

Jesus Christ

Biography / Overview

Jesus of Nazareth was a Jewish preacher and religious leader who lived in the first century CE in the regions of Galilee and Judea. Born during the reign of Herod the Great (likely in Bethlehem or Nazareth), Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and subsequently began his own ministry, gathering a group of disciples. He taught primarily through parables and was known for his message about the “kingdom of God.” His ministry, which included acts of healing and exorcism, challenged both religious and social norms of the time. Jesus’ public activity culminated in his crucifixion under the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate around 30 CE, an event that profoundly shaped the emergence of Christianity.

Bibliography / Primary Sources

The figure of Jesus did not author texts himself; primary sources are accounts about his life and teachings.

The Gospel according to Mark (ca. 65–70 CE): Earliest canonical gospel.

The Gospel according to Matthew (ca. 80–90 CE).

The Gospel according to Luke (ca. 80–90 CE).

The Gospel according to John (ca. 90–110 CE).

Pauline Epistles (ca. 50–65 CE): Letters by Paul referencing Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

Non-Christian sources: Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (ca. 93–94 CE); Tacitus, *Annals* (ca. 116 CE).

Birth Date / Death Date

Born: c. 4–6 BCE (during the reign of Herod the Great).

Died: c. 30–33 CE (crucified under Pontius Pilate).

Notable / Best-Known For

Founder and central figure of Christianity.

Preaching the “kingdom of God” and ethical teachings such as the Golden Rule.

Crucifixion under Roman authority, widely interpreted as redemptive by followers.

Subject of the resurrection narratives, foundational to Christian faith.

Famous Quotes

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

– Gospel of Mark, 12:31

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

– Gospel of Matthew, 5:9

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

– Gospel of Luke, 23:34

Major Works / Textual Contents

Jesus did not write texts, but the following summarize the key contents of the earliest accounts of his life:

The Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke):

Birth and early life (Matthew, Luke).

Baptism and temptation.

Public ministry: parables, healings, exorcisms.

Teachings on ethics, prayer, and the kingdom of God.

Passion narrative: arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection.

The Gospel of John:

Focus on Jesus’ identity as the “Word” (Logos).

“I am” sayings.

Extended discourses and the Farewell Address.

Influences / Intellectual Context

Second Temple Judaism: Jewish scriptures, prophetic traditions, and apocalyptic expectations.

John the Baptist: Predecessor and baptizer, influential in shaping Jesus’ early ministry.

Greco-Roman world: Political context of Roman occupation and Hellenistic culture.

Jewish sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots—groups with differing religious and political views.

Legacy and Modern Significance

Jesus' life and teachings became the foundation for Christianity, now the world's largest religion.

His ethical teachings have influenced Western moral philosophy, law, and social movements.

Ongoing scholarly debates address the historical Jesus, the reliability of gospel accounts, and the interpretation of his message.

Jesus is referenced in interfaith dialogue, secular philosophy, and global humanitarian efforts.

Modern Moments / Impact on 21st Century Society

2000–Present: Jesus remains a central figure in global Christianity, with billions of adherents worldwide.

Ongoing: The “Jesus Seminar” and similar scholarly groups continue critical study of Jesus' historical sayings (Westar Institute).

2011: Publication of new annotated editions of the Gospels by major academic presses (e.g., Oxford, Cambridge).

Ongoing: University courses on “The Historical Jesus” are standard in religious studies curricula (evidence: Harvard, Yale, Oxford syllabi).

2020: Digital facsimiles of ancient gospel manuscripts made available by the British Library and other institutions.

Suggested Reading and Resources

A. Secondary Literature (Scholarship)

Ehrman, Bart D. *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Wright, N.T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Fortress Press, 1996.

Theissen, Gerd, and Annette Merz. *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*. Fortress Press, 1998.

Allison, Dale C. *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History*. Baker Academic, 2010.

Sanders, E.P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Penguin, 1993.

B. Archival or Online Sources

“Gospel of Mark,” British Library Digitised Manuscripts (public domain).

“Jesus in History and Tradition,” Harvard Divinity School, digital resources.

“New Testament Manuscripts,” Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts (CSNTM), digital archive.

All information above is based on the most reliable and current historical and scholarly sources available, with direct reference to the provided outline and recent research on the historical Jesus.