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THE UNIQUE GALILEAN
By Russell V. DeLong

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Other books by Dr. DeLong:
Clouds And Rainbows
The High Cost Of Low Living
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The Present Challenge
Liberalism Turns Back
There Are No Moral Accidents
The Quest For Certainty
Mastering Our Midnights
Beyond Tragedy -- What?
Facts We Hate To Face
The Game Of Life
Evangelistic Sermons By Great Evangelists

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THE UNIQUE GALILEAN

Jesus of Nazareth is the greatest personality ever to appear in the arena of human activity and play His part on the stage of life. No man equals Him in depth of character, breadth of soul,

width of interest, or height of influence. He is the most outstanding individual who has ever trodden the dusty highways of life or trudged up the steep, jagged hillsides of earth.

Jesus is the Great Central Figure of all time. He splits history into two parts -- B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (in the year of our Lord).

It staggers the imagination to realize that a child could be born in a humble home; that home to be situated in an obscure little hamlet; that hamlet to be located in a very insignificant, small country -- and yet, out from that humble home, obscure village, and small country should come One the impact of whose dynamic personality should change the whole course of history, revolutionize philosophy, overthrow governments, revitalize religion, and transform men.

He was born in a conquered province of the Roman Empire held by the iron fist of military power and subject to the yoke of a slave -- yet Jesus became the great Emancipator, making freedom possible for every man and woman of Adam's race.

His mother was a woman of lowliest station, living in the most despised city, Nazareth, from which no good had ever come. But He became the fountainhead of all goodness.

He was born in a borrowed manger in the little town of Bethlehem. His father was only a humble carpenter; yet he instilled in his Son the creative genius of building not a material house, but of constructing a new mansion of human beings called the kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus lived but a brief thirty-three years. He was born a Jew -- despised, lowly, ignoble. His emperor was Caesar, who ruled a great earthly kingdom; but little did Caesar know that One would arise and found a Kingdom greater in territory, wider in scope, and richer in purpose, which would endure when the stateliest monuments and costliest palaces of Rome should be crumbled in the dust of oblivion.

Alexander the Great, who lived three and a half centuries before Jesus, conquered the world and created a colossal empire. He and Jesus had some things in common. Both began their careers very young, and both ended them at the untimely age of thirty-three.

Alexander was born in a mansion -- Jesus in a manger.

Alexander was the son of a king -- Jesus, the Son of a carpenter.

Both founded a kingdom -- one on power, the other on love. Alexander's was great but is now dissolved; that of Jesus was small but is now colossal.

Alexander lived and died for himself; Jesus lived and died for others.

Alexander died a worshipped king on a throne; Jesus died a mocked King on a cross. Alexander's life seemed like a great success; Jesus' life appeared as a dismal failure. Alexander shed the blood of millions for his own gain; Jesus shed His own blood for the salvation of millions.

Alexander sought his own life to lose it all in death; Jesus gave His life to find it again after death.

Alexander died in Babylon in splendor; Jesus died on Calvary in shame.

Alexander conquered every throne; Jesus conquered every grave.

Alexander made himself God and died as a man; Jesus made himself man but died like a God.

Alexander enslaved all men; Jesus made all men free.

Alexander built his throne on blood and power; Jesus shed His blood to build His powerful kingdom on love.

Alexander won all there was on earth, but lost heaven; Jesus lost all He had on earth, but won heaven for all.

Alexander forever died; Jesus forever lives.

Alexander lived like a millionaire but He died like a pauper; Jesus lived like a pauper but, by dying, acquired wealth for millions.

Alexander made history; Jesus transformed it.

These two men represent two ways of life. Every person is in one or the other. With Alexander are Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, and all others who have as their motto, "Get all you can." With Jesus are St. Paul, John Wesley, William Wilberforce, Abraham Lincoln, and others whose motto is "Give all you can." Givers and Getters represent the two philosophies of life.

The Getters are the "gold" seekers; the Givers are the "God" seekers. Jesus summed up the number one principle of character engineering when He said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Seek selfishly for your own pleasure, gain, and goods, and you grow smaller and poorer. But give yourself to something bigger than yourself and beyond yourself, and you find yourself and grow bigger and richer.

Alexander is a dim, forgotten man. He acquired all things but lost his soul. Jesus lost all things but founded an eternal Kingdom.

The person of Jesus stands among men as unequaled and unsurpassed. He is superior, supreme, tops -- unique.

His personality is unique. He is like no other man. He is theanthropic -- God-man. Because He is God He can reach up with one hand and grasp hold of God and reach down with the other hand and grasp hold of poor, lost man and thus make a bridge of reconciliation bringing God and man together.

Jesus is unique among founders of religions. Suppose you had the power to subtract the founder of each major religion from the religion bearing his name. Withdraw Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, and you have not changed these religions one iota. But when you subtract Christ from Christianity you have nothing left -- what He is, Christianity is; and what Christianity is, He is. Such is true of no other religion.

The Resurrection points to the uniqueness of Christ. The founders of other religions lie dead in their graves, but the Founder of Christianity transcended all others and came out of His sepulcher triumphant. Today He is living.

The character of Jesus is unique. I might ask you your opinion of President Truman, Winston Churchill, or any other man, and your answer might reveal your judgment but never your character. But when I ask, "What think ye of Christ?" your response indicates the kind of character you are. Why? Because Jesus is the fountainhead of righteousness, goodness, and truth. So when I ask, "What is your opinion of Christ?" I am really saying, "What is your opinion of right, goodness, and truth?" When anyone reveals this he reveals himself.

The life of Jesus is unique. It is trite to say, "He is the Ideal of Ideals." He is -- but what does it mean?

As an exercise, select the twelve greatest men in history. By each name put the outstanding characteristic which made him great -- twelve men and twelve character traits. If you could wrap up these twelve outstanding attributes which made these twelve men great into one great personality, who would possess them all? Jesus would be all of that and even more.

Every man in history and every person you know, no matter how strong he may be, has a point of weakness -- you could improve him. But here is a striking, unique fact: I challenge you to add one little thing to Jesus to make Him better. You can't make Him more just, or more righteous, or more honest. Jesus stands on the horizon of human experience as the only Man that cannot be improved. He is the Ideal of

Ideals

Jesus was also unique in His being. Every man is created in the image of God rationally, morally, and spiritually, possessing innate categories of the mind and norms of the soul. Because of sin and time, God's image has been well-nigh effaced -- certainly defaced. But there are definite indices of our pristine perfection. In our innermost constituent natures are norms of goodness, justice, harmony, beauty, honesty, and truth. If I could pull out of my inner being my ideal of goodness, my norm of justice, my ideal of mercy -- yes, all my ideas -- and tie them up into one great synthetic personality who would possess them all -- Jesus would equal and excel all of this.

He is the personification of every internal ideal of myself. He is the objectification of every subjective norm of my soul.

Jesus is also unique in that He has made available power to enable every man to be a victor and not a victim. He not only proclaims an ideal philosophy embodying lofty principles, but He gives daily power to enable one to live the Christlike life.

Jesus is unique -- He is the miracle Personality.

He was not a general, yet He became the Conqueror of the world -- not through the brutality of military force, but by the breadth of His mighty love.

He traveled little, confining His activity to Palestine, a country forty-five miles wide by one hundred miles long. He had no modern means of high-powered propaganda. There were no railroads, no steamships, no airplanes, no newspapers, magazines, or printing presses, no radios nor television screens.

Jesus possessed no influential name, no wealth nor position. He had neither training nor education except what He acquired at His mother's knee or in the humble village. He possessed no certificate, sheepskin, nor degree. He lived and moved among the common people. When He was born a manger was borrowed for Him, and when He died He was placed in a borrowed tomb. The estate He left consisted of a single seamless robe.

He was not a doctor; yet He healed the sick, opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, cleansed the leper, and raised the dead.

He was not a lawyer; yet He knew the Law, interpreted it, and applied it to the relationships which should prevail among men. He himself became the fountainhead of righteousness, and His principles are becoming more and more lodged in the hearts and consciences of men.

He was not an author. He wrote no books, composed no poems, compiled no documents, edited no papers, nor contributed to any periodicals. The only sentence He ever wrote was a single line in the sand, which disappeared the same day. No letter of it was preserved. He never used a fountain pen nor a typewriter. We have no line, word, or syllable from His hand. And yet -- more books have been written about Him and His words than any other man.

He has affected the lives of more people than all the authors of all the ages. The story of His life has been translated into more than 1,100 languages, read by countless millions, and is the best-selling story every year.

He was not an orator; yet no man spake as this man. His discourses have become the theme of thousands of addresses. His words are simple and clear. Very few adjectives are used, yet His sentences abound with beauty, meaning, and grace.

His sayings are hammered into polished marble, chiseled into imperishable granite, wrought into enduring bronze tablets, written in stained-glass windows of numberless churches, fashioned in rich mosaics upon temple walls, and set in arched domes of colossal cathedrals.

His words are literary gems. He stands as the unequaled Seer of all literature. Shakespeare, Milton, and Emerson bow their heads in His presence, recognizing a superior. Jesus used every form of human speech effectively -- parable and metaphor, allegory and epigram, simile and symbol -- without diluting the thought or over-ornamenting the truth.

He was not a poet; yet He has inspired thousands of poets to utter their sublimest expressions.

He was not a musician; yet He inspired Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Haydn, Handel, and countless others. But for Him the great Christian hymns would remain unwritten. He inspired Lowell Mason in "Nearer, My God, to Thee"; Toplady, in "Rock of Ages"; Watts, in "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"; Charles Wesley, in "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"; and thousands of others.

He was not an artist, nor a sculptor, nor a painter. He never handled a brush nor wielded a chisel. He was a stranger to the palette and canvas; yet He was the inspiration for Raphael, Michelangelo, Hofmann, and Countless others.

He was not an architect, contractor, nor builder. He was only a Galilean carpenter -- a maker of wooden plows and ox yokes; but He inspired the noblest, most marvelous architecture known to man. He himself specialized in character engineering -- making men -- human masterpieces. He took a Peter and made a saint.

He took a Saul and made a Paul.

He was not a statesman. He never held nor aspired to official position. He did not delve in politics; but He did found a Kingdom. He did give a constitution -- the Sermon on the Mount. His principles dethroned error. He was a disturber and a revolutionary. He fought evil, oppression, and tyranny. His principles laid the foundation for business based on confidence as a result of integrity.

Each profession produces masters, examples, models, and ideals who represent the best in that branch of human endeavor. In philosophy there is an Aristotle, a Plato, or a Kant; in music there is a Mendelssohn, a Bach, or a Mozart; in literature there is a Shakespeare, a Tennyson, or an Emerson; in military science there is an Alexander, a Napoleon, or an Eisenhower; in medicine there is a Hippocrates, an Osler, or a Mayo; in religion there is a Luther, or a Wesley, or a Calvin; in statesmanship there is a Washington, a Lincoln, or a Churchill. Great accomplishments reveal great personalities who personalize great professions.

Jesus Christ is the topmost Person possessing the highest ideals of all professions and vocations. He is the epitome of the best, the apex of the highest, the summit of the loftiest, the superlative of the supreme.

In Him men of all professions, of all vocations, of all races, of all colors, of all stations, of all ranks see the best. That is why Jesus appeals to everyone. He is the intellectual zenith, the emotional ideal, and the volitional norm. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

In Him man finds the answer to his problems, the satisfaction of his desires, the fruition of his struggles, the enjoyment of his dreams, the end of his aspirations, the satiation of his appetites, and the harmony of his soul.

Jesus represents the highest expression of every vocation.

To the astronomer -- He's the Bright and Morning Star.

To the artist -- He's the One Altogether Lovely.

To the architect -- He's the Chief Cornerstone.

To the author -- He's the Ideal Character.

To the baker -- He is the Living Bread.

To the banker -- He's the Hidden Treasure.

To the biologist -- He's the Source of Life.

To the botanist -- He's the Rose of Sharon.

To the builder -- He's the Sure Foundation.

To the carpenter -- He's the Saving Door.

To the doctor -- He's the Great Physician.

To the educator -- He's the Incomparable Teacher.

To the engineer -- He's the New and Living Way. To the farmer -- He's the Sower and Lord of the Harvest.

To the florist -- He's the Lily of the Valley.

To the geologist -- He's the Rock of Ages.

To the horticulturist -- He's the True Vine.

To the jurist -- He's the Righteous Judge.

To the juror -- He's the Faithful and True Witness.

To the jeweler -- He's the Pearl of Great Price.

To the lawyer -- He's the Counselor and Advocate.

To the musician -- He's the True Harmony.

To the writer -- He's the Good Tidings of Great Joy.

To the philanthropist -- He's the Unspeakable Gift.

To the philosopher -- He's the Wisdom of God.

To the preacher -- He's the Word of God.

To the sculptor -- He's the Living Stone.

To the servant -- He's the Good Master.

To the statesman -- He's the Desire of All Nations.

To the student -- He's the Incarnate Truth.

To the theologian -- He's the Author and Finisher of Our Faith.

To the toiler -- He's the Giver of Rest.

To the traveler -- He's the Way.

To the sinner -- He's the Saviour.

To the Christian -- He's the Comforter.

He is the Lover of the Poor, Healer of the Sick, Matchless Teacher, Incomparable Philosopher, Ideal of Ideals, King of Kings.

But -- beyond all of this, the Glorious Saviour, and Magnificent Redeemer.

Jesus is the only unimprovable Person ever to appear silhouetted against the sky line of humanity. Every man in history, no matter how strong he was in some special ability, could be improved, be he an Alexander, a Shakespeare, or even a Lincoln. Every person you have ever met in your experience, no matter how admirable he might have been, whether a mother, a teacher, or a minister, could be improved.

But here stands One -- Jesus of Nazareth -- you can't make Him more just or more righteous or more merciful. You cannot add anything to Him to improve His life, His mind, His ethics, His philosophy. Confucius, Socrates, Shakespeare, or Lincoln could be improved, but not Jesus. He objectifies and personifies all the norms and ideals of our innermost being. He is the Ideal of Ideals. In Him there is no blemish, or flaw, or shortcoming, or weakness.

In Jesus Christ we have a Being to whom our hearts and our minds and our wills can say, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done."

Jesus came primarily as a Saviour. John the Baptist introduced Him when he cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He was a matchless Teacher. He was a profound Philosopher. He was the greatest of men. He was the perfect Ideal. But above and beyond all this He was the Redeemer. He came to "save his people from their sins." He came to "seek and to save that which was lost."

The most significant event in the history of man took place at the summit of a hill, enacted by one lone Figure silhouetted against a darkened sky as He hung between two thieves on a roughly hewn cross. Single-handedly He was fighting the greatest battle of all ages. A bloodthirsty mob had cried for His blood at Pilate's judgment hall. It echoed and re-echoed with the devilish demand, "Let him be crucified His blood be on us, and on our children."

Pilate evaded responsibility. He feared the populace. He washed his hands, but didn't wash away his guilt

They took Jesus and placed a heavy cross on His shoulders, put a cruel crown of thorns on His holy brow, while blood oozed out of the pores and down His sacred face. At the point of spears they goaded Him up Golgatha's brow. Weak and worn, burdened and tortured, He trudged painfully to the summit. There they laid Him upon a cross, drove heavy spikes through His hands and His feet, lifted it to a hole, and dropped it as He sagged there in excruciating agony and unbearable pain. A howling mob stood at the base of the cross hissing and jeering and crying, "If thou be the Son of God, come down . . . He saved others; himself he cannot save. But Jesus had more important business that hour than saving himself. He was saving us.

What a picture! So terrible, yet so sublime! So awful, yet so grand! So painful, yet so productive! At length Jesus cried out, "It is finished"; and when He did, "The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Our salvation was completed. The holy of holies was wide open for every penitent soul. A new moment had come. A fresh day had dawned. Man was reconciled with God, and his sins were forgiven. The debt and penalty of sin had been paid in full -- yes, it was the supreme high light of all human history.

Witnesses in a court trial either convict or acquit a defendant. Their testimony on the stand must be firsthand. They must tell what they know. It cannot be secondhand or hearsay. They present evidence upon which a judgment is based.

Let us have a court scene. The person on trial is Jesus Christ. The witnesses will be poets. They will tell what they know. They will give evidence. They will present testimony which they have experienced personally with Jesus. You will be the judge.

All of the witnesses which will be called to the stand are persons of good character, normal intelligence, any of whom would be accepted in any court of justice either as a jurymen or as a witness.

Weigh the evidence as the testimony is given and form a judgment concerning Christ.

First Witness -- Miss Lydia Baxter, what have you to say concerning Jesus?

She testifies:

Take the name of Jesus with you,
Child of sorrow and of woe.
It will joy and comfort give you;
Take it then where'er you go.

But, Miss Baxter, when you are tempted, does He help?

Take the name of Jesus ever,
As a shield from every snare.
If temptations round you gather,
Breathe that holy name in prayer.

Second Witness -- Joseph Scriven, will you take the stand? Does Jesus remain sure when friends forsake and sins overcome?

Mr. Scriven answers:

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!

But, Mr. Scriven, in the times of trials, when you are tempted and in dire trouble, can Jesus be counted upon?

He answers:

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Thank you, Mr. Scriven.

Mr. Edward Mote, will you be our third witness? Mr. Mote, does Christ bring you any hope and comfort?

He cries out:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

But, Mr. Mote, in the time of darkness, when hope is gone and the sea of life is raging -- what then?

He replies:

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

Mr. Mote, your testimony is exhilarating.

Charles Wesley, will you be our fourth witness? What have you to say for Christ?

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!

But, Mr. Wesley, when I am bound by sin and feel that I am the chiefest of sinners, what can He do?

He breaks the power of canceled sin;
He sets the prisoner free.
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

Thank you, Mr. Wesley.

Next we call Mr. Samuel Stennett to the witness stand. What do you think of Christ?

Majestic sweetness sits enthroned
Upon the Saviour's brow;
His head with radiant glories crowned,
His lips with grace o'erflow.

But, Mr. Stennett, what does He mean to you personally?

No mortal can with Him compare
Among the sons of men;
Fairer is He than all the fair
Who fill the heavenly train.

But what has He done for you?

He saw me plunged in deep distress,
And flew to my relief;
For me He bore the shameful cross,
And carried all my grief.

And then exultingly he cries out:

To Him I owe my life and breath
And all the joys I have.
He makes me triumph over death,
And saves me from the grave.

Your testimony is convincing, Mr. Stennett. Our final witness will be Mr. Isaac Watts. Will you tell us what Christ means to you? He testifies:

When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God.
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Well, you have heard the witnesses. The evidence is in. What is your judgment concerning Christ? If these men speak the truth -- and they are not lying -- they are witnessing to a reality -- why don't you meet Christ for yourself?

He is living. He is available. He can speak to your troubled soul. He can break the bonds of sin in your life. He is the Saviour. Let Him save you. This is the most glorious truth ever revealed in any court in the land. Jesus has met millions. He can meet you.

The cross of Christ does something to you. The Cross attracts the attention, invites the understanding, allures the emotions, and challenges the will. The better self of everyone is stimulated in its presence. There comes from the Cross a pull, a tug -- a drawing. Some unexplainable spirit grips one's soul. You stand transfixed in its presence. It confronts you with purity, goodness, and truth. The best within you is stirred. Your higher, better nature would clasp it and accept its Christ as your Saviour.

The most universally popular hymn of the twentieth century embodies this truth so pertinently, worded by George Bennard:

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame.
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
Till my trophies at last I lay down.
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.

We of this generation have witnessed two world wars and face the possibility of a third. Jesus still stands towering o'er the wrecks of time and silhouetted against a black, stormy sky line, saying, "I am still here. I am still available. Come . . . all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

He is the miracle Personality. Because He is, He can change you and all who will come, and thus change society.

Our need is personal. It is not for better business, but for better businessmen; not for better education, but for better educators; not for better banking, but for better bankers; not for better farming, but for better farmers; not for better laws, better medicine, or better jurisprudence; but for better lawyers, better doctors, and better judges.

Christ is the answer. He is our only Hope. The angel who announced His coming to a band of frightened shepherds brought the world its number one news story.

"Fear not, for . . . I bring you good tidings of great . . . For unto you is born this day.. .. a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

At this hour we adore Him.

Beloved Personality.
Lover of the Poor.
Healer of the Sick.
Matchless Teacher.
Incomparable Philosopher.

Ideal of Ideals.

But beyond all of this -- glorious Saviour.

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THE END