

Jesus' Life, Message and Ministry

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1.0 Introduction

This paper highlights on Jesus life, message and Ministry. Further, it explores briefly about the theme of Jesus as a healer (with personal reference) and personal view of Jesus. This exposure is aimed at bringing out my personal understanding of Gospel exhortations transformed into my day to day life.

2.0 Jesus' Life, Message and Ministry

2.1 Jesus' Life

Jesus (also called Christ which means king or Messiah) was born in Israel over 2000 years ago. For his first thirty years, Jesus lived a traditional Jewish life, working as a carpenter. During this time, all of Israel was under Caesar's Roman dictatorship, including Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, and Nazareth, where he was raised. In his thirties, Jesus began his public teaching and display of recorded miracles. Over a three year period, despite his efforts to keep a low profile, Jesus' reputation spread nation wide. The Roman governors and rulers of Israel's provinces and the leaders of the Jewish people (the religious counsels) took note of him

Many have asked "Who is Jesus Christ?" Jesus' most controversial act was that he repeatedly claimed to be God, which was a direct violation of the Jewish law. Therefore the religious leaders asked the Roman government to execute him. In each of several official trials, the Romans found that he was not guilty of breaking any Roman law. Even the Jewish leaders recognized that other than Jesus' claim to be God, Jesus followed the Jewish law perfectly. Still the religious leaders, using the argument of political disfavor, persuaded Pilate, a Roman governor of the Southern province of Israel, to authorize an execution.

Jesus was brutally tortured and then hung by his hands, which were nailed to a horizontal wooden beam (cross). This method of execution restricted the airflow to his lungs, killing him in three hours. However, according to more than 500 witnesses, Jesus returned from the dead three days later, and over the next 40 days journeyed in both the southern and northern provinces of Israel. To many, this was conclusive proof that Jesus' claims to be God were real. Then Jesus returned to Jerusalem, the city where he was recently executed, and according to witnesses, he left the earth alive by rising up into the sky.

As a result of these miraculous events, the number of his followers increased dramatically. Only a few months later in that same city of Jerusalem one record states that some 3000 new followers were added in a single day. The religious leaders responded by trying to stomp out Jesus' followers. Many of these people chose to die rather than deny their belief that Jesus was truly God.

Within 100 years, people throughout the Roman empire (Asia Minor, Europe) became followers of Jesus. In 325 AD, the following of Jesus, Christianity, became the official religion of the Roman Emperor Constantine. Within 500 years, even Greece's temples of Greek gods were transformed into churches for followers of Jesus. Although some of Jesus' messages and teachings were diluted or miscommunicated through the expansion of a religious institution, Jesus' original words and life still speak loudly for themselves.

2.2 Jesus' Message and Ministry

Jesus' message in general included the following:

God loves you and is with you

Love one another

Immense value of each person

Good news: kingdom of God has come to earth

Reality of judgment to heaven or hell

God forgives those who ask

However, a question perhaps we should ask ourselves: what was the major message of Jesus? Many people would answer this question by saying something about love, because we rightly associate Jesus' teaching with love. But, as it turns out, love is not the core of his message, though it is close. What Jesus actually proclaimed, first and foremost, was not that we should love, but something else. We find a succinct summary of this "something else" in the first description of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of Mark: *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news'" (Mark 1:14-15).*

The phrase "kingdom of God" appears 53 times in the New Testament gospels, almost always on the lips of Jesus. The synonymous phrase, "kingdom of heaven," appears 32 times in the Gospel of Matthew. Throughout the accounts of Jesus' ministry, he is always talking about the kingdom of God. Many of his parables explain something about this kingdom: it is like mustard seed, a treasure, a merchant looking for pearls, and a king who gave a banquet (Matt 13:44-47; 22:2). Jesus even defines his purpose in light of the kingdom: "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43). Thus as we hold the message and ministry of Jesus to be Love (God and Neighbour), we have to link it to the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom we are ultimately meant to attain, a Kingdom without whose existence we cannot be. Our hearts are restless till we attain this Kingdom (One with the Father). This is a Kingdom that I believe in as I unite myself with the World, only as a pilgrim in a journey.

3.0 How Jesus Healed Me

All through my youth, Jesus was just a historical, albeit beloved, figure to me. Whenever I would think of Him on the cross and thought of the perfect life He'd lived on earth, I thought it was something which only He could be expected to do and that I could live my life how I pleased; somehow it would be alright. Shortly after I turned 20, Jesus became a personal saviour to me. I'd had a very sheltered upbringing so it was hard for me to repent, as I believed I was "good" and didn't need to repent and accept Jesus; that I didn't deserve to be condemned as a sinner. However, inherently I knew that I was a little selfish and self-centered. The turning point came when I attended a prayer fellowship organized at Kisaju SDA Church about 5 years ago. The experience left a mark within me. I accepted Jesus as a personal savior. I started looking at life and world with eyes full of compassion and a dire need to extend my generosity to others.

Although I took a courageous step in my spiritual life, I found it still hard to maintain the pace. My life has been getting more challenging since that day, mostly because of my family not sharing my view of my salvation and relationship to God and ridiculing me. But I am truly convinced that this is the way to go, I would never go back to what I was before because God is with me every day. No matter how tough everything around me gets, I never feel completely alone. I really feel deep down that I have no excuse to despair. I see His blessings everyday and I have no regrets. I am more free now than ever before. I am relieved of the burden I used to carry, and I believe in a continuous process of Jesus' healing.

4.0 My Personal View of Jesus: As a Redeemer

For me, Jesus is a redeemer, saviour who forgives us all our sins. I believe that to ask Jesus's forgiveness is to receive it. Thus, Jesus washes away past sins. He redeems us from all our past transgressions. Forgiveness of sins is so important to Jesus, that he instituted two formal mechanisms by which sin could be washed away: Baptism and Reconciliation. In Baptism (Mt 28:19), we are initiated into the Church. This necessitates that our past transgressions will not be held against us, so our sins must be forgiven. We are born again (Jn 3:1-8) into Jesus (Rom 6:3). Our old lives are washed away (I Pet 3:21), and replaced with new lives in God. However, we do not always live up to the expectations of our new life. For this, Jesus instituted Reconciliation (Mt 16:19, Mt 18:18, Jn 20:21-23). I find my peace and solace in the redeeming presence of Jesus.

Reference

Roberts, M.D. (2004). *What was the Message of Jesus?* Available at <http://www.markdroberts.com/htmlfiles/resources/jesusmessage.htm>.

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