

Jesus Christ. Who is he, and why should I trust him?

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A. Earliest History

1. God created the heavens and the earth. The crown of His creation was man, whom alone God created in His own likeness and image. God created man as male and female, and gave them the responsibility of being fruitful and multiplying, and of subduing the earth and ruling over it and over its creatures. God created man as a morally good being with whom He could enjoy friendship (Genesis 1).
2. God placed man in a beautiful garden. He gave man a beautiful companion as a wife. God told man he could eat of any tree in the garden except the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If he ate of the tree he would instantly die (Genesis 2).
3. Satan, God's greatest enemy, appeared as a serpent to Eve, Adam's wife, in the garden. He tempted her to eat from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She believed Satan instead of God, and ate. She gave fruit to her husband and he also ate. Instantly, they felt embarrassed without clothing, and hid from God when He came to visit them in the garden. Man had already died spiritually. He was separated from God, and that's why he hid. The thought of continuing his friendship with God made him uncomfortable. We call any disobedience sin. Adam and Eve were now sinners with a sin nature (a tendency to do the wrong thing instead of the right thing). They would pass their sin nature on to their children. But God promised a way to save the human race through a particular descendant of the woman (Genesis 3).
4. Sin progressed quickly. Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain grew jealous of his brother Abel and killed him (Genesis 4). People lived hundreds of years, but eventually all died physically (Genesis 5). Man grew to be so evil that God had no choice but to wipe out mankind from off the face of the earth. But Noah found grace in God's eyes. God chose Noah and his family to preserve mankind. God would save Noah and his family and start over with the human race. God instructed Noah to build a huge three-deck floating barge on which he, his family and representative animals would survive during a global flood (Genesis 6).
5. God flooded the entire earth. All bird life, animal life, and human life was killed. The flood covered everything and lasted just over a year. Only Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their three wives were saved, along with representative animals

aboard the barge (Genesis 7-8).

6. Having been preserved aboard the barge, Noah and his family exited, along with all the animals. God told Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply and to spread out over the entire earth. He created a rainbow to appear in the clouds to serve as a sign that God would never again destroy the earth with water (Genesis 9). From Noah and his three sons, descendants were born to replenish the human population on the earth (Genesis 10).
7. At that time, mankind all spoke one language. But once again, man rebelled against God. Instead of spreading out over the face of the earth, people concentrated themselves in modern day Iraq. They proceeded to build themselves a tall tower to serve as a rallying point and to concentrate the human population in one place. God was alarmed. He said, in effect, "They all speak one language, and they have determined to form the United Nations and concentrate themselves in one place. There will be no stopping the great evil they will commit. Let us confuse their language and force them to spread out over the earth, because they will not be able to understand one another." God did so, and, through distinct languages, forced the human race to spread all over the world in groups that could understand one another. The name of the tower was called Babel. Through a play on words, it sounds like the Hebrew "to confuse." But the Babylonians preferred to view the name as "Gate of God." Babylon became a symbol of rebellion against God (Genesis 11:1-9). (This will become more apparent in Revelation 17-18.)

B. Patriarchal History. The history of the founding fathers of the nation of Israel.

1. God continued with the next step of his plan to save people of the world. He chose a man named Abram (later renamed Abraham), who lived in Southeastern Iraq in a city named "Ur of the Chaldees." He told Abraham to leave his relatives and his father's house and move to a LAND God would show him. He would make of Abraham a great NATION. He would BLESS Abraham, and Abraham was to be a BLESSING. God would BLESS those who BLESSED Abraham, and curse those who cursed him. In Abraham, God would BLESS all the descendants of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3). (Don't look now, but Jesus is the descendant of Abraham through whom God has chosen to bless the world.) Abraham moved to the land of Canaan. God told him, "To your descendants I will give this land" (Genesis 12:4-7). Later God told Abraham to look north, east, south, west. All the land Abraham could see God would give to him and his descendants forever (Genesis 13:14-17). God told Abraham his descendants would be slaves in a foreign country for 400 years. But God would bring them back to the land of Canaan and possess it. God made an Unconditional Irrevocable Covenant with Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants from the "River of Egypt" to the River Euphrates (Genesis 15:1-21).

2. But there was a problem. Sarah was barren. At last, in desperation, she did something that was culturally expedient, but not in keeping with God's promise. She gave her Egyptian slave girl Hagar to Abraham as a concubine to produce a son whom Abraham and Sarah could claim as their own. Hagar conceived, and immediately there was tension in the household. The tension was temporarily resolved, and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (Genesis 16).
3. But the child that God promised to Abraham and his wife Sarah was Isaac, not Ishmael. God told Abraham his wife Sarah would have a son named Isaac, with whom God would establish His everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:18-21). Isaac was born and Ishmael, the father of the Arabs was dismissed, along with his mother (Genesis 21:1-22). The animosity between the line of Isaac through Jacob and the line of Ishmael and Jacob's twin brother Esau continues to this very day.
4. Later on, Abraham commissioned his servant to procure a wife for his son Isaac from among his wife's relatives back in the land of Syria (Genesis 24). But Isaac's wife Rebekah was barren. Isaac prayed for his wife. She conceived with twins, but the twins struggled within her. She asked God why. God told her, "Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples shall be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:19-23). Esau was born first, and Jacob second (Genesis 25:24-26). But God had chosen Jacob, and the blessing promised to Abraham and transferred to Isaac was now passed on to Jacob (Genesis 28).
5. Jacob went to Aram (Syria) to visit his mother Rebekah's relatives and find a wife. Through a strange turn of events, Jacob married two sisters. By them and their slave girls, he had twelve sons. These became the Twelve Tribes (or clans) of Israel. Jacob and his family returned from Syria to the land of Canaan. A famine forced the country to move to Egypt (Genesis 28-50).
6. By the beginning of the book of Exodus the sons of Israel had lived in Egypt for many years. But a Pharaoh arose who did not know the early history of Israelis in his land. He saw the sons of Israel as a threat and put the entire nation into slavery. God raised up Moses to deliver the nation from bondage in Egypt. He did so through the power of God and ten mighty plagues which decimated Egypt and compelled the king to permit the Israelis to depart. One enormous miracle sealed Israel's escape. Israel was able to cross the Red Sea on dry ground with the waters parted. When the Egyptian soldiers ventured in, the water collapsed on the now-disoriented army and drowned them all (Exodus 1-15).

C. National History. God as Invisible King of the new Chosen Nation of Israel.

1. By Exodus 19 the sons of Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai. Moses climbed the mountain to speak to God. God presented himself as a King in search of a nomadic tribe. In the form of an ancient treaty, He promised He would care for the sons of Israel and provide for them if they would obey Him and serve Him. The sons of Israel agreed with a blood ratification of the covenant. This covenant is variously called the First Covenant, the Old Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Torah, or the Law (Exodus 19-24).
2. God was an invisible King to the sons of Israel. He showed Himself by a pillar of fire at nighttime and a pillar of cloud by day. The remainder of Exodus describes the various laws God prescribed for the sons of Israel. Keeping the laws would not bring salvation. Only faith in God and His promises could do that. But obedience was an evidence of faith, and it brought God's blessings.
3. The Book of Leviticus details many of the laws God prescribed so that a Holy and Pure God could live amongst a people defiled by sin. Laws on personal hygiene and ritual cleanness and diet abound. The whole Law was a conditional covenant. God's blessing depended on Israel's obedience. The New Testament reveals that from God's point of view, the Law was given to prove it could not be kept. It actually high-lighted man's sin (Romans 3:19-20; 5:20; Galatians 2:16).
4. In Israel's history there were cyclical period of obedience and blessing followed by disobedience and discipline.
5. After 40 years of wandering because of disobedience (described in Numbers 14-36), the sons of Israel encamped on the plains of Moab ready to enter the Promised Land as a nation. Conquest awaited them. Moses could no longer be their leader. Joshua would lead them in (Deuteronomy 1-34).
6. The book of Joshua describes Israel's conquest of the Promised Land of Canaan. Unfortunately, pockets of resistance remained. This would come back to haunt the sons of Israel, who were tempted repeatedly to join in with the false religions of the native peoples (Joshua 1-24; Judges 1-21).

D. The Arrival of a Visible King in Israel. The Development of the Davidic Covenant

1. Many years went by, and the people grew tired of an invisible King. They desired a visible king just like neighboring nations possessed. The Prophet / Judge Samuel was deeply hurt, but God was hurt even more. Finally God granted them a human king. The Prophet Samuel anointed Saul with oil, symbolic of the Holy Spirit. God then anointed Saul with His Spirit, and Saul's heart was changed. Saul now

had the wherewithal to be a great leader for Israel (1 Samuel 1-12).

2. But Saul began to disobey (1 Samuel 13-15). In penalty God told Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the next king of Israel. That son turned out to be David, “a man after God’s own heart.” Samuel obediently anointed David to be king of Israel. The Holy Spirit left Saul and God anointed David with His Spirit (1 Samuel 16). Empowered by the Spirit of God, David was also a Prophet. A Prophet is one to whom God speaks and one who in turn speaks to man on God’s behalf. David wrote at least 73 of the 150 Psalms. So David was both a King and a Prophet, although his primary role was that of a King
3. David fought many battles for Israel on God’s behalf (1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel 1-5; 8-10). After a period of time he wished to build a permanent house in which God could live instead of the portable tabernacle (tent) (2 Samuel -7). God said that he had fought too many wars. His son would build God a house (temple). Meanwhile, God decided to bless David. God would build a HOUSE for David (2 Samuel 7:11). God made a Promise to David that later was classified as a Covenant. We call it the Davidic Covenant. It is recorded in 2 Samuel 7:16, in which God promised David, “Your HOUSE and your KINGDOM shall endure before Me forever; your THRONE shall be established forever.” The term “HOUSE” refers to David’s royal DYNASTY. This was an Unconditional Covenant, and thus Irrevocable. A given king might disobey and reap God’s discipline. But the ultimate outcome was inevitable and unavoidable.
4. Decades passed by, and Israel repeatedly disobeyed God. The Kingdom over which David’s son Solomon ruled was wealthy and spread over a vast territory. But because Solomon disobeyed God by worshiping other gods, God predicted the Kingdom would be split under the rule of his son. That proved correct. Under the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, 10 tribes seceded from the nation and 2 tribes remained for Rehoboam to rule. The northern 10 became known variously as Israel or Samaria. The southern 2 became known as Judah (later, Judea) (1 Kings 1-22).
5. The ten northern tribes were carried off into captivity by Assyria in 722 B.C., the southern two to Babylon in 606, 597, and 586 B.C. under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 1-25). The southern two tribes (Judah) experienced a 70-year captivity predicted by Jeremiah the Prophet (2 Chronicles 36:21). Exiles returned to Judea in waves and rebuilt the temple Solomon had built and even rebuilt the shattered walls under Nehemiah (Ezra 1-10; Nehemiah 1-13).
6. The Old Testament ends with the book of Malachi, written by about 400 B.C. No Scripture was written for almost 400 years. For hundreds of years, Israel had no prophet and no king.

E. Jesus of Bethlehem / Nazareth as the Fulfillment of God's Promise to and Covenant with King David.

1. As we open the pages of the New Testament (Testament is another word for Covenant), we encounter four narratives that give a detailed of the ministry, death, and resurrection of God's greatest Anointed One. We call these four narratives the four "gospels" ("gospel" means simply, "good news"). They are named after the men who wrote them. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record the coming and ministry of Jesus. Luke records that the angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary. Here is what he said:
 - a. 30 Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." (Luke 1:30-33)
 - b. Notice that the identical terms which appeared in God's Covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7:16 were repeated by the angel to Mary: Her son would be given the THRONE of His father David. He would reign over the HOUSE of Jacob forever. His KINGDOM would have no end.
 - c. So Jesus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, is the fulfillment of God's promise to and Covenant with David of an eternal dynasty to rule over the entire nation of Israel forever.
 - d. John, in his gospel recorded the following about Jesus. First of all, he identified Jesus as the "Word" of God. By that he meant that Jesus is the very best expression, the very best Message of who God is, what He is like, and what His standards are. Here is what John said:
 - 1) 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1:1-3)
 - e. Notice that the Word existed already in the beginning. He was with God, which means both association (they were together) and distinction (they were not the same persons). The Word was the Creator of all that exists. In other words, the person of the Godhead who did the actual work of Creation as described in Genesis 1:1 was none other than this person who is called "the Word of God."

- f. Moreover, this “Word of God” became man. John continued on a few verses later,
 - 1) And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)
 - g. So this “Word of God” who was eternal, who was the Creator, became man and lived among John and his Israeli compatriots. This is nothing short of amazing.
 - h. We conclude therefore that Jesus of Nazareth is a one-of-a-kind hybrid. He is 100% God and, at the same time, 100% man. Since he was implanted in Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit, He had no sin nature whatever. He was uncompromised. Since he had no sin, he was not inevitably doomed to die. Had he not allowed himself to be killed, he never would have died!
2. He was born of a virgin. He was born of the family line of David, and thus eligible to be King of Israel. It was announced to shepherds in the hillsides of Judea by an angel that “...Behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David (Bethlehem) there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ (meaning Messiah, the Anointed One) the Lord (meaning Master) (Luke 2:10-11).
 3. All during his growing up years, Jesus performed no miracles. He did have an amazing understanding of God and the Old Testament Scriptures, however.
 4. When Jesus was about 30 years old, he came to be baptized by John the Baptizer in the Jordan River. This most significant event was recorded in all four gospels. In Matthew 3:13-17 we read about Jesus’ baptism. His purpose in being baptized was to show his approval of and identification with John the Baptist (who was the Herald of the King) and of John’s message. John proclaimed about the need for people to change their mind about sin and change their mind about who the King was in the impending “Kingdom of the Heavens.”
 - a. Immediately after the account of Jesus’ baptism, here is what Matthew writes: 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” (Matthew 3:16-17)

- b. This is a most important Scripture. This event marks God's anointing of Jesus with His Holy Spirit. The invisible Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a visible dove. Immediately, God the Father spoke from heaven and identified Jesus as His beloved Son. So we have the Trinity present. Jesus, the Son upon earth. God the Father speaking His identification and approval of His Son from up in heaven. God's sending of His Spirit to anoint Jesus for ministry. What was that ministry?
- 1) **First God anointed Jesus to be Prophet.** All four gospels record many of Jesus' speeches. He taught the people of Israel what were the requirements for participating in His kingdom. The major ministry of Jesus upon earth was to proclaim the message of God as God's Ultimate Prophet.
 - 2) **Second, God anointed Jesus to be Priest.** A great portion of the book of Hebrews is devoted to demonstrating that Jesus is the Ultimate Priest of God after the order of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-20; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1-28). Having completed His earthly ministry as God's Prophet, and having been rejected by the leaders of Israel as God's King, Jesus permitted himself to be killed as the Ultimate Sacrifice on behalf of man, offered up by himself as the Ultimate Priest. Having been resurrected, and having ascended to heaven, Jesus now sits at the right hand of God, where his primary ministry is that of a Priest, advocating on our behalf before the Throne, and praying not only for all those who have trusted in him, but for all those who will yet trust in him (John 17; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2).
 - 3) **Third, God anointed Jesus to be King.** Both John the Baptist and Jesus himself announced Jesus as King of Israel ready to set up his kingdom with Israel. Their message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2; Matthew 4:17).
5. Once Jesus had been baptized (Matthew 3) and tested by Satan (Matthew 4), He began His public ministry. He performed miracle after miracle (identified as "signs" or "miraculous signs" in Scripture) to prove he was the promised Messiah, or Christ, that is, the Ultimate Anointed One (John 3:1-3; 20:30-31).
6. But the people of Israel, through their leaders, outright rejected Jesus as their anointed King. They had him assassinated as a blasphemer, a pretender to the throne of David. But in the mighty plan of God, Jesus' violent death proved to be the Ultimate Sacrifice that would pay for all the sins of all the people in the world. That payment would be effective, however only those who believe in Jesus as

God's Ultimate Anointed One (John 3:16-18, 36; 5:24; 11:25-27; 20:30-31; Acts 13:38-39; 1 John 2:1-2; 5:11-13).

7. So right now Jesus is at the right hand of the Father waiting until God makes Jesus' enemies a footstool for his feet (Psalm 110:1-2). Then Jesus will return to earth, purge the world of enemy combatants (Revelation 19:11-21), judge the survivors alive at his coming (Matthew 25:31-46), and set up his kingdom here upon earth (Isaiah 2:1-4; Zechariah 14:1-21).
8. So at Jesus' Second Coming, his role will be largely that of God's Ultimate King (Revelation 19:16). He will rule over the nations with a rod of iron, seated on Mount Zion, Israel (Psalm 2:1-12). Only those who submit to His rule and place their confidence in Him will be permitted to join Him in His kingdom (Matthew 25:1-46). My prayer for you, the reader, is that you will acknowledge your own sin and unworthiness to meet God's righteous standards on your own. I pray that you will trust in Jesus and to submit to Him as your own personal King. Then you must live your life to serve the Great King as a loyal subject. Then you will be permitted to enter His Kingdom!

F. Summary.

1. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, who existed eternally in the past as the Word (or Message) of God to be the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King.
2. As Priest, Jesus died to pay for the sins of all mankind. His payment is credited to the account of those, and only those, who trust in Him.
3. He is returning to this earth to be King of Israel and King of the Earth. Only those who trust in Him and submit to His rule will be preserved alive to enter His Kingdom.
4. Those who do not trust Him and submit to His rule will be put to death and eventually banished to everlasting pain and darkness.
5. Each person is urged to make peace with God by trusting in His Anointed One and submitting to His rule.
6. The decision is yours.