

## **Bi132 The Gospels**

### ***Lesson Bi132-1 Jesus Is God***

For centuries the Jews, descendants of Abraham, heard Old Testament prophets tell about the coming of the Messiah, God's Anointed One. They expected the Messiah to deliver them from Roman oppression and bring in God's kingdom. But for 400 years no prophet had spoken. So when John the Baptist started to preach that the end was near, the Jews listened. And when John baptized Jesus, they all wondered if Jesus really was the Coming One. So who was this Jesus?

Speaking of Jesus, John the Apostle says: "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 all mankind. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-4, 14).

The answer to "Who is Jesus?" is that Jesus is God. He is called by John, the 'Word.' He had no beginning; and through him the world was made. Yet John also explains that the Word, God, was made flesh and lived here on earth. When we call Jesus Christ the God-man, we are speaking of his 'incarnation.' God took on human form. He was 'Immanuel'—'God with us' (Matt 1:23)—as prophesied by Isaiah hundreds of years earlier. In this course you will learn about the life of the man called Jesus Christ. He was the greatest man who ever lived, but he was more than just a man. He was the only true God, who came to earth in a human body. He died for our sins, then rose from the dead and returned to his Father in heaven.

The Holy Spirit chose to preserve the story of the life of Jesus through the writings of four different early believers, who each recorded his account. Each wrote with a particular purpose and group of people in mind, as the Spirit of God directed him. Each Gospel account has unique distinctives, yet all four agree on many points. The gospel message was an oral proclamation for perhaps 30 years before a written 'Gospel' existed. We hear this message of Jesus' life in the preaching of Peter, Paul, and other apostles as recorded in Acts. It is not surprising that four people would put the oral message into writing with slightly different emphases.

Mark's account of Jesus' life may have been the earliest and most chronological. He writes to the Romans, the foreign rulers of the Jews at that time. Mark emphasizes what Jesus does, more than what he says. Mark learned from the apostle Peter and traveled with Paul. He shows Christ's rejection by the religious world and his acceptance by the common people of Judea and Galilee.

Matthew, a tax collector, writes to a Jewish audience. His purpose is to show that Jesus is sent from God and is the long-awaited Messiah, King of the Jews. He shows how Jesus fulfilled

many Old Testament prophecies and gives us many of Jesus' teachings. Matthew was one of the twelve apostles called to be with Jesus.

Luke was a medical doctor. He directs his message to all non-Jews, those called Gentiles. He emphasizes Jesus as the Son of Man and says that the gospel is good news for all, including the poor and common people. He personally interviewed the eyewitnesses of Jesus' life before he wrote. He was a companion of the Apostle Paul and relates many unique stories which Jesus told.

John, called the 'beloved' apostle of Jesus, was a fisherman. He writes to all peoples to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One, and the only source of eternal life. His purpose seems to be primarily theological, to convince hearers that Jesus is the Son of God. Scholars believe John's Gospel was perhaps written last, though all four were probably written within 60 years of the crucifixion. They were written in Greek, the common language of that day.

Remember as you study, that there is just one story, one life, but each witness presents his account emphasizing the truths that will touch the hearts of his particular intended audience. Different Christian communities had a need for a book about Jesus. If we want to fully understand the life of Jesus we must look at all four accounts of his life. In our two Gospels courses, OLBI will interweave the four accounts into a single story. This is called a 'harmony' of the Gospels. This was first done by believers just 100 years after the last Gospel was completed, to show the agreement of parallel passages. This approach helps us to more fully understand the message and life of Jesus. The Gospels are a particular kind of writing, containing biographical material, historical fact, and teaching content relating to Christ.

Think about this question a few moments: *What do you think was the main purpose for which Jesus came to the earth?*

The purpose of the gospel story is more than just to give the biography of Jesus. It is really the story of God's plan from before the foundation of the earth. He knew mankind would choose to disobey and would need a Savior. He chose to send Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, to show his love for us. In explaining the Incarnation, John describes the Incarnate Jesus as 'the true light':

"The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ... For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known" ( John 1:9-13, 17-18).

At the right time in God's plan, "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Gal 4:4-5). Jesus came to

earth, but his own people, the Jews, refused to receive him. But everyone who does receive and believe in him becomes a child of God. By grace that person is born again to eternal life. This Jesus, who came from God and was God, is the only one who can reveal God the Father to us human beings.

This story is **important** because it shows us that Jesus is one with God the Father. Thus the promises Jesus makes to us are the promises of God. Jesus gives us light so we can experience the love and mercy of God in our lives and become his children.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Jesus is God. Through him the world was created and only through Jesus can we experience salvation and become God's children.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. How many people did God choose to write the story of the life of Jesus?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said "God chose to preserve the life of Jesus through the writings of four different people," you are correct.
2. What is the meaning of the phrase "harmony of the Gospels?"  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "A weaving together of all four gospel accounts to create one complete story," you are correct.
3. Who is the one called the 'Word' in the opening verses of the Gospel of John?  
A. [Pause.] If you said, "The one John called the 'Word' is Jesus," you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to memorize verses one and fourteen from the first chapter of the Gospel of John and share with someone what the Bible says about who Jesus is. Here are the verses:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 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" (John 1:1 & 14).*