

# 102



# Fascinating Bible Studies

ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

Dr. William H. Marty



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This book is dedicated  
to the people who will use it.  
It is my hope that it will  
help you to better know the Word of God  
and the God of the Word.

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# Introduction

I had the unique privilege of teaching Old and New Testament Survey to four hundred freshmen for thirty-seven years. It was an exciting experience. They were eager to learn, and keenly attentive in class, at least at the beginning of each semester. Of course, since they were at Moody Bible Institute, they expected their Bible teachers to answer all their questions about the Bible, including some that angels never imagined. I soon learned that I would never get through survey if I didn't control their questions, so I had to be somewhat of a killjoy and explain to them that I couldn't answer all their questions. I assured them that in their four years at Moody they would have multiple opportunities to get answers to their questions. I also confessed that I didn't know all of the answers, which was somewhat shocking to some students. But I assured them that my colleagues knew more than I did about certain subjects and would be able to answer their questions.

I'm sorry, but I have to be a killjoy again. This book will answer a lot of your questions, but not all of them. That's the bad news. The good news is that the editor gave me the liberty to pick the topics. When he told me that, I thought he must be kidding. Did he know what he was doing giving a retired Bible teacher that kind of freedom? He was serious, so most of the studies are on topics about which I think I am capable of making a few intelligent comments. But not all. I chose some topics that I had not previously



studied but have had questions about. Some are a bit difficult and even controversial. I have tried to avoid tipping my hand on the ones that are controversial, but it is impossible to be completely unbiased. So if you disagree with me on a conclusion, that's okay. I'm not inspired; the Bible is. I realize I may be wrong, and people who disagree are not heretics. Some may have a different interpretation of certain passages. It is possible to agree to disagree if those passages are not foundational to orthodox Christian doctrine.

What's in this book? A lot of studies on topics from the New Testament. At one point, I told the editor I felt like I was writing a Bible dictionary, but I was the only contributor. He was really encouraging. He said that he felt the same way as an editor. How are the topics organized? I tried to balance the studies between the life of Christ (the four Gospels), the book of Acts, Paul's epistles, the general epistles, several studies on the book of Revelation, and doctrine. Because this isn't a story, the order in which you do the studies doesn't matter. You can start with the last study in the book and then go to the next one that captures your interest.

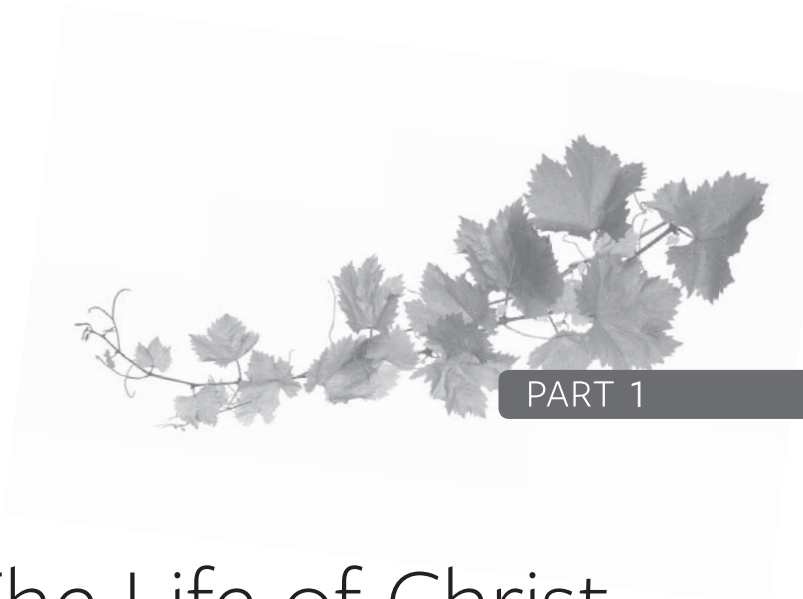
Who should use this book? It is intended for individuals or small groups, for pastors or people in the pew, for Bible teachers or students, for mature believers or new Christians. You don't even have to be a Christian to use this book. You may have serious doubts about Christianity because of what you believe the Bible says or what others have told you the Bible says on certain subjects. You may find one or more of those subjects in the book, and you may be surprised by what the Bible actually says.

What should you do with this book? Don't read it like a novel. It doesn't have a plot and story line. There are "102 Fascinating Bible Studies" in it. Why 102? I don't know. That's how many I was asked to write. The format for each study is basically the same. I make a few comments about the topic that includes some of the significant biblical references. The comments are followed by a memory verse on the topic. The questions are the main part of the study. Don't do what my wife and others have attempted, and that's to answer the questions without reading the passage. If

you do, you will tell me what my wife did: “I don’t understand!” I then asked her, “Did you read the passage?” The usual answer was, “No!” “Well, no wonder you don’t understand the question!” My wife was actually a huge help in writing this book. But please read the passage before attempting to answer or discuss the questions. If you don’t like my questions or want to add additional ones, you can make up your own.

The goal for this book is what I have been devoted to most of my adult life. After college, four years in the army, and one tour in Vietnam, I decided I wanted to do something else, so I went to seminary. Seminary was like landing on a different planet. The men and women who were my teachers not only cared for me, but they loved God and his Word. Their passion for the Word of God ignited the same passion in me, so after a whole lot of schooling I began ministry and found my place in God’s kingdom teaching the Bible to young men and women and trying to ignite in them a love for God and his Word.

My wife thinks I was the right person to write this book. She often tells me that because I didn’t grow up in the church, I don’t think in the typical evangelical/orthodox Christian box. She said that growing up in the church she was not allowed to ask some of the questions I do. This book will not answer all of your questions, but hopefully it will give you insight and a fresh perspective on some of the perplexing passages in the New Testament. I hope the studies challenge you, make you think, but most of all help you to become more like Christ. In the study on Paul’s prayers, I have been convicted to include his prayer for the Ephesians in my prayers for others. “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better” (Ephesians 1:17). And that’s my prayer for you!



PART 1

# The Life of Christ

# Genealogies of Jesus

Because of the advances in DNA testing, there has been a surge of interest in tracing one's ancestry. Though they didn't have DNA testing at the time of Christ, genealogies were extremely important in Judaism. They were essential for establishing inheritance rights and tracing the messianic line.

Only Matthew and Luke give Jesus' ancestry, and though the genealogies are similar they are not identical. Plus, they are not complete, only representative.

Matthew presents Jesus as Israel's messianic king, who had come in fulfillment of God's kingdom promises. No one, however, could claim they were Israel's long-awaited king unless they were a descendant of David, to whom God had promised that one of his descendants would rule over an eternal kingdom (2 Samuel 7:16). Matthew then begins his Gospel by identifying Jesus as the Messiah, a son of David, and a son of Abraham (1:1). By tracing his ancestry to David, Matthew establishes Jesus' legal right to the throne of David. But he also wants to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the universal promise of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1–3).

Luke's concern is to show that Jesus is a universal Savior. He traces Jesus' ancestry from Joseph to Adam (3:38), and puts the genealogy between Jesus' baptism and temptation (3:21–4:13). By placing the genealogy between Jesus' baptism and temptation Luke contrasts Jesus' victory over sin and Satan as the second Adam with the failure of the first Adam (cf. Luke 3:21–22 and Luke 4:1–3). Because he was created, Adam is called "the son of God" (3:38). God calls Jesus his "beloved Son" at his baptism (3:22 ESV), and in the temptation account, Satan says, "If you are the Son of God . . ." (4:3).

## Study Questions

1. Matthew 1:16. Why do you think Matthew identifies Joseph as the husband of Mary rather than the father of Jesus?
2. Matthew 1:3, 5, and 6. In addition to Mary, Matthew lists four women in Jesus' genealogy.
  - a) Who are they and what do we know about them from the Old Testament?
  - b) What is the significance of including these women in Jesus' genealogy?
3. Genesis 12:1–3. What are the three promises God made to Abraham? How did God fulfill the promise to bless “all people”? Why is this important if we are not Jewish?
4. Matthew 28:16–20. Though Jesus is identified in the genealogy as Israel's Messiah-King, how does the Gospel of Matthew end? Why is this important?
5. Luke 3:23. Like Matthew, Luke makes it clear that Joseph is not Jesus' biological father. Luke's intent is to raise the question, “If Joseph is not Jesus' father, who is?” How does Luke answer that question in 3:38?
6. Luke 3:38. Not only is the order of Jesus' genealogy in the reverse order than the names in Matthew, but Luke does not stop with David and Abraham. How far back does Luke trace Jesus' ancestry? And as mentioned in the commentary, the genealogy comes before the temptation account. Why?
7. Matthew 1:11–13. Who is identified in the genealogy?
  - a) What happened to Jehoiachin, king of Judah, because of his wickedness (see Jeremiah 22:24–27)? The “signet ring” was a symbol of royal lineage. This means that the royal line was cut off, and messianic hopes ended with the Babylonian exile.

- b) Haggai 2:23. What did God do to reinstate the messianic line?
  - c) What does this reveal about the grace of God and his promises?
8. What do the genealogies confirm about God's providential control of history? How does this give you assurance about the course of your life?

**Memory Verse: Matthew 1:1**