



# Lesson Three

## Who is Jesus of Nazareth?

### A Promised Messiah

Long before Jesus was born into the world, humans cried out to Yahweh for salvation from all the suffering in the world. Yahweh promised a Messiah – or a savior – would come and relieve us from pain and death. You might hear some people refer to this Messiah as *the Christ*, which is simply the Greek translation of the word Messiah. This Messiah would free us of our sins and make humanity right with God.

Throughout history, hundreds of people have claimed to be that Messiah. However, we know now that the Messiah was none other than Jesus of Nazareth. How do we know?

When Yahweh made the promise that He would send a savior, He gave us signs to point to the chosen person. An example is that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. Jesus's mother was Mary. She was betrothed to

A woman wearing a blue headscarf and a blue and white patterned garment is holding a newborn baby wrapped in a white cloth. She is looking down at the baby with a gentle expression. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wall or a cave.

When we do the math, the chances of Jesus fulfilling every single prophecy by chance is 1 in  $10^{57}$ . That's a 1 in

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chance! In other words, it would be virtually impossible for Jesus *not* to be the

Firstly, Jesus' disciples knew him to be the Messiah. Peter, one of Jesus' closest

friends, said of him, "You are the Christ." (Matthew 16:16). Jesus praised Peter for his understanding.

Jesus did not hesitate to identify himself as the Messiah. During one excursion of his ministry, Jesus stopped at a well for a drink. There, he met a woman and they had a conversation. At one point, the woman brought up the Messiah, and Jesus' reply was very telling. He said to her, "I who speak to you am he." (John 4:26)

Jesus knew who he was, and told her by his own words that he was the Messiah!

Further evidence comes before Jesus even started his 3 year long ministry. At the age of 30 years old, Jesus approached his cousin John living in the wilderness by the the Jordan river. There, John

baptized Jesus in the waters of the river. Immediately, something wonderful happened! As soon as Jesus came up from the water, the heavens opened up. God's spirit, like a dove, descended upon Jesus, and a voice from heaven declared ""This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17). This was the voice of God. Yahweh Himself was telling us that Jesus was the Christ!



Jesus' Baptism

Image by the Keystone Project

**Discussion:** Read John 4 : 7-45 and discuss the following:

How did Jesus' reveal himself as the Messiah to the Samaritans?

# The Perfect Lamb



As the Messiah, Jesus was sent to save mankind from suffering and death. How could he accomplish this important task.

In our last lesson, we discussed the origin of suffering. It is important to now revisit this topic, as it is crucial to understanding the importance of Jesus as our savior.

When Yahweh God created Adam, He gave him the gift of perfection. This meant that Adam was physically, mentally, and spiritually perfect. Adam did not know what it meant to hurt or suffer. Adam did not know sin. There was only one rule that Adam had to follow in Eden: he could not eat from

the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

When Adam ate from the Tree, he did more than just consume a piece of fruit. *By disobeying God's command, Adam introduced sin into the world.* Sin is defined as the breaking of God's commands (1 John 3:4). From that moment on, each person born would be born with sin engrained in their hearts. Each person inherited sin from Adam (Romans 5:12).

Think of a man who is in grave debt. When he passes away, his debt does not disappear. Instead, his debt is collected into a loan against his estate, which is inherited by his children. His

debt becomes their debt. Likewise, we have all inherited sin from our first father, Adam. The bible describes us as being held captive. Jesus himself said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin." (John 8:34, ESV). The bible also confirms that everyone commits sin (Romans 3:23).

**Discussion:** Read Romans 5:12 and discuss the following:

Why is everyone on earth a "slave to sin"?



By disobeying His command, Adam and Eve brought sin into the world

Adam would pay dearly for his decision to sin. Ousted from Eden, Adam now knew what hardship was, something he had never experienced before. Most monumental of all, Adam lost his precious friendship with Yahweh the Creator. He had chosen to reject Yahweh. In the end, Adam died for his sin. Because we all have inherited sin from Adam, we all face these same consequences. We grow old, we get sick, and we die because of sin (Romans 6:23).

In His loving wisdom, Yahweh God provided us what we needed to break the endless cycle of sin and death. If we were all held captive to sin, we would need a ransom to free us from captivity. A 'ransom' is defined as a payment for the release of a prisoner. This analogy is perfectly

applicable. We are all held hostage by our sinful nature; in order to be freed, someone would have to pay a ransom to free us. The bible makes it clear that we cannot pay for our own or each other's sins, since we live in sin ourselves (Read: Psalm 49:7-8). Because Adam was perfect when he sinned and lost his life, the ransom paid had to be a perfect human life. Thankfully, Yahweh provided the ransom needed.

**Discussion:** Read the scripture at Psalm 49:7-8 and discuss the following:

Why can we not pay our own ransom for sin?

Even though Jesus was born from the human Mary, he was born sinless (1 Peter 2:22). This is because Jesus is God's Son (Matthew 3:17). His

mother was a virgin, and he was placed in her womb by Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34-35). He had no earthly father to inherit sin from. For this reason, Jesus did not inherit sin in his earthly existence.

In his time on earth, Jesus displayed qualities that would mean our hope. Jesus perfectly obeyed his Father's commands, even when he didn't necessarily want to. At one point, when reflecting on what was going to happen to him, Jesus cried out to Yahweh, and said, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; *nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.*" (Matthew 26:39, ESV). Notice that Jesus, even regarding his own death, was willing to obey his Father's authority. This obedience would be the means of our salvation!

Jesus's perfect state and his willing obedience proved to be of utmost importance. Because Adam was a perfect man when he chose to disobey God, only a perfect man could undo that sin and relieve us from death (Romans 5:18-19). That could only be one man- Jesus of Nazareth. In his perfect obedience, Jesus kept his Father's commands, even when he was brutally tortured and killed. *This is why Jesus was called the Messiah – because he paid for our sins.*

**Discussion:** Read Romans 5:18-19 and discuss the following:

Why was Jesus the only one who could pay for our sins?

The bible refers to this as a ransom paid (Psalm 49:15,

1 Timothy 2:6, 1 Peter 1:18-19). This is because Jesus died in our place as wages for our sins. How did he do this? The answer from the bible is this: "*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*" (1 Peter 2:24, ESV). Here it says that he bore our sins on his body. When he was being tortured, beaten, and crucified, our sins were transferred from our bodies to his own, so that when he died, our sins died with him.

**Discussion:** How does 1 Peter 2:24 tell us that Jesus cleansed us of our sins?

# God's Reflection



Now that we know what Jesus did for mankind, you might be curious about who he was as a person. This topic, who is Jesus, isn't to be taken lightly. The bible highlights how important it is to know Jesus personally. We are told that knowing Jesus is just as important as knowing Yahweh God, and it means everlasting life to know them both (John 17:3)!

Even though Jesus is no longer on earth, we can still get to know him through the bible. In fact, the bible tells us an awful lot about Jesus' character. We can get to know Jesus' nature through the detailed account of his life and ministry recorded in the gospels. First, the bible refers to Jesus as "Rabbi" or

'teacher" (John 13:13). Jesus has also been referred to as the Great Teacher, reflecting his love for educating others about important gospel truths.

Several examples on his ministry show Jesus as passionate and caring. One case came up during Jesus' ministry, where a man plagued with leprosy came to Jesus and begged to be healed so he could reintegrate with society. Jesus' response highlights his loving and caring nature. "I want to." Jesus didn't heal as part of his ministry; *he wanted to*.

**Discussion:** Read Matthew 8:2-3 and discuss the following:

How does Jesus response, "I will" or "I want to" show Jesus to be a caring teacher?



Jesus lovingly healed a man with leprosy

Jesus was 'perfect'. What does that mean? It means that, like Adam was when he was first created, Jesus was physically, mentally, and spiritually pure. In essence, it means that Jesus never committed sin. During his entire life on earth, Jesus obeyed his Father's commands perfectly. Like Adam, Jesus was also a living reflection of Yahweh God. As God's son, Jesus so perfectly resembled Yahweh that he

once said, "...whoever sees me sees Him who sent me." (John 12:45). The bible also refers to Jesus as "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), image here meaning "likeness or similarity" Perhaps their similarities are best described in Paul's letter to the Jewish members of the assembly: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of His power..." (Hebrews 1:3).

**Discussion:** How is Jesus a reflection of Yahweh God?

Some people mistakenly take this to mean that Jesus *is* God. You have likely already heard this interpretation. So many today will go as far as to say that if you don't believe this, then you aren't a 'real' Christian. While that

might be hurtful to hear, it's important to stand for what the *bible* says to be true, not what man says.

The bible does not indicate that Jesus is God. Jesus repeatedly referred to his Father as higher than him – therefore, they are not co-equal like so many claim (John 14:28). God is stated in the bible to be eternal - with no beginning nor an end. Yet Jesus *has* a distinct beginning, not created but 'begotten', meaning he was born of spirit from his Father the way humans are born of flesh from our parents. Yahweh used the power of His holy spirit to bring Jesus to life, just as He created the earth and all things on it.

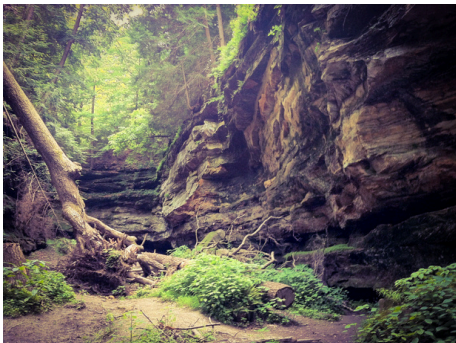
**Discussion:** Read Proverbs 8:22-31. Bible scholars say this scripture refers to Jesus. What does it tell us about

him?

Although Jesus is not God Himself, Jesus *is* a divine entity. Take the example of a human father and son. They are both human, and are usually rather similar in appearance and character. Likewise, Jesus is a spirit creature like Yahweh is. And just as we would not say the human son is his father just because they are both human, we cannot call Jesus "God" just because he is a divine entity. "God" means more than just a divine spirit being. "God" is the Creator of all things, which is why the title goes to Yahweh alone.

Was Jesus present for creation? Yes! In fact, Jesus was cardinal in creation. It was through Jesus that Yahweh created the earth (1 Corinthians 8:6) Doesn't that prove Jesus to be God? NO!

Think of a musician on a stage. The music comes from their instrument, but their instrument is not the music-maker, it is the instrument through which music happens. The musician is the music-maker. Likewise, when we think about creation, we can see from the bible that Jesus is the instrument of creation, while Yahweh is the Creator. By witnessing the beauty of the creation of the world, we can know that Jesus directly and fully obeys his Father's will.



Like a violin, Jesus is the  
"instrument" of creation

**Discussion:** How do we know that Jesus is not God?

Jesus existed in heaven before he came to earth. The prophet Micah referred to Jesus' origins as "from ancient times". Several times during his ministry, Jesus made reference to his pre-earthly origins in heaven (John 3:13). Living beside his father in heaven lead to Jesus and Yahweh having a special relationship.

As his son, Jesus was very precious to Yahweh. The bible refers to Jesus as "the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15). This signals the special love shared between Yahweh and Jesus, so deep that Yahweh placed Jesus first in line for all of the blessings that He has promised. Jesus was the only one that Yahweh trusted enough to send to earth to

accomplish His will. Likewise, Jesus deeply respected and love his Father. When he saw men desecrating the holy temple, he became enraged at their blatant disrespect. His righteous anger was justified by his sinless nature, and his pure love for Yahweh God.

That relationship continues to this day. After his death on the cross, Yahweh resurrected Jesus and chose him to lead the earthly assembly from heaven (Hebrews 12:2).

**Discussion:** What is Jesus' relationship with his Father?



Jesus sits on a throne in heaven as "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords"

# Jesus and You

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Jesus may be in heaven, but developing a strong relationship with him is not only possible, but it is easy! Jesus told the early apostles that he extends his friendship to his disciples (John 15:15). There is no reason to believe that this is no longer true today. If you want to form a friendship with Jesus, you need to become a disciple of his and study the gospel message.

Already you have begun this journey by studying about the bible, God's word, and of Yahweh God, Jesus' father. In the lesson you have begun to get to know Jesus on a personal level, seeing some examples of his passion and zeal. This relationship you have started forming can only

grow through continued study.

Think of a plant. Once a seed is planted in the soil, it needs care. Likewise, your relationship with God and Jesus needs to be cultivated through study, prayer, and worship. We will go over how to best go about these in later lessons of this course. You can begin some of these practices with your bible teacher. For now, let's start by going over how Jesus and his sacrifice directly affects you.

## JESUS DIED FOR YOU

Even though we still sin every day, Jesus's sacrifice frees us from our sin. How? Imagine your sins are an item in a

grocery store. When we check out, we must pay for the sins that we have committed. Before, we had to pay with our own money, or by our own deaths. Now, Jesus has come along and paid for them via a pre-paid visa. There's still a cost, but it's already been paid.

### A CLEAN CONSCIENCE

Nobody is perfect. Sometimes, it can feel like our flaws and sins are overwhelming. This can bring with it a sense of guilt and shame that plagues our peace of mind. When we truly repent, through Jesus' sacrifice, Yahweh is able and willing to forgive us for our sins (Hebrews 9:13-14). With that in mind, we can freely forgive ourselves for our misdeeds and cultivate self-respect, develop peace of mind, and live a happy life.

**Discussion:** Read Hebrews 9:13-14 and discuss the following:

How does Jesus' sacrifice give us a clean conscience?

### THE HOPE FOR EVERLASTING LIFE

Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. Yet that same verse also tells us "the free gift of God is eternal life". In later lessons, we talk about the paradise to come. Right now, it is important to understand that the many promises of God are only made possible through Jesus' sacrifice. Without him, we would not have the promise of everlasting life found in the bible.

We have every reason to be grateful to Yahweh for the ransom sacrifice. For any gift

we appreciate the thoughtfulness, time, and effort placed into giving that gift to us. The ransom is the most precious of gifts, because Yahweh made the greatest sacrifice in bringing it to us (John 3:16). It is also proof of Jesus' love, both for his Father and for mankind (John 15:13). This gift of the ransom should convince us beyond a doubt of the love of God and His son.

Now you may be wondering, what can we be doing to show our appreciation to Yahweh for this great gift? It starts with *getting to know Yahweh*, the giver of this important gift. Your continued bible studies will help you do that. The more you know of Yahweh God, the deeper your love for Him will expand. In turn, that love will grow your desire to make

Yahweh happy.



Your bible study will help you get to know Yahweh God

*Exercise faith in Jesus' sacrifice.* John 3:36 emphasizes the importance of belief in Jesus, but it also shows that our faith comes through obedience to God's Word. During his ministry on earth, Jesus gave us the gospel message for us to adhere to. This message included the Law of Christ, as outlined by the apostle Paul. We demonstrate faith

through our actions. One of the best ways we can show Yahweh and Jesus that we value the gift they've given us is to imitate Jesus' qualities, not just in what we say, but also in what we do.

**Discussion:** Read James 2:26 and discuss the following:

Why is it said that faith without works is dead?

Another thing we can do to demonstrate our faith in Jesus and Yahweh is to *attend the annual Passover Memorial to Christ*. In 33 AD, Jesus instructed his disciples to keep the Passover Memorial as a way of honoring his sacrifice as a perfect man for all of imperfect mankind. At the Passover, we eat the bread of Christ and drink the wine as a way of honoring the enormous sacrifice Jesus was

about to make.

Jesus' ransom sacrifice is an invaluable gift for all Christians around the world. When we profess faith in Jesus's sacrifice, blessings abound for us. What will you do with this special benefit from God? Will you accept the sacrifice of Jesus?