

# The Mind of Christ

## The Boy Jesus

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. It has been said that there are two great beginnings in the life of every man who has left his mark on history. One is the day he is BORN into the world; and the other is the day when he discovers WHY he was born into the world.
  - A. When it comes to the life of Christ, theologians have debated for centuries whether or not Jesus ALWAYS knew who He was, and ALWAYS knew why He had been born into the world.
    1. We're not going to debate that issue here, because regardless of whether Jesus always knew or not, there is no question about His knowing WHO and WHAT He was, when He made one particular trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.
      - a. It was the custom of Mary of Joseph to make the trip to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover.
      - b. Whether or not Jesus made the other trips with them is not stated. Apparently, most children were left with the care of others until the boys reached 12 years old, when they would be old enough to become a "Son of the Law" – this is where the term Bar-Mitzvah comes from.

- c. However, we are told that on this particular journey to Jerusalem, Jesus was also twelve years of age – and for all we know, this may have been His first trip to Jerusalem as well.

II. The Passover was the greatest festival of the Jews.

- A. On that day the Jews remembered how the hand of God delivered them from their bondage in the land of Egypt.

- 1. Passover fell on the 15th of Nisan, which would be around mid-April on our calendars, and the festival was kept in Jerusalem.

- a. It was one of three feasts that every adult male Jew who lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem was obligated by Rabbinical Law to keep. The others were Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles.

- b. But these three feasts were so sacred among the Jews that devout Jews from all over the Roman Empire would gather in Jerusalem to celebrate them – ESPECIALLY Passover.

- c. Those Jews who lived in the furthest regions of the Roman Empire would often save for a lifetime just to be able to keep the Passover once in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

2. Careful preparations were made for Passover throughout the city of Jerusalem and in the surrounding countryside.
  - a. Roads were smoothed and bridges were repaired. The tombs along the roads were given a fresh coat of whitewash, so that some unsuspecting traveler might not accidentally touch one of them, and thereby, be declared unclean (Numbers 19:11) and unable to celebrate the Passover.
  - b. In the schools, for some six weeks before the festival, teachers would instruct their students about the meaning and the purpose of the Passover.
  - c. The Passover was the subject of practically every sermon in every synagogue in the weeks prior to the event.
- B. To any serious-minded boy who had a sense of pride in the history of his people and an awareness of Almighty God, the day when he attended his first Passover in Jerusalem was one of the most exciting days of his life.
  1. The latter part of Luke chapter two speaks of a time when the young boy Jesus attended Passover.
  2. There is a lot in these verses that tell us about Jesus in those early years of His life – before He began His ministry.

3. Therefore, let's focus our attention on this series of events and see what we can learn about the Mind of Christ. **(Luke 2:41-52)**

## **BODY:**

- I. It was estimated to be between 85 to 90 miles from Nazareth to Jerusalem, and it would take a slow-moving caravan nearly a week to make the journey.
  - A. All along the journey, every young boy the age of Jesus would be thinking about their first Passover in Jerusalem.
    1. Their minds would be filled with the wonderful stories they had been taught from childhood about God's deliverance of His people from the hand of the Egyptians.
    2. As they finally approached city of Jerusalem, even though they would still be miles away, it would be an astonishing sight for any young boy seeing it for the first time.
      - a. It was truly "a city which is set on a hill – a city which cannot be hidden."
      - b. And the first thing every young boy would see is the glorious golden Temple rising majestically above the city's walls.
      - c. Josephus describes the wonder of the Temple: *"The outward face of the Temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men's minds or their eyes; for it was covered all*

*over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendor, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn away their eyes, just as they would have done at the sun's own rays. The Temple appeared to strangers, when they were at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow, for those parts of it that were not gilded were exceeding white."*

- II. There would naturally be a thrill in the mind of every boy Jesus' age as he saw the gleaming Temple ahead.
  - A. And imagine how moving it would be to climb Mount Zion with the thousands of others who were coming to the Passover, all singing the words of **Psalm 122**, as generations before them had done.
    - 1. **Psalm 122:1-4** – *"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD.' Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to the Testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD."*
  - B. On the afternoon of the day when the Passover was to be observed, the lambs were killed in the Temple courtyards.

1. The lamb was not simply the main dish, it was a sacrifice that was being made according to the Law of Moses and, as such, had to be made in the Temple courts.
2. There was one part of every slain lamb that belonged to God – the blood.
  - a. The Jews identified the blood of a living creature with the life of that creature.
  - b. Therefore, to God alone, belongs the life-giving blood of the lamb – because it was the blood that Jews offered as an atonement for their own sins. It was the life of the lamb for their own life – the lambs blood for theirs.
3. And so, every father would take his son along with him and their sacrificial lamb into the Temple courtyards to slay the lamb and offer its blood to God. On this occasion, we can be safe in assuming that Joseph took Jesus along with him for the same purpose.
4. The MISHNA, the codified law of the Jews, describes the regulations for the killing of the lamb and the offering of the blood.
  - a. The priests stood in two rows, and in their hands were bowls of silver and gold – one row of priests handled the silver bowls, while the other row handled the gold bowls.

- b. The bowls were always kept separate and were never mixed together. They were also made with sharply rounded bases that would prevent them from being sat down and allowing the blood to congeal.
5. Every Israelite was required to slaughter his own offering.
- a. As soon as the throat of the lamb was slit, the priest would thrust the bowl forward to catch the blood. He would then pass it to the next priest in line, who would pass it to the next, until it reached the end, where the priest nearest to the Alter would toss the blood on one side against the base of the Alter.
  - b. Think, for a moment, what the Temple courtyard must have looked like.
    - (1). We're told, on one occasion during the reign of Nero, the governor of Palestine was ordered to take a census of the number of lambs slain during Passover so they could calculate the number of Jews who attended.
    - (2). The number was 256,500 slaughtered lambs.
    - (3). Try to imagine the scene – hundreds of thousands of worshippers each slitting the throat of their lamb, allowing the blood to drain away, the long line of priests leading to

the alter each with blood drenched hands, bloody bowls being passed from priest to priest, until it reached the end where the blood was thrown at the base of the Alter.

(4). The whole Temple courtyard literally ran with blood – the marble pavements slick with the blood of the lambs. It would have reeked with the odor of blood and would have resembled an immense slaughterhouse rather than a place of worship.

c. To the mind of most 12 year old boys, it would have been a moment of great disillusionment – the Passover was supposed to bring people closer to God, but how could all this blood do that?

C. No one knows what went through the Mind of Christ at this moment

1. But perhaps as He saw the thousands of lambs being slaughtered, Jesus may have remembered **Isaiah 53:7** – a prophecy He had come to fulfill.

a. **Isaiah 53:7** – *“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.”*

2. Maybe He had in mind something He would someday reveal through inspiration to the writer of the Hebrew epistle, when it was written:

- a. **Hebrews 10:1-10** – *“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.’ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come; In the volume of the book it is written of Me; To do Your will, O God.’ Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He*

*may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*

3. Perhaps Jesus was troubled when He witnessed the mass slaughter of lambs, knowing all along that it would eventually take His own blood to make a permanent sacrifice, once and for all, for the sins of mankind – something the blood of animals could never do.
- III. Whatever thoughts may have crossed through the Mind of Christ on that occasion, we know Jesus turns His attention to the Sanhedrin – the Supreme Court of the Jews, with its seventy members presided over by the High Priest himself.
- A. Normally, the Sanhedrin met in private in its own Hall of Hewn Stone, and there discussed the matters of the law. But during the Passover, the Sanhedrin met in public – usually in Solomon’s Porch, adjacent to the Temple – and anyone who wished, could listen to the discussions of these learned men.
    1. As these men openly discussed and disputed doctrinal issues and other matters from the Law and the Prophets, little did they realize

that God the Son – *the Word incarnate* – in the form of a 12 year old boy, was stepping forward to listen to their discussions.

2. If a young 12 year-old boy, like Jesus, had become disillusioned by the bloody ceremony of the priests, perhaps he might find something in the wisdom of these teachers of the Law that would draw him closer to God.
3. But as young Jesus drew near, He would NOT have heard the teachers of the Law discussing justice and mercy, or love and holiness.
4. Instead, these great Rabbi's would be arguing over all the countless rules and regulations devised by the Scribes and the Pharisees. These Scribal rules were to interpret what THEY considered to be the REAL meaning of the Law of Moses – the REAL intent of the Law.
  - a. For example, if they were talking about the Sabbath – they wouldn't simply be discussing the fact that men and women were to:
    - (1). *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work..." (Exodus 20:8-10a)*

- b. Instead, they would have been talking about all the ways a man could break the Sabbath by working or doing something the scribes and Pharisees believed constituted work, such as carrying a burden on the Sabbath day.
- (1). So, this young boy would have heard these teachers of the Law discussing such questions as “what constitutes a burden?” Could a man go out on the Sabbath wearing sandals made with nails? Do nails constitute a burden? And what about wearing a false tooth? If a handicapped man went out with a crutch on the Sabbath, did that constitute a burden? And what about picking up a stone? Would it be safe if the stone were small enough to throw at a bird, but not big enough to throw at cattle? A man couldn’t write on the Sabbath day, but did that apply if he wrote with some fluid that didn’t leave a permanent mark?
- (2). All these questions were ACTUALLY DISCUSSED in the MISHNA, the codified rules and regulations the Jews more commonly known as “the traditions of the elders.”
- c. Any young boy who would have been expecting something uplifting and edifying from these teachers of the Law would have been terribly disappointed.

- d. There was nothing in these discussions that told of God's love for mankind, and of how to heal a broken heart, or to assure man of the forgiveness of his sins.
5. We have no idea what went through the Mind of Christ on this occasion either. But one thing is certain, He would have heard first-hand the endless and pointless discussions and debates that the teachers of the Law engaged in.
6. Perhaps He might have remembered a similar time in the days of Ezekiel, when the priests of Israel and the teachers of the Law failed to care for God's flock, Israel.
  - a. **Ezekiel 34:1-6** – *“And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was*

*no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.”*

- b. Surely, young Jesus would have seen that the people of Israel are still wandering about like sheep without a shepherd.

IV. When the week-long celebration of the Passover had concluded, Mary and Joseph began their journey back home.

- A. Somehow Jesus became separated from the caravan of people as they prepared to leave the city, and he stayed behind.
  - 1. Mary and Joseph probably assumed Jesus was somewhere among their relatives or other acquaintances, and they did not seek Him until the caravan made camp the first night.
    - a. When He couldn't be found, Mary and Joseph immediately returned to Jerusalem to begin their search.
- B. From the time they discovered Him missing, until the moment they found Him in the Temple, three days had passed – three days of searching through the crowded city of Jerusalem, and time enough for any parent of a 12 year old boy to become extremely worried.

1. **Luke 2:46-47** – the Scriptures say, “... *they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.*”
2. The reaction of Mary, as revealed in her first words to Him upon finding Him safe, was perfectly natural. **Luke 2:48** – she said, “*Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.*”
  - a. Mary was naturally relieved to find her Son safe, and her reaction is that of any typical mother in a similar situation.
  - b. But she forgot one very important thing.
3. **Luke 2:49** – So, Jesus replied, “*Why is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?*” There are several important things Jesus was telling Mary in these words that constituted both surprise and a rebuke:
  - a. First, Jesus may have been saying that He couldn’t understand why they had not come to the Temple first. Surely, if they had thought about His interests, and had considered His ways and His habits, they would have known He would have been somewhere in the Temple.

- b. Second, Jesus wanted to remind Mary that He was NOT Mary and Joseph's son, He was GOD'S Son. So, in these words, Jesus mildly rebukes Mary for forgetting who He really was.
- c. Finally, in these words, Jesus also reveals that He already has a keen awareness – at the age of 12 – of His mission. He has come to do the will of the Father in heaven – namely, to seek and to save that which is lost.
  - (1). People had turned away from God because of all the formalism and endless traditions and interpretations of the Law.
  - (2). Judaism had become a religion of burdensome rules and regulations, none of which the common man could keep.
  - (3). There was no love and mercy in the keeping of all these endless traditions – just law-keeping. And that didn't bring people closer to God – it turned them hopelessly away.
- 4. Joseph and Mary did not understand, “the statement which He spoke to them.” But as they returned to Nazareth, the Scriptures tell us *“He was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.”* **(Luke 2:50-51)**.

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. Like every other 12 year old boy, Jesus made His trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover as a Son of the Law.
  - A. There is no doubt but that Jesus clearly knew WHO He was and WHAT He had come into this world to do – He was His Father’s Son (God’s Son), and He had come to do His Father’s business.
    1. Through the EYES of a 12 year-old boy, Jesus would have seen the immense slaughterhouse in the Temple courts as lamb after lamb was slaughtered for the sins of the people.
      - a. He would have seen the blood flowing across the pavement to the drains that would eventually take it to the Brook Kidron which flowed to the east side of the city – between the Temple and the Mount of Olives.
      - b. The brook was said to run red for days with the blood of thousands of lambs that were slaughtered for Passover.
      - c. Ironically, it would be this same Brook Kidron, flowing red with the blood of sacrificed lambs, that Jesus would cross twice on the night of His betrayal as He went to and from the Mount of Olives.
      - d. Whatever went through the Mind of Christ on this Passover is anyone’s guess – but we can probably be safe in assuming

Jesus would have seen His OWN SACRIFICE and His OWN BLOOD that eventually would be shed for many for the remission of sins.

2. And when Jesus turned to the teachers of the Law, He heard through the EARS of a 12 year-old boy, the endless disputes about the Law.
  - a. He heard first-hand why the people of Israel were still wandering in the wilderness as sheep without a shepherd – the shepherds of Israel had neglected their duties in properly feeding the sheep words that would draw them closer to God rather than push them further away.
  - b. Eventually, Jesus would clash head-on with these same scribes and Pharisees as He openly challenged their right to bind on mankind rules and regulations God never intended to be bound.
  - c. He would also clash with them over missing the very essence of the Law itself. He will say to them, **Matthew 23:23-24** –  
*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others*

*undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!”*

- B. On that eventful trip to Jerusalem, Jesus certainly knew He was the Son of God, and that He had come for the purpose of turning the hearts of men and women back to the Father in heaven.
1. Jesus knew people couldn't find comfort for aching hearts and troubled souls in the stiff, formalized religion that Judaism had become. To the Jew in Jesus' day, Jehovah had become a distant, harsh, judgmental, wrathful, and vengeful God.
  2. Jesus had to show people the TRUTH about God – that He was a loving, merciful, forgiving, patient and longsuffering God who would go to any length to find even one sinner and bring them safely home.
  3. And so, Jesus had an awesome task before Him. But before He would undertake that task, He would spend the next 18 years preparing Himself – and that's what we will discuss next time – when *“Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:52).*

- II. Before we close, it's important that we understand one thing. God never intended for our devotion to Him to become lost in endless traditions or to be bound up by rigid law-keeping.
  - A. While obedience to the Father and to the Son is paramount, we are not justified in God's eyes by simply keeping a bunch of rules and regulations.
    - 1. Rather, we are justified by our faith – an obedient faith – that demonstrates itself in keeping God's commandments out of love for the One who gave those commandments.
    - 2. Jesus said, *"if you love Me, keep My commandments"* (John 14:15). We keep the Lord's commandments because we love Him, not because we are trying to earn our way to heaven.
  - B. Are you keeping the commandments of the Lord because you love Him?
    - 1. If you're not a child of God, then you need to submit your will to Him in obedience to the gospel of Christ by believing in Him, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Him, and by being buried with Him in baptism.
    - 2. If you are a child of God, but out of duty, then you need to return to the Father who loves you and the Christ who died for you – with a heart of godly sorrow that moves you to a genuine repentance.