

The Saviour comes

John Houghton ©

A. Introduction

1. History had reached its perfect point: 'When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem...' (Gal 4:4). This is the climax of the drama, the omega point, the culmination of history. However, the birth, when it came, was sudden and unexpected, bypassing the seats of power and confounding all human expectations.
2. God's chosen vessel was an unknown young virgin woman named Mary (Luke 1:26-35). Yet Satan knew, and the age-old conflict entered its next and decisive phase (Revelation 12:1-6; see Matthew 2:16-17). On a starry night, in a bustling town, Mary gave birth, most likely in a cave or house where livestock sheltered for the night below the domestic sleeping platform. She laid her baby in a feeding trough. His name was Jesus.

B. What do we know about Jesus?

1. Politically, Palestine was a Roman protectorate, having a degree of autonomy over its national and local government, and especially over its religious activities. Rome provided political stability, the rule of law, military protection, good international communications and trade. For this privilege, unwanted by many (for the rule had been imposed by force), people paid taxes to Caesar. The Zealots appear to have been a popular liberation movement dedicated overthrowing Roman rule. Meanwhile, the ruling local political and religious leaders deemed it in their interests to co-operate with Rome as far as possible.
2. The government under which Jesus lived was as follows:

Caesar Augustus	Rome	Roman Emperor	27 BC - AD 14	Jesus' youth
Tiberius	Rome	Roman Emperor	AD 14 - 37	Jesus' adulthood
Herod Antipas	Galilee	Tetrarch of Galilee/Perea	4 BC - AD 39	Jesus' lifetime
Pontius Pilate	Jerusalem	Governor of Judea	AD 26- 36	Jesus' death

3. The date of Jesus' birth is unknown. The preferences are 7 or 4 BC; few argue for year zero. There is no historical support for him being born at the Feast of Tabernacles, though that appears neat. It is likely that he died in AD 30 or 33, giving him a maximum life span of 37 years, and a minimum of 33.
4. Matthew 1:1-17 provides us with the legal line of descent of Jesus' adoptive father, Joseph, a carpenter. It is generally agreed that Luke 3:23-38 gives us the bloodline

through Mary. Thus, Jesus was a swarthy, black-haired Jew, with characteristic brown eyes and a strong nose. Physically, he was strongly-built, with the hands of a working man, attractive but otherwise undistinguished. He was reared as an artisan carpenter/ building and tree-felling contractor. His father died some time between his 13th and 30th birthdays. He had four younger brothers and several sisters, and was indirectly related to John the Baptist. He was a totally flesh and blood human being, sharing every normal characteristic of humanity. To deny this is the spirit of antichrist (1 Jn 4:2-3).

5. The four gospels give us four complementary records of Jesus' life. They are not biographies in the usual sense, but concentrate mostly on his ministry and predominantly on the last week of his life. The writers have each drawn on a variety of personal experiences, eyewitness accounts, individual testimonies and general knowledge. Each Gospel has a different style and purpose.

Name	Date	Audience	Focus	Symbol
Matthew	58-68	Jews	Messiah-King	Lion
Mark	55-65	Romans	Servant-Redeemer	Bull
Luke	60-68	Greeks	Perfect Man	Man
John	80-90	Persians	Son of God	Eagle

6. By special revelation we know that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:31-35). He is the Son of God by birthright, not by earned merit. The real wonder of Jesus concerns not what he attained but what he gave up (Philippians 2:5-8). The Incarnation is nothing less than the Word made flesh – eternity becoming mortal so that the mortal may become eternal (John 1:18; 5:26; 8:56-58; 17:5; Colossians 2:9).

C. The mission of Christ

1. John the Baptist was the promised Elijah figure who had the task of preparing the way for the King (Malachi 4:5 cf. Mark 9:11-13). He baptised Jesus and inaugurated his ministry as the promised deliverer (Luke 3:21-22). John was the last Old Testament prophet (Luke 3:4-6; 16:16) and from his ministry came Jesus' first disciples (John 1:35-42). His imprisonment by Herod sparked Jesus' Galilean ministry (Mark 1:14).
2. Jesus came preaching the politics of the kingdom of heaven. His government manifesto is found in Luke 4:18-19. It is the Messianic announcement of the advent of the Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus' teaching and actions supply clues to the character of that Kingdom.
 - a. He defeats Satan in the wilderness. The real enemy is spiritual.
 - b. He expels demons and heals the sick. He is a healing warrior.
 - c. He rebukes hypocrisy and teaches a new way of life based on different heart attitudes (the Sermon on the Mount). This is a radically new social order flowing from love.

- d. He speaks in parables and analogies.
- e. He invites spiritual communion with himself.
- f. He warns of sin, righteousness and judgement.
- g. He calls for repentance and he forgives sinners.
- h. He promises the Holy Spirit.
- i. He expects to die and to rise again.
- j. He refuses to be made a temporal king by force, and explains why to Pilate (John 18:36-37).

D. The mystery of Jesus

1. Jesus raised questions. Who was he? Carpenter's son or Son of God? Prophet or charlatan? John the Baptist or Elijah resurrected or the promised Messiah? His teaching was accessible and persuasive, his miracles remarkable; yet he was ordinary, eating, drinking, enjoying good company. The questions in his day were phenomenological, – what do we make of what we see? Later they would be theological – how can two natures reside in one person?
2. The true identity of Jesus comes by revelation – Matt 16:13-17; Revelation 1:12-17. Jesus was God in a knowable form – John 1:14, 18. Encountering him through faith and the revelation of the Spirit is still the heart of what it means to believe and to know God.

Date	Feasts	Region	Event
29 AD			
Oct	Tabernacles	Early Judean	Baptism & temptations
Nov		“	
Dec	Dedication	“	Miracle at Cana
30 AD		“	
Jan		“	
Feb		“	
Mar	Passover (John 2:13)	“	Cleansing the Temple
Apl		“	
May	Pentecost	“	
Jun		“	Nicodemus
Jul		“	Through Samaria
Aug		“	
Sep		“	Arrival in Galilee
Oct	Tabernacles	“	
Nov		“	
Dec	Dedication	Great Galilean	Cana & Nazareth
31 AD		“	Capernaum
Jan		“	Call of disciples & 1 st tour
Feb		“	
Mar	Passover (John 5:1)	“	2 nd visit to Jerusalem
Apl		“	
May	Pentecost	“	Sabbath conflict & 12 chosen
Jun		“	Sermon on the Mount
Jul		“	
Aug		“	
Sep		“	

Oct	Tabernacles	“	2 nd tour & kingdom parables
Nov		“	3 rd tour and sending of 12
Dec	Dedication	“	
32 AD		“	
Jan		“	
Feb		“	
Mar	Passover (John 6:4)	“	Feeding 5000. Tyre & Sidon
Apl		“	Bethsaida, Caesarea Philippi
May	Pentecost	“	Transfiguration
Jun		“	
Jul		“	
Aug		“	Feeding 4000
Sep		“	
Oct	Tabernacles (John 7:2)	“	Visit to Jerusalem
Nov		“	Sending of 70
Dec	Dedication (John 10:22)	Late Judean	Visit to Jerusalem
33 AD		“	To Perea (Transjordan)
Jan		“	Bethany Lazarus raised
Feb		Perean	To Jerusalem via Samaria
Mar	Passover (John 12:1)	Last Week	Crucifixion & resurrection
Apl		Risen	Ascension
May	Pentecost (Acts 2:1)		Outpouring of his Spirit