

# The Christian Religion—Jesus Christ

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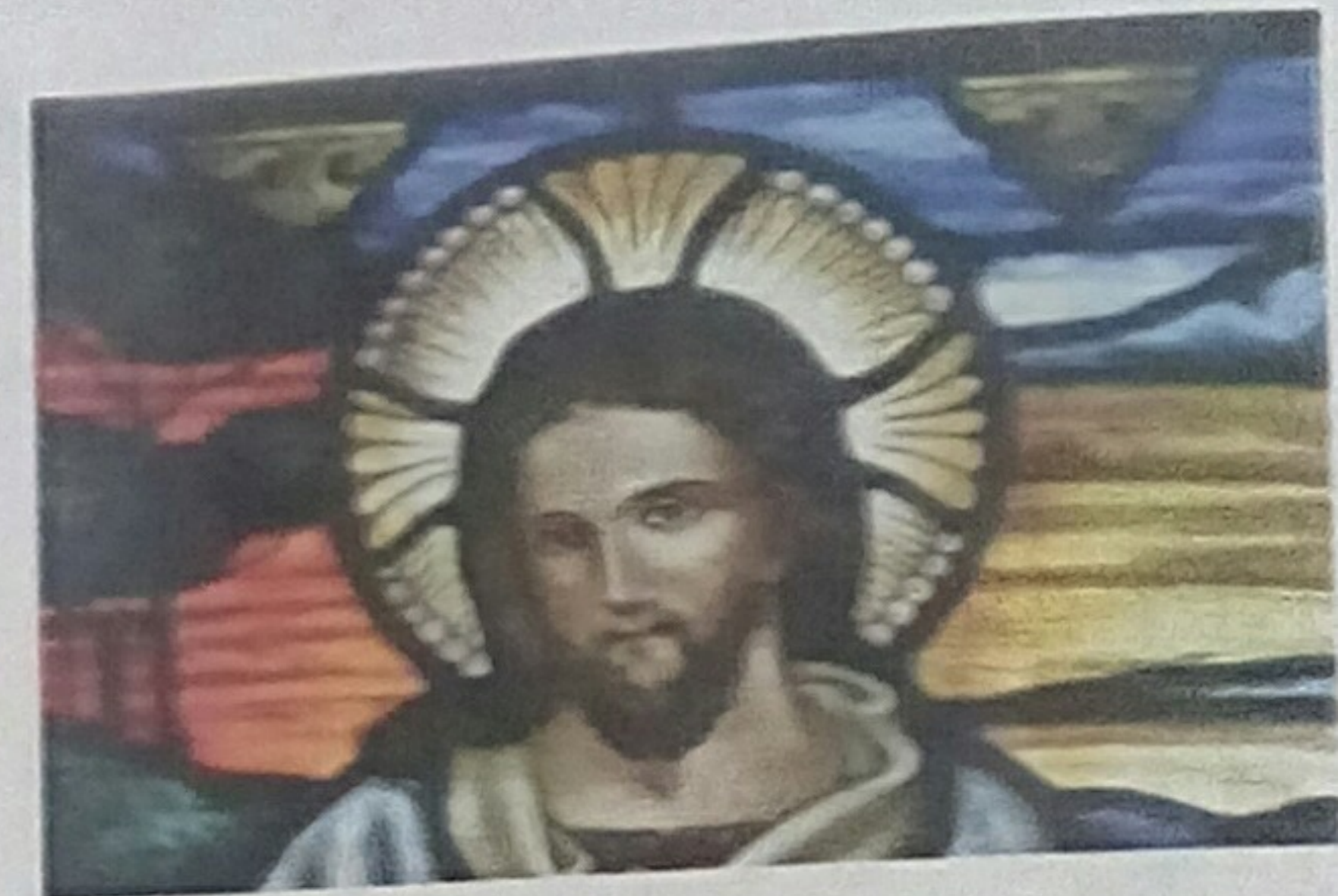


**Jesus Christ** was a Jewish *prophet* and *teacher* who founded the **Christian religion**. He preached and taught in Palestine almost 2,000 years ago.

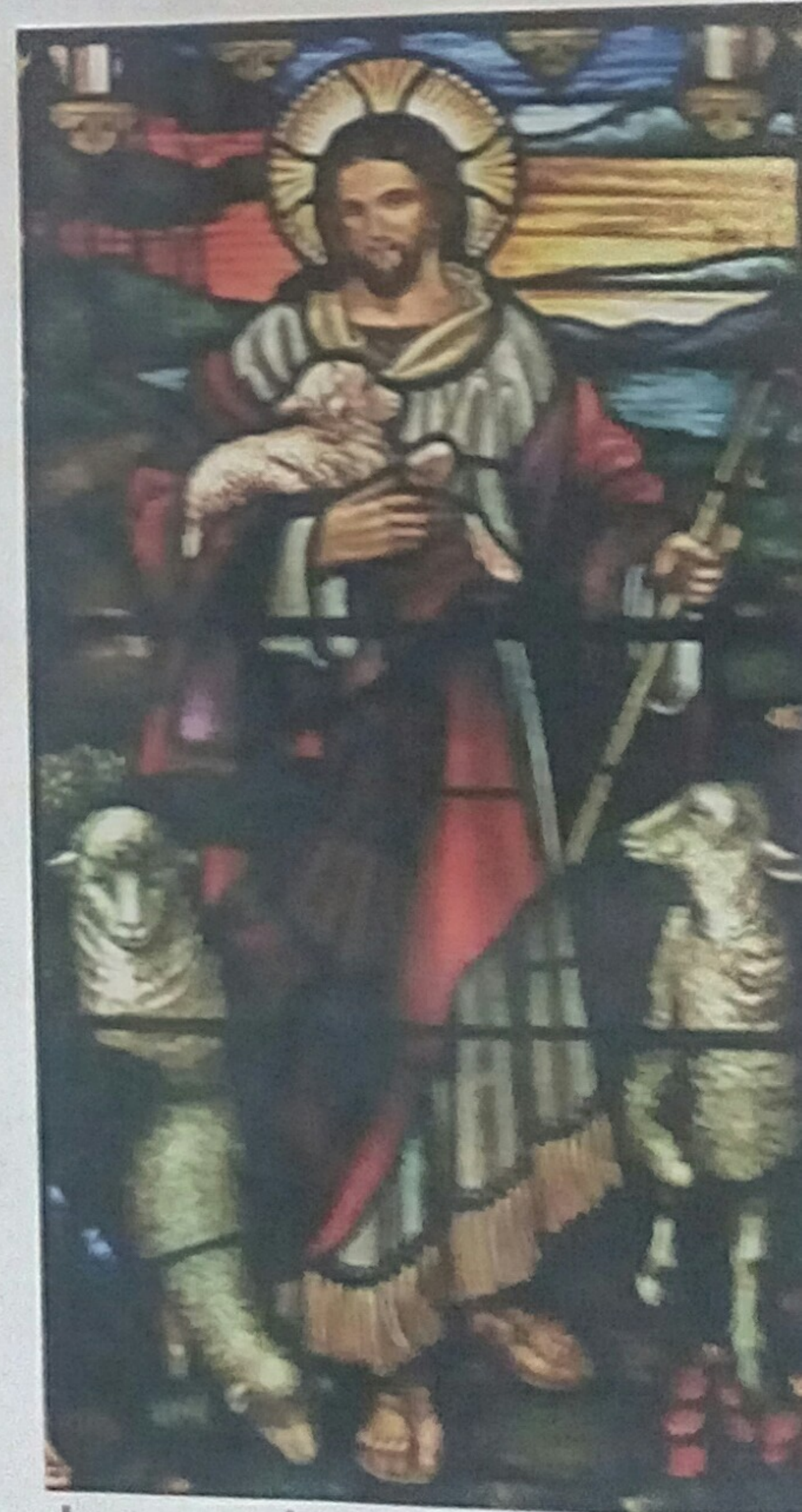
To Christians, Jesus is the 'Son of God', and to most of them he is divine. Divine means related to God. Christians believe that God sent him to earth to save mankind.

## *The Story of Jesus*

Jesus was born shortly before the death of King Herod the Great in 4 BC. Herod was a ruler appointed by the Romans, who controlled Palestine. Jesus grew up in Nazareth with Mother Mary and Joseph. Joseph was a carpenter. As Jesus grew old, he joined his father's occupation. At the same time, he became very thoughtful. When he was about 30 years old, Jesus began his **ministry**. This won him followers, and also enemies. About AD 30, he was arrested in Jerusalem and then executed by **crucifixion** (nailed to the cross), which was a punishment for criminals at that time.



Jesus Christ



Jesus depicted as the good shepherd

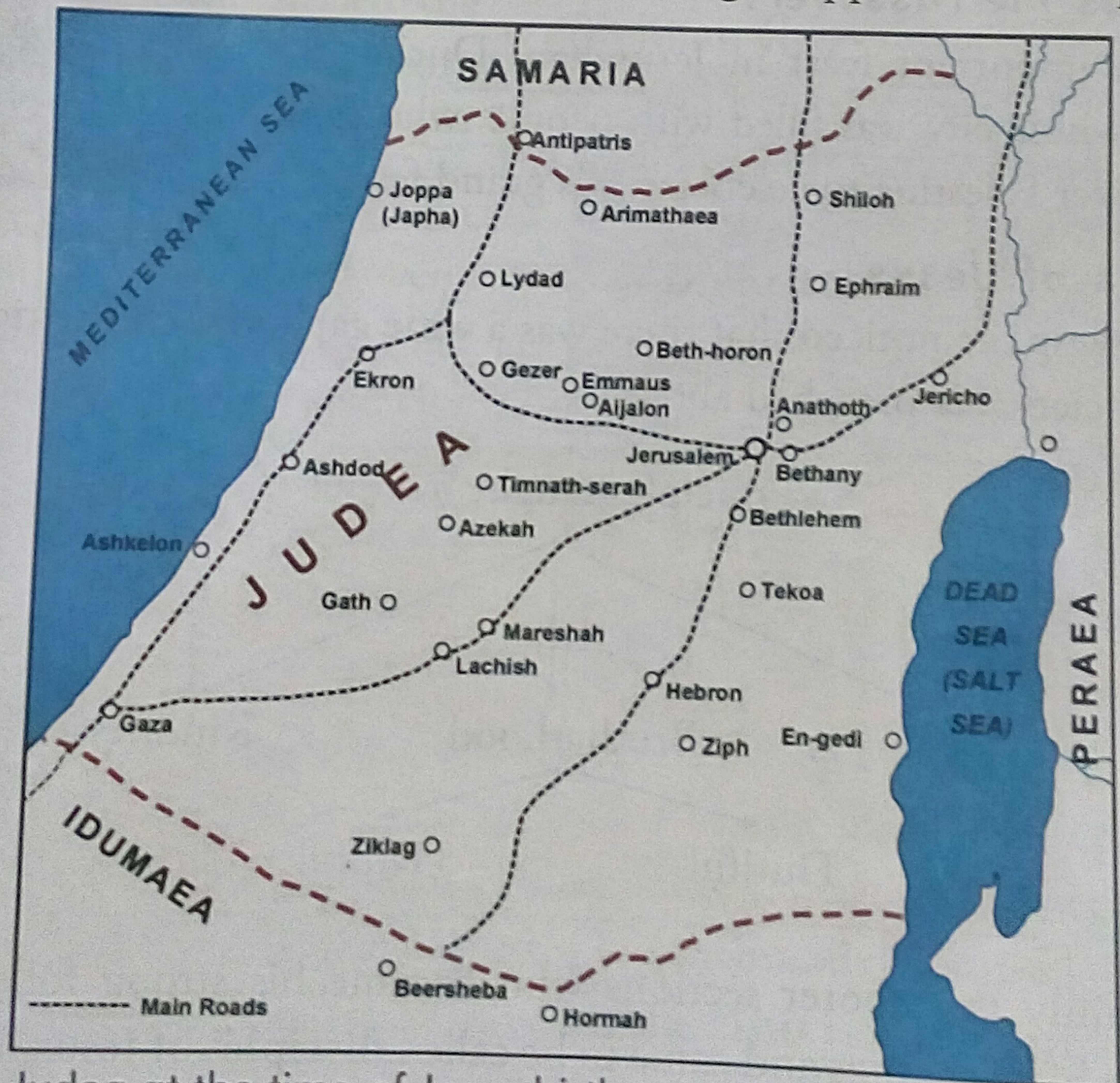
## What does the name Jesus Christ mean?

The name **Jesus** is the Greek version of a common Hebrew name **Joshua**, meaning *Saviour*. **Christ** is the title, which comes from a Greek word meaning *Messiah*, one appointed by God. Thus, Jesus Christ means *the saviour appointed by God*.

## Birth and Early Years

The Gospel tells that Jesus was born miraculously. An angel appeared to Mary and told her that she would bear a son, who would be the '**Son of God**' — the **Messiah**.

Shortly before Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem. As the town was crowded, they were forced to find shelter in a *stable*, and Jesus was born there. His *cradle* was a *manger*. Angels appeared to shepherds in



Judea at the time of Jesus birth

nearby fields and proclaimed the birth of the Messiah. The *Wise Men* followed a star to *Bethlehem* to find the *King of the Jews*.

King Herod heard of Jesus' birth, and he feared a rival. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and warned him that Herod wanted to harm the child. Joseph and Mary fled with their child to Egypt. Herod was so angry that he ordered killing of all the boys in Bethlehem two years old or younger. After Herod's death, Jesus, Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth.

### What are Gospels?

Gospels mean 'good news'. These stories of Jesus are told in four books called Gospels, written by his four disciples Mathew, Mark, Luke and John.

### What was the Passover?

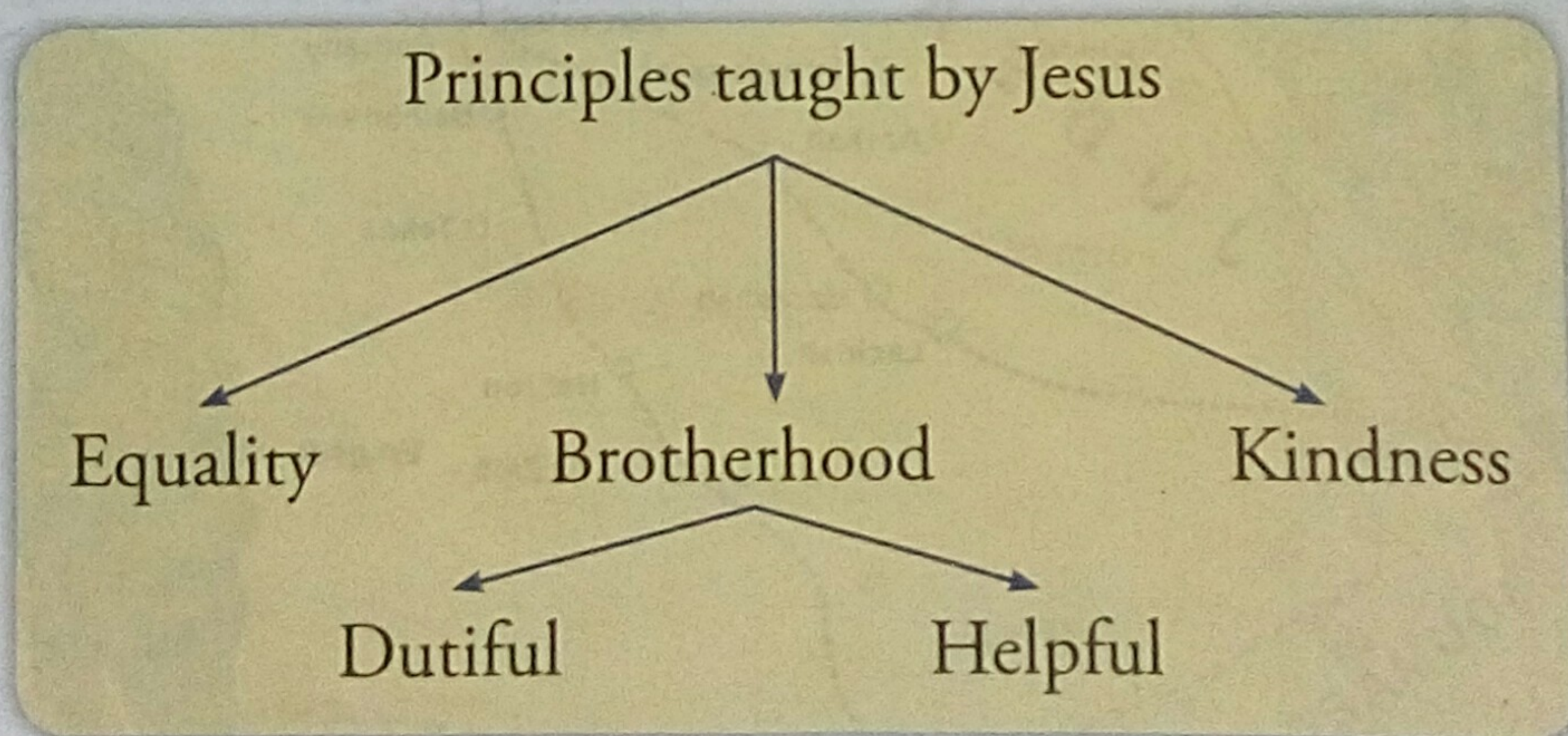
It was an important feast in Jerusalem. During the feast the whole city was filled with people, who came from all over Palestine to celebrate this grand festival.



The Passover

### Teachings of Jesus

As he grew up, he noticed that there was a wide gap between the rich and the poor in society. He preached about—



It was mainly the poorer sections who became his strong followers. They believed in his teachings and came to be called **disciples of Jesus**. He chose 12

disciples to help in his work. His early disciples were: **Peter, Andrew, James the Elder and John.**)

The Gospels collect many of his teachings into long speeches or **sermons** and also through parables. Parables are short stories with a moral or religious principle.

Jesus thus formed his **ministry**. Jesus' *miracles* were also a part of his ministry. One such miracle tells us that **he walked on the water of the Sea of Gallilee and stilled a storm.**) He fed thousands of people from a few fish and loaves of bread. But the most important of his miracles were the miracles of healing. He cured lepers, blind persons, healed the lame and raised three people from the dead.)

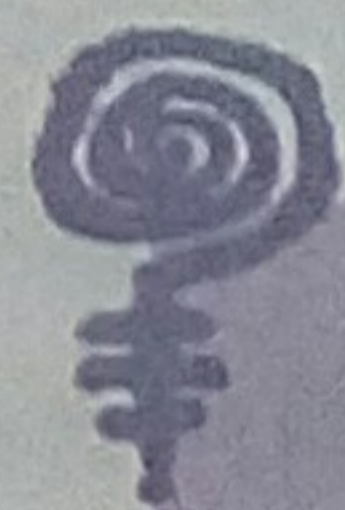
### **Arrest and Crucifixion**

Jesus and his disciples went to **Jerusalem** to celebrate the **Passover**. Jesus entered the city in triumph, riding a donkey, an animal that is a symbol of being meek. People spread palm branches before him and welcomed him.

Jesus next went to the Temple and drove out people who were 'changing money and buying and selling'. He said that a Temple is a place for **prayer and worship** and not for **buying and selling**. This angered the Jewish religious leaders, and they began to *plot his death*. He gave **bread** to his disciples, saying, '**This is my body**', and gave them wine, saying, '**This is my blood.**' Christians remember the **Last Supper** in their sacrament of communion.



Jesus transfiguration



### **Know This**

The Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 4th century AD. He issued an order called the Edict of Milan, which commanded toleration of Christians and other religions. Prior to this Jews who chose to become Christians were tortured by the Jews.

## The Last Supper

After the Supper, Jesus and his disciples went to the **Garden of Gethsemane**. He was taken to the **Sanhedrin, the council** looking into Jewish affairs. After condemning him for **blasphemy**, he was turned over to **Pontius Pilate**, the Roman Governor. Pilate attempted to free Jesus, as it was the custom to free one prisoner during Passover. But the crowd that had gathered outside his palace demanded Jesus' death. Pilate then ordered him to be **executed** for claiming to be the *King of the Jews*.

### What is blasphemy?

Speaking disrespectfully about God or sacred things.

The next day, a Friday, Jesus was **crucified** outside the city walls. He was forced to wear a **crown of thorns** and to carry his own *cross* to the site. Jesus was nailed to the cross until he died. This *day* in



Jesus' crucifixion

the Christian calendar came to be known as **GOOD FRIDAY**. Even when Jesus was nailed, his last words were: **'Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.'**

## **Resurrection**

On the **Sunday**, following Jesus' death, his family members and his disciples went to his tomb and found it empty. An angel announced to them that *Jesus had been raised from the dead*. The Gospels tell stories of how Jesus appeared to his disciples in Jerusalem. He asked his disciples to go out into the world to tell his story and to spread his teachings. According to tradition, he *left the earth and ascended to heaven* after 40 days.



Jesus' resurrection

Thus, Jesus was resurrected and it proves that he was the **'Son of God'**.

## **New words learnt**

prophet

crucifixion

saviour

messiah

manger

angels

passover

disciples

sermons

parables

ministry

miracles

stilled

blasphemy

executed

resurrection