14 Philippians 2:7–8 Hebrews 2:14	Jesus is able to fully represent humanity in atonement. If Jesus were not human, he could not have paid the price for humanity's sin.

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Belief	Meaning	Scripture	Importance
Christ's Atoning Death	Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and his bodily resurrection can bring us to God.	Mark 10:45 1 Peter 2:24 1 Peter 3:18 John 14:6	Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for humanity's sin—both physical and spiritual death.
Christ's Bodily Resurrection	Jesus rose bodily from the grave.	Romans 4:25 Romans 10:9 Luke 24:39	Jesus' resurrection from the dead was proof that he conquered death. It showed that someday everyone will be resurrected and spend eternity in either heaven or hell.
The Necessity of Faith	Faith in God and Jesus Christ, not our good works, connect us to God.	Hebrews 11:6 Romans 4:5	We cannot save ourselves because we can never repay the debt owed to God, no matter how many good things we do. Faith is trusting that God will save us through Christ's sacrifice. In faith, we accept God's gift of salvation.
Christ's Intercession	Christ represents us before God.	Hebrews 1:3 Hebrews 4:15 Hebrews 7:25 1 John 2:1	Jesus acts on our behalf. He defends us before God's law and against the accusations of Satan.
Christ's Second Coming	Jesus will return again.	Matthew 24:30 Revelation 22:12 Colossians 3:3–4 Luke 12:40	When Christ returns everyone will see him. Believers will rule with him in his kingdom forever. Those who do not believe will be separated from God forever.

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What Jesus said about:

LOVE

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."—Mark 12:30–31

"Do to others as you would have them do to you.... Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."—Luke 6:31–36

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."—John 13:34–35

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."—John 14:21

GOD

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."—John 14:1

"[The disciples] were greatly astonished and asked, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" —Matthew 19:25–26

"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me."—John 8:42

ETERNAL LIFE

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."—John 17:3

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."—John 5:24

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."—Mark 8:34–36

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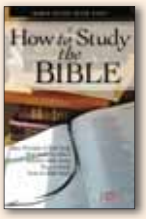

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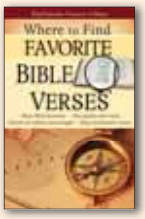

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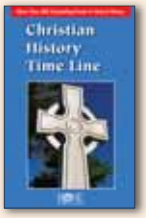

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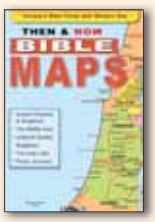

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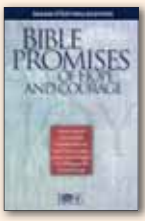

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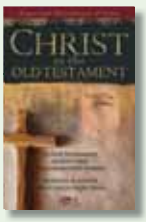

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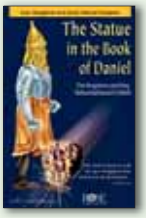

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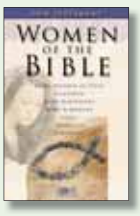

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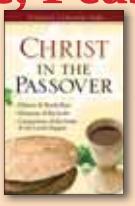

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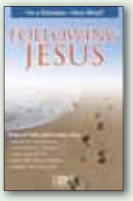

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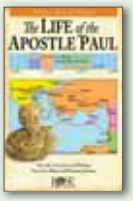

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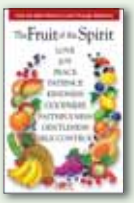

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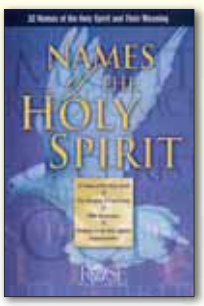

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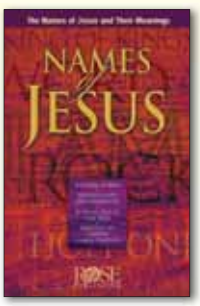

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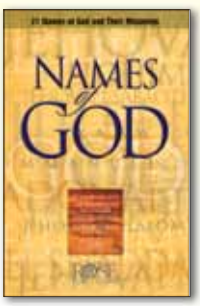

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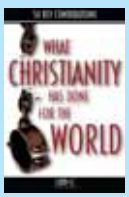

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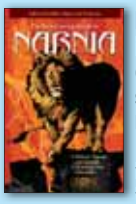

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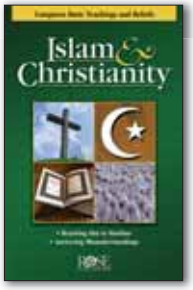

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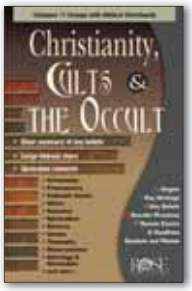

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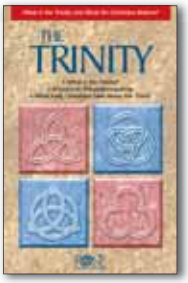

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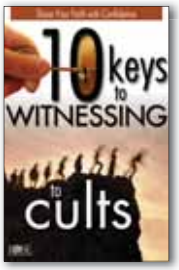

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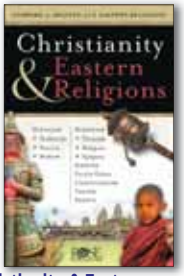

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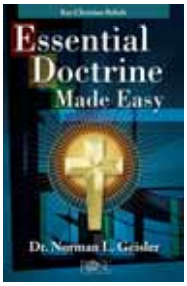

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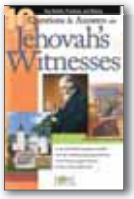

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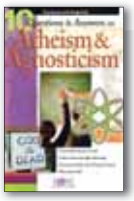

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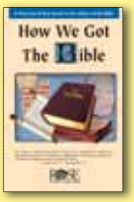

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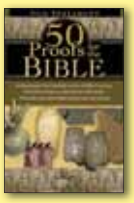

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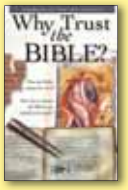

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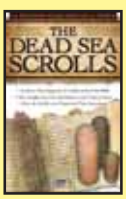

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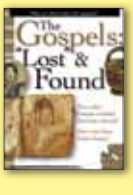

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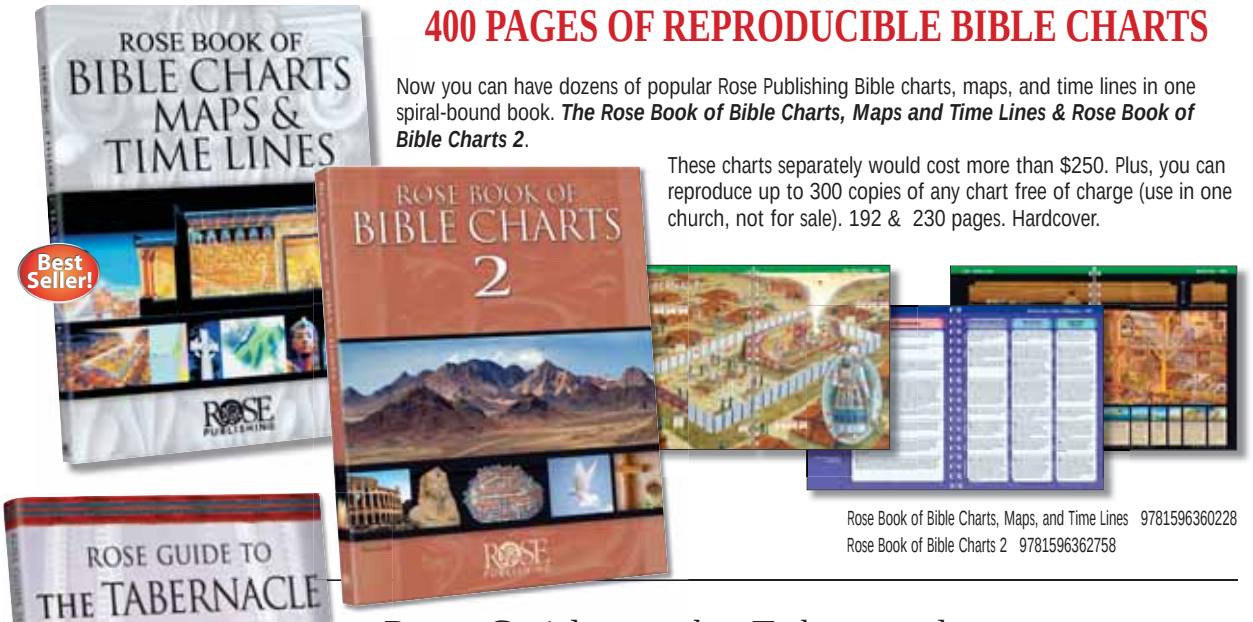

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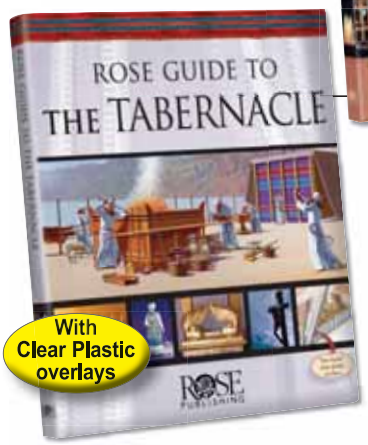

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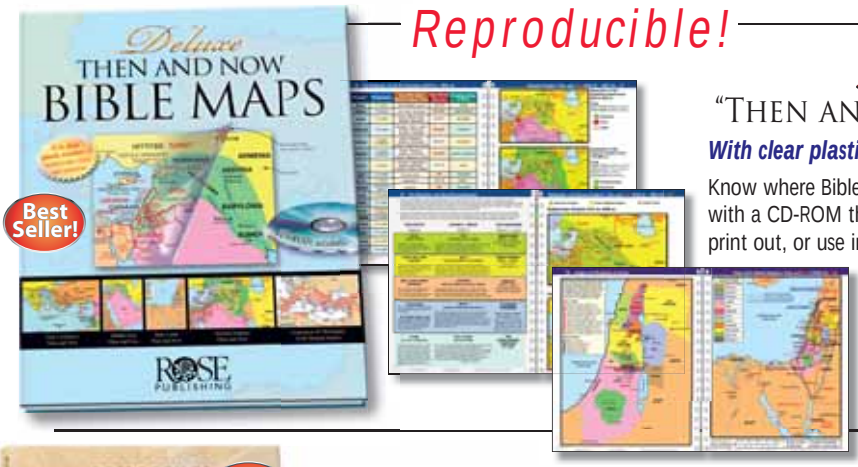

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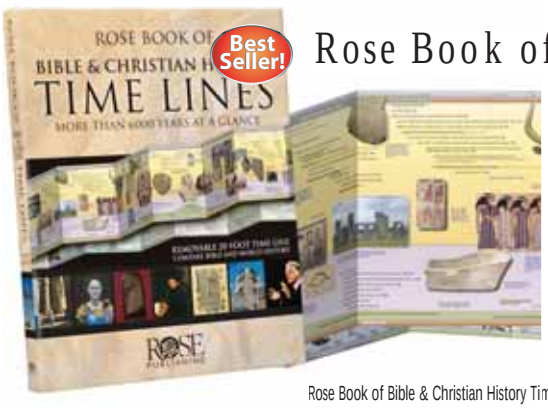

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