

A Survey of the New Testament (Part 1)

Selected Scriptures

September 17, 2017

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Well, it is our joy tonight to begin a multi-week survey of the New Testament. And I'm hoping to do it in four weeks. In fact, I've been told I have to do it in four weeks, or I won't stay with the schedule for *anchor*. So, I will do that. We're going to do two nights on the gospels. I know that's hard for you to believe, but yes, we're going to cover the life of Christ in two messages. And then, Lord willing, we'll cover the rest of the New Testament - Acts to Revelation in two messages as well. The goal here is obviously not to get down into all the details but to give you a historical, biblical context in which to put all of the New Testament. I'm hoping, by the time we're done, you'll know where all of the pegs fit and you'll understand the big picture of how the New Testament and, over the next two weeks, the life of Christ fits together.

Now for our time tonight, I want us to begin our look, then, at the gospel record of our Lord's life. And my goal tonight is to make it from His conception through 30 years of age, before He begins His ministry. Lord willing, the next time we study together, we'll look at His ministry as a whole, but tonight, from our Lord's conception until He was 30. So, it's important that we began, then, with an overview of the gospels. There are, as you know, four gospels. There's only one gospel but that gospel is told from four different perspectives. Matthew writes to Jewish believers and presents Jesus as Messiah and king. Mark, really an amanuensis of sorts for Peter, writes to the Romans as well as to other Gentiles and presents Jesus as servant. Luke, to Greeks and other Gentiles, presents Jesus as the perfect man; the perfect man who represents the humanity that God intended for humanity to be. And then John writes to the entire world and presents Jesus as the unique Son of God. Those are the perspectives, four different perspectives of the same gospel and, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ at the center of that gospel.

Now, I want us to just get a brief summary timeline. I'll come back to this a little bit next time when we look at the ministry of Christ but let me just give you the big picture. We know that our Lord was born somewhere between the years 5 and 6 BC. I know that messes up your brain because you think, "*Wait a minute, I thought BC was before Christ.*" Well remember, the calendar as we know it was created 500 years after Christ, and while he did a reasonably good

job, he did miss a little. So, the reason we know this approximate window of time when Jesus was born is because of the death of Herod. We know that Herod the Great died in late March early April of the year 4 BC. We know that he was alive when Jesus was born because, remember, he is the one who caused the children to be killed in Bethlehem. And because of him, we know that Jesus was less than two years old at that time, remember, because he killed all the children two years of age and older. So, we know, therefore, that Jesus was born somewhere in that 5 to 6 BC window.

Now, when you do the math, then, we understand things...if I had time, I could take you through. There are a number of different ways to calculate the beginning of Jesus' ministry. One of them is the gospels tell us that He was about 30 when He began His ministry. We can also calculate from the day of His death. We know that He died on Friday and that Friday was a Passover Friday. There are only two possibilities in that period of history. One of them was 30 AD and the other is 33 AD. It had to be one of those two dates. Well once we know the timing of His death, we know He started His ministry at about 30, you can do the math from there. I certainly lean toward a 30 AD death of Christ and resurrection. And so, this is based on that chronology. We'll talk a little more about that when we get to His ministry. But that's an overview of His life and ministry - born in the years 5 to 6 BC, began His ministry in the year 26 AD, and after a three-and-a-half-year ministry He ends up dying and being raised from the dead in the year 30 AD.

Now with that background, let's begin by looking at Matthew 1. Turn with me to Matthew 1. Matthew begins his gospel with the record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Now both Matthew and Luke provide us with the genealogical records of Jesus. If you compare Matthew and Luke's genealogies, you find that there are significant differences. Obviously, Luke goes back to Adam and Matthew only goes back to Abraham and from David, excuse me from Abraham to David, the two genealogies are practically identical. But the most difficult differences are the generations from David to Christ. Now there are two obvious problems in the genealogies with that in mind. One is the names are greatly different and, two, the number of generations are different. Now why is this? Well, there have been a number of solutions that have been proposed but I think the simplest and the most

obvious is that from David and on, you're talking about two different genealogies. You say, "Why would there be two different genealogies?" Well, let me explain to you the problem. The problem is a man named Jeconiah. Jeconiah is a problem for this reason: if you go back to 2 Samuel 7, God told David that the legal right to his throne was to pass through his son Solomon. In other words, the Messiah would come from Solomon. But one of Solomon's descendants was a man named Jeconiah. And because of Jeconiah's sin, God said that none of his physical descendants would prosper on the throne of David (that's in Jeremiah 22:30). So, none of his physical offspring would prosper on the throne of David. Now think about the problem we have here. The Messiah is going to come through Solomon, the line runs through Jeconiah, but none of his physical offspring can prosper on the throne. So, how does this work? Well, this is where the genealogies come in. Because from David to Christ, they are the genealogies of two different people. When you look at Matthew's genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17, you find that this is clearly the genealogy of Jesus but it's through Joseph, His legal father. And, therefore, it traces back through David's son, Solomon. Now the problem with that is Joseph's line includes whom? Jeconiah - whom God said none of his physical descendants would sit on the throne. And so, the legal claim to the throne passed to Jesus through Joseph. But listen carefully. Because Jesus was not physically descended from Joseph, He escaped the curse on Jeconiah's seed. In fact, look at chapter 1:16. Notice how it's worded: "Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary [notice that expression], by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah." Now in English, the "whom" is unclear - could refer back to Joseph, could refer back to Mary. But in the Greek text, "whom" is feminine singular. So, we could accurately translate verse 16 this way: Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary and it was by Mary that Jesus was born who is called Messiah.

Do you see the brilliance of God? One of David's descendants, through Solomon, would have the legal right to the throne but Jeconiah and his physical offspring could never be that person. So, how does God solve this? Well, that's where the second genealogy comes in in Luke 3. This is the genealogy of Jesus as well but, instead of through Joseph, it's through Mary, his physical mother. From David on, it's a different genealogy. It's through David's son, not Solomon, but through David's son, Nathan. And what that means is it excludes Jeconiah, and the curse God had made on Jeconiah. And so, the legal claim to the throne came through

Joseph's side but the physical claim to the throne passed to Jesus through Mary. They were both descendants of David. And because of the way God arranged it, because of the virgin birth, Jesus could be both the legal claimant on the throne, through Solomon, without the curse of Jeconiah, but the physical descendant of David through Mary and, ultimately, through David's son, Nathan. Really amazing isn't it, how our God arranges history? This is one of the major reasons behind the virgin birth. You understand that, you know, some people say well the virgin birth was about protecting the sinlessness of Christ. Listen, God had to protect the sinlessness of Christ as much from Mary as He did from Joseph. That's why the Holy Spirit ensured that He would be the holy one. The virgin birth, in part, was to protect the claim of Jesus on the throne and yet avoid the curse on Jeconiah.

Now that brings us, then, to the birth of Jesus. Look at chapter 1:18: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly." Now Scripture doesn't tell us how old Mary and Joseph were when they became engaged, but we do know this: most men of that time were married before they were 20. And most Jewish girls of the 1st century were betrothed just after puberty, at somewhere between 13 and 15 years of age. It's possible that Mary was in her late teens but, frankly, it's highly unlikely. Usually, families arranged for their children's marriages and they arrange for those marriages at a relatively early age. Now a 1st century Jewish marriage consisted of two parts. There was, first of all, the betrothal period - called the *kiddushin*. It was much more serious than our engagement. Don't think engagement. It could only be ended by divorce. And yet, the couple didn't live together, and they were to remain sexually pure. Any form of sexual sin was considered adultery during this betrothal period and in Old Testament times, according to Deuteronomy 22, the guilty party was to be stoned. The second part of the Jewish marriage was called the *huppah*. The man went to the home of his wife with a great, you know, parade of people and great fanfare and he brought his wife, from her parents' home, back to his home to live. And this was accompanied by as many as seven days of feasting and, of course, the consummation of the marriage. Guys, you thought your daughter's wedding cost you a lot. Imagine paying for seven days of feasting.

The word that Matthew uses here in his account, tells us that what happened here was during that first period, the *kiddushin*.

And, notice, Matthew adds that it was before they came together. That's a Jewish euphemism for the fact that they had not had sexual relations. And at some point, during the *kiddushin*, during that formal betrothal period, something remarkable happened. She was found to be with child. Literally the Greek text says, "*out of the Holy Spirit*", a production of the Holy Spirit. And so, therefore, verse 19: "...Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is [out] of the Holy Spirit.'" Now it's hard for us to imagine the shock. Forget, for a moment, he's heard from the angel. Just go back to when Mary tells him that she's pregnant. She'd been away, you remember. She'd gone for the period of her pregnancy to her cousin's home, Elizabeth, and spent six months there. So, when she returns, she's very much with child and she has to tell the man to whom she's betrothed. And she says to him, "*An angel came, told me I was going to get pregnant; it was something God Himself was going to do, I had nothing to do with this.*" Yeah exactly! I heard somebody chuckle. That - I mean, apart from what we have subsequently learned, of course that's the response. I mean, Joseph knows that the child obviously isn't his. He knows his betrothed wife is pregnant and the child isn't his. So then, as anyone would, he began to think about his options. And there were only three options. The first option was to marry her. Now this was simply not done. In fact, even Roman law treated a husband who failed to divorce an unfaithful wife as a panderer, exploiting his wife as a prostitute. The Jewish Mishnah forbade a man in this situation to marry the woman. And besides, just on a practical level, think about it. If he marries Mary, what does everyone think? This is his child. He would be forever tainting his reputation. That was his first choice but it really wasn't a choice. His second choice was to disgrace her; that's how Matthew puts it. This refers to Joseph making a public accusation against Mary in a court of law. But such a public proceeding with...in that culture, a culture known for the concept of shame, it would publicly shame him and his family. But Matthew tells us that Joseph was a remarkable man because he wasn't thinking about himself, and his own reputation, and his own honor when he decided not to take Mary to court. Notice, specifically,

what it says - he didn't want to "disgrace her". He didn't want to make a public spectacle of her. In Moses' day if it had been proven in court that a betrothed wife was unfaithful as I said, she could have been stoned; she could have been put to death. But in the 1st century, if Joseph had taken this course, the court would have allowed him to have impounded her dowry, the assets she brought to the marriage, and perhaps have permitted Joseph to recoup the bride price if he had paid one at the beginning of the betrothal. In other words, he could've recouped all of his losses, written this off, and kept his reputation untarnished, although it would have brought some public shame. His third choice was to send her away secretly. The Greek word translated "send away" is the very same word our Lord uses both in Matthew 5 and in Matthew 19 for divorce.

So, Joseph was considering privately divorcing Mary. And that, Matthew tells us, is exactly the course that Joseph decided to take. Notice verse 19: he "planned to send her away secretly", to divorce her privately, and to move on with his life. Now, at this point, think about Mary for a moment. There was no way in the world for Mary to defend herself. What is she going to say that is going to convince Joseph of her innocence? How is she in any way going to bring him to understand what has happened to her? There's no way. And so, the Lord defends her. He sends an angel, in verse 20, to speak to Joseph in a dream and this is what the angel said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife..." That phrase, "to take Mary as your wife" - that describes the second part of the Jewish wedding, when the man came and took the woman back to his home. So, the angel tells Joseph to proceed with finalizing the marriage. And Joseph did exactly what he was commanded. Verse 24: "And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife..." He took the next step and formally took Mary from her home into his own. But notice, according to verse 25, he "kept her a virgin". Literally, the Greek text says, he "*did not know her*", that is, he did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth. What was the reason for that? Why was that important? Because Isaiah had said, remember, Isaiah had said that a virgin would conceive and that, as a virgin, she would bear a son; she would give birth to a son. And that's exactly what Matthew records.

Now, of course, you come to the most detailed account of the actual birth of Christ is recorded for us in Luke 2:1-20 - the very familiar Christmas story. And I'm not going to get into that

tonight because we're familiar with that. I want to move to an area of Christ's life that we aren't as familiar with. The rest of those 30 years - the infancy and youth of Jesus Christ. Let's walk through this, based on the timeline I've already shared with you. Of course, at 8 days came His circumcision - again, somewhere in that 5 to 6 BC window, depending on exactly when He was born. Luke 2:21 says, "And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." Usually this was a ceremony, a big ceremony, attended by family and close friends. It became the occasion at which the name was typically announced, the name that the parents had decided - often, as it is today, a family name, a name with some significance to the family itself. But Joseph you remember, as we just saw a moment ago, had been told by the angel that his son was to be named Jesus. In fact, look at Matthew 1:21: "She will bear a Son [this is the angel to Joseph]; and you shall call His name Jesus..." "*Call Him Jesus*". Now the Greek name "Yesus" was simply a transliterated form of the Hebrew name Joshua or Yeshua. It simply means Yahweh, God's personal name, "Yahweh is salvation" or "Yahweh saves". What could be a more perfect name for the Redeemer? And Matthew tells us that the angel defined it for Joseph in verse 21: "...call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." He will rescue...call Him "Yahweh saves". But it doesn't say because "*Yahweh will save His people from their sins*". Call Him "Yahweh saves" for "*this child will rescue His people from their sins*". You see, already, the deity of Christ screams off the page of the New Testament.

At 40 days, Jesus was presented at the temple. It's about 6 miles journey from Bethlehem, where Jesus had been born, to Jerusalem. Some of you have made that trek. In Luke 2:22-38, this presentation at the temple is described and the people they run into there. The offering that was made for a male child, firstborn male child, was to be of a lamb or of a dove...excuse me, a lamb and a dove or of a pigeon. But if they couldn't afford a lamb, the law allowed for this couple to substitute two turtledoves or two pigeons, according to Leviticus 12:8. And that's exactly in this record what they did. So apparently Joseph and Mary, like most young couples starting out, were not wealthy. They couldn't afford a lamb as the sacrifice. But it's possible they had some family property because they had to return to Bethlehem for the census and for the purpose of taxation. And primarily, it was land that was taxed although it's possible they just returned for what was called a poll tax, which had nothing to do with land. We can't be sure. But it appears

to have been a sort of middle-class home by the time Jesus reached adulthood. Now after 40 days was over, they returned to Nazareth. Notice Luke 2:39: “When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.” So, they leave Bethlehem and head back to Nazareth after the 40 days. Now it is unclear, there’s some confusion here, about whether this happened after the wise men and the flight to Egypt, or before. But I think Luke 2:39 seems to imply that after they had presented Jesus at the temple, at 40 days, they returned to Nazareth. If that’s right, and I believe it is, then their purpose was simply to go to Nazareth to collect their things and move back to Bethlehem because the next time we find them, it’s living in a house in Bethlehem.

Now between 40 days and two years, somewhere in that window of time, you have of course the visit of the Magi recorded in Matthew 2:1-12, those amazing characters. We’ve studied that in detail, and I won’t get into it here tonight. But that event occurred. And because of that, it’s followed immediately, during that same window of time from 40 days to two years, the flight into Egypt, recorded for us in Matthew 2:13-18. You remember the horrific story. Herod the Great was a paranoid man. I told you last time. He executed his favorite wife. He executed his...her favorite son. He demanded that all of the leaders of the Jewish nation be killed on the day he died so that there would be mourning in the nation. He was a paranoid man. And so, what he does here, in the gospel record, is not out of character for him at all; it’s very much in character. And he orders that the children two years of age and under be killed after the report of the Magi. Now in a village the size of Bethlehem (it was a small village), it’s likely that this was fewer than 20 infants. But 20 infants is a travesty. It’s a horrific thing. And so, it’s rightly called “The Massacre of the Innocents”. Joseph and Mary, in response to God’s warning them, hastily leave, probably leaving most of their belongings in Bethlehem. And they head to where? To Egypt.

Egypt - the population of Egypt was a very cosmopolitan population. Egypt was accountable directly to the Emperor. So, there was no Roman governor. It was, frankly, an easy place to get lost. The port city of Alexandria was the second largest city in the empire, and it had an extremely large community of Jews. It’s possible that that’s where they ended up settling. We aren’t told, of course, what Joseph did while he was there. He may have used his trade, or he

may have, in God's providence, had the money necessary from the gifts the Magi brought. He may have sold those and been able to provide for them through those proceeds.

Somewhere around 18 months later, it had to have been after April 4th, 4 BC, because that or shortly before, was the death of Herod the Great. And so, some point after that, three significant events occur. There's the death of Herod on April 4th, 4 BC or, as I said, maybe the end of March. There's some leeway the historians have there. They return, the holy family returns from Egypt and they establish a new home in Nazareth. This is recorded in Matthew 2:19-23. Now Joseph had apparently still planned to live in Bethlehem. Remember the Messiah was to be from Bethlehem. But that's where He was born; that isn't where the Scripture says He would spend the rest of His life or grow up. In fact, we're told He would be a Nazarene. So, when Joseph heard that two things were true, he changed his mind. He heard that Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, was reigning over Judea and, when God warned him in a dream that it wouldn't be a good thing for them to live in Bethlehem, Joseph takes his belongings from Bethlehem and takes his family and settles in Nazareth, in Galilee, back to where they were, near where they were from, there in Nazareth.

Nazareth, in Jesus' day, was not a chief city but it was always called a polis; that is a city and never a village. It, as you know, didn't have a good reputation with the culturally sophisticated of Judea. In John 1:46, Nathaniel says, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" [And] Philip said to him, "Come and see." It was, however, secluded. It wasn't on a main road. A trade route passed just south of it. It was 15 miles west of the Sea of Galilee, about 20 miles east of the Mediterranean, but it was large enough to have a synagogue. Centrally located with a synagogue, this is how R.H. Mounce describes it: "Secluded yet not isolated, Nazareth cradled the origin of the Christian faith."

That brings us to Jesus' childhood. Sometime after they settled in Nazareth, we read this in Luke 2:40: "The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." That is the only New Testament verse about Jesus' childhood. But we can know some things about His childhood, for example, His education. We know, because the Old Testament required it and Joseph and Mary were committed Old Testament believers, we know

that they, as his mom and dad, would have trained him in Scripture. Deuteronomy 6 - if you love the Lord your God, you will teach your children His ways. So, we know that Jesus would have been taught from childhood by his mother and father. Also, in a city the size of Nazareth, there would have been a school, typically called the House of the Book. Here's how...I don't know if you can read that clearly with me but follow along if you can. Here's how Alfred Edersheim, an expert on Jewish social customs in the 1st century, writes. I love this. He says, "There is a passage in the Mishnah (the Jewish writing) which quaintly maps out and, as it were, labels the different periods of life according to their characteristics. It is worth reproducing if only to serve as an introduction to what we shall say on the upbringing of children. Rabbi Yehuda, the son of Tema says, 'At five years of age, reading of the Bible; at ten years, learning the Mishnah; at thirteen years, bound to the commandments; at fifteen years, the study of the Talmud; at eighteen years, marriage; at twenty, the pursuit of trade or business; at thirty years, full vigor; at forty, maturity of reason; at fifty, for counsel; at sixty, commencement of agedness; at seventy, grey age; at eighty, advanced old age; at ninety, bowed down; at a hundred, as if he were dead and gone, and taken from the world.'" If you're here tonight and you're in that category, I didn't say this! Alright? Now, Edersheim goes on to say this: "In the passage just quoted, the age of five is mentioned as that when a child is expected to commence reading the Bible, of course, in the original Hebrew." So, from the age of 6, that's when education (formal education) started, Jesus would not only have been taught by his parents, but He would have begun to attend what would have been the equivalent of our elementary school, taught by the rulers of the synagogue. It was connected to...a school like this was connected to every synagogue. Again, Edersheim writes, "Every place then, which numbered 25 boys of a suitable age or, according to Maimonides 120 families, was bound to appoint a schoolmaster. More than 25 pupils, or thereabouts, he was not allowed to teach in a class. If there were 40, he had to employ an assistant. If 50, the synagogue authorities appointed two teachers. This will enable us to understand the statement, no doubt greatly exaggerated, that at the destruction of Jerusalem there were no fewer than 480 schools in the metropolis."

How did they study? How long? Again, you know there's nothing new under the sun.

Edersheim tells us that the number of hours during which the younger ages were in school was limited. The daily lessons were intermitted between 10 AM and 3 PM. Only four hours of

instruction were allowed in the hot months of July and August. So, Jesus would have learned this way. For the first four years, from the age of six, He would have studied the Old Testament in Hebrew; that would have been his only textbook. And the very first book they started with at six? Leviticus! Doesn't that make you feel like a wimp? You start reading through the Bible as an adult, you get to Leviticus, and you kind of bog down. This is what 6-year-olds were learning.

Jesus learned three languages. This becomes very clear from the New Testament. He learned Aramaic. When the Jews returned from the 70-year captivity, they came speaking the language spoken by the Persians. And that was the common language across the land of Israel in the 1st century. There was Hebrew. We know Jesus read Hebrew. For example, He often was in the synagogue and in Luke 4:16, He read from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue. That would have almost certainly been in Hebrew. That was the tradition. We also know Jesus knew Greek because, in a couple of cases, He uses the word play that doesn't work either in Aramaic or in Hebrew. For example, in John 21, Jesus uses two different Greek words for "love". Peter uses two different words for "know". That interchange doesn't work in either Aramaic or Hebrew. And in Matthew 16:18, Jesus uses a word play on the Greek words "petra" and "petros". Again, clearly Jesus knew these languages. So, His education began young. At 12 years of age, came His first Passover. This is recorded for us in Luke 2:41-50. Jesus was 12 years of age and at 13, a Jewish boy had the celebration of his bar-mitzvah. Literally, that means a "son of the commandment". It meant He'd come of age. He was now responsible before God. In preparation for that momentous event, the bar-mitzvah, most Jewish boys went to their first Passover celebration at the temple, at the age of 12, the very age we find Jesus there. What's remarkable about this passage, in Luke 2:49, you find the very first words of the incarnate Christ; the very first words of Jesus after He came to the earth. And here's what He said to His parents, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" Now understand that is not disrespectful. That is not insolent. That's shown both by his parents' reaction and, of course, we know that Jesus was perfect and never sinned. He himself said, "Who of you can point out a single sin in Me?" This was not that. It was an intentional contrast between "your father" and "I and My Father". You understand, "your father and I were looking for you" and Jesus says, "*I must be about the business of 'My Father'.*"

There was a contrast intentionally built. It shows that, even at the age of 12, Jesus had a clear sense of who He was and of His mission.

Now from the age of 12 to the time He was 30, we have Jesus' adolescence and young manhood - something about 7 AD till He begins his ministry in 26 AD, built on the timeline that I shared with you earlier. In Luke 2:51-52, we have a summary of those years: After the incident at the temple, "...He went down with them [his parents] and came to Nazareth [this is at 12], and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." That summarizes what happened during those 18 years. Now while there are some things that we can't know about these years of Jesus' life, there is much that we can learn and it's very encouraging to know it. I want to take you into this time period of Jesus' life and when I'm done, I'll show you why it's important. It's very important to us, to our faith, to our daily lives, and ultimately to the gospel itself. So, stay with me I think it'll be worth it.

First of all, we know that during this period of life from 12 to 30, Jesus studied the law of God. On the Sabbath, He attended and apparently often lead the worship at the local synagogue. We don't know at what age that began. It may not have begun till His ministry, but it possibly could have begun in some sort of a ministry way earlier; we're not told. What we do know is likely that His family had a copy or a partial copy of the Scripture because this was true even before His time. You remember, last week, we studied the period the Maccabees, that period of about 100 and 150 years or so before Christ. And Edersheim writes this of that period: "At the time of the Syrian persecutions, just before the rising of the Maccabees, the possession of portions or of the whole of the Old Testament by private families was common in Israel, for part of those persecutions consisted in making search for these scriptures and destroying them as well as punishing their possessors." You remember we learned that last week. And so, individual families had portions or in some cases if they were wealthy enough, the entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures. And, of course, there would have been complete copies of the Scripture in the local synagogue, there in Nazareth. So, don't forget that aspect of Jesus' life. Every Sabbath, every Saturday, He was at the synagogue and reading and hearing Scripture, and it likely as I said a portion of or the entirety of the Scripture, in His home.

In addition, during these years, Jesus practiced a trade. We know that his father, Joseph, was a carpenter. Matthew 13:55 says, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" So, Joseph was known as a carpenter. But it was also true of Jesus. It was His trade as well. In Mark 6:3 they said of Jesus, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary..." Now the word carpenter literally means a craftsman. The Greek word is a broad word like our English word builder. It can include the work of a carpenter, or a mason, or even woodworking. We can't be absolutely sure of this but it's interesting that Justin Martyr, who lives shortly after the Apostle John's death, wrote this: "When He was among men, He made plows, and yokes, and other farm implements." It's interesting, isn't it, that Jesus spent so many years of His life working, doing exactly what we do, what consists of our lives - working, providing a living for our families. J. Oswald Sanders writes this: "Jesus saw no incongruity in the Lord of Glory's standing in the saw-pit, laboriously cutting the thick logs into planks or using a plane and hammer. In days when white collar workers tend to despise those who work with their hands, contemplation of the life of Jesus during those silent years would wither such contemptuous pride. He was a carpenter, a working man, who earned His living as others of His contemporaries by manual skill. His was no 40-hour week but a 12-hour day, doubtless with overtime as well. If it was not beneath the Son of God to work as an artisan, then surely it is beneath none of His children because He was no stranger to the dust and sweat of toil. Sons of labor are dear to Jesus and He has imparted to a life of toil both dignity and nobility." So, He worked. He worked hard. He worked physically hard. He worked long hours.

From a spiritual standpoint, in terms of the life of the nation, annually, as was commanded of all Jewish males and remember Jesus kept the law perfectly, He would have made the trek to the temple for the three annual feasts. They're required - Exodus 23, Deuteronomy 16. So, He would have gone, left His business, left His carpenter's trade, and gone down for those feasts and been at the temple - both for the sacrifices and for the teaching.

What about His family life? I want you to turn with me to Mark 6. This is a fascinating insight into these years in the life of our Lord. In verse 1: "Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the

synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?'"

"Hometown boy. Where in the world did He learn this stuff?" Verse 3: "'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?' And they took offense at Him." Now think about what that text tells us about Jesus' family life. He had four brothers and he had sisters (plural). So, Jesus grew up in a family of at least seven children and perhaps more if, in fact, He had more than two sisters. It says sisters (plural). So, we can only assume the lowest numbers, two, but it may have been more than that. So, it could have been a larger family than seven, but it was at least seven.

Now the question arises - who are these brothers and sisters and in what sense? Three answers have historically been offered. Jerome: "It presented the view that these were not brothers and sisters, but they were cousins." This remains, by the way, the primary Roman Catholic position and you can understand why. It's to protect all of those things, the doctrines they've created around Jesus that are not biblical doctrines. But Greek has a word for cousin. It occurs in the New Testament and the New Testament writers chose not to use it of these brothers. In addition, the Greek word "brother" is never used anywhere else to designate a cousin. So, this is a highly unlikely view. A second view is these must have been Joseph's children by a previous marriage. That would mean, think about this, that would mean that Jesus was the youngest in the family and the only child of Mary and Joseph. Now why would anyone have proposed this solution? Well, it was proposed to protect the concept, the unbiblical concept, of the perpetual virginity of Mary - a theory that began a couple 100 years after Christ. In addition, I think, to denigrating the sanctity of the physical relationship in marriage which God says is honorable in Hebrews, there are so many problems with this view. First of all, there's no mention of this in Scripture. Also, it erases Jesus' claim to the throne if He wasn't the firstborn. He had to be the firstborn to have the legal right to the throne. And it doesn't match the New Testament picture. In the gospels, the boys are always tagging along with their mother and they're later described as having wives. The implication is that they were younger than Jesus, not older. The third option, and the one that clearly fits the biblical data, is that these brothers and sisters were children that were born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus was born to Mary. And the biblical statement seemed to clearly imply this. Matthew 1:18: "...before they [Mary and Joseph] came together she was found to be

with child by the Holy Spirit.” The implication is they came together, after the birth of that child. And so, the whole idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary is not a biblical concept. Again, Matthew 1:25: “[Joseph] kept her a virgin until she gave birth...” And in Luke 2:7 Jesus is called Mary’s firstborn son which implies what? There were other children that followed. And so, Jesus grew up in a large family.

There’s several other implications of Mark 6:3 that jump out at us in these early years of Jesus’ ministry. First of all, it seems clear that Joseph had died. Joseph is not mentioned here during Jesus’ ministry. He was clearly still living when Jesus was 12 at the temple - that incident that’s recorded for us. But there is no mention of Joseph after that. Jesus had then at least six younger siblings that He led and supported. A second implication is that Jesus had taken over the family business. He’s called the carpenter. That means Jesus worked six days a week to support the family, a large family. He became the surrogate Dad. And that brings me to the third implication, and that is, that Jesus led the family. If Joseph had died, as it certainly appears in the Scripture that he had after Jesus visited the temple but before Jesus began His ministry, then (listen carefully) it would have fallen to Jesus, as the oldest man in the home, to teach His younger siblings the Scripture, to be the surrogate father in the home. His responsibility then, is outlined in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Can you imagine being one of those seven plus children and sitting around the dinner table and hearing Jesus teach you the Scripture? You imagine being shepherded by a father like that, a father figure like that? No family ever had a better teacher, a more consistent example, a more perfect model of God the Father than they did. And yet, whenever it was that Jesus’ siblings first became aware that their older brother claimed to be more than the human son of Mary and Joseph, whenever they became aware of that, they all uniformly refuse to believe in Him. In fact, more than that, they thought He was out of His mind. Turn to Mark 3. Mark 3 and look at verse 21. Verse 20 says He came home to Capernaum, where He had made His ministry headquarters, and the crowd gathered again to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. “When His own people [that is His own family] heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him [literally, to seize Him by force and take Him back to Nazareth]; for they were saying, ‘He has lost His senses.’” So, they leave Nazareth to go to Capernaum to rescue Jesus from Himself. Go down to chapter 3:31. This is when they arrive: “Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent

word to Him and called Him.” The house was packed. A crowd was sitting around Him and so word had to kind of trickle through the crowd. “...and they said to him ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.’ Answering them, He said, ‘Who are My mother and My brothers?’ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him [His disciples, us], He said, ‘Behold My mother and My brothers!’” These are my true family. If you’re in Christ you’re His true family. That’s what He was saying. “For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.” Their attitude, that is His family’s, His siblings’ attitude toward Him, becomes very clear in a later incident that occurs just six months before the crucifixion. It’s in John 7. Look there briefly with me. John 7:1: “After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths [that’s in October], was near. Therefore His brothers [His four brothers] said to Him, ‘Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.’” Why would they say that? Verse 5: “For not even His brothers were believing in Him.” Think about that for a moment. Jesus had worked hard to support the family after the death of Joseph. He had taught them the Scripture. He had been the best example that a human family could ever hope for. How sad it must have been for Jesus, for His own family to reject His claims. It’s possible, we can’t be sure but it’s possible in this, Jesus limited His omniscience. Remember, He didn’t exercise His attributes except under the direction of the Spirit while He was on the earth. It’s possible that He didn’t know that His siblings would eventually trust in Him. That may be why, at the cross, he appointed Mary to John. He may have died not knowing if His brothers would ever believe in Him, that those He had loved and cared for and taught perhaps would eternally reject Him. You know, if you’ve ever had a child walk out on the faith, you ever had a child turn his back on all that you’ve tried to teach him or her, Jesus knows exactly how you feel.

But that’s not the main story here, in those years from the birth of Jesus until He started His ministry at the age of 30. Here’s the main story. For 30 years, Jesus lived a very ordinary life. Very ordinary. Dean Frederick Farrar, in his famous book “The Life of Christ”, describes it this way: “In these years, He began to do long before He began to teach. He began to do, that is,

long before He began to teach. There were the years of sinless childhood, a sinless boyhood. Imagine that. A sinless youth. Can you imagine that? A sinless manhood spent in that humility, toil, obscurity, submission, contentment, prayer to make them an eternal example to all our race. We cannot imitate Him in the occupations of His ministry, nor can we even remotely reproduce in our own experience the external circumstances of His life during those crowning years of ministry. But the vast majority of us are placed by God's own appointment amid those quiet duties of a commonplace and uneventful routine which are the most closely analogous to the 30 years of Jesus' retirement. It was during those years that His life is for us the main example of how we ought to live." Think about that - for those 30 years, an ordinary life. He grew. He studied the Scripture. He attended the weekly synagogue worship. He worshipped. He worked. He raised a family. He did exactly what many of us here tonight are doing even now. He experienced it all - a completely ordinary life and clearly, as Farrar writes, "He is an example in those years."

But is that really the point of those years? Is it all just about His being an example? No. It's much more than that - those 30 silent years. Yes, He did set an example, a wonderful example, a reminder that it's okay. It's okay to live an ordinary life of work and family and worship of God. But He also lived those years, those 30 years, so that He could live the life we should have lived. Ever wonder why Jesus didn't just come down for the Passion Week. Why didn't He just come down for the weekend, come down for Friday through Sunday, and go back to heaven? Why those 30 silent years doing what you and I do day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year - quiet obscurity? The reason is because for those 30 years, He needed to live the life we should have lived. And here's the good news. He did! For those 30 years, He did everything right. He did everything, at every stage of life, the way we were designed to do it, the way God created it to be. And He did it not for Himself, but He did it for us so that His righteous life, in justification, could be credited to us. 2 Corinthians 5:21: "[The Father] He made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]." Where did that righteousness, that's imputed to us, come from? It came from the righteousness of Jesus Christ, earned by 33 years of perfection, perfect obedience to God. And, Christian, here's the really good news: in justification, God takes those 30 years of silent work, obscurity, and those 3 1/2 years of perfect ministry and He credits them

to your account. And He now treats you as if you had lived those years of perfection. That's what Paul said and that's why those 30 years matter. It's at the heart of the gospel.

Let's pray together.

Father thank You for what we have learned tonight. Thank You that when the fullness of time had come, You sent forth Your Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that He might redeem, He might rescue those who are under the law. Father we thank You that He rescued us by becoming a curse for us, by taking the curse of our law-breaking on Himself so that, then, His perfection, His 33 1/2 years of obedience could be credited to us. And now, as we stand here, as we sit here tonight, we are clothed in His righteousness. And You see us as if we had lived that perfect life. What grace! We love You. We thank You. And, Lord Jesus, we thank You that You lived among us, that You not only set a wonderful example of an ordinary life, but that You also lived Your life for us. It's in Your name that we pray, Amen!