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Editorial Office: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

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Principal Contributor

Roy Adams

Associate Editors

George Belser
Esther Doss

Art Director and Illustrator

Lars Justinen

Editor

Soraya Homayouni Parish

Editorial Assistant

Sharon Thomas-Crews

Line Drawings

Robert Wright

Pacific Press® Coordinator

Paul A. Hey

Publication Manager

Lea Alexander Greve

Consulting Editor

E. G. White Estate
Norma Collins

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Introduction

An Eternal¹ Hope for the World

Of all the famous people throughout the history of the world Jesus of Nazareth had the shortest period of public work. Only three and a half years.

But what a three and a half years they were!

Socrates taught for 40 years. Plato for 50 years. Aristotle for 40 years. But Jesus worked for not even four. But the influence² of Christ's short ministry (work) goes beyond that of the combined 130 years of those three famous Greek thinkers.

Someone once wrote that the best paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci (famous Italian painters) show Jesus, the Light of the world. Haydn, Handel, Bach, and Mendelssohn (German musicians) gave to the world their best melodies (music). They wrote them to glorify (give praise to) Jesus Christ. Art, culture, music, and philosophy all have been made better by His teachings. But Christ offers far more than philosophy, art, and music. These cannot save. Jesus offers light and life and salvation³ to sinful men.

The above sentences are beautifully written. But they fail to equal the richness of Jesus. This is because these sentences are written for the West only. Christ's work goes all over the world. It goes beyond all political, ethnic,⁴ and cultural borders (boundaries).

"You should study the Bible," Ellen G. White writes. "This is because it tells you of Jesus. As you read the Bible, you will see how beautiful Jesus is. You will fall in love with Him. At every step you can say to the world, 'His ways are pleasant, and all His paths are peace.' You are to represent Christ to the world. You may show to the world that you have an eternal hope in Christ."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, page 293.

With Jesus at its center, Christianity is also a historical religion. This means that it centers on a Person whose life and work are open for careful historical study. But, at the same time, we cannot limit Jesus Christ within the confines (limits) of history. This is because the real Jesus is suprahistorical (above history). Jesus goes beyond the point that history cannot explore. History cannot take us into the mysteries of salvation. It cannot study the wonderful reasons for Christ's death for the world. For all that history offers, it cannot understand fully what Ellen G. White called "an eternal hope for the world."—Adapted from *The Review and Herald*, June 10, 1852.

1. eternal—forever; without end.

2. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

3. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved.

4. ethnic—having to do with different races of people.

This quarter centers on Jesus. It centers on who He was, on what He taught, on what He did and on what He *is doing now*. That last wording, “on what He is doing now,” makes a very big difference in the world. It is what might be called the “mystery of our present history.” It is very important because it separates Jesus from every other famous person in history. No other famous historical person, no matter how great he or she is, can equal Jesus!

Who was this wonderful Jesus? What was He like? What did He do while here? What is He really doing for us now? And finally, why should He interest people in the twenty-first century?

The answers, as we will see, are not just for study. Instead, they influence the future of every human being (person).

Roy Adams was born in the Caribbean area. He is the author of this quarter's Bible study guide. He is also an associate editor of the Adventist Review, the world magazine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He is married to Celia (nee Wilson), and they have two adult children, Dwayne and Kimberly.