

The Life of Jesus 1

The birth of the Messiah Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 1:26-2:52, Matthew 1:18-2:15

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit live in the eternal now. They are each perfect and are therefore One. In that eternal existence they are completely satisfied and have need of nothing. The heart of the Father has been forever satisfied with the Son. They decided to make man in their image. Indeed Moses uses that very language, "Let US make man in OUR image." Genesis 1:26

As the Lord is omniscient and determines the end from the beginning, He knew that given a choice man would fall. And so, before creation began, the heavenly counsel determined that redemption would be accomplished, and many sons brought to glory, through the incarnation and sacrificial death of God the Son. Thus He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world". Revelations 13:8

When the perfect time had come, God sent his Son into the world. Galatians 4:4 Israel had been restored from captivity and, although under the rule of Rome, was free to worship. The common person was looking for the coming Messiah. They had a desire that He would unite the people and break the yoke of Rome off their backs. The tax collectors were a great burden but even the local ruler and Chief Priest were selected with Rome's influence. Everywhere one looked they were reminded that Rome controlled God's nation. Highways were built that connected most of the Roman Empire. There were Roman cities within the nation. Some of the old Jewish nation on the other side of Jordan and in the northwest was inhabited by Greeks.

Read the account of the first signs of the coming from Luke 1:5-25. After 400 years without the voice of a prophet, an angel meets Zechariah in the Holy of Holies and tells him of the birth his son, John the Baptist. In John 1:17 the angel tells him that John will pick up where Malachai left off. And so the last prophet – the last to hold this place as a man who hears from God and relays to us the message, is John. Luke 16:16 He is the end of an era and the announcer of a new one. The spirit of Elijah is on him.

The prophets had foretold that the Messiah, the Christ, was coming. Some people prayed for his coming. Two of them are mentioned in the Gospel of Luke 2:21-40, Simeon and Anna. When God desires to act in the world He stirs the heart of his servants to pray for his will to be done.

Joseph and Mary are engaged to be married when an angel of God comes to visit Mary. God has chosen his vessel and sends the angel Gabriel to announce to her that she will give birth to Jesus. Luke 1:26-38 She asks how it can be possible since she has not slept with a man. The angel declares the child to be conceived

of the Holy Spirit and goes on to describe that He will be the One in whom is fulfilled the promises made to David. When Joseph learns of the pregnancy he is very troubled, but in a dream an angel helps him to understand what has taken place.

There is a problem though. The Messiah is prophesied to be born in Bethlehem, (Micah 5:2) but they are living in Nazareth. And so God uses the vanity of man, Augustus Caesar, who decides to take a census. In Israel the vassal ruler, Herod the Great, ordered the tribes of Israel to report to the city that was the capital of their tribe to be counted. Both Mary and Joseph were of the tribe of Judah, descendents of David, just as the Scriptures had foretold. The timing of the census coincided with the time of Jesus birth, and so the prophecies were fulfilled. The Messiah was born in Bethlehem (which means, house of bread). There was no lodging available, hotels were few in that time, so the Mother of Jesus delivered Jesus in a stable. A millennium earlier David heard the Father say of this day, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

Shepherds hear the angelic chorus and are sent to see and worship the newborn. Interesting that the angels came to shepherds. They were on the bottom of the employment scale and so mistrusted that their witness could not be accepted in court. They were tending lambs for sacrifice. Mary was too, although she did not know it. Salting a newborn and wrapping him in strips of cloth so that he cannot move was a tradition of the time. The angel's instructions to look for a babe wrapped in swaddling cloth meant a baby that had just been born. The manger part of the instruction would really narrow it down.

The stable, a rock grotto, has been pointed out to early pilgrims and passed down through time. It may very well be the actual birth place. The oldest Christian church in Israel stands on the site, the Church of the Nativity.

(Luke 2:21-40) When Jesus was 8 days old he was taken to the temple to be circumcised and for Mary to offer the poor person's offering for purification. As they entered an elderly man ran up to greet them. His name was Simeon. He took the baby in his arms and began to praise God. "Now I can die, I have seen the Lord's Messiah! ...a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." He spoke some troubling words to Mary too, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." Then an elderly woman approached them, Anna. She began to tell everyone that was looking forward to the redemption of Israel about the child. Certainly all of this was a confirmation to Joseph and Mary of all the angel Gabriel had told them about the child they were raising in their home.

Does God need mankind?

Why was man created?

Why did He give us free choice when He knew we would fall?

Why do you think God chose a poor family and such humble conditions?

If God knows the end from the beginning and can move the heart of officials so Jesus would be born in the town predicted, is there anything too hard in your life for Him to arrange?

The boy, Jesus

It is quite acceptable and even common practice for those relaying a story to leave out or skip over details they don't see connected or pertinent to their point. You will notice that to be the case in many accounts and even genealogies. Luke does not tell us of the journey to Egypt and the wise men. Mark and John don't tell anything of Jesus youth. Matthew seems to indicate that they stayed in Bethlehem up until Jesus was between one and two years old. The Magi come to bring him gifts and on the way ask people about the birth of the new king of Israel. Herod gets wind of this and calls the wise men and asks what time the star appeared and for them to tell him when they find the Savior, that he too wants to go to worship him. King Herod was so paranoid at this time about someone taking his throne that he would go to any length to destroy a contender. God warns the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod, and also warns Joseph to take his family to Egypt. Then Herod kills all baby boys in Bethlehem 2 years old and under, hoping to eliminate any threat to his throne. It reminds us of the death of the infants when Moses was born.

Luke told us that decision for a census happened when Quirinius was governor of Syria. The most well known census of the time was 6AD, and Augustus had asked him to watch over Palestine. Quirinius was in charge of the 6AD census. Census took place on a 14 year interval but could have been called for at a special time. Since we know Herod died in 4BC, it is possible that Quirinius was governor during two different periods. If Jesus was born in 7 BC it could match both Luke's and Matthew's description. Herod could have been reigning and Quirinius would have been the Syrian governor, and thus Luke's use of the word "first" in Luke 2:2. That would have put Jesus in Egypt to around 3 years old. At this time in history there were more Jews outside of Israel than inside. Joseph and Mary would likely have gone to a Jewish enclave in Egypt.

Joseph knew by a dream that Herod had died (4BC). Upon return they moved back to Nazareth. Nazareth was settled about 100 BC by a Davidic clan returning from Babylon. Fr. Bargil Pixner believes that there is evidence that the name of the city means "the branch" and thus "He shall be called a Nazarene" (or Natzorean – a descendent of David). Not the sect that Samson belonged to but the group of people descended from David. This was Jerome's belief also. This would explain Mk 10:47 when blind Bartimaeus heard the Jesus the

Natzorean was passing by, He cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." If that is true then Jesus grew up amongst a people who looked for the Messiah to be born from a woman that lived amongst them.

I have seen the Synagogue in Nazareth, probably built right over the one Jesus went to each Sabbath. The ground of the first synagogue was hallowed and therefore later synagogues were built on top of the ruins of the old one. Adjoining the Synagogue is the school. This connection was customary at the time of Christ. The same spring (Well of Mary) bubbles out to give drinking water to the town. We wonder what it was like for this child who must have felt so out of place. Did He know He was God, or did the stories Mary told Him about his birth and the differences He saw in his own life gradually open his understanding? We can only guess. ⁵ Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷ Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" Heb 10:5-7 (NIV)

It certainly must have been strange to see a little boy who was not selfish. Instead of hitting back he would have demonstrated all the attributes of God His Father. I can't imagine how radically different He would have been from all the children. In fact they may have thought He was a little touched. His brothers do accuse Him of that, and we are left to wonder if they hadn't always worried about what would happen to such a caring, sensitive, loving, but disciplined boy.

Before Jesus turned 12, Judas the Galilean, led a revolt against Roman rule. It was mercilessly crushed and at ever crossroad crucified Jews could be seen. Jesus no doubt was witness to these scenes.

We do have one story in all the years between Egypt and the beginning of his ministry. His parents went yearly to the Feast of the Passover. When Jesus was 12 years of age it was time for His Barmitzva. After the feast the family headed home. There was no sign of Jesus. Perhaps they thought He was with His odd cousin John. They would have had a lot in common since John was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb. After searching and not finding Him they returned to Jerusalem and discovered Him sitting among the Temple teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone was amazed, the Scripture says, at His understanding and His answers. Certainly by now He knew why He was different. When His parents asked why He had treated them like this He responded, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" This is our first indication that Jesus had a conviction about His real Father.

Since it was His family's custom to journey to Jerusalem for every Feast of Passover, this may have been the first of many encounters with the Temple

hierarchy. The High Priest was appointed by the king. The priestly garments were kept by the king until the time they were needed for the feasts. Many appointments were made purely for political purposes. In Herod's case, one appointment was even made because of his lust for the appointee's daughter. Much of Jesus' reproach of the religious leaders probably developed over these years of interaction during the Passover Feasts.

We have one more statement that covers the 18 years after the first Temple encounter. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." How can God grow? There is this blend here of all God and yet all man. Whatever it was that He set aside to become human (Phil 2) allowed him to grow, showing us we can do the same. That sentence sounds to me like Jesus was very inoffensive. How can those perfect attributes of mercy and grace and love and joy be offensive? It makes me wonder if much of my offensiveness is a just plain lack of Christ-likeness.

Wouldn't it have been great when you were a teen to have teenage Jesus as a friend? He must have had quite a reputation. I wonder how many kids His age would come to Him for His wise counsel. But we can draw a few conclusions from Scripture or the lack of mention. His earthly step-father, Joseph, must have died in His youth. Early in His ministry He says a prophet is without honor in His own country and in His own home. His half-brothers and sisters (Joseph was their father) must not have accepted his authority. Sibling rivalry prevailed in them until the resurrection. We have a letter from His brother James and one from Jude. We don't hear any more until it is time for His ministry to begin at around 30 years of age. We know that he worked as a carpenter and, being sinless, He did that to the glory of His Father. The word carpenter is actually better translated, builder. He may have hewn stone. There is a large city very close to Nazareth that was under construction during that time, Sefhoris. There He would have witnessed the Greek and Roman excesses and possibly the theater from a distance. They were years of thoughtful preparation, waiting for the signal that He was to begin His public ministry.

What does it mean to you that Jesus, a poor peasant boy that learned three languages to understand and convey Scripture?

The wise men provided finances for their trip to Egypt. Will God provide what you need to do as He instructs?

Can you imagine your brother being perfect? How would you feel about that?

Jesus leaves the carpentry business John 1:19-35, Matthew 3:13-17 Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, was baptizing people in the Jordan River. We don't know if during His youth he met with John or not. But news of his ministry

had spread to Nazareth and Jesus made the long trek to where John was baptizing. Had Mary told Him about the prophetic words of Zechariah, John's father? (Luke 1) John's whole mission was to prepare the way for the Messiah. As he baptized people for the repentance of sin, he watched for the One he was to announce. As Jesus approached to be baptized, John knew He was the One. He said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!... the reason I came baptizing with water was that He might be revealed to Israel."

John told Jesus that he should be baptized by Jesus, but Jesus insisted. When Jesus came up out of the water in prayer, the Spirit of God descended on Jesus like a dove. This was a confirmation to John. The Spirit had told him that the person upon whom he would see this happen was the Messiah. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased."

Jesus immediately was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. After fasting for 40 days, Satan tempted Jesus in three different ways. First came the temptation of miracles to satisfy Himself. Satan asked Him to change stones into bread. There may have been a deeper implication – supply the physical need of men. Jesus came for our spiritual need. He came to do the will of the Father. Satan was tempting Him to do it his own way. Jesus responded with a passage from the Hebrew Torah. Those years of preparation in Nazareth included a study of the Old Testament in Hebrew. Many passages that will pour out in His teaching, He must have committed to memory during the early years.

Next Satan tried Scripture himself, tempting Jesus to throw himself off a high point of the Temple to see the Scripture fulfilled that angels would keep Him from dashing his foot on a stone. Both times Satan tempted Jesus he began, "If you are the Son of God, then..." This brings us back to the knowledge within himself. If Satan was going to delay Jesus' ministry he had to get Jesus to doubt the conviction that He was God's only Son. Jesus had that conviction from at least the age of 12, but certainly had a confirmation in the voice that came from heaven. Perhaps the temptation was to prove to Himself, or in front of all the people to prove to them who He was. The Father had another proof in mind – resurrection. Jesus responded to Satan's scripture with another scripture, you shall not tempt the Lord your God.

Finally Satan's last ditch effort, he offers the kingdoms of the earth to Jesus in exchange for His worship. Satan took the right to rule from Adam in the Garden. God as man came to take it back from Satan. Here Satan is offering a short-cut, a half-way victory, without the pain of crucifixion. Again Jesus uses the Word of God to hit Satan in the very place of his own rebellion. "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." He commanded Satan to leave His presence. Satan

did leave looking for a more opportune moment. Angels came and ministered to Jesus.

Why was Jesus baptized?

What example did Jesus give us of dealing with temptation?

When did Jesus memorize those Scriptures and why?

What was Satan after? And Jesus? And you?

Jesus first year of ministry John 2:1-11, Mark 1:21-34, John 4:1-32, John 2:12-25

Jesus now begins his first year of ministry. We know little of this first year and his activities seem to be limited until the death of John. The first disciples were John's disciples, John and Andrew. They had heard of John the Baptist message of repentance and getting ready for the coming Messiah, all the way up in their hometown of Capernaum. Jesus returning from the wilderness temptation must have been sunburned and gaunt. It seems that John actually encouraged them to leave his side and follow the "Lamb of God". They came and asked him where he was staying. He said, "Come and see". He may have been staying with relatives in Kochaba. Later Andrew joined with them and encouraged his brother Simon to come see the man. Jesus immediately gave him the name Peter. Philip of Bethsaida joined next and then Nathaniel of Cana.

The miracle of Cana, water into wine, was Jesus first. From there his mother and brothers and disciples stayed in Capernaum. Jesus went to the first Passover Feast of his ministry, family and disciples in tow. He went into the outer court with his disciples and sat down and braided some cords. Then to the shock of his disciples he drove those exchanging money and selling animals out of the temple. "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" John 2:16

This outer court was a place for Gentiles to gather to pray. They could not enter into the inner courts. Jesus was very aware that his calling was to the world. He certainly wanted this court to be a place of worship not a noisy market. But more than that he knew this temple was merely a shadow of the hearts of people that would come to believe in him. He wants those hearts to be places of prayer, communion with him, not all caught up in business.

While there Jesus performed miracles that convinced many people. The religious leaders challenged him and stood in opposition to him. But one of their group was impressed enough to come to him by night (secretly) and ask him about eternal life. (John 3) This man was changed by the encounter and stayed faithful to Jesus. He was one of the first of these elitist religious leaders to believe.

On the way back to the Galilee, Jesus went through Samaria and talked with a woman of that area at a well. There is no mention of Jesus' family. Perhaps they returned another way in which they did not have to go through this foreign area. The Jews thought Samaritans would defile them and considered them as impure half-breeds. But Jesus had no such prejudice. After winning the heart of the woman he met, the town came out to see him. Many believed that He was indeed the Messiah. He spent several days there.

There is a break in the story, for Jesus returns to Nazareth and the disciples to their hometowns. There was a hint at this in Jesus words to his mother at the wedding feast, "My time has not yet come." We can only guess what was on Jesus' mind, but it seems he was waiting for John to finish his work preparing the people by calling for repentance. When John was imprisoned it seemed to be Jesus signal to begin again. Matthew 4:12-14

He begins right at home in his own synagogue. Luke 4:14-30 Jesus was invited to be the speaker that day. The keeper of the scrolls would hand the reader (sometimes referred to as the messenger – *angelos*) the scroll and the reader would read a passage. After reading it in Hebrew, he would explain in Aramaic so the people could understand. Usually he would quote the books of explanations and commentaries. But Jesus did not do that. "He spoke with authority", as if He were qualified to comment on it himself; and the people were amazed at his teaching. But this day the scroll was opened to Isaiah 61. (see Luke 4:18-30) As he read about the Messiah the people were thrilled as they were "the branch of David". Jesus commented that this passage was about Him. They may have even applauded in excitement, something allowed at this time in synagogues. But then he started talking about being rejected by them. He told stories from the Scriptures of how God sent his prophets to people outside Israel.

Now surely they had heard of his miracles in Jerusalem but they had also heard of that temple cleansing, and the days with the Samaritans who called him Savior of the WORLD. Here He goes again with this global vision thing! Now they are getting upset. Their interpretation of the prophecies is that the Messiah is a king like David. Forget about the world, they want freedom from Rome and to be an independent nation, the Messiah as king and themselves as part of the royal court. They become furious and push Jesus out of the synagogue up to a cliff to push him over. Miraculously he walks right through the crowd and keeps going till he gets to Capernaum.

Do we have expectations of what Jesus should do in our lives? Do we get upset with Him when He moves in ways contrary to our expectations? Instead of rejoicing that His mission was greater than Israel they were mad because they weren't going to get what they wanted. Jesus was rubbing their prejudices raw

and they did not like the thought that they may need to change. How do we handle the Holy Spirit's prompting that indicates we are the ones that need to ask forgiveness, to settle differences lovingly?