



JESUS
and The URANTIA Book

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JESUS

and The URANTIA Book

HAVE YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW more about Jesus' life? As a college student I became committed to this search, and it eventually led me to *The URANTIA Book*, which confirmed and greatly expanded what I had learned in the New Testament. My spiritual search really got underway when a girlfriend — figuring that I needed it, I suppose — invited me to a Christian revival, where I realized for the first time that the spiritual path is not primarily concerned with learning *about* God, but in having faith *in* Him. I felt moved to admit my sinfulness, to ask for and receive God's forgiveness, and despite inner reservations, to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior.

The following night I awoke around 3 a.m., began praying, and dedicated my life to God, whose love I then felt wash over me for several minutes. I had heard such an experience described as the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Then and in retrospect, I knew that I had met my Maker.

Since the revival obviously had put me in the frame of mind to have faith in God, did the power of the resultant experience validate the theology of the group with whom I had experienced it? I felt it did not, that "being born again" was an experience I had had with God, not with a denomination or any set of theologic propositions. What I did know was that I had met Someone. Was it God, Jesus, or both?

Fundamentalism's emphasis on faith was a vast improvement over my prior confused mishmash of beliefs which, despite all faults, had put me on the spiritual path, but I wasn't comfortable with what seemed to me to be its tendency to reject intellectual analysis. After all, Jesus quoted the Old Testament scripture requiring us to love God with our minds as well as with our hearts, souls and strength.

I was grateful for what my Christian fundamentalist friends had taught me about faith, but all in all, I was a poor candidate for their theology. I had no doubt that the Bible was inspired, but to consider



WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

it literally inerrant seemed not only intellectually indefensible, but unwarranted. If God had wanted mankind to have an infallible guide to living, a repository of *all* truth, I felt that at a minimum He would have arranged for a universally accepted version to have survived. Religious history shows God's progressive revelation of Himself to men, and to crystallize that ongoing revelation at any given point in time seemed contrary to His way of doing things. Moreover, the attempt to elevate to the status of spiritual truth Old Testament stories about God's supposed delight over various tribal slaughters seemed contrary to Jesus' description of God as the loving Father even of one's enemies. To take the story of Adam and Eve literally required a convoluted explanation of dinosaur bones I had actually touched in museums and of virtually all generally accepted science. I could not see how God's creation of man was rendered any less majestic if, as obviously happened, He created through the process of evolution.

THE ATONEMENT DOCTRINE

The atonement doctrine was another belief which seemed contradictory to my belief in a loving God. It holds that as a result of Adam's fall from grace, all mankind was cursed by sin. Under this theory, even little children (whom Jesus called blessed, being like

the Kingdom of Heaven) and all unborn generations come into the world morally guilty, under a spiritual curse. According to the atonement doctrine, the Father's procedural code required that the blood of a totally innocent party be shed to satisfy His demand of justice. This would assuage God's wrath and permit Him to receive His children back into the fold. I couldn't accept the formulation of either the problem or the solution. The heavenly Father could not have been so wrathful and unforgiving as to require the death of Jesus on the cross to atone for mankind's supposed inborn guilt, as if sin were something transmitted from parent to child. Why should we imagine that our loving Father would damn unborn generations to *eternal* torture in a lake of fire as a result of Adam's sin, an event over which they had not an iota of control?

This concept of God *wanting* to love His children on earth, but due to Adam's sin not quite being *able* to, seemed to presuppose a lack of unity in His personality, where the part of Him which wished to show love and mercy was in conflict with another part which demanded rigid justice and desired to see His children adequately punished for the sins of their ancestors.

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URANTIA (EARTH), SCENE OF THE MIRACULOUS BESTOWAL

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

It seemed to me that Jesus taught that the Father in heaven is like the father of the Prodigal Son, who longed for his erring son to return home; that God's dealings with His mortal children are characterized by infinite love, a love that goes beyond forgiving sin to actually destroying the desire to sin in our hearts.

In studying the New Testament, I was struck by the fact that Jesus never taught anything resembling the atonement doctrine, as it became attached to Christianity. If holding such a belief had been vital to my salvation, wouldn't Jesus at least have mentioned it? Instead, the Bible records Jesus teaching basic spiritual truths: loving God, serving man, entering the Kingdom within, attaining eternal life.

Not long after thinking all this through, I came across *The URANTIA Book*. It satisfied my longing to know more about Jesus, and set forth a theology totally compatible with what I knew of history, science, logic, philosophy, and faith. I was not bothered by the fact that *The URANTIA Book* claimed to be a revelation, since its value to me derived from what it said, rather than from where it purported to come.

I mainly wanted to know what *The URANTIA Book* said about Jesus. From my studies I knew that

the early Christian church had spent several centuries consumed by inquiry into Jesus' nature. After those who knew Jesus in the flesh died, his incarnation became more and more perplexing, and sects formed behind teachers attempting to explain who he was. To settle the issue, the bishops of the church gathered in council at Nicea and Constantinople in the fourth century, and established it as the official church doctrine that Jesus was *both* God and man. *The URANTIA Book* likewise teaches that Jesus was God incarnate in mortal flesh, both God and man.



THE BISHOPS MEET

A BIGGER GOD?

But there were differences. *The URANTIA Book* describes God's activity in the universe in far vaster terms than I had been accustomed to. It teaches that God is creating and perfecting virtually uncountable planets, all destined to be inhabited by free will beings not essentially different from ourselves. It teaches that after this, our first life, we progress through a long ascending series of life experiences on other worlds until we eventually embrace God on Paradise, from whence we will be sent forth to serve in new universes even now in the making.

The URANTIA Book teaches that Jesus came to earth in the likeness of mortal flesh, not only to reveal God to us, but to learn what mortal life is like. He experienced all of the joys, temptations and tribulations of the mortal estate, and therefore we may be



LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE

certain that he understands our weaknesses and frailties. By actual personal experience Jesus gained insight into the human condition, and revealed to us the transcendent possibilities of a life wholly dedicated to doing the Father's will. He became the human lens through which men could see the invisible God, and through the attractive power of love, be led to worship the Father.

"AS JESUS PASSED BY"

According to *The URANTIA Book*, what Jesus taught was not so important as who he was and how he lived, and its unique contribution consists in the marvelous detail it gives us about Jesus' day-to-day life; how he revealed God "as he passed by." Jesus' entire life was an unbroken revelation of God, and our life in the spirit is bound up in our personal relationship with him. Jesus is the spiritual vine and we are the branches. However, this does not mean

that God-knowing Hindus, Mohammedans, Buddhists, or others who have not been exposed to Christianity are doomed because they haven't "accepted Christ." Since it is not a person's theology but the spiritual attitude of his or her soul that is the determining factor, a person may be in personal communion with Jesus without necessarily realizing with whom he is having the relationship.

The URANTIA Book teaches that Jesus was the Word made flesh. Born as a babe in Bethlehem, Jesus emptied himself of his attributes of divine pre-existence, and grew up as a man among men, experiencing hunger, thirst, weariness, and all of the commonplace trials, tribulations, joys and sorrows of human existence. His youth was much like that of countless other boys of his day until his father Joseph's untimely death when he was fourteen, whereupon as eldest son he did his best to provide for his mother and seven brothers and sisters. Since Jesus was too young to earn much, the family slowly slid into poverty, but even during that severe financial struggle he refused to use his divine power for his personal benefit. Later, at the end of his life on earth, Jesus still refused to use his divine power to avoid the machinations of the vicious men who contrived his crucifixion, and even while on the cross prayed on their behalf, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."



MEN WERE ATTRACTED BY HIS FORCEFUL, GRACIOUS PERSONALITY

THE ALLURING PERSONALITY

Men were attracted to his forceful personality and homeless life dedicated to the welfare of others. Rugged Galilean fishermen called Jesus Master. He showed patience, humility, love and graciousness in all of his dealings with his fellow men, and his faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness made him intellectually honest and fearless before any threat.

Jesus appealed not only to the unschooled and fear-ridden Samaritan woman by the well, but to the greatest philosopher of his day; not just to the little children who gathered outside his carpentry shop in Nazareth to hear him tell stories, but to the Roman captain whose soldiers drove the nails through his hands and feet, who said, after Jesus' last breath, "Truly, this was a Son of God."

Jesus knew and understood men of every kind and description, no matter what their race, culture, morals or abilities, and loved each of them as a child of God. He had the courage to inaugurate a corps of women in full equality as preachers of the gospel in

a society which considered them little better than chattel.

After beginning his public career, Jesus lived under conditions of extreme stress, but he never seemed to be in a hurry, and never wavered in his convictions. His enemies tried to discredit him before both the people and the Roman authorities, but he did not stumble, nor was he influenced by public praise or ridicule.



GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

GOOD FOR EVIL

Jesus consistently returned good for evil; when he was slandered, he uttered no threats in return; on his last night on earth he forbade Peter to attack the guards who came to deliver him to the Sanhedrin. Jesus was a friend of sinners, and loved even his enemies. He unselfishly responded to human need. He was quick to recognize and acknowledge faith in others, but did not engage in flattery. Jesus was no dreamer or drifter, no sweet, kindly and harmless mystic. He was tender, compassionate and meek before God, but loathful of sin, intolerant of hypocrisy, valiant in defense of righteousness and fearless be-

fore his enemies. The moneychangers fled from the temple before him. Jesus didn't hold back; he was unreservedly committed to doing the Father's will. He healed the sick, raised the dead, forgave sin, and declared that he and the Father were one. He was so bold and aggressive in preaching the gospel that even his followers were occasionally tempted to wonder if he might be beside himself.

Jesus lived his life of self-forgetful service in the channel of its natural flowing, depending exclusively on his Father's guidance every step of the way. He was content to use what circumstances the Father made available. He was exposed to every sort of disappointment and temptation, but he never became discouraged, nor did he sin. He bound up the brokenhearted, proclaimed liberty to the captives, opened the prison doors to those enslaved by fear and comforted those who mourned. He promised that those who believed in him would have eternal life, and invited all those laboring and heavy-laden to come and learn of him, to take his yoke upon them and receive rest for their souls.

A MAN AMONG MEN

Jesus' teachings are best understood by learning how he lived them as a man among men. Jesus was all that he taught, and *The URANTIA Book* allows us to visualize this most important story of all time in its immediate background. Combining passages thought to refer to identical situations, some biblical scholars believe that the New Testament describes only 29 separate days of Jesus' life. Having witnessed the divine power of Jesus' resurrection, and confidently expecting his immediate return, the authors of the New Testament didn't write much about the human Jesus of Nazareth. *The URANTIA Book* appears not only to contain the true and original foundations of Jesus' teachings, but fills in many gaps in our knowledge of his life. It permits us to see Jesus as he really lived on earth, and to discover how he met and mastered those same trials of life we all confront.

Anyone who has the slightest curiosity about Jesus Christ cannot afford to miss the sheer thrill of this story, regardless of what he might think about *The URANTIA Book*.

As the story opens, Jesus is sovereign of his universe, prior to the upcoming incarnation. The narrative begins on page 1344 with a description of Joseph and Mary, Gabriel's announcement to Mary



JESUS OFTEN VISITED THE HILLS NEAR NAZARETH WITH JOSEPH

on the day of Jesus' conception, and the dream which reconciled Joseph to the idea. About the time Mary was due, Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to register for taxes, and Mary insisted that she be allowed to accompany him. There Jesus was born in a caravan stable on August 21, 7 B.C. Shortly thereafter the couple had to flee to Egypt due to King Herod's intent to kill the baby whom the wise men had unwittingly informed him was destined to become "King of the Jews."

Following his return from Egypt, we are given a year-by-year description of Jesus' childhood, his work around the house and his schooling in Nazareth. At age 12 his mother and father took him to Jerusalem to commemorate the Passover, where he became so preoccupied with the discussions in the temple that he forgot to return home with his parents, causing them much anxiety.

A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT

The following year Joseph was killed in a construction accident, which left Jesus as the sole supporter of his mother and his younger brothers and sisters — including one unborn at the time of Joseph's death. Jesus took over his father's carpentry shop, and endured several years of intense financial struggle before any of his younger brothers were old enough to help. Jesus' years from 14 to 27 were

preoccupied with raising his large family while he was only just growing up himself. We learn, for example, about Rebecca, the beautiful daughter of Ezra, and her unrequited love for Jesus; his work as a blacksmith; and about his work as a boatbuilder with a man



named Zebedee in Capernaum, two of whose sons later became apostles.

At 28, Jesus had turned over the management of his deceased father's home to his brother James and took a memorable trip to Rome as tutor to the son of a wealthy merchant from India. Two of the favorite conversations reported in this section are "The Young Man Who Was Afraid," on page 1437, and "Counseling the Rich Man," on page 1462.

Jesus was 30 years old when he returned from Rome, and after a brief stay with his family in Nazareth he went to work as a caravan leader on a trip to the Caspian. At the town of Urmia, he gave a series of lectures in which he set forth the closest thing to his political opinions, as valid today as then, given on pages 1485 through 1491.

All through his life Jesus had been growing progressively more aware of his unique relationship with God, and upon his return from the trip, he retired from human contact for six weeks of communion with his heavenly Father. Near



CRISIS ON MOUNT HERMON

the end of this session on the slopes of Mount Hermon, Jesus became absolutely assured of his divine nature, and vanquished the emissaries of Lucifer in personal confrontation.

AN ASTONISHING BAPTISM

Jesus returned to Zebedee's boat shop, where he worked until January, 26 A.D., when word reached him that his cousin John was preaching and baptizing in the River Jordan near Pella. Jesus laid down his work apron, announced that his time had come, and went to submit himself to John's baptism. As he arose from the water, a voice said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Jesus then left their company, and went into the hills for 40 days of communion with his heavenly Father. During this period, he formulated the six principles which were to guide him in his public ministry.

Upon his return he chose his first six apostles: Andrew, Peter, James, John, Philip and Nathaniel; and accepted an invitation to attend a wedding being given at Cana, where he unintentionally turned water into wine (p. 1528). After four months of training for the original apostles, he allowed each of them to choose one associate, and Matthew, Simon, James and Judas Alpheus, Thomas, and Judas Iscariot joined their company. An in-depth description of each of the apostles is given on pages 1548 through 1567. Their ordination sermon (p. 1568-1571) has become known as the "Sermon on the Mount."

Part 4 of *The URANTIA Book* is laced with short talks which Jesus had with his associates, applicable also to us today. A few classic examples are "Lesson on Self-Mastery" (p. 1609), "The Discourse on Prayer" (p. 1618), "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" (p. 1682), "Why Do the Heathen Rage?" (p. 1725), and "Jesus' Teaching at Tyre" (p. 1737).

THE BIBLE EXPANDED

Every episode of Jesus' life from the Bible is expanded upon and shown in context. For example, Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus in which he asks how a man can be born again is given on page 1601,

the man with the withered hand on page 1664, his rejection of Nazareth on pages 1683-1687, the Mount of Transfiguration on page 1752, the woman taken in adultery on page 1792, and the rich young ruler on page 1801. For a sample of Jesus' parables, read about the Prodigal Son on page 1850 and the Good Samaritan on page 1809.

The URANTIA Book also describes previously unknown aspects of Jesus' public ministry, notably the discussions which the apostles Nathaniel and Thomas had with one Rodan, an eminent Greek philosopher who came to believe in Jesus and whose psychological observations are only now being re-discovered (pp. 1772-1787).

The ruling Sanhedrin in Jerusalem had long been concerned about Jesus' popularity, but their worry turned to panic after the resurrection of Lazarus (pp. 1842-1849) and became fury after Jesus attacked their means of livelihood by driving the moneychangers out of the temple (p. 1888). After unsuccessfully attempting to discredit him before the multitudes by asking him trick questions such as whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar (p. 1899), the Sanhedrin unanimously decided that both Jesus and Lazarus must die.

Judas spent the Wednesday before the crucifixion



JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM FOR THE LAST TIME

in Jerusalem making arrangements with the chief priests for Jesus' capture. Thursday night the apostles went to the city to celebrate their last supper in the upper room of a believer's home, where Jesus established the remembrance supper and told the apostles that he must return to the Father, but that in his place he would send them the Spirit of Truth (pp. 1934-1962). Judas left early, but when he returned with the Roman guard, the group had already departed for Gethsemane.

THE TRAGIC EXECUTION

A short distance from camp, Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father while Peter, James and John were sleeping the sleep of nervous exhaustion. Judas arrived with the soldiers and identified Jesus with the traitor's kiss. Jesus was bound and taken before the court of the Sanhedrin, where he had already been condemned to death without a hearing on trumped-up charges. Since the Jews under Roman occupation did not have the right to impose the death sentence, they sent him over to governor Pontius Pilate. The Master endured humiliation in majestic silence. Pilate, while admitting that he could find no fault in the man, nonetheless sentenced him to death, and at 3 p.m. on Friday, April 7, A.D. 30, Jesus died on Golgotha, crucified between two thieves.



"BEHOLD THE MAN!" SAID THE AWESTRUCK PONTIUS PILATE

Pilate gave Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus permission to take Jesus' body, and they buried it in Joseph's new tomb. Pilate sealed the tomb and posted a guard to prevent the body from being removed at the request of the Sanhedrin, who feared Jesus' promise to rise again. His apostles lacked that confidence, and spent Saturday in abject fear for their safety. At 3 a.m. Sunday the stone rolled away, Jesus rose, and the terror-stricken guards fled to Jerusalem. Later that morning Mary Magdalene and four other women followers discovered the empty tomb when they went out to embalm his body more properly, not knowing about the sealed tomb or the Roman guard.

JESUS RETURNS

Jesus appeared to the women at the tomb, and shortly thereafter to Peter and John. He appeared to all of his apostles as they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee; the impulsive Peter jumped into the water to swim to him more quickly. On his nineteenth and final appearance, Jesus led his apostles to the western slope of Mount Olivet, where they could look out over both Jerusalem and Gethsemane. He directed that they kneel in a circle around him, prayed with them a final time, and ascended to his Father in heaven.

Later that day Peter called a meeting, and 120 believers assembled in the same upper room in which the apostles had had the last supper 40 days before. As they prayed, they became aware of a new presence which conferred spiritual joy upon each of them — as he had promised, the Master had sent his Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, to be with them and all believers in his stead.



THE PENTECOST MIRACLE

The human interest factor in the life of Jesus told in Part 4 makes it an excellent place for anyone to start reading *The URANTIA Book*. Starting there ensures that you will read enough of the book to discover the tremendous impact it is virtually certain to have on you. Having read that part, you will probably want to read the rest of the book to see how the incarnation of Jesus fits into the larger mosaic of God's dealings with man.

The URANTIA Book challenges Christians to discover anew the living Jesus. This stirring challenge is an appropriate way to end our pamphlet:

"Christianity has indeed done a great service for this world, but what is now most needed is Jesus. The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men. It is futile to talk about a revival of primitive Christianity; you must go forward from where you find yourselves. Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus' life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation. And when Jesus becomes thus lifted up, he will draw all men to himself. Jesus' disciples should be more than conquerors, even overflowing sources of inspiration and enhanced living to all men." p. 2084



"You learn about God from Jesus by observing the divinity of his life, not by depending on his teachings. From the life of the Master you may each assimilate that concept of God which represents the measure of your capacity to perceive realities spiritual and divine, truths real and eternal. The finite can never hope to comprehend the Infinite except as the Infinite was focalized in the time-space personality of the finite experience of the human life of Jesus of Nazareth.

"Jesus well knew that God can be known only by the realities of experience; never can he be understood by mere teaching of the mind. Jesus taught his apostles that, while they never could fully understand God, they could most certainly *know* him, even as they had known the Son of Man. You can know God, not by understanding what Jesus said, but by knowing what Jesus was. Jesus was a revelation of God." p. 1856



No pamphlet can begin to do justice to the life-changing power of the story of the life of Jesus which *The URANTIA Book* contains. You need to read it yourself. *The URANTIA Book*, © 1955, is published by The URANTIA Foundation, 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614. For further information and additional free copies of this pamphlet, you may write Asoka Foundation, PO Box 82009, Oklahoma City, OK 73148.

