

LESSON 1 Finding Out About Jesus

Who do you think Jesus is? Some people say He was a great teacher. Others say He was a prophet, a philosopher, a Western god, or a good man whose example we should follow.

But Jesus was more than a great teacher, prophet, or philosopher. And He was not from the West, so we cannot call Him a Western god. Jesus was born in the Middle East almost 2,000 years ago. Though He did not build any monuments or command an army, His life affected the whole world. And although He lived so long ago, millions of people today claim to know Him personally. They say He has changed their lives, and they would die for His cause. So who is the Jesus?

In this first lesson, we will begin to find out who Jesus is. We will start by looking at two ways to learn about Him.

The Plan

- A. The Bible Reveals Jesus
- B. Personal Experiences Show Us Who Jesus Is

The Goals

- 1. State why you can depend on the Bible to show you who Jesus is.
- 2. Discuss how we can learn who Jesus is through personal experience.

A. THE BIBLE REVEALS JESUS

Goal 1. State why you can depend on the Bible to show you who Jesus is.

Accuracy of the Bible

To learn who Jesus is we go to the book where we find an accurate record of His life and teachings—the Bible. The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books written by some thirty-five to forty people.

The writers of the Bible were men of many different occupations. They were businessmen, shepherds, farmers, fishermen, prophets, priests, doctors, scholars, government officials, and even kings. They lived at different times over a period of about 1,600 years, and they had the following things in common:

- 1. They all worshipped one God—called Jehovah*—Creator of the universe.
- 2. They each had God revealed to them and received His messages for humanity.
- 3. They all wrote what God told them to write.

*Another way of representing the name Jehovah is Yahweh. Interpreters call this a transliteration.

God kept these writers from making mistakes as they wrote the records of the past, predictions of future events, and His messages for humanity in every age and circumstance. Many years ago, these God-inspired writings were put together in one book—the Holy Bible.

For prophecy never had its origin in the will
of man, but men spoke from God as they were
carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)

The Bible is accurate in every detail. It is historically and scientifically correct. The exact fulfillment of hundreds of its prophecies about nations and individuals proves that it really is the Word of God. We can depend on what it tells us about Jesus.

Application

1 Three of the following statements are TRUE about all the writers of the Bible. Circle the letter in front of each one.

- a)** They lived at the same time.
- b)** They worshipped the same God.
- c)** They worshipped many gods.
- d)** They received messages from God.
- e)** They wrote whatever they wanted to write.
- f)** They wrote what God told them to write.
- g)** They made mistakes in their books.

2 We can depend on the Bible to tell us who Jesus is because the Bible is

- a)** long with many details.
- b)** a collection of smaller books.
- c)** an accurate message from God.



Theme of the Bible

Why should sixty-six books, written by some forty people over a period of 1,600 years, be put together in one book? It is because one theme runs through them all. Together they show us different parts of the same picture. Books of history, law, songs, prophecy,

biography, and practical teaching in the Bible have one central theme. It is the salvation of sinful humanity by a loving God.

Both parts of the Bible—the Old Testament and the New—show people’s need of a Savior and God’s provision of a Savior in Jesus. The Old Testament, written before Jesus was born, contains many prophecies about Him. The New Testament tells us how the Savior came and how we can be saved by Him. The theme of the whole Bible—salvation for humankind—centers around Jesus, the Savior for all people.

Application

- 3** The theme of the Bible is salvation for humankind through
- a)** better laws.
 - b)** Jesus the Savior.
 - c)** a good environment.
 - d)** improved religion.

4 Write the number of the part of the Bible in front of each phrase that describes it.

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|--|------------------|
| ... a Tells how the Savior came | 1) Old Testament |
| ... b Describes the life of the Savior and how we can be saved by Him | 2) New Testament |
| ... c Has many prophecies about a coming Savior | |



New Testament Records About Jesus

The New Testament gives us the records of:

1. Jesus’ life and teachings.
2. The church He founded.
3. Instructions for following Jesus.
4. Future events related to Jesus’ return.

We can depend on the accuracy of the New Testament. God chose the men who should write it and inspired them in every detail of their work. Three things assure us that the New Testament

records are true: (1) divine inspiration, (2) eyewitness testimonies of the writers, and (3) the systematic investigation of the facts.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the Gospels called by their names. These are the first four books of the New Testament. We call them Gospels because gospel means “good news.” The good news about how Jesus came to give us eternal life is the best news there is.

We see people from different viewpoints. Think of a man you know. To one person he is a neighbor; to another, a friend; and still to others a husband, father, and worker. All could write about the same person, but each would have a different perspective and emphasis.

God inspired Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to write the good news about Jesus from different viewpoints.

- Matthew shows us Jesus as King—the descendant of King David who would rule the world in righteousness.
- Mark shows us Jesus, the Servant of God, doing God’s will—the suffering Servant described in Old Testament prophecy, who came to die for our sins.
- Luke, a Greek physician, presents Jesus as the Son of Man—the perfect representative of the human race and the remedy for the ills of all humanity.
- John writes his Gospel to let us see Jesus as the Son of God—the Savior of the world.

John’s book is a record of the life of a man he knows and with whom he is closely associated. John writes as a witness to prove who Jesus is. His aim is to convince all who read his record that Jesus is more than a man—He is God come in the form of man. And he declares that all who believe in Jesus will receive eternal life. This is a great statement—almost too good to be true. But as we read in the Bible what other followers of Jesus wrote about Him, we see that they all agree. What they say about Jesus is true.

Matthew and John are two of the twelve disciples who spent three years with Jesus during His ministry. They describe the miracles they saw Him perform, record some of His teachings, and tell what they observed personally of His death and resurrection.

John gives the proof of Jesus' deity and stresses the importance of believing in Him. Matthew was accustomed to working with official documents before he became Jesus' disciple. Step by step, he presents the proof that Jesus is the King of whom the Old Testament prophets wrote. He quotes the prophecies and their fulfillment, traces Jesus' royal lineage, and describes the principles of His kingdom.

Note: We use a term, ministry, often. In one way, ministry is the work or operation of religious service. In another, ministry is simply one's work. A minister can be either a religious official, as in clergy, or a publicly-beneficial worker. In government, some countries have ministers of government departments or a prime minister who heads them all. In saying "Jesus' ministry" we mean the work He did, which therefore was of benefit to all humankind.

Mark was a young man living in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' ministry there. He was probably among the crowds that heard Jesus preach, saw His miracles, and saw Him crucified. Later, Mark was closely associated with Peter (one of Jesus' disciples) and probably learned from him some of the details given in Mark's gospel.

Luke the physician investigated carefully the reports about Jesus. He wrote two books (his Gospel and the book of Acts) to give a prominent friend an accurate record of the life of Jesus and the growth of His church. Luke interviewed Mary (the mother of Jesus) and many others to learn the details about Jesus' miraculous birth, life, death, and resurrection. He checked on many of the healings that Jesus had performed and described what happened.

The writers of the rest of the New Testament—Peter, James, Jude, and Paul—were well qualified to write about Jesus. Peter had spent three years with Him as His disciple. James and Jude were Jesus' brothers. Paul was a bitter enemy of Jesus and His followers. But then he met Jesus in a way that changed his life completely. From then on Paul spent his life telling others about Jesus.

God inspired these men to write for us (as well as for the people in their days) what they knew about Jesus. Their records all agree. From their experience they tell how we too can know Jesus and enjoy the wonderful life He gives. John sums it up:

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

Application

5 Memorize 1 John 1:3.

6 The New Testament account about Jesus is a

- a)** record written by people who knew Him or learned the facts from those who knew Him.
- b)** collection of legends and ideas about a folk-hero of the first century.
- c)** story passed down by word of mouth for generations before it was put into writing.

7 Circle the letter before each statement which gives a reason why you can depend on what the Bible says about Jesus.

- a)** Most of the events described in the Bible happened many years ago in the Middle East.
- b)** The Gospels were written by men who knew Jesus personally or who interviewed those who knew Him.
- c)** All the writers of the Bible were inspired by God.
- d)** The Bible contains songs, history, and law.
- e)** Hundreds of prophecies in the Bible have been fulfilled exactly.



B. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES SHOW US WHO JESUS IS

Goal 2. Discuss how we can learn who Jesus is through personal experience.

Jesus is alive, and we can know Him personally! This is part of the good news of the gospel. Jesus still does the same things for people that He did long ago.

The Experiences of Others

Do you know anyone who knows Jesus personally? This is more than just knowing about Jesus, or being a member of a Christian church. Knowing Jesus personally changes a person's life. Millions of people do really know Jesus today. They would be glad to tell you about Him. Some of them say:

- I used to hate everybody, but when Jesus came into my life He changed me. Now I love people and want to help them.
- I used to have a terrible sense of guilt, but Jesus took it all away when I asked Him to forgive my sins. He gave me joy, peace, and a clean conscience.
- Jesus took away the fears that tormented me. He gives me courage to face my problems.
- Jesus has given me a reason for living, a purpose in life.
- Jesus is the answer to all my problems. I take everything to Him in prayer. He shows me what to do and meets my needs.
- I am not lonely anymore because Jesus is with me all the time.
- I was hooked on drugs, but Jesus took away the craving for drugs when I turned my life over to Him.
- Jesus has healed me many times in answer to prayer.

These testimonies and thousands of others from people who really know Jesus today demonstrate the truth of what God says. Hebrews 13:8 affirms, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Application

8 Memorize Hebrews 13:8.

9 Something to think about: If you heard people tell about experiences with Jesus like the ones quoted above, what would you think? Would you also want to know Jesus? Do these true testimonies lead you to believe that knowing Jesus might help you solve some of your problems?



Your Personal Experience

How can you best know who Jesus is? You can learn much about Him by studying the Bible. There you find His life and teachings. You discover why He came into the world and what He has done for you. The Bible tells you what He is doing now and what He will do in the future. You can learn about Jesus from the experience of others. Down through the years until this very hour, people have discovered that Jesus makes himself known to those who really want to know Him. And best of all, you can know Him personally and learn from experience that what the Bible says about Him is true.

You may have known about Jesus all your life, or you may never have heard much about Him. You may already know Him and love Him, or like Saul—the enemy of Jesus whose life was changed when he met Him personally—you may be opposed to the gospel. Whatever your knowledge of Jesus and your attitude toward Him may be, these lessons have been written to help you become better acquainted with Him personally. And as you do, we hope and pray that you will enjoy the wonderful benefits that come from friendship with Jesus.

Application

10 From the following statements, choose the three that give the best ways to learn who Jesus is. Circle the letter before each one.

- a)** Study what the Bible says about Him.
 - b)** Study what other religions say about Him.
 - c)** Compare the teachings of various religions.
 - d)** Hear what Jesus has done for people who know Him personally.
 - e)** Know Jesus personally yourself.
 - f)** Listen to what the enemies of Jesus say.
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Check Your Answers

The answers to your study exercises are not given in the usual order. This is done so you will not easily see the answer to your next question ahead of time. Look for the number you need, and try not to look ahead.

- 4 a** 2) The New Testament
b 2) The New Testament
c 1) The Old Testament
- 1 b)** They worshipped the same God.
d) They received messages from God.
f) They wrote what God told them to write.
- 6 a)** record written by people who knew Him or learned the facts from those who knew Him.
- 2 c)** an accurate message from God.
- 7** All the statements are true. However, statements **b)**, **c)**, and **e)** give reasons why you can depend on what the Bible says about Jesus.
- 3 b)** Jesus the Savior
- 10 a)** Study what the Bible says about Him.
d) Hear what Jesus has done for people who know Him personally.
e) Know Jesus personally yourself.