

Who Was Jesus?

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[0 : 00] Well, we're beginning today the first of six sessions of an investigative Bible study that we're calling Christianity Christianity Explored.

! I'm not sure how this is going to go. As I said, it's six sessions. It may take us 12 sessions to do the six sessions that I would intend for a Bible study in the home.

Because we only have about 40 minutes, and I think usually you would have an hour and 15 or an hour and a half in a home study. So we'll see how we go. I don't want to rush through it.

But thank you for all coming tonight, and I hope you had a good week. I want to commend you for your interest in wanting to study the Bible for yourself. You know, too many today are willing to deal with it secondhand.

But the Bible treats issues that are just too important to blindly leave to what others have told you about Christianity. You're wise to want to examine its claims for yourself.

[1 : 08] Noel Coward was a British playwright, a composer, an artist, an actor of the 20th century. He was known for his cheeky sense of humor. And once when asked, what do you think about God?

He replied, well, we've never been properly introduced. Well, you see, that's precisely what God does in the Bible. He introduces himself to us.

In the very first verse of the Bible, he says, In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And so he introduces himself to us as our maker. As the one who made us and all things in this universe.

And in the rest of the Old Testament, that's part one of the Bible, God goes on to tell us more about himself. And when we come to the New Testament, part two of the Bible, we find God introducing himself to us in an even more personal way.

In part, he became a man. He came near to us by becoming one of us that we might know him. And so in part one of the Bible, he kept telling us, I'm coming, I'm coming.

[2 : 24] And part two of the Bible says, I am here. He is here in the person of Jesus Christ. So part two of the Bible, the New Testament, begins with the four gospel accounts.

We're going to be studying the third account in our Bible study. And that account goes by the name of its human author, The Gospel According to Luke.

So you want to open up your Bibles to Luke. And the way this works, you see a colon.

Is that right? It's a colon, not a semicolon? Yeah. You see a colon there. Sometimes in your notes, there's a number and then a colon and then more numbers.

The first number is the chapter. And the number after the colon are the verses that have been divided up to help us find our way through this book.

[3 : 22] So we're going to be looking at the first four verses to begin with. Who is Luke? Well, he was a highly educated Greek man. We can tell that by the style of Greek that he uses, a very formal Greek.

He's also a medical doctor, as we learn in his second book, the book of Acts that he wrote. He was a historian, as we see in this book and in his other book.

He traveled widely with the Apostle Paul as he took the gospel about Jesus Christ to many different lands. Notice this introduction, then, to his gospel.

Roger, would you read for us, Roger Michaud, the first four verses. Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.

Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seems good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the

certainty of the things you have been taught.

[4 : 39] So, Luke is writing, and he's writing to an important Greek man whom he calls what? Theophilus is the name, and he's got some words before that.

Most excellent Theophilus. So, what do we know about this man? Well, we know he was a most excellent Theophilus, and that's all we know about him. He may have been the patron that Luke was writing for, but we know he was some important man.

He's mentioned nowhere else in the Bible, and so far I haven't found any references to him in other history. But as a historian, we find that Luke is interested in historical facts, don't we?

He wrote his account just 20 or 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead. So, just 20 or 30 years after these events that he's writing about.

And it doesn't appear that Luke himself ever saw the Lord Jesus, and yet there were clearly plenty of people still alive who were eyewitnesses of his life and works.

[5 : 51] And so, this would be like us investigating the facts about someone who died 20 or 30 years ago. So, Jesus was a very famous man in his time, as even secular historians take account of him and his miracles.

Princess Diana was a famous person, wasn't she? And she died about 20 to 30 years ago.

So, it would be about like trying to investigate events in her life. She was about 36 when she died. I think 36. Jesus was 33. 33. But it would be like as if she was born and lived her whole life and died in an area not much bigger than from South Bend down to Kokomo and about 50 miles wide.

Just a small area like that. Lived, born, lived, died in that area. It wouldn't be hard to find people who knew her, who heard her, who could quote things that she had said and so on and so forth, who could verify some of the claims that others might be making about her or disabuse us of those falsehoods.

[7 : 13] Well, so it was with Jesus of Nazareth. When Luke wrote his gospel, it was just 20 to 30 years after his ascension into heaven. And so there were still people living who had met him and who could explain whether or not what Luke has written is really true.

So, from these eyewitnesses of the Lord Jesus, Luke made a thorough investigation, that's the words he uses here, of the things that were handed down from these eyewitnesses.

So, what we have is Luke's orderly account of this investigation that he made so that his friend, Theophilus, might know the certainty of the things he had been taught.

So, there were plenty of eyewitnesses still abounding to verify or not. Now, I suppose everyone at least knew somebody that was either healed or saw one of Jesus' miracles.

You don't spend three years of public ministry doing the things Jesus did in an area that small without there being plenty of people to check with. Now, as you have had a week to read the first ten chapters of Luke's gospel, or the first nine, I guess, I assigned to you, what would you say this book is about?

[8 : 37] If there's just one thing, central theme, what would you say the book of Luke is about? Anyone? Okay, that's pretty simple, isn't it?

And that's right on. Jesus Christ of Nazareth. A historical figure. It's about Jesus. So, a read through Luke's gospel reveals that Christianity is about a person then, isn't it?

And there's no mystery as to who the person is. Although the book begins with the birth of John the Baptist, we quickly find that John the Baptist is not the object of his and the key subject of the book. He only uses him as a springboard to get to his main topic, for he quickly shifts to the Lord Jesus. And then we see, why did he start with John the Baptist?

Because he was the forerunner who was sent to prepare the way for Jesus and to introduce him to Israel and to us who would read. So Luke quotes the things that his eyewitnesses said about Jesus.

[9 : 47] So, the focus of Christianity, indeed of the gospel, is not on rules like some religions. It's not on religious rituals like other religions.

Though there are rules and rituals in Christianity, the focus is not that, but rather the person of Jesus Christ. Who he is, what he's done, and then what our response to him should be because of who he is and what he's done.

Indeed, somebody has said that Christianity is just the appropriate response to who Jesus is. So this gospel was written that we might get to know him even as we read it.

So our starting point then is just this question. This is the quest we're on this evening. It's who is Jesus. Now, how does Luke present him to us?

What does he tell us about him? Right from the get-go, his birth, we're told some important information about him. The very words that came from the angel Gabriel as he came and announced his birth to the Virgin Mary about her son.

[11:02] Dan Philpiss, would you read verses 31 to 35 of Luke chapter 1?

We can turn there and see what was said about Jesus even before he was born, said to the Virgin Mary. 1, 31 to 35.

And behold, you will conceive your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there will be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How will this be, since I am the virgin?

And the angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God.

[12:05] So right away we're told a lot about Jesus, aren't we? What are we told about him from these words? I'm sorry? He's holy.

He's the holy one. He's a king. He's a great king. And a king in whose line? David's line.

So we know he is a human being. He has a human ancestry. And he descended from David. But we also read words that tell us that he was more than a human being.

What's some of the language used to tell us that? He's the Son of the Most High. So yes, he is a son of mankind.

He's descended in one way from David. But he's also called the Son of the Most High. The Son of God.

[13:02] How can that be? How is his conception and birth different from any other human being that's ever been born?

What did we read? He was born of a virgin. That differentiates him from all other human beings ever born. Then how was he conceived?

By the power of the Holy Spirit of the Most High God. And that's why he will be called. This Holy One will be called the Son of God. So right away as Luke introduces the main subject to us, we're made to say, Ouch.

My brain can't get around that. That's a hard thing for me to grasp. How this Jesus is being claimed to be a man. And at the same time, he's being claimed to be the Son of God.

Without any human father. Conceived by the Spirit and power of the Most High. Now, whether or not you believe that or not, I want you to know that that's what's being claimed for him.

[14:10] That's what Luke is telling us that the angel said to Mary. And so, as we go through the Gospel of Luke, we'll want to keep our eyes open to that.

Are there evidences that he was a man? And are there evidences that he was more than a man? Now, he is God, he is man, and he has a title.

Pam, Martin, would you read chapter 2, verses 10 through 12 for us as we hear the angel's message to those shepherds outside of Bethlehem on the night of Jesus' birth.

Chapter 2 and verses 10 through 12. All right.

Jesus has a name. This baby has a name, and his name is Jesus. He has a title, and that title is the Christ.

[15:32] Christ. And so, he's referred to often as Jesus Christ. Now, you have two names. David Goodrich. David is your first name, and Goodrich is your family name, and it helps us identify the family.

So, is that the way it is with Jesus? That his first name is Jesus, and his last name was Christ? That he was the son of Mary and Joseph Christ?

And if you were wanting to find out where they lived, you'd look under the sea of the phone book? No, that's not it at all. It's not his name. It's his title. He is Jesus the Christ.

And that's a title with a long history. It means the anointed one. The anointed one. In Hebrew, it's the Messiah. In the New Testament, it is Christ, Christos.

So, in the Old Testament, when God's kings were anointed over his people Israel, when they were at their coronation service, I should say, they were anointed with oil.

[16:36] They were called the Lord's anointed ones. And that oil symbolized that they were invested now with God's authority to rule over his people.

Now, that's the title that was used of kings. And the Old Testament prophets, in part one of our Bibles, were constantly talking about a day when the truly anointed one would come and rule with the very authority of God.

He would be God's anointed king. And this coming Christ would not just be anointed symbolically with oil, but with the Holy Spirit.

And so he would indeed speak and act on behalf of God himself. So for hundreds of years, the Old Testament proclaimed, the anointed one is coming.

And then 2,000 years ago, outside of Bethlehem, to a group of shepherds, the angel said, today in the town of David, a savior has been born to you.

[17 : 40] He is Christ, the anointed one, the Lord. This long-promised king who rules for God is here. So the Gospel of Luke is really concerned with answering the question, who is Jesus?

The most important starting point for anyone who would want to know, what is Christianity? Did you hear it? Christianity? It's all about this Christ, this anointed one?

Simply to look at him, you would think him nothing more than a man because he took our nature and had a human body and a human soul. There was nothing to make him appear different.

There was no halo over him as artists have depicted. He just looked like another common Jewish man. But he was far more than just a man, according to Luke's account.

Let's go on then to some of the evidence that Luke now begins to compile. He investigated, he heard the claims, and now here's his evidence that this Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Christ exercising the very authority of God himself.

[18 : 58] We go to chapter 4 and we've got to be selective here because there's so much that Luke tells us. But in chapter 4, verses 16 through 22, Mark Aikens, would you read that for us?

He went to Nazareth, where he had brought up, and on the sad day, he went into the synagogue and took his custom.

He stood up free, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed in. On the rolling head, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, and has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to claim the year of the Lord's favor.

Then he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fascinated. He began by saying to them, Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

All spoke well of him, and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. Isn't this Joseph's son? They asked. Now, this is the first evidence we want to examine.

[20 : 22] Who is this Jesus? We see that the angel claims that he is the Christ, this anointed king who rules with God's authority. And here we see in one of Jesus' first sermons, as he takes the scroll of Isaiah that was written 700 years before he was born, he turns to the place where we read about this anointed one who is anointed with God's own spirit.

spirit. And Jesus reads the text, and when all eyes were upon him, he says, This is now fulfilled in your eyes. What is he claiming then?

To be the anointed king. The very one that the Old Testament says is coming. And therefore, he speaks for God. When you hear the words of Jesus, you are hearing the words of God.

He was sent as this anointed one to speak for God, to proclaim his word. And people were amazed when they heard Jesus talk.

There was a soldier that was sent to arrest him, and they came back empty-handed, and the authority says, Why didn't you arrest him? And he said, No one has ever spoken as this man.

[21 : 44] What was it about his speaking that was so unique and so amazing to them? What did verse 22 say was so amazing about his words?

They were gracious. What does verses 31 and 32 say about his words that amazed people? The authority with which he spoke.

Now again, if he is God's anointed king, then he speaks with the authority of God. It doesn't just mean he spoke loudly, and people said, Wow, what authority. There was something hidden.

There was the Spirit of God bringing his word home close to their hearts, and they said, What authority in his words? Well, it was the very authority of God, because being the anointed one, he speaks for God.

Well, there are many voices calling out to us today in our world, claiming this, claiming that. We would all do well to pay attention to God's authorized spokesman and what he has to tell us.
[22 : 53] Are there any questions about this passage and what Jesus is claiming for himself? Whether or not you believe it yet, I want you to see he's making the claim to be that anointed one who speaks for God.

All right? Let's go to the next evidence that Luke digs up. Chapter 4, verses 38 through 40. Krista, do you have that there?

38 to 40 of chapter 4? All right. Chuck will help you if he can't. See, Jesus left us in a house.

He went to the home of Simon. Now, Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. And they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and removed the fever.

And it left her. She got up at once and began to lay on that. In verse 42, please. When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness.

[24 : 02] And laying his hands on each one, he healed them. All right. This is, as you read the first nine chapters this week, you would have bumped into many passages just like this, where Jesus worked these divine healings of all kinds of diseases.

This is the first passage, I think, where we see such a statement about Jesus. These were not the pretended and claimed healings that we see so often on television today, modern miracle workers. There is a lady, Johnny Erickson Tata, who, as a teenager, dove into a lake and broke her spine and was confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life.

And when that first happened, she was a religious young lady and so she was seeking healing. She was praying to God for healing and then she heard about a modern miracle worker, Catherine Kuhlman.

And so she went to one of her crusades and she went early and got there. She wanted to be healed more than anything else.

[25 : 19] And they wheeled her off to the side along with all the other severely handicapped folks. And they never got so much as a word from Catherine Kuhlman, much less a healing.

And that cured her from seeking these modern miracle workers because she didn't have the power to do for her what Jesus had to do with all the diseased people that came to him.

You notice, it wasn't just the fever of Simon Peter's mother-in-law. It was that. But it was also those who came to him with all sorts of diseases.

And what was true of all who came seeking healing? They got healed. They went home healed. Well, that's amazing.

And the miracles of Jesus are beyond denying. There were people still present on the earth who were healed. There were relatives and friends and neighbors who could vouch for many, many miracles.

[26 : 33] And one of the hallmarks of Jesus' miracles is that it was immediate. I just heard a testimony this week of somebody who was claimed to be healed by some modern healer.

And she didn't feel all completely right at the end of the session. And she was told, well, it sometimes takes some days before you get the full healing.

That never happened with Jesus. He spoke a word and they were healed. He touched them and they were healed. At once. It's one of Mark's favorite words in his gospel.

But it's true in all the gospel writers. At once they were healed and it was visible beyond a doubt. Well, these healing miracles were God's verifying signs that this Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the anointed king.

And his healing miracles were signs of the kingdom that Jesus was bringing to earth. He was giving appetizers as you get when you come to a more formal meal perhaps.

[27 : 43] You get an appetizer and it's just a foretaste of what's yet to come. And so Jesus, on his first visit, was giving appetizers. This is the kind of thing that happens when the king, who is God and speaks with divine authority, comes and sets up his kingdom on earth.

Amazing things happen. And when he comes back, you will see the full meal. This is just an appetizer that he gave. And when he comes back again, we'll see that there will never be any more sickness or disease in his new heaven and new earth that he creates.

So, all kinds of diseases brought to Jesus and he healed them all. That speaks of an authority greater than man, doesn't it?

No doctor can do such things. Well, any questions about the claim that Luke is making for the miracles, the healings of Jesus?

All right, let's look at his next evidence of Jesus' authority. It's in chapter 4 and verses 33 through 36. 33 to 36.

[28 : 58] Nate, would you read that for us? 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 in that room?

Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Be quiet, Jesus said sternly. Come out of him. Then the demon threw the man down before the ball and came out without injuring him.

All people were amazed and said to each other, What is this teaching with authority and power that he has forced to evil spirits and they come out? Do you see our key word of authority here?

What authority do we see Jesus have here? Authority with a word to drive out evil spirits, demons. Who knows what a demon is? You read about him if you read the first nine chapters. This is just, I think, one of the earlier accounts, but it happened often, didn't it?

[30 : 09] What's a demon? A fallen angel. An angel that rebelled against God. And what, they're called evil spirits, aren't they? So there are these spiritual beings that are good and there's spiritual beings that are evil.

So there are angels that are good and there's angels that are evil and demons are fallen angels. They're evil. And Satan, the devil, is the prince of demons.

And these beings have powers that are greater than men. In fact, they can take possession of men. And that's what we find in the gospel accounts where they actually indwell these people and act out through their bodies.

And men being slaves to these demons and unable to shake loose from them. But when they meet Jesus, they meet an authority that is altogether higher than theirs and all Jesus needs to do is speak a word and they must flee.

Now, one of the things that's interesting is the demons' knowledge of Jesus. The question of Luke is, who is Jesus? That's what we're seeking to answer.

[31 : 27] What do the demons say about Jesus? What do you see? And who is that?

Who do they say? The Holy One of God. There's other passages where the demons say, we know you are the Christ.

We know you are the authoritative king from God, the anointed one. So it's interesting, isn't it, that Luke's question as to who is Jesus is known by the spiritual world even though it's unknown by the natural world and human beings as Jesus walked among them.

So, we find an authority here in Jesus Christ over the demons. So, we see his authority over diseases, over demons.

He's here to destroy the works of the devil. Let's look at the next section, chapter 5, verses 4 to 8. Chapter 5, 4 to 8.

[32 : 38] Jonathan, would you read that when you get it? you. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.

Simon answered, Master, we work hard all night and haven't caught anything, but because you say so, I will let down the nets. When he had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that the nets began to break.

So, they signaled their partners to the other boat to come help them and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord.

I'm a sinful man. What was it in that event that made Simon Peter feel how small he was and that he was in the presence of the Holy One?

Pardon? He questioned him, but what did Simon Peter just experience? The fish obeying the mind of Jesus Christ.

[33 : 49] I've fished all night, haven't? They're not biting, Lord, but when Jesus speaks, they're biting. Edwin, that'd be a great partner to take along with your fishing. There we see Jesus' control of the fish of the sea.

Over in chapter 8, in verses 22 through 25, we see this same evidence. One day Jesus said to his disciples, let's go over to the other side of the lake.

And so they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake so that the boat was being swamped and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him saying, Master, Master, we're going to drown.

He got up, rebuked the wind and the raging waters. The storm subsided and all was calm. Where is your faith? He asked his disciples. In fear and amazement, they asked one another, who is this?

He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him. have you ever tried to speak to the wind, to speak to a raging storm and just with the word, hush, be quiet, to have it answer you?

[35 : 12] That shows an authority far above our powers, doesn't it? That shows the authority of the creator, who made the fish, who made the wind, who made the sea, and when he speaks, all creation is under his authority and responds to his will.

I read recently that the weather and climate disasters of this past year cost our nation over \$306 billion, the most ever spent in one single year due to the disasters of nature.

and here is a man who appears to be just a man and yet he has authority to speak and all nature obeys him.

Well, one more. Chapter 5, verses 17 through 26. Jim Webb, would you read that for us?

Chapter 5, 17 through 26. We're holding. I can't let this thought.

[36 : 29] Yes, Yes, One day, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law would come from every village and gallery and from Judah and Jerusalem were sitting there and the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.

Some men came carrying a paralytic long mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.

When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went in up on the roof and lowered him on his mat, the tiles, onto the middle of the crowd right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, friend, your sins are forgiven. The Pharisee and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy?

Who can forgive sins but God alone? But Jesus knew what they were thinking about. Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?

[38 : 08] Which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up and walk. But that you may know that the Son of God has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He said to the paralyzed man, I tell you, get up and take your mat and go home. Immediately he stood up in front of them and took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, we have seen remarkable things today.

Thank you, Jim. What filled them with amazement? What did they see? Well, they saw a roof torn up and a man lowered down.

I don't know if they'd ever seen that happen before. But that wasn't it. What did they see? They saw a lame man walk. But that really wasn't it either.

[39 : 20] What were they amazed at? Anybody? That this man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

There's our word again. Jesus is God's anointed one with authority to speak and act for him. And here he is claiming to have the authority to forgive sins.

I want you to go home and to think about the question that Jesus poses. Which is easier? To say to this man, get up and walk or to say to him, your sins are forgiven.

You seek the answer for that one. We'll come back and pick up our account here. We're looking at the evidence that Luke is gathering together from eyewitnesses that saw Jesus, that heard him, and experienced these things.

And he's writing them so that Theophilus will be able to know for certain that these things are true about Jesus. Well, we're dismissed.

[40 : 26] Enjoy the snacks and we'll see you next week. Same time, same place. All right.