



5 The Life of Christ

Key Theme

- The Bible records actual history.

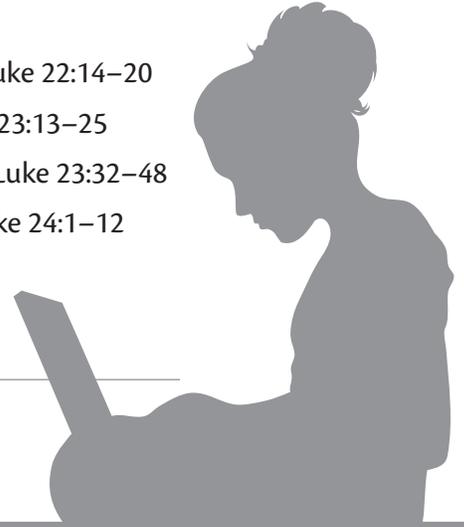
Key Passages

- Birth: Luke 2:4–7
- Early Life: Luke 2:42, 2:41–50
- Baptism: Luke 3:21–22
- Taught in Synagogues: Luke 4:14–22
- Healed the Sick: Luke 4:38–44
- Controlled Nature: Luke 8:22–26
- Taught His Disciples: Luke 11:1–10
- Last Passover Supper: Luke 22:14–20
- Trial Before Pilate: Luke 23:13–25
- Crucified on the Cross: Luke 23:32–48
- Rose from the Dead: Luke 24:1–12
- Ascended to Heaven: Luke 24:44–53

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Identify some key events in Christ's life on earth.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, "How can timelines help us study the Bible?"

Students will review the memory verse by working on the Memory Verse Puzzle and reciting the verse to a friend or to the class.

- Memory Verse Puzzle for each student from the Resource DVD-ROM



Studying God's Word

The Gospels tell us about Jesus our Savior—His humble birth, His early years, His miracles, His teachings, His death, His Resurrection, and His ascension.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Life of Christ Timeline

As you work through the lesson, the students can record notes on the Life of Christ Timeline worksheet. This worksheet can be used throughout the New Testament lessons to record key events studied, so encourage the students to keep them in their Bibles for future use.

- Life of Christ Timeline from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

How could one possibly write an overview of the life of Christ in one lesson? We are reminded of the verse the Apostle John ended his Gospel with, John 21:25: “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”

The important thing to remember here is that we know that what has been recorded about Jesus Christ—His birth, His life, His death, His Resurrection, and His ascension—is true history. Not only are they true historical events, but His brief life was more significant than any other life ever lived, for it affected all humanity for all eternity.

We will take a bird’s-eye view of Jesus’s ministry from the book of Luke, discussing only a few of the myriad of events that were significant as He ministered, taught, preached, warned, and proclaimed the way to eternal life through humble faith and trust in Him.

Jesus’s birth (Luke 2:4–7): In fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the Bible records a humble birth for the King of kings, laid as an infant in a feeding trough because there were no rooms available.

Jesus’s early years (Luke 2:42, 2:46–50): At twelve years old, Jesus was already about His Father’s business, listening to and asking questions of the teachers in the Temple, astounding them with His understanding and answers.

Jesus’s baptism (Luke 3:21–22): As Jesus was baptized by John, He humbly associated Himself with sinners and exhibited His humility and obedience to His Father, who proclaimed that this was indeed His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased.

Jesus taught in synagogues (Luke 4:14–15): Once Jesus started His adult ministry, we read of Him being in the synagogues, expounding the Scriptures with authority.

Jesus healed the sick (Luke 4:38–39): In this account, Jesus healed Simon Peter’s mother-in-law of a high fever. This was just one of many instances where Christ revealed His power over sickness and His compassion for others by healing them of various illnesses.

Jesus controlled nature (Luke 8:22–25): Here is one example of many where Jesus manifested His power over nature. So amazing was His stilling of the

storm that His disciples said to one another, “Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!”

Jesus taught His disciples (Luke 11:1–4): Jesus taught often in the synagogues. But He also spent much time teaching His disciples. In these verses, we learn that His disciples asked Him an important question about prayer. And Jesus answered by revealing a model for prayer that refuted the vain repetitious prayers common among the religious leaders (see Matthew 6:7).

Jesus’s last Passover meal (Luke 22:14–20): Jesus knew the time for His suffering was at hand, and He shared this last Passover meal with the Twelve Apostles. It was at this last meal that He established the Lord’s Supper to be shared for generations to come as a remembrance of His death and the redemption it provides all who believe, until He comes again.

Jesus’s trial before Pilate (Luke 23:13–15): Both Pilate, the Roman governor, and Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, found Jesus innocent. He had done nothing that deserved the death the chief priests were demanding. Due to public pressure and the outcry of His Jewish accusers, Pilate sent Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus crucified on the Cross (Luke 23:32–34): Jesus was crucified on the Cross between two criminals. In a demonstration of mercy before His death, He cried out, asking the Father to forgive even those who put Him to death. And we know this forgiveness was accomplished through His very death—to all who would put their faith and trust in Him.

Jesus rose from the dead (Luke 24:5–7): In glory and majesty, revealing the omnipotence of God who alone can raise the dead, Jesus came forth from the tomb. God has power over life and death, and through the Resurrection of Jesus, we have hope that eternal life awaits all who repent and believe in Him. This is our hope. This is what enables us to abound in hope amidst dark and disturbing circumstances.

Jesus ascended to heaven (Luke 24:50–53): His earthly ministry was finished. Jesus had accomplished all that the Father had sent Him to do. In the presence of many witnesses, He ascended to heaven. He now reigns from heaven, preparing a place for believers in order to one day come back to take them to their eternal home (John 14:2–3).

What a Savior! What a Man! This merely scratches the surface of who Jesus was, what He did, and what

He will do for those who follow Him in repentance and faith! Again we can recall John 21:25, knowing that the world itself could not contain the books that could be written about this Man, Savior, Friend, Redeemer, Lamb—the eternal and everlasting God!

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

So far in *Answers Bible Curriculum* through the Old Testament lessons, we have presented the history of redemption chronologically. However, as we study the New Testament and the ministry of Jesus, there will be times when we don't follow a strict chronology.

Outlining a detailed chronology of the events in Jesus's life is difficult. There are discrepancies among scholars as to the exact timing of events in Jesus's life. Take His birth, for example. The New Testament does not give us dates based on our modern calendar. Luke tells us that Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem for a census ordered by Caesar Augustus when Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:1–2). This gives us a historical context within which we can place the birth of Jesus.

When did this census take place? From other historical records, we know that Caesar Augustus ruled from 31 BC to AD 14, giving us a range. This is where it gets tricky. Herod the Great was king at the time of Jesus's birth (Matthew 2:1), and there are no other historical records of a census taking place at this time. We can be certain that Luke's audience of the time would have known about the census and understood exactly when the census and, consequently, the birth of Jesus occurred. It is difficult for us to know precisely, but based on the evidence, it is generally believed that Christ was born between 6 and 4 BC.

Determining chronology within the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—is also difficult. These accounts were written under the direction of the Holy Spirit by four unique men writing to different audiences. Consequently, they do not follow the same sequence of events, but present a more complete account of Jesus's life and person when they are considered all together.

Defining precise dates for the events recorded is often difficult. For example, John records that Jesus cleansed the Temple only a few months after His baptism (John 2:13–22). Another cleansing is recorded

by Matthew, Mark, and Luke during the week of the Crucifixion (Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46). Some people believe these are the same event, but a comparison of the four accounts suggests that the cleansing recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the same, while John records a previous cleansing of the Temple.

Skeptics often reject the Bible because of difficulties in precisely identifying when events occurred. Understanding the nature of the Gospels as eyewitness accounts, and knowing that each author crafted his Gospel for a specific purpose, can help to answer the skeptics' questions. Unfortunately, much skepticism seems to be an excuse to dismiss the authority of Scripture caused by their spiritual blindness and rebellion against their Creator.

With all that in mind, realize that we have done our best to be faithful to the Scriptures as we present the dates and order of events in the life of Christ through this curriculum and on the New Testament History Poster. You may come across dates you disagree with for particular reasons, but don't get lost in examining the bark on the tree and miss the beauty of the forest. The life that Jesus lived on this earth was lived in perfect obedience to the Father, in the power of the Spirit, fulfilling exacting details of prophecy and climaxing with His death and Resurrection. His saving work is the only hope we have for eternal life after our death, whenever that day may come.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Heavenly Father, you have given me another opportunity to praise you as I've studied through this lesson. Yes, this was a quick overview of the astounding life of Jesus. But the details of His life never cease to inspire awe in me. His power beyond measure, His love beyond comprehension, His words perfectly spoken, each life who encountered Him—changed. This is the Jesus my students need. This is the Jesus revealed to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is the Jesus I want them to know. Prepare their hearts now for an encounter with the Word made flesh.

Review

Since beginning our study of the New Testament, we have looked at the role of the Gospels in telling us about the person and work of Jesus Christ.

? Who can tell me the names of the synoptic Gospels (remember that synoptic means “same view”)? *Matthew, Mark, and Luke.*

? Who can tell me why we call them the synoptic Gospels? *We mean that these three Gospels give the same basic accounts with some variation and in the same basic order. John stands out as different in its structure.*

John is written in a different style, setting it apart from the other three inspired records. Together, we have a fully adequate record of what Jesus did and taught while here on earth. However, we know it is not a completely thorough record. As John tells us, if everything were written down, the books would fill the world (John 21:25).

Today we are going to continue looking at the Gospels as a record of the life of Christ. Through the Old Testament lessons, we stuck to a pretty rigid chronological approach to studying the Bible. There was a bit of overlap as we looked at the division of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, but we followed a chronological study. The goal of the chronological study was to help keep all of the dots connected since the books of the Bible are not compiled in a chronological way in our modern Bibles.

If time allows, walk through the structure of the New Testament with the students.

Optional. The New Testament is also organized thematically. First we have the four Gospels. Next comes the book of Acts, a historical record of the formation of the

early church throughout the Mediterranean world. Then we have the 13 epistles of Paul (Romans–Philemon), the epistle to the Hebrews, the two epistles from Peter, the three epistles of John, then the epistle of Jude. Closing the canon is the Revelation given to John. Those 27 books make up the inspired New Testament writings.

Our lesson today is going to focus on some of the key events in the life of Christ. The only records we have of his life on earth come in the four Gospels and the opening chapter of Acts. After our first twelve lessons of this quarter, we are going to depart from our strict chronological study and look at some major themes in the ministry of Christ taken from the Gospels (but not necessarily in order). So our lesson today is intended to give a big picture overview of the roughly 30 years Christ walked the earth. We will be referring to this New Testament History Poster and use it as a reference through our study of the New Testament.

Point out the appropriate sections on the New Testament History Poster as you work through the lesson.

On this timeline, you can see about 100 years of history from just before the birth of Christ to the early church at the turn of the second century AD. *Point to area showing the 3-year ministry of Jesus.* In this section, you can see a more detailed timeline of the earthly ministry of Jesus. That will be the focus of our time today. We are going to take a whirlwind tour through 30-plus years of history in a matter of minutes. Our goal is not detail, but to get a picture of the flow of Christ’s life on earth.





Life of Christ Timeline

MATERIALS

- Life of Christ Timeline from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

You will be giving each student a copy of the timeline to use as a note sheet during the entire lesson. Pass these out at the beginning of the lesson.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Our lesson today is going to be a little bit different. We are going to use Luke as the source for our study. This is for two reasons. First, it will be easier to just flip through the pages of Luke rather than back and forth between the four Gospels. Second, Luke is the most consistent in his chronology, and we can march straight through his writing.

This worksheet will give you a place to keep notes as we work through the lesson today. You can also tuck it into your Bible and use it as we progress through the other lessons. I will call out a passage and then someone can read that passage. For each passage we will come up with a title we can add to the timeline, and I will give you an approximate date at which to place it.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Our first passage is Luke 2:4–7. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

? How could we title this passage for our timeline? *Jesus Is Born or some variation.*

Now, this might throw you for a loop, but Jesus was actually born sometime around 5 or 4 BC. How can Christ be born five years “before Christ”? Well, it has to do with various calendars used throughout the millennia and some miscalculations that we have corrected as more historical information has been discovered and analyzed. We will talk a bit more about this dating in a later lesson.

The next passage is Luke 2:41–50. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

From this passage, we learn that Jesus was already aware of His mission to serve the Father and that He had an amazing understanding of the truth. Though He was on a mission from the heavenly Father, He was also submissive to His own earthly parents.

➤ Write on the board, “How can timelines help us study the Bible?”

➤ Pass out the Life of Christ Timeline worksheet to the students. See the Activity section above.

Luke 2:4–7

➤ Many students misunderstand the abbreviation AD to refer to “after death.” While BC stands for “before Christ,” AD is actually a Latin phrase *anno Domini*, that is, “the year of the Lord.” Also, there was no year 0 in the calendar.

Luke 2:41–50

? How could we title this passage for our timeline? *Jesus Travels to Jerusalem or some variation.*

? So, we know that He was 12 years old from verse 42, so where would this put us on our timeline? *Most will probably think that from His birth in 5 BC would mean He was 12 in AD 7, but there was no year 0 in the calendar. This means this event was likely in AD 8.*

Luke 3:21–22

The next passage is Luke 3:21–22. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

To determine the timing of this event, we have to go to a cross-reference since Luke doesn't give us an exact date. If you look back to the opening verses of chapter 3, Luke sets the events of John's ministry during the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius. If you look ahead, verse 23 tells us that Jesus was about 30 years old. So we have two relative dates, but no absolute date.

? How are we going to determine where to put this on the timeline? *Students may suggest we look to historical records to see when historians believe Tiberius reigned. Explain to the students that there is a bit of disagreement among historians about that date. Some historians suggest that Tiberius had a co-regency with Caesar Augustus, and others reject that idea. If we accept the co-regency, as men like Ussher did, we arrive at a date around AD 26. If there was no co-regency, then the date is AD 29. Both of these dates are consistent with Luke's statement of Jesus being "about thirty" at the beginning of His ministry. We are going to use the later date, placing the baptism of Jesus in late AD 29.*

? How might we title this point on the timeline? *Jesus's Baptism or some variation.*

Luke 4:14–22

The next passage is Luke 4:14–22. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

One of the most common things recorded in the Gospels is the teaching ministry of Jesus. He often carried this out in the synagogues. The synagogues were the centers of religious life for the Jews, and Jesus was in His hometown synagogue claiming to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 61:1–2) of the Anointed One—the Messiah! For this they sought to throw Him off a cliff.

? So how could we label this item and where should we place it? *The label could be Teaching in Synagogues or Rejected at Nazareth. The timing is early AD 30, sometime after the first Passover described in John 2.*

Luke 4:38–44

The next passage is Luke 4:38–44. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

? Who is Simon? *This is Peter's original name.*

? What is the major emphasis in this passage? *Jesus healed many people, including Peter's mother-in-law, and the casting out of demons.*

This passage is just one of many that demonstrates the power Jesus had over sickness and the demonic forces at work in people. Here we also see the compassion of Jesus for those impacted by the effects of sin and the Curse. So, we could label this passage as Healing the Sick and Casting out Demons. This would still be in AD 30, shortly after our last entry.

Luke 8:22–26

The next passage is Luke 8:22–26. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

We have moved forward about one year, so this entry will be in AD 31.

? What do we learn about Jesus's power in this passage? *Jesus has power over nature.*

This made the disciples marvel and ask, rhetorically, who this was that commands even the wind! They knew that only God could do this, and they feared this awesome Man who was sitting in their boat.

We could label this event Calming the Storm and place it in the middle of AD 31.

The next passage is Luke 11:1–10. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Luke 11:1–10

Again, we have jumped forward about one year to the middle of AD 32—to sometime after the Feast of Tabernacles described in John 7. As we mentioned before, Jesus taught in different forums. Here we have a description of His intimate teaching of the disciples. This specific passage describes the teaching on prayer, but there were many more things that He taught them during the years they were together.

? How could we label this passage on the timeline? *Teaching the Disciples or Teaching on Prayer.*

The next passage is Luke 22:14–20. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Luke 22:14–20

As we have moved from chapter 11 to 22, we have only moved ahead a few months on our timeline. The first three years of ministry are described in chapters 1 through 17, and the last few weeks are described in 18 through 24. So we get a lot more detail of this period, and the same is true for the other Gospels. Knowing that this supper was at the time of Passover, we can place this event in the spring of AD 33. Here, Jesus taught His disciples many important lessons and instituted the remembrance of His death through Communion.

? How should we title this event on our timeline? *The Last Supper or some variant.*

The next passage is Luke 23:13–25. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Luke 23:13–25

? What major point from this passage can we use to label our timeline? *Trial of Jesus.*

This is a condensed version of the trials that Jesus faced, but the order to crucify Jesus came from Pontius Pilate. The Jews, spurred on by the Jewish leaders, called for Jesus's death, and He was led away to be scourged and crucified.

The next passage is Luke 23:32–48. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Luke 23:32–48

We are all familiar with this passage, but I hope it never becomes so familiar that we just read over it without being moved by its weight. The Son of God humbled Himself to the point of death, even death on the Cross, as it says in Philippians 2:8.

➤ If time is short, read Luke 23:32–35 and 44–46.

? **What was accomplished by Jesus on the Cross?** *In His substitutionary death, sin was dealt with in an absolute way. All those who repent and trust in Christ's work on the Cross receive forgiveness of their sins.*

We can mark this event on our timeline at AD 33 as the Crucifixion.

Luke 24:1–12

The next passage is Luke 24:1–12. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

On the third day after the Crucifixion, the women mentioned in the passage went to the tomb only to find it empty! Jesus was not there, and the angels reminded them of the words Jesus had spoken to them. Jesus had risen from the dead just as He had predicted.

? **Why is this such a significant account as we study the ministry of Jesus?** *Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:12–19 that if Jesus is not risen from the dead, our faith in Him is futile. The Resurrection was a stamp of approval on the completed work of Christ on the Cross. Without the Resurrection, we are still dead in our sins.*

We can label this passage The Resurrection at AD 33. And we can trust that He will also raise us up with Him on the last day.

Luke 24:44–53

Our last passage is Luke 24:44–53. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

? **Does anyone know how much time passed between the Resurrection and this event?** *In Acts 1:3, Luke says it was 40 days from the Resurrection to the Ascension.*

After an additional 40 days of ministering to and teaching the apostles, Jesus blessed them and gave them their final commissioning. Having completed His earthly work, He ascended to heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of the Father. We can label this final event as The Ascension.

SOVEREIGN

FAITHFUL

ETERNAL

JUST

MERCIFUL

Discover the Truth

We have just done a whirlwind tour through the life of Jesus. We looked at a few highlights, and in those events we can see some of the key attributes of God demonstrated in the relatively short time Jesus was on the earth.

? **What attributes of God were demonstrated in the different passages that we looked at today?** *Sovereignty over disease, nature, and death; Faithfulness in carrying out Jesus's ministry; Eternality in ascending to heaven; Justice and Mercy in providing a way of salvation for mankind; etc.*



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Jesus really spent a very short time on earth. But it was enough time to accomplish everything that the Father had sent Him to do. As we

consider the life of Christ through the next several months, we will be referring back to this timeline so that you can keep track of the events and have a better understanding of their timing and significance. You may want to tuck it in the back of your Bible to use as a reference in the future.

Let's discuss some of the practical applications of our study today.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **What is the most striking feature you see on the timeline we completed today?** *Discuss various answers including that most of the events are in the last few years of His life.*
- ? **How can a timeline help to dispel the idea that the Bible is simply a book of mythology?** *A timeline can show the reality of the events recorded in Scripture in relationship to other events in history. Refer to the History of Israel Poster to demonstrate some of the connections.*
- ? **Considering the relatively short life of Jesus and His even shorter formal ministry, how does this influence your thinking about how and when God can use you to accomplish the good works He has planned for you?** *At any age, every believer has the Holy Spirit living in them and can exercise the gifts of the Spirit given to them. While there are areas where we can grow in maturity, we can begin serving the Lord wholeheartedly and not wait for the perfect opportunity or some particular point in life (e.g., graduating, marriage, etc.) to work for His glory and kingdom.*
- ? **Which of the common rules of reading the Bible did we break today?** *We read a lot of passages with very little context, but this was appropriate based on the goal of the lesson—to get an overview of the life of Christ.*
- ? **How can you use this timeline as a tool in discipleship or evangelism?** *Discuss various answers and encourage the students to carry through with a plan of action.*



MEMORY VERSE

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God because Jesus lived and died just as the Bible says.
- Thank God for every detail that has been recorded about Jesus, so that we can learn from Him and find out how to have eternal life with God.
- Ask God to help us to tell more people about Jesus because what the Bible says about Jesus is the most important message they'll ever hear.

