

## THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Message #12  
Bible Survey

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In our survey of the Bible, we have come at long last to the beginning of the New Testament. We want to look in today's message at the life of Jesus Christ. The life of our Lord began on earth with a supernatural birth. We read about this in several places. I turn to Matthew the first chapter and the sixteenth verse where we read that "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who was called Christ." The supernatural birth by which Jesus Christ entered this world was a virgin birth--that is He had only one human parent, his mother. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of Mary and this is the virgin birth.

The Bible clearly teaches this. The verses I just read teach that very explicitly. "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus." Notice the phrase "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus." "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus" not "Joseph of whom was born Jesus" nor "Joseph and Mary of whom was born Jesus" but only "of Mary was born Jesus." This is precisely what the text says because in the original Greek text, the pronoun "of whom" is a feminine singular relative pronoun. If God had intended us to understand that Jesus was born as everyone else had been--of two human parents, Joseph and Mary, He would have had to have used a plural pronoun and He likely would have used the masculine in order to highlight the father. Rather, He uses the feminine and the singular leaving no doubt in our minds that Matthew believed that Jesus was born only of Mary by the virgin birth. Of course this was not the beginning of the life of Christ. He existed from all eternity, but on earth, His beginning, His incarnation came through the virgin birth.

Of the childhood of Jesus Christ we know very little. We know that He came from a large family. He had several sisters; we do not know whether He had two or more. He had four other brothers making at least seven in the family eventually, for the other children were later born to Joseph and Mary in the normal fashion. We know that He came from a working family. Joseph was a carpenter and tradition says that he died when Jesus was in His teens; so very likely, if that is true, Jesus had to take over the management of the family.

We also know that He came into a religious family for they went up to the Passover every year according to the second chapter of Luke and we know that Mary went along which was not required by the Law. This must have been quite an expense for this family--this poor family into which Jesus was born.

When Christ approached the age of thirty, God then set Him apart for public ministry. In the next three and a half years He did all of His ministry. The ministry was forecast, announced, pointed out by John the Baptist. Then Jesus was tempted of the Devil in the wilderness to prove that He was unable to sin. It is very necessary that the Saviour be sinless; if the Saviour is not sinless, He is not a qualified Saviour. So the temptation proved the sinlessness which was inherently His, but which was proved by the temptation.

The teaching ministry of Christ can be divided into several periods. There was first of all a period of His ministry in Galilee and Judea recorded in John 2, 3, and 4, opening with the turning of the water into wine as recorded in John 2. There was a period of further ministry in Galilee which is recorded in the first five chapters of Mark and in one of the other Gospels too. At this point, Christ was being received quite popularly by the people. There was a year then of opposition as Christ taught again in Galilee and Tyre and Sidon and Caesarea Philippi. You will find this recorded in Mark 6,7,8, and 9 and in the other Gospels too. Then there was a ministry in Judea and Perea and this is recorded only by Luke in Luke 10 to 16. There was the ministry of the last journey to Jerusalem and what we call Passion week--the week that ended in the crucifixion.

The Gospel writers give more space to discussing the last week of Christ's life than they do any other period of His life; all the writers give a number of chapters to the last week of His life because in this is the most important work of Christ's being done. There was the triumphal entry on the Sunday that we call Palm Sunday. There were other activities during the week including certain teachings that He gave; then was the Lord's Supper and the prayer and the betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. Things rushed headlong to their conclusion through the illegal trials of Christ, and leading eventually to the crucifixion on that fateful day. Christ was then in the tomb, but that's not the end of the story for the resurrection occurred on that next Sunday morning; and He is alive today because He rose from the dead those two thousand years ago.

Now there obviously is not time to discuss all of the teachings of the life of Christ nor even all of the implications of His death, but I would like to point out several things that are so important as far as the meaning of His life is concerned. What does the life of this great Person mean to the world today? First of all, the life of Jesus Christ is another attestation to the fact that God fulfilled prophecy. The coming of the Messiah was written in the Old Testament, predicted in the Old Testament many, many times. This person appeared on the earth and the people knew that He claimed to be the Messiah. That is the reason they often sought to kill Him. They knew too that He claimed to be the Son of God and this to them meant that He was claiming to be God. They knew that perfectly well. It is only people today who try to say that Jesus never claimed to be God. He did, and the people of His day reacted accordingly. The High Priest before whom He was being tried realized that He was claiming to be God when he asked Him point blank. The High Priest's reaction in rending his garments shows that he understood that Jesus plainly was saying that He was God, making Himself equal with God. This is the fulfillment of the prophecies, the many prophecies of the coming of the Messiah.

His teachings, second, are very important. No one should ever underestimate or minimize the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of us regardless of our religious standing or interest or sensitivity could well do with more practice of the teachings of Christ.

His life, third, was a proof of His sinless character and this is important because this is the only kind of redeemer who can do anyone any good. All of His life He proved that He was sinless. He Himself said, "I do always the things that please the father." Others said of Him, writing

later, that he "knew no sin," that he "did no sin," that in Him "was no sin." This kind of Saviour is the only sufficient kind of Saviour there is.

Fourth, the life of Christ is, of course, the revelation of God in flesh. "No man hath seen God at any time but the only begotten who is in the bosom of the father, he hath led Him fourth." Jesus is God in flesh; this is what incarnation means,--in flesh--God revealed in flesh.

But undoubtedly the most important significance of the life of Jesus Christ is the purpose for which He came. Important as these other things are, the fulfillment, the masterful teachings, the proof of His sinlessness, the revelation of God--important as all of these things are, they would be valueless without the fact of His death. If Jesus Christ had not died, then the rest of His life would have meant nothing. In His death He paid for sin. He Himself said that He was going to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28) and this word means that He was going to give His life a ransom in the place of many, that is, as a substitute for people. He is the substitute for sin and His life was given for that purpose. This is by His own declaration, the reason for His coming, to give His life a ransom as a substitute for others. Without this, the rest would be meaningless.

Now, Jesus Christ is not dead; He is alive, so everyone must face His claims and have some reaction to them. Either they accept them or reject them or remain indifferent to them. There must be some reaction to them because He is alive and His claims still stand. They are still placed upon people today. What is your relationship to Jesus Christ? What is He to you? I hope He is all of these things, but unless He is your Saviour, there is not much point in you accepting Him as your teacher. If you do not accept Him as your Saviour, His teachings were not entirely accurate because He claimed to be the Saviour too. If He is your Saviour, this is the all-important thing; if He is not your Saviour listen to His own words, "Him that cometh to me, I will never cast out. . .I came to give my life a ransom for many." Accept His teachings and if you do that, you will accept that fact that He wants to be your Saviour. If you will open your heart to Him today, He has promised to come in and to save you from sin and to take you to heaven to be with Himself forever.