

# Jesus: His Early Years

Loving Our Magnificent, Invincible Savior

The "early" years of Jesus go back a long way--into the very depth of uncreated Existence. Naturally, we begin there, then follow the Eternal Word to earth and trace His developmental journey as He grew "in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."

**And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Luke 2:52 ESV**



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combines history, astronomy and a very close reading of the Biblical text—more fantastic, yet closer to scripture, than the greeting card images.

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### **About the Author: [Steve Evans](#)**



For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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## CHAPTER ONE

# His Eternal Pre-Existence

Jesus didn't suddenly appear on the scene with His birth at Bethlehem. That was when He came to earth as one of us to play the central role in our redemption. But He wasn't waiting in the wings rehearsing His lines! What was the Son of God doing before He became the Son of Man? The clues are scattered across the pages of the Bible like stardust in the heavens.

**In the beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. John 1:1 AMP**

## Before the Incarnation

Jesus is the Eternal Son of God, having been in existence since before time began. Everything we might know to say about God will be true of Him, if it is true of God. But it is not that simple. His descent to earth changed everything. During His Incarnation He took a break from being God, set His divine attributes aside, and became fully human for 33 years. Now, post-Resurrection, He is right back on "the job" of ruling over the universe with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but with a crazy twist: He is still united to our humanity, having become forever the God-Man. That's going to take some explaining!



There's always more to Jesus than meets the eye, even well-schooled eyes of faith. For now, however, the question before us concerns His life before the Incarnation, specifically in His relationship to Israel.

The extraordinary truth about Jesus' pre-existence is that He didn't just drop in us "out of the blue" when He showed up in Mary's womb, as if He had only been God at a distance up until then. No, He had been intimately involved with Israel from the beginning. There is a natural tendency to suppose that God the Father was "single-handedly" dealing with Israel, keeping Jesus "off stage" waiting for His entrance as Messiah. Seen in this (mistaken) light, all references to God and all appearances and utterances of God in the Hebrew Scriptures are attributed to the Father. But that's not what the gospel tells us.

**The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. John 1:9-11 ESV**

This one statement by John makes it clear that—all along—Jesus had been creating, sustaining and redeeming the world, humanity, and Israel especially: "He came to His own." For sheer



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pathos there is nothing to match this: Jesus was the national God of Israel! He came to them visibly and in Person, yet they didn't recognize the One who led them out of slavery, across the Red Sea, into the Promised Land and back from Captivity. He spoke to them through prophets, signs and wonders. Yet, "his own people did not receive him." And worse, they put their own God to death on the cross. We share in that of course—Jesus died for our sins as well—but Israel's tragic blindness shows us how hard it can be to "see" the Lord when He visits us.

## Jesus, the Great "I AM"

To open our eyes better, let's review seven monumental sayings of Jesus by which He was trying to open Israel's eyes to who He was (and forever is): the seven "I AM" sayings recorded in the gospel of John. These provocative statements were intentional allusions to the greatest "I AM" statement of all time, the self-revelation of God as He spoke to Moses from out of the burning bush. Unquestionably, Jesus desired to open His listeners' blinded eyes to see Him who was speaking to them as the same One who spoke to Moses then.

**God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'" ...This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. Exodus 3:14-15 ESV**

The meaning of "I AM" as a name for God is a vast subject in itself, but in essence it means "I will become what I choose to become" and is, therefore, a statement of God's eternal and utter self-existence and uniqueness, His absolute independence from and sovereignty over everything He created. By this we can see that for Jesus to say "I AM" to Biblically educated, believing Jews was "shock therapy." But for us it also opens a window into His activity prior to the Incarnation: what Jesus says He is in the present shows us what He has always been, even though Israel "did not receive Him."

**"Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save." Isaiah 46:3-4 ESV**

## Seven "I AM" Statements in John

### 1. The Bread of Life

**Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." John 6:35 ESV**

As a staff gave power to a man, so the ancients called bread the staff of life, for it gave everyone the strength each day required. Just as Jesus gave the Israelites their daily mana in the wilderness, so too, He gave them (and us) their daily words of heart strengthening encouragement and guidance. We "feed" on His every Word.

**And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Deuteronomy 8:3 ESV**



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## 2. The Light of the World

**Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 ESV**

In the beginning of creation, Jesus radiated forth the light that God gave to banish the primordial darkness. Jesus was with Israel in the cloud of glory and the fiery pillar, leading them as they came out of Egypt. His wisdom was there to enlighten their understanding all along the way. He has been enlightening our darkness ever since.

**For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light. Psalms 36:9 ESV**

## 3. The Gate

**"I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:9 ESV**

We are at risk whenever we go out into world, besieged as it is by spiritual darkness, but we are also at risk in our homes. That's why the Lord called for Israel to place reminders of their God on their doorposts and their gates—so that, whether they were leaving or returning, they would remember that He was with them and that they were meant to be "with Him" by living faithfully.

**The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. Psalms 121:7-8 ESV**

## 4. The Good Shepherd

**"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11 ESV**

David epitomized the good shepherd who willingly risks his own life for his flock. He told Saul that, because he had fought off both bear and lion with God's help, he was ready to face down the giant Goliath for Israel's sake. A Greater Shepherd was watching over him. Later, he wrote a psalm in praise of the Shepherd who had been resting, refreshing, and raising him to leadership as Israel's servant king.

**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. Psalms 23:1-3 ESV**

## 5. The Resurrection and the Life

**Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26 ESV**

Belief in resurrection and eternal life didn't make it in any obvious way into the first five books of the Bible. That's why the Sadducees, who based their faith on Moses' writings alone, were at such odds with the Pharisees, who believed the "writings and the prophets" were also scripture.



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Old Job lived long before their time, yet his words have outlasted them. All he caught was a faith-glimpse of his Redeemer, but he knew he would see Him one Day.

**For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.  
And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom  
I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. Job 19:25-27  
ESV**

## 6. The Way, the Truth, and the Life

**Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 ESV**

In making this "I AM" statement Jesus is saying that anyone who finds the right way to live has found it through His direct enabling; anyone who discovers a truth, any truth, has drawn close to His Person; anyone who experiences the quality of life that heaven calls "life," entered into that moment by His grace. God the Father gives these gifts, but we can only enter into them through Jesus' working, just as we can only come to the Father, through His revealing.

**For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;  
he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in  
integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints.  
Proverbs 2:6-8 ESV**

## 7. The Vine

**"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is  
that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 ESV**

What a beautiful image of fruitfulness vines gave to Israel! Branches heavy-laden with grapes were sure to usher in a harvest, leading to choice wine—the gift and sign of joyful fellowship. Above all, vineyards were a sign of their position in God's heart—Israel was the vineyard He cultivated by prophet, priest and king, as well as by Word and sacrifice. His very life was in their midst! Had they only stayed united to their Vine... how different it might have been.

**What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I  
looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? Isaiah 5:4 ESV**



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## CHAPTER TWO

# The Living Word

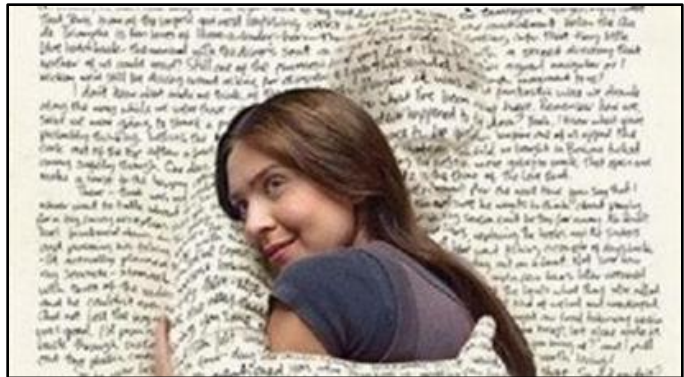
Among ourselves we trust a person's word because we trust the person—we know them and their character well enough to believe they'll do what they say. If we don't know them or have reason to doubt their integrity, we'll likely want their promises written down, signed, sealed and delivered! If they want our business, they'll give us a contract. Something like this is just how it works with God. The Father knows we don't know Him and find it hard to trust Him. He wants "our business," so He not only wrote His Word down, He sent Him to us!

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1 ESV**

## The Word of God

This is a mystery whose heights simply cannot be scaled by our imagination: The Living God is also the Word of God. What does that mean? We can readily understand what the scriptures mean when they tell us that God's Words are true, for that is the way it is with us. We see ourselves as speaking words that are either true or false, but we do not see ourselves as our words.

Yet, this is what the Bible would have us know about Jesus. He doesn't just speak the true Words of God. He is the one Person of the Trinity who is called "the Word." This Word is very much alive: Jesus is the Living Word of the Living God and He communicates Himself to us in two primary ways.



## The Written Word

As the Living Word of God Jesus gives us two main ways of receiving His thoughts. He is (somehow) the Written Word; He is also the Spoken Word. The Bible is not Jesus of course. What we hold in our hands is a book with words on the pages—nothing mystical about that. Even the words on our pages are not the words recorded in the original manuscripts; they are translations based on copies of those words. And yet, we are told by the Bible itself that it is by no means an ordinary book.

**Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16 AMP**



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This passage shows that God (the Word) “breathed” Scripture into being, in some way infusing Himself into its words. This same Word can speak forth through the scriptures to anyone with ears to hear. For this reason, everyone who reads the Bible with faith notices a curious paradox. No matter how much we may read and understand with our minds a particular passage, there may come a day when that passage “speaks” to us with unexpected force or previously unrecognized meaning. Jesus, God and truth suddenly become even more alive to us in those moments! Conversely, it is possible to read the words of scripture and never once enter into a living relationship with the One who lives on or within every page as many a skeptic has demonstrated.

Accordingly, we should take care that the words themselves are not our only concern when reading the Bible. Certainly, we want to take them seriously and studiously as we build our spiritual understanding upon them. There may even be times when we will literally have to “bet our lives” on His Word being true, so we would be wise to make sure we know it accurately and well. Even so, the Bible is more than a book of words, laws, truths and promises. It is a divinely given means for entering into an intimate relationship with its Author.

## The Spoken Word

Somewhere along the way a truly wonderful thing occurs: The Written Word transforms into the Living Word! The words of scripture lead us into conversation with and communion with our Risen Lord. Then, the more we grow familiar with, submitted to and dedicated to obeying the Written Word, the more frequently we may “hear” our Lord speaking fresh words to us. As Jesus becomes “more alive” to us in this way, we become attuned to living in relationship with the Spoken Word of God as well as God’s Written Word. In this way both the Bible and the Lord’s voice reveal Jesus to us, just as He said would happen:

**“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” John 14:21 ESV**

What does it mean to hear God’s voice? Don’t think just about your ears. Being endlessly creative, Jesus speaks to us in ways too numerous to list involving the whole of creation and probably in some ways that are unique to each individual. He has also been reported by some people as speaking right out loud to them. Nevertheless, the most common forms are through the Bible, through conscience, through circumstances, through others, through silence and solitude, and through our inward spiritual sense, the trickiest way of all.

Naturally enough, the devil is trying to get his own words in so we have to take care that we are actually hearing from Jesus. His says His sheep hear His voice, but there are plenty of warnings in scripture and plenty of life-wrecks around to show us that Jesus’ voice is all-too-easily missed. See [Walking in the Spirit](#) for more on good listening and successful guidance.

## Logos and Rhema

There is yet another way in which we can think about Jesus as the Word. In general terms we often refer to the words God recorded for us in the past (the Bible) as the *logos* and the words God speaks in the present as *rhema*. This is hardly an exact science, since God often “speaks” to us in the present through the scriptures for guidance or encouragement and the scriptures



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are themselves words God “spoke” in the past to those who set them into written form. Nevertheless, these two words, one Greek, the other Hebrew, give us a convenient handle for our words about the Word.

*Logos* entered the Bible through the New Testament authors who wrote in Greek, the common language of the Mediterranean basin. John used it to describe Jesus in the passage quoted above. In Greek philosophy and theology, *logos* described the divine reason which is evidenced in creation, giving it form and meaning. These connotations naturally fused with Biblical ideas of Jesus as the eternal counsel of God and the underlying order to all creation. As the Word (*Logos*) Jesus spoke everything into being. He sustains everything by His Word. Hence, intelligence structured all of reality. These thoughts are perfectly correct and can carry us a long way towards knowing God, so long as we don't stop there or go all mystical with it.

The Gnostic heretics of the Early Church, unfortunately, carried on so much about “the *Logos*” that they got carried away into false ideas about God. His Mind became anything their minds could conjure up. Then they got into trouble with matter: Since God (to them) was pure thought, how could the eternal Mind have anything to do with matter, or the material realm? They seem to have forgotten the second huge statement John made about the Word in his Prologue: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” You can't enter the material realm any better than being “en-fleshed” in it! But why would pure mind want to do that?

## What's the Matter with Mind?

The most important thing to keep in mind about God — whether you are thinking of Father, Son or Holy Spirit, or of all Three-in-One—is that God is first and foremost a Person, not a mind. To think of God as some mysterious, super-spiritual force or ethereal mind is to think much less of God than God is. God has incredible power and intellect at His command, but God is a Person, actually Three Persons living in perfect harmony. That's why God not only can *do* love, He can *be* love.

A single Being, no matter how exalted, cannot be the source of love. Love requires a lover and a beloved who exchange love. The essential harmony sustaining all created things flows out of the dynamic fusion of perfect love forever being exchanged between the uncreated Persons of the Trinity. God's Word is truth, the Word Himself is truth, but God also is love. Many times the surest and shortest path to really knowing God is through the heart, not the mind.

In translating *logos* as “word” the New Testament plays into a bias in our cultural understanding that it will help us to recognize. We tend to think of words as intellectual concepts, the building blocks of sentences which they undoubtedly are at that level. In the West especially (and for excellent reasons) we place a high value on the mind and intellectual achievement. The Hebrew Scriptures, however, are weighted more towards the heart. In fact, ancient Hebrew had no word for “idea” or “mind.” Our word “images” would translate the original text better, but our translations usually reflect our cultural bias. Interestingly, modern science is now suggesting that even our minds think by means of images.

## Keep a Right Image of the Idea

Think for a moment of Jesus as the eternal Word. Now, “picture” Him as “the image of the invisible God.” Can you see a difference? That image will help keep our thoughts of Jesus as



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*Logos* in balance by reminding us that He is a Person, not an idea. Even so, the Hebrew word, *rhema*, which we frequently use for God's Spoken Word invites us to listen, rather than look. *Rhema* describes a spoken word made by "the living voice" of the Lord. It is a dynamic, powerful utterance, capable both of creation and of re-creation, of bringing even benighted, unbelieving humanity into the new birth through igniting faith in its hearers.

Where *logos* leads us to think of the mind of the Maker, *rhema* beckons us to hear His voice. With *logos* we understand that God's Word is written for all eternity, outside of time and unchangeable. Through *rhema* we realize that God's Word is also alive in the present, soft as a whisper, crashing like thunder, fleeting as the wind, for it comes to us as a holy breath from the One who speaks it forth into our space and time with a heart of immense love.

## Going Forward with the Word

No matter how we might think of Jesus as the Living Word, the essence of the walk is learning to let His words establish our faith, guide our steps and inflame our hearts. The simple truth is that Jesus is a Word living inside of us, surrounding us, and leading us home. What He has written cannot be denied; what He speaks must be tried. Let His Word enlighten, liberate, guide, convict, convince, cleanse, clarify, strengthen and comfort you!



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## CHAPTER THREE

# His Miraculous Birth

If Jesus truly is our Model and Example in everything pertaining to the spiritual life, then His birth has volumes to speak to us about our own new life in Him. Indeed, it does! What it reveals will make you marvel even more at the “risk” He took and the miracle, not only of His birth, but of His unwavering pursuit of His divine assignment.

**Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 ESV**

**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 ESV**

## Looking Beyond the Familiar

Jesus’ birth by the Virgin Mary is the nearly unbelievable miracle that begins two of the gospels, bringing the Son of God to earth in a way no one had ever arrived here before. It is a fitting entrance for so exceptional a Person. But is it also something far more than that? So astonishing is the miracle itself, so captivating the events that surround it, so endearing the images it evokes, that we could easily stop short of seeing its full significance.



Biblical miracles are called “signs and wonders” for a reason. As wonders they are meant to get us wondering, not just in awe, but also in probing meditation; as signs they point to something greater that lies beyond themselves. What does the sign of this virgin birth want us to ponder? Where is it directing our gaze? To the infant, yes, but from what perspective?

Looking to the Infant from earth’s perspective, we see the miraculous in the way He is born of a virgin. Our eyes naturally shift to Mary through whom that miracle occurs, or our attention focuses upon the Babe in His tender vulnerability. Looking from heaven’s perspective, we see the miraculous in what it took for the eternal Son of God to become an infant. Our eyes naturally shift to heaven and it is there that we “see” something even more astonishing going on!

## Jesus Emptied Himself!

What about the hidden story behind His miraculous birth, invisible to us, yet stunningly apparent to that host of heaven praising Immanuel on those wintry fields beyond Bethlehem? There is



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something truly astonishing going on behind the scenes that will help us esteem our Lord even more. Not only that, but these insights may give us an entirely new perspective on the surprising ways in which our life of faith is a mirror image of His own. Be ready to pause in wonder, as we seek to unveil just a glimpse of this holy Mystery, the mystery of how it was that the Word became flesh through the "self-emptying" of Jesus Christ.

**Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.**  
Philippians 2:5-7 ASV

As near as I can make it out, here is the Why? What? and How? of it...

## The Why: Why a Baby?

We take it for granted that He came into the world as a baby, but that wasn't His only option. From a Christian perspective there are numerous sightings of the Lord Jesus in the Hebrew Scriptures most notably in His appearance as both "a man" and "Prince of the Lord's hosts" to Joshua just before the battle at Jericho. If He could make an appearance as a divine "man" to Joshua and many others, He certainly could have entered the world of Herod's Israel the same way.

Why didn't Jesus simply step into time and space to begin His mission looking and acting like one of us? Why did He choose to enter our world as a baby instead? Clearly, there were important reasons why He had to become fully human. That could only happen by being born of a woman same as the rest of us. But why? I see two compelling reasons and they both argue for Him not only becoming fully human, but in some "operational" sense, only human:

- 1) He had to become one with us in order to die as our representative at the cross and
- 2) He had to become one with us to regain the dominion authority over the earth that we had ceded to Satan.

To do this Jesus had to "empty" Himself of all that went with being God. Someone put it this way: "Though He was never less than fully God, He lived as never more than only man."

## The What: What Was He Emptied of?

No doubt there is much here that needs reverent consideration, but the list is impressive even when filed by title: Jesus chose to empty Himself of His own divine glory, of His rights and privileges, of omnipotence, of omniscience, of omnipresence, and of the fame and adoration He received in heaven. He left behind heaven's beauty, its glory and its matchless fellowship, which included "face to face" intimacy with His Beloved Father.

Think of what a little baby brings into the world by way of knowledge and power and you will see how much like us He truly became. Now, only add to that image an unbroken spiritual connection to the Father (He was born of the Holy Spirit) and only subtract from it a fallen spiritual connection to the enemy (He was born without Adam's sinful nature). This is admittedly

a huge difference from our birth, but it brings His experience of human life amazingly close to our own.

To close the gap even more, God through Jesus provides a way for us to “catch up” with Him. We didn’t begin life with the same spiritual connection to the Father as Jesus, but once we are reborn that loss is fully restored through the gift of the Indwelling Spirit and His union with our own freshly regenerated spirit. At the same time God “crucifies” our “old man.” Through faith-conversion we are severed from the fallen nature and the enemy’s mastery over us that our carnal flesh once enjoyed. By these gifts, we truly “catch up” with Jesus’ human experience.

These realities are descriptive of the invisible realm of spirit and take place within our hidden depths. They are admittedly hard to picture. Hold the image of what a baby’s body offers by the way of powerlessness and what a baby’s mind provides by way of knowledge and you will see well enough how thoroughly the Son of God was emptied!

## The How: How Was He "Refilled"?

Luke tells us that Jesus grew in favor with God and man. Long before that He had a tremendous amount of catching up to do with the Person He had always been, the Person the baby would grow to become. God help us not to transgress in our thinking about so hallowed and mysterious a subject as what was transpiring within the infant Jesus. Yet, for Jesus to have honestly and fully become an infant, there could be nothing in the baby’s consciousness that would not be in ours, save for the inchoate sense of connection to Father God and the absence of strident self-will. But where, oh where, were the words?

The Word became flesh by setting words aside! Did not the Babe of Bethlehem have to learn Hebrew word by word? Indeed, we know that it takes time and considerable effort for babies to separate out images, sounds, and feelings and then associate them with ideas, before speech itself can be learned. Did not Jesus have to travel this same path or was His “growth” all just pretense and pretending?

Did He who gave the Word to Israel, not have to learn Truth through the scriptures as a child—same as we who follow Him now? Did He not have to search the scriptures to discover (rediscover) His divine assignment and destiny? Did He not need a faith community to aid His own spiritual formation as we do? Was He not tempted as we are? Did He not have to intentionally stay united to His Father through intimacy and obedience and depend upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and power same as ourselves? He “suffered” the burden of all of these disciplines (so necessary for us as well) and grew mightily.

## The Ultimate Temptation

Perhaps the greatest temptation Jesus faced was to draw on His divine side and in so doing forfeit the right to be our representative. Seen in this light every day from His miraculous birth onwards was fraught with hidden perils. How perfect His obedience had to be! His self-emptying choice to become (and remain while on earth) fully human was a direct reversal of the enemy’s temptation to Eve to become like God.

We have all aspired to be the god of our own little worlds (especially in infancy), imposing our wills wherever we could get away with it. Yet, Jesus emptied Himself, choosing to become a



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servant to His Father's will each and every moment of His life. Not only that, but His assignment was to live as if He were only human, so that He could complete His high calling at the cross.

What a stupendous irony! Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father, was the only child born of Adam who freely chose to be merely human. In this He shows us the way. We may not have received His start, but we who believe have all received the same re-start. Now seek to see how your own self-emptying and graced refilling can mirror His. Go back over the path of His own development and see how He is even now seeking to grow up from a mere babe inside of you into full stature and favor with God and humanity.

It is fitting that Paul, who most clearly reveals the self-emptying of Jesus, would also describe for us the high calling of our own self-emptying: that we may know Him and become like Him.

**But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. Philippians 3:7-8 ESV**



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## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Bethlehem Star

The Father literally moved heaven and earth to give His Son's birth a "stellar" announcement. You have heard about the wise men's star all your life, but you probably haven't heard this. It is a telling of the tale that combines history, astronomy and a very close reading of the Biblical text—more fantastic, yet closer to scripture, than the greeting card images.

**Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east at its rising and have come to worship Him. Matthew 12:2 AMP**

## The Traditional Image: Culture vs. Bible

Our ways of celebrating Christmas hold tremendous emotional power, especially since the roots of Christmas traditions for many of us go back into the earliest happy memories of childhood. The Holy Family and our family are intimately intertwined through these annual celebrations. For many of us the family traditions have to be persevered and exactly repeated with each returning season. This might make it hard to step back and take a "second look"—a closer look—at one part of that tradition, the Bethlehem Star, but your efforts at truth seeking will be rewarded. Truth, God's truth, is always much more wonderful than man-made legends.



There are few instances where the difference between Christian culture and Biblical revelation is more pronounced than in the way we "picture" the events of the Nativity. Over the years the popular re-telling of the well-known events has been reinforced by countless images on Christmas cards, by heart touching lyrics in songs, and by beautiful scenes in pageants and movies. Try to put all of that out of your mind and read the actual Biblical description of the events, paying particular attention to the underlined parts.

**Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you**



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have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. Matthew 2:1-12 ESV

## Compare the Text to Traditions

Take a moment to carefully compare these five observations with Matthew's account. Remember as you do, that Jesus once upbraided the Pharisees, not for having traditions, but for placing their traditions above the Word of God.

- 1) The Bible never speaks of the wise men as being kings.
- 2) The Bible does not say how many wise men there were.
- 3) If the star were like a beacon that was bright enough and focused enough to lead the wise men to Bethlehem, every curiosity seeker in Israel would have gotten there first. Yet, Herod was literally in the dark, not knowing that a star of significance had appeared.
- 4) In fact, the wise men did not go directly to Bethlehem but went to Jerusalem and asked for directions. Why would they do that if the star were precisely leading them?
- 5) The wise men came to a house, not a stable; to a child (*paidon*), not an infant (*brephos*).

Now notice the discrepancies (including the title) between the Biblical account and a very popular carol, "We Three Kings":

*We three kings of Orient are Bearing gifts we traverse afar, Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star. O star of wonder, star of night, Star of royal beauty bright, Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect light.*

To this day I love singing this carol! It is one of my favorites, but I have had to recognize that it is inaccurate. Knowing this does not diminish my ardor for the song in the least. The intent of the writer was pure, so it is easy and uplifting to worship with him.

## Clues in Matthew about the Star

Play the Biblical detective. What are the facts of this "case" and how can we assemble them to give a more accurate picture of what really happened on the night(s) in question.

- 1) The star signified birth.
- 2) It signified kingship.
- 3) It had a connection with the Jewish nation.
- 4) It rose in the east, like other stars (en anatole in the Greek text).
- 5) It appeared at a precise time.
- 6) Herod didn't know that it had appeared (or when)—nor did any of his advisors.
- 7) It endured over time.



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- 8) It was ahead of the Magi as they went south from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.
- 9) It stopped over Bethlehem.

## The Historical Background

### The Wise Men

Wise men from the East were known as Magi (plural of magus, which means magic) and served as “court astrologers.” They were advisers to royalty, who studied the heavens for signs concerning kingdoms on earth. At times they are known to have traveled great distances to attend the birth of kings and offer presents, so their arrival in Jerusalem was an obvious cause of alarm to Herod. They could have been Zoroastrians, Medes, Persians, Arabs or even Jews who still lived in Babylon following the Captivity that resulted from the destruction of Jerusalem six hundred years earlier.

The Magi were proto-astronomers or scientists held in high esteem: hence they were known as “wise” men. The eastern magi could easily have learned about Jewish Messianic expectations through their readings of the literature of the Diaspora Jews still in Babylon (consider the prophecies of Isaiah concerning Cyrus of Persia and the book of Daniel). The Jews themselves were forbidden by scripture to study the heavens in order to make forecasts, since the King of heaven spoke to them directly through the prophets.

### The “Star” of Bethlehem in Scripture

Whatever the event in the heavens was, it was not obvious to Herod or to those who advised him. In fact, the Chinese kept extensive records and they have no recording of anything like an exploding star or super-nova during this period of time. On the other hand, the Bethlehem star could not have been a comet, because comets were universally interpreted as signs of judgment or impending disaster. It was probably not extraordinarily bright or numerous records would have been made of it. Most likely, it was only noticed by professional astrologists like the Magi.

#### 1) The First Sighting

The Magi saw the Star rising *en anatole*, rising in the east. This is the ancient astronomical term for an acronical rising in which the object rises at sunset and is visible all night. There is no mention of further sightings.

**Wise men [astrologers] from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east at its rising and have come to worship Him. Matthew 12:1b-2 AMP**

#### 2) The Second Sighting

The Magi saw the Star again as they left Jerusalem, heading southwest toward Bethlehem (5 miles away). Since they were already on the road to Bethlehem, no guiding star was needed to get to the town. Once in the town, everyone there had probably heard about the shepherd’s visitation to the family of David’s lineage from Nazareth, making it easy to find the Holy Family.



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**When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. Matthew 2:9 KJV**

## Candidates for the “Star” in Astronomy

### 1) A Nova?

No exploding stars were recorded (by the Chinese), but what would it signify?

### 2) A Comet?

There weren't any impressive ones at this time. Besides, comets were always seen as bad omens.

### 3) A Meteor?

Meteors are too short lived. They would have no staying power or special significance.

### 4) A Planet?

Planets were universally thought of as stars. The Greek root “*planetos*” means “wandering stars.”

### 5) A Conjunction?

A conjunction involving planets and stars would also have indicated messages in the heavens. A conjunction is a close, visible approach between two celestial bodies—when one is due north of the other. The closer the objects are to each other the more significant the event is astrologically.

## One Plausible Scenario from Astronomy

The following is a possible scenario of events presented by astronomer Craig Chester. Although there are other plausible scenarios for the timing of events, this will at least give a well-considered framework for viewing the Bethlehem Star as a heavenly sign different from traditional images of it.

**September 11, 3 BC:** At the time of the Jewish New Year (Rosh ha-Shanah) Jupiter came into the first of several close conjunctions with Regulus. Jupiter was the planet that represented kingship, coronations, and the birth of kings. In Hebrew it was known as *Sedeq* or “Righteousness,” a term also used for the Messiah. Regulus was the star of kingship, the brightest star in the constellation of Leo, which was associated with the tribe of Judah, from which Messiah was to come. August 12 saw Jupiter and Venus conjoin.

**2 BC:** 25th anniversary of Caesar Augustus' rule and the 750th anniversary of the founding of Rome. Caesar was declared [Pater Patriae](http://www.healingstreamsusa.org) (Father of the Country). An



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enrollment or census was called for throughout the empire. The holy family at some point will receive command to go to Bethlehem for the census (a registration, not taxation) and make the journey (Luke 2:1-5).

**February 17 and May 8 of 2 BC:** the conjunction between Jupiter and Regulus occurred two more times as Jupiter entered retrograde (appearing to go backwards), thus making a triple conjunction—a starry “dance” between the planet of Kings and the star of kings.

**June 17 of 2 BC:** Jupiter and Venus (the Mother Planet) joined together in the constellation Leo, the two brightest objects in the sky (apart from the sun and moon), experienced such a close encounter that to the naked eye they became a single object above the setting sun. This conjunction would have created the brightest “star” ever visible in the magi’s lifetime.

**Summer to winter of 2 BC:** The wise men journey towards Jerusalem from the East.

**Fall to winter of 2 BC:** Shepherds watching their sheep in the fields, are called to witness the birth of the Christ child in a stable. Only Temple flocks were allowed to graze in fields rather than wilderness areas—but never in growing seasons (hence, grazing on stubble in the fall).

**December of 2 BC:** The wise men arrive in Jerusalem and ask Herod about the birth of the new king. The “star,” Jupiter would have appeared to the south of Jerusalem (looking in Bethlehem’s direction) after it’s rising. (Planets move eastward until they reach their stationary point).

**December 25, 2 BC:** Jupiter performed a “retrograde loop” during December, stopping or “standing over” Bethlehem (reaching its stationary point—as seen from the perspective of Jerusalem) on the 25th. Shortly thereafter, the wise men visit the “child” at a house in Bethlehem.

**January 10, 1 BC:** A total lunar eclipse marks the execution of 2 rabbis and the beginning of Herod’s terminal illness.

**Spring of 1 BC:** Before Passover Herod died and his son ascended to the throne.

Since Herod was alive at the time of the wise men’s visit, his death sets the upper limit on the possible year of Jesus’ birth. Although some scholars date Herod’s death at 4 BC, there are good reasons for setting it as I have on this timeline at 1 BC. I know that this doesn’t put the Nativity itself on December 25th or even in the year 1 AD (Sorry, due to a calendar error there is no year 0 AD)—but it’s the best arrangement I have seen so far of the facts as we have them.

## The Power of this Perspective

God could have used His limitless power to create a special star-like light that only the wise men saw, and which only they, therefore, could follow. But what would that say to us? That God can do amazing, outlandish things for select individuals? Let’s turn this around and see a much bigger message than that in the stars!



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Suppose this telling of the story is the true one, or at least on the “right track” in terms of seeking a conjunction or series of conjunctions as the Bethlehem Star. As we have seen with His miraculous birth, Biblical signs and wonders point us towards something even bigger than themselves. By any account this sign is dazzlingly wonderful. What is it trying to show us?

Those starry heavens are a gigantic celestial clock which ticks away with absolute, unchangeable precision. The Creator apparently doesn’t “monkey” with the system. That’s why computer programs in planetariums can recreate the exact movements in the heavens of any star or planetary body as seen from any place on earth for any point of time in history. That’s awesome! But that’s nothing compared to what this re-telling of the Nativity story says that the Father did to properly herald the birth of His Only Begotten Son.

## A Dazzling Divine Display

Consider what the Father had to orchestrate with complete control. From the very moment of the big bang, when the stars were first flung into space, He had to guide them into perfect position relative to the earth, so that the heavens would “tell” a story the wise men could read. For the wise men to grasp the significance of that story in connection to Israel, that meant that the Jewish people would have to have been carried off to Babylon, and then later leave a sizable remnant behind when some of them returned to their land.

That community in Babylon would have to have made sufficient impact (think Daniel and the other Jewish “wise men”) that their sacred writings would still be read six centuries later. These are just a few of the impossibly complex, providential orchestrations which the simple gospel account necessitates. This speaks volumes about how important the birth of Jesus was to the Father. Truly He was the predestined Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.

## His Perfect Plans for You

A God who can do that can do anything! Just as He was able to plan well in advance for the birth of Jesus, He has been making His good plans for your life and mine since the world began. He says He plans to give us a future and a hope. Don’t you imagine He can pull it off for you—just as He did for Jesus? Let the Star of Bethlehem set your faith on fire!



## CHAPTER FIVE

# His Incomparable Life

It is our happy task to be “imitators of Christ.” Jesus said that a disciple fully formed (that’s you and me in the making) will be like his teacher. When it comes to showing us how to live, Jesus really is the Master. Trying to copy His ways from the outside in, however, is a guaranteed formula for frustration and failure. We need to see how He did it from the inside out.

**Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.** 1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV

## The Imitation of Christ

Truly Jesus lived an incomparable life! No one in the history of the world has ever lived so perfectly, so admirably, or so lovingly. That puts Him head and shoulders above the rest of us, but God isn’t content to leave it there. Our Father is out to conform us to the image of His Son, inviting us to “grow up” into the full stature of what Jesus Himself displayed. One phrase that describes this high calling is the “imitation of Christ.”

“What Would Jesus Do?” is a good question to ask in terms of general orientation, but it can easily lead to misdirection. Unquestionably, we are meant to represent Christ to the world.

We are to make Him known both by our words and by how we live. The believers at Antioch evidently re-presented Christ to their world so effectively that they were derided as Christ-ians—“little Christs.” The church picked the nick-name up, dusted it off, and has been wearing it proudly ever since.



## Just How Do We Imitate Him?

Yes! We want to be like Christ! But how do we go about doing that? One way certainly is to study the gospels, watching closely how Jesus handled Himself in every situation. This way of looking at the life of Jesus is just like looking at the laws of scripture: it sets the boundaries for how we are to behave. This works for broad outlines, but fails in the details.

We can see, for instance, that He was gracious to many (yet thoroughly reprimanded the Pharisees), was helpful to everyone (except the Syrophoenician mother at first), never sinned (though He broke the Sabbath and cleared the Temple with a whip), was ready to heal (but a lot depended on how people reacted to Him), could easily do miracles, and had no trouble casting out demons (even from people who didn’t want to be free). How do you “copy” that? His incomparable life cannot be duplicated by striving to reproduce the outward form of it!



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It would take perfect memory to recollect and perfect judgment “apply” the right response of Jesus to every person and every circumstance you encounter. The problem is that you won’t be in any of His circumstances. You are going to be in all kinds of situations that have no obvious Biblical counterpart. We see only limited selections from three years of Jesus’ life in ancient Israel. The most we can do is try to find universal principles by studying His life and then seek to apply them to ours. Again, this is good for setting boundaries, but it will fail us in the complexities of daily living.

## Not Another Law!

The real problem, however, with this approach to the imitation of Christ is that it throws everyone who attempts it back on trying to keep laws in their own strength. “Law keeping” is the very thing that the gospel has come to liberate us from doing! If I am studying Jesus’ life from the outside, then His words and actions become a new set of laws for me to try to interpret and apply. That makes me a New Testament believer who is just as “law-bound” as the Jewish believers who were trying to interpret and apply the Old Testament laws. Wow! That’s an easy one miss.

We have been set free from the Law of the Old Testament, not so that we can be immoral (and break the Law), or so that we can adopt new rules of our own. Our freedom from law-keeping liberates us to trust and follow the One who set us free! When we yield to Jesus, He leads us by His peace and by His Spirit. “Walking in the Spirit” is our new and living way of fulfilling the Law. In this way Jesus navigates us through the thorny problem of finding the right thing to do in each situation we face. We simply follow His lead in childlike simplicity one step at a time.

Everyone who surrenders their life to Jesus in this way, knows exactly what the gospel is describing as “walking in the Spirit” or “abiding in Christ.” Experiencing this requires our willingness to be “crucified with Christ.” If we are not willing to take up the cross of self-denial as needed (Jesus said “daily”), we won’t be able to follow Jesus in this way. Those who don’t want to surrender all, never understand or experience this. They go back to law-keeping in one form or another. Please, don’t let that be you!

**And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." Luke 9:23-24 ESV**

## The New and Living Way

As our Example, Jesus showed us how to live our lives. Unquestionably, He lived within the moral boundaries and even told us to do the same, distilling the Old Testament’s hundreds of laws into [two great commandments](#). But did Jesus Himself live by law-keeping? You might be surprised what He had to say about it.

Jesus was explicit on many occasions recorded in John’s gospel that His focus was not on the Law, but on the Lord of the Law—His Father. He stated emphatically that He always kept His eyes on the Father, only did what He saw the Father doing, and only spoke as He heard the Father speaking. In love He conformed Himself to the guidance that He was receiving directly from the Father.



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**So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." John 5:19 ESV**

Through faith-conversion, our God has come to us in a very similar way. We are to fix our eyes on Jesus, yield in trust to Him as He did to the Father, and then follow Jesus' leadings by His Spirit just as He followed the Father's leadings. Little children do this by an unconscious grace. Jesus said that if we want to enter into His Kingdom way of living, we would have to become like little children all over again. This way of entry into Kingdom life on earth—not just access to heaven in the end—is what the new birth makes possible. Listen to how Paul put it:

**For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die. Galatians 2:19-21 NLT**

## Finding Life through Death?

Paul says that through Jesus he "died to the law" and actually stopped trying to keep it. This surely means that we are not supposed to be "keeping laws" either. We are not to keep the new laws of the New Testament by trying to keep them, any more than we are to keep the Old Testament laws by self-effort. Nor are we meant to imitate Jesus as if His actions were a new law to interpret and apply. We do not worship and serve the Law. We trust in and follow the Lord of all laws—Jesus! Follow Paul's thought into the next sentence and it is clear that the new life comes to life in us (so to speak) whenever we trust in, cling to and rely on Jesus.

The way we imitate Jesus is, therefore, by this interior orientation of the heart to continually surrender to and submit to Him in trust and obedience. This is how Jesus tells us He lived His life—in intentional surrender and submission to the Father, moment by moment. Are we "above" our Master? How could any other mode of life possibly be described as living as He lived, or walking with God as He walked with God?

This new and living way alone brings the flow of peace and other fruit of the Spirit which transforms us from the inside out. It also enables us to follow a path through our very complex, modern lives that is led by the Spirit step by step—no matter how active or demanding our circumstances may be. If we choose to trust and follow Jesus moment by moment, we will be living in imitation of Jesus' own way of living. Our lives will inevitably become as Holy Spirit filled, empowered and overflowing with love as His own: His incomparable life will be released through us like a river once the dam has broken!

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-25 ESV**



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## CHAPTER SIX

# The Man Going Down

Jesus came down from heaven to be with us as one of us. That we can easily see. But His descent didn't end there—with becoming like us. He descended further and became what we had always been meant to be. Then He descended even further to become what we had never been meant to be. We, on the other hand, can hardly wait to rise higher. We all too often hate and fear the descent, even though it is life-saving and soul-transforming.

**Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him.** Philippians 2:5-9 ESV

## The Man Going Up

The Bible is full of ironies. Picture this one: Saul storming across the Syrian plains towards Damascus, “hell-bent” on crushing the infant sect of Nazarenes there. Holy indignation over their religious error inflames his zeal. Unholy ambition to make a name for himself spurs him on. Then, from out of the blue, a totally unexpected revelation literally knocks him off his “high horse.” Saul has been persecuting the very God he believes he is serving!



Until this moment Saul is a man going up, blinded by pride. It's only when he meets the "Man Going Down" that his spiritual eyes are opened. His life will never be the same. He, too, becomes a man going down. And so do we, once we meet Jesus.

**But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.** Philippians 3:7-8

## A Divine Humility

What is it about Jesus that can produce such a change? Many things, no doubt, but for now let's focus on this one: His perfect humility. This is one of His most endearing characteristics, but it is also one of the least expected. Let us remember that none of the ancients would ever have



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thought to see humility in their gods—those exalted beings (demons really) demanded obedience, respect, worship and service worthy of their high rank. Not Jesus. He didn't come expecting to be served.

**"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45**

We should have been willing to live for Him and die for Him, our Creator and our Supreme Lord. He could have stayed in heaven where He belonged. Instead, He chose to live and die for us. He descended in order to rescue us. Seeing this about Him crushes our self-centered blindness. In conversion we see our sins: that humbles us. We also see our Savior taking our place: that humbles us even more. We see in Him what we should have been and what we now desire to become.

Saul wasn't the only man going up. All of us, men and women, have been going up into pride ever since birth. This primary temptation underlies all of our temptations: to become "like God" in our own little worlds—just as Adam and Eve were tempted before us. Part of what this means is that we enthrone our own opinion as Truth and then use our wills to act independently of God. As "gods" with Self stubbornly set on the throne, we are restless, un-trusting and resentful under the conditions and limitations of our humanity.

## The Divine Reversal

Jesus never "grasped at" god likeness as Adam and Eve did, though He had every right to do so. Ironically, Jesus was the only person ever born who was willing to become fully and only human. Paul says that He "emptied Himself" of His divine attributes in order to become man. This mysterious and marvelous event is called the kenosis of Christ.

If Jesus had not done this, He could never have been a genuine human representative who could legitimately die in our place. Neither could He become an Example we could follow. It is only because He lived within the conditions of our humanity that we can hope to follow in His steps. Consider this carefully lest old-fashioned, "super-human" ideas of Him still prevail in the back of your mind: All that Jesus did on earth He did in His Humanity.

- 1) He lived by trusting the Father with His life—a faith-life same as ours.
- 2) He did only what He believed God desired Him to do—a faith-walk same as ours.
- 3) He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for all of the works—a faith-empowerment same as ours.

## His Humility; Our Humanity

Consider also, what true humanity meant for Jesus. Jesus "came down" into all that it means to be "merely" human.

Dependence  
Weakness  
Limitations

Hunger and thirst  
Temptations  
Humiliations

Sorrow  
Suffering  
Mortality



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We are told by Paul in Philippians that Jesus humbled Himself further by becoming “a slave” to the Father’s will. Then, He went down further still, carrying his obedience “to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross.” Ultimately, and most terribly, He sank into the lowest depths our humanity ever reaches, when He was “made to be sin”—our sins—and suffered our punishment.

## The Way Up

Now watch this: First the Father raised Jesus up from death and the grave and then the Father highly exalted Him. The way down was in reality the way up. Going down is the way to be raised by God! He always raises those who go down into true humility.

**Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.** 1 Peter 5:6

### What Going Down Means for Us:

- 1) Go down into your mortality, completely accepting that you will die yet trusting God to raise you one day to heaven, and you will be raised from all fear of dying even now.
- 2) Go down into your weaknesses and make peace with the fact that you will always have weaknesses in one form or another, but you will also always have a Helper to call on, and you will be raised and sustained by His supply of strength.
- 3) Go down into your physical being and totally accept the body God has given you and you will be raised above all vain concerns about your body.
- 4) Go down into your lack of knowledge and accept that there will always be many things that you don’t know and you will be raised to the higher wisdom of trusting God rather than your own understanding.
- 5) Go down into your sinfulness, be honest about how bad it truly is, and you will be raised to a greater realization of His mercy and love.
- 6) Go down in surrendered obedience to rightful duties and they will become a path of life, raising you into integrity and joy.
- 7) Go down in humiliation before others, looking only to God, and God will raise you into the unassailable reality of His acceptance and love for you.



May this mind be in us that is in Him!



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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Thirty Hidden Years

**STILL BEING DEVELOPED**

of the universe. You can't really top that one! But being forgiven comes close.



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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Three Public Years

**STILL BEING DEVELOPED**

of the universe. You can't really top that one! But being forgiven comes close.



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