

The Life and Ministry of Christ

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

NOTE: Our study of the life of Jesus Christ on earth has been developed according to the breakdown suggested by the words of Jesus in John 16:28. "*I came forth from the Father,*

...and am come into the world;

...again, I leave the world,

...and go to the Father."

I. UNIT ONE: "I came forth from the Father..."

The emphasis: The pre-existence of Jesus Christ. This has sufficiently been covered in the section on The Pre-incarnate Christ.

II. UNIT TWO: "...and am come into the world..."

The emphases:

1. Jesus' birth, infancy, boyhood

2. Jesus emerges into public life

a. John the Baptist ministers in anticipation of the appearance of Messiah

b. Jesus is baptized by John

c. Jesus is alone in the wilderness for 40 days, is tempted by the Devil

d. Jesus gathers to Himself the first disciples

e. Jesus works a miracle at Cana

3. Jesus gains attention in Judea and Samaria

Note: This phase of Jesus' ministry lasted about six months, but it is recorded only by John. It was because of opposition generated during this time that Jesus left Judea and ministered in Galilee

4. Jesus' 18-month ministry in Galilee

a. Jesus spent 18 months in Galilee, during which His ministry was characterized by:

- open announcement of His Messiahship;
- miraculous proof of His claim to Messiahship and deity; and,
- ever increasing public amazement and official hatred.

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b. During this time Jesus traveled to Judea once for a feast, but most of the time was spent traveling throughout Galilee offering Himself as Messiah to the Jews.

c. Jesus' offer of Himself as Messiah was rejected by the Jews. The most important single moment of rejection is recorded in Matthew 12:25-37, the event often referred to as the "unpardonable sin."

5. The training of the twelve

a. During this time, Jesus' emphasis changes dramatically. In brief, the change can be described as follows.

THE GALILEAN TRAINING OF THE TWELVE MINISTRY

Jesus' PURPOSE: *PUBLIC PRESENTATION* -- of Himself as Messiah *PRIVATE PREPARATION* --of His disciples for His death and departure

Jesus' EMPHASIS: *MIRACLES* -- designed to authenticate His claims concerning Himself *PARABLES* --designed to hide truth from His enemies, and to buy time to instruct His disciples

Jesus' STRATEGY: *GO TO THE JEWS, MINISTER OPENLY* --in order that that generation might be personally and powerfully confronted with His message and with the confirming credentials, His miracles *FLEE FROM THE JEWS, SEEK SOLITUDE* --in order that He might find opportunity to instruct His disciples concerning what was soon to happen to Him, what their responsibilities would be, how He would enable them even in His absence

Public REACTION: *MOUNTING PUBLIC FASCINATION* -- tempered by the suspicion, contempt, and finally hatred of the leaders of the nation toward Jesus and His claims *MOUNTED OFFICIAL HATRED/REJECTION* --tempered by the continuing fascination on the part of the common people, but finally winning over even the populace

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b. The reason for this dramatic change: Jesus recognizes that Israel's rejection is full and final, and that soon He will be taken and put to death. Thus, He begins to prepare His disciples for that event and their consequent responsibilities.

c. This period (training of the twelve) lasted about six months (approximately the first half of the last year of Jesus' public ministry). During these months Jesus fled crowds, was reluctant to perform miracles, and began to speak in parables.

d. NOTE: It was during this time that Jesus began to prophecy to His disciples that He was going to die (Matthew 16:21).

6. In and around Jerusalem; the final six months before the Passion of Jesus

a. These last six months before Jesus' death are difficult to harmonize exactly. It is clear that Jesus traveled extensively in Perea (Trans-Jordan) for much of this time.

b. During these months, Jesus went three times to Judea. However, those trips were unannounced and brief, as Jesus was taking care not to fall into the hands of His enemies before the appointed time. The general spirit of this period is well reflected in John 7:30.

c. The events of this period, the last six months of Jesus' public ministry, are best understood in relation to three trips to Jerusalem (or its environs) made during this time. We must piece together all four Gospel accounts to understand the chronology of this period, simply because no one Gospel provides a continuous narrative.

TRIP #1 - to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2-10:21). After the Feast, Jesus remained in Judea, though He avoided Jerusalem.

TRIP #2 - to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-39). After this feast, Jesus journeyed to Perea, that area beyond the Jordan River.

TRIP #3 - to Bethany (2 miles from Jerusalem) in order to raise Lazarus from the dead. After this miracle, Jesus finds seclusion in Ephraim, a little town north of Jerusalem some miles. Here He remains with His disciples, hidden from His enemies until He goes for the final time to Jerusalem for the Passover season (John 11:54).

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III. UNIT THREE : . . . again, I leave the world . . ."

1. The emphasis: Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, His arrest and trials, His crucifixion and burial
2. Basically, this involves the Passion Week, the major events of which include

SUNDAY --the Triumphal Entry

MONDAY/TUESDAY --the fig tree is cursed, found withered; the second cleansing of the Temple --possession of the Temple for two days; Jesus bests all of His enemies in open debate, and then pronounces woes upon them --The Olivet Discourse

WEDNESDAY --a silent day in the Gospels

THURSDAY (afternoon & evening)

--the preparation for the Passover meal

--Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples; the Upper Room Discourse (Meanwhile, Judas betrays Jesus to the Sanhedrin)

--the arrest of the Lord Jesus near the Garden of Gethsemane

FRIDAY --a series of trials of Jesus, first three Jewish (a hearing before Annas, and then 2 trials before the Sanhedrin) and then three Roman (Pilate, Herod, and then Pilate gives Him over to the multitudes)

--the crucifixion of the Prince of Life; His burial in a borrowed tomb

SATURDAY --Jesus' body lays in the tomb; the Sabbath is observed

IV. UNIT FOUR: " . . . and go to the Father."

The emphases:

1. The resurrection of Jesus
2. The 40-day post-resurrection ministry of Jesus
3. The ascension of Jesus to the Father