

How It All Began

THE STORY BEFORE THE STORY

Luke 1:5-25

- ▶ God's **story** always starts with **obedience**.
- ▶ Real faith trusts God, not the **circumstances**.

THE AUTHOR BEHIND THE STORY

Luke 1:1-4

- ▶ Luke:

THE REASON FOR THE STORY

- ▶ "To know with **certainty** what I have been **taught**."

Book	Date Written	Earliest Copies	Time Gap	No. of Copies
<i>Iliad</i> , Homer	800 B.C.	400 B.C.	400 yrs	643
Plato	400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1300 yrs	7
<i>Gallic Wars</i> , Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1000 yrs	10
<i>History of Rome</i> , Livy	59 B.C. - 17 A.D.	4 th Century 10 th Century	400 yrs 1000 yrs	1 partial 19
New Testament	50-100 A.D.	130 A.D.	50 yrs	Fragments
		200 A.D.	100 yrs	Books
		250 A.D.	150 yrs	N.T.
		325 A.D.	225 yrs	5,600
		400-500 A.D.	400 yrs	24,600

The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict, McDowell

THE RESPONSE TO THE STORY

- ▶ What do I do with this **Jesus**?

Growth Group Homework

For the week of October 10, 2010

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching on *How It All Began*, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. If you were to ask five of your friends who don't go to church who Jesus is, how do you think they would answer and what would they base their answers on?

2. How has your understanding of who Jesus is changed over your life?

What have been the biggest influences in shaping your understanding of Jesus?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Doubt is something that plagues all of us at one time or another. This weekend, we saw Zechariah express his doubt even after the angel Gabriel appeared to him with the news that he would have a son (Luke 1:18). Below are several incidences in which people in the Bible showed their doubt. What do you learn about doubt or Jesus' response to it from these stories?

John 20:24-29

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. [25] So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

[26] A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" [27] Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

[28] Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

[29] Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." [NIV]

Mark 9:17-24

A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. [18] Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

[19] "O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

[20] So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

[21] Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. [22] "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

[23] "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

[24] Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" [NIV]

Luke 7:18-23

John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, [19] he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

[20] When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?' "

[21] At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. [22] So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. [23] Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." [NIV]

Have you ever felt like doubt has been a hindrance to your faith?

Do you think doubt can ever help you grow spiritually? If so, how?

2. We heard this weekend why we can trust the Bible. Unfortunately, many people don't ever read it. That's where Christians come in. Someone once wrote, "You may be the only Bible some people will ever read." How do the following verses help us understand what this means?

Matthew 5:13-16

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

[14] "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. [16] In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. [NIV]

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. [NIV]

James 1:27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. [NIV]

Can you think of any people who have done a good job of “being the Bible” to you? What do you appreciate about how they lived?

3. Everyone who hears about Jesus has to make a decision about who they think He is. The Apostle Paul came to the conclusion that Jesus is who He claimed to be, and he was killed because of it. In the Book of Colossians, he writes a very clear description of Jesus. As you read Colossians 1:15-20, what key points do you see Paul making?

Colossians 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. [16] For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. [17] He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. [19] For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. [NIV]

What do you find most encouraging or helpful in this passage?

TAKING IT HOME

1. Are there any doubts that are tripping you up or hindering your faith?

2. Can you think of anything that might be hindering your ability to be the best Bible to others that you can be?

This weekend, Chris read ***One Solitary Life***, a short description of the impact Jesus has had on our world. Here's that description for your encouragement.

One Solitary Life

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself...

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is a centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built, all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.

This essay was adapted from a sermon by Dr James Allan Francis in "The Real Jesus and Other Sermons" © 1926 by the Judson Press of Philadelphia