

Jesus, the Early Days

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

Detailed outline from the Sermon on December 30, 2007

What we know about Jesus' early life.

1. His dedication (Luke 2:21-24)

Circumcised like any male.

Dedicated to God, specifically because he was a firstborn. Offering up the firstborn to be of special service to God was as customary as giving first fruits offerings of the tithe to God.

2. The prophecies (Luke 2:25-38)

Simeon- an elderly man, who has waited his whole life to see the Messiah, believing he wouldn't die without seeing his hopes realized.

Simeon's song (29)

Simeon's prophecy (34)

Anna – an old woman; a prophet. Widowed for more than 60 years, and praying the whole time for the Messiah. She also had words for Joseph and Mary.

3. The great escape (Matthew 2:13-23; Luke 2:39)

King Herod – questions the Magi and his scholars. The Magi were uncooperative; so Herod feared a child born to be king. He had all male children 2 and under killed.

But an angel warned Joseph in a dream to escape, so the little family fled to Egypt, and eventually back to the relative safety of the north country of Galilee, after the death of Herod, where they settled in Nazareth, a small community on the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee.

4. The next time we check in with Jesus, he's 12 and visiting the Temple in Jerusalem during the Passover pilgrimage. It's a classic story of one child accidentally being left behind. But this one is different. They find Jesus wowing the teachers with his keen interest and extraordinary questions.

“Son, why did you treat us like this?” “Didn’t you know I had to be in my father’s house?” (Luke 2:41-51)

5. Twice we see commentary on the character of this child. (Luke 2:40), “The child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.” And (Luke 2:52), “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”
6. Mark 6:3 tells us that Jesus was a carpenter. (I also assume he was a good one).
7. Mark 6:3 also mentions Jesus’ brothers, James, Joseph, Jude (Judas) and Simon. The brothers remained unconvinced about Jesus’ identity well into Jesus’ ministry. After the resurrection, at least James and Jude believed, since James becomes the pastor of the early church at Jerusalem (“James the Just”), and authors the book of James, and Jude wrote a small book in our New Testament.
8. As for the other relatives, we are best acquainted with John the Baptist, Jesus’ second cousin. The first chapter of Luke documents his birth, and the early chapters of each gospel tell about his important role in preparing people for the coming Savior.

What we suppose about Jesus’ early life.

1. Joseph’s death. By the time we get to Luke 8, Jesus is visited by his mother and brothers. We are left to assume that Joseph is gone. At the cross, Jesus leaves the care of his mother in John’s hands.
2. We also assume Jesus’ self-knowledge. How it evolved, we don’t know, though the Temple story indicates that 12-year-old Jesus has both wisdom and a sense that God is his father in an unusual way. During his days as a carpenter, we assume that he was sharpening his tools for preaching and ministry, and probably exercising phenomenal restraint.
3. And we assume that Mary was in cahoots with Jesus. We’ve been told that she treasured up in her heart all of the strange encounters surrounding Jesus’ birth. Then, at the wedding feast at Cana, it’s Mary who virtually pushes Jesus to perform his first public miracle (John 2). My assumption is that they often spoke about Jesus’ calling in life, and that Mary was a quiet conspirator as Jesus waited for the coming days of self-revelation.

The beginnings of more

Then those days came.

1. Baptism – encounter with John – who is absolutely clear about who he’s meeting. John thinks this is backward. Matthew:” I need to be baptized by you.” Mark, Luke: “I baptize with water but he will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” John:” Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

In all gospels, a dove descends as the Holy Spirit and in most gospels, a voice declares, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.”

2. The wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) Jesus has to stare down his demons – rather, Satan himself.
3. The early disciples – Simon, Peter, Andrew, James and John (Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:35-42)
4. The wedding feast (John 2:1-11) Jesus puts his power on display.
5. The self-declaration (Luke 4:17-21) “Today, this scripture has come true in your hearing.”
6. The simple message “Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” (Matthew 4:17)
 - a) To turn away from... is sometimes the hard part...unhealthy pleasure...addiction... like scratching an itch...not good but so good.
 - b) To turn toward. Don’t excise the old with redirecting focus and energy to God...good...health...freedom...relationship...fruitfulness...growth... peace and real pleasure.
 - c) The Kingdom of Heaven is near.
 - Jesus is near. Heaven has come down.
 - A new paradigm: the Kingdom has begun.
 - All of us are close to Heaven. Our days are numbered and we must live in that awareness.