

## The Ministry of the Lord Jesus

### Introduction

- In church history, the primary person to begin with is Jesus Christ.
  - He said it was His church and He would build it (Matt 16:18).
- We must look at the details of His life.
- There are different ways to divide it up.
  - His active and passive ministry (John)
  - His Galilean and Judean ministry (Matt, Mark, Luke)
  - His power and Passion (Mark).
- We also need understand the scholarly quest for the historical Jesus.
- We must also understand the identity of Jesus theologically.



## Jesus Preincarnate

- Jesus' existence did not begin in a manger in 4 B.C. He existed from eternity past and is as old as the Father – eternal (no beginning nor end).
- We see His preincarnate nature described in a number of passages.
  - John 1:1-3 (not confused with Gen 1:1) ; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:10 ; Colossians 1:5-17.
- In Genesis 1:26-27, we see the entire Trinity creating man and His image.
  - He who created flesh was the one who would also take it upon Himself.
- We see Christ manifested as the Angel of the Lord numerous times in the Old Testament.
  - Joshua 5:13-15 ; Daniel 3: 24-25.
  - Angel of the Lord and Jesus Christ : 1) visible representations of God. 2) Angel of the Lord appears nowhere in NT. 3) Both spoke as God. 4) Both receive worship. 5) Both bring judgment.



## The Incarnation

- This was the greatest event in history.
  - Every single promise rested first upon His incarnation.
- It occurred sometime between 6-4 B.C.
  - Calendars were not based on Christ's birth yet – not until 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.
  - Instead they were based on the founding of Rome – which was a guess since it was based on myths.
  - When we get to Christ's time, it was around 750 AUC (Latin for founding of Rome). This was Roman guesswork.
  - What we do not guess about is the death of Herod the Great. It is fixed and known for sure from Roman records as 4 B.C.
  - We also know that Herod died after Jesus' birth (Matt 2:19-20).
  - Since he killed those 2 and under, we narrow the birth down to 6-4 B.C. Conservatives = 4, moderates = 5, liberals = 6.



## Narrowing It Down

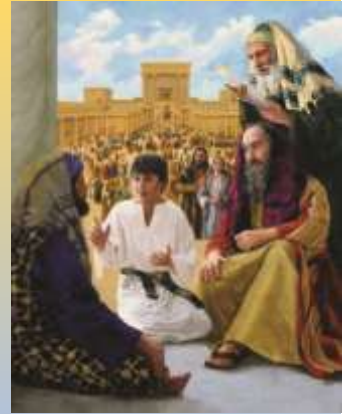
- At the start of Jesus' ministry in John 2:18-21 (after cleansing the Temple), the Jews said it took 46 years to build the Temple to its current state.
  - Josephus tells us Herod began building the Temple in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. Roman sources show Herod's reign to begin in 38 B.C. Thus, the Temple construction began in 20 B.C.
  - 46 years added to 20 B.C. puts us in A.D. 26 for this conversation in John.
  - Luke 3:23 tells us Jesus' ministry began at age 30. Subtract 30 from 26, you end up with -4, or in our case, 4 B.C.
- This is why conservatives favor 4 B.C.
  - Also add to this what Luke 3:1 tells us about the ministry of John the Baptist.
  - It's also worth considering Daniel 9:25.
- This calculating process is by no means perfect.

## Calendar Problems

- A tropical year is either 365 days, 5 hrs, 48 min, and 48 sec, or it is 365 days, 5 hrs, 49 min, and 12 sec. They are not sure and try to average it.
  - If we can't record it exactly today, neither could the ancients. They came close.
- Julius Caesar invented the Julian Calendar (46 B.C. or 708 AUC) which added a leap year to fix discrepancy.
  - Even this doesn't fix it. In centennial years we do not observe leap years, otherwise our calendar gets ahead on days.
- In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, John I (bishop of Rome) asked a Scythian monk to confirm when Easter is. Based on the Julian calendar, he divided history into the B.C. and A.D. (anno domini) divisions. He was off on Christ's birth by 4 years, due to calendar deficiencies.
- The Julian calendar is 11 minutes and 15 seconds too long. In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII reformed the Julian calendar by deleting 10 days that accumulated over the last 1600 years.
- Britain and its colonies (U.S. during time of Framers) jumped on the Gregorian calendar in 1752, deleted 11 days and don't recognize leap years on centennial years unless that year is divisible by 400.
- What's the point? Exact pinpointing is IMPOSSIBLE for us!!!!

## Jesus's Early Years

- We know very little about Jesus' early years and childhood.
  - Apocryphal accounts were written on the subject. They are clearly uninspired since first miracle was at Cana.
- We know of His miraculous conception and of His royal genealogy from Matthew and Luke.
- We assume He followed the trade of His step father Joseph since that was the norm.
  - We often assume it as carpentry, but the Greek word can just as easily refer to stone masonry. Either way, Jesus' trade was construction.
- The only account the Bible gives us of His young years was when He was 12 years old in Jerusalem.
  - Perhaps 12 years without a miracle caused Mary and Joseph to forget who their kid really was and why He was born.
  - This event may have been to remind them (Luke 2:46-52)
  - Luke 2:52 tells us He grew up in stature, just like any other human.



## Jesus's Earthly Ministry

- Conservatives tend to place its start between 26-27. If at 27, then it would be three years from 27 to 30.
- We learn the details of His ministry from the Gospels.
  - Matthew presented the gospel to the Jews by focusing on fulfilled Scripture.
  - Mark likely presented the gospel to Romans since it was the shortest and moves through the events quickly. (many latinisms)
  - Luke presented the gospel to the Gentiles (Greeks) as he focused on Jesus the man (compassion). It also was chronological.
  - John wrote his gospel to believers of all sorts and focused on Jesus as being God.
  - Jesus is also mentioned in a few secular records.



## Earthly Ministry as Presented in the Gospels

- Matthew arranges the ministry of Jesus in five discourses with narrative.
  - Some see it as corresponding the five books of the Torah.
- Matthew is particularly concerned with Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament—both prophecies and types.
- Like Mark and Luke, the focus is on a Galilean ministry that grows until Jesus heads to Jerusalem for the Passion.
- Ends with a clear presentation of the resurrection.



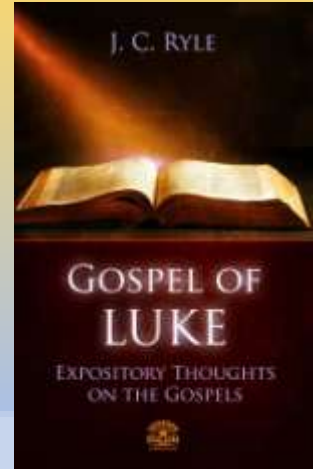
## Earthly Ministry as Presented in the Gospels

- Mark also focuses on a Galilean ministry and its growth.
- Mark, however, ultimately describes the chronology of Jesus's ministry with two aspects of His Messianic identity.
  - 1:1—8:30 focuses on the authority of the Messiah (signs and wonders that display His power).
  - 8:31—16:8 focuses on His role as the Suffering Servant.
  - The transition point is 8:30-31 where Peter declares Jesus is the Christ, but then Jesus predicts His sufferings and death.
- Mark implies the resurrection with the empty tomb.



## Earthly Ministry as Presented in the Gospels

- Luke also emphasizes the Galilean ministry.
- His purpose is to record a detailed and chronological account.
  - He provides a much fuller conception/birth narrative.
- He focuses much on the social dimensions of Jesus's teaching.
- He presents a clear presentation of the resurrection.
- He sets the reader up for the sequel—Acts.



## Earthly Ministry as Presented in the Gospels

- John presents Jesus's ministry in terms of active then passive ministry.
- The first part of His ministry was active.
  - He was active doing miracles and teaching.
  - In the active phase, when His enemies tried to capture Him, He could slip away or vanish.
- John 17:4 begins the passive phase.
  - He passively allowed the will of the Father to befall Him. He did only one miracle (healed the severed ear).
  - He did not fight back and did not allow His disciples to. He did not open His mouth against accusations.
  - The enemy got to do what it wanted to Him.
- Jesus was not helpless (remember the mob on its face), nor was it suicide. It was a passive ministry of obedience to the Father.
- In John 17:4 Jesus concluded the active phase by stating in the active voice, "I have glorified you by *completing* the work."
- In John 19:30 Jesus in the passive voice concludes the passive phase by saying, "*It is finished.*" This means the things God was going to do to Him were completed.
- Let us not forget the victory. He rose from the dead, performed signs, instructed the disciples for 40 days, and ascended to the Father's side.

## Earthly Ministry as Presented in the Gospels

- John focuses much of the ministry in Jerusalem, centered around the major Feasts of Israel.
- As such, he offers us key points missing from the Synoptic Gospels.
- Like Matthew, John leans heavily in Jewish theology.
- He ends with a clear presentation of the resurrection.



## Length of the Earthly Ministry

---

- How long was His ministry? Matthew, Mark, and Luke offer no help here.
- John mentions 3 Passovers – chps 2, 6, & 13.
  - This only provides for 2 years (medicine analogy). Some say the ministry was only 2 years because of this.
- John 5 mentions an unnamed feast. Some manuscripts have “a” and others have “the.”
  - If it is “the feast” then it can mean nothing other than Passover. If it is “a” feast, then it could possibly be Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles.
- Logically the only feast that justifiably would be called just as a feast would be Passover. The other two certainly would need to be identified, otherwise the Jews would never just assume it.
- The length of ministry depends on how many Passovers are in John.
- There is good reason to believe there to be 4 Passovers.

## Quest for the Historical Jesus

- The Old Quest

- It determined that Jesus should seem very different from a first century Jew.
- It sought to universalize his teachings into modernist European ideals.
- Albert Schweitzer effectively critiqued the project for what it was. Conveniently, every scholar of the old quest saw his own reflection when he described the historical Jesus.

- The New Quest

- It acknowledged the Jewish context and nature of Jesus, but minimized its significance. This culminated with the Jesus Seminar.
- Instead, it assumed modernist presuppositions and determined arbitrary rules for what the historical Jesus could and could not be like, and what He could and could not have said. They used colored beads!

## Quest for the Historical Jesus

- The Third Quest

- It properly locates Jesus in his first century Jewish context and consults the historical sources of early Judaism in order to compare what is known of Jesus to that material.
- Rather than the hypothetical form criticism of the Old Quest and the arbitrary and culturally located criteria of the New Quest, the Third Quest compares the Gospels to the available Jewish literature from the same period.
- THIS IS THE WAY!

- Second Temple Monotheism

- God as Creator
- YHWH as covenant God of Israel
- Monolatry

- New Testament presentation of Jesus is consistent historically with the doctrines and beliefs in Second Temple Judaism.

- Wisdom and the Word were within the unique identity of God.



## Understanding Jesus Theologically

- A plurality within the one identity of God was acceptable in 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Judaism (Wisdom and Word—Memra).
  - Shema allows for this.
- Furthermore, the OT introduces three figures that are divine.
  - God, in general, refers to the Father.
  - The Messiah is said to be divine—Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, and Micah 5:2.
  - The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God—Gen 1:2
- Though more can be said, this paints the overall picture of what the OT reveals. God is one, but the one God seems to include God, the Messiah, and the Holy Spirit.



In the Second Temple Era, some writers included the Word of God and the Wisdom of God within identity of the One God (F.T. Gen I; Ps. Jon. Gen III, XV).

## Understanding Jesus Theologically

- He is presented in the NT as a Messiah that is also divine.
- He clearly was a man (1 Tim 2:5).
- Yet, as a man He is presented as God.
  - He was worshiped even as a man (Matt 2:2; John 20:28).
  - He also forgave sins (Matt 9:2).
  - He is said to be the Creator (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-16).
  - He is identified as the YHWH of Israel (next slide)
- These are all the non-negotiables of 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Monotheism. Only God is Creator; only God is YHWH; only God is to be worshiped. Yet, Jesus is described as all 3.
  - The NT writers present the highest Christology possible.
  - This certainly refutes the old failed Hellenization Thesis.

## Jesus as YHWH

- In Exodus 3:14, God identifies Himself to Moses as I AM, or אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה.
  - This is related to the tetragrammaton YHWH, the name of God.
  - When the LXX was made, they translated *ehyeh-asher-ehyeh* to εγω ειμι, or *egō eimi*.
- In John 8:58 Jesus answered the same of Himself with Before Abraham was, I AM.
  - Jesus would have said the Hebrew, and John translated to Greek. Note the Jew's reaction in vv. 59.

Exo 3:14 και εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωυσῆν  
**Εγὼ εἰμι** ὁ ὢν· και εἶπεν Οὕτως  
 ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραηλ· Ὁ ὢν  
 ἀπέσταλ· κέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

John 8:58 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν |  
 λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι  
**ἐγὼ εἰμὶ.**

## Jesus as YHWH

- Eventually, the Jews stopped pronouncing יהוה (YHWH).
  - They substituted YHWH with the generic term, Lord, or אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*).
  - When the LXX was made, the translators translated *adonai* as κυριος or *kurios*.
- In the New Testament, Jesus was called κυριος many times.
  - Romans 10:9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.



## Jesus as YHWH

- שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:
- 1 Cor 8:6 – yet for us there is one God, the Father. All things are from him, and we exist for him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through him, and we exist through him.

## Basic Chronology of Jesus's Ministry

- Jesus ministered in Galilee with teaching and signs and wonders.
- He triumphantly enters Jerusalem and cleanses the Temple (this makes him a theological and political threat).
- He confounds the religious leaders from all parties.
- He institutes the Lord's Supper and announces the New Covenant.
- He is arrested, tried by the Sanhedrin, and crucified by Pontus Pilate.
- He died, was buried, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Day He rose from the dead.
- He spent 40 days teaching His disciples.
- He ascended to heaven 10 days before Pentecost

## Conclusion

- Much more could be said about Jesus' life and ministry.
- He likely was born in 4 B.C. and began His ministry in A.D. 26-27.
- Our main sources are the Gospels (all written in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century).
  - They tell a consistent story, but each with very different emphases.
- The first two historical quests were greatly misguided.
- The oldest documents present Jesus as the God-Man.
  - Creator; YHWH; and the one to be worshiped.
- In three years, this man Jesus changed the world more than all other men of history.
- He rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father.
- He will return for His church.