

One area that the New Testament is curiously silent about is Jesus' childhood and early life. There are lots of theories about what Jesus did during His "silent years," but at best, they are all speculation. As we discussed before, the aim of the Gospels is not to record the whole of Jesus' life on earth. Rather, the focus is on His years of ministry, which has covered approximately the last three years. Up to then, there apparently wasn't much to report. By all indications, Jesus lived a fairly normal life as a young Jewish man would have lived in that day and time. As you may remember, He was largely rejected in His home town because of the people's familiarity with Him. "Is this not the carpente'r? The son of Mary?" So those who knew Him growing up apparently didn't notice anything unusual about Him.

In this study I'll try to piece together a brief overview of His early life based on what the Scriptures do tell us as well as the way Jewish families typically functioned at that time. We do see that when Jesus was eight days old, He is taken to the Temple and circumcised and officially given His Name of Yeshua, or Jesus . Then, forty days after His birth, they take Him back to the Temple to dedicate Him as the first born son and for Mary to undergo the ceremonial washing that Leviticus requires of new mothers. It's also noteworthy that Joseph and Mary's sacrifice for the occasion was two pigeons, which according to Leviticus would indicate that, at least in this period of their lives, they were poor. Joseph's work as a carpenter or craftsman was generally a middle to upper middle class occupation so maybe they were just going through a dry period in their business. We don't know.

While they were at the Temple, they also encounter a man named Simeon, who had been told prophetically that he would live to see the Messiah, as well as an elderly prophetess named Anna. Both of them recognized Jesus right away.

Ok, next we will skip ahead possibly as much as two years later. The king of the region at this time was a man known as Herod the Great. He was the founder of the Herodian Dynasty that ruled over the Holy Land until it fell to the Romans in 70 Ad. On one hand, Herod was a very effective ruler. He did try to court favor from the Jews by rebuilding their magnificent Temple. But on the other hand, he was a very cruel, ruthless man He oppressed the Jews through heavy taxation and even had several members of his own family killed.

OK, with that in mind, remember in our last session we talked about the Magi or Wise Men. Again, religious tradition has greatly misrepresented who these men were and what their mission was. Based on the three gifts they bought, some through the years have assumed there were three wise men. From that, traditions began to develop regarding their names ages and ethnicities. They were described as being an elderly Caucasian man named Gaspar, a middle aged Oriental man named Melchior and a younger African man named Balthazar. But as we know, tradition is not always

accurate. They came from the region of Persia which we now know as Iran. So picture a large caravan of dignitaries arriving on the scene accompanied by as many as 1000 armed guards and with all the pomp and circumstance that would go along with it. They held positions of such prestige that they were regarded as King Makers. Their blessing was seen as essential for a new king to come to power and as we previously discussed, the gifts they brought to Jesus were a customary way to honor a new king. So when King Herod discovers that these men are looking for the King of the Jews, he freaks!

Herod meets with the Magi and asks about this new King and claims he wants to worship Him too but of course, he is lying through his teeth. What He wants is to kill Jesus before this new king could become a threat to him. But the Magi are prophetically warned the Herod was up to no good, so after they finish their time with Jesus, they go back home.

When Herod realizes that he's been outwitted, he commits a horrible atrocity. He orders every male child two years old and under to be killed. Nonetheless, Mary and Joseph are divinely led to hide Jesus in Egypt until King Herod's death.

From there, they returned to their home in Nazareth. In fact, some archeologists believe they have recently uncovered the site of Jesus' childhood home under the Sisters of Nazareth Convent.

Our next scenario occurs when Jesus is twelve years old. He has gone to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary for the annual Passover celebration. If you have children and you have ever been in a crowded store or something like that and your child has gotten lost even for a few moments, you know how terrifying that feeling is. So imagine what it was like to look for Him for three whole days! No phones, no GPS, or any modern technology. But when they finally do find Jesus, He is at the Temple interacting with the elders, asking them questions.

Jesus was not being disrespectful to His mother and stepfather. But He seems almost surprised that they wouldn't know where He was. His response that He needed to be in His Father's house. So even at this early age Jesus understood who His real Father was and that He had a very special purpose on the earth. He was approaching the Bar Mitzvah age of 13 where He would be officially confirmed as a responsible member of the Jewish community. So He may have wanted to get some special instruction. Or He may have been challenging them and pushing their buttons as He would be so good at as an adult. We don't know but wouldn't you love to have been able to watch?

From there we see that Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with both God and man.

Mary and Joseph did go on to get married and have more children. But we see that there was a degree of tension between Jesus and His siblings. John 7:5 indicates that, at least at that point, His own brethren didn't believe in Him. It has been speculated that since it was known that Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, that they may have had to deal with a great deal of the social stigma that went along with that, we don't know all the reasons. Of course, we know that later on His brothers James and Jude did come to faith and went on to write books in the New Testament.

Jewish boys were taught a trade by their fathers, or in Jesus' case, His stepfather. Joseph was a carpenter, or again, to translate the Greek more literally, a craftsman. This might include carpentry but was not necessarily limited to that. Regardless, it was hard, physical work. Jesus had a very blue collar upbringing. He knew what it was like to work for a living, to deal with irate customers, to manage His finances and all the other things we have to deal with.

So as ordinary as Jesus' early life might have been, it wouldn't stay that way for long. In

the next session we will see how His public ministry started with His baptism. Until then please like us and subscribe to our channel and as always, keep it real!