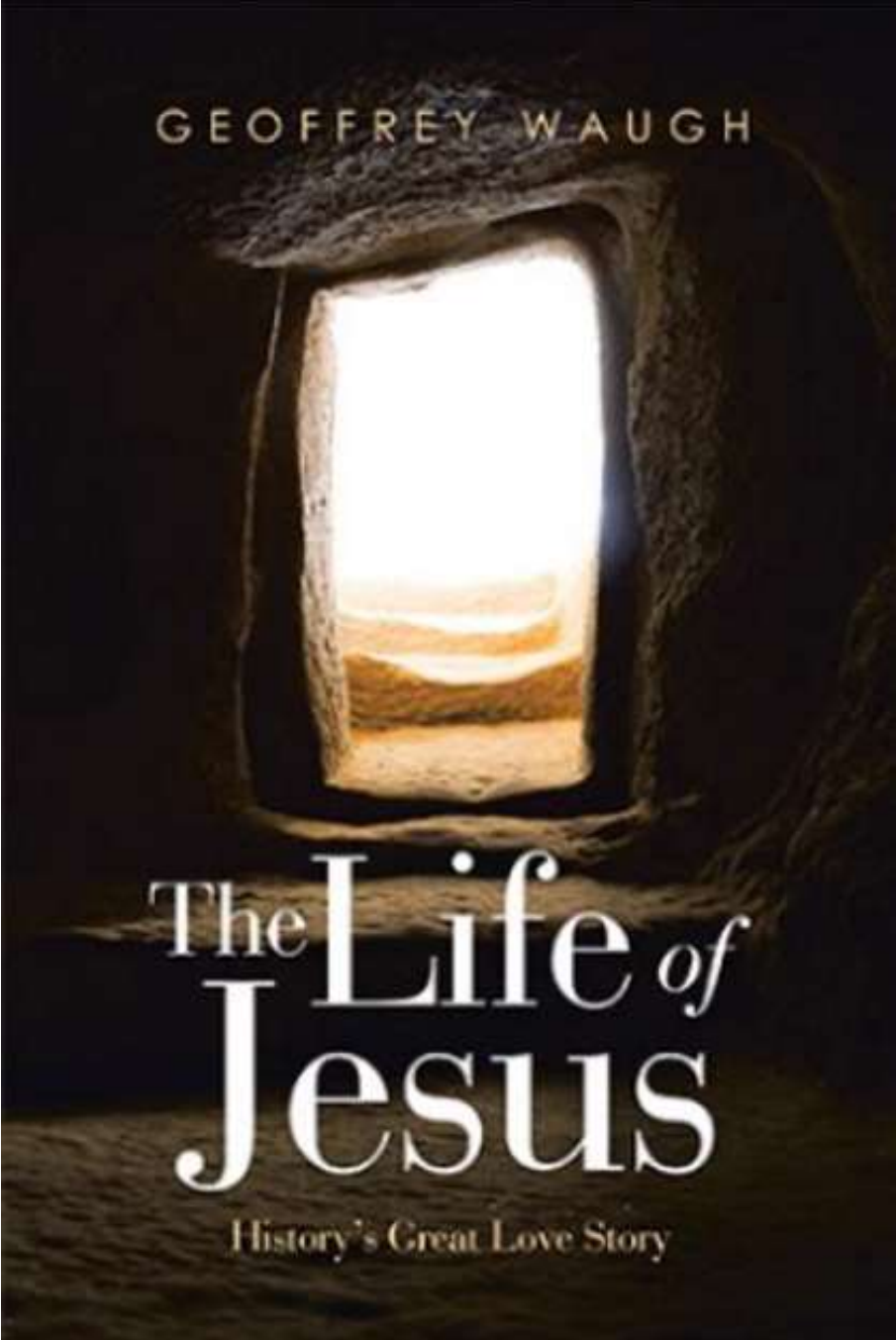


GEOFFREY WAUGH



The Life of
JESUS

History's Great Love Story

Sample

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	7
<i>Introduction</i>	9
<i>1 Birth and Boyhood</i>	13
<i>2 Ministry Begins</i>	25
<i>3 First to Second Passovers</i>	35
<i>4 Second to Third Passovers</i>	43
<i>5 Passover to Pentecost</i>	49
<i>Conclusion</i>	73
<i>Discussion Questions</i>	75
<i>Appendix 1: Chronology Chart</i>	77
<i>Appendix 2: The Feast Days</i>	89
<i>Appendix 3: The Gospels</i>	95
<i>Appendix 4: Alternative Chronology</i>	103
<i>Appendix 5: The Shroud of Turin</i>	107
<i>Appendix 6: Publications</i>	109

Endorsements

A most helpful telling of the life of Jesus using the biblical text and adding some background and charts. Anyone using this book will be enriched.
Rev Dr John Olley, Research Fellow, Morling College, Australia

Geoff Waugh has written a very helpful devotional book about the Saviour of the world who is also the loving presence in believers. Having known Geoff for over sixty years I can testify that every word written proceeds from his own heart of love for Jesus and for all God's children. Geoff has avoided trying to manufacture some theory or new twist to make the book more colourful. He has used Scripture as his main source and has been faithful to both the divinity and humanity of Jesus as expressed in the Gospels. His use of chronology for headings and the many sub-headings makes the book simpler to absorb, even for an enquirer or new believer. It reminds me a little of Leon Morris's beautiful book The Lord from Heaven. I warmly commend this book.
Rev Dr Tony Cupit, Former Director of the Baptist World Alliance.

This is a very informative, amazing, and powerful book. Thanks to the author for investing hours of research, expressed with his masterful command of language. Alex Johnson

This is a wonderful book and can be read over and over. Kerry Rawson

I keep this book with my Bible. It is especially helpful when reading through the Gospels. Cathy Hartwig

The book is beautifully written and I have learned and understood a lot. I am recommending this book. Kattie Mayson

I read your book last night. This is a great book. Thanks for writing this for all of us. Nabeel Sharoon, Pakistan, translator of this book into Urdu, Hindi, Sindhi, Pakistani Punjabi and Indian Punjabi (see renewaljournal.com).

**For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but may have eternal life**

John 3:16

**We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us
and we ought to lay down our lives for one another**

1 John 3:16

**No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one's life for one's friends
[Jesus' words on the Jewish day he died]**

John 15:13

Preface

Why would such a good man who loved so profoundly and helped so many people be killed? Why did he provoke opposition?

If God walked among us in the person of his Son, why would people want to kill him? Why did so many vehemently oppose him?

That puzzled me as a boy. It still does.

The greatest love story the world has ever seen led to the excruciating death of crucifixion.

Many people have given their lives for other people as soldiers do in war. They die for others, defending home and country. But Jesus' death was different. God's Son chose to die for us because of his immense love for us. He took our place. His death gives us life. He is the perfect, sinless, eternal sacrifice for us. His blood cleanses us from all our sin as we trust in him. We are forgiven.

But why did so many good people, good religious people, hate him? That puzzled and fascinated me, so I explore that mystery in this book. I wanted to write a summary overview that people of all ages could read.

I always believed in Jesus. Even as a small boy I loved to hear and then read stories about him. He was so unique, so different. I believed his story as a boy and trusted in him. I still do and I hope you do too.

Jesus did what was good. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, set people free from addictions and evil, performed miracles, and even raised dead people. Huge crowds followed him and wanted him to be their king.

Now billions follow him, captivated by his love, the greatest love story of all. You can do that also. I invite you to simply pray something like this: Thank you Lord for all you've done. Forgive me for any wrong in my life. I trust in you and give my life to you.

Introduction

The year on our calendar or diary reminds us of when Jesus was born, approximately. We count the years from his arrival. So when you look at your diary or calendar you can be reminded again of Jesus.

They called him Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus) of Nazareth, the same name as Moses' famous general who led God's people into their Promised Land. *Yeshua* means God saves, or God is salvation.

That name comes to us in English through many translations from *Yeshua* or *Y'shua* in Hebrew and Aramaic, then translated into *Iesous* in Greek, then to *IESVS* in Latin and later as **IESUS** as printed in the first edition of the King James Bible in 1611. Later that century 'J' replaced the 'I' so the English name became **Jesu** (vocative) and **Jesus** (nominative) but eventually as just **Jesus** in English. Other languages have translations such as **Jesu**, **Yesu**, and **Isa**.

English translations of the Bible used the name **Jesus** for Joshua/Jesus of Nazareth, and the name **Joshua** for others with that same name.¹ So in English the name Jesus became unique and sacred for Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. The angel Gabriel announced his name before his birth to both Mary his mother and to Joseph who married Mary.² Gabriel explained that Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus) had that name because he would save his people from their sins.

The great love story had begun. Jesus came to save us and give us eternal life.

His followers recorded that story of his life and his love in the good news of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The rest of the New Testament explores the mystery and wonder of that amazing life and love.

Scholars have a bewildering array of theories about the Bible and about who wrote what, and when, and where, and why. I'm content to run with traditional explanations that have been used through most of history.

¹ *Iesous* (Yeshua) is translated as Joshua in these verses: Luke 3:29; Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8.

² Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21.

Jesus' unique and wonderful life, his brutal death for us, and his powerful resurrection, all reveal his and God's eternal love for us all. You could pause and thank him right now even as you read this.

John's Gospel emphasizes God's eternal love revealed in Jesus. It includes the most famous passage in the Bible:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.³

That love, powerfully shown on the cross, has transformed billions of lives, restoring believers to an intimate and eternal relationship with God.

A trinity of three physical metaphors help me to be constantly aware of, and grateful for, God's presence with us always:

(1) Light surrounds you. By it you can read this. The sun always shines, even when it's hidden from us. Light shines around us though we may be unaware of it. God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. We can live in his light.

(2) Blood pumps through your body right now, cleansing and healing. We may be unaware of it until reactions like alarm alert us to our beating heart. Jesus' blood cleanses from all sin, always. We can trust him for he is with us.

(3) We may breathe without being aware of it, or we can be aware and take deep breaths, as you may have done just now! Breath purifies our lungs and body. God is Spirit and like breath or fresh breeze, he can purify us.

May the light of God's love breathe life in you right now.

We've been made in God's image to have an eternal, loving relationship with him that even transcends death. We can know and experience God's unconditional love no matter how far we stray from him. Those who stray most are often the most grateful for his forgiveness and love. We all stray in many ways and we all need forgiveness and we can and should be truly grateful.

³ John 3:16-17 (NKJV).

God knows and loves us as we are. That makes praying or talking to him easy because he already knows our failures and struggles and welcomes us just as we are. The more honestly we come to him the more he can transform us.

If we have trouble believing we can at least say, “God, if you’re there, help me.”

Some thoughts may get in the way when we pray or want to talk to God. Just give him those thoughts. He already knows all about it and loves us as we are.

If we reject God’s love and mercy by ignoring him and going our own way, we condemn ourselves to eternal darkness away from his light and love.

If we accept his love and forgiveness by believing in him, by trusting him, he gives us life, his eternal life. That makes us new. We are transformed.

Vast numbers of people worldwide of all faiths, and of none, have prayed the prayer in the popular hymn by Charlotte Elliot, ‘Just as I am’ which includes these adapted verses:

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me
And that You bid me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fighting and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

God welcomes us and we can all pray that prayer. A title for Jesus, as in that song, is the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away our sin.

The Life of Jesus is a vast topic with millions of books written about it. I hope my small contribution gives you a helpful overview. I quote from the New Revised Standard Version unless indicated otherwise, and include many footnotes that you can explore to discover more.

Best of all, of course, are the inspired Gospels now in over 700 different languages in Bible translations and a further 3,500 languages have Bible portions, especially the Gospels. Read and respond to those Gospels.

1 Birth and Boyhood

It began at the beginning, this great love story, for “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”⁴

Why did he do that? For us.

He did it for you. He loved you so much he created you to know and enjoy him now as you read this, and forever. He offers you intimate, infinite love. He created you through the wondrous union of your parents’ ecstasy.

He made the earth for us to inhabit and care for and rule. He made the heavens (plural) for us to inherit, the physical firmament and also the realms of vast, eternal glory prepared especially for us.⁵

He created us free to accept or reject his astounding love. Sadly we went our own way. We all, like sheep, went astray. We all turned to our own way. So God laid on his Servant, his Son, all our iniquity.⁶ God saves us through his Son in their great love for us all. You could pause and thank him now as you read this.

In the beginning Adam and Eve enjoyed intimate, unashamed relationship with God and each other. Then, like us, they believed lies and went their own way, losing Paradise. But God still blessed and sustained them and their descendants who chose to love him and live for him. Sadly only a few did.

Noah and his family loved and obeyed God and he rescued them from the great flood. People ridiculed him for obeying God and building a huge boat on dry ground – not even in a dry dock. The rainbow became the sign of God’s covenant to Noah and his descendants including us.

Abram, a wealthy sheik from the wide fertile Tigris and Euphrates valleys in western Asia, north-east of the Arabian Peninsula (now Iraq), loved and obeyed God. Renamed Abraham (God’s friend) he journeyed to the Promised Land, now called Israel from the name given to his grandson who wrestled with an angel or with the Lord.⁷ Circumcision became the covenant sign for them and for their descendants through whom God would provide his salvation for us all.

⁴ Genesis 1:1.

⁵ John 14:1-6; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

⁶ Isaiah 53:6. See Isaiah 52:13-53:12, the fourth Servant Song, along with Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-7.

⁷ Genesis 17:5; 32:28; 35:9-10.

Abraham and his descendants walked that verdant Promised Land as did Jesus and his followers. So did our family for a month in 1981-82.⁸

King David reigned there for 40 years from around 1000 BC, described as a man after God's own heart who would do what God wanted.⁹ That's an amazing picture of God's love and grace for flawed people like David. His descendants ruled from his capital, Jerusalem, till the fall of their kingdom to Babylon. The human Jesus was descended from David through Mary, as was Mary's husband Joseph, also a descendant of the royal line of David.

God blessed his people through history when they remained faithful to him but sadly, like us, they often went their own way, not God's way. The northern kingdom of Israel fell captive to Assyria by 722 BC as did the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon from 597 BC. Then Cyrus of Persia allowed the exiles in captivity to return from 538 BC. Babylonian armies took captives in waves of exiles, and the exiles returned in various groups, then speaking Aramaic, a Semitic language similar to their Hebrew Scriptures. Their temple in Jerusalem lay in ruins for 70 years from 586 BC to 516 BC. The returning exiles became known as Jews, a term derived from the former kingdom of Judah.

Alexander the Great's conquests established Greek culture and language in Israel from around 333 BC, eventually sparking the Maccabean revolt from 165 BC with the Jews gaining independence from 134 BC.

Their independence lasted less than a century till 63 BC when warring brothers appealed to Rome, and Roman armies then invaded and killed 12,000 people, including temple priests, in the siege of Jerusalem. Rome then ruled its province of Judea, also named from the previous kingdom of Judah.

Those searing memories simmered strong in the Israel of Jesus' day when Jews longed for their Messiah to deliver them. Radicals often attacked the Roman occupying armies. Rome retaliated swiftly and brutally. Their armies slaughtered thousands, with hundreds nailed to crosses as in a rebellion led by Judas the Galilean in AD 6 when Jesus was a boy.¹⁰

Jesus' elderly relatives the old priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth lived near Jerusalem, and Zechariah had been literally dumfounded while offering incense in the temple during his roster when the angel Gabriel told him they

⁸ See *Exploring Israel* in General Books and Biography on renewaljournal.com

⁹ 1 Samuel 13:13-14; Acts 13:22

¹⁰ Acts 5:36-37.

would have a son to be named John. Zechariah spoke again nine months later at his son's birth when he announced that the boy's name was John.¹¹

Six months after that temple encounter, Gabriel appeared again, this time to Mary in the northern hills of Nazareth. He announced that Mary would conceive by the Holy Spirit and her son would be called Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus), meaning 'God saves' or 'God is salvation.'

Mary's pregnancy created a problem for her espoused husband-to-be Joseph. Being a good man he decided to separate or divorce quietly and not make a fuss now Mary was pregnant. An angel intervened in a dream and explained about the miraculous pregnancy and that Mary's son would be named Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus) because he would save his people from their sins. Matthew wrote that it fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel'
which means, 'God is with us.' (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 9:6)

The great love story burst into history through that holy, miraculous conception. Excited at her news, Mary journeyed about 100km (64 miles) south to visit her relatives Elizabeth and Zechariah near Jerusalem. Old Elizabeth declared that her baby John leapt in her womb when she heard Mary's news.¹² Mary stayed with Elizabeth and her dumb husband for three months till John was born (when Zechariah spoke again). They believed Gabriel's word that John would, in the spirit of Elijah, announce the coming of the Lord. Those two women, supernaturally blessed, carried the wonder of God's loving purposes in their wombs.

This came in the fullness of time.¹³ Previous history pointed to Jesus' coming as the Messiah, the Christ, God's Son. We now date history from that birth.

¹¹ Luke 1:5-24.

¹² Luke 1:26-45.

¹³ Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10.

His Birth

Historian Luke gives us details of the birth. The Roman Empire declared a census and all the men (the ones they counted then) had to go to their place of origin. Joseph, descended from King David, had to go to Bethlehem, David's home town. So pregnant Mary journeyed south once again, this time with Joseph to Bethlehem which nestled in the hills 12km (8 miles) south of Jerusalem. Today Bethlehem is like a southern suburb of the modern sprawling city of Jerusalem.

Luke's story identifies the time of that census and Jesus' birth. Around 500 years later in AD 525 a monk named Dionysius Exiguus introduced the AD system (*anno domini*, Latin for 'in the year of the Lord') with BC used for the years Before Christ. Modern reckoning places Christ's birth at around 4 or 6 BC. In recent years many publications use the alternative Common Era, CE, and 'Before Common Era, BCE. It's very significant that the Common Era dates from the time of the birth of Jesus.

Relatives in crowded Bethlehem had no room in their guest room so Joseph and Mary used a stable and rested their tiny baby boy in an animals' feeding box, a manger. Modern translations correctly note that there was no room in the guest room so Mary gave birth to her firstborn son in the stable. "She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them."¹⁴ The tradition of no room in the 'inn' dates from the King James Version translation of 1611.

Shepherds in the nearby hills around Bethlehem had quite a night! They saw and heard an angel announce the unique birth, directing them to the baby in the manger. The angel announced a Saviour, the Messiah and Lord, born in the town of David. To their further astonishment a host of angels suddenly appeared as well, all giving glory to God.

Those shepherds found the baby in the stable and began telling everyone the amazing things they had seen and heard. It's interesting and significant that the unblemished lambs being prepared for the annual sacrifices in the Temple were born and shepherded among the flocks of Bethlehem. A title for Jesus is the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for us.

¹⁴ Luke 2:7 (NIV).

People in those times often overlooked shepherds, regarding them as inferior, as was young David before them in those same hills. There Samuel anointed David to be king and there David's greater Son was born king.¹⁵

Joseph and Mary stayed on in Bethlehem, Joseph's ancestral town. Carpenters could find work readily for there were always homes and furniture needing to be built or repaired.

Surprisingly, about a year or just over a year later, Wise Men, astrologers from the East, turned up at their home in Bethlehem. They had been tracking an unusual star and believed it signified the birth of a great king. Naturally they went to the capital, Jerusalem, looking for the new king, to King Herod's astonishment and alarm. The scholars he consulted said that their great king would be from Bethlehem. Scholars were familiar with the messianic prophecies of Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah (both prophesying about the promised Messiah), speaking and writing before the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722 BC, but promising a remnant would return who would see God's eternal kingdom established. They knew Micah 4:1-5 and 5:1-5 (without chapter and verse then as those were added to Greek and other translations from 1551). It included this prophecy:

² But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;

⁵ and he shall be the one of peace.
(Micah 5:2-5)

Another well-known messianic prophecy from 700 years before its fulfilment about a great Davidic king declared:

¹⁵ 1 Samuel 16:11-13.

For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the increase of *His* government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.
(Isaiah 9:6-7 NKJV)

The Wise Men and their entourage saw the star shining over the house in Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem, and worshipped the baby king there. They gave Mary and Joseph invaluable gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, which certainly helped them through their sudden refugee status.

A dream warned those international visitors not to report back to Herod, as he had requested, so they took another route back east, bypassing Jerusalem.

An angel appeared again to Joseph in a dream, warning him of Herod's plan to destroy the baby king. The angel told Joseph to escape to Egypt and stay there until he was told to return. They packed quickly and left that night.

Matthew tells how in his fury Herod killed the boys up to two years old in Bethlehem. Herod had a reputation for killing anyone threatening his rule including three of his own sons and one of his wives.

Jewish historian Flavius Josephus described the infamous king Herod the Great as a successful builder in his youth who became increasingly paranoid and ruthless during the final decade of his 36-year reign. He renovated and expanded the Second Temple built by returning exiles around 516 BC, restoring it to the size of the First Temple built by Solomon, and his teams eventually doubled the size of the sandstone Temple Mount with the Antonia fortress at its northern end. His many palace fortresses included one in Jerusalem and another at Masada by the Dead Sea, the place of the last stand of Jews against the Roman invasion of AD 70. Herod the Great, from an Idumaeon father, raised as a Jew, governed under Rome's rule.

His Boyhood

The young boy became a refugee, around a year old, escaping Herod's wrath by fleeing with Mary and Joseph to Egypt. So it is likely that Jesus had an early multi-cultural and multi-lingual boyhood among the Jewish diaspora based in Cairo in Egypt. They remained there until after Herod's death.

Then in another dream an angel informed Joseph of the death of those who wanted the child killed and directed him back to the land of Israel. God warned him in a dream so he did not return to Judea where Archelaus, Herod's son ruled, but instead returned again to Nazareth in Galilee.

The family became well-known around Nazareth. The trade of carpenter can also be translated as builder, artisan, stone worker, and metal worker. Jesus (Joshua) and his brothers James (Jacob in Greek), Joseph, Simon and Judah (or Jude) would learn the family business and care for their sisters. Imagine your older brother being as wise, honest, caring and loving as was Jesus. The townspeople knew him as a carpenter and the son of a carpenter.¹⁶

As adults, after Jesus' death and resurrection, those brothers and other relatives such as Mary and Mary's sister and her sons joined the company of Jesus' followers. James (Jacob) and Judah (Jude) wrote short, strong, practical, pastoral letters to guide believers, now included in our Bibles.

Jesus walked to Jerusalem regularly. Devout Jews journeyed to Jerusalem for each of their three major feasts, Passover and Pentecost around April-May and Tabernacles in October. Jesus attended the Passover feast as a boy of 12, spending extra days in the temple after the annual festival, discussing the Scriptures he had come to fulfil. The scholars were amazed at his understanding and his questions.

Boys of 12, then as now, could recite large passages of their Scriptures including from the Torah (the five books of Moses) and the Psalms as well as the Prophets. They would be questioned about their understanding and could submit their own questions to the priests and scholars. No wonder Jesus stayed an extra three days in those temple discussions and was surprised that his 'parents' didn't know where he would be. He gave them a loving reminder about his heavenly Father when Mary said "Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."¹⁷

¹⁶ Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55.

¹⁷ Luke 2:41-52.

A pure, strong, alert and gracious boy, Jesus studied his destiny as revealed in the Scriptures and continually embraced his Father's loving purpose for him. Growing as a teenager he remained loyal and subject to his human parents while always fulfilling his heavenly Father's will.

He would know the significance of those annual Passover celebrations. They not only recalled God's mighty and loving mercy in saving his people from slavery in Egypt, but also pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of God's Son as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Exodus 12 tells the story of the first Passover.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ² This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³ Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴ If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷ They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰ You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹ This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:1-13)

The unblemished lamb, killed in the late afternoon of the 14th of Nisan would be eaten at the Passover or Seder meal on 15th of Nisan that same evening because the new day began after sunset.

That day was the first day of a week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which Jesus and his family and friends would celebrate annually in Jerusalem, beginning with the Passover meal, eating the sacrificial Paschal lamb.

Passover, a spring festival, begins at the full moon after the northern vernal equinox. In the Northern Hemisphere the vernal equinox falls around March 20 or 21 as the sun crosses the equator going north, the first day of the month of Nisan.

So the Feast began on the 15th and ended on the 21st of Nisan (usually early April). All leaven, whether in bread or other mixture, was prohibited and they ate only unleavened bread. It symbolized both the Hebrews' suffering while in bondage, and their haste when they left Egypt in the Exodus.

Jesus participated in the annual festivals in Jerusalem, particularly those associated with the three of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Through his youth and into manhood, Jesus would journey to Jerusalem at least three times each year to celebrate these feasts, as did all the devout men of Israel.

God gave Moses the dates and details of the annual festivals as summarised in Leviticus 23. Here is a brief overview of those festivals.

- 1 Passover (*Pesach*) - *Nisan 14-15* (March/April)
- 2 Unleavened Bread (*Chag Hamotzi*) - *Nisan 15-22*
- 3 First Fruits (*Yom Habikkurim*) - *Nisan 16-17*
- 4 Pentecost (*Shavuot*) - *Sivan 6-7* (May/June)
- 5 Trumpets (*Yom Teruah*) - *Tishri 1* (September/October)
- 6 Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) - *Tishri 10*
- 7 Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) - *Tishri 15-22*

The Spring Festivals

(1) Passover. The festival year began with the full moon at Passover on the 14th day of the first month (Nisan 14) when the unblemished lamb was slain, celebrating how the angel of death ‘passed over’ the homes with the blood of the lamb on their door post and lintel. Jesus is our Passover Lamb of God.

(2) Unleavened Bread. This feast began on the next day (Nisan 15) and lasted for seven days. They ate only food without yeast or leaven for that week. Jesus lived without sin, unblemished and pure.

(3) First Fruits. Celebrated on the day after the Sabbath, they brought the early crops of wheat and barley to wave the sheaf before the Lord. They sacrificed Passover lambs on the 14th of Nisan, then the first day of Unleavened Bread was the 15th with the Feast of First Fruits celebrated after the Sabbath. Jesus rose on that day, the first fruit of everlasting life.

(4) Pentecost. On the Sunday after the seventh Sabbath (50 days after the Passover Sabbath) they offered two loaves of bread with leaven/yeast and new meat offerings, marking the beginning of the summer harvest. God’s Spirit was poured out on that day after Jesus’ death and resurrection.

The Autumn/Fall Festivals

(5) Trumpets. The 1st day of the seventh month (Tishri 1) was celebrated with blowing the ram’s horn. The trumpet was the signal for the field workers to come into the Temple. One day, the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised, and we shall be changed at the Lord’s return. (1 Corinthians 15:52)

(6) Atonement. This highest of holy days fell on the 10th day of the seventh month. A day of fasting and sacrifices, it was the only time once a year when the High Priest sprinkled blood of the sacrifice on the golden mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies behind the thick curtain in the tabernacle and then later in the temple. The priests released a goat, dedicated to God, into freedom, symbolically carrying the people’s sins away, never to return. That’s how we got the term scapegoat.¹⁸ Jesus is our atoning sacrifice and takes our sin away.

¹⁸ Leviticus 16; 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7-11.

(7) Tabernacles. The 15th day of the seventh month commenced a week of celebrating in booths, a reminder of God's care for them during the 40 years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. He led them with a bright cloud above the tabernacle and a pillar of fire at night. He leads us by his Spirit.

A Winter Festival

The Feast of Dedication (Hanukah) in December celebrated the cleansing of the temple in 165 BC when olive oil burned for eight days during the Maccabean revolt against the Greek empire. Jesus attended this optional feast before his final Passover sacrifice the following April.

Throughout his youth and into manhood, Jesus would journey with his family and friends from Galilee, along the wide Jordan valley, to Jericho and up the hills into Jerusalem for the three main annual festivals of a week at Passover, a weekend at Pentecost, and over a week at Tabernacles.

They would visit relatives in and around Jerusalem, including Mary's relative Elizabeth, her husband Zechariah, and their anointed son John who was filled with the Spirit from his birth. John knew that Jesus was unique and sinless, but he did not realize that Jesus was indeed the longed-for Messiah until the Spirit of God came upon Jesus when John baptized him.

God's glory filled the human Jesus. His disciple John wrote "we have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth." At the Last Supper, on the Jewish day he died, Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." And the letter to the Hebrews adds, "He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being."¹⁹

God walked among us in the person of his one and only Son. Some believed in him and followed him. Many did not. It's the same today.

¹⁹ John 1:14; 14:9; Hebrews 1:3.

Available on Amazon

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Life-Jesus-Historys-Great-Story/dp/1664268154/>