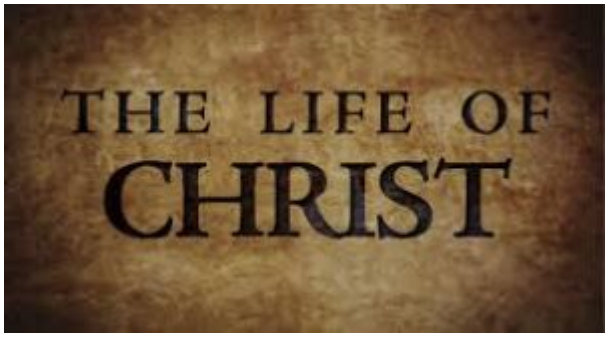
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Introduction to The Life of Christ from a Messianic Jewish Perspective

To my faithful wife Beth. I wanted to marry someone who loved the Lord and His Word,
someone who would be my partner in life and in ministry. God gave me the best of both.
We're in this together, we are a team; I couldn't love you more.



*Dear loving Heavenly Father, What a joy it is to look ahead from life's trials to our eternal inheritance and blessing you have for all your children**. The Ruach Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, also heirs – heirs of God and joint-heirs with Messiah – if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Rom 8:16-18).** The joy of heaven will be forever and life's trials will all be over. I desire to bless you with my life in earth. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

The Use of the New International Version

Because I am writing this commentary on **The Life of Christ** from a Jewish perspective, I will be using *the New International Version* unless otherwise indicated. There will be times when I substitute Hebrew for English names using the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) by David Stern. But generally I will be using the NIV

translation for the Jewish perspective.

The use of ADONAI

Long before **Yeshua's** day, the word **ADONAI** had, out of respect, been substituted in speaking and in reading aloud for **God's** personal name, the four Hebrew letters *yud-heh-vav-heh*, variously written in English as **YHVH**. **The Talmud (Pesachim 50a) made it a requirement not to pronounce Tetragrammaton**, meaning the four-letter name of **God**, and this remains the rule in most modern Jewish settings. In deference to this tradition, which is unnecessary but harmless, I will be using **ADONAI** where **YHVH** is meant.[1] In ancient times when the scribes were translating the Hebrew Scriptures, they revered the name of **YHVH** so much that they would use a quill to make one stroke of the name and then throw it away. Then they would make another stroke and throw that quill away until the name was completed. **His** name became so sacred to them that they started to substitute the phrase *the Name*, instead of writing or pronouncing **His** Name. Over centuries of doing this, the actual letters and pronunciation of **His** Name were lost. The closest we can come is **YHVH**, with no syllables. The pronunciation has been totally lost. Therefore, the name Yahweh is only a guess of what the original name sounded like. Both **ADONAI** and **Ha'Shem** are substitute names for **YHVH**. **ADONAI** is more of an affectionate name like *daddy*, while **Ha'Shem** is a more formal name like *sir*.

The use of TaNaKh

The Hebrew word **TaNaKh** is an acronym, based on the letters **T** (for "**T**orah"), **N** (for "**N**eviim," or the Prophets), and **K** (for "**K**etuvim," or the Writings). It is the collection of the teachings of **God** to human beings in document form. The term "Old Covenant" implies that it is no longer valid or, at the very least, outdated. Something old, to be either ignored or discarded. But **Jesus Himself** said: **Don't think I have come to abolish the Torah and the Prophets, I have not come to abolish but to complete (Matthew 5:17 CJB).** I will be using the Hebrew acronym **TaNaKh** instead of the phrase the Old Testament, throughout this devotional commentary.

The Use of the phrase, "the righteous of the TaNaKh," rather than using Old Testament saints

Messianic synagogues, and the Jewish messianic community in general, never use

the phrase Old Testament saints. From a Jewish perspective, they prefer to use the phrase, **“righteous of the TaNaKh.”** Therefore, I will be using **“the righteous of the TaNaKh,”** rather than Old Testament saints throughout this devotional commentary.

The Use of Disciple and Apostle

Luke indicates that **Jesus** chose **twelve** from among **His** disciples, and that these **He** named **apostles**. Consequently, I will be using the word disciples as a general term for those who were committed to following their **Master** to learn from **Him**. And I will be using the word **apostles** for **the Twelve** in whom **Messiah** invested **His** time and sent out with **His** delegated authority. Obviously, **Yeshua** chose **twelve** special disciples to be **His apostles**. I will also be using the Hebrew word **talmid** (singular) or **talmidim** (plural), which means *student or learner,* to refer to **His Twelve apostles**. Empowered by **the Holy Spirit**, they carried on **His** ministry after **He** had ascended back to **the Father** in heaven.

The Historical Context of Jesus’ Teaching

It is crucial to the understanding of **Yeshua’s** teaching that you immerse yourself in the first-century Judaism of which **He** was a part. There are **two concepts** that lay at the heart of understanding **The Life of Christ**. **The first concept is the Kingdom of God**, and is absolutely essential to the whole of **Jesus’** teaching and ministry. It answers the question, “Why did **He** come?” **The second concept is the Oral Law.** I dare say you cannot understand the interaction between **Yeshua** and the religious leaders of **His** day unless you understand **the Oral Law** (**to see link click Ei – The Oral Law**). It answers the question, “Why was **He** rejected?”

Introduction to the Individual Gospels

It is profitable to view the gospels from both a harmonistic and individual point of view. Each gospel was written and intended to be read as an independent work. Each is a separate and distinct witness to the life of **Christ**. When there is a need, I will be pointing out different themes and points of view of each individual author under the inspiration of **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh**. The more you thoroughly understand each individual gospel the more profitable the study of the life of **Messiah**.

The Gospel According to Matthew

1. **The Author of Matthew:** **Matthew** was a Jewish **talmidim** of **Jesus** who once earned a living as a tax collector, an official of the Roman government. Moved by **the Holy Spirit**, he wrote a biography of **Yeshua** from a Hebrew perspective, emphasizing the regal rights of **Jesus** as the long awaited **Meshiach** and legitimate **King** of Isra'el.[2] Early believers uniformly attributed this gospel to **Matthew**, and no tradition to the contrary every emerged. This book was known early and accepted quickly. In his Ecclesiastical History (AD 323), Eusebius quoted a statement by Papias (AD 140) that **Mattityahu** wrote **Yeshua's** *sayings* in Aramaic; however, no Aramaic gospel of **Matthew** has ever been found. Some believe that **Matthew** wrote an abbreviated version of **Jesus'** *sayings* in Aramaic before writing his gospel in Greek for a larger audience.

2. **The Date of Matthew:** According to the writings of early believers, **Mattityahu** was the most widely and frequently used of any of the gospels. This is why it is arranged first. But, like all the gospels, **Matthew** is not easy to date and suggestions have ranged from AD 40 to 140. The two expressions **to this day (Mattityahu 27:8)** and **to this very day (Matthew 28:15)** indicate that a substantial period of time has passed since the events described in the book, but, they also point to a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. **Yeshua's** answers to **the apostle** three questions in **Matthew Chapters 24** and **25** also anticipates this event. The strong Jewish flavor of this gospel is another argument for a date prior to AD 70. Since a majority of **Mark's** gospel is found in **Matthew** it seems likely that **Mattityahu** depended on **Mark's** Gospel as a source. Therefore, the date of **Mark** would determine the earliest date for **Matthew**. The likely date for this book being written is around AD 65. It may have been written in Palestine or in Syrian Antioch.

3. **The Audience of Matthew:** **Matthew** is a gospel written by a Jew to Jews about a Jew. Thus, it has long been recognized as the "Jewish Gospel." Because the Church was first comprised of Jewish believers **(Acts 2:1-47)**, **Matthew's** gospel became very popular and is probably the reason it is listed first among the gospels. **Mattityahu** is the writer, **his** countrymen are the readers, and **Yeshua ha-Meshiach** is the subject. **Matthew** wrote, "This is **King Messiah** – worship **Him**."

4. **The Christ of Matthew:** **Matthew** presents **Jesus** as Isra'el's promised **King Messiah (1:23, 2:2** and **6, 3:17, 4:15-17, 21:5** and **9, 22:44-45, 26:64, 27:11** and **27-27)**. The phrase **the kingdom of heaven** appears thirty-two times in

Matthew like nowhere else in the New Covenant. To show that **Yeshua** fulfills the qualifications for **the Messiah**, **Matthew** uses more quotations and illustrations (almost 130) from **the TaNaKh** than any other book. Often used in this gospel is the revealing phrase: **So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet**, which appears nine times in **Matthew** and not once in the other Gospels. **Jesus** is the climax of the prophets **(12:39-40, 13:13-15** and **35, 17:5-13).** And the messianic term **Son** (meaning descendant) **of David** occurs nine times in **Mattityahu**, but only six times in all of the other gospels.

5. **The Purpose of Matthew: Matthew's** purpose is to present **Yeshua** as **the King** of the Jews, the long-awaited **Meshiach**. Through a carefully selected series of quotations from **the TaNaKh**, **Mattityahu** documents **Yeshua's** claim to be **the Messiah**. **His** genealogy, baptism, messages, and miracles all point to the same inescapable conclusion: **Jesus** is **King Messiah**. Even in **His** death, seeming defeat is turned to victory by the resurrection, and the message is the same, **King Messiah** lives.

6. **The Central Theme of Matthew: Yeshua**, the Jewish **Meshiach**, the climax of salvation history, has come.

7. **The Key Verses of Matthew: Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied: Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:16-19).**[3]

The Gospel According to Mark

1. **The Author of Mark:** The second gospel, like the others, contains no statement of authorship. But, the uniform tradition of early believers attributes it to **John Mark**, **John** was **his** Jewish name and **Mark** was **his** Latin name **(Acts 12:12)**. Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen are among the Church fathers who affirmed that the author was **Mark**. **He** was not one of **the Twelve**, but the son of a follower named **Mary (Acts 12:12)**, who had a large house that was used as a meeting place for believers in Jerusalem. **Peter** apparently went to this house often because the servant girl recognized his voice at the gate **(Acts 12:13-16)**.

Barnabas was **Mark's** cousin **(Colossians 4:10)**, but **Peter** may have been the person who led **him** to **Christ** (**Peter** called him: **my son Mark** in **First Peter 5:13)**. It was this close association with **Kefa** that lent apostolic authority to **Mark's** Gospel, since **Peter** was evidently **Mark's** primary source of information. It has been suggested that **Mark** was referring to **himself** in his account of **a young man, wearing but a linen garment,** who **was following Jesus (Mark 14:51)** in Gethsemane. Since all **the apostles** had abandoned **Yeshua (Mark 14:50)**, this little incident may have been a firsthand account.

2. **The Date of Mark:** Most scholars believe that **Mark** was the first of the four gospels, but there is uncertainty over its date. Because of the prophecy about the destruction of the Temple **(Mark 13:2)**, it should be dated before AD 70, but, early traditions disagree as to whether it was written before or after the martyrdom of **Peter** in AD 64. Because ninety-three percent of **Mark** is found in the other gospels, it seems likely that it was the first gospel written. The probable date for this book is in the late 50s AD. Early tradition indicates that it originated in Rome.

3. **The Audience of Mark:** **Mark** wrote for Gentile readers in general and Roman readers in particular. Some indications of this are that the genealogy of **Jesus** is not included (meaning little to Gentiles); Aramaic phrases are translated at least five times **(3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 14:36; 15:34)**; Latin equivalents for terms and amounts **(Mark 12:42** says **copper coins** for the Greek *two lepta*); in the story of the Canaanite woman there is no saying about **Jesus'** lost sheep of the house of Isra'el **(Mark 7:24-30)**; and finally, **the apostles** are not forbidden to go on a mission among the Samaritans or Gentiles. **Mark** wrote, "This is **the Servant** who served humanity – follow **Him**."

4. **The Christ of Mark:** The shortest and simplest of the four gospels, **Mark** gives a crisp and fast-moving look at **the life of Christ**. With few comments, **Mark** lets the narrative speak for itself as **the Lord** is presented as an active, compassionate, and obedient **Servant** who constantly ministers to the physical and spiritual needs of others. Because this is the story of a **Servant**, **Mark** omits **Jesus**' ancestry and birth and moves right into **His** busy public ministry. **Mark** is primarily concerned with relating the actions of **Yeshua** without neglecting **His** teachings. The distinctive word of this book is *euthus,* translated *immediately* or *straightaway,* and it appears more often in this compact gospel (forty-two times) than in the rest of the New Covenant. **Christ** is constantly moving toward a goal that is hidden to almost all. **Mark** clearly shows the power and authority of this unique suffering **Servant**, identifying **Him** as no less than the **Son of God (Mark 1:1**

and **11, 3:11, 5:7, 9:7, 13:32, 14:61, 15:39)**.

5. **The Purpose of Mark:** With the action orientation of the **Romans**, **Mark** wrote a gospel that emphasizes the actions of **the Messiah**. **Mark's** gospel emphasizes the servant nature of **Christ**; therefore, we can say that to show **Christ the Servant (Mark 10:45)** is the purpose of this gospel.

6. **The Central Theme of Mark:** **Yeshua, the Son of God**, came to seek, serve and save. **He** obediently suffered as **the Servant** of **the Lord** to pay the ransom price for sins, and as a model of suffering and sacrifice for **His disciples** to follow.

7. **The Key Verses of Mark:** **Jesus called His apostles together and said: You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).**[4]

The Gospel According to Luke

1. **The Author of Luke:** **Luke** was a **doctor (Colossians 4:14)**, probably born and raised in Macedonia. **He** was a Hellenistic Jew; therefore, the entire B'rit Chadashah was written by Jews. **He** does not claim to be an eyewitness of what **he** wrote in **his** gospel, but rather to have thoroughly investigated the events before writing them down. It is generally recognized among biblical scholars today that when **Luke** wrote **his** Gospel, **he** already had the writing of **Acts** in mind. The two form a two-volume work. It is clear from the beginnings of both **Luke** and **Acts** that they were addressed to the same man named **Theophilus**, meaning *lover of God,* as a two-volume work. **He** was probably the patron who sponsored **Luke's** writing. The book of **Luke** is the longest of all the gospels. **Matthew** has more chapters, but, **Luke** has more verses and words. And the combined work of **Luke** and **Acts** comprises the largest amount of material from any single human author in the New Covenant, including Rabbi Sha'ul. **Acts** begins with a summary of **Luke** and continues the story from where the Gospel of **Luke** ends. The style and language of both books are quite similar. The Church throughout the ages has attributed this book to **Luke**.

2. **The Date of Luke:** The date of the Gospel is closely tied to its companion

volume **Acts**. Since Paul was in prison in Rome at the end of **Acts** (AD 62), **Luke** may have finished **Acts** before Paul's release and later martyrdom. This would place **Acts** around AD 62, and **his** gospel was probably written in the early 60s.[5]

3. **The Audience of Luke:** In his two-volume **Luke-Acts** set, **Luke**, under the inspiration of **the Holy Spirit**, desires to reach the world. **He** wrote to neither the spiritually privileged Jew nor the politically privileged Roman, but, to common Greeks, most of whom had no power, no wealth and no hope. **His** Gospel is grounded **his** in Judaism, and even though **his** message starts in the heart of Judaism, in Jerusalem and the Temple, **his** audience is the whole world. **Luke** shattered cultural boundaries, ethnic boundaries, and racial boundaries because it includes humanity. **He** wrote, "This is the only **Man** among men without sin – emulate **Him**."

4. **The Christ of Luke:** The humanity and compassion of **Jesus** are repeatedly stressed in **Luke's** Gospel. **Luke** gives the most complete account of **Christ's** ancestry, birth and development. **He** is the ideal **Son of Man** who identified with the sorrow and plight of sinful mankind in order to carry our sorrows and offer us the priceless gift of salvation. **Jesus** alone fulfills the Greek ideal of human perfection, and yet, **the Savior** of all the people of the world.

5. **The Purpose of Luke:** **Luke** wanted to create an accurate, chronological and comprehensive account of the unique life of **Jesus Christ (Luke 1:3-4)** to strengthen the faith of Gentile believers and stimulate saving faith among nonbelievers. **Luke** also had another purpose, and that was to show that **Christ** was not only divine, but, also human. **Luke** pictures **Christ** in all of **His** humanity by devoting more of **his** inspired writing to **Christ's** feelings and humanity than any other Gospel.

6. **The Central Theme of Luke:** **Luke** presents **Jesus** as the Perfect Man who came to seek and save both Jews and Gentiles alike. It shatters cultural boundaries, ethnic boundaries, and racial boundaries because it cuts across the human condition.

7. **The Key Verse of Luke: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost (Luke 19:10).**[6]

The Gospel According to John

1. **The Author of John:** The author and apostle **Yochanan** is **the talmidim whom Jesus loved (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20** and **24).** He was prominent in the early Church but is not mentioned by name in this Gospel – which would be natural if he wrote it, but would be hard to explain otherwise. The author knew Jewish life well, as seen from references to popular messianic speculations (for example: **John 1:20-21; 7:40-42)**, to the hostility between Jews and Samaritans **(Yochanan 4:9)**, and to Jewish customs, such as the duty of circumcision on the eighth day taking precedence over the prohibition of working on the Sabbath **(John 7:22)**. **He** knew the geography of Palestine and particularly the city of Jerusalem, mentioning such incidental details such as Cana, a village not referred to in any earlier writing known to us **(2:1, 21:2)**. The gospel of **John** touches on many things that were obviously based on the recollections of an eye witness – such as the house at Bethany being filled with the fragrance of the broken perfume jar **(Yochanan 12:3)**.[7] Early Church tradition affirms that it was written by **John the apostle**. Irenaeus (130-200 AD) wrote, "**John**, the disciple of **the Lord**, who leaned on his breast, also published the gospel while living at Ephesus in Asia." Irenaeus said that he received this information from Polycarp, a disciple of **Yochanan** himself. So, both the internal and external evidence confirms **John the apostle** as the human author.

2. **The Date of John:** Since the eighteenth century, it was common among critical scholars to date **Yochanan** as being written late in the second century, assuming its high view of **Jesus** was a late development in the Church. However, the discovery of the *John Rylands manuscript (p52, 135 AD)*, a small papyrus fragment of **John**, as well as the other discoveries at Qumran (which show the Jewishness of the Gospel) have forced scholars to abandon this late date. Since **John's** three epistles and **Revelation** were written after his Gospel, most scholars today date the Gospel from AD 80 to 90.

3. **The Audience of John:** **John** certainly knew of the synoptic Gospels and probably taught from them for many years before deciding, under the guidance of **the Holy Spirit**, that the biography of **Jesus** remained incomplete. All believers knew **Him** as **King** of the Jews, **Yeshua** as **Servant** and **Yeshua** as **the Son of Man**, but there remained a need for the theme, **Jesus** as **the Son of God**. **John** wrote **his** Gospel so that we would know that **the Son of Man** is **God** in human flesh – completely human, yet no less **God** than when, **in the beginning,**

He spoke the universe into existence. **John** wrote, "This is **God** in human flesh – believe in **Him**.

4. **The Christ of John:** This book presents the most powerful case in the entire Bible for the deity and incarnate **Son of God**. **The man they call Jesus (John 9:11)** is also **Christ, the Son of the Living God (John 6:69 NKJ).** The deity of **Christ** can be seen in **His** seven **I AM** statements: **I AM the bread of life (Yochanan 6:35), I AM the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5), I AM the gate (John 10:7** and **9), I AM the Good Shepherd (John 10:11** and **14), I AM the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), I AM the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6) I AM the true vine (Yochanan 15:1-5).** The seven signs or miracles: Changing Water to Wine **(2:1-12)**; Healing the Officials Son **(John 4:43-53)**; Healing at the Pool of Bethesda **(John 5:1-15)**; Feeding the 5,000 **(Yochanan 6:1-24)**; Walking on Water **(John 6:16-24)**; the Healing of a Man Born Blind **(John 9:1-44)**; and also Raising Lazarus **(Yochanan 11:1-44)** point to **His** divine character. **The Word was God (John 1:1)**, but **the Word** also **became flesh (John 1:14).**[8]

5. **The Purpose of John: John's** Gospel contains a clear statement of purpose. **Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His apostles, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name (John 21:30-31).** This may indicate that the gospel's primary purpose is evangelistic, to bring unbelievers to faith in **Christ**. On the other hand, the interpretation of the phrase: **that you might believe**, is disputed. Some early manuscripts view this as in the present subjective, and thus could be translated: **that you might** continue to **believe**. Therefore, the purpose could be to assure believers in their faith. These two purposes of evangelism and assurance are not mutually exclusive. Both could be aspects of **John's** purpose for writing. The theme of light and darkness is a minor motif in **John's** Gospel.

6. **The Unique Material and Theological Themes of John:** The central theme of **John** is that **Jesus** is the divine **Son of God** who reveals **the Father**, providing **eternal life** to **whosoever believes in Him**.

a. The gospel of **John** is unique. Although it is written in a simple style, and with simple vocabulary, it displays a deeper level of theological meaning and implication behind the words and deeds of **Jesus.**

b. **John** omits much material included in the Synoptics **(Matthew, Mark and Luke)**. **He** provides no genealogy, illustrating the fact that deity has no beginning. **John** offers no childhood details and retells no parables, perhaps to emphasize **His** transcendent nature as **God**. **Yochanan** bypasses **Jesus Christ's** temptation in the wilderness, **His** transfiguration on the mountain, **His** commissioning of **the apostles** after **His** resurrection, and **His** ascension from the earth.[9] Most of the teaching of **Jesus** in **John** is unique. Ninety-two percent of **John** is unique to **his** Gospel, with only 8 percent found in the Synoptic Gospels (this is almost exactly opposite of **Mark**). Five of the seven miracles do not occur in other gospels. The Sadducees are not mentioned nor is **Jesus'** fellowship with sinners and tax collectors. Many events important in the Synoptics are also omitted, including birth stories, genealogies, **Jesus'** baptism, the temptation, the transfiguration and the ascension. The key Synoptic phrase, **the Kingdom of God**, occurs only twice. Evidently **John** avoided repetition with the Synoptics unless it fulfilled his purpose.

c. **Yochanan** is the only writer to report **Jesus'** extensive Judean ministry. From the Synoptics alone it is impossible to tell how long **Messiah's** public ministry lasted. They mention the Passover, but, only when **Yeshua** died.
John supplements this material by letting us know that there were four Passovers during **Christ's** public ministry; thus, we know it lasted for three-and-a-half years.

d. **John** repeatedly describes **Jesus'** contacts with those around **Him**, like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. When people came in contact with **Jesus**, they either accepted or rejected **His** person and **His** message. But, either way, a response was necessary. From these personal interviews, we gain great insight into **Yeshua's** identity.

e. Lastly, there is more extended teaching by **Yeshua** about **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** than in any other.

7. **The Key Verses of John: For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).**[10]