

LEGEND

who is the most influential person in history?

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If we look for the greatest legend of all time, the biggest influencer who has ever lived, one stands above them all. Roughly 2,000 years ago, a man was born who changed the world. He is a central figure of human history, and His name is Jesus.

Over the past 2,000 years, countless books have been written about Jesus. He was and still is a central figure in art, music, and culture. The very birth of Jesus determines how we divide time. Our modern calendar measures years based on Jesus' birth. When we say the year is 2020, we mean it has been 2,020 years since Jesus was born.

While history is full of many remarkable people who did amazing things, none of their words, inventions, or contributions compare to the impact Jesus has had on the world. Jesus, a real person who lived at a specific time and in a specific place, is the most influential person who has ever lived. He is the most significant person in history.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Who is someone you consider to be influential? What makes them an influencer?

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HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Jesus was born to a Jewish woman named Mary. He was born in Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and Caesar Augustus. Jesus was a carpenter by trade, who died by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius.

While the majority of the information we have about the life and existence of Jesus comes from the Bible, there are multiple pieces of historic evidence from secular sources that have no motive of spreading Christianity and prove Jesus really did exist. Some historians and writers who lived during the first 100 years after Jesus' birth (ex. Flavius Josephus, Tacitus, Pily the Younger, and Suetonius) made mention of Jesus in their works, referring to His death and followers. This is significant historical data because, in the first 100 years after Jesus' death, people were still alive who knew Jesus when He was alive or knew someone who knew Him.

While there has been controversy throughout history surrounding the works and teachings of Jesus, a legitimate historian has never claimed that He did not exist. Jesus was a real man who lived in a specific place in the world, in a specific time in history.

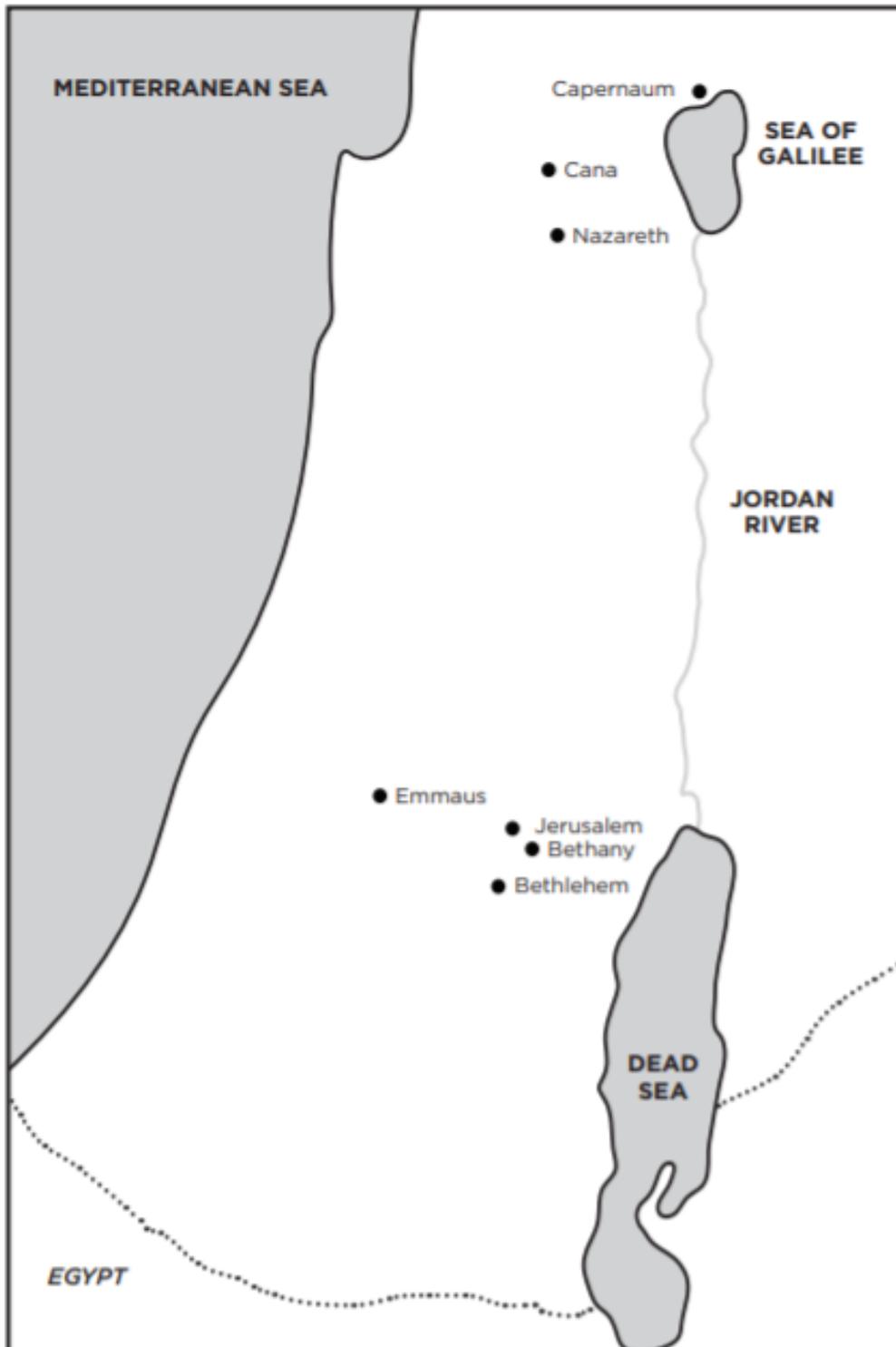
REFLECTION QUESTION

Have you ever considered whether or not Jesus was a real, historical person? If so, why?

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Jesus was Here Activity

Use a marker or a pen to draw a little emoji on the ancient map that shows what happened when Jesus was at that location.



Jesus was here!

BETHLEHEM

Jesus was born here (Luke 2:1-7). This is also where King David was born about 1,000 years before Jesus.

EGYPT

Joseph and Mary fled here from Bethlehem when Jesus was a baby to keep Him safe from King Herod, who wanted to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:13-20).

NAZARETH

A village in Galilee where Jesus grew up (Luke 2:39-40).

JORDAN RIVER

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist here (Matthew 3:13-17).

CAPERNAUM

Jesus lived here after leaving Nazareth. This is where Jesus met Peter and some of the other apostles (Matthew 3:12-22).

CANA

Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding here (John 2:1-11).

Note: Jesus traveled to many places during His public ministry.

JERUSALEM

In this city, Jesus celebrated Passover with His apostles (Matthew 26:17-25).

Here He was accused and sentenced to death (Matthew 26:57-67; 27:27-31).

Jesus was crucified on Golgotha, right outside of the city (Matthew 27:33-44). It is also the site of His burial and Resurrection (Matthew 27:57-60, 28:5-10).

EMMAUS

After He rose from the dead and people could not find His body, Jesus was found walking with two disciples on a road to this town (Luke 24:13-35).

BETHANY

Jesus ascended into heaven somewhere near this town (Luke 24:50-51). He

also raised His friend Lazarus from the dead here (John 11:1-44), which is the event that caused the chief priests and Pharisees to make a plan to put Jesus to death.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stands out to you the most about the places where Jesus lived and visited?

When thinking about Jesus and His life, what difference does it make for you to see the places where Jesus lived and visited?

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INFLUENCER

Jesus began His ministry with no followers. As He started to travel, preach, and perform miracles, He invited 12 men to be His apostles. As His disciples went forth and spread the news about Jesus, His following grew even more.

Jesus' influence did not end when He died; rather, His following continued to grow. While there are many great people who influenced the world and are celebrated after their death, there is something different about Jesus. Jesus claimed that He is God, and this sets Him apart from every other person in history, making Him and the movement He inspired worth considering.

The effect Jesus had on the world is remarkable: A man who lived thousands of years ago is still remembered, followed, and loved. Jesus continues to impact the lives of billions of people.

REFLECTION QUESTION

In what ways has Jesus impacted your daily life?

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Imaginative Prayer

CLOSING PRAYER

We have explored the fact that Jesus was a real, historical person. We have seen where He was born and grew up. We have identified the places where He met with His friends, performed incredible miracles, died, was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. But Jesus' influence and power are not limited to that particular time in history or the work He did in the Middle East. Jesus is not just a legend who lived "then" and "there"; He is "here" and "now." The stories in Scripture happened in a particular time and place, but they can transform our lives at this very moment. We are going to take some time in prayer to visualize ourselves in the story of Scripture, so it is not only someone else's story long ago but our story right now.

DIRECTIONS

1. Open your bible to Matthew 9:27-31 (Jesus healing the blind man)
2. Read the Scripture passage once, slowly.
3. Now, close your eyes and visualize the scene in the story: Who is in the story? Where are they? What are they doing? How do they feel?
4. Read the Scripture passage a second time. This time put yourself in the story and use your five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) to imagine the scene.
5. Now, imagine the following questions: Did you feel the press of the crowd following Jesus? Did you hear the voices of the blind men? Did you smell the dust being kicked up by the feet of all the people in the crowd? Did you feel the touch of Jesus' hand on your eyes? Did you see the amazement on the faces of the people in the crowd?
6. Read the Scripture passage a third time. This time pay attention to any words, phrases, or images from the story that stand out to you.
7. Read the Scripture passage a final time.
8. Take a few moments in silent prayer to talk with Jesus about what you experienced during this exercise and what words, phrases, or images stood out to you. Ask Jesus to reveal how this passage might relate to your life.