

claimed by the Apostle Peter, to Cornelius and his household, in the first Gospel sermon addressed to Gentiles (Acts 10:39-41). (4) In short, these essential facts were proclaimed wherever the Gospel was preached in apostolic times. See Acts 3:14-21, 17:29-32, 26:22-23, etc. Cf. Rom. 10:9, 10—"because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (5) Note, in the last place, the close correspondence between Peter and Paul, in fact between all the Apostles, in their presentation of the essential facts of the Gospel message; a correspondence to be expected, however, in view of the fact that they were all inspired by the same Holy Spirit.

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON SIXTY-NINE

22. What briefly are the facts presented in the New Testament writings respecting Jesus of Nazareth?
23. What three fundamental facts, of all this array of facts presented in the New Testament writings respecting Jesus of Nazareth, have been divinely constituted the essential facts of the Gospel message?

Lesson Seventy

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY

Scripture Reading: Acts 3:11-26.

Scripture to Memorize: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Servant Jesus: whom ye delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and

asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:14-15).

24. Q. What fundamental truth stands out from the array of facts presented in the New Testament writings respecting Jesus of Nazareth?

A. The fundamental truth that Christianity has an historical background.

Or, that the Christian religion is not the outgrowth of abstract speculation, philosophy, mysticism, occultism, and the like; but that, on the contrary, it has its roots in certain facts which are alleged to be historical, and which are to be studied and tested in the light of their historicity.

25. Q. What is the historical background of Christianity?

A. The historical background of Christianity is the life and work of a historical character—Jesus of Nazareth.

Not only His life, work, teaching, etc., but also His death, burial, and resurrection. *Had there never been a Jesus of Nazareth, there would be no Christianity.* Or, as previously stated, the *System stands or falls with the Person.*

26. Q. What is the first great fact in the historical background of Christianity?

A. The first great fact in the historical background of Christianity is that JESUS LIVED.

(1) Matthew: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea," etc. (Matt. 2:1). "And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of diseases" (Matt. 4:23). (2) Mark: "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan" (Mark 1:9). "Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God" (*i.e.*, the good news with respect to the approach of the Kingdom, Mark 1:14-15). (3) Luke: "And Jesus himself, when he began to teach, was about

thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23). "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and a fame went out concerning him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all" (Luke 4:14). (4) John: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). "After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples, and there they abode not many days" (John 2:12). "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). (5) Peter: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). "Even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem" (Acts 10:38-39). (6) Paul: "Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4). "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: he who was manifested in the flesh," etc. (1 Tim. 3:16). (7) *Epistle to the Hebrews*: "God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same" (Heb. 2:14).

27. Q. What is the second great fact in the historical background of Christianity?

A. The second great fact in the historical background of Christianity is that JESUS DIED.

That Jesus died is a historical fact; that He died for our sins is a doctrinal truth. (1) Matthew: "And Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit" (Matt. 27:50). (2) Mark: "And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up the ghost" (Mark 15:37). (3) Luke: "And Jesus, crying with a loud voice said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said this, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46). (4) John: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit" (John 19:30). "He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). (5) Peter: "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay" (Acts 2:23). "But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One . . . and killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:14-15). "Whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree" (Acts 10:39). (6) Paul: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). (7) *Epistle to the Hebrews*: "He also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). "Christ having been once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:28). "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself up without blemish unto God" (Heb. 9:14).

28. Q. What is the third great fact in the historical background of Christianity?

A. The third great fact in the historical background of Christianity is that JESUS LIVES AGAIN.

Or, that He was raised up from the dead, and is alive for evermore. (1) Matthew: "He is not here: for he is risen, even as he said" (Matt. 28:6). (2) Mark: "Be not amazed:

ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who hath been crucified: he is risen: he is not here; behold, the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6). "Now when he was risen early on the first day of the week" (Mark 16:9). (3) Luke: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:5-7). "Unto the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom he showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs" (Acts 1:2-3). (4) John: "Jesus saith to her, touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17). "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:26-27). "I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:17-18). (5) Peter: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). "And killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). "Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-41). (6) Paul: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:20). "That he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4). "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of

them that are asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20). (7) *Epistle to the Hebrews*: "When he had made purification of sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

29. Q. What was the relation between these three great facts and the rise and spread of early Christianity?

A. It was their knowledge of the historic certainty of these facts that gave such power and conviction to the ministry of the Apostles, and that consequently resulted in the marvelous sweep of Christianity over the world under their preaching.

"We cannot understand Pentecost," writes B. H. Bruner, "unless we understand some of the things which preceded it. The opening chapters of Acts give us a portrait of a group of men who had been followers of Jesus of Nazareth. At His death they had left Him. Then something happened that brought them together in Jerusalem. This something was the resurrection of their leader from the dead. These men who had seen their last hope go with the death of Jesus and who had run away for fear of the authorities, had become convinced that the same Jesus whom they had followed in the flesh had actually come forth from the tomb. They had seen Him, they had talked with Him, they had broken bread with Him, they knew Him. In Jerusalem they had seen Him for the last time, but He had left them with a promise that continued to ring in their ears and which filled their souls with a great expectancy. The Ascension was a sign to these men of a spiritual fact, of which they were absolutely convinced, that henceforth Jesus was alive with God. Three facts of tremendous importance stand out as the background of Pentecost; Jesus lived; Jesus died on the cross at the hands of His enemies; Jesus came forth from the tomb on the third day. The disciples were absolutely sure of

these three facts. No one can read the records and doubt it. They had lived with Jesus for three years. They had seen Him arrested, and at least some of them had seen Him die and knew where he was buried. They had all seen Him after His resurrection. They did not debate about any of these facts; they simply stated them and staked their lives upon them" (*Pentecost: A Renewal of Power*, pp. 15-16).

30. Q. What is the relation between these facts and Christianity in all ages?

A. The relation is simply this: that the Church of Christ stands or falls with these three great facts: "These are the three supreme facts of the Christian religion: Jesus lived; Jesus died; Jesus lived again. These three facts had begun to turn the world upside-down before any of them were recorded in a book. They were written down in a book only because they had become the dominant and outstanding facts upon which the early Christian community was founded, and the source of its conquering power. The Christian Church stands or falls upon these three facts" (Bruner, *ibid.*, p. 16).

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON SEVENTY

24. What fundamental truth stands out from the array of facts presented in the New Testament writings respecting Jesus of Nazareth?
25. What is the historical background of Christianity?
26. What is the first great fact in the historical background of Christianity?
27. What is the second great fact in the historical background of Christianity?
28. What is the third great fact in the historical background of Christianity?
29. What was the relation between these three great facts and the rise and spread of early Christianity?

30. What is the relation between these facts and Christianity in all ages?

Lesson Seventy-one

THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:22-36.

Scripture to Memorize: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay" (Acts 2:22-23).

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31. Q. What is the next question to be considered in studying Jesus of Nazareth?

A. This question: Are we fully justified in accepting Jesus of Nazareth as a historical character?

This is what we mean by the *historicity* of Jesus. That is, Is He really a Person who lived and wrought as a Man among men? Is He an actual and outstanding Figure of human history who lived at the time and in that part of the world indicated by the New Testament writers? Or, is He just an imaginary creation of a group of overwrought religious enthusiasts?

32. Q. What is the first valid ground on which we accept Jesus of Nazareth as a historical character?

A. The first valid ground on which we accept Jesus of Nazareth as a historical character, is the testimony of the New Testament writers.

(1) Matthew, John, Peter, and others, were intimately associated with Him for some three years. They expressly claim to have been eye-witnesses of His manifestations and works (2 Pet. 1:16; 1 John 1:1-4; Acts 2:22, 3:15, 10:38-42, etc.). Paul vouches for the authenticity of his testimony by repeatedly affirming the circumstances of his call to the apostleship, in which, as he relates so force-