

Di223 We Believe

Lesson Di223-7 Jesus—His Ministry

If you were to ask your friend or neighbor about who Jesus was or what he did here on earth, what would they answer? A good person? A great teacher or the founder of a religion? How many of them would know about the Cross?

Jesus' ministry did not last a long time—about three and a half years. That is all the time he needed to set in motion God's great plan of salvation. In Jesus' first year of public ministry, he chose 12 disciples and performed his first recorded miracle at Cana in Galilee. There he changed water into wine for the guests. Jesus traveled throughout the land of Israel, teaching and healing the sick. The Gospel writer Luke describes a day when the sun was setting. "The people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ" (Luke 4:40-41).

Mark tells about another person Jesus healed a few days later. The man could not walk, so four of his friends had carried him to Jesus. The crowd was so large, his friends had to make a hole in the roof and let the man's bed down in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Then, because the religious leaders began to criticize Jesus for claiming he could forgive sins, he said to the man, "Get up, take your mat, and go home." So he got up, took his mat, and walked out in front of all of them. Everyone was amazed and praised God because they had never seen anything like this before (Mark 2:1-12). So we see that Jesus worked miracles, performed healings, cast out demons, and had power to forgive sins.

When his friend Lazarus died, Jesus comforted the man's sisters by saying, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25). Jesus, as God in flesh, had power beyond this earth. He had power to give eternal life and full salvation: "The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life" (John 10:25-28). He declared himself to be the true and final judge of all people, because the Father had entrusted all judgment to him.

Jesus' third year of ministry was marked by trouble with the Jewish religious leaders. They rejected his claim of being the Son of God. They accused him of blasphemy for claiming to be divine. The religious leaders could no longer tolerate his ministry. Jesus' death, in their opinion, was the solution. A plot soon developed. Jesus was arrested in the middle of the night and dragged to the high priest's court. At the end of this illegal trial, the Jewish leaders decided Jesus must die. The Jews had to work through the Roman Governor, Pilate, to have Jesus crucified. All of this fulfilled God's plan that Jesus would die for the sins of the world. The Cross is at the heart of the gospel. We are saved by believing in the work of Christ on the Cross.

Though the Cross is at the heart of the gospel, the story doesn't end there. Jesus arose from the grave! This is the great miracle of Christianity. Jesus completed God's plan for our salvation by his death and resurrection. Jesus became our Mediator, which means he made peace between God and mankind. Jesus is presently at the right hand of God and is ready to present our needs to God the Father.

Let's recall our third *Statement of Faith* about the Lord Jesus Christ: "We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, as revealed in the Scriptures by his virgin birth, his sinless life, his miracles, his death on the Cross, his bodily resurrection from the dead, and his position at the right hand of God." Our verse to memorize from the Bible is: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (2Peter 3:18).

This lesson is **important** because it condenses the life of Christ down to a few paragraphs. The main facts, without all the details, are easy to share with someone who has never heard the story of Jesus. You can learn the who, why, when, what, and how answers to questions about Jesus. Then you can share them easily with others.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Jesus, through his death and resurrection, provided salvation for mankind and is presently representing us to God the Father as our Mediator.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What kinds of ministry did Jesus have during his public ministry? [Pause.]
 - A. If you said that Jesus preached, healed the sick, and cast out demons, you are correct.
2. What was the main reason the Jewish religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus? [Pause.]
 - A. If you said, "The Jewish religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, because he claimed to be the Son of God," you are right.
3. Name two of the claims that Jesus made about himself. [Pause.]
 - A. If you said two of the following: he had power to forgive sins, he had power to give eternal life and full salvation, he declared himself the true and final judge of all men, or he claimed power over death, you are right.

Your **assignment** is to say from memory the first three *Statements of Faith*:

1. "We believe the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God. They are the revelation of God to man, the unchanging rule of faith and conduct."
2. "We believe the one true God has revealed himself as the eternal Creator of heaven and earth and the Savior of mankind. He further revealed himself as one being in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."
3. "We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, as revealed in the Scriptures by his virgin birth, his sinless life, his miracles, his death on the Cross, his bodily resurrection from the dead, and his position at the right hand of God."

Also, learn the memory verse for this lesson, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (Second Peter 3:18).

Gather some friends or family members together and ask them what they know about Jesus' life here on earth. Then share with them the parts of his story they may not have heard. Make sure they understand the meaning of the Cross.