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Childhood of Jesus



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In "Childhood of Jesus," Steve Gregg delves into the little-known aspects of Jesus' early life. He discusses how Jesus' family fled to Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod, and may have supported themselves with gifts from the wise men. Gregg also makes connections between the history of Israel and the personal history of Jesus, pointing out the parallels between the two. He touches on the idea of sin nature and how it varies among different Christian denominations. Finally, Gregg notes how Jesus' time as a carpenter dignifies secular work and shows the importance of patiently waiting for God's direction in one's life.

Transcript

Last session we were in Matthew chapter 2 also, and we covered the material up through verse 18. At the beginning of this class, we'll finish off this chapter, verses 19 through 23. And then there's a small segment of Luke chapter 2 that needs to be finished off, and that will be the conclusion of the treatment of the childhood of Jesus.

Now, the time frame here is not while he was an infant any longer. At verse 19 of Matthew chapter 2, Jesus was some years old. We don't know how old.

There's reason to believe that he may have been approaching two years old when he went into Egypt, and we don't know how long he remained there. We know he remained there until Herod died. That might have only been a few weeks or months, or it might have been a couple of years or more.

We don't know. However, Herod died in the year 4 B.C., and that would mean that Jesus could hardly have been born much later than 6 B.C., since we'd have to allow probably at least two years for the events from his birth until his return from Egypt, and possibly even longer than that, depending on how long he spent in Egypt. I think, however, we should suggest he spent only a very short time in Egypt, possibly a year or less.

We can't be certain, but the reason I say this is because his ministry began around the year 27 A.D., according to the records in Luke. It was the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. That would be around 27 A.D. That's when his ministry began.

And Luke tells us he was about 30 then. Well, obviously, if he was born even as late as 6 B.C., which is about the latest it could possibly have been, that would make him 33 in 27 A.D., or 32. He was still about 30.

But if you have him born very much before that, he gets further and further from 30 and closer and closer to 40. So I think we can deduce that he was probably still quite young when Herod died, maybe as young as two years, three years old. And if that is the case, then we can't allow for a very long stay in Egypt.

There is nothing recorded of the time that was spent in Egypt, neither its duration nor how the time was occupied. Joseph and Mary, we know, were not rich people. And one might wonder how it is that they supported themselves in Egypt, but it is usually deduced or suggested by commentators that they supported themselves upon the gifts that the wise men had brought.

The gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Although the quantities are not told us, it would be an insult to give to a king a negligible amount of such things. The purpose of the gifts was to show honor and homage, and therefore it is probable that the gifts that were given were fairly substantial.

Mary and Joseph would, of course, have been at liberty, too, and must have spent those things on their trip to Egypt, and perhaps been supported by those things while they were in Egypt. How much of that wealth would have been remaining to them when they came back to Egypt, we don't know. It depends very largely on what amount was given in the first place and how long they stayed in Egypt.

In any case, we don't have any indication that they spent the rest of their lives rich. Well, the reason that Christ's birth is not at where you would think it would be, 0 B.C. A.D. or 1 A.D. or whatever, is simply because the dates that we now go by began to be reckoned several centuries ago, back when it was believed that Jesus was born in a particular year. I don't know exactly when this system began.

I'm sure that could be discovered in the Encyclopedia Britannica or somewhere like that. I've never looked it up, but sometimes centuries ago, somebody deduced the approximate or probable year of the birth of Jesus. What evidence they used to arrive at that year, we don't know, but whenever they made that decision, they started dating all other subsequent events and previous events from that marking point.

Sometime since then, discoveries have been made that show that the year that Herod died, would probably, when corresponding with other events that were dateable, happen in the year that would traditionally be called 4 B.C., which means that the B.C. A.D. division was made in the wrong place. But rather than change all the dates in history, we continue to go along with the tradition. It was established for enough centuries that we would have to go and rewrite all the history books and change all the dates in order to

accommodate the new information.

I can't give you time frames for how long things were and when we discovered about Herod. I'm dependent on secondary and tertiary information myself, not primary sources. The explanation is that whenever the years began to be calculated with the terms B.C. and A.D., they didn't have all the information they now have.

It is now possible to exactly date the death of Herod at 4 B.C. and clearly Jesus was born before that, so the B.C. A.D. is a misleading thing. Jesus, in other words, was not born 1993 years ago, even though this is the year 1993 as we speak. It would be closer to 2,000 years ago that he was born, but we don't know how close, but very close.

About B.C. and A.D., I think most people know this, but just briefly in case you've always wondered. B.C. obviously means before Christ, as I think everybody knows, but not everyone is aware of what A.D. means. Some people mistakenly think that A.D. means after death or after the death of Jesus.

Actually, A.D. stands for the Latin words Anno Domini. Anno means the year of, and Domini means the Lord. Anno Domini means the year of our Lord, really.

Prior to the time that people began to date things B.C. and A.D., they had to have some other way to mark time, and they did. You can see it throughout the Old Testament. Obviously, none of the stories in the Old Testament say, now, about the year 586 B.C., so and so happened.

Because when those were written, no one knew when Jesus would come, and therefore they couldn't affix how many years before Christ it was. We only call dates by B.C. by way of retrospect. Obviously, people who lived B.C. didn't call the year in which they lived so and so many years B.C. They didn't know how long before Christ they were living.

But they did date them from the reign of a current king. You can see that, for instance, throughout the Book of Kings in the Old Testament. In the third year of Josiah the king, so and so did such and such.

In the first year of Nebuchadnezzar. In the third year of Nebuchadnezzar. In the first year of Darius the Mede, and so forth.

In other words, they dated things from the beginning of the reign of whoever was the current king. Whoever was king at that time was the one whose birth, or whose reign, I should say, the beginning of his reign, marked that from which all other events subsequently were measured. Now, that is the same with B.C. and A.D. The difference is that those people who decided to affix the letters A.D. after a certain number, Anno Domini means the year of our Lord, or the year of our king, Jesus.

So, the assumption lies behind the B.C. and A.D. designations that Jesus is the king and has been reigning for that many years. It is assumed that since he came to earth, his reign began. And so, as things used to be measured from the hundredth year, or not usually hundredth because the king wouldn't live that long, but say the twentieth year of Artaxerxes or something like that, at some point there was the twentieth year of the reign of Christ.

And that was even before he began his ministry, technically. And ever since, his reign continues forever, and therefore he is the only king who can measure his reign into the 1900s and more years. But when a person, even when the newspaper puts 1993 or whatever date they put on it, they're acknowledging the reign of Christ for that many years, that he has been reigning that long.

Of course, as I mentioned, the date is not quite right, it's a few years off, but still, it's an interesting admission. I remember Richard Wurmbandt, the Lutheran pastor, Romanian pastor, who was arrested in communist Romania, and spent fourteen years in prison there for his faith. Once, when he was being transported by guards on a train, he entered into a dialogue, sort of a debate with the guards, who were communist atheists.

And they said, don't you know that Jesus never even lived? And he said, well, of course Jesus really lived. Not only did he live, but he's the ruler of the world. And they said, that's nonsense.

He said, no, it's not nonsense, even the communist government believes that. And they said, no, no way, the communist government doesn't believe that Jesus even lived. And he said, well, really, let's take a look at the newspaper here.

And he pulled out the official probs, or the official organ of the Soviet communists, and showed them the date, and said, here's the year, what's that number mean? You know, I mean, here the communists, who are atheists, and trying to deny any significance of Jesus Christ, or even his existence, they're still caught up in a world that has been permanently affected by his arrival. And the time of his coming is the turning point of history, so much so that even pagans, who would like to have, in every way, Jesus expunged from the records, from the public record, they will nonetheless inadvertently acknowledge his having come, and his unique significance, by measuring all events, even from 2,000 years removed from his birth, by the date of his birth. And when you consider, that's really quite a, that makes him quite significant, even if you don't accept him as the son of God, but any human being who ever lived, from which, from whose birth, all events forever after were measured and dated, would have to be a highly significant person.

And it must be a galling thing to the anti-Christians, that they have no other way of dating things, than to date them from the birth of Jesus. Now sometimes they, in some scholarly journals that are not Christian, you'll find instead of A.D., they put C.E. Like,

this is the year 1993, C.E. And if you ask what C.E. means, some will say, of the Christian era. Therefore, not necessarily acknowledging Jesus is important, but simply the objective fact of history, that the Christian church has pretty much colored this whole era in the Western world for that many years.

But others would say C.E. doesn't stand for the Christian era, but the current era. And so, the really hostile atheists and others who want to be totally secular, would say we are living in the year 1993, C.E., current era. And removing all reference to Christ.

But even so, they're not removing any reference to Christ, because when did the current era begin? It began with the coming of Christ. And how is it that this man's coming, issued in an entirely new era, that has not been supplanted for almost 2,000 years by any subsequent development? There have been many eras, I suppose you could say, but whatever era began 1993 years ago is a highly durable era, because we still measure from its beginning now, almost two millennia later. And therefore, no matter how they want to designate it, unless they want to rewrite all of history, they're going to have to inadvertently acknowledge the importance of Christ, by even signing the dates on their personal checks, or whatever they do.

Okay, that's just a little aside. Now, verse 19 of Matthew 2, Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young child's life are dead. Now, here's an interesting thing.

Actually, this just came to me just now, so it's an untested illustration, an untested point. But I told you that there were some parallels between the history of Israel and the personal history of Christ. Israel was a type of Christ.

It just occurred to me as I read that an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream in Egypt, that there was another Joseph who received dreams from God in Egypt in the Bible too. And it was that Joseph in Egypt who took Israel into Egypt, from which later they were delivered. When Hosea said, I called my son out of Egypt, meaning Israel out of Egypt, if we would ask how did Israel get to Egypt in the first place, the answer is Joseph took them there.

When Joseph rescued them from the famine, he moved them to Egypt, he relocated them there. And they never left for 430 years until Moses delivered them. So to say that Israel's coming out of Egypt was a prefiguring of Jesus and his infancy coming out of Egypt, we could also say, although I don't know that this is highly significant, that Jesus going into Egypt, just like Israel was going into Egypt, was initiated by a person named Joseph.

Joseph took Israel into Egypt and another Joseph took the Messiah into Egypt. And by the way, in other parallels, both Josephs had fathers named Jacob. But that's probably not

supposed to be too significant.

But just an interesting coincidence. Okay, verse 21, Then he arose and took the young child and his mother, and they came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee, which is, of course, where he came from originally. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene. Now, Joseph was uncomfortable about going back to Judea.

Now, one might expect that he would go back to Nazareth anyway, since that was where his business had been prior to the birth of Jesus and only a few years had passed. And since he had been relocated to Bethlehem only for a short time, and then sort of had to leave under persecution, one would think he wouldn't even return to Judea at all. But apparently Joseph felt that he should return to the place from which he left first, so he was going to go back and live in Judea.

Possibly there was work for him in Bethlehem that he had found in those weeks that he lived there, or years that he lived in Bethlehem. And it wasn't the lack of work or the lack of a home in Bethlehem that kept him from settling there, but when he heard that Archelaus was reigning. Now, Archelaus was a cruel ruler, the son of Herod the Great, and a very inept ruler.

He was actually removed from his position in 6 AD by the emperor because of mismanagement. And it was then that the procurators or the governors of Judea began to rule there, of whom Pontius Pilate was one, and he was the fifth one. But Archelaus was ruling at this time.

He ruled from his father's death in 4 BC until 6 AD, so sometime in that 10 years. Joseph came back, didn't want to live under Archelaus' rule, and an angel warned him not to stay there too, and so he went up to Galilee and settled in Nazareth. Now, that was really, although Matthew doesn't tell us that, that was really a homecoming for Joseph and Mary, because Luke has told us that that's where they started out in the first place.

So they went back to their hometown, and that's where Jesus grew up. Now, Matthew says that this fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene. Now, if Matthew seemed to be stretching things when he quoted, I have called my son out of Egypt and applied it to Jesus in his infancy, and even stretching it a little further when he quoted Jeremiah 31 and said, Rachel is weeping over her children, and applying that to the baby, explained in Bethlehem, both of which I feel like Matthew was justified in doing.

I believe God's Holy Spirit gave him insight into the meaning of those passages. But he

certainly seems to be stretching here, when he says it fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene, because that statement is not found in any context in the Old Testament. It's not found in the Old Testament.

Nowhere in the surviving records of the Old Testament do we find any prophets saying he shall be called a Nazarene. Now, scholars have puzzled over this for a very long time and tried to explain what Matthew might have been referring to. Some of the older Bibles, wrongly, give a cross-reference in the margin to Numbers chapter 6. But there's no good reason to, they're just desperate.

Numbers chapter 6 gives the law of the Nazarite. And so they say, well, maybe that's what it's talking about. No, it's not talking about that.

Jesus was not a Nazarite, and a Nazarite and a Nazarene were not the same thing at all. A Nazarene was just somebody from Nazareth, just like an Oregonian is just someone from Oregon. A Nazarite was a person who took a Nazarite vow, regardless of where they lived, regardless of their national or village origin.

It was a choice they made to be a Nazarite, and that, as I pointed out in a previous lecture, was what John the Baptist was. He wouldn't cut his hair, wouldn't drink wine, and wouldn't come near a dead body if he had a Nazarite vow. Those were the three restrictions upon Nazarites.

Jesus clearly was not a Nazarite. He touched dead bodies from time to time. He drank wine.

And even if one wants to say it was unfermented wine and only grape juice, which I do not accept as true, but even if that were true, even unfermented wine was forbidden to the Nazarites. They couldn't even drink grape juice. So obviously Jesus was not a Nazarite.

And so to connect this statement, he shall be called a Nazarene, back to Numbers chapter 6, which gives the law of the Nazarites, is an absurdity. First of all, it mixes up the word Nazarite with Nazarene, which don't mean the same thing at all. And secondly, if it's suggesting that Jesus was a Nazarite by the suggestion of that verse as a cross-reference, then they're missing the point altogether.

Jesus was not a Nazarite. John the Baptist was, but not Jesus. So where does Matthew get this? There's no statement that comes even close to saying this in the Old Testament, but there are two explanations that have been suggested.

First of all, notice it doesn't say that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, but what was spoken by the prophets. Up in verse 15, when he quotes from Hosea, although he doesn't name Hosea, he said this was spoken by the Lord through the prophets, singular. And he quotes a specific passage from a prophet, Hosea.

Likewise, when he quotes Jeremiah, in verse 17, he says, then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet. He's got specific prophets in mind in each of those two cases. But here, he should be called a Nazarene.

Matthew represents this as what was spoken by the prophets, as if he's not really referring to any particular reference in any one prophet, but he might be summarizing that which is the theme of more than one prophet. If so, what is the thought? What is it that more than one prophet said about the Messiah that Matthew is referring to here? There are two opinions among scholars. Either of them could explain adequately this.

One is the fact that the prophets sometimes referred to the Messiah as the branch. Jeremiah did. I believe Isaiah did.

Zechariah the prophet did. The branch is a Messianic title. In the Hebrew, the word branch is netzer and is believed to be the root word for the name of the city Nazareth.

Netzer means branch. That would mean that Nazareth would mean something like the town of the branch. Now, since the prophets, plural, did say that the Messiah would be the branch, Matthew saw it quite interesting that he would settle into a town called the town of the branch.

Is this not, in some respects, a fulfillment of what the prophets said, that the branch would live there, would justify the name of the town being therefore known as the town of the branch? It would suggest an association with Jesus and that town. He the branch, that town the town of the branch. To say he should be called the Nazarene would be simply a paraphrase of that thought.

Now, that might be what Matthew has in mind here. We don't know for sure. Against that view is the fact that back when it said he should be born in Bethlehem, an exact scripture is quoted in verse 6. Again, prophet singular is spoken of in verse 5 and it's the prophet Micah.

Bethlehem is mentioned. Now Bethlehem means the house of bread. One might think that a point could be made, well, isn't that interesting, the bread of life was born in a town called the house of bread.

But no such point is made. And the only thing that's significant about Bethlehem is that a prophet specifically mentioned Bethlehem by name. And that's why Matthew brings it up.

No prophet mentioned Nazareth by name or the town of the branch by name. But it is not impossible that Matthew has seen some kind of a connection there. That as the prophet spoke of Jesus as the branch and as Nazareth was the town of the branch, how appropriate and how prophetic, how much a fulfillment of these prophetic insinuations it is that Jesus came to reside and grow up in the town of the branch.

Nonetheless, that's not an entirely satisfying solution. There's a second possibility, which also is not an entirely satisfying solution, but either one might satisfy to a degree. The second suggestion is that the name Nazarene, namely a person from Nazareth, was a term of contempt among the Jews, just like the name Samaritan was a term of contempt.

You know, in Matthew chapter 8, excuse me, John chapter 8, the Pharisees, seeking to insult Jesus, said, You are... What did he say? He said, You've got a demon, and you're a Samaritan. Well, they knew he wasn't from Samaria. And they probably knew he didn't have a demon.

They were just trying to throw invectives at him and make him feel insulted. And some of the worst things you could say about them was that they had a demon, or, maybe even worse, that they were Samaritans, even though that was not really a suggestion about their place of origin, so much as Samaritans just meant a despised person. The word Nazarene, or a person from Nazareth, some people feel might have had that connection as well.

In favor of this view is John chapter 1, usually quoted in favor of this view. In John chapter 1, when Jesus saw Philip, he called Philip to follow him, and Philip went and found his friend Nathanael, who was under a fig tree at the time. And he said, We have found him of whom Moses and the Law and the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, this is John 1.45, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, verse 46, and Nathanael said to him, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Now, this statement, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Many people have felt that suggests that Nazareth had sort of a bad reputation.

There might have even been a saying common among them, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? On the basis of this statement alone, many have concluded that Nazareth was a place with a bad reputation, and that to be called a Nazarene was a term of contempt in that society. Now, by way of balance, I need to say this. First of all, there is no evidence outside this one statement in John, no evidence in the Bible or elsewhere outside the Bible that Nazareth had a bad reputation.

You may have heard from the day you were in Sunday school as a child that Nazareth had a bad reputation. I've heard it longer than I can remember from Sunday school teachers and preachers and even commentators. But the state of the evidence is as follows, John 1.46. That's the only evidence from which it is drawn, and it's an inference that may not be a correct one.

When Nathanael said, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? was he trying to say that Nazareth is a wicked place and that that town has a bad reputation? Was he trying to say something disparaging about Jesus because he was a Nazarene? Or is it possible that he implied that Nazareth being a Galilean town, and Galilee in general, was not the place from which significant people came? Now, Nathanael was himself a Galilean, as

was Philip. Therefore, he might have been speaking somewhat humbly. He might have been suggesting, Philip, do you think this guy from Nazareth is the Messiah? Don't you think the Messiah would come from somewhere more prestigious like Jerusalem? Or at least somewhere in Judea? Do you really think a Galilean like someone like you or me, guys from Galilee, could ever amount to anything? Nazareth might not have been so much focusing on the town, but on the fact that Nazareth was a Galilean town.

And it might have been, since these guys were Galileans, that Nathanael was simply being humble, saying, Really? Come on now. Our type, us Galileans, never amount to anything. Can anyone significant come from a Galilean town like Nazareth? It may be that Nazareth didn't have any particular bad reputation, but Galilee as a whole was frowned upon as lesser.

The word Galilean became a term of contempt that was applied to followers of Jesus by those in Judea, because Galileans were considered to be low-born. They were considered to be separated from the temple geographically and culturally. In fact, Galileans were so frowned upon that the Pharisees even lied, or the chief priests.

Remember at the end of John chapter 7, when Nicodemus spoke up in favor of Jesus, the other Jewish leaders were shocked that Nicodemus would speak up in his favor, in Jesus' favor, and they answered in John 7, 52, They answered and said to him, Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee. Remember, Galilee was the whole district where Jesus grew up, but so did eleven of his disciples. Nazareth was just one of the towns in that area.

So was Capernaum. So was Cana, and so were a number of the other towns that Jesus frequented. The point here is, they said no prophet could arise out of Galilee.

Well, that's not strictly true. Elijah the prophet was from Galilee. Elisha was from Galilee.

Jonah the prophet was from Galilee. Hosea may not have been from Galilee, but he spent his whole ministry in Galilee. He may have been a native of their region.

In other words, they were not exactly telling the truth when they said no prophet arises from Galilee. But Galilee just had that kind of reputation. Do you expect someone significant, a prophet or a messiah, to come from Galilee? Forget it.

No way. Galilee just isn't that significant. And it's possible that when Nathanael, a Galilean himself, said, do you really think the messiah is coming from Nazareth? Can anything good or significant come from Nazareth? But he wasn't reflecting on the village of Nazareth itself, but simply the fact that that was a Galilean village, just like the village from which he himself came.

And he might have just been saying, come on, us Galileans never amount to anything. How could this Galilean Jesus we talk about be the messiah? Anyway, the evidence that

Nazarene was a term of contempt or that Nazareth was a particularly bad town, the evidence is very shaky. It's based on a single verse of the Bible, which is certainly capable of other interpretations.

But on the assumption that Nazarene is simply a term of contempt, Matthew saying the prophet said he should be called a Nazarene would be more or less Matthew's way of saying the prophet spoke of him being held in contempt and rejected and scorned. The prophet Isaiah especially and some others spoke of his rejection and his people holding him in scorn and mocking him and speaking abusively to him. To be called a Nazarene would be sort of a term of contempt and there would be some kind of vague connection between the prophecies that he'd be spoken of as evil and the fact that actually he did turn out to be called a Nazarene and if Nazarene was really a term of contempt there would be some connection made.

That's more of a far-fetched explanation, I think. Of the two, I would personally prefer the branch town explanation, though that is not fully satisfying either. One thing is for sure, though.

Matthew quotes this statement differently than he quotes the other prophecies in the same chapter. In every other case, he cites a particular prophet or indicates a prophet said something and then he quotes the direct thing from the prophet. Here he says, this is what was spoken by the prophet and then he gives a statement which, if he's talking about the statements of more than one prophet, he can't be quoting any one.

It must be a summary statement or something where he's kind of digesting something that more than one prophet had to say about the Messiah and whether it's about him receiving rejection and mockery and contempt or whether it has to do with the prophet who spoke to him in the branch or whether there was some third alternative that Matthew and his readers would have put together but we have somehow lost. We just can't say. However, there are ways to vindicate Matthew in this and certainly he couldn't have been making it up completely just fabricating it.

He had some rationale in his mind for this. Now we turn over to Luke, take the closing portion of Luke chapter 2, starting at verse 39 and to the end of the chapter. Now Luke has left all this out about the wise men and about the flight to Egypt and the return from Egypt.

All those things we read about in Matthew chapter 2 Luke has omitted. The last thing that Luke has recorded was those things that happened when Jesus was 40 days old and Simeon and Anna met him in the temple. Luke either did not know about the trip to Egypt and the wise men or else it simply wasn't one of the things that he sought to include in his sampling of the events of the life of Jesus.

He had his own reasons for including or excluding any particular information. Luke did

not tell us anything about it. Instead, right after talking about Anna and Simeon, he says in verse 39, so when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own city Nazareth.

Now Luke alone had told us that they were from Nazareth previously. Back in chapter 1 he indicated that in verse 26, now in the 6 months the angel Gabriel was sent by God to the city of Galilee named Nazareth where he met Mary. So Matthew didn't mention that Nazareth was their previous home, but Luke did.

And now he says they went back to Nazareth. What Luke doesn't tell us is that they stayed in Jerusalem for a while after the events he just recorded, were visited by wise men, made a trip to Egypt and back. Luke has passed over all that and just moved directly to their return to Nazareth.

It agrees with Matthew, but some people have a hard time harmonizing these things because it looks in Luke as if they just went back to Nazareth after the 40th day of Jesus' life, where in fact you have to use both Gospels to supplement each other to see what things were left out by whom. Now, they went back to their own city Nazareth. Verse 40, And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Now, it says that Jesus became strong in spirit. The same thing is said of John the Baptist in the last verse of Luke 1. Luke 1.80 says, So the child, this is John the Baptist, grew and became strong in spirit. Now, these statements that Jesus and John grew, of course they grew, we heard of them as babies, people do grow from that stage unless they die, but becoming strong in spirit is more of a distinctive about these two boys.

They became spiritually exceptional. Now, how this exceptional spirituality was even recognized, we are not told in most cases. John the Baptist, I guess it's in view of the fact that he went and lived in the wilderness until his time of his showing to Israel, probably from age 12, we don't know for sure.

But there might have even been before that time evidence in John the Baptist's life that he was a spiritually unusual person. He certainly was. And Jesus also may have given evidence in his early life prior to age 12 of his exceptional spirituality.

However, Luke only tells the story of something that happened when he was 12, which was an evidence that he was strong in spirit, that he was spiritually strong and superior to others. Now, as far as the years prior to Jesus being 12, we have no data of Jesus' exceptional activity. There are some apocryphal Gospels that do not belong in our Bible because they're forgeries, but they do come from the 2nd century.

I say they're forgeries because they claim to be written by guys like Peter and Thomas, but they weren't. They were written after the death of those men. The Gospel of Thomas,

in particular, these Gospels are still available in print.

They date from the 2nd century. And they usually, in most cases, represent Gnostic versions of Christianity and fables about Jesus and so forth. No one knows whether there's any truth in any of them.

And there are even sayings of Jesus taken from these sources that you can get lists of, but they're not probably authentic. It is possible, however, that some of his authentic sayings and deeds may have been preserved in other writings besides the Gospels we have, but you just can't trust these 2nd century documents that claim to be from Thomas and Peter and really aren't. I mean, obviously, if the author is lying about who he is, what else might he lie about, you know? He's an impersonator.

But in the Gospel of Thomas, there are some stories about Jesus doing supernatural things as a little child. You may have heard of some of them. There are stories about Jesus striking bad little children dead without touching them, you know, just cursing them and they drop dead.

There are stories about Jesus as a little boy shaping birds from the clay of the ground and they come to life and fly away and so forth. Those stories, of course, are not true. They are very early.

They come from the 2nd century, but they're not genuine. The inspired record suggests that Jesus' very first miracle happened when he was 30 years old, or about 30, when he turned water into wine. In John chapter 1, after it tells of this miracle, Jesus turned the water into wine, excuse me, John chapter 2, after it tells of Jesus turning the water into wine, it mentions specifically that this was his first miracle, or at least the wording that sounds like that claim.

It's in John 2, 11. It says, This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifest his glory. This turning the water into wine is said to be the beginning of his signs, which suggests that he didn't do any signs before that.

And it seems appropriate. The Holy Spirit didn't come upon him powerfully as at his baptism previous to that. When Jesus was baptized in water, the Holy Spirit came upon him and that empowered him for the things that he later did through the power of the Spirit, including the miracles.

But as a boy, he was just a spiritually oriented kid. I mean, he was God in the flesh too, but he had not been empowered yet. He had not been empowered yet by the Holy Spirit to do supernatural things.

And everything we read about him prior to age 30 just suggests that he was a real human, but a real perfect one. He never sinned. And there's an exceptional story about his childhood.

Only one has been preserved, and that's when he was 12 years old. It says in verse 41, His parents went to Jerusalem every year for the Feast of Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.

When they had finished the day, as they returned, the boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem and Joseph and his mother did not know it. But supposing him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey and sought him among the relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking him.

Now so it was that after three days 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. So when they saw him, they were amazed.

And his mother said to him, Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought you anxiously. And he said to them, Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? But they did not understand the statement which he spoke to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them.

But his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. There is much to be said about this story.

The age of Jesus is probably significant. At age 12 or 13, a Jewish boy, nowadays in modern times it's 13, would make that transfer from boyhood to manhood. It was noted with a ceremony called Bar Mitzvah.

Jewish boys are bar mitzvahed these days at age 13. It is possible that 2,000 years ago the custom was to do so even at age 12 in some cases. I don't know.

But Jesus was right at that age where if he was not yet already, he was very soon in the Jewish society to take on the cloak of manhood and the burdens of manhood. When a boy goes through a bar mitzvah, it is suggested that he becomes a son of the law himself. He's a son of the covenant.

Prior to that, his misdeeds were kind of covered. He's just a boy. He's not really responsible.

But after bar mitzvah, he's a man. And he has male responsibility, adult man responsibility to keep the law of God and to answer for it. Some have suggested that possibly the age 12 or 13 is the age of accountability, at which point a child becomes responsible for his sins.

And prior to that, he's not responsible. But that would be... That seems a little late in life, frankly. There is no biblical authorization for that age.

That was a Jewish custom. The Jews simply made a custom of bar mitzvah and their sons at that age. So there's no inspired basis for it.

In fact, Jesus seems to become aware of his sonship prior to age 13 at age 12. Now, did Jesus know that he was the son of God before this? We don't know. The final verse in this chapter says Jesus increased in wisdom, which proves that he didn't have all wisdom prior to his ministry.

As a boy, he had to increase in wisdom just like anybody else. And in stature, he had to grow larger and wiser. And since there was increase in his wisdom and in his learning, we have to assume that he wasn't born omniscient, but he had to learn the same way other people do.

It would suggest, of course, that as a little tiny baby, he didn't know that he was born of a virgin. A baby doesn't know what a virgin is. And he probably had no conception in those early years that he was God's son in some unique sense.

But at some point he did. And at age 12, we can clearly see that he knew that because he says, I must do about my father's business. In referring to God as his father here, it's clear that Jesus had the revelation.

He knew that he was not Joseph's son. He was God's son. Mary and Joseph knew that too, but the fact that they were puzzled by his statement and didn't understand this significance means that he had not been accustomed to talking about God that way previous to this.

It's very possible that he had not fully understood that he was God's son until this time. I don't know. I'm just reading between the lines.

But if Jesus had understood it before and had been accustomed to talking about it around the house, there should have been no surprise in Mary and Joseph when he said, I must do about my father's business. Here I am at the temple in my father's house. Where else would I be? That should have been obvious what he meant by that, if they were accustomed to him talking that way about himself and his relationship to God.

Almost certainly, I think. Up till this time, whenever Jesus' father was discussed, it was Joseph that was in view. In fact, even in Mary's statement, in verse 48, Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought you anxiously.

It's quite clear that Joseph is referred to as the father, though Luke has made it very clear earlier in the narrative that Joseph was not the father. He was the stepfather. But it's natural enough for a stepfather who has adopted a child from birth to come to be called dad, to come to be called father, and for the family to speak of him that way, as if he is the father, even though he's only a stepfather or a foster father.

Now, the fact that Mary felt comfortable referring to Joseph as Jesus' father and was confused when Jesus used the word father otherwise than of Joseph, suggests that this is kind of a new development, a new insight, something that took Mary and Joseph by surprise and might have taken Jesus a bit by surprise. It might have been his first visit to Jerusalem. We don't know.

We know that male Jews above 12 years old were required to go to Jerusalem for three festivals a year. Prior to that they were not required to, but at age 12 they had to start. And that being so, Jesus conceivably might have not been to Jerusalem before.

This might have been his first trip to Jerusalem since his infancy. And it might be that he, in the temple there, met with God in an unusual way and received revelations about who he was, what his mission was, and what his special relationship was to God. I'm reading between the lines.

Because obviously some of this may be sheer fabrication out of my own imagination. But it seems to me not an unlikely scenario in view of the bit of evidence we have that previous to this he didn't have a clear awareness of his particular relationship with his father, but he certainly had it now. And his parents are going to have to get used to it too, since they were surprised by this too.

John? Well, really, do you think that Jesus gave their children sex education before age 12? I doubt it. My mother gave me my first introduction to sex education from a book written for children on the subject when I was, I don't know how old, maybe 8 or 9 or so. But I didn't understand it at all.

It went right over my head. I must have been easily 12 or so, maybe even a bit more before I really understood about reproduction and so forth. And I imagine that our culture, obsessed as it is with sex, probably teaches children about sex earlier than ancient Hebrew cultures did.

In all likelihood, ancient cultures didn't bother teaching their kids about sex until they were marriageable age. And I seriously doubt if Mary... First of all, I'm sure Mary intended eventually to tell Jesus about his origin. But prior to age 12, she might have figured, well, this is too young.

I'll tell him when he's old enough to understand. Age 12 is still pretty young if a child is kept naive. I mean, nowadays in our society, we think of a child at age 12 possibly very jaded because he's seen so many R-rated movies and looked at the pornography in his father's room and all kinds of stuff.

I mean, so many kids are jaded by age 5 or age 3. They've seen their mothers sleeping with different guys every night and stuff. We live in a very corrupt society where children's innocence is not very much protected. And so it's not uncommon to meet a

10-year-old or a 9-year-old kid who's cynical and knows all about sex.

He probably doesn't really know all about it. He knows the mechanics of it. And age 12 might seem to us fairly old to let a kid get before you give them some insight.

I imagine a Jewish society is straight-laced and prudish as it was about such things. They probably didn't intend to even tell a kid about sex until he was engaged. I have heard that Jewish kids were not allowed to read the Song of Solomon until they were 18.

I'm not sure if that was the normal age for teaching them about sex or what. But to me it doesn't seem strange. It doesn't seem strange at all that Mary would have, even if she intended later to someday tell him about this, that she would not have sat down with her 10-year-old kid and said, now listen, I know you're not going to understand this, but I've just got to tell somebody.

I was a virgin when you were born. What's a virgin? Why bother telling him that young? But I'm sure that Mary did intend to tell him sometime. I'm sure he must have.

If he hadn't forgotten that he was from heaven, then we'd have to assume that the moment he was born, or even still in the womb, that he was fully conscious that he was entering earth from heaven and that he was making an invasion. I don't think the Bible encourages us to see Jesus' infancy that way. If Jesus was self-conscious of his own godhood in his infancy, then he must have known everything, even before he was old enough to speak and before he was old enough to read and things like that.

The deity of Christ is a doctrine that we are so careful to want to preserve because it is true, and because cults deny it, that we sometimes swing further than the Bible does in denying his humanity. We want to make sure that we don't diminish at all from the deity of Christ, and so we have this extremely magnified view of his deity, which would almost make him all god and no man. But the Bible indicates that Jesus as a man lived, he was born and grew and lived under the same handicaps other people do.

He got tired, fell asleep, he was ignorant of certain things, he had to increase in stature and in knowledge, he even increased in favor with God. It says in verse 62, he even had to increase in favor with God. And I really think that prior to age 12, Jesus, he may have had some sense of destiny, he might have had some sense that there was something different about him and others, and he might have been a very pious young boy, it's possible for a child at age 2 or 3 to really love God.

And it's likely that Jesus always did. But as far as getting a revelation of exactly what his relationship was to the Father, my personal theory is that he probably didn't know about it until age 12. I could be wrong.

Well, there are theories about how Jesus kept from sin. There are theories, one theory which I do not accept is called the impeccability of Christ. This exalts Christ's deity

almost totally to the absence of any humanity.

They say the impeccability of Christ teaches that Christ is incapable of sin. I can't believe that the Bible would teach such a thing because the Bible treats his temptation as a real accomplishment, him overcoming it and so forth, and if he couldn't sin, what's the big deal? But even among those who don't hold to the impeccability of Christ, there's a prevailing doctrine which is considered to be orthodoxy, that Jesus, though he was a man, did not have a sin nature. That he had everything about humanity in him except the sin nature.

Now, to this day there are still Christians who deny that any man had a sin nature at birth, but most Christians who are orthodox believe that man is born with a sinful bent. But it is also part of orthodoxy to say that Jesus was not born with this sinful bent. Now, the Bible doesn't say that.

And the hardest thing about establishing this point is to try to find what a sinful bent is, you know. Is it a thing or is it just a description of nature? For example, everyone is born with an appetite to eat. Presumably, eating is a good thing and an okay thing to do.

Although, if you're so hungry that you steal from someone else and eat their food, or that you covet their food because you're hungry, or you overeat regularly and you're a glutton, those things would mean that you're really not governing your appetite in a godly way. You are missing the mark. You're falling into sin.

It is possible to sin by eating. Paul said that whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. And he said that in a context where he is advising people not to eat certain things that would stumble your brother.

So, even though eating is an okay thing, and the appetite to eat is certainly not a bad thing, yet it is your appetite to eat that might lead you into eating things you shouldn't eat, things that aren't yours to eat, things that would stumble your brother if you ate, or simply eating more than you should eat. Now, is that a sin nature? You have an appetite for food. It's that appetite for food that could draw you into overindulgence.

But is that due to something special in you called a sin nature? Is that just a description of your appetite unbridled? Likewise, after people reach puberty, they have all the hormones, God-given, that make them attracted to the opposite sex. And what we all know as the sexual drive, there's nothing wrong with that drive. God made it.

He intended for it to be used in marriage. But he did not intend for it to be used outside of marriage. But the problem is the sexual drive doesn't distinguish between marriage and non-marriage.

The sexual drive is just a drive to sex. My sex drive is indiscriminate. I mean, it might be discriminate.

I might not be attracted to someone who I don't find attractive. But given a group of women that I find attractive, and my wife one of them, my sexual drive doesn't discriminate. My mind has to be discriminated.

My conscience has to be discriminated. My commitment to God has to be discriminated. I will not exercise my sexual drive toward anyone except my wife.

But that's not my sex drive making the distinction. I have to govern my sex drive because it would not make the distinction. As far as attraction goes, I can be attracted to food that is not good for me to eat.

I can be attracted to food that is stolen. It says, in fact, in Proverbs, stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is a delight, or something like that, indicating that your appetite for food can even be attracted to things that aren't right for you to eat. What I'm saying is that man is given, in man's nature, as part of the good equipment God gave him, certain appetites.

The appetite for food, for drink, for sex, for sleep. And these pleasures are not evil things, but every one of them can be overdone. Every one of them, if not governed by a godly spirit or a godly soul, will lead you into sin.

Now, is that another way of saying we have a sin nature? I'm not sure. What is a sin nature? The Bible doesn't ever use the expression. The Bible says we're born in sin.

The Bible says that we all sin from birth. But is that because we have a thing in us called a sin nature, or is that because we have appetites in us that are not in themselves sinful, but because of their indiscriminateness, we move into sin because of them. We're drawn into things that are sin.

You see, for me to sleep with my wife would be a sin if she wasn't my wife. But if she's my wife, it's not a sin. So the whole thing that makes sex with my wife a sin or not a sin is the question of whether I married her first.

It's not a question of whether I have a sex drive toward her or not. It has to do with marriage. It has to do with decision.

My willingness to keep a commitment and those kinds of things. That's spiritual stuff. Now, I'm just saying all this not to ramble.

I'm saying this to address the question of whether Jesus had a sin nature or not. That depends. What is a sin nature? I'm not sure.

Now, I am certainly agreeable with those who say man is born with a bent toward sin. But as far as I know, that just means that man has drives that are selfish. It is possible to exercise selfish drives in a way that is not a sin.

If I eat, am I not being selfish? I'm not doing it for anyone else for the most part. I mean, I'm eating because I'm hungry. But that's not a sin.

But if my drive governs me instead of me governing my drives, if I let my flesh and its appetite direct my life rather than me bringing it under subjection and governing it with my spirit, then, of course, it's going to lead me into behavior that is sometimes sinful, sometimes not sinful. That my sex drive is not particularly part of a sin nature but part of the basic biological equipment that God gave Adam and Eve before they sinned would suggest that we don't... I don't know whether speaking about a sin nature is quite... that's not biblical terminology, though it might be a biblical concept. But if we ask, did Jesus have a sin nature? I would have to say this.

Jesus had drives. Jesus had an appetite. He must certainly have had a sex drive because the Bible says He was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin.

If Jesus didn't have a sex drive, He can't be tempted all the ways I've been tempted. And we know He had an appetite for food. He was hungry.

He was tired. He had the same bodily needs and bodily cravings that we have. The difference is He governed them.

He governed them within the perimeters of what His Father wanted and He never violated what His Father wanted with them. That's the difference. I mean, at least one difference between Jesus and us is He never allowed His drives to drive Him into sinful behavior.

We have. All of us have allowed our drives to drive us into sinful behavior. But is that because we have a sin nature that He didn't have or is it just because we have not behaved? You know, and He did behave.

He was committed to obedience to His Father. And He submitted to His Father more than we do. Well, I suppose the orthodox view would be the reason He submitted to His Father more than we do is because we have a sin nature that prevents us from submitting to Him more.

But I don't know if that's true. You know, if I have a sin nature that drives me to sin and Jesus didn't have one, how then was He tempted like I am? That's the big question in my mind. How could it be said He was tempted in all points like I am if I, in fact, have this sin nature that compels me to sin but Jesus didn't have that? Then His temptations weren't very much like mine.

You know, I mean, it seems to me to make a big heck of a difference when facing a temptation to either have or not have a sin nature that predisposes you toward the wrong behavior. It seems to me like a person who has that predisposition and a person who does not and both confront the same temptation are not being tempted quite the

same. And therefore, I don't know.

I don't know about this. But I'll say this. How did Jesus prevent himself from sinning before he knew he was the Son of God? Some would answer.

I think the Orthodox sense that you hear most often is, well, he didn't have a sin nature, therefore he didn't sin. Some would go so far as to say he was impeccable, he was incapable of sin. I don't think either of those statements is taught directly in the Scripture.

But of course, part of the problem is defining what the sin nature is because to the Calvinist, sin nature means that you're not only born with a bent towards him but you're born already guilty of sins that you didn't commit. You're born guilty of sins that Adam committed. You're already born with a record.

Now, that's not clearly taught in the Bible. But it is clearly taught in almost all Orthodox Protestant texts and I think Roman Catholic people too. It's been around for a long time, probably since Augustine.

And that being the case, to suggest that Jesus was born with that, namely, Adam's sins on his record, would be difficult to swallow because Jesus had to die sinless. Jesus had to live and die sinless. And some people would have problems not differentiating between Jesus and man in that very respect of sin nature because to them, sin nature includes the idea of guilt, of Adam's sin because that's sort of the way that Christians have talked about it.

But Jesus didn't have a human father. I've read it, but what I've read has taken the form of propositions, unfounded, and theories. I mean, what John is saying is, there are people who say, well, the sin nature is passed down through the father, through Adam.

And therefore, every generation since Adam, it's been through the male that it's passed along. And therefore, every child that's born who has a human father is a sinner. But Jesus had no human father.

He came through the woman, and therefore, he avoided having a sin nature. Now, the problem with this is the Bible nowhere says that in every generation the sin nature is passed on through the father. As I said, the term sin nature is not even found in the Bible.

But even if we accept it as a concept, it's not said to be restricted to being passed down through the father's line. If that were true, one would wonder whether girls are born with it or not. Because after all, they can't pass it along.

If they can't infect anyone with it, maybe they don't have it. If you're born with a disease, you can infect someone. And the fact that you can infect someone proves you've got the

disease.

I don't know if that's an analogy that works or not. But if we want to say that only men pass along the sin nature to their offspring, women do not, is this because women don't possess it? If women do have a sin nature, why don't they pass it along? These are questions that biblically can't be answered because the Bible doesn't make such statements. That's how they talk about it.

That's true. One point is clear. Jesus is the only man in history who could be called the seed of the woman.

The word seed in the Greek actually is sperma, obviously from the word sperm. When the Bible talked about a man spilling his seed on the ground in the Old Testament, that was talking about sperm, of course. Therefore, the word seed, when applied to human seed in the Bible, usually means sperm.

But an interesting thing occurs in Genesis chapter 3, when God is cursing the serpent. He said, On your belly you shall go, and I'll put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. And her seed shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Now, there's a strange thing about that because it talks about the woman's seed, a term that throughout Scripture usually means, when applied to humans, sperm. But a woman doesn't have it. A woman doesn't have seed in that sense.

And yet, Jesus is called the seed of the woman in that prophecy, and how he destroyed Satan. And, of course, Paul makes this point in Galatians 4.4. Jesus came in the fullness of time born of a woman. Not born of man, but born of a woman.

Now, whether that has anything to do with the passing on of a sin nature is simply a matter of conjecture. Because everything John has said has been said by many theologians. He's actually stating what is considered to be pretty much orthodoxy, and it's been argued this way by Christians for a very long time.

All I'm saying is the Bible nowhere gives any statement that my mind would suggest that only the male could pass on the sin nature. The difficulty is finding even any statements in the Bible about the sin nature. It is not hard to find statements in the Bible that indicate that man is prone to sin.

And born that way. And when we say the sin nature, we just are speaking of a description of that propensity. Then I certainly have no objection.

But if we think of the sin nature as some kind of a thing, like a tumor on the heart or something, there's something in addition to his humanness there, that sort of he's infected with it, he's born with this disease. Then I'm not sure how we get Jesus born

without it. Since what I, at least in my experience, when I sin, when I sin through pride, through greed, through lust, these are the ways that we sin through a lust heart, I'm told in the Bible that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are.

In fact, the temptations Jesus went through were in all three of those areas. Greed, lust and pride. Satan tempted him three times, once for each category.

And unless Jesus was incapable of sinning, which seems to me the temptation would be meaningless if he was incapable of sinning, he must have been tempted. He must have had the ability to be appealed to on the basis of lust and greed and pride. It must have been something that his nature was capable of.

The difference is he refused to submit to such influences and motivations. We don't, often enough. We have not resisted them unto blood, as Jesus has.

It says in Hebrews chapter 12. Jesus resisted sin much more strongly than we do. But if he had the capability of pride and the capability of lust and the capability of greed, but he simply resisted them in his spiritual warfare against the enemy, then it would mean he had the capability of sin.

And what is sin other than these drives? What is the sin nature? When I sin, it's because I have these drives. Is it not? If I didn't have the drives, I wouldn't sin. And I don't think I need anything in addition to these drives to make me want to sin.

I don't need something in addition, a tumor called the sin nature to be added. Just give me the drives I've got, and I'm induced, often enough, to sin. And that is simply because the drives are biological, largely.

And because they're biological, they're kind of amoral. That is, they're neither good nor bad. To have a sexual drive is not a good thing or a bad thing.

If anything, it's a good thing, because God made that and said it was good when he made it. But it can lead to good behavior or bad behavior. But the decision is not made on a biological basis, but on a moral basis, which is a decision made by my soul.

And I think it's in the soul that people say the sin nature is, but it's very hard to identify it. Let me, now that your head is swimming with this subject, let me just say this. I don't find it particularly profitable or fruitful to try to nail that down.

I don't need to have a nailed-down doctrine of the sin nature to know that I've sinned and that everybody has, or to know that Jesus didn't. But I cannot, with biblical authority, say that Jesus didn't sin because he didn't have a sin nature, and we sin because we do. That may be the case, but I know of no biblical basis for saying that.

What I can say is that Jesus was tempted and I am tempted. As near as I can tell, his

temptations were fairly parallel to my own. His experience of temptation must have been very much like my own if he was tempted at all points like we are.

And that being so, it must mean at the very least that he put up more resistance to temptation than I historically have. Because if I had put up a greater resistance, I could have resisted temptation too. But I didn't, and maybe I didn't because of some defect that's in our race.

But if Jesus lacked that defect, that propensity, that attraction to sin, we are nowhere told that he lacked it. And the whole idea of his being tempted suggests that he had that attraction, but he simply denied it. Just like he calls us to deny ourselves and take up our cross, he denied himself.

His self, if he had chosen to be selfish, would have been inclined to sin just like we are when we're selfish. But he denied himself and followed the will of his Father. Any speculation about the presence or absence of a sin nature is simply going beyond anything the Bible has to say on the subject.

But theologians are quite fond of going quite a distance beyond what the Bible has to say about things, simply because the Bible leaves a lot of these questions really unanswered because they're not necessary to know. But man is not satisfied to be ignorant and therefore comes up with theories. And once he comes up with theories, sometimes those theories sound so good that they become doctrinaire, you know, orthodoxy.

And once they become orthodoxy, people entirely lose sight of the fact that they're not found in the Bible. They're just the theories that have become acceptable and that help people explain and help people understand things that the Bible doesn't explain. But anything that is the doctrine of man and not found in the Bible, I think we are at liberty to question, especially if it creates problems in understanding some other biblical concepts.

I simply don't know. And I could be wrong in saying that Jesus didn't know all along that he was the Son of God. But I personally think that the surprise his parents showed in his comments, the fact that Joseph quite naturally was referred to as his father by Mary up to this point, would suggest that Jesus' awareness of God being his father, if he had it, he kept it a secret before now.

And it may be that he didn't even fully understand it until this point. Jesus was a real human being. And as a real human baby and a child, he did have limitations to how much he could grasp and understand.

And he had to increase in that by the church, in wisdom and so forth. So there would have been some threshold he crossed at some point in his life, some turning point where

he came to realize things he didn't previously realize. One of those things would have had to do with the specific nature of his relation to the Father.

In fact, he might have understood that he was the Son of God at some point, and then even later than that understood what his mission was going to be. We don't know exactly when he first realized he was going to go to the cross. Maybe he knew it all along.

Or maybe that's something God revealed to him a little later on down the line. That's information I'm not getting. You know, were they surprised that he knew, or was it that they didn't even know, or whatever? I mean, certainly Mary and Joseph both knew that Jesus was the Son of God because the angel had told Mary that her child would be called the Son of God because of his virgin birth.

And the angel told Joseph something similar. And they knew it. But remember, we just read about it a couple of verses earlier.

Twelve years had gone by in their lives where Jesus was just their son, one of several sons. I mean, sure they knew in the back of their minds he was a miracle baby. But, hey, miracle baby stories can kind of fade into the back of your mind to a certain extent when the baby's not a baby anymore for a long time.

I mean, I was healed of what was diagnosed as a fatal disease, cystic fibrosis, when I was a baby. My parents know that. But no doubt they don't think about it all the time.

You know, I mean, in the day-to-day business of raising me, they weren't every day thinking, wow, he was miraculously healed. There must be some great destiny or something for him. They just had to deal with my disobedience and discipline me and train me.

And, of course, I'm not Jesus, and I'm not making any such suggestion. I'm just saying I know for a fact the way the dynamics of the brain work that miracles are great when they happen, but after a little while the everyday business of life kind of shoves them to the back of our minds. We remember them from time to time, but they're not always continually dominating our thinking, especially when Jesus was being potty trained and things like that.

You know, those kinds of things, just the mundane stuff of raising a kid. And not only him, probably within a year or two they had a few others. And so they were just raising a family.

They knew Jesus was different and so forth, but he was too young to talk to about this. Probably Mary and Joseph didn't fully understand all the stuff, and they probably, Mary pondered these things in her heart, we're told, but she and Joseph might not have talked extensively about it and may have never talked about it to Jesus or the other kids. And

for that reason, it's possible that they just kind of shoved it in the back of their minds until some later date when things got a little clearer.

And they'd become accustomed to calling Joseph the father, though they knew he wasn't the biological father and so forth. Jaylene, you had a question? Yeah, question there, sorry. But you see, his statement to them really is kind of a defiance of sorts.

He was raised in the home of Joseph to learn Joseph's business. And apparently he did, after he went home and subjected himself to them after this. He apparently learned his father's business, that is Joseph's business.

But at age 12, he made a significant announcement that there was a different father whose business he had to be concerned about primarily. And that was something that I'm sure Mary and Joseph didn't have a full grasp of. Actually, I wanted to comment on some of the earlier verses too, but this is of course the key verse of this passage, Jesus' statement and what it reflects about what he knew about himself and so forth.

Let me just give you a few comments on the earlier verses in the passage. It might seem strange that Mary and Joseph could go a day's journey from Jerusalem and not realize that their son isn't with them. It might seem they weren't very attentive parents, but you have to realize a couple of things.

It makes it very clear that they were traveling with a company of people in verse 44. They supposed him to have been in the company. And in the latter part of that verse 44, it says they sought for him among their relatives and acquaintances.

This was not just a company, it was a company of neighbors and friends and relatives. It must have been a pretty large clan that traveled together. And no doubt, large families for the most part.

Joseph and Mary had something like six other kids besides Jesus, and there's every reason to believe the other families were comparably large. There must have been kids running around everywhere. And Jesus, at age 12, I would imagine was extremely mature and reliable.

I'm sure that many parents learn to lean on their kids and give them something like adult responsibility. It's much younger than age 12 if they show responsibility. And Jesus must have been the perfect model son.

I mean, totally able to be counted on. I'm sure that they let Jesus out of their sight quite a bit and just trusted him as if he were an adult already. Furthermore, it is known from later Jewish practice, and it might have been the case in these days, that the women would travel in company with the younger children ahead of the men and the older children.

That is, the women would start home since they moved slower from these children. They'd start home earlier in the day than the men would. And the men and the older sons could travel faster, so they'd leave Jerusalem later in the day and catch up with them.

With Jesus being 12, he was kind of at that median age, he might be considered one of the younger children or one of the older children. And Mary may have assumed he was with Joseph, and Joseph may have assumed that he was with Mary. And when they caught up at the encampment that night, they found out that neither of them had him.

In any case, there's nothing extraordinary about the fact that they could have gotten a day's journey without having noticed until then that Jesus wasn't with them. What seems extraordinary is that in verse 46 one gets the impression that once they got back to Jerusalem they had to search for three days to find him. Which doesn't seem to be the best way to understand that, since Jesus was centrally located, he was in the temple, he was in a prominent place.

It shouldn't have taken three days searching through a city like Jerusalem to find him, if that's where he was. But since they had gone a day's journey away from Jerusalem, and then they must have had to go the same distance back to get there, which was another day's journey, it would have been, if they didn't find him that same night, if they found him the next day, that would have been the third day that they found him. And in all likelihood when it says, now it was after three days they found him, probably that just means they found him on the third day.

There had been a day of journeying without him not knowing he wasn't with him, and then the day of journeying back knowing he wasn't with him, then probably the next day they found him in the temple. Now I know it says after three days, and you might say that should be four days total, but after three days is actually a term that the Jews commonly use for the third day. If you look at, for example, in Matthew chapter 27, in Matthew chapter 27, verse 62 and following, this is after Jesus was buried, it says, On the next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that while he was still alive, how that deceiver said, After three days I will rise again.

Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come and say to the people that he has risen from the dead. Notice, they remembered his words were that he would rise after three days, and yet they understood that to mean until the third day they had to secure the tomb. The third day was the day that they felt like he was speaking of, though he said after three days, it was just the manner of speaking.

So when it says in Luke, after three days they found him, no doubt that is to be understood as the third day after missing him, the third day after they had left

Jerusalem, and that would be easy to account for that passage of time. Now when they found him, interestingly, it says in verse 46, he was in the temple in the midst of the teachers. How he happened to get into the midst of the teachers we are not told, but it is probable that during the times of the feast, the rabbis used to sit out on one of the porticos, sort of out in the open air, and just discuss theology together, and bystanders could listen in to their wisdom, and maybe even sit among them and ask them questions.

Jesus probably was not the main center of attention when he arrived there. He became that, but in all likelihood he was passing by and he overheard some guys talking about theology, and it happened to be a subject of interest to him. And so he lingered, and then he began to ask questions.

Notice what it says about him in verse 46, it says, he was listening to them and asking them questions. It does not say he was teaching them or giving answers, just listening and asking questions. But the next verse says, and all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers.

Now that is interesting. It says he was listening and asking questions, but what astonished them was his answers. If we would reconstruct this scene, I think we could be guided by some of the later material in Jesus' life where he did this same kind of thing as an adult.

In the final week of his ministry, he spent a number of occasions debating with Pharisees, Sadducees, and other religious leaders. And many times it was so that he would ask them a question, which they were unable to answer, then he would give an answer. And that is probably what happened here.

For instance, when they asked Jesus, by what authority do you do these things? Where is your authority from? He said, well, let me ask you a question. The baptism of John, was that from heaven or from earth? Was that from man or from God? And they refused to answer. And so he said, well, I won't answer either.

But on occasion, he would ask them questions that stumped him and sometimes give his own answers. Probably that is what he is doing here. He probably said things like, well, you know, why is it that we say you are not allowed to do any work on the Sabbath day? And yet, if a child is born eight days before Sabbath, and the eighth day of his life falls on the Sabbath, we circumcise him, which requires the priest to work on the Sabbath.

And why is it that when the Sabbath comes, the priests don't have to keep it? Because instead of offering one morning lamb and one evening lamb, as they do all other days of the week, on Sabbath they offer two in the morning and two in the evening. They work twice as hard on the Sabbath. Isn't that a violation of the Sabbath? And we know that he pointed to those facts later in his ministry as inconsistencies on the part of the Jews.

And those might have been the kinds of things he was bringing up at age 12. Saying, now, why is it we do it this way? Or he might have been saying, why do the Scriptures say such and such? You know, Jesus said that later in life. He said, whose son is the Messiah going to be? And they said, well, he is going to be David's son.

He said, then why did David call him Lord? Because he is his son. And he quoted Psalm 110 where David called the Messiah his Lord. And they couldn't answer.

You know, Jesus, I don't know if he was trying to stump them or just curious. In his later life he was clearly trying to stump them. He was clearly trying to show them their own inconsistency and trying to show them that, guide them by his questions and by their inability to answer, try to guide them to the truth of the matter.

In this case, at age 12, he might not have been consciously trying to do that. He might have just been curious. Why do we do it this way? Why does the Scripture say this or that? And it may be at this point that he first became disillusioned with the answers that the Jewish leaders gave.

I don't know. Maybe not. But it's conceivable that at this point he began to realize the inadequacy of Judaism as it was being led and practiced by these guys.

They didn't have the answers. In fact, he had better answers than what they had and they marveled at his answers. It's hard to say.

We just don't know anything about the contents of this except that he listened and he asked questions. But then they marveled at his answers. Okay, well, we've already talked about his mother and father finding him or mother and Joseph finding him.

But they didn't understand his statement. But verse 51 says, Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. But his mother kept all these things in her heart.

Jesus was subject to his parents even though he knew God was his father. He was so astute and so brilliant and so spiritual that he could baffle the religious leaders and his own parents were dull. They must have been real boring in theological discussions.

I mean, he makes a very plain statement. I must be about my father's business. They should understand that.

They don't even understand that. There must have been tremendous frustration with Jesus not being able to discuss the deep things of God with people like Mary and Joseph who didn't quite grasp even the simplest things. And yet the marvelous thing is though his superiority to them intellectually and spiritually was manifest, he subjected himself to them.

He honored them as parents. He had to go through the same training ground that he expects others to go through and that is to submit to proper authority, to live with the hierarchies that God has established and to do so without regard to personal giftedness or superiority because so many times, for example, children will defy their parents because the children are Christians and the parents are not Christians. And the children feel like, well, my parents couldn't possibly understand God's will.

Or wives are that way with their husbands from time to time. A wife who is married to a non-Christian man or simply a guy who is not a very spiritual man. He may be a Christian but not very wise in spiritual things or whatever.

She'll think that because she's more spiritual or more intelligent than he, that she can just go over his head or ignore his authority. That's not the way Jesus lived it. Jesus was certainly immeasurably wiser and more spiritual than his parents.

But it specifies that he was voluntarily subject to them until the time that God told him to leave and to start his own ministry. And so we have nothing more about the childhood of Jesus after this except that he grew in size and in wisdom and he increased in favor with God and men. It's often been pointed out that this speaks of Jesus' physical, mental, social and spiritual development.

I'm almost embarrassed to point that out because it's such a cliché. I'm not sure that it does talk about his social development, but I guess it does. In a sense, Jesus has seemed to be kind of well-rounded in his development.

Of John the Baptist, nowhere says he increased socially. He was a hermit. John the Baptist was kind of a loner, even when he grew up.

He never really had a lot of close friends. He just kind of hung out in the woods and ate grasshoppers. But Jesus was like a party animal.

He was just into it. A fellowship junkie. He just always wanted to hang out with people and go to all the feasts and the parties.

That's not saying something bad about him. He boasted in it. He reveled in being called a friend of sinners.

But people would accuse him of being a wine-bibber and a glutton because he was frequent at feasts and parties and with the wrong crowd, in fact. But in that, he was very different than John the Baptist. John was not a sociable type.

But Jesus, as a boy, grew up and had not only faith with God but also with man. That didn't change until he started preaching. But he was a sociable guy.

A sociable kid. He wasn't some kind of a weird kid who was always kind of standing in

the corner of the playground while the other kids played football. He wasn't the nerd.

He obviously was different in that he never did anything wrong. But that doesn't always make a kid an outcast. Jesus was a sociable person.

And it becomes clear that he was, too. In his later years, he simply tended the carpenter's shop, apparently, until his ministry began. And there's another thing about Jesus that is a marvelous thing.

And that is that he only was to live a total of something like 33 years or so. And the entire fate of the world rested upon his ministry. And he was only going to live half a lifetime.

And yet he spent ten-elevenths of it shaving wood. I mean, and doing nothing spiritual. Now, the patience that took on his part, not to launch himself into ministry early.

Hey, after that conversation with those teachers in the temple, he could have started his own magazine, his own newsletter. Could have had his own TV program. Maybe started a tent circuit, you know, going around having revival meetings.

I mean, he'd get a reputation real fast. But instead he stayed home, nailed boards together for 30 years altogether. And he only had 33 years altogether to live.

And how much he must have been tempted at times to think, I'm wasting my time here. The whole world depends, the fate of the world depends on my ministry. I'm here 30 years old, I'm not getting any younger.

And I haven't been released from this mundane occupation. It should give you some encouragement to accept patiently mundane occupations until God releases you to whatever it is you might have a vision for later. Whether it's ministry or something else.

If Jesus could labor in a carpenter shop for 30 out of 33 years, it certainly, his doing so certainly dignifies labor. It dignifies work. It shows that even work in a secular job can be an act of worship.

Jesus spent more of his life doing that than any other thing. And so that's how his childhood and young adult life was spent. But then when we come back to the Gospels, he's an adult, and we come to the ministry of John the Baptist at Jordan, and Jesus begins his ministry then in the next chapter.

All right, that's all for today.