

When Did The Work Of Jesus Christ Begin?

2 Timothy 1:8-10 [NIV] *“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. **This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time**, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*

The work of salvation through Jesus Christ began before time was created.

Titus 1:1-3 [NIV] *“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, a faith and knowledge resting on **the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time**, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour,”*

Certain decisions and promises were made by God the Father before time began and foretold in ancient scripture, but revealed in full through the Holy Spirit’s inspired writing of Paul.

1 Peter 1:18-21 [NIV] *“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were **redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world**, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.”*

One of these decisions and promises was the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the sacrificial Lamb of God.

1 Corinthians 2:6-10 [NIV] *“We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, **we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began**. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived **what God has prepared for those who love him**”, but **God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.**”*

The great purpose that God the Father had for creating human beings is **only revealed** to us by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle John points us towards this real beginning of Christianity, and its founder, Jesus Christ.

John 1:1-2 [NIV] *“**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.**”*

Who is this being called “the Word”?

John 1:3 [NIV] *“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”*

He was the creator of the physical universe.

John 1:4-5 [NIV] *“In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”*

He gave life and illumination to the understanding of the purpose of life.

Who claimed to be this light?

John 8:12 [NIV] *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”***

Jesus Christ made this claim of Himself.

John 1:6-11 [NIV] *“There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. **The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.** He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”*

The prophet John the Baptist prepared the people of Palestine for the beginning of the life revealing message that Jesus Christ was about to proclaim to all humanity. This message would be rejected by the majority of people, then and throughout the history of humanity since. Even Jesus Christ’s own people, the Jews, would reject His message of hope for humanity.

John 1:12-13 [NIV] *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, **he gave the right to become children of God,** children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”*

Only through acceptance of *“the Word”* and belief in the message He would bring could humans experience a new birth and become created children of God who receive the gift of eternal life from *“the Word”*.

John 1:14 [NIV] *“**The Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

The apostle John then pinpoints who *“the Word”* really is, Jesus Christ.

I ask you to suspend judgement on this staggering claim that the apostle John makes until we have taken a closer look at the life, death, resurrection and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Only then will we be in a position to make an informed decision about Jesus Christ.

Let us now look at the physical birth of Jesus Christ as recorded in the four accounts of His life and the prophecies that foretold these events.

Genesis 3:21 [NIV] *“**The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.**”*

To cover the guilt of their sin of rebellion against God, God made garments for Adam and Eve from the skin of an animal, most likely a young lamb, that foretold the sacrifice of Jesus Christ the *“Lamb of God”* [John 1:29].

John 8:56 [NIV] *“Your father **Abraham** rejoiced at the thought of **seeing my day;** he saw it and was glad.”*

God revealed to Abraham the message of good news that Jesus Christ would proclaim.

Galatians 3:6-9 [NIV] *“**Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”** Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture*

foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” **So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.**”

All nations would be blessed through Abraham and the faith he had in God’s promises.

How would this happen?

Galatians 3:16 [NIV] “*The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds”, meaning many people, but “and to your seed”, meaning one person, who is Christ.*”

Jesus Christ the Saviour of all humanity was born to Mary a direct descendant of Abraham [Matthew 1:1-16]

Isaiah 7:14 [NIV] “*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*”

“Immanuel” – God with us.

Matthew 1:18-24 [NIV] “*This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”, which means, “God with us.” When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.*”

“Jesus” means “the Lord saves”.

Jesus came to earth to save us because **we cannot save ourselves from sin and its consequences.**

No matter how good we are, we cannot eliminate the sinful nature present in all of us.

Only Jesus can do this.

Jesus did **not** come to help people save themselves by keeping certain moral laws for this is an impossible task.

Psalms 51:5 [NIV] “*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*”

David acknowledged he had this rebellious sinful nature even before his birth.

God can and will forgive any sin we commit because of this nature but may **not** always erase the natural consequences of that sin.

David’s life and family were never the same again after his adultery with Bathsheba and the indirect murder of her husband.

But God did **not** take the Holy Spirit from David, and even uses His example of humble repentance to teach us today.

Psalms 51:10-13 [NIV] “*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your*

salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.”

This humble prayer of David’s was answered.

Acts 13:22 [NIV] *“After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’”*

This is why Paul was able to say this of King David inspite of his sins.

I thank God for recording King David’s life, for it shows the great love that God has for all of us and encourages us to also do everything that God wants us to do in our lives.

Thank God for Jesus our Saviour.

Matthew 2:1-2 [NIV] *“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”*

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Micah 5:2 [NIV] *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”*

This was predicted by the prophet to be Jesus Christ’s birthplace.

Luke 2:1-7 [NIV] *“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

Without this decree from Caesar Augustus Jesus would have been born in his parents’ home town Nazareth.

An example of God’s perfect timing to ensure prophecy of Jesus Christ’s birthplace was fulfilled.

Matthew 2:2 [NIV] *“and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”*

“Star” – Greek “*astēr*” – the same word is used of angels who are the messengers and servants of God and also of false teachers [**Jude 13** “*wandering stars*”].

The term “*star*” is used in both Old and New Testaments for any luminous non-terrestrial body other than the sun or moon.

“*Star*” is used metaphorically without astronomical reference, usually to imply dignity, either innate or usurped.

Job 38:7 [NIV] *“while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?”*

Daniel 12:3 [NIV] *“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”*

Revelation 1:16, 20 [NIV] *“In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.” ... “The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches**, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”*

All of these and many other scriptures point to the “star” that the Magi followed was an angel messenger that God had sent to guide them to Jesus Christ.

Matthew 2:13-15 [NIV] *“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”*

Joseph and Mary with the young boy Jesus escaped the murder of all the boys in Bethlehem under the age of two years.

This fulfilled what was prophesied in Hosea.

Hosea 11:1 [NIV] *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”*

All through Israel’s sad history of sinful rebellion against God He continued to love them and made this promise to provide a Son who would bring them out of Egypt [depicting sin]. Notice **“my Son”** Jesus Christ.

The northern tribes of the original Israel went into captivity never to return to Palestine.

But a remnant, mainly Judah, the royal tribe, would return to Jerusalem where one day the Messiah [Jesus Christ] would come offering pardon and reconciliation to all who would faithfully follow Him.

Thank God for His continual faithfulness to Israel and then His offering, through Paul and the apostles, by their Holy Spirit inspired teaching, to all humanity.

John 3:16-17 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

The birth of Jesus Christ was no accident but had been planned before time began and predicted for thousands of years by God’s servants.