

The Life of Christ

*Sponsored by:
The Christadelphians*

*Learn to Read the Bible Effectively
Life of Christ Seminar
Week 3 - The Young Messiah*

SECTION 7

The Visit of the Magi

The visit of the “Wise Men” is recorded only in Matthew’s Gospel. On the surface, it might seem strange that the most Jewish of the four Gospels is the one that offers a record of these Gentiles coming to honour Jesus.

The early Church was faced with the problem of blending two very different groups of people into one unified body, as followers of Christ. The unification of Jews and Gentiles into one harmonious body was an issue that we find the Apostles faced with throughout the New Testament.

Therefore, it appears to be logical that Matthew would include this record in order to better commend Gentiles to his Jewish readers. The fact that these men were Gentiles is evident from their ignorance of the Micah prophecy (Matt. 2:5,6), which all Jews were familiar with (John 7:42). It is also implied by their use of the expression “King of the Jews,” as we note that every New Testament occurrence of this phrase comes from a Gentile.

The Bible record does not state that they were Kings, nor does it say how many were involved. It simply says “Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem.” In the Old Testament, the term “Magi” is associated with Babylon. As an example of this we can look to Jeremiah 39, verses 3 and 13. Nergalsarezer, the Rab-mag (chief of the Magi) is named along with other leading officials of the King of Babylon.

Daniel, the most prominent Biblical name among the Jews in King Nebuchadnezzar’s Court, during the Babylonian captivity, was eventually appointed Chief of the Magi. This group included magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners. (Dan. 5:11)

From these clues, and from historical data relative to the Babylonians and Chaldeans, we can reasonably assume that these visitors seeking the new King were from a group of men in Babylon who were scribes and the custodians of knowledge and wisdom. History also confirms that this group set great store by omens and were skilled in astronomy.

Daniel, in his capacity as master of the Magi, would probably have related to them the hope of Israel, which would include the 70 weeks’ prophecy, (490 years) foretelling the birth and work of Jesus Christ. (Dan. 9:25). As scribes, they would pass the records of such information from generation to generation. Their belief in omens and their association with astronomy would predispose them to act upon the sighting of a bright star or some unusual activity or phenomena in the sky to the East. This omen, coupled with the fact that it had been about 490 years since the prophecy regarding the birth of a great King had presented through Daniel, probably provoked their journey to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem would be the logical choice since the hope of the Jews in captivity in Babylon had always been to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple.

The scanty information given in the Matthew record would also suggest that once this caravan of wise men began their journey, the star disappeared. From that point on their trip would have been a journey of faith, taking approximately four months. (Ezra 7:8,9)

It is estimated that Jesus was probably around 12 months old at the time of their visit. This can be deduced from 4 points:

- 1. It was certainly after Jesus' presentation in the Temple. If the Magi's gifts, which included gold from their treasures had already been presented, such devout people as Joseph and Mary would not have given the cleansing offering of two young pigeons. They would have been able to afford to offer the lamb.**
- 2. The Magi did not visit Jesus in the manger. His family was already living in a house by the time they came. (Matt: 2:11)**
- 3. The word used by Matthew for "child" in verse 11, means "a young child, a little boy." This contrasts with the word used in Luke (Luke 2:12), which refers to "a babe in arms."**
- 4. When Herod was unable to locate the child Jesus, he had all the male children up to two years old in Bethlehem slain in an effort to eliminate what he saw as a threat to his family throne.**

Bethlehem

The Magi came to Jerusalem searching for the child King because they had no knowledge of His birth place. They knew nothing of the local political issues, or of King Herod's madness. Otherwise, they would not have openly declared their purpose. They would assume that Jews everywhere would exult in His birth as they inquired of people in Jerusalem: *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him."* Matthew 2:2

They would have found it hard to understand the apparent disinterest of the Jewish people.

News of the wise men's visit would spread through the city quickly and Herod soon heard about it. As Matthew records in verse 3: "he was troubled." And when King Herod was troubled, all of Jerusalem was troubled. Little did these travelers suspect the evil they had aroused in the dark soul of the Idumean King, who ruled Israel. By craftiness, he had obtained a dispensation from Rome to rule Israel. His anxiety to retain that rule had become an obsession, which was only satisfied by the blood of every rival. In fact, he had already murdered his wife and some of his children because he thought they were plotting to overthrow him. In his old age he was a victim of his own vice. Those around him were potentially victims to his lust and jealousy.

Living in the luxury of his new palace, this descendant of Esau, surrounded himself with spies, and lived in perpetual fear of retribution from an outraged people, jumping at every shadow and imagining the activity of enemies in every political move. Living anywhere near Herod was to live in great peril.

He certainly would have been aware of the events of the previous months - the story of Zacharias in the Temple, the words of Simeon, Anna the prophetess. The wise men's visit coming on top of all this would, indeed, worry Herod.

Their reference to a star, coupled with all these events, would have no doubt reminded him, or one of the Bible scholars around him, of a prophecy in the book of Numbers:

“There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab...and Edom shall be a possession...” Numbers 24: 17, 18

Herod was an Edomite, so the knowledge of such a prophecy, in the face of these present events would alarm him more and strengthen his resolution to thwart its accomplishment.

So, he called together the Chief Priests and Scribes and demanded to know where the Christ was to be born. Verses 5 and 6 in Matthew 2, confirm that they answered him with the prophecy from Micah 5:2, stating that His birth would take place in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah.

Herod immediately plotted to kill the infant Jesus, and secretly called in the Magi, determining from them, just when they had first seen the star. (Matt: 2:7) Faking a zeal to match that of the wise men, he sent them to Bethlehem, asking them to report back to him when they had located the child so that he, too, could worship Him. (Matthew 2:8)

Leaving Herod's court, the wise men traveled south to Bethlehem, and as suddenly as they had seen it before, the star reappeared. This time, it went before them, “till it came and stood over where the child was.” Their hearts were filled with excitement and joy as they saw this God-given sign, and followed it to the house of Jesus. (Matt: 2:9,10)

At this point, we might consider why no one else saw this great light. If what they saw when they left Herod's palace in Jerusalem, was, indeed, a star, how could it lead them to a specific house in Bethlehem, not too many miles away, and then come to rest directly over top of it? If we look even at the moon as the brightest light in the sky over our city at night, it is difficult to determine how we could pinpoint it as being over one house because of the great distance involved between the earth and this light in the sky.

We can see a relationship to this “star” that the Magi were following to the house in Bethlehem and the great light which shone on the shepherds the night that the angel announced the birth of the Christ child to them. In that case, it was identified as “the glory of the Lord shining around them.” (Luke 2:9)

In the record of Matthew, describing the Magi being led to the house of this future King, we can find an echo of a great prophecy given in Isaiah, which speaks of the Glory of the

Millennial Kingdom which will be ruled by Jesus. The echo of these prophetic words found in the record of the Magi, could also provide a foreshadow.

Isaiah 60:1-3: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”

Isaiah 60: 6 “A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba will come; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the Lord.”

If the glory of the Lord led these Magi to Jesus as a foreshadow of that great day when God’s glory will fill the earth and there will be no darkness as a result of His grace in the sacrifice of His own Son, it would explain why there was no excitement among the rest of the people and no attempt by others to follow the star, as the wise men did.

On an earlier occasion in the record of God’s Word, the Glory of the Lord was “a cloud and darkness” to the Egyptians, but “it gave light by night” to Israel to lead them to the Promised Land. They could see and follow this light, but the Egyptians could not.

This visit could also foreshadow the day when the nations of the earth will present their gifts, and give honour to the risen Jesus in the Kingdom of God as foretold in Isaiah 60.

The Magi entered the house, saw Jesus with His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. Opening their treasures, they presented Him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Gifts

Apart from the echo to Isaiah, chapter 60, in these gifts (gold and frankincense) we can see a possible significance. From early Christian times they have been thought to represent:

THE GOLD - a symbol of the Messiah’s Kingship

THE FRANKINCENSE - a symbol of His Divine origin as the Son of God

THE MYRRH - a symbol of His death

Biblically, each of them carries significance.

GOLD - a symbol of tried and precious faith (1 Peter 1:7)

FRANKINCENSE - is a symbol of prayer (Exodus 30:34)

MYRRH (from a word that means bitterness) - is a symbol of sacrifice and can relate to subjection to God’s Word (Rev.10:9, 10; Ezek.3:14)

The greater significance, however, is found when we consider the fact that these three gifts that were presented by the Magi, are all associated with the High Priest in his service before God under the old law.

The High Priest wore, on his forehead, a **golden** plate: “Holy to the Lord.” (Exodus 28:36).

In the sanctuary, he carried a **golden** sensor where incense burned, with **frankincense** being the main ingredient. (Exodus 30:34)

His office of High Priest began with his anointing with the Holy Oil in which **myrrh** was an essential ingredient. (Exodus 30:23)

In the echo provided by the presentation of these three gifts, from these Gentile worshippers, we can find reference to the fact that this new King of the Jews was also to be “A priest after the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110:4)

In his letter to the Hebrews, the author compares Christ with the Priesthood of Melchizedek, and says: “*Now the main point in what has been said is this: We have such a High Priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens,*” (Hebrews 8:1)

Having been warned by God in a dream, the Magi then departed for their own country, taking a route that would enable them to avoid Herod, so they did not reveal the location of this child whom Herod so desperately sought to murder.

LESSON FOR US

Those who hear and heed God’s Word, will seek out Jesus Christ and will lay before Him Spiritual gifts that evidence a life given to God in mind, affection, and action. The Son of God opens the way to the Glory that is His Father’s.

“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”
Romans 12:1

“Wise men still seek him!”

SECTION 8

Sanctuary in Egypt

Only Matthew provides detail regarding the period between the departure of the wise men and the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, moving to Nazareth. (Matt. 2:13-23) Luke does refer to their return to the city of Nazareth (Luke 2:39), but omits everything between the presentation at the Temple and this move to Nazareth. As soon as the wise men left, an Angel appeared to Joseph, also in a dream, warning him to arise and flee into Egypt. He was to stay there with the child and His mother, until he was told to leave. Herod was going to seek the child Jesus to destroy Him. (Matt. 2:13) In this we might see a reflection of the statement made in Psalm 91 regarding one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High.

“For He will give His Angels charge concerning You, to guard You in all your ways.” Psalm 91:11

“For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper,” Psalm 91:3

Following this warning, Joseph did not hesitate. Hurriedly, he arose, and under the cover of night, he left Bethlehem for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod died.

Bible Echo

This flight enabled fulfillment of another prophecy concerning Him, which had been foreshadowed previously through God’s children.

“Out of Egypt did I call My Son” Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15.

From Abraham’s time onward, Israel’s call was to “come out of Egypt.” Abraham had gone into Egypt, suffered affliction, and then had come out with great substance. (Gen.12: 10, 17; 13:1,2)

Drought also caused Jacob/Israel to go to Egypt in Joseph’s time, but God gave the nation deliverance through Moses. (Ex. 12: 51; 4:23)

Now, Jesus, as the Spiritual embodiment of the nation, experienced the same fate. In a sense, we are all like Jesus for when we are called to depart from sin, the sin we leave behind is Biblically represented by Egypt or the world. If we would gain the Kingdom of God, ungodly ways of the world must be abandoned.

The Slaughter

As the wise men left, and Joseph fled into Egypt with his family, Herod waited impatiently. It soon dawned on him that the Magi were not going to return. In fact, as he saw it, they had played tricks with him (mocked or made a fool of him - Greek).

Herod's only clue was that supplied by the Chief Priests - Bethlehem. From what the wise men had said it was about a year or more since the strange sign had been seen in the sky. Allowing a margin for error, he resolved that every boy in Bethlehem up to the age of two should die. And not only in Bethlehem, but in the countryside around it. (Matthew 2:16)

It was something so criminal, that public conscience was revolted. A shudder of horror passed through the land, and the cry of Jeremiah 31:15, "Rachel weeping for her children," who "refuse to be comforted," was heard in the land. (Matt. 2:18)

It re-enacted the tragedy of over six centuries before, when the people had been assembled at Ramah, before being driven into exile in Babylon. (Jer. 40:1) Rachel, who had desperately desired children (Gen. 30:1), and whose tomb was near Bethlehem, (Gen.35:16-19; 48:7), is therefore a representative of all Israelite mothers who have been deprived of their young ones. This cry has been made down through the ages since the time of Jesus, most recently during the Holocaust!

Foreshadow

This reference provided by Matthew, in taking us back to Jeremiah, leads us to Jeremiah's additional prophecy regarding the eventual restoration of Israel. Although Jeremiah in his time, spoke about the return of the children of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, this event, and this prophecy, coupled with Matthew's reference, provide us with a foreshadow of the day when Israel will once again be restored. We, today, have seen the beginning of this fulfillment in 1948 when Israel once again became a nation.

"Thus says the Lord, restrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, declares the Lord, and they shall return from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for your future, declares the Lord, and your children shall return to their own territory. Jeremiah 31:16, 17

Herod's Death

No one was sorry when, a short time later, (in about B.C. 4), Herod died in misery, full of diseases and vindictive to the end against everyone. History records that he died of a terrible disease at Jericho, at the age of 69, after a long reign of 37 years. The Jews made the day of his death a permanent Feast Day. And yet this was the man who had supplied all the resources for the rebuilding of their Temple.

The Return from Egypt

The news of Herod's death would no doubt, have quickly reached Egypt. But once again we see Joseph's faith and obedience. He had been told to remain there (in Egypt) until advised to return. (Matt. 2:13)

When the Angel appeared in the dream, Joseph again obeyed without hesitation and took the child and His mother out of Egypt and into Israel. (Matt. 2:19-21)

When Herod died, Augustus Caesar had divided up the country between three of Herod's sons. Archelaus, the worst of the three, was the new ruler in Judea. This made Joseph afraid to go to Judea. His fears were well founded for Archelaus was vicious and brutal. History records that at his first Passover, he had 3,000 Jews massacred in the Temple, as a result of a revolt against the Romans while he was away in Rome.

Once again, God intervened and being warned in a dream, Joseph headed for the regions of Galilee, where Herod Antipas, a much milder person, ruled. (Matt. 2:22) Thus the family took up residence at Nazareth, and the stage was set for the growth to manhood of the Son of God. (Matt. 2:23)

A Nazarene

Matthew says that this was done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene." No specific prophecy to that effect appears in the Old Testament. It is obviously a general message concerning Jesus that Matthew has in mind, which he weaves together by a play upon words.

Nazareth, in despised Galilee, (John 1:46; 1 Kings 9:11-13; Isaiah 9:1), would bring to mind such prophecies as Isaiah 11:1 concerning Jesus as the "root out of a dry ground" and "the branch" and, certainly, Isaiah 53:3, concerning the despised suffering sin-bearer.

"He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." Isaiah 53:3

There were other prophets, also, who prophesied much the same thing.

Examples: Jeremiah 23:5-6; Jeremiah 33:14-16; Ezekiel 17:22-24; Zech. 3:8; 6:12.

Everything that happened to Jesus was necessary to fulfill the Divine Plan concerning Him.

LESSON FOR US

Like Joseph, we should be prepared to follow God's way as revealed in His Word, without question, and in absolute faith.

Just as Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, we can follow Christ as He leads us out of the way of worldliness, maintaining our faith and confidence in Him, without looking back.

“Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.” Jude, verse 5

SECTION 9

The Early Years

All that is known about Jesus up to the age of 12 is covered by one verse:

“And the child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.” Luke 2:40

Prophetic Fulfillment

The prophecies of the Old Testament come to life both in actual fulfillment and in the foreshadowing of fulfillment as the Gospel Records begin to unfold the life of Jesus.

As we read this verse in Luke, references in the margin immediately take us back to the Prophet Isaiah, who presents a wonderful picture of the Messiah’s reign in the future millennial Kingdom. Isaiah begins this prophecy by describing the coming forth of a shoot or an offspring from the stem of Jesse, (King David’s father), and that a Branch from this offspring’s roots will bear fruit.

The person that Isaiah is about to describe is from the family of David, but this cannot refer simply to his son, Solomon. Although Solomon ruled the Kingdom of Israel at the height of its glory, that natural kingdom is but a foreshadow of the Millennial Kingdom to come.

As the prophecy unfolds, the reader will see that the Branch to which Isaiah refers can only be the Messiah, for the conditions that he describes in this wonderful kingdom have never yet existed on this earth, and will not exist until Jesus returns to establish and rule His Father’s Kingdom in the millennial age.

“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit, and the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And He will delight in the fear of the Lord,” Isaiah 11: 1-3

The words used by Luke to describe Jesus during His developing years as a child are a direct echo of Isaiah’s description of a Branch who will come out of the root of Jesse.

Jesus' First Words

Luke is the only writer to provide a record of any detail regarding Jesus' life from His return from Egypt into Nazareth until His ministry begins at the age of 30.

From His ministry and teachings, we can deduce some things with a reasonable assurance of accuracy. His knowledge of Scripture and God's law with which He was able to challenge even the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, would confirm that He very faithfully studied the Scriptures. The devout faithfulness of Mary and Joseph would certainly suggest that they fulfilled their responsibility of teaching their children the law of the Lord. It was a father's sacred trust in Israel, even after all those centuries of disobedience and travail.

“And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your hearts; And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Deut. 6: 6,7

It is not beyond reason to surmise that in His God given destiny as King of the Jews, He would have thoughtfully and carefully written His own copy of the law, which Moses had described as a duty for every King of the Jews. (Deut. 17:18-20)

Although Joseph had a skill as a carpenter (or craftsman), we might also safely assume that Jesus was brought up in very humble circumstances, and in a struggle against poverty. The parables of Jesus are full of homely scenes which might have had their source in His own early experience. The patched garment, the widow's feverish search for a lost coin of little value, father and children sharing a bed, the one raised lamp which could illuminate the whole house - all these seem to reflect what might have been some struggling circumstances from His youth.

From this background, and from Mary and Joseph's loving devotion, and from Jesus' attention to God's word, the strength of God's grace upon Him, and His growing wisdom in God's way, would come a youthful obedience and subjection to Mary and Joseph as a dutiful child. In fact, Luke states that He “continued in subjection to them.” (Luke 2:51)

Luke states in verses 40 and 52, that Jesus kept increasing in wisdom. This “wisdom” can have reference to nothing but the divine wisdom of the Scriptures, for, Biblically, there is no other wisdom. “The fear of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom.”

The Visit to the Temple

Luke, in his record of Jesus' life, jumps from Jesus' presentation in the Temple at the age of 41 days, while they were still living in Bethlehem, right to Jesus' 12th year, by which time they were living in Nazareth, following the return from Egypt.

He then describes the next record of a visit to the Temple by Jesus beginning at verse 41 of chapter 2. All male Jews were required to attend at the Temple three times in the year,

at Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. (Exodus 23:14-17). It was not obligatory for women or children to attend the feasts, but Mary did so, with Joseph, “every year” (verse 41) at the Passover time. Attendance at all three festivals was difficult with Jews scattered all over the Roman world, but many made the effort once a year.

The year of this journey in Luke’s record was a special occasion, for Jesus was 12 years old. At that age, as with other Jewish boys, in their thirteenth year, He became a “Son of the covenant,” or “Son of the precepts,” and it was His responsibility thereafter to keep the law.

We might well imagine the feelings going through Jesus’ mind as He entered the Temple on this special occasion. He stood on the sacred spot that God had chosen that His name might be there. It was on this rock that Abraham had shown the faith of complete dedication in offering His son of promise in obedience to God’s command. It was here that Solomon had received divine instruction to build a house in which God should dwell. It was here that when the building was finished, mortal man reached his highest point of communion with his Maker. It was here that God accepted the petitions of His people in a glory that filled the house, preventing the entrance of the Priests.

All these echoes of history, pointing forward to the ultimate Sacrificial Lamb provided by God, merge together, finding a completion, a fulfillment in Jesus, who stood at that point as a Son of the Covenant at this Passover Feast.

Passover is followed by the seven days of Unleavened Bread, and since attendance at this was not obligatory, many may have returned home immediately after the Passover. But the family of Jesus remained, spending the “full number of days” (Luke 2:43).

On this occasion, at the end of these seven days, Jesus was left behind when His parents set out for home. This does not suggest carelessness on the part of Mary and Joseph. Following practice in a large group, the women and small children went ahead, and the men followed with the bigger boys. Joseph and Mary might each have thought that Jesus was with the other. For a full day they journeyed, looking for Him among the travelers (Luke 2:44), before they concluded that He must still be in Jerusalem.

We can imagine the anxiety that was building in them from the time they missed Him and returned to Jerusalem, until they found Him after three days, sitting in the middle of the teachers, in the Temple, both listening to them and asking questions. (Luke 2:46)

It is reasonable, at this point, to picture Mary as an anxious mother, breaking into this quiet circle of discussion, having conflicting emotions of relief at finding Him and distress because He had stayed behind.

This location in the Temple was a customary place for teaching. The teachers in the Synagogue in Nazareth would probably not have been of the caliber of those in the Temple in Jerusalem. As we look at verse 47, we gain insight into the educational system of the day, which put emphasis on listening, asking questions, and answering questions. In other words, it was a discussion giving scope for the student to both ask and answer

questions. We note the level of His wisdom as the teachers were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

It is logical to assume what one of His questions might have been. At Passover time, according to the commandment of Exodus 12:26, and according to universal Jewish custom throughout the centuries, the first born of each family was to put forward the question: "What does this rite mean to you?" (The rite of Passover)

The answer which Scripture supplied was: "It is the sacrifice (of a specially selected lamb) of the Lord's Passover, so that the angel of death would pass over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, preserving the life of the firstborn of the family."

This passing over was a protection, the Lord "not suffering the destroyer to come in unto the houses" of His people, covered by the blood of the lamb. (Exodus 12:27, 23) That specially selected lamb was now sitting in the midst of these teachers. Now, if not earlier, the cross was already casting its shadow across His path.

Psalms 88 is one of the saddest in the book of Psalms, describing in great detail the calamities facing one in a crisis that threatens his life. It abounds with references to untimely death. And it has been suggested that it points forward to the sacrifice of Jesus necessitated by our sins. One line from this Psalm reads: "I am afflicted and ready to die from a boy." (Verse 15)

When Mary and Joseph found Him, Mary reproached Him, her motherly love overcoming any embarrassment at interrupting these learned teachers.

"Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your father and I have been anxiously looking for you." Luke 2:48

We then read Jesus' quiet reply, not a rebuke, but rather a declaration that something wonderful has happened in His life.

"Why is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" Luke 2:49

These words introduce us to the first statement of Jesus recorded in the Gospel record. Before the clouds eventually take Him out of the sight of His devoted Apostles (Acts 1:9) we will read of many gracious utterances that fall from His lips. But, in these first recorded words the purpose of His life is crystallized. He must be about His Father's business - fulfilling His Father's purposes. This resolution was to make great demands of Him. It would put Him to the test in the wilderness, try Him among seething, clamoring multitudes, strained relationships, and at times, even bewilder His dearest friends and followers. It was to demand a loyalty in which earthly relationships were to be forgotten. His family would be those who did His Father's will. It was finally to make the supreme demand of life itself. The life of Jesus is the record of how He did all these things with quiet confidence and unflinching faith, and with a clear perspective of the work He was doing in relationship to the purpose of His Father.

His answer shows that this early in His life Jesus had an idea of the importance of the service of God and that He stood in a special relationship to God. The expression “My Father,” is noteworthy since no parallel to it is noted in the Scriptures. The Jews, when referring to the Father, added “in heaven” or used “our Father,” or words to that effect. Jesus’ choice of words is, indeed, a recognition of His unique relationship to God, and the necessity of being in His house.

Neither Joseph nor Mary captured the full meaning of these words, but Mary kept all these sayings in her heart.

Jesus returned to Nazareth and was subject to His parents, and He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. (Luke 2:51, 52)

The absence of any further reference to Joseph in the Gospel records, after Jesus was 12, would suggest that he probably died sometime during the 18 years prior to the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. As the oldest son, this would leave upon His young shoulders the responsibility of the home.

Nothing more is said of His growth to manhood. Yet what is said is enough to give the picture of a youth whose whole attitude was God-centered. He did not attend any of the great centers of learning (Luke 4:22). On the contrary, He regularly attended the Synagogue (Luke 4:16), and He was filled with lessons woven from life observed with a mind which God had quickened. This was the Man, who at age 30, was presented to the nation. As He grew, there was another young man who was also growing in favour with God, undoubtedly, straining at the leash, eager to be out and busy calling a wayward nation back to its God, preparing the way for the Messiah, that is John the Baptist.

LESSONS FOR US

When we picture this innocent young man, Jesus, in the Temple on that occasion, and remember the significance of the Passover Feast, might each one of us remember, with sadness, that it is our sins that demanded His sacrifice. It is only through God’s grace, and Jesus loving obedience to His Father, that we can receive forgiveness of sins, and escape the bondage of death. As we read of His life, might each one of us remember with humble thanksgiving, that He gave His life for us.

*“...Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”
John 1:29*