



Who Was Jesus?

By Ellen Morgan

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This fascinating addition to the best-selling Who Was...? series does not settle questions of theology. Instead, it presents young readers with a biography that covers what is known historically about Jesus and places in his life in the context of his world when Jerusalem was part of the Roman Empire. In an even-handed and easy-to-read narrative, this title—illustrated with eighty black-and-white drawings—also explains the early origins of Christianity and how it became a major religion.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Ellen Morgan spent her childhood going to church, to Sunday school, and to church camp, where she was fascinated by Bible stories from Genesis to Revelation. She has written several books for children under a different name and currently lives in New York.

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Who Was Jesus?

It's Christmas! Every December 25, all over the world, people are going to church. They gather around Christmas trees. They bake treats. They cook meals for family and friends. They sing songs and open presents.

What is everybody celebrating?

Christmas is the birthday of Jesus. He was born more than two thousand years ago in the small town of Bethlehem. He was from a poor family and grew up to be a preacher. He talked about God and how people should live their lives. He became well-known, and his friends passed along stories about him. They shared his teachings with others.

Jesus's ideas became a movement. The movement started with only a handful of people. But it grew into one of the most important religions in the world—Christianity. Christianity spread to all parts of the globe. Today, there are two billion Christians. They are from different backgrounds, different races, and different cultures, but they share common beliefs.

Christians believe in one God. They believe in Heaven, in life after death. They also believe that Jesus was much more than a preacher. They believe he was the son of God.

Chapter 1: A Humble Birth

Jesus was born into a Jewish family over two thousand years ago. His father was a carpenter named Joseph. His mother was named Mary.

According to the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel came to Mary months before Jesus's birth. "Do not be afraid, Mary," the angel said, "for you have found favor with God." He told her she was going to give birth to a special baby boy. The baby was the son of God, not the son of her husband, Joseph. Gabriel also told her the baby's name—Jesus.

Joseph and Mary lived in a region ruled by the Romans and Emperor Augustus. It was called Judea. Right before Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had to travel to the town of Bethlehem. The government wanted to register the names of all people living in the area.

In Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to her son.

The family stayed in a stable, because the local inn had no room for them. Instead of a crib, Jesus slept in a manger. A manger is a wooden bin that holds food for horses and other animals.

It was a humble start. However, right away, people learned of this birth and knew the baby was special. According to the Gospel of Luke, shepherds in the fields saw an angel above them.

“I am bringing you good news of great joy . . . ,” the angel said. He told them a baby had been born who would be the Messiah. *Messiah* is a word for a special person who will save people from great danger or harm.

The Gospel of Matthew says that far away, in a country to the east, three wise men spotted a bright star in the sky. The wise men studied the heavens and understood the star was an important sign. It meant the Messiah had been born. So they followed the star to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus.

When the three wise men saw Mary and the baby Jesus, they fell to their knees. They brought him gifts, too—gold, as well as frankincense and myrrh, which were costly spices.

Herod, the king of Judea, also heard about Jesus. The news of Jesus’s birth worried Herod. He asked the wise men to tell him where Jesus was. He told them he just wanted to see the baby, too. But after they had seen the child, a dream warned the wise men to not return to Herod, and instead they went home.

Joseph, Mary’s husband, also had a dream. It alerted him that Jesus was in danger. He took Mary and his son and fled at night into the country of Egypt.

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