



Lesson 1 – May 26, 2020

This study is going to be all about Jesus – just Jesus: What he did, what he said, who he was. Living a life like Jesus must begin with being a student of Jesus.

We will try to gain a fresh understanding of Jesus and a clearer understanding of what it means to be a Christ-follower—to find out if we’re really serious about being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:2: For I resolved to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Philippians 3:10: I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...

Do you think most people find Jesus interesting as a person?

Do you think most people think Jesus is relevant to their actual lives?

How does the average person (not a Christ-follower) see Jesus?

- As a more or less magical figure
- Not regarded as a real-life personality who deals with real-life issues
- As a person concerned with other worlds, not this world we live in
- As a curse word they use
- As an imagined person that weak people need

When you hear someone talk about being a disciple of Jesus Christ, what does that mean to you?

Many Christians think of discipleship as optional—that you can choose to be a disciple or not. It's thought of as an upper-level Christian!

Matthew 7:24-25: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and we desperately need all three. He said,

John 12:32: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

He is the attraction that cannot be resisted. It's all about Jesus, and we need to keep it simple.

"Actual discipleship or apprenticeship to Jesus is, in our day, no longer thought of as in any way essential to faith in him. It is regarded as a costly option, a spiritual luxury, or possibly even an evasion. Why bother with discipleship, it is widely thought, or, for that matter, with a conversational relationship with God? Let us get on with what we have to *do*." (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 34)

Jesus grew up as a Jewish boy in a Jewish family in the agricultural town of Nazareth—a nothing town. "We Gentiles face the constant danger of letting Jesus' Jewishness, and even his humanity, slip away." (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, p. 50)

Can you imagine how difficult it was for the Jews in Jesus' day to believe that he was who he said he was—the Son of God?

What are some signs of Jesus' Jewishness in the Gospels?

- Circumcised as a baby
- Family attended a very important Jewish festival in Jerusalem, long journey from their home, when Jesus was 12
- Jesus worshiped in the synagogue and temple
- He followed Jewish customs

Within a few generations of Jesus' life, basically Jews stopped following Jesus and the church became thoroughly Gentile.

Jesus was raised in the Galilee, which had a reputation as a breeding ground for revolutionaries. It was the farthest province from Jerusalem and the most backward culturally. Rabbinic literature of the time portrays Galileans as bumpkins, fodder for ethnic jokes. Their accent was thick and crude. (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, p. 60)

Think of how the Gospels treat this part of the country:

John 1:46: "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"

John 7:50 – 52: Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?" They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

John 7:3: Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do."

Matthew 26:69-70, 73: Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away."

Galilee seemed a most unlikely place for the Messiah to arise.

Think of who Jesus kept company with:

- The disciples (apostles):
 - Matthew, a tax collector
 - Peter and Andrew, rough, uneducated fishermen
 - James and John, fishermen
 - Andrew
 - Philip
 - Bartholomew
 - Thomas
 - James the son of Alphaeus Thaddeus
 - Simon the Zealot
 - Judas Iscariot
- Pharisees – the popular part of the middle class
- Sadducees – blatant collaborationists with the Romans.
- Samaritans – half breeds – Jews didn't speak to them

Where would you have fit in if you lived then? Would Jesus have won you over?

Jesus represented a threat to almost all sects of the Jewish community in that day. They all wanted to preserve what was distinctively Jewish, no matter what. To that goal, Jesus represented a threat.

How would you have reacted when Jesus said:

Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple."

How would you have reacted when Jesus said:

John 2:19: Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

Mark 2:27: Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

Matthew 9:2: Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

Next Week:

Read The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness

Matthew 4:1 – 11

Mark 1:12 – 13

Luke 4:1 – 13

How did Matthew, Mark and Luke know the details about these 40 days?

What do you learn about Jesus from this?

What questions does it raise in your mind?

Recommended Reading:

The Jesus I Never Knew by Philip Yancey

The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard

Speaking of Jesus by Carl Medearis