

The Mind of Christ

The Formative Years

INTRODUCTION:

- I. When Jesus, at age 12, made what may have been His first trip to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, there is no doubt but that He knew who He was and why He had come into the world.
 - A. He was no ordinary 12 year-old boy.
 1. He had been come into the world, as He said, to “*be about My Father’s business?*” **(Luke 2:49)**.
 - a. He had been sent into the world to bring men back to God, and ultimately, to become the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world.
 2. Even though He was 12 years-old on that particular occasion **(Luke 2:42)**; He was 30 when He left Nazareth to begin His work **(Luke 3:23)**.
 3. For 18 long years He waited – waiting patiently to begin the awesome task for which He had been sent into the world.
 - a. But those so-called “silent years” were not wasted.
 - b. During that period of time, Jesus was preparing for a work that no one else in the world could do.

- B. What happened during that period of time in the life of Jesus?
1. Luke tells us, “*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*” **(Luke 2:52)**.
 - a. Although nothing more is said of those 18 years in the life of Jesus than what is revealed in this short verse, there was a great deal taking place in the life of Jesus.
 2. Therefore, as we continue our series of lessons on The Mind of Christ, let’s take a closer look at how “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

BODY:

- I. Through those 18 years, Jesus was developing all the skills that would be essential during the three brief years of His ministry.
 - A. He acquired the basic knowledge and skills every man needs for life.
 1. For example, we know that at some point Jesus learned to read, for there was a day when He would read the lesson from the prophets in the synagogue in Nazareth **(Luke 4:16-22)**.
 2. He also learned to write, which in those days was a much rarer accomplishment.

- a. In the story of the woman taken in the act of adultery, we are told that Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground (**John 8:7-9**).
 - b. In that same passage, an Armenian manuscript dating to A.D. 989, adds a curious footnote. It says Jesus was writing the sins of the woman's accusers on the ground, and when they read what He wrote, they quietly slipped away, one by one, from the oldest to the youngest.
3. In learning to read and write, Jesus was developing the skills that every boy needed to learn.
- a. There was a village school in Nazareth just as there was in every Jewish community, and it seems certain that Jesus would have attended that school.
 - b. In that village school there was some nameless village schoolmaster who had the distinct privilege of teaching the young Jesus – perhaps never knowing that he was teaching the very Son of God and the Creator of the world.
 - c. Those of you who teach young children in this congregation should always remember that you are not just teaching a bunch of kids... you're teaching the elders, deacons,

preachers, teachers, and the wives of elders, deacons and preachers of the church tomorrow.

- (1). You may never know how much you and your teaching impacts the lives of these young people.
- (2). I don't think "Grandma Katie" knew – she was the teacher in the Kindergarten Bible class at the Mountain View congregation in San Bernardino, California during the early 1950's.
- (3). But out of her class came several boys who would grow to manhood and become elders, deacons, and preachers – including me – and there were several girls who grew up to be the wives of these men.
- (4). Never underestimate the influence you are having on the lives of the children here. I guarantee you that you're efforts will be rewarded – not only in this life, but also in the life to come.

B. There were other skills Jesus developed during those years.

1. He learned to do a good day's work, for he would come to be known as a carpenter in Nazareth (**Mark 6:3**).
 - a. Justin Martyr, a second century Christian, wrote about the legends that had grown up around Jesus, saying, "He was in

the habit of working as a carpenter when he was among men, making plows and yokes.”

(1). There is a legend that Jesus of Nazareth made the best ox-yokes in all Galilee, and that men came from far and near to buy the yokes that Jesus made.

(2). Then, as now, craftsmen hung their trade signs and slogans above their shops.

b. Once Jesus said, His “*yoke is easy*” (**Matthew 11:28-30**). The Greek word for “easy” is “*chrestos*,” which means “well-fitting.”

(1). It makes us wonder if perhaps there might have been an ox-yoke above the door of the carpenter shop in Nazareth with the words painted on it “*My yoke fits well.*”

c. It’s important to take note of the fact that the New Testament actually says Jesus was more than a simple carpenter – He was a craftsman.

(1). The word “*carpenter*” (**Mark 6:3**) is from “*tekton*,” and speaks of a craftsman who do everything from build a house to make a fine table or chair.

(2). He was the kind of craftsman who had those special skills to take a piece of wood and turn it into a masterpiece of fine woodwork.

(3). But then, we would come to expect that of the One who took the dust of the ground and formed man.

C. During those 18 years, Jesus also gained the physical strength of manhood that He would need during the three years of His ministry.

1. The time would come when Jesus would walk the roads of Palestine, and when He would tell His followers *“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”* **(Luke 9:58)**.

a. Jesus could have never lived the life He lived if He had not been physically equipped for it.

(1). In those days, a carpenter didn't buy his wood from the lumber yards or some wholesaler. He went out on the hill-side, chose his young tree, swung his ax, cut it down and carried it back home.

(2). Jesus was certainly not some weak and anemic person – He must have been bronzed and weather-beaten, in the perfection of physical strength and health.

b. We have no idea what His physical appearance was like, other than what we have already said, and other than a glimpse given to us by the prophet Isaiah.

(1). Isaiah wrote of the Suffering Servant that, *“He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.” (Isaiah 53:2).*

(2). Whatever His physical appearance, there was nothing about Jesus’ appearance that would distinguish Him from any other man.

D. During those 18 years, Jesus also learned the importance of family life through human experiences.

1. The name for God, which came most naturally to the lips of Jesus, was “Father,” and the very use of that word is in itself a very beautiful compliment to Joseph.

a. Jesus would eventually teach His disciples to pray, *“Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.” (Matthew 6:9).*

b. Some people have trouble thinking of God as their Father, because memories of their own father are filled with anger and bitterness.

c. But to Jesus, the name *“Father”* was the most natural and the most precious name for God – and it seems safe to assume that Jesus also shared warm feelings toward another father, Joseph.

2. There were also words which Jesus must have heard in the home in Nazareth that would later surface again during His personal ministry.
 - a. There was the time when Jesus came into a little girl who lay dead on her bed. *“He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’” (Mark 5:41).* Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, in their commentary, say a more accurate translation of *“Talitha, cumi,”* is *“Little lamb, get up.”*
 - b. This was an expression commonly used by mothers in Palestine when they gently woke their children from a safe night’s sleep – *“Little lamb, get up.”*
 - c. Where do you suppose Jesus heard a child being awakened with the words *“Little lamb, get up.”*? Could it have been something Mary said to Him and his brothers and sisters, when they were all very young?
3. Throughout those years when Jesus was preparing Himself for the task God had set before Him, Jesus grew up in a family and learned the beauty of having loving, devoted parents, and the responsibilities that go along with being the older brother.

4. He would see many things during those years at home, and in the homes of His neighbors that would surface again and again in His teaching.
 - a. Jesus may have watched His own mother using leaven when she baked bread, and would someday tell His disciples, *“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”* **(Matthew 13:33)**
 - b. He knew what happened when a woman sewed a new piece of cloth into an old garment, or what happened when someone carelessly put new wine into old wineskins that had lost their elasticity. **(Matthew 9:16-17)**
 - (1). He would use these illustrations to show that His teachings would not be compatible with the teachings and practices of the scribes and Pharisees.
 - c. He may have watched a shepherd leaving his flock in the safety of the sheepfold to go out and find one sheep that was lost. Or He may have known of a woman who lost a special coin and conducted a frenzied search, sweeping her house until she found it. **(Luke 15:4-10)**

(1). And He would someday use these experiences to tell others of how God seeks and searches for that which is lost, and rejoices when it is found.

E. During those same years, Jesus learned to appreciate, through human eyes, the beauty of the world around Him – the world He created.

1. He grew up in the most beautiful part of Palestine -- around the Sea of Galilee.

a. In that region was the Plain of Gennesareth – a word which the Jews frequently said meant “Prince of Gardens.”

b. They called this plain “the unequalled garden of God” – and they called the land surrounding it “Sepphoris,” which means “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

2. It was in this beautiful land that Jesus saw many things He would later use in His sermons.

a. He would have seen the sower sowing his seed, and would someday speak a parable of a sower sowing seed (**Matthew 13:1-8**).

(1). He would have seen some seed fall on the wayside where the birds would immediately snatch it up, some would have fallen on stony ground only to sprout, wither and die for lack of moisture, and some would have fallen among

thorns where it grew up only to be choked out, and some which fell on good ground where it yielded a crop, some 100 fold, some 60 and some 30.

- b. Jesus would have also seen fields *“already white for harvest!”* **(John 4:35).**

(1). And He would tell His disciples that opportunities to share the message of the Good News were all around them if they would only lift up their eyes and look out on the fields.

- c. He would have also seen wild flowers – the lilies of the field – covering a hillside in breath-taking color **(Matthew 6:28-29).**

(1). And He would tell His disciples that *“even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”* Then He would remind them, *“if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”*

3. Throughout these years, Jesus was growing up in a land that provided Him with all kinds of wonderful examples from nature that He would use so effectively in teaching others about the true nature and character of His Father in heaven.

F. It was also in those 18 years that Jesus learned to pray to the Father in heaven.

1. When there was an important task at hand, Jesus always took everything to God in prayer.

a. Time and time again, Jesus would withdraw from men to be alone with God.

b. And when He was in His last agony on the Cross, He prayed, *“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”* **(Luke 23:46).**

(1). This is a quotation from Psalm 31:5, with the one word *“Father”* added.

(2). But more than that, it was also the first prayer which every Jewish mother taught her child to pray before laying down to sleep.

(3). It's similar to the childhood prayer most of us learned:

“Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

(4). Therefore, it was with a child's prayer on His lips that Jesus ended His agony and finished His task.

- II. But there's one more thing we need to add. Eighteen years is a long time to wait, but there may have been a very special reason for the delay.
 - A. After the Passover in Jerusalem, when Jesus returned with His family to his hometown of Nazareth, Joseph vanishes from the Biblical record.
 - 1. Even as early as the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee, recorded in the second chapter of the gospel of John, Joseph is no longer mentioned in Scripture. **(John 2:1-11)**.
 - 2. The most reasonable explanation is that Joseph died. That would mean that Jesus, as the oldest son, would have remained in Nazareth to take the responsibility of helping to support His family.
 - 3. Because of that, He probably remained at home until there was someone in the family old enough to take over the carpenter shop and earn a living for the family.
 - 4. But that day eventually came, when He left behind the comfort and safety of home, and the warmth and love of a family.
 - a. Jesus would never be welcomed back among the people of Nazareth as He had before He left. He would leave Nazareth being known simply as "the Carpenter" – the son of Mary and Joseph. But when He returned, He would come with the credentials of the Messiah – the Son of God.
 - b. The people of Nazareth would never think of Jesus the same.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Jesus left everything behind – all the glories and the beauty of heaven, and even the comfort and security of a home and family – to become our Savior and our Redeemer.
 - A. At one point during His ministry, Peter began to reflect on all that he and the other apostles had also left behind to follow Jesus.
 1. Peter said, *‘See, we have left all and followed You.’* So Jesus answered and said, *“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”* **(Mark 10:28-30)**.
 - B. Would you be willing to do that to be a disciple of Christ?
 1. Jesus gave up everything to be our Savior. What are you willing to give up to be His disciple?
 2. Would you leave everything – your house, your brothers or sisters, your father or mother, your wife or children, or your lands, for the sake of Jesus Christ and for the sake of the gospel?
 - a. Jesus left it all for our sakes, and so did the apostles of Christ.

2. It's challenging to think about making that kind of sacrifice. Would you be able to do it if you were required to do so?
3. What sacrifices are you making now for the cause of Christ?
 - a. If you've never obeyed the gospel of Christ, are you willing to give up everything that stands between you and truly making Jesus the Lord of your life?
 - b. And, if you're a Christian, but you've somehow allowed the cares and worries of this world to crowd out your love for the Lord, are you willing to give up whatever stands between you and faithfully serving Jesus Christ?