

## Christ Formed

### FOREWARD

The following booklet is based on a transcript of a series of messages by Ed Miller, taught in 2005 at the Black Rock Camp and Conference grounds in Quarreyville, PA. The theme of these messages is the progressive development of the Lord Jesus in the hearts of His children. Ed's observations are taken from the progressive revelation of the Lord Jesus in His first thirty years on the Earth. The sigh of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 4:19, "*My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you...*" is the key to the burden that was shared with a gathering of men on this weekend. The title of the series is called: Christ Formed In You.

Many thanks to Hannah Kanuchok for her service of love in transcribing the spoken word! This transcript has been partially edited for clarity. Some highly informal colloquialisms have been changed to the formal expression more suited for reading; burdensome contractions have been omitted; personal comments or local references only intelligible to those who were present were also dropped; the sentence fragments that were confusing were clarified. Some paragraph headings were added to provide the reader with the same information the audience had in the notes they had in hand. Several transitional sentences were added where clarity was required to keep the logical flow of thought. The limited editing of the transcript necessarily lacks literary polish since every attempt was made to preserve the spoken form. Efforts were made to include the spirit of the speaker and the audience in order to give the reader, as nearly as possible, the actual record of the teaching sessions.

We offer this modified transcript with the prayer that the message of the Lord may be received in the hearts of His hungry people. We ask you to read it with the patience necessary for reading any transcript of a spoken word, and that you prayerfully ponder what is presented here with the same caution you would give to any uninspired speaker or writer of God's truth.

**THE FIRST 30 YEARS**  
**THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF CHRIST**

**CHRIST AS A FETUS IN MY HEART**

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Well good morning brothers, it is so good to be with you again. We certainly welcome you all in the name of the Lord, whether you've been here as one privileged to attend this conference for many years, or whether this is your first time attending. We welcome you in the name of the Lord. It is our united testimony that the Lord has been pleased year by year to meet with us; to visit us; to manifest Himself to us. Many, through the years, have come puzzled and broken and weary and very dry or otherwise needy, and God has been pleased to meet us in our need. Others have come already resting in the Lord; they have come to worship Him, and they have left refreshed and resting more confidently in the Lord. So we just pray that the Lord would meet with you this weekend, and that you would meet with Him. We pray that it will be a wonderful time for all of us, in union with Christ.

Now as we come to the study of God's word, I remind you of a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable. That principle is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. Helpless dependence! At the end of the day we have to come to Him as little children. We have to come before the Lord and ask God to dawn Christ on us. Only God can reveal God, and He delights to do it. When Bob shared the theme of the weekend with me, "You are the King of who I am", a verse came to my heart that some time ago had made a great impact on my life. I would like to give you a verse connected with that theme. It is from the book of Micah in chapter 4 in verse 11. Micah is in the Old Testament. Micah 4:6 says that the Lord will gather

*"... assemble the lame, gather the outcast."*

And 4:7 says:

*"I will make the lame a remnant and the outcast a strong nation, and the Lord will reign over them in Zion from now on and forever."*

The Lord desires to be King over a kingdom of cripples. He will reign over the *lame* and the *outcast*. So, when we sing our little theme chorus (The Lord of Who I Am) and we know who *He is*, now we know who we are <chuckle> He is the King of who I am; we are the lame... we are the outcast. That is His Kingdom. He chooses to reign over the lame and the outcast.

Before we pray and commit this time to the Lord I want to give you another Bible verse; actually, a couple of verses. This passage is from Acts chapter 16 verse 14 when Lydia first heard the word of the Lord. Acts 16:14 says,

*“The Lord opened her heart to respond.”*

Isn't that a wonderful verse? The Lord opened her heart to respond. Respond to what? What is His invitation? Through the years we have experience this invitation calling for response. Let me show you His invitation. It is stated in Psalm 27 verse 8. This is God's invitation. This is God's desire, or as Dana called it last night, “God's jealous desire.” Psalm 27:8 says:

*“When you said to me, ‘Seek my face,’*

That is His desire! The face of God in Scripture expresses the highest knowledge of God! It is seeking God Himself. Moses knew God face to face. God's invitation is “Seek my face!” Our response should be verse 8:

*“My heart said to You, ‘Thy face O God will I seek.’”*

That is what this weekend is about. God is inviting us to seek His face. Our response is, “Thy face O God will I seek.” That is where Acts 16:14 comes in.

*“The Lord opened her heart to respond.”*

His invitation remains. Brothers, let us seek His face.

I do not know if you have ever actually, deliberately, on purpose given a whole weekend to completely focus on Him. That is why we are here; just to see Him. May God give us that kind of a weekend, every one of us. We are here to seek His face. That is His invitation. My heart responds: “Thy face O God will I seek.” Lord, open our hearts to respond. He did it for Lydia; He can do it for you! He can do it for me!

With that in mind, let us bow and commit our time unto the Lord: *Our Heavenly Father, how glad we are that You have gathered us; engineered our steps; brought us here. It is only because of your jealous desire to fellowship with us; to have us walk with You, that You have gathered us together.. You have invited us to seek Your face. Our hearts desire to respond. When You said to me, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You, “Thy face O God will I seek.” Have mercy on us Lord, and open our hearts to give You that kind of response. We commit this session unto You; we commit this entire weekend unto You. Meet with every brother. Take us where You would have us. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.*

Some years ago I was in a meeting and the brother began the meeting as I am going to begin. He said, “Before I speak I would like to say something.” Before I share

with you the burden that is on my heart, let me just sort of give you a little background. I have something to say before I speak.

Jude chapter 3 is an interesting verse.—or verse 3 rather. Jude verse 3 says:

*“Making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you, appealing to you, that you contend earnestly for the faith. Once for all delivered, handed down to the saints.”*

In other words, when Jude started to write the book of Jude, he had actually planned to write a book like Romans. He wanted to write about the common salvation of the saints. He actually attempted to write a book like Romans, but he couldn't find the words. He then said, “As I tried to write a book like Romans I felt a necessity in me to write something else,” and so he wrote us that wonderful epistle called Jude.

Alright, hold that for a moment. Now let me refer to Matthew chapter 5 verses 1 to 3. (you do not need to turn to it, however, you can if you want to) Matthew 5:1 to 3 begins:

*“Seeing a multitude He went up to the mountain and He began to teach.”*

We call that the *Sermon on the Mount*. You know how that sermon begins,

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit”.*

You also know how it ends—with the parable of the two houses, one built upon a rock, and the other upon the sand... Luke chapter 6 verses 17 to 20 says,

*“He came down and He stood on a level place and He began to teach them, “Blessed are the poor,”*

And then He went on to teach a message that closely resembled *the Sermon on the Mount*. Notice please, it even ends up with the parable of the two houses, one built upon the sand, and the other one on the rock. You see, one of the discourses is the *Sermon on the Mount*; the other discourse is a *Sermon on the Plain*. When you read the record, it appears to be the same sermon. In fact, some people think it is the same. It's not the same. The two messages were given in a different place, on a different occasion and to a different group.

All of that was to tell you that when I was first invited to come and share at this conference, I set my heart to seek the Lord. At that time I had intended (in fact it was announced to many) to speak on the subject, “The Words of a Crucified Man.” You see, my heart was gripped with the truth that Jesus spoke those seven different times when He was on the cross. Those are the words of a crucified man. I was ready to apply it in this way. I am crucified with Christ; I am a crucified man in my union with Jesus. The words He spoke as a crucified man should also be my words as a crucified man. How do

the words of a crucified man apply to my life? How are the principles of being crucified with Christ expressed through the seven statements Jesus made from the cross? I began to study that. I did study it, but I am not ready to present it. It was as if God put a baby in my heart, but it was not ready to be born. When a woman has a baby—I remember when my daughter was great with child—the last month she was not fit to live with. <audience laughter>—she just wanted that baby to be born—she wanted to tell the baby when to be born. Carri did not tell Daniel when to be born. Daniel told Carri when he was going to be born—the baby tells the woman when it is going to be born. And when God puts a truth in your heart, you do not decide when that truth should be delivered; that truth tells you when it is time to be delivered. If I were to share with you this morning the words of the crucified man... they would be premature. They would need life support. It would be incubator truth. I *tried* to give that, *I was going to give* that. I was like Jude, attempting to deliver one thing while a different message was being impressed upon my heart. My whole point about the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain is this: Jesus repeated His sermon. He was not afraid to give the same message more than one time. I took encouragement from that, for I recoil from repeating the same message.

What I'm going to share this weekend, in a slightly different form, several of you brothers have heard before. You have already heard some of the principles that I'm going to share. You have heard either the Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon on the Plain and you're about to hear it again. As the apostle said, "For me to repeat again is not irksome for you." So, if you have heard this before, or heard the principles before, it should not be irksome for you. It's safe to hear it again! I do not mind stirring up some of your minds by way of remembrance. All of that was to say that what I had at the first intended to give, I will not be giving at this time. Instead, this is what I would like to share:

### **THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS OF OUR LORD JESUS ON THE EARTH**

About a year ago (maybe a little longer than that) I began to meditate on a section of Scripture—I enjoy getting into the sections that have not, up to this point, made a major contribution to my life. (I am getting older, and soon, in a few hours, we will all sign out. You know we are leaving this world. This is not our home. As our brother was sharing last night, there is a heavenly city that we seek.) While I live, I want every part of the Bible to make a major contribution to my life so I read those parts that have not really touched me to the present. Anyway, it was about a year ago that I was meditating on a section of Scripture in the New Testament that had not really touched me in a meaningful way. I am referring to the first 30 years of our Lord Jesus as He lived on the earth. You know, for 33 ½ years He was on the earth. Some would say, "Well, we have an incomplete record of the first 30 years; we have a more complete record of the last three and one half years." No we don't, brothers. That is not completely true. We cannot say that we have an incomplete record. We have a very complete record. It's short, but it's complete. We have everything that God wants us to know. That is what makes it complete. Short does not mean incomplete. You probably know someone who has had a short life. That does not mean it was an incomplete life. Our granddaughter

was called to Heaven in her third month on the earth. She lived a complete life in the will of God.

We have a lot of information about the last three and a half years, often referred to as the years of His ministry, but we do not have a lot of information covering the first 30 years. We have enough! Well, I wanted to study that 30 year period. I studied it with the prayer that the Lord would use it mightily in my life.

The source for our material as you would expect, is the Bible. The reason I say that is because there is a lot of stuff written about the first 30 years that is not in the Bible. It is curious stuff, extra biblical stuff. They are not true accounts. Many bogus stories about the early years of the Lord actually contradict the character of our Lord Jesus. When I read some of those accounts, I was flabbergasted. Let me mention several examples, to show you how ridiculous these accounts are. There is one story about when He was four years old. He made a little clay pool, and one of his friends broke it. According to the record, Jesus became angry and killed him. The dead child's mother got upset and came to mother Mary and said: 'Did you know, your son just killed my son.' Mary scolded Jesus, so, to please His mother, He went out and kicked His dead playmate in the ribs and the child came to life again. I am serious! That is one of the stories. Another time, we read of when He was six years old and somebody bumped into Him. Once again, Jesus killed him. It was the same kind of thing. This is so contrary to our revelation of the Lord Jesus. Once again Mary was informed; once again she scolded her son; once again He went over and picked him up by the ear and raised him from the dead. There are so many of those kinds of stories. Another time the Pharisees came to Joseph and said: "Did you know your son is making pottery on a Sabbath day?" It is recorded that He made some little animals and some clay pigeons. Joseph supposedly came in and scolded Him for working on the Sabbath. According to the story, He clapped his hands... the little animals ran away and the clay birds flew away.

Another account tells us that Mary used to save His bath water. People would come and collect the bath water, and if they applied that bath water they would be healed of any disease—even of leprosy. There are many of those kinds of stories.

Let me give one more fanciful illustration of Jesus in those first 30 years. They say Joseph, the step-father of the Lord Jesus, was not a great carpenter. He did not understand Ross Perot's principle I guess—you know, "measure twice, cut once." Very often Jesus would have to stretch out a board that His step-father mis-measured. I'm serious! Those are the kinds of stories that are in those bogus accounts. We are *not using those apocryphal accounts as a source* for our material because we know from John 2:11 that the beginning of his miracles was when He turned the water into wine. We know that, and so we will begin there.

Let me share with you what is on my heart in this introduction lesson. Very often we miss the impact of a segment of Scripture, and it is because we are so accustomed to studying the stories in an isolated way, apart from its large context. In other words, you go in, you find a Bible story, you lift it out, you read it, and then you apply it. That's not

wrong, but I am suggesting for this weekend, that we look at that 30 years a little differently. It is not wrong to take the stories by themselves and study, for example, Gabriel's message to Mary, or the story of the virgin birth, or the story of the shepherds and the wise men. It is not wrong to study Jesus in the temple, or the record about Anna and Simeon. We can profitably study 12 year old Jesus, or the baptism and the temptation of Christ. All of that is okay! But for this weekend, God helping us, I want to look at that 30 years as a block of Scripture that is all connected to a single context.

In other words, we will look at the first thirty years of Christ on earth as a unit; as if it were a book. If you studied the book of Philippians, if you studied the book of Ephesians, if you studied the book of Colossians, you would look at the book and you would say, "What is the theme of the book, and how do all of the parts tie into the theme?" Well, there is another book. We will call it: "The First Thirty Years of our Lord Jesus on the Earth". I want to see the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ in that book; I want to see how all of its parts tie together.

### **THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

What is the chief revelation of Christ in that thirty year period? Now, in the simplest words I know, the easiest way that I can say it is this: "There's no other section of Scripture that I know of that will give you this in the same way! That first thirty years gives us *the progressive revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is maturing before our eyes. He is growing. He is developing. Luke chapter 2 verse 40. He says,

*"The child continued to grow, became strong increasing in wisdom. The grace of God was upon Him."*

Luke 2:52: *"Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man."*

You cannot read that section and not see Jesus growing. First He is a fetus in a womb; then He is an infant in a manger; then He is a toddler in a house; then He is a young adult in the temple; finally He is a mature man. He is an adult in the waters of Jordan, and so on. That gradual unveiling, that growing of the Lord Jesus has a purpose. His maturing has a goal; has an end. He is developing toward something. He is growing toward something, and the thing He is growing toward is that day when He can minister and pour out his life redemptively for all mankind. That is what it is all about.

### **GALATIANS 4:19 "...UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU"**

Now is a good time to suggest the text. I am going to ask you to turn to Galatians chapter 4 please. I want to show you a prayer. Oh, you might look at that verse and say, "It is not a prayer; it is just a longing, just a sigh..." It is a prayer! I know it is a prayer! You ask, "How do you know?" Because, I prayed it! That makes it a prayer

Galatians 4:19,

*“My children, with I am again in labor  
until Christ is formed in you.”*

The apostle Paul does what he often does. He mixes metaphors, but always to a purpose. The apostle desires to communicate two truths; two truths that I think every messenger of grace also desires to communicate. The first thing he wants to communicate is to show his own heart’s desire for the Galatian believers. In other words, he is suffering; he is burdened; he has a concern for them. He pictures his burden as if he were a mother in labor ready to give birth. He has labor pains for them. He says, “I have a baby and I am longing to bring that baby forth; I want this baby delivered!” Then, at the end of the verse he changes the picture.

*“Until Christ is formed in you.”*

He is no longer the mother. They are the mother; the people he is writing to have a baby within them; the church is the mother. Now the Church has a baby in her womb. He said, “I am in labor pains until Christ is formed in you.”

We talk a lot... (and last night I announced this when Bob asked what I am going to share) we talk a lot, and rightly so, of growing in the Lord. We desire to be growing in Christ; maturing; developing; advancing; going forward in the Lord! Second Peter 3:16,

*“Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The messenger of the grace of God does have a desire, a labor pain, and a burden. I hope you do grow in Christ. I now have another labor pain since I have studied that thirty year period— let Christ grow in you! In the record of those thirty years, we see Christ growing; Christ maturing; Christ developing; Christ moving toward the time when He can minister. Graham Scroggie calls this... this thirty years, “Years of preparation.” Years of preparation! These were the years that were preparing Him to be the perfect Savior so that He could pour out His life for the world.

### **CHRIST DEVELOPS IN MY HEART AS HE DEVELOPED ON THE EARTH**

What I am suggesting brothers, (and I think you will see that it is so) is that the very way He progressed while on the earth is how He progresses now in our hearts. He progresses in our hearts for the very same end He reached when He lived in His incarnate body on the earth. He’s being prepared in you and in me so that He can pour out His life redemptively to the world. It is an amazing parallel. As I began to study those thirty years and I began to see how He developed—when I looked into my heart and I reflected back—I said, “Oh... *It is the same.*” And so, I want to show you how Christ grows in you. By studying His development in the first thirty years we will have discovered the



exact principles by which He develops in the hearts of His own in the present day. This will be our happy theme for the weekend!

Now by way of encouragement, as an aside, let me remind you that we have an absolute guarantee that someday we will be conformed to Christ. He laid that principle down in Genesis 1:12,

*“The seed bearing after its kind.”*

You know, in 1 John chapter 3:9...when we are born again, we read, *“His seed is planted in you.”* His seed! We are assured that the seed will produce after its kind. There are some different opinions about this assurance but we are not going to get into that discussion. It is comforting to know that He will develop in every true child of God. This is not dependent upon us; this is the guarantee of the life in the Seed that indwells us. What is the difference between my growing in Christ and Christ growing in me? There is a difference, you know! There is a lot of connection, but there are some differences. One of the chief differences is this: His growing in us is unconditional. It does not in any way depend upon us. This is guaranteed. Now, Christ maturing in us might take a while; some of us are unusually stubborn, but He is going to grow in us, and always for His end. It is because we are His instruments that He desires to grow in us the same way He developed on the earth. He desires to do again what He did once upon the earth; He longs to pour out His life through us to the world.

I am going to ask you to glance at that handout sheet please. We are going to use that as a general guide and I think you'll discover, as I began to discover, this amazing parallel holds true. The way He matured on earth, the way He came, He comes; the way He did it then, is how He does it now; the way He went from one stage to another is exactly the way He develops in my heart... and it is marked! You can trace it. You can see the characteristics of each stage, so that you will be able to look back in your life and say, “Oh yes, I remember when Christ was a fetus in my heart. Oh, yes, now I begin to see. Christ is an infant in my heart. Yes! He is 12 years old now in my heart.” We will focus on the principles. We will lay them out clearly before you, and you will be amazed at the wonder of it! I do hope God will open your heart and cause you to respond to this. He has a burden; He has a passion; He is being prepared in you. He is being prepared in me. He is moving toward the day when He can minister through us to the world He came to redeem.

### **PRAYER FOR PRAISE, PATIENCE AND REVELATION**

Let me mention a couple of things (and I will just say this quickly in passing) that I have prayed about and I hope God accomplishes for us this weekend. I hope He accomplishes these several things. Number one: I hope when you hear what Christ is doing now in your life, that your heart will be filled with praise. Some of you that are rookies, as Bob calls you, you first-timers—I don't know what goes through your mind when you hear these things for the first time. Our hearts should be filled with praise as we discover how much mercy the Lord has toward us. We heard Brother Charles this

morning share Psalm 136. We hear that a lot from him. Every year he reads this passage to us. If you read that Psalm without the verses in between that repeat, “*His mercy endureth forever*”, you would be reading a cold history of a nation. In between the lines, however, is the mercy of God Everlasting! You can look at your life apart from His mercy, and it is just a cold history, but as you look back, in between the lines, you can see the mercy of God. The mercy of the Lord is our hope for life. So, I pray that your faith will be encouraged as you begin to seek Him. You know, sometimes we get confused about the events in our lives. We ask, “What in the world is God doing in my heart?” You wait until you see these principles. Then your heart will respond and say, “Oh... Now I see. That is exactly how it was in my life. Now I see His mercy in allowing this or that; now I understand a little of what He is doing.” I do pray that your heart will be filled with praise as we meditate together on this wonderful thirty years describing the progressive development of our Lord Jesus.

Secondly, I pray we will become more patient with others as Christ is formed in them. We all know that we are all different, and so you may think, “Well, there is going to be different principles for every person. They may not all apply to me. That might be true of Christian “A” but it is not true for Christian “B”. What I am going to share from the texts—these wonderful principles—do not change. They are the same for every believer. Christ is the same. He is a fetus in the same way in you as He is in me. He is an infant in the same way in every Christian. Every believer experiences the progressive development of Christ in the same way. You will see that in your life. Christ is developing in you, and you need to know that God is moving and God is working. It is not a stagnant life. He is moving toward an end. Then, Lord willing, when we come to the end, we will see Christ, very much alive, mature and ready to minister. Sadly, we sometimes minister long before He is ready to minister. Let us study the text and watch Him mature. This is my burden this weekend: that Christ will be formed in you. I hope also, (I pray) that by seeing these principles you will be more patient with brother A, B, and C, sister A, B, and C, as Christ is allowed to mature in them.

Finally, I also pray that you will get a new taste for seeing the Lord in the Book; that the Bible might become rich to you as you study with a heart to know Him. I do pray that you will greatly desire the revelation of the Lord Jesus through this book. The Bible is alive, only as one beholds the Lord in its pages. I pray our study will encourage you to see how rich the Bible is.

Well, having said that, I do not know if you have ever heard a message on the nine months Jesus spent in Mary’s womb, but here we go: Christ as a fetus in your heart! At this stage He is in your heart but you hardly know it. He is a seed! So tiny! So small! He is there in embryonic form! He is conceived in you, but He is not yet born into the world. It still might be many, many months before you even know you’re pregnant. After that, even more time must pass before He is born.

## **GABRIEL SENT BY GOD TO THE VIRGIN MARY (LUKE 1:26-38)**

Luke chapter 1 please. I'm going to ask you to turn to Luke chapter 1. Gabriel is sent by God to the Virgin Mary. Begin at verse 26

*“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph of the descendants of David: and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”*

### **THE PRINCIPLE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH**

Now let me come straight to the principle. This is the beginning. We are going back—as far back as we can go—to the very beginning of the life of Christ in Mary. We must see Mary as an illustration in every individual believer. The first principle is connected in verse 27 with the word *virgin*. There can be no life of Christ apart from the principle of the virgin birth. Now, theologians make a lot out of the virgin birth as you know. They make it a test of orthodoxy. They insist on knowing, “Do you believe in the virgin birth?” To them, the virgin birth was necessary for two reasons. The Virgin Birth was necessary first of all, to enable the Lord Jesus to be born without sin. They say that sin comes through the man. I have never been able to make that my own, but we will leave that with the theologians. Secondly, of course, the Virgin Birth was necessary to bypass the curse of Coniah. That is another study all its own. The Virgin Birth was God’s answer to the curse of Coniah on the messianic line of Joseph. It is a wonderful truth. It is true. The virgin birth does both of those things.

What *is the principle* of the virgin birth? I think if you asked the average Christian they might say, “The principle of the virgin birth is holiness, or purity, or cleanness, or innocence, or virtue, or piety.” The virgin birth, many think, illustrates absolute holiness. Was Mary chosen as an instrument because she was holy? I do not think that is the chief principle of the virgin birth. I think God calls attention, not to

Mary's holiness, but to His own grace. Look at verse 34. Here is the key. Mary asks,

*“How can this be since I know no man? I am a virgin.”*

In other words Mary was saying, “What you are promising to me will have to leave man out in order to come to pass. How can that be? From the creation of the world babies have been born and man had a part in the conception of children. That's how it is. But listen to this strange word. How can it possibly come to pass if you leave man out?” His wonderful answer is in verse 35:

*“The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason the child shall be called the Son of God.”*

How can it possibly be without man, without flesh? The answer is the Holy Spirit. He will be the One who will form Christ in you. It is not by works, it is by grace; it is not by flesh, it is by the Spirit; it is not by humanity, it is by divinity. It has nothing to do with the flesh. That is why we read, when Isaiah gave his prophesy: *A child born and a son given,*

that he added these words in Isaiah 9:7:

*“The zeal of the Lord of Hosts, He'll perform it.”*

He'll perform it!

It is interesting as you read your Bible to discover in the New Testament that there are many pictures of the Church. Wonderful pictures! The union of the bride and groom is a picture of the Church. Marriage is a picture of our union with Christ! The building's foundation and superstructure united by the corner stone are a picture of the Church. The head, the body and its members are a picture of the Church. The New Jerusalem is a picture of the Church. But, the first picture of the Church in the New Testament is Mary. You say, “How is Mary a picture of the Church?” Well, what is her contribution to the history of redemption? Her contribution is that she gave Christ to the world. What is the contribution of the Church to the history of redemption? It is to give Christ to the world! How did Mary do it? The Holy Spirit formed Christ in her and in the fullness of time she gave Christ to the world. How is the Church going to do it? The Holy Spirit will form Christ in her and in the fullness of time she will give Christ to the world. Glorious picture, this! It is the principle of the virgin birth. You see, for Mary's cousin Elizabeth, it was too late for man to have a part because she was very old; for Mary it was too early, and because she was a virgin we know man did not have a part. That is why Mary's response is so instructive. Luke chapter 1 verse 38:

*“Behold the bondmaid of the Lord, may it be done”.*

Not, “What should I do?” but, “be it done unto me.” That is the beginning of life in Christ.

Now brothers, at this early stage, when His life is just beginning to form in us, we do not know much. But we do know this—we may not use the expression, “virgin birth”—but that is the principle. We do not know much, but we know this: It is not by man; it is not by works. That is how the whole life of Christ begins in us. I do not know a lot, but I know the life of Christ in me is by the Holy Spirit. We come to the place where we discover, it is not by man; it is a work of the Holy Spirit. He is the only One who can form Christ in me, in you, in us. That is how you started, I know it. If you are truly saved, somewhere along the line you have learned that it was not by works. It was not by you. There was no man involved in any way. It was by the Holy Spirit.

## **THE PRINCIPLE OF THE MAGNIFICAT**

We will keep reading the record and we will glean these broad, life principles. I am standing back as far as I can stand, and I ask, “What happened next?” What was the next thing that happened in the Bible story? The instructive answer to that question is, “He wrote a magnificat in her heart.” All of a sudden she was so happy; she was filled with the joy of the Lord. She could not contain her joy. At this point we read of a great overflow of praise. This praise song has been called “Mary’s Magnificat.” Luke 1:46-55, we will not read the full song, but note please, this wonderful line,

*“My soul doth magnify the Lord. My soul rejoices in God my Savior.”*

When your life in Christ begins, you do not know a lot, but you know the work is of God; it is something God performed. When you start your life with Christ, you don’t know a lot, but you also know this: You are happy now. We say, “He has put a song in my heart; my heart is rejoicing; God has given me a Magnificat.” Then you read the record and you say, “Well it is not complete; Christ is just a fetus in the womb of Mary; there is so much more to come.” True, as far as it goes, but in another sense, it is quite complete. Oh yes! Life in Christ is progressing, yet it is complete at every stage. It is full! A great joy fills your heart. We are far from having arrived at this early stage. We know our experience is a mighty work of the Lord; we know that we have hearts that are full of joy and praise. Now then, let us follow the record. What is the next account given to us?

## **ELIZABETH’S GREETING TO MARY (Luke 1:39-56)**

### **THE PRINCIPLE OF DESIRING TO BE WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE**

Turn to Luke 1:39-56 please. We read next of a mutual exchange between Mary and Elizabeth. Let me tell you the story in terms of the principle. At this stage of the development of the Lord, Christ has been conceived in Mary. Her only experience of Him in her is knowledge. The Christ in Mary is... He is so small; He is so tiny; He is imperceptible. She has not yet understood what has happened. There is, at this point, no outward evidence, except that she is unusually happy. She is full of song; she’s full of joy. Now God does a new thing for this one who has Christ abiding in her. He plants in

her heart a desire. She begins to gravitate toward those who have had a similar experience as she had gone through. God had done a supernatural work in Elizabeth and Mary senses that it is very much like the work God had done in her. Now Mary begins to find a desire working in her heart. She thinks, “I have got to be with these people. I do not know why, but I must seek them out.” When Christ is just a fetus in our hearts, we cannot explain it, but we know something has happened in us and we unconsciously look for other strange people in whom something strange has also happened. We desire to be with them; we gravitate towards them as Mary did towards Elizabeth.

Do you remember how John the baptizer was the forerunner of Christ? He was used by God to prepare the way for others to receive the Lord. Who is the first one John ever prepared to receive Christ? Why, it was his parents. God used John the baptizer to prepare them! The miracle of Elizabeth carrying John in her womb was the preparation needed for Zacharias and Elizabeth to be open to the message Mary was bringing to their home. Mary is experiencing an inward gravitation toward those who have been prepared. I think we all remember back when we had those inward urgings. “I have got to go to somebody else who had a similar experience to what I have experienced.” Brothers, do you remember? Think back. When Christ was a fetus in your heart, you did not know much, but somehow you knew it was not by works; it is by the Holy Spirit. You did not know much, but you had a melody of first love in your heart. You were singing; you were happy; you were rejoicing; your soul was magnifying God your Savior. You did not know much, but at that time you also found a strange desire to be with others who had had a similar experience, and you were filled with keen excitement. You were in a new world, and you sought out people who were in that world that could share it with you.

### **LOOKING TO THE HUMAN INSTRUMENT IN AN UNHEALTHY WAY**

So we read that Mary came to Elizabeth’s door with a very small and imperceptible Christ in her heart. Do you remember the first one that ever brought Christ to your door? I will never forget it! Someone is about to bring Christ to Elizabeth’s door—and a Christ so small and so imperceptible that He can only be seen by faith. Mary comes to Elizabeth’s door. She is already pregnant; we know that because of Luke 1:43. She is called *the mother of the Lord*, not the mother-to-be. She is already pregnant. Ah, the fellowship Mary and Elizabeth and Zecharias must have had together for those three months.

May I ask you this? Were you ever uncomfortable reading Luke 1:42 and 43?

*“She lifted up her voice with a loud cry and said,  
‘Blessed art thou among women. Blessed is the fruit  
of thy womb.’ Whence is this to be, that the mother  
of my Lord should come to me?”*

I have been very uncomfortable with those words. They seem too “Mary-centered” for my taste. I wish Elizabeth had said, “How can it be that *the Lord* came to

me?” But she did not say that. She said, “How can it be that *the mother of the Lord* came to me.” You see, Mary seems bigger than Christ in this passage. Do you know why? It was because she was bigger than the Christ within her. She is a lot bigger than the Christ who was in her womb. I can understand when I read this record, why some folks exalt Mary. It reads like Mary should be exalted a little bit and venerated and so on... “How is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” God is doing more than laying out the history for us; God is laying down principles. This is a Bible! He is not just telling us history; He is laying out the progressive unveiling of Christ. In those early stages Christ is so small that (even sometime in an unhealthy way) we begin to look at the instrument that brought Christ to our door. That is what happened to Elizabeth. She was more taken up with Mary than with Christ.

My firstborn son is named David—not after the David of the Bible. You say, “What do you have against the David of the Bible?” Not a thing, but he is named after a man named David Kraft. David Kraft is the man that led me to Jesus. He was the valedictorian of our high school. He was the captain of the football team. He was the president of our youth for Christ organization in Connecticut. I was a high school nerd. I was backwards. David Kraft helped me get out of high school. He tutored me privately in chemistry. He picked me up every week to go to youth group. He took me to Burns School in Hartford Connecticut in 1958 to the youth rally where I accepted Christ as my Savior. He was an instrument that brought Christ to my door. Now, did I have an unhealthy attachment for Dave? You better believe I did; that is why my son is named Dave. We named him David because of that precious instrument that brought Christ to my door.

Are you familiar with how, in the high school yearbook, you write down your dreams and aspirations in a sentence or two? Well, we had to write something of our future plans in our year book. You can look it up. In our year book you can read of David Kraft: David Kraft – Missionary in Africa. He aspired to be a medical missionary! Do you know what it says under Ed Miller’s name? “Ed Miller – Medical missionary in Korea.” Any of you who know me, you know how far from a possibility that is. Why would I write that? It was because David brought Christ to my door. He was God’s instrument. I am not even saying it is wrong to look to the instrument; I am just saying that that is how it is. That is how it happens. You do not know much when Christ is formed in you, but you know it is not by works. You do not know a lot, but you know you’re happy. You have a new song. You do not know a lot, but you know you want to be with others that have had a similar experience as you have had. You even begin to look to them in an unhealthy way. Sometimes it takes a long while to look away from that human instrument. That desire to look to human instruments did not go away in my life with David Kraft. I began to look to all kinds of human instruments as men and women came into my life. I even tried to imitate the lives of those I read about in books. For some, this tendency may last many years. It did for me, even much later on in my Christian life. One of the mentors in my life was a man named Frank Sells. He was a teacher at Columbia Bible College. How God used that man in my life. I was already married when I asked him if I could move in with him. I am serious! “I will not bother you; I will not be a pain... I’ll just follow you around. I’ll just take notes!” Praise

God for the wisdom of brother Sells. He said, “No, go back to your wife.” That is how it is. When you begin to read of Godly men the Lord has used, you desire to imitate their lives. I am going to be Hudson Taylor. I began to read some of the mystics. I am going to be Eckhart; I am going to be Guyon; I am going to be George Mueller, and Spurgeon, and Moule, and Nee etc. When you read all these people, because Christ has really not developed yet, all you see is the instrument. Well, that is how it is. You desire to be like them; you cannot take your eyes off them. If you happen to be the instrument God chooses and uses, sometimes that gets to your head and you really think you are somebody. It works both ways!

Well that is the first stage, when Christ is just a fetus in our heart. I do not know much, but I know it is not by flesh, it is a virgin birth. I know I am happy now. I know I have to be with other people who have had that same experience, even if it means having an unhealthy attachment to them.

### **JOSEPH’S DREAM (Matthew 1:18-23)**

#### **THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD’S CONVINCING WORK IN OTHERS**

Quickly, look at the handout sheet and notice the next reference. It is Joseph’s wonderful dream where God finally convinced him of the work done in Mary. Matthew 1:18-23. This is where Joseph is convinced by God that what happened to Mary was from heaven. I am going to begin reading a few verses here. Verse 18:

*“The birth of Jesus was on this wise. His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph. Before they came together she was found with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man, not willing to make her a public example was minded to put her away until an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, ‘Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife. That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.’”*

We saw Mary as a picture of the Church in her relationship to God and she was undone: “Be it done unto me.” We saw Mary in her relationship to those who had been prepared by God. She only wanted to be with them; she wanted to fellowship. Now, God tells us the story of Mary in her relationship to Joseph. You know the story well. This is the old Christmas story. Joseph is her fiancé; this is her husband-to-be; this is her future; this is her life; this is her family; this is her dream; this is her ambition.

When Christ was conceived in Mary she was put on a spot, because there was no possibility that she could ever explain what had happened in her heart. There were no words to explain the conception that planted the Lord Jesus in her. She could try to say/explain: “Now, let me tell you Joseph. I know you are wondering why I’m pregnant, um... you see, this angel came to me.” It is not going to happen! Not only will she not



be able to give an explanation, but there is a great possibility that she would have to walk away from Joseph forever. You know the record. I call attention to this to illustrate that principle of the early Christ in us. One of the first things that we are faced with is trying to explain what happened to us, to our loved ones; to our family.

Now the Bible tells us only a little bit, but it does not fill in the details. I expect that Mary shed a lot of tears over this. I do not know how many conversations she had with Joseph. I know she had several because the Bible says:

*“She was found with child and when she was he was about to put her away.”*

I remember when the Lord saved me. I was trying to explain my experience to my Lutheran mother, and my grandmother, and my older sister Margie. How many tears were shed as I tried to explain to them! In their minds, I was just leaving the Lutheran Church; they were certain that I had just gotten involved in some cult. In love, they were trying to rescue me. It is a crisis in a person’s life when an explanation for a spiritual work is required. There is every chance that we’re not going to be able to explain it. No matter how hard we try, it is not going to work. Our inadequate explanation is just going to get us into more and more trouble. There is a very good chance that we’ll have to walk away forever, and we’ve got to be willing to do that as Mary was willing to walk away from Joseph.

Notice, as we read verses 18 to 25 in Matthew 1, how God solved this problem. I cannot imagine the joy in Mary’s heart when God Himself came to Joseph and convinced him that what happened in her was from God. You see, that often happens in those early stages. You are out witnessing, and you are telling everybody: “You have got to hear what is happened to me”... and you cannot put it in words. You cannot convince anybody with your many words, but God begins to convince them in a supernatural way, and you begin to see miracles. It is very exciting to witness God convincing others of the work He has done in you.

I do not have time, brothers, to tell you now how my mother came to Jesus; how my sister came to Jesus; how my grandmother came to Jesus. I only know He did not use me. He did not use me because He could not. I was driving people away. I was a fanatic. I was ram-rodging the gospel down their throats. That is how it is in this stage of development. At the stage when He is just a fetus, we are ignorant of almost everything. I just know it is something He has done. I do know I am so filled with joy and I’m happy. In my ignorance I know I desire to be with others who are testifying of a similar experience. I know I am failing to explain what took place in me, but at the same time, I am watching God work miracle after miracle after miracle as He begins to convince others.

## **THE DECREE FROM CEASAR AUGUSTUS (LUKE 2:1-5)**

### **THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD GUIDING BY CIRCUMSTANCES**

One more story and we will close our introduction lesson. I pray this introduction will prepare our hearts for the next part. Luke chapter 2. This is the record of their trip to Bethlehem. Beginning of verse 1:

*It came to pass in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This enrollment was made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child”*

You know as soon as Christ is formed in you, as soon as He is conceived in you, you are on a new road. Your heart is now lined up with the purposes of God. What is the road to His purposes? You are not yet familiar with that road. When the Lord Jesus received me as His own personal son at the age of 16 years, I didn't have a clue about the Lord, His purposes or His book. I didn't even know that there were two Testaments in the Bible. I knew nothing of spiritual matters. I would be very surprised if Mary knew about Micah's prophesy. I don't think Mary came to Joseph and said: 'You know Joseph, we have to get to Bethlehem. There is a prophesy in the book of Micah that says that Jesus is going to be born in Bethlehem. We must hurry.' She did not have a clue! She was not a student of Messianic prophesies, so God used circumstances to bring them to the place that He desired them to be. Now I do not know why Caesar made that decree about taxation, at that time. The historians make their best guesses. But I know this, in those early stages when Christ is just a fetus and you do not know beans about the Bible; you do not know about the ways of God; you do not know about His will. I know in that early stage, He guides you according to circumstances and you end up where you're supposed to be. It is marvelous to look back and see how the Lord guided through every day circumstances, and brought you here and there.

I am not worried about a new Christian as some are. Some say: "Oh, you know you have to follow them up." Most follow-ups are fowl ups. You don't need to follow them up; God's going to follow them up. You just send them on their way rejoicing, as Philip did the eunuch. Newly born Christians are safe! He is going to guide them. Circumstances play a large part in the lives of new Christians. I feel more nervous about older Christians. I do not fear for the young ones, God is taking care of them at that stage.

This is the fetus stage of Christ in my heart. This is the stage when you know the work in you was not a work of man; it was a work of God. You do not know much, but you know you're happy. You do not know much but you know you have got to be with others that have had a similar experience. You do not know much, but you know God is doing miracles; people are coming to the Lord and He, not you, is convincing them. You do not know anything—you do not know God's guidance through His Word—but God is guiding you through circumstances. Those are wonderful truths. This is the beginning of Christ coming to the place where one day He will be mature and He can pour Himself out to the world.

Sadly, in many instances, by the time that Christ is a mere fetus in us, we are already busy ministering for Him. It is true that He is not prepared yet; He has not even begun His ministry at this point. Oh, we are out there! Boy, we are walking track-racks! We are ministering, but He has not started His ministry.

Now, Lord willing, tonight we'll take the next step. It is markable. You can see the stories, read the principles and trace the progressive development of Christ. We will examine the stories that are connected with Christ as an infant. We will see what is true when Christ becomes an infant in my life. What does that look like?

You say: "Well, these precious first principles are all going to pass away." No they are not. Moving from stage one to stage two does not mean that the principles that were true in stage one have disappeared. No! The fact is, the more you grow in the Lord, the more you are going to know the principle virgin birth. That it is not a work of man but a work of God is a principle of life as well as a principle of Christ as a fetus in my heart. As you grow in the Lord, the deeper your joy is going to become; the more you're going to want to gather with weird people on weekends like this. You see, that is not going to go away. That is going to get deeper and deeper. The more you grow, the more you will know that you are not going to convince anybody with your fancy arguments; only God can convince the human heart of His work. That God has kept you safe, and that He is guiding you will be true all the days of your life. Ah, I tell you, these things get better and better as you go on with the Lord. This is Christ maturing.

Paul says, "I have a labor pain. I have a desire for God's people until Christ is formed in you." Brothers, Christ wants to grow in you. We will trace out the stages. You will be able to mark them in your life and Christian experience. This is Christ here... and here....., and here....., and here. You will begin to see and understand what is happening in your life. May God be able to mature in you! He **does** grow. Eventually, when He is matured in you and in me, He will fulfill His desire to pour Himself out redemptively through us. Have no doubts about it, He will. He will mature in us, whatever it requires! Let us pray.

*Father, thank You so much for Your Word. We thank You for all that You have inspired this Word to mean, and Lord now we just pray that You would have the unhindered right of way to mature, and to grow in us. We know that as You once came,*

*You come; As You developed then, You develop now. Grow in us we pray. As we look back and trace your progressive development in us, our hearts are filled with thanks. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**THE FIRST 30 YEARS**  
**THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF CHRIST # 2**

**CHRIST AS AN INFANT IN MY HEART**

INTRODUCTION AND PRAYER

While our brother is handing out those sheets, I want to welcome, again, everyone who has just come in today. We have already been seeing the Lord together; we know that you have come to see the Lord and that you are going to add to our individual and corporate vision of the Lord. So we are glad you are here.

As we come to look again at God's word I remind myself, and I remind you, of a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable. Our brother just sang it: Grace is what God does. The indispensable principle is: Total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. Only the Lord can take the Bible and teach our hearts—unveil the Lord Jesus to us. We are not undermining academics in any way. There is a human side to the Bible and we need it. But there is also a divine side, and if all we get is the human side, then the more we know, the prouder we will become since knowledge puffs us up. We need the divine side as well as the human side, and only God can give that.

For some of you brothers that missed some of the things that Dana was sharing, one of the precious principles he has been reminding us of that greatly ministered to my heart, is that, because of God's heart, because He delights in us, therefore He creates in us a delight for Him. So God is the initiator. He comes first.

Some years ago I heard a message by Tom Wontrop. It was on John chapter 4 where he was actually making Dana's point. His illustration was of course, this woman at the well in Samaria. The Lord Jesus came to the woman at the well and said, "*Give me to drink.*" Tom pointed out that the reason the Lord said, 'give me a drink' was because He wanted her to say, 'give me a drink.' Tom made this comment, he said, "All God's commands are invitations. Every time God commands us, He invites us. He commanded her so she would invite Him. He does it for us; that enables us to do it. He wants this union; He wants this relationship.

Before we pray together, I want to do two things. First I want to correct a reference I gave this morning on a verse. I turned you all to Micah and some brothers came up to me later and said, "I could not find what you were saying in 4:11. There is a reason for that. And so the verse is chapter 4 verses 6 and 7. In Micah, chapter 4:6,7 God tells us that the Lord wants to be king over the lame and over the outcast. You know, a shepherd has a crook, and the king has a scepter. So let me add to that verse another one in Micah. Micah chapter 7 verse 14. It says,

*"shepherd your people with your scepter."*

Shepherd your people with your scepter. He wants to reign over His sheep, His crippled sheep. He wants to reign over the outcast.

One more verse and we will look in the Word. It is a verse that I misread, or misunderstood for a long time. Recently God dawned this verse on my heart with a new meaning. It is II Chronicles 16:9. I figure if Dana can use II Chronicles, I can too. II Chronicles 16:9

*“The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those who are His.”*

Here is how I looked at it before. I thought the eyes of God were searching the earth to find those who were strong toward Him. But it does not say that. He is not looking for those who are strong toward Him; rather, He is looking for those *to whom He can show Himself strong*. He is doing that this weekend. The eyes of the Lord are going to and fro looking for somebody to whom He can show Himself strong. Is that brother here? Let us pray.

*Our heavenly Father, how glad we are tonight, so glad for grace. Thank You for our brother and his ministry in song; how he ministers to Your heart, and therefore how we get ministered unto. We tremble to think what would be in our life if it were not for grace. We praise You tonight for Your grace. Now we ask again, draw us, and we will run after You. Your people are willing in the day of Your power. Thank You for Your jealous love. How You delight to show Yourself to us. How You stimulate us to respond to that. Cause us, even this evening, to respond again. We thank You in advance. We commit this session unto You, in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus, Amen.*

## **A SHORT REVIEW OF LESSON # 1**

Now let me set before your hearts again, and especially by way of a little review for the brothers who have lately joined us—just to get before your heart what is on my heart to share in the privilege that I have. About a year ago, maybe a little longer than that, I was inclined to meditate on the 30 years of our Lord Jesus. As you know, He was on the earth for 33 ½ years. We know so much about the last three years of His ministry, but the 30 years, sometimes called, “the silent years”, or “the obscure years”, that had never made a major contribution in my life. Lately I have been studying those sections of Scriptures. I thought that there would be just a handful of Bible texts that had not contributed to my life in a major way, but there is a great many passages that have not really made a major contribution to my life. This section, this first 30 years of the life of our Lord Jesus on the earth was one of them.

Now, we are looking at that this weekend, not as we usually take a text and turn to it—say Matthew 6 and we will read 5 to 10—or whatever... It is a broad view I wish to take...over the whole 30 years. As I reminded the brothers today, some people might say or think that the record is incomplete. It is not incomplete. It is short, but it is not

incomplete. It is full! Everything God wants us to know about that 30 years, He has recorded for us. I tried to lay that before your hearts this morning...

Do you remember Lenny Sylvia? (Dear brother, pray for Lenny, he is still wrestling with his disease. You know... He is in another vicious bout now with the flair up of that Crohn's disease. That dear brother has about two or three productive hours in a day, and he has given me six or seven of those. He is building bookcases for me. He is just ministering unto the Lord. Just, tremendous) Anyway, we studied this topic together, and it was in the incipient stages of this study that I became very frustrated! I said to Lenny, "Lenny, there has got to be a revelation of Christ in this section, that no other section gives in the same way. I know there is. I have been praying but I do not see it." And Lenny said to me, "The only thing I know about this 30 years is that Christ is being progressively revealed." That became the key that unlocked the whole thing for my heart.

God used brother Lenny to begin to open this to me. If ever a section of Scripture... if there was ever a block of God's Word that presented the progressive unveiling of the Lord Jesus, it is this 30 years. He is growing before our eyes. He is maturing. He is developing. When you open the record you see the Lord Jesus as a seed. He is the seed of the woman! Then He becomes an infant. Then He becomes a toddler in the house. Then we see Him as a young adult. Then we see Him standing in the waters of baptism. Then He is mature and getting ready for ministry. We see Him in the wilderness, fully matured and prepared. We see the Lord Jesus, then, in this 30 years, growing and developing and maturing and... always toward an end; toward a goal; toward a destiny.

Graham Scroggie calls these years, the years of preparation. Jesus was being prepared to be the perfect Savior; to pour out His life redemptively on the earth. As I meditated with Lenny, as we studied together, as we looked at the Scriptures, it began to dawn on our hearts that the way Christ came, He comes; what He was, He is; and as He developed then, He develops now.

The verse that I am using as a key verse for this series is Galations 4:19. The sigh that the apostle had,

*"My children with whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you."*

Paul had a desire as a messenger of the grace of God; he had a longing. Like a woman ready to have a baby, he said, "I have labor pains. I desire to see **Christ formed in you.**" For so many years we have been together, and we have talked about knowing the Lord and growing in the Lord. This year the burden on my heart is to show you from the Scriptures what it means that *Christ grows in you*.

You ask, "How is He going to grow in me?" Let us read the record, because the way He developed then is the way He grows in my heart now. It is marked. You can note it. It is observable. You can see it. What we are trying to do, God assisting, is to

just take the stories – I have given you an outline. That is just sort of a guide; we are going to follow that outline. What are the Bible stories when Christ was a fetus? We looked earlier at those stories and we began to see principles. We look at our life and we say, “Oh yes, I remember when He was a fetus in my heart, then He became an infant.” What did that look like? The stories give principles, life principles. We began to look at those principles.

Our Lord Jesus, when He was on the earth as your Substitute and mine, gradually grew to the place where He could pour out His life redemptively. He has now come into my heart and He wants to grow. He wants to develop. We are all different. You ask, “Will it be different in me than it is in you?” Oh, there will be differences, but there are things that are everlastingly the same. These are great principles, and so we are seeing—how does He develop in me and why? He is moving toward an end. He wants to pour out His life redemptively through you; through us; through me. So brothers, that is what we are looking at, and that is what is on my heart.

#### THE PRINCIPLES GLEANED FROM CHRIST AS A FETUS IN MY HEART

I am not going to go through everything we already looked at. I will state the principles. Glance at the outline and you will notice when Christ was a fetus on the earth, the Holy Spirit was pleased to give us four Bible stories. As far as I know the record is complete. I did not look at all the Old Testament prophecies... I am sure there is a lot in there as well. We are just looking at the Bible stories in the New Testament record. Each time there is a story there is a principle. So we are sort of standing back and looking in a cursory way, and just picking up the surface thing; the great truth.

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

What was it like when Christ was a fetus in my heart? These are the principles we touched this morning; when it all began. The first principle was the virgin birth. What is the principle of the virgin birth? The principle of the virgin birth is illustrated by what Mary said. She said,

*“How can this be seeing I know not a man.”*

It is not by flesh. Man is not involved. His answer was, “The Holy Spirit will come and form Christ in you.” When you first came to the Lord you did not know much, but somehow you knew that it is not by man. It is by the Holy Spirit.



## THE PRINCIPLE OF THE MAGNIFICAT

The next story tells us that, all of a sudden, God wrote a magnificat in her heart. She began to sing a song:

*“My soul rejoices in God my savior. My soul does magnify the Lord.”*

When it all began in your heart and mind; when Christ was a fetus we did not know much, but we knew it was not by man. We did not know much, but we knew we were happy. We had a song. God wrote a song in our hearts.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF DESIRING TO BE WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

As you follow in the history you see the next event. She begins to gravitate toward those who have had a similar experience. She goes to see Elizabeth and Zacharias, because God had worked in their hearts and prepared them by the forerunner John the Baptizer. When Mary went to them, Christ was so small in her heart that Elizabeth had more focus on Mary as God’s instrument than on the Christ that she brought to the door.

*“How is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”*

In those early stages we begin to look at the instrument; we are so thankful for those God uses to bring Christ to us. I am not saying that it is wrong; that is how it is! We are so thankful for the instrument that brings Christ to our door.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD’S CONVINCING WORK IN OTHERS

The final principle was revealed in the dream God gave Joseph to convince him of the work He had done in Mary. Mary tried to explain it to her loved ones and there was no way her human words could be convincing. Then God in His grace, He came supernaturally to Joseph and explained it to him. God showed Joseph what had happened in her heart, and what a blessing that was to Mary.

That is how it was at the beginning when you got saved; when I got saved; when Christ was first formed in you. You did not know a lot, but you knew it was not by man; not by works. You did not know a lot, but you knew you were happy; you had a song now. You did not know a lot, but you knew you were gravitating toward other people who had a work done in their heart just like God worked in you. You did not know a lot, but you knew that God had done something very special and was now working that miracle in others all around you, helping you to explain to them what happened in your heart.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD GUIDING BY CIRCUMSTANCES

And when we left off, I was calling attention the last story, you know, when they went to Bethlehem. Mary did not say, “You know Micah tells us that Jesus has to be born in Bethlehem so... I’m great with child, we better get going.” She did not know that! When you are first saved you do not know the word of God. You do not know what is planned. So God uses circumstances to guide her in the way. That is how it is when you are first saved. That is Christ as a fetus in your heart.

### **CHRIST AS AN INFANT IN MY HEART**

Okay, which brings us then to the second stage of the maturity of Christ; His infancy. What is it like when Christ is an infant in my heart? He is still undeveloped. He is still immature, but at least there is this difference now—He is visible. At least you can see Him. As you can see from the outline, this section includes those famous Christmas stories like the shepherds, and the circumcision in the temple with Simeon, and the wise men, and Herod; you know, with the killing of all the infants and so on; coming out of Egypt and settling in Bethlehem. In other words, what we are calling His infancy is from His birth until about three or four years old. That is what we are looking at as His infancy.

Now the problem that I have with this, I mentioned earlier. Pray with me along this line as we go through this. We are so accustomed to study these stories in an isolated way. You know, Christmas comes around then we study the Christmas stories, and so on, and that is not wrong. That is not wrong. But this weekend we are not going to do that. I am not going to begin by saying, “All right, let us do the Christmas story; Now, the next story is this, and the next story is this...” That is not how we are going to look at it. They are not four Christmas stories. It is all one story. It is one story of how our Lord is developing. So we will look at all the stories, and maybe some things will overlap. I am trying to dip in the record and observe, “What is it like with Jesus? His infancy is different than when He was a fetus?” As I said, you can mark it. As we begin to look at this—I was so moved when Lenny and I really studied this whole thing together; all the sections—as we began to look at this, we began to see it playing out again in our lives... I’ll tell you, it is amazing. I thought I was studying the history of Jesus, but I was actually studying my own spiritual autobiography. What is true of me is also true of you. You will see it. You will see it in your life. Anyway, we will look at that, and examine these wonderful stories.

### **Christ as an Infant in my Heart**

Christ as an infant in my heart. Let me begin by showing you the transition between Christ as a fetus in my heart in my experience, and Christ as an infant in my heart in my experience. I called attention to the fact that Mary as the instrument of Christ was God’s picture of the church. She is the one who had Christ formed in her by the

Holy Spirit; she it was who carried Christ to the door of Elizabeth. At that point Christ was so imperceptible in Mary that, with these eyes, one would have very little evidence of Christ being present in Mary. You could see Mary. You could see the instrument. Christ was in her, but you could not clearly see Christ. Now watch how this begins to change when the Lord Jesus comes out of the womb.

### **THE VISIT BY THE SHEPHERDS (LUKE 2:6-20)**

#### A SEPARATION OF THE HUMAN INSTRUMENT FROM THE CHRIST

I am going to ask you to turn, please, to Luke chapter 2. The first story here is the story about the shepherds. Chapter 2 verses 6-20: When the glory of the Lord appears to the shepherds in the field. That is the same Shekinah glory that had left the earth 600 years before in the days of Ezekiel. Luke chapter 2 verse 10,

*“And the angel said to them, ‘Be not afraid. Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people. For there is born to you this day, in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you. You shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’”*

Even if you only approached it as literature you could see a difference in the reading, because now it is all about the baby; it is not about the parents.

*“Born to you, a Savior who is Christ the Lord...  
You shall go...You will find the Babe wrapped in  
swaddling clothes.”*

It is about Him! It is not about the instrument indwelt with an unformed Christ gravitating toward those who are prepared by God. This time the prepared ones are the ones that are coming. It is reversed.

I have an idea that the shepherds would have never heard the good news that night if they waited for Mary and Joseph to come out in the fields and announce the birth of the baby. They would not have heard about it. Mary and Joseph had other things on their minds. They were very focused, as any new parent would be, on their baby. “We just had a baby! Come see our baby! We would be glad to let you see our baby. We are not going to take the baby and show everybody, but you come see our baby! We are glad to show off the child.” At this point God now prepares—and this is different—God does not prepare the instruments to go (Mary and Joseph) but He prepares the prepared ones to come (the shepherds) where they are. So, the shepherds arrive in Bethlehem. They seek out the sign that the angels had given them.

Now, did they find the human instruments? Of course they did. Luke 2:16:

*“They came with haste. They found both Mary and Joseph and the Babe.”*

See, the instrument is still there, but God calls attention to the fact that now there is a separation. The instrument is there, but the baby is also there lying in a manger. When the shepherds finish sharing everything they have been told, everyone was amazed including the instruments that brought Christ into the world. Verse 19:

*“Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart.”*

As Christ gradually develops, as He moves from fetus to infant, there is a notable separation of the instrument from the Christ.

### **CHRIST DEDICATED IN THE TEMPLE (LUKE 2:21-40)**

Eight days later, in the next record, Mary brings the Lord Jesus to the temple to be dedicated and to be circumcised. Luke 2:26: Notice please,

*“It has been revealed unto him.”*

This is Simeon, another prepared person by the Holy Spirit, the one that should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. What impeccable timing! Verse 27:

*“He comes by the spirit into the temple.”*

Did he see the instrument? Yes, indeed. Notice that Mary is carrying Jesus. Now when she went to Elizabeth, was she carrying Jesus? Can you see the difference? Mary was carrying Jesus in her womb. Now Mary is carrying Jesus in her arms. She is still carrying Jesus. Verse 28:

*“And he received Him into his arms and blessed God.”*

You see, Elizabeth only saw Mary because she carried Christ in her womb; the shepherds saw Mary, Joseph, and the Baby, because Mary is carrying Jesus in her arms. There is still that separation, but now Simeon actually takes Jesus from the arms of Mary.

I’ll tell you brothers, it is a wonderful day in the formation of Christ in your heart and mine, when as the instrument, we can hand Him over to another and they can embrace Christ without embracing us. Bless the Lord! That is Christ as He develops into an infant. As we move from fetus to infant, that is the first observation that there is now this separation. Now the instrument can take the Savior and hand Him to another.

## **THE COMING OF THE MAGI (Matthew 2:1-12)**

Let me give another observation and a principle. I want us to look at the terminal points of His infancy. I hope when you study the Bible that you use that as a Bible principle; a study principle. Study the terminal points of any passage. How does it begin? How does it end? Many times, by seeing how it begins and how it ends, God can take you forward in His heart; in His message. When you look at the terminal points it is very interesting to see Christ developing as an infant.

### **HE IS SAVIOR**

Let us go back to chapter 2:29. This is Simeon's testimony and it is at the beginning. He is eight days old:

*“Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace  
, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy  
salvation which Thou has prepared before the face of all people...”*

Mary hands Jesus to Simeon. Simeon looks into the eyes of that Baby and he makes a confession. He learns something: Salvation is not a plan. We often say, ‘The plan of salvation,’; it is not a plan; it is a Person. Simeon looks into the eyes of the Lord Jesus and he says:

*“My eyes have seen thy salvation.”*

I am ready to die.

Brothers, do you remember when Christ was an infant and all you knew was this: My eyes have seen God's salvation, I am ready to die. I am not going to hell. I am ready to die. I have seen Christ as my Savior. Of course, at that time—do not forget now, according to the record, He is just an infant; He is going to mature to the place where He can minister. He is not ministering yet—we soon find out when we discover Him as our Savior, ‘My eyes have seen thy salvation’, that we have become ministers even though the Lord Jesus has not begun to minister. We are out in the street and we are telling everybody, “You've got to come see this Jesus; and get saved”; we go all out... that is when we get on fire. Sadly, we begin our ministry long before Christ ministers in us. Praise God He uses us anyway. But that is how it begins. He is my Savior. I have peace now. I have found the purpose of life. I am ready to die. I am going to go to heaven. That is how His infancy begins.

### **HE IS LORD**

All right, let us look at the end of it. The end of it is illustrated by the coming of the Magi. Now we have to pass over much because we are not doing a Christmas story.

All of the interesting and instructive facts about the amazing star, and how many Magi there were, and the relation of those Magi to the Old Testament prophets and all of that—it is very interesting, but here is the point. Jesus is now about two years old. If you turn to Matthew chapter 2 you see where we get that. Verse 16, This is Herod’s wicked plot to kill the infant Jesus:

*“Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, with exceeding wrath sent forth and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and all the borders thereof from two years old and under according to the time he had exactly learned of the wise men.”*

Jesus had now developed and had grown, and now He is at least two years old. At that time some gentiles from the east—the astrologers, the magi—come. I want you to notice their vision of Him. Verse 2:

*“Where is He who is **born king** of the Jews?  
We saw His star in the East. We have come to  
worship Him.”*

At the beginning of His infancy it was, “My eyes have seen thy salvation.” He is my Savior. I am not going to hell. I am ready to die, I have found a Savior! I have found salvation.” At the other end of his infancy, we notice that the wise men are *looking for a king*. Where is He who is *born King*? We want to worship Him. They find a king; they fall down; they worship; they give Him gifts. He is Savior. He is King.

Sometimes we don’t use the word King; we use the word Lord. You have heard testimonies after this manner, “I have found Christ as my Savior; and then after a long time, I found Him as my Lord.” Have you ever heard that? “I found Him as my Savior; then after a long time I found Him as my Lord.?” We do what Simeon did, we find Him as Savior; we do what the magi did, we find Him as King. Then we fall down and worship Him as they did... and so on.

Now brothers, I know when we speak of knowing Jesus as Savior and King we think we have come pretty far down the road in the knowledge of Christ. We think that that revelation of Him as undisputed Lord, that coronation means that we must really be mature. But seeing Him as Savior and Lord *has to do with His infancy*. That is Christ as an infant in my life. That is an early revelation. That is threshold stuff. That is just at the doorway. You have only begun to see the Lord when you see Him as Savior and Lord. I know some Christians have had decades between the time they have seen Him as Savior and Lord. It is still His infancy. It is so far away from what He is doing as He matures.

He is growing in me; He is growing in you, on purpose, to come to the place where He can pour out His life redemptively through us. He is very patient. He has

started the work. He leaves no unfinished symphony. He will perfect what He has begun. He will mature. At this stage, however, it is only the beginning.

You know, it was the eighth day when our Lord Jesus was named. According to Luke chapter 1, before Jesus was conceived in Mary she knew His name:

*“You shall call His name Jesus.”*

Later, Joseph was told,

*“When the child is born, you will call His name Jesus.”*

Now, Luke 2:21, they bring Him to be circumcised and they name Him Jesus. I will tell you brothers, that is how it was in the beginning. At the beginning, Christ is separated from the instrument. At this stage, you are holding Him in your hands. He is still a baby. He is still undeveloped. What do you know about Him? I know His name is Jesus. I know He is my Savior; I am ready to die. I also know that He is my Lord, and somehow I think, because of that knowledge, that I have arrived in my knowledge of Him. We have only begun to know Him!

You know, one of the things that I enjoy doing is rejoicing with those that rejoice when they have little babies. I go to the hospital, and I stand there and I look through the glass. You hear the parents speaking about the baby. They have things to say. What do they say? “Isn’t he chubby? Look at that dimple! So much hair! Hardly any hair! Looks like his father.” I feel like saying, ‘Yes, like father Adam. You’ll find out soon enough.’ But, what can you say about a newborn baby? I began to look in the record. Were there any words spoken of Jesus—not during His whole life and ministry—but just about His infancy? I jotted down a few verses. Actually, I will not give all these references. If you want them later, let me know and I will give them to you.

Matthew 1:1: Messiah; Son of David; Son of Abraham; Emmanuel; God with us. Matthew 2 verse 6 calls Him, A Shepherd. As a baby He is called the Son of God, The Horn of Salvation, The Most High, A Light for the gentiles, The Glory of Israel, The Word made flesh, The Life, The Light of men, Messenger of the Covenant. This is all when He is an infant. His names are, Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, The Firstborn from whom are all things. He is the Author of salvation; The Seed of the woman; the last Adam; The Branch; The Desire of nations.

When I look into my little window and see a baby, what do they say, “Want to see my kid? He is cute. He is fat. He is chubby. He has dimples. He...” But, look into the window here and see this One. You say, “I know His name. I am saved. He is my King.” That is a very incomplete look at a very complete Savior. He is full; we haven’t begun to know Him when we know Him as Savior and when we know Him as Lord.

I want a number, how many angels are there? <Audience murmur “a lot”> Yes!. The Bible says ten thousand times ten thousand. Did you ever do the math on that? That is a hundred million (100,000,000) and then He adds, and thousands of thousands, and myriads of myriads... In one place, they are called an unnumbered host. Do you know when Jesus became an infant there was a gathering in Heaven? God called all the angels together, every one. He called the Cherubim, seraphim, archangels, ministering angels, whatever rank they had, He called them all together. You say: Where do you get that? I get that from Hebrews 1 verse 6. It says:

*“When He brings His firstborn into the world”...*

You see, that is Christmas. He said:

*“Let all the angels of God worship Him”.*

Imagine that. He is a little baby. Say: What do you know of this little baby? “I know His name. He is Jesus! I love that name. I know my eyes have seen salvation, I am ready to die. I know that. I know He is King.” That is all!

I tell you, brothers: How incomplete our vision of Christ is in that infancy stage. He is so much more than our dim eyes have ever seen. We have a full Christ, but we have a very limited view of that full Christ. You could live ten million years and you will never have more Christ than you received when Christ came into your life. You will never have more Christ than you have this evening as you sit before me as I stand before you. You will see more. But you will never have more. You have a full Savior. You have a full Savior. The only thing you will ever get from now until you get to heaven is eyes to see who you have. He is already yours; every part of Him is yours. He is in your heart. But now God is going to show you gradually; now we must wait for the maturing... we must wait for the development of Christ within.

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So, He becomes an infant in my heart, and I begin to see there is a difference between the instrument and the Savior. I know His name. I know He is my Savior. I know He is my Lord. At this point in my Christian experience, it is the first time I have begun to taste worship. You know, those wise men, they just fell down and worshipped Him. In the infancy stage when all you know is His name, that He is your Savior, and that He is your Lord, you begin to taste, for the first time, worship. You begin to taste worship for the first time at His precious feet. That was your first experience of dedication. You followed the light that you had and you laid your gifts before Him. See, you followed the star of nature and that led you to the light of the Word of God, and then you came to the Light of the world Himself. The Bible says after that, that the magi went back another way. You have begun to taste that as well. I do not know a lot, even as an infant. I know He is my Savior; I know His name; I know He is King; I begin to worship Him; I begin to surrender my heart to Him. I have tasted a little of that. Really, I do not know much more than that at this stage of Christ’s development in my heart.



## A GREAT EMPHESIS ON DEDICATION

Let me show you another characteristic of Christ as an infant. After these things, they brought Him to be dedicated; they brought Him to the temple to be dedicated. They brought Him to the temple to be circumcised. Let me view this as a Bible principle. At this stage in your Christian experience, and, if you look back you will see it. When Christ was an infant in your heart that is what it looked like. You knew His name; you knew He was your Savior; you knew you were going to heaven; you knew He was Lord; you have tasted a little bit of worship, a little bit of surrender, and now, you experience *dedication*. Your life begins to be marked with dedication. You keep dedicating yourself and re-dedicating yourself. Do you remember those days? Somebody would give a message and your hand would go up; then they would hand out a card and you would sign the card; they would invite you to walk an aisle and you would go down the aisle; they offer you an altar and you are kneeling at the altar. Over and over and over again this would be repeated. I could give testimony after testimony of this phase in my life. Dedicating, dedicating, and dedicating some more! Notice please, the background here in chapter 2:21. It is dedication in terms of *circumcision*. Now what is the principle of which circumcision is a picture? You know what circumcision is. <intelligible response> Exactly right. Thank you.

A little piece of flesh is removed from the body causing a separation of the flesh at the source of life. It is God's illustration of sanctification; of separation. That is why you are dedicating yourself, because now, at this infant stage, for the first time you are feeling the burden of this indwelling sin. You know you are saved, you know you are going to heaven, but you keep getting messed up. Your whole life seems so dirty that you say, "I have to go back and dedicate myself again... and it doesn't work, so you think... "I don't want to blame God. It must be me." At this point, we are scolded into feeling guilty. Did something happen to you? Perhaps you didn't mean it when you went to the altar; you were not serious. Perhaps you were holding something back. Man, do you remember those days? Now I am not even saying that is wrong. I am just saying that is how it is. God has pictured it all here. When Christ becomes an infant, there is this separation of the instrument and the Christ. You can see it. It is there. There is that separation.

There is also a very limited view of Christ. I may think I know Him well because I have seen Him as my Savior; I have seen Him as my Lord; I know His name; I started to worship; I tasted a little of surrender. Then I gave myself to dedication and rededication. Then I heard endless appeals to which I responded in more dedication. "Give yourself to the Lord. You have to mean it this time. Now, seriously, do it right this time! Come, re-dedicate your life." Over and over and over again! You see, at that point, you may not realize it, but you do not need another dedication. You are totally dedicated to a Christ this big <gestures small>. You do not need dedication; you need a bigger Christ to whom you can dedicate yourself. You need a new vision of the Lord. That is what is needed!

On the way up here we were following an Amish buggy. Cars were whizzing past this black carriage. You see, that is what happens when you have only one horse power. The cars had much horse power. I tell you, when you are in Christ and you do not understand these things, you are operating on one horsepower and you are going to go very slow until you learn—until Christ grows in you—and you learn how to ride. Well, we will see more of that in the next stage.

## **THE CALLING OF CHRIST OUT OF EGYPT (MATTHEW 2:13-23)**

### SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Let me give another principle, and then we will get ready to wrap it up. I will not develop this; I am just going to sort of point it out. I pointed out, when Christ was a fetus, that the last story in that early section had to do with guidance. Mary and Joseph did not know the word of God and yet God used circumstances to guide them. How does the portion of Scripture that describes Jesus as an infant end up? Chapter 2 of Matthew verses 13-23 ends up with this supernatural protection of Christ. We are not going to read the record of this history, but talk about being full of the grace of God, this section certainly is. This is the story of Mary and Joseph being sent by God to Egypt and then later, being called out of Egypt. In the infancy stage of Christ being formed in you, you also have your first taste of *spiritual warfare*. As you would guess at this stage, when Christ is just an infant, He is just beginning to be developed; you do not have a clue about spiritual warfare.

I told you this morning that when I came to the Lord, nobody could have been greener. I grew up in a Lutheran church but it was not the kind of Lutheran church where you would be well trained in the Scriptures. Many of them are; they are good; they will teach you the Bible—I am not condemning Lutherans—but I knew *nothing from my background*. I learned zero—absolutely nothing, from the church that I grew up in. But somehow, after I accepted Christ I was so filled with zeal and emotional joy that many folks thought I knew something. I didn't know anything! They got in trouble and I got in trouble. One time, for example, we were in a high school study hall, and I was sitting there meditating on my classmates. Did they know Jesus? I thought, "These people, they don't know Jesus! I know Jesus; they don't know Jesus." They were throwing spitballs, and talking to one another—just doing what they do in study hall. Nobody is thinking about their souls. I jumped up on the stage and I said, "There is a man out here, David Kraft (he is the guy I told you about this morning) He wants to tell you how to get saved. Dave, come on up here.

I was at a youth for Christ rally and they called on me—a thousand young people were there—they called on me to pray. I did not know anything about prayer. I stood up there and I started praying, I began to think, and I said, "Lord, save the devil!" I figured: Hey, that is going to solve a lot of problems! He gets saved...wow! That makes good sense, right? I didn't know anything! I think I embarrassed the one who called on me to pray.

At this stage of the Christian experience, I do not know anything about spiritual warfare. I know Christ is Savior; I know He is Lord; I have tasted a little worship. I am into the dedication scene, but I do not know that there is an enemy out there that hates my guts and wants to massacre the undeveloped Christ in my heart. I do not know anything at this point, about Satan's schemes; I know nothing about his malice; I do not know anything about my armor; I do not know anything about prayer; I know nothing about victory at this point; I do not know about binding and loosing; I do not know about corporate authority; I do not know about walking in the Spirit; I do not know identification truths with the Lord Jesus Christ. What does it mean to abide in Christ? What is an overcomer? What does it mean to be seated with Christ above all rule and authority? I know nothing! He is just an infant in my heart. I know nothing of the weapons of our warfare, powerful to the destruction of fortresses, destroying speculations, and every lofty thing that rises up against the knowledge of God. I know nothing.

Now, being totally ignorant, you would expect that I would be absolutely vulnerable. Christ is an infant in my life. Wouldn't you think, if ever Satan could devour the Christ in you it would be when you knew nothing about warfare, or enemies, or Satan, or anything like that? That Satan hates the Christian and Christ, is certainly illustrated by the hatred that Herod showed when he tried to kill the Christ. If history tells us the truth, Herod was so stupid, his edict actually took the life of his own two year old son. Amazing! One historian wrote, "One would be better off being Herod's hog than Herod's son."

When we are so ignorant; when we are so young; when we are so dumb; if God protected Christ in you then—can I ask you brothers a question?—if, when you knew nothing, Satan could not get to the Christ in your heart, don't you think that you are safe now and all the way to heaven? I tell you we ought to be praising God. We ought to be praising the Lord that Satan cannot—this enemy—he cannot get to the Christ that is in our heart. Herod is going to forever represent the futility of every attempt to get at the Christ as He develops in you.

That is how it is when Christ is an infant in you. God is not only guiding you when you do not know the Bible, He is protecting you from all that Satan is trying to do against you. Everything is backfiring; blowing up in his face.

Did you notice where they were sent? Matthew 2:13:

*"Go down to Egypt."*

Egypt! That is slavery; that is bondage; that is oppression. Now, you are not going to stay in Egypt. There is a day coming when He is going to call His Son out of Egypt, but not yet. Not when Christ is an infant.

Isn't it an amazing thing that in your legalism, in your Egyptian bondage, in your worldliness, when you are a new Christian and you do not know anything—in fact, you

are still quite messed up as far as theology is concerned—you are in Egypt yet, there Satan rots, Herod dies, and Christ grows. He actually uses Egypt to mature Jesus in your life; to mature in my life. That is how it is! At the end of that infancy stage He is going to call you out of Egypt and you are going to learn a little about liberty and victory and how to be delivered from the world, but you don't know it yet! It is not only you that survives this stage, but Christ Himself survives this wonderful time.

This is what it is like when Christ was an infant. It was true then, it is true now. He separates the instrument and you begin to see. Yes, now I can hand Jesus to other people. *Glorious* revelation! You think you know something but all you really know is His name; you know you are saved; you are going to Heaven; you are ready to die; you know He is Lord. At this stage you have tasted a little worship; tasted a little surrender, not much. You know what it is to dedicate and re-dedicate, and give yourself over and over and over again because you need spiritual circumcision. You want to be separated from the flesh. All the indwelling corruption in your heart and nature begins to gnaw on you.

You know a little bit about warfare; you do not know much. Somebody is after the Christ in you and trying to destroy that Christ, but you are as safe as a babe in his mother's arms. I am as safe as a babe in its mother's arms. If it is true when you are that vulnerable, it is true all the way through your Christian experience. Brothers, praise God! *Grace* has brought you safely this far, and grace will take you home. Even when you are in Egypt, bless God; there He begins to grow in you.

Now He is going to become a little boy. We will examine that tomorrow. I mean, we are going to look at the record. What is it like when He is twelve years old in your heart? You see, by the time we come this far—I know He is Savior; I know He is Lord; I know He is King; I have tasted worship and tasted surrender; I have been dedicated—I vainly reason that I am ready for the mission field! I'm ready to go! Oh, to realize, at this stage He is still a baby. He has not yet been prepared to the place where He can pour out His life. We are running to the mission field but He is not. We need to let Him grow in us.

I hope you can look back in your life and praise God for what He has done. It is the same for every believer. We have all experienced this! He is going to grow in us as He once developed on the earth.. He is going to become twelve years old. That period that we are going to look at tomorrow, that is the longest period. That lasted eighteen years. We will look at that section. What is that like when He is just a young adult in my life? What is it like when He is maturing and being prepared? What will my life look like at that point? And finally, what will it be like when He is fully mature and He can actually pour out His life through mine? Oh may God help us brothers. These are the ways of God with His people. Let us bow...

*Father, we thank You so much for your precious Word. Thank you for showing us how You developed then; how You grow in our hearts now. How we praise you for your wonderful victory protecting the indwelling Christ; letting Him grow; preparing for that wonderful time when You can minister through us and pour out Your life redemptively to a needy world. Fill our hearts with praise as we meditate on all of Your wonderful ways. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**THE FIRST 30 YEARS**  
**THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF CHRIST # 3**

What a wonderful testimony! Thank you Wayne. Praise God. Bob, some years ago, made the comment that every man has a story. Isn't that the case? How God deals with us individually. Wonderful!

Oh, brothers, as we come to look into God's word this afternoon I remind my own heart, I remind you, about that principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable. That is, total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. Let me give these two verses and then we will pray together. Psalm 119 verse 19 says:

*"I am a stranger in the earth."*

Psalm 119:54 says:

*"Your statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."*

As Dana has been talking about—that *inner desire* that the Lord has and has created in us, to go home—illustrates that we are strangers here, we do not belong here. We have another place. We have a home. We have a union with Him, and He has promised that in that pilgrimage He would minister to us and feed us and support us. So let us bow together, brothers, and ask again that the Lord would manifest Himself.

*Our Heavenly Father, we do thank You so much that You have not left us on our own as we come to this book, but You have put in our hearts your life, your Holy Spirit to show us the Lord Jesus, to conform us to His image. As we wait upon You this afternoon we ask that You would indeed minister life to us. Show us the Lord in such a way that we would be changed. We thank You so much for the portion of Scripture on which we are meditating. We look at those 30 years and your progressive manifestation. Instruct us now we pray. We wait before You, and we call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.*

## BRIEF REVIEW

All right brothers, let me get before your heart again by way of review what we are looking at. We are looking together, examining the record of the 30 years of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the very, very complete record, short, but full of our Lord Jesus. Those years have been called the years of preparation. As I said earlier, as far as I know there is no other block of scripture (none that I know of), no other section of Scripture that more perfectly presents to our hearts the progressive revelation of our Lord Jesus. In that record of the 30 years we see Jesus growing, developing, maturing, and advancing. He is being prepared for the day when He can minister and pour out His life redemptively

upon the earth. The story begins when He is conceived in a virgin. He grows in that womb. He becomes an infant. He grows. He becomes a toddler in the house. We see it! We can mark it! God has given us the record and we see Jesus as He grows from one stage to another.

The idea behind everything that is on my heart comes from Galatians 4:19, that sigh of the apostle when he said:

*“My children with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.”*

Glorious revelation! Christ is formed in you. I know there is the other side of the truth, Ephesians 4:13 and so on, where we grow up into Christ. We grow in Him that is true, but there is this other side as well, that He grows in us. That is what we are meditating on. I have suggested to you that as He came, He comes. As He matured then, where His development is spelled out in the record, where you can mark the stages, see Him as a fetus, see Him as an infant, see Him as a young adult, see Him in His maturity being prepared, just so in your heart and mine, there is that time when He is just a fetus in our hearts. We read the stories, we mark the principles and we can see the characteristics. Think back! We are able to say, “Yes, I remember that. I remember when He was a fetus in my heart. I remember very well all of these stages.”

Then we saw Him as an infant. I remember when He was an infant in my heart. This afternoon we will see Him as a young adult. We will study the record of our Lord Jesus when he was twelve years old. I am not going to go through all of the developing of the principles again. I will just state the principles. When He was a fetus, what did it look like?

#### REVIEW CHRIST AS A FETUS IN MY HEART

You see, at that time I did not know much. But I knew it was a virgin birth, and by that I mean I knew man was not involved. The Holy Spirit formed Christ. I did not know much, but I knew God had written a Magnificat in my heart. I had a song now. My soul began to rejoice in God my Savior. When He was a fetus I did not know much, but like Mary I have found a drive inside and I began to gravitate toward others who had had a similar experience and God had prepared them. At that time I did not know much, but I knew I could not express what had happened in my life. The more I tried to express it, like Mary to Joseph, the worse it got. Then God Himself, in His great grace, came and convinced Joseph what had happened in Mary. As a fetus we begin to see God doing the work and we see conversions and people are coming to the Lord. We are trying to explain it but it is not working. At that time, when He is a fetus, we do not even know anything about the Bible. Mary and Joseph did not know Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem so God at that stage used circumstances in order to bring them into His will. That is how it was, brothers, when Christ was first conceived in you.

## REVIEW CHRIST AS AN INFANT IN MY HEART

Then later He became an infant. He was born and there was this separation from the instrument. We now could see both the instrument and Christ. He had been delivered out of the womb. You still did not know a lot! But, like Simeon, you knew that you had found salvation and you were ready to die. You did not know a lot, but like the wise men you knew He was King and you knew Him as Savior and Lord. You tasted a little bit of worship, tasted a little bit of surrender as you laid your gifts before Him. You did not know a lot but you knew at that time that there was this desire in you, as Mary and Joseph had to bring Him to the temple for dedication, and that was a time of dedication and rededication. Your heart began to taste the indwelling corruption. All of a sudden there is a war going on in there, and you knew that and you knew you wanted to be sanctified. You wanted to be holy, and so there was the dedication and the rededication, and going to the altar and signing the card; crossing the line and raising your hand and praying over and over. You would rise up, you would fall down... and that section ends as we ended last evening, the Christ within was being supernaturally protected. You had your first taste of spiritual warfare. You do not know anything at that time about warfare, about the devices of the enemy, about your armor, about prayer, about living in the spirit. All you know at that time, you are in Egypt. God in His great grace protects the Christ inside, and I suggested when we closed, if God protected Christ in you when you were so vulnerable, when you knew nothing, when you were just starting, won't He protect Him all the way to heaven? Brothers, we are safe. We are safe in Christ Jesus. He will be formed in you.

## **CHRIST AS A YOUNG ADULT IN MY HEART**

All right, that brings us this afternoon then... and I will ask you to turn to Luke chapter 2... this third stage of the development of the Lord Jesus, Christ as a young adult illustrated by twelve year old Jesus. Luke 2 verse 41:

*“Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. Then, 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 amazed at His understanding and His*



*answers. When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."*

So that we are all together, and since God has given us analytical minds, let me tell you exactly where I am going. I would like to take this story and just state four characteristics of Christ as a young adult in my heart. These are the same four characteristics of Christ as a young adult in your heart.

What does the Christian life look like as Christ is being formed, when He goes from a fetus to an infant, and then from an infant to a young adult? Now some of these characteristics are very similar but there is a nuance of difference. So I have stated them, each one. There may be some overlapping. But I want to make it crystal clear so that we can see what God, in His great grace, is doing in our lives. This will enable us to look back and praise Him. Sometimes it gets so confusing. We ask, "What in the world is the Lord doing?" I will tell you what He is doing, He is growing. He is maturing. He is being prepared for the time when He can pour out His life redemptively in you and through you, to the world.

## THERE WILL BE A GREAT DESIRE TO CELEBRATE REDEMPTION (Luke 2:41-52)

The first characteristic of Christ as a young adult illustrated by this record in Luke chapter 2 tells us that the time has come when it has become a holy habit to gather and celebrate with the people of God. Now, this is very different from what has been seen in His earlier stages of development. There is a time in the maturity of the Son of God in our hearts when there is a great desire to be with the people of God and to celebrate redemption. Glance again at Luke 2:41. His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. Verse 42:

*"They went according to the custom."*

It had now become their holy habit to gather with the people of God to worship. It had become the custom that every year they would get together with the saints. You know the Jews had those annual pilgrimages that they made to Jerusalem, one in the spring, one in the early summer, and one in the fall. In the spring they went to the Passover; in the early summer the Feast of Pentecost, and then the Feast of Tabernacles.

All of the festivals that we read about are included in those three annual gatherings. It was the habit now, the regular habit of the family of Jesus to get involved with the people of God and the things of God. The illustration that God gives of this truth is this Passover. We can only imagine what happened on this wonderful feast. As far as I know we do not have anything like that today in our Christian circles. We have our conferences, we have our retreats, we have our Hilltops, and we have our revival meetings and that kind of thing. This was like that but a whole lot different. Whole caravans of families, whole towns emptied out, as they would go up to Jerusalem. It was about 80 miles from Nazareth, where Jesus was, to Jerusalem, and they would travel about four or five days. When they traveled, they looked like tributaries coming into this great river and the number of saints would swell as they moved toward the holy city.

According to Josephus this Passover gathering sometimes swelled to over a million people. Bob, imagine if you got a million letters. How many are going to Hilltop over the next year?; or Black Rock? A Million people signed up! That is what it was, a million people gathering together! We are told as they made their way to the city of peace that they would sing the great Hallel, and the more people gathered, they too would join in the Psalm 113 to Psalm 118, the songs of deliverance out of Egypt. They would sing that as they went up to the Holy City. Again, according to Josephus, more than a quarter of a million animals were slain during that feast alone. It was a tremendous gathering, rejoicing, fellowship, testimony, scripture reading, chanting, praying... People would meet with people they had not seen, and there would be these wonderful reunions, they would cry together, they would pray together, they would share burdens together, it was a wonderful time of praise and worship and rejoicing and Bible study. That is a characteristic of Christ as a young adult. There is this new desire, you did not see it in the infancy, but now there is this desire, "I want to be with the people of God. I want to celebrate redemption. I want to party, I want to rejoice in my salvation!" You want to attend every Christian event every time the doors are opened. You see, as you go on in the Lord, or as He goes on in you, you get this desire, "I want to be at every prayer meeting, I want to go to fellowship, and I do not want to neglect the assembling of the saints." We give every excuse we can think of to attend; it is now the routine. It is now the habit. We must get together with the saints. We just have to have another conference. We just have to get together and rejoice in the Lord. That is the first characteristic.

## THERE WILL BE A TENDANCY TO PRESUME ON HIS PRESENCE

There is a second characteristic. Because of all of this development of Christ within, I not only have a desire that has become a holy habit now to be with God's people and celebrate redemption, but at this stage, because there is so much fellowship, there is also the temptation to presume on His presence. It is very easy at this stage in the development of Christ within, to take your eyes off the Lord for a little while. You see, this is the stage where we have certain expectations from the Lord. We now know the Lord personally; we have learned to take Him for granted, and when he does something out of the ordinary, why, that upsets us. You can see how that is illustrated here in chapter 2. I have no doubt that the family of the Lord Jesus got very involved in the

festivities, “Let’s go to Passover. We will see and fellowship with one million saints. Let’s pray together; let us sing; let us worship; let us get into those old Psalms. We will hear and tell the old Bible stories.” They became so involved with the blessings (As Dana said the first night he was speaking) that they forgot the Blessor! It is hard to believe that they could leave the conference like they did and forget to take Jesus with them.

Brothers, do you know what would be a very terrible thing? You know what I am going to say. It would be a very terrible thing to come to a weekend like this, with all of the singing, the testimonies, the Word of God being opened, the fellowship, and then to leave the conference without Jesus. Boy that would be tragic. That is exactly what happened here. They became so involved in the routine since it had become routine, it had become custom, that they took His presence for granted. They left the Bible conference and everybody assumed that his neighbor, the other person, had taken Him.

When you read verse 48,

*“When they saw Him they were astonished and his mother said to Him, ‘Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I sought thee, sorrowing.’”*

you can understand how natural it was to do what they did. Now any of you who are parents, you cannot read that and be too surprised at Mary’s response toward Jesus because she is His mother; Joseph is His step-father, and they had a relationship with Him. It was based on that relationship that they expected a certain behavior from Him. I believe I would too. If my twelve-year-old son did not show up and I expected him to be somewhere...I would not be too happy! You see, we are related to Jesus and based on that relationship there is a certain behavior that we expect from Him. It is not too surprising to read that they blamed Jesus for their anxiety. They blamed the Lord Jesus because He interrupted their plans and their schedule. They had expectations for Jesus and Jesus let them down. Jesus disappointed them.

I told you at the beginning that Mary is a wonderful picture of the Church. All the way through the Bible record she reflects the Church. We need to keep that in mind, because we too, have a relationship with Jesus. We too, have expectations because of that relationship with Him. You see, we are the King’s kids. We have a relationship with Him, and because of our relationship we expect Him to act in a certain way. I belong to the Lord, I expect Him to protect me. I belong to the Lord, I expect Him to heal me. I expect that because I belong to Him and I have a relationship with Him, I expect Him to keep me from bankruptcy; keep me from poverty; bless me, and prosper me. I expect Him to join Himself to my caravan and go in my direction. What Jesus said, in effect, is this, “Yes mother, I do indeed have a relationship with you, but I also have a relationship with my Holy Father God. My relationship with my Holy Father God is higher than my relationship with you. Everything I do in terms of you is going to be in terms of my relationship with my Holy Father God.” May God help us grasp this, but remember, that is that young Christ we are speaking of.

As He is in us we get that temptation too. God is blessing us so much by this development of Christ that we begin to look to the blessings, look to the testimonies, look to everything else, and sometimes Jesus is nowhere to be found in our experience. We have all of this expectation from Him, and then we get to fretting and being anxious; we wonder what in the world is going on. He will always choose His Father's will over your wish; His Father's will over my wish.

It is not an accident, you know, that according to the record, that they found Him on the third day and in the temple. I don't want to read things into the Scripture that are not really there, but I think there might be something to this. You know, you read about the third day and how it is used as a symbol of resurrection? There are going to be times, brothers, when we get our eyes off of the Lord and we are going to go looking. "Oh where did He go, where did He go?" I will tell you where He is. He is in the temple. He is always in the temple. You see, in the Old Testament it is the garden.

In Song of Solomon, the bride lost her Lover. She only discovered where He was when she remembered that He had told her, "You are my garden." When she lost Him, she went on a frantic search asking everyone, "Where is He, where is He, where?" Then the daughters of Jerusalem say, "What does He look like?" "Oh, He is altogether lovely." She goes into this long and beautiful description of how lovely Her groom was. By putting her eyes back on Him; by meditating on Him, it was easy for her to answer the next question they put to her. They asked, "Where is He?" Immediately she responded and said, "Ah, He is in the garden! He is always in the garden." What was true of the Old Testament garden is true of the New Testament Temple. You are His temple, I am His temple, and we (as Dana pointed out) are His temple. He was found in His temple on the third day.

You see at this stage there is going to be the temptation to take your eyes off of Christ, look to some good thing, and then say, "Oh!! What has happened? He is gone!" Amazingly, on the third day, you will find Him. He has never left. He is in the temple. He is always occupied with the things of the temple. Well, that is Jesus as a young adult. As a young adult, God will create a new desire in me to be with God's people, to celebration redemption, to keep the feasts and just enjoy the Lord and to celebrate redemption with the people of God. There is also this temptation to take His presence for granted, to look away. But God in His grace on the third day will manifest Himself in the temple.

## THERE WILL BE VERY MUCH CONCERN ABOUT THE WILL OF GOD

There is a third principle when Jesus is a young adult. Verse 49:

*"He said unto them, 'How is it you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's house?'"*

Now, they heard that. This principle that I am going to give you when Christ was a young adult, you, like Mary and Joseph, will hear it. There is more, however, than just hearing something. Notice please, the next verse:

*“They understood not the saying.”*

This saying that He gave, they heard it and it became very precious to them, but they did not understand it. You hear it, but it is not yours yet. King James says,

*“Did you not know I must be about my Father’s business.”*

At this point in the maturity of Christ you are introduced to the will of God, the Father’s business, the purpose of the Father. King James says, *“I must be about my Father’s business.”* The New American Standard says *“I must be about my Father’s house.”*; another translation says, *“I must be about my Father’s interests.”*; another translation says, *“I must be about my Father’s concerns.”*; another translation says, *“I must be about my Father’s affairs.”* Kenneth Wuest, in his expanded translation, says, *“I must be occupied in the things of my Father.”* Why are there so many different translations? Doesn’t the Greek mean only one thing? Isn’t there a word that can be easily translated? The answer is simple. In the Greek manuscripts in this place, there is no noun! It is blank! So the translators tried to help you out. Here is what Jesus said, *“Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s?”* My Father’s what? I will tell you, *“My Father’s everything.”* You must be about My Father’s business, my Father’s house, my Father’s pleasure, my Father’s will, my Father’s interest, my Father’s concerns. It is at this stage in the Christian life, as Christ begins to grow from a fetus to an infant, from an infant to a young adult, all of a sudden the will of God looms large. Now the great burden becomes, *“I need to know the will of God.”*

This is the stage where you begin to ask the question, *“What does Jesus want me to do? What is His will? Who does He want me to marry? Where does He want me to live? What is His will for my location? What is His will for my vocation? Should I go? Should I stay? Should I write? Should I sing? Should I minister? Should I attend Bible School? Should I be a lawyer, a doctor, drive a cab, work at Jiffy Lube? What is God’s will for me?”*

I am involved at this stage of the development of Christ within me, with the people of God celebrating redemption. There are times I get my eyes off the Lord, to be sure, and I leave Him behind because there are so many blessings. Then, in His grace He brings me back, calms my anxiety, and on the third day He reveals Himself. He is back in the temple. At this point, as I said, they heard Him, *“I have got to be about my Father’s business.”* They simply did not get it. They did not yet understand it.

I remember so well when I chased after the will of God in my life. I did not have a clue about the God whose will it was. It is the will of God! I was so determined to be a good Christian, and about this stage of development, I read this wonderful illustration by F. B. Meyer. He was on a boat and they were coming into a landing and there was this

great channel the boat had to follow to avoid the rocks. He said to the helmsman, “How do you know where the channel is?” And he said, “Do you see those three lights on the shore?” He said, “I move the boat around until those three lights line up and when the three lights become one light, there is the channel.” He said, “I watched those three lights, I saw them become one. I saw the boat line up with that single light and sail safely into the harbor.” Then F. B. Meyer named the three lights for us. He said, “You have to have the peace of God, you have to have circumstances, and you have to have the Word of God.” When those three lights become one light, then you will know the will of God. So I followed that, I said, “Oh, that’s good.” Except, they lined up for me several times and I missed the path. I said, “Oh! It’s not always true!” Nevertheless, I was running after the will of God.

I know one person that was so focused on the will of God in this stage of the development of Christ in her life that she plunged into a very great bondage. “Where should I shop? What time should I leave?”, she’d pray. Which car should I take, or should I walk, or take a cab or a bus? Which path should I go? What brand should I buy?” I’ll tell you, she became paranoid. Why? It was because her heart was so determined to know the will of God. I’m not saying that is bad; I’m saying that is fact. That is what happened. As Christ grows in you, as He develops, there grows with the growing of the Christ within, a burning desire in you. Yes I want to be with the people of God. Yes, occasionally I take my eyes off of Christ but I always come back and I always find Him. He always settles my anxiety. The will of God plays a very important place in the Christian’s life at this stage.

## CHRIST SUBMITS HIMSELF TO THE CHRISTIAN

There is one more characteristic. Let me set this before your heart. I say there is one more; there are probably a dozen more, but we will look at one more. Verse 51 please, John chapter 2:

*“He went down with them, came to Nazareth, and He was subject unto them and His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. Jesus advanced in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man.”*

Let me try to get this before your heart by relating it to what has gone before. Notice in verse 46, when Mary and Joseph returned, when they were looking for the missing Jesus, the Bible says it was after three days they found Him.” Now, how you understand that three days is not universally agreed upon. Commentaries differ. Some say that they went a day’s journey without Him before they noticed He was gone. Then they returned a day’s journey, which would be two days. Then they hunted and found Him on the third day. Others say, “No, the Greek will also allow this. The Greek may be saying that they came back and searched for three days.” Either way, they were panic stricken. They were wounded. They thought He had done them wrong and they gave Him, quite honestly, a reprimand. Jesus had disappointed His parents.

Now let me paraphrase what I believe is the thought here in my own words, it is not Bible words but my own words. I think this will help us focus on the fourth principle. I think it is as if Jesus said in answer to the question, “Why did you do this to us? Didn’t you know the anxiety you caused us? Didn’t you know we cared? That we have been looking for you?”

*“How is it that you were seeking me? Mom, tell me, why did you suppose that I would be with you in your caravan, going in the direction that you wanted to go in? You had a direction; you went in that direction. May I ask you this mother, why did you presume that I would be going in the direction that you chose? Is it just because you happened to be going that way? Do you presume that I would be going that way? Do you think I am obligated to go in the direction you chose?”*

It was at this point that He laid down that principle that they did not understand. “Don’t you know I have to be about my Father’s?; My Father’s everything; My Father’s business. My body is at His disposal, not yours. It is true that I am related to you; I am also related to Him. My relationship to Him is higher than my relationship to you. I have to be about His. I must be about His everything.”

Now watch it, because this is the crux of it, “I have to be about my Father’s will. I know that is a new principle to you and I know you don’t get it. Ponder it. You see, I did not teach that when I was a fetus in your heart, and you did not learn it when I was an infant, but you have to know it now. I will always be about my Father’s will; I will always be about His everything. I will always be about His pleasure.” Remember brothers, at this point the Lord Jesus is not fully mature. He is not ready for ministry, so watch what He does. Brothers, may God help us with this because this explains so much that goes on in the heart of everyone in whom Christ is being formed. Verse 51 He lays down the principle,

*“I must be about my Father’s business.”*

Then He turns around and submits to Mary.

It is not an accident. This is more than an obedient son respecting His parents. Do you realize the burden the Lord Jesus put on Mary and on Joseph? Do you realize the responsibility that was now theirs? Consider the spot that He put them in. “It is My Father’s business, and I must be concerned with that. As I am about My Father’s everything, at the same time I am going to submit to you and it will be up to you to determine what my Father’s business is.” Every time you act now, every time you move, every time you choose, every time you decide, you must ponder what I told you. You know that I must be about My Father’s, and you are going to have to ask now, ‘Is this His Father’s business?’” Christ as a young adult was all about His Father’s business; as a young adult, immature, not ready yet for ministry, also submitted to Mary and He limited Himself to her choices and her decisions. It is God’s will, but now Mary has to decide what that will is.

One of the main characteristics, brothers, of Christ as a young adult in our lives—I don't know how to say it any other way than to say this—as Christ grows in you there will be a season, there will be a time in your life when He will submit to you, as amazing at that is, and He will go where you take Him. You see, there is a time when we harness the Lord Jesus to our programs and our ideas and our ministry. We dictate the place where He is going to go. We move, and we expect Him to bless our move. We go to place A and B and say, “Come, Lord Jesus, we're going over here – and so, we go over here.” And He comes! That is the wonder of it. He comes He comes; He blesses; He ministers. We say, “All right Jesus, we're going to church.” off to church He goes. “We are going on a mission trip”; He goes to the mission trip. “We are going to visit the nursing home.”; He comes to the nursing home. “We are going to the jail”; He goes to the jail. “We are going to do some street work.” He goes to the street work. “We are going down the beaches to pass out tracts.”; He comes down to the beaches.

At this time, brothers, we are very active in ministry. He has not started to be active yet. He has not begun His ministry yet. He submits to you. He submits to me. I will tell you, this is a wonderful time in the Christian life but it is also confusing. We do not really know... We are wrestling with this thing called “The Will of God and His Father's business.” We do not understand it. We are pondering it in our heart and it looks like everything is going great because Jesus keeps submitting to us.

As a young adult, we now love the people of God and we love the things of God and we love the gatherings of God. We celebrate redemption, and now and then we take our eyes off of Jesus, but praise God we find Him again on the third day! He is rediscovered in His house; He has built that in us! That is the desire Dana is talking about: The desire for the house of God. That is where He is. He is in His temple. We must not forget at this point Jesus is letting us do it our way. At this point He is submitting to us; He is subject to us. I do not think it is an accident that this is the longest segment in the record of the development of Christ—18 years He submitted to them. He is not yet public, but they are. It is at this point is that many Christians become famous. They become popular; they author books; they make tapes; they go on mission field trips; they take pastorates; they speak at conferences; they have large reputations as the servants of God. Our ministry is well underway. His has not begun. Brothers, this will not go on forever. A unique day must come. A revolutionary hour will come when that which you are pondering in your heart, you love it but you do not get it, you treasure it but it is not clear yet, will finally become clear.



We have been following Mary. Mary is God's illustration of the Church. When is the next time Mary appears in the record? I am going to ask you to turn to John chapter 2 please. In Luke chapter 2 verse 51 we see Jesus submitting to Mary. John 2 verse 1:

*“The third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and His disciples were also bidden to the marriage. When the wine failed the mother of Jesus said unto them, ‘They have no wine.’ Jesus said unto her, ‘Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come.’ And His mother said to the servants, ‘Whatever He says, do it.’”*

See, do not read that Scripture passage, “la la la.” For 18 long years Jesus was subject to His parents, “Come on Jesus,” they would say, “we are going to go see Uncle Zechariah and Aunt Elizabeth.” Wherever they said, “We’re going,” that is where they went. “We are going to Passover.”—off to the Passover they went. “Yes mother, yes mother, yes mother, yes mother—whatever you say mother. We will go there. If you say that we are going on a mission, we will go on a mission. Any place you take Me, that is where I am happy to be going.”

Then one shocking day the conversation changed. “They have no wine”, said His mother. “Woman, what do I have to do with you?” He responded. I tell you that must have hit her like being knocked with a four by twice. Unbelievable! It is such a change! The time is going to come when He is no longer subject to you, to me, to us, but we are subject to Him.

You know what happens after that. He does His miracle and He shows forth His glory. This is where His ministry begins. I tell you, Mary had this idea, “Where I am, there Jesus will be.” Mary was incorrect in that thinking. It is not, “Where I am, there He is.” No! That is not what Jesus said. The Bible says, “Where He is, there will my servant be also.” It is not Jesus submitting to us; it is we who are submitting to Jesus. So from this point on, Jesus is no longer taking instructions from Mary.

I have met many who have not understood this transition in the development of the Lord Jesus in the heart. Somehow, they still believe Jesus is subject to Mary and so they are not focused on Him but on her. I have a few friends who are very adamant on their reverence to Mary; some are even inclined to worship Mary and all of this kind of stuff. I like to tell them it is right to obey Mary in this case. You say, “Obey Mary?” Yes! In this case we should obey Mary. Here is what Mary said, “Whatever He says, do it.” I hope you do obey Mary by doing whatever Jesus says.

You see, this is His hour now—when His ministry begins. Listen to these verses please from John 12:

*“Verily, verily I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die it abides by itself alone. But if it dies it brings forth much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it. He that hates his life in this world shall keep it. If any man serve Me let him follow Me, and were I am there shall be my servant also.”*

All of a sudden His business became her business. That which was pondered and misunderstood suddenly became clear to her. Praise God, brothers, for His great patience in our lives.

It is at this critical cross road in the formation of Christ in your heart, (I have tasted it. I have seen it in others)—when this truth dawns upon the heart, when God begins to break this day on the heart—I have seen fruitful ministries fold up. I have seen men of God walk away from the most amazing ministries because now they cannot be in the big house anymore. There has been a dawning; there has been a revelation. You ask, “Well, wasn’t there real fruit in that ministry that preceded the ministry of Jesus?” Oh yes! All the ministry of Christ the young adult—when He is submitting to us—that entire ministry, is used by God. He has been blessing our service all along. Many souls have been saved; many people have been greatly blessed. If God has been blessing your life when He was submitting to you, then we ask, “What was the problem? Why did you suddenly drop out of your ministry? Why did you leave? Quit? What happened that you no longer serve as you once did?” The answer is simple! Jesus has developed in me to the place where He is no longer subject to me. I left because I have been over here so busy for Jesus, but I discovered that He is over there. I desire now to be where He is rather than having Him where I am. For that reason alone, I now look like a quitter.”

Those who have not had Christ mature beyond that young adult stage, they do not get it. From their point of view, they think that you are backsliding. The change in your life places you on their prayer list. They think you are losing it. To them, you are dropping out. They remember when you used to be so active, and you used to be so busy, and now you are cooling off. No, you are not cooling off. Actually, the opposite is true! You have found your home; you have your resting place. No human explanation can communicate that wonderful moment when Jesus stops submitting to the Christian; but it is a transforming moment. We will never be the same when Jesus begins His ministry in us!

I tell you brothers, this happens in every believer. Christ is being formed in you. Even at this stage, He is still not mature. He is still growing, but He is not yet mature. You say, “But, I love the people of God and I love to gather.” Yes, that is part of it. “Now and then I take my eyes off the Lord, I put them on some blessing and He takes me

back and I find Jesus again.” Yes that is part of it. “I love the will of God, I just want to please Him and seek His will.” That too, is part of it. Through all of that He is submitting to you, and so you take Him on your mission trip.

Let me ask you brothers this heart-searching question, “Have you ever been with Him on His mission trip?” It is not the same thing. Praise God that He goes with you on your mission trip, and that He blesses it. Praise God that souls get saved and you are blessed. That is part of the maturity. That part will one day pass away.

There are days coming, glorious days; Jesus is maturing. We will look at that, Lord willing, tomorrow when He comes to the place where He can then pour out His life. Do not despise any stage of maturity. Some of you have said—Wayne said, “You know, He is still a fetus in my heart.” These stages—you never really grow out of them. They are always all there. Sometimes, you know, you feel as I did as I studied this. I felt I was a spectator viewing some of these realities. Even now I feel as if I were just standing at the window looking in. One wonders when it is going to be all completed. Oh brothers, do not despise any stage of the formation of Christ in your heart. You say, “He is just a fetus in my heart.” Well, bless God for that! At that stage you know it is not of man, you know it is God! Praise God for that, for you have a song! Praise God for that, for you are inclined to be with the people of God! Praise God for that, for He is guiding you even though you do not know the Word of God! That stage never goes away. You say, I am at the stage where Jesus is an infant in my heart. Well, praise God that He is separating the instrument from the Christ. Praise God that you know Him as Savior and as Lord and you know His name is Jesus and you have tasted worship and you have tasted dedication and you keep rededicating you life unto Him. That is not bad; that is all good, that is wonderful! We are not blasting any of that.

You know, we can look at some people in a judgmental way and say, “Oh, look at them, all involved in works and all” Rather, praise God, they are bringing Jesus with them! He is submitting to them and He is blessing. That is part of the maturity process! In every stage of the maturity of Christ in you, there is in His heart a longing. He is being prepared for the day when He can pour out His life redemptively through you. He is maturing in you, brother. He is maturing in me. As He grows in us, He is ever moving toward His purpose; He longs to pour Himself out to a needy world. He is moving to that end.

Now tomorrow we will look at the last two events, God gracing us. We will study Christ mature and ready to minister. May God help us, let us pray.

*Father, thank You for Your Word. Make these things real in our hearts and give us hearts of rejoicing for your great grace in our life. We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen. Thank you.*

**THE FIRST 30 YEARS**  
**THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF CHRIST # 4**

**CHRIST AS A MATURE ADULT**

Good morning, brothers. As we come to the study of God's Word there is a principle of Bible study that I desire to bring before your hearts brothers, that is absolutely indispensable. I pray as you go forward in the knowledge, (the heart knowledge) of the Lord Jesus that He would write that principle on your heart. This is not only a principle of Bible Study; it is a principle of Christian living: total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. God is ever pleased to open up His word to those who would come to Him as little children. I promise you that this is my only hope for understanding anything in this Book. That is our hope. We come to Him as little children come to their parents; we cry out to the Lord and He reveals Himself to us.

I want to share a little passage with you before we actually look at the text that we are going to be sharing together. One of the principles that God communicated through Dana this week, that has just been burning in my heart, is how God is always first in His great desire toward man. Man is a responder. It is wonderful to know that He first creates it in us and then we respond. Every year my wife and I choose a book of the Bible for our year book, and in a special devotional way we study that book through the year. This year we are studying Ezra, and oh my, what a book that book is! So much about what Dana was sharing with us is familiar to me because at least the first part of Ezra, chapter one through chapter six, has to do with the rebuilding of the temple. Now I want to share a verse from Ezra but to lead up to it I am going to quote a couple of other verses in terms of God's desire. If I were to quote you a verse like Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 10:

*“Turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul”*

By adding those words,

*“With all your heart and soul”*

what would I be saying, or what would God be saying? Why does He add those words, “*Do it, but with all your heart and soul.*”? This whole idea of seeking with all the heart and all the soul seems to be so intense that, you know... God certainly is going to do it. Now, turn please to Jeremiah 32. Jeremiah 32 please! The book of Ezra has to do with God's great desire to restore His people out of captivity and bring them back to the land. Now look at Jeremiah 32. I am going to begin at verse 37:

*“Behold I will gather them out of the lands to which I have driven them in my anger, in my wrath, in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place.”*

(There is His desire.)

*“I will make them dwell in safety, they shall be my people, I will be their God. I will give them one heart, one way that they may fear me always for their own good and for the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do good to them. I will put the fear of me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from me. I will rejoice over them to do good. I will faithfully plant them in this land...”*

(Now watch)

**“with all my heart and with all my soul.”**

It is one thing if God tells you to seek Him with all your heart and all your soul; it is another thing when He says, *“It is my delight to plant you in the land and I am going to do it with all my heart and with all my soul.”* Now in order to do that, in Ezra there is a recurring expression: God stirred them up. God stirred them up. He stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, stirred up Zerubbabel, stirred up Joshua and He stirred up the remnant. God stirred them up. I was interested in that expression as I studied Ezra. I was only one verse deep when I received a little light on what it might mean. How does God stir us up? He wants to plant us in the land with all His heart. He wants us to seek Him with all our heart. In order to do that, He stirs us up. How does He do it? In Ezra chapter 1 verse 1 concerning the great decree of Cyrus, it says,

*“He sent a proclamation and put it in writing.”*

If you follow that expression, “stirred them up,” you will notice those two things... I do not know if it is a hundred percent of the time, but it is very, very often. He sends out a herald; He writes it down. He puts it in writing. Dana and I, in a special way, have been very privileged this weekend to be heralds. We are the Lord’s messengers. He has also put it in writing. This Bible is the place where His promises are written.

What is it all about? I tell you what it is all about, “God has a great desire to plant us in the land, to take us home, to bring us into His temple truth.” Great desire! With all of His heart and soul He wants to do it, but to do that He has to first stir us up. He does this by, every now and then, bringing a messenger into our lives. He also has written it down in the Bible. When you hear the Word of God, know that it is God stirring you up so that you can line up with His desires. Anyway, let us ask the Lord to stir us up through His messenger and His written Word.

*Father, thank You so much for your precious Word. Thank you for the wonderful way You stir up Your people to respond to Your great desire. Lord, it almost takes our breath away to realize what You want to do for us with all Your heart and all Your soul. Our hearts say "yes." Stir us up, we pray, and in a special way in this final message, tie together all the loose ends and clinch these wonderful truths in our hearts. We commit this session now unto You and we trust the Holy Spirit to minister the Lord Jesus in a living way to every heart. These things we ask, claiming it in His matchless name, Amen.*

## BRIEF REVIEW

Well, I think this morning I will not take too much time for review. You know what we have been looking at. We are looking at this wonderful 30 year segment of the life of the Lord Jesus, and I have suggested that as He once came, so He comes. As He was progressively revealed on the earth, that is how He is progressively revealed in our hearts. We have tried to trace that reality by looking at the Bible record—when He was a fetus, when He was an infant, and when He was a young adult; now this morning we want to study Him as an adult who has reached maturity. All of that was to prepare Him for His ministry; to prepare Him for the day when He could pour out His life redemptively on the earth. We began our study with the sigh from Galatians 4:19:

*“My little children with whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you.”*

It was the apostle’s desire to see Christ formed in Christians. That was his baby! He wanted to see in those he addressed, Christ being formed. It is our burden as well.

Now if you still have that little outline that we are following you will notice that there are two stories that describe the full maturity of our Lord Jesus just before He began His public ministry. I am referring to the story of His baptism and the story of His temptation in the wilderness. I acknowledge that some attempt to make the temptation of the Lord Jesus the beginning of His ministry rather than the end of His preparation, but I am going to ask you to humor me this morning, at least for today and believe it is really the end of His preparation for ministry. I have several reasons that cause me to believe it is the end of His preparation rather than the beginning of His ministry, not the least of which is Matthew 4:10, the words of our Lord Jesus to Satan, *“Be Gone!”* It seems like that was the end of the test. It seems like the first Adam was tested and failed; now our Last Adam is victorious – Be Gone! Satan is conquered. Now the Lord Jesus has victoriously finished His preparation.

The question we have been asking, is, “What will my life look like when Christ passes from young adult into His fully mature stage?” When He is finally ready to start His ministry, when I am finally ready to set mine aside so that He can pour out His life through me, what will that experience be?

## THE BAPTISM AND THE TEMPTATION OF THE LORD JESUS

I want you to notice how closely connected these two stories are. You can either just listen as I quote the verses or look them up, God links the record of the baptism of Christ and the temptation of our Lord Jesus in an organic way. It is such a tight link. Matthew 4 begins with the thought that there is no time separation between the two events. Immediately after His baptism without intermission, Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.

Luke 4 verse 1 gives one the same impression. Luke 4:1 says:

*“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan  
and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”*

Mark, in his distinctive way, uses the word “straightway” to describe the transition. Mark 1:14:

*“Straightway the Spirit drives Him into the wilderness.”*

Kenneth Wuest—I do not know if you are familiar with that Expanded Translation, but that translation has been of great benefit to me as I study—anyway, Kenneth Wuest in his expanded translation of the New Testament has said in effect, “I do not care how many English words it takes to show the nuance of the Greek. If it takes a sentence, if it takes a paragraph, if it takes an entire page, whatever it takes to communicate the meaning of the Greek word, that is the space I will take as I seek to translate the Greek. I want to communicate to English readers, the precision of the original language.” It is called an expanded translation, and it is just that; it gives a wonderful insight into some of the Greek language. Anyway, he translates Mark 1:12 this way:

*“And immediately the Spirit thrusts Him into the uninhabited place.”*

The point is that there seems to be little doubt that God intended that these two stories be connected. They belong together. God has put them together. I believe there is a reason for that, and I believe that these two stories graphically illustrate the entire reality of the 30 years.

### THIRTY YEARS OF TESTIMONY TO HIS PERFECT LIFE

You know our Lord Jesus was born of a woman, born under the law to live a life according to the law. Jesus came to do what Adam could not do. Jesus lived as our substitute; He was man as God created man to be. All through those 30 years we can read the full record of His perfect life. I told you, we have a full record; it is not long, but it is full. It is a complete record. The one thing we know for certain about those 30 years, is that He lived a spotless life. He lived a perfect life. I did not mention it yesterday in our discussion, but His perfection was also illustrated when He was a young adult.

He submitted to His parents; His heart was set on His Fathers everything. When He submitted to His parents He was rightly related to man. When He submitted to His Father’s everything He was rightly related to God. Those two directions represent the two tables of the law. He is “rightly related to man”; He is “rightly related to God.” I think as we come now to these last two stories, we have His perfection illustrated again. In His maturity, I think the record of His baptism illustrates that He was rightly related to



man; His temptation in the wilderness illustrates that He was rightly related to God. That is Christ in His maturity. Maturity is when you are rightly related to man, and you are also rightly related to God. Then you are ready to minister. In His baptism when He fulfills all righteousness and in His temptation when He identifies with sinners, He proves that He is rightly related to man and rightly related to His Holy Father, God.

Now, I want us to look at the records of His baptism and at His temptation, but as you know that is a big chunk of Scripture. One could spend a lot of time meditating on the Scriptures that describe the wonderful baptism of our Lord Jesus and the temptation in the wilderness. I could do a whole series just on those passages. So, by necessity we can only touch the surface. I just desire to see the heart of God. I want to just be able to understand, “What is it like when He is mature; what does it look like? What will it look like in me when Christ is formed in me to the place where He can minister?”

### THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD JESUS (MATTHEW 3:1-17; MARK 1:1-11; LUKE 3:1-22; JOHN 1:19-34)

I am going to ask you to turn to Matthew’s gospel please, chapter 3. We will begin sort of in the middle of the record. Chapter 3, beginning at verse 13:

*“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized of him. But John would have hindered Him saying, ‘I have need to be baptized of thee. Comest thou to me?’ Jesus, answering, said unto him, ‘Suffer it now for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he suffered Him and Jesus when He was baptized went up straightway from the water and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him. And He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove coming upon Him. And lo, a voice out of the heavens saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”*

Mark’s record pretty much says the same thing. Luke adds one detail. In Luke chapter 3 verse 21 Luke tells us that when the dove descended on Jesus He was praying. Luke tells us He was praying. You see, when the multitudes went into the waters of Jordan they did not go in to pray. They went in to repent. Jesus did not have to repent. He did not go in to repent; He went in to pray. The apostle John tells us that it was the coming of the dove that was the signal to his heart that this was Messiah. Listen to John 1 verse 33 and 34:

*“I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize in water, He said to me, ‘Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on Him, the same is He that baptizes in the Holy Spirit,’ and I have seen. I have born witness. This is the Son of God.”*

This baptism I believe, pictures the Lord Jesus in His maturity, first as He stands before men. Now, in order to save time I am just going to dip in and get the facts because the facts always fossilize these everlasting principles. So we will just take a fact and discover the truth in the fact. What is the truth in the next fact, the following fact, and so on?

## THE DOVE

Let me mention three facts about this precious baptism. The first is the dove. See, you cannot study the baptism of the Lord Jesus and leave the dove out. You have to have the dove. That is part of this record. But we must clear our minds, I think, from these notions we have about the dove. We are all familiar with the expression: The dove of peace. That is not what this is about. The dove that descended in the baptism of the Lord Jesus was not to picture the dove of peace. Well, I would guess that probably that expression came from Noah's dove. Remember? The dove was sent out after the raven and then returned with the olive leaf in its mouth. In Mark's statement of the words our Lord Jesus made, that we ought to be "as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves", I also believe has no reference to the baptism dove. I do not think that is what this passage is talking about.

If you study the record of our Lord Jesus in His maturity as He is forming... you will note that this is not the first time we saw the dove. Very early in the forming of our Lord Jesus we saw the dove. In Luke chapter 2 verse 24 Mary and Joseph brought a dove as a sacrifice when they dedicated the Lord Jesus. In fact, they brought a pair of doves. Why did they do that? Well, it was because of Leviticus 5 verse 7,

*"If you cannot afford a lamb you could bring the dove."*

You see, the lamb was a picture—a substitute for the sinner. A dove was also a picture—a substitute for the lamb which was a substitute for the sinner. What if you could not afford a lamb? Why, then you would bring a dove. But what if you could not afford a dove? Then the Bible says, "*Just bring a pinch of flour in your hand.*" God's heart was, "Don't stay away, come!" The flour was the substitute for the dove; the dove was a substitute for the lamb; the lamb was a substitute for the sinner. As our Lord Jesus stood in the water's of His baptism, the dove came on Him. I think we would better understand it if it were not a dove, a bird. If a lamb were lowered from the sky and settled upon Him, then you would know the principle. If a cross came down, then you would understand the descent of the dove. He is being anointed for His mission. That is why later He said,

*"Are you ready to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"*

The dove is picturing the cross. It is His death that is being pictured. Do you want to know what Jesus looks like in His maturity? You cannot understand that concept without the cross.

In the water's of the Jordan, He is standing in the middle of those He has come to save. He is identifying with sinners. Now, He did not have to do that. That is a big point. John makes much of that point and the Bible goes on to develop it. You do not have to do that, Lord Jesus! You do not have to identify with sinners. The fact that Jesus had a choice in the matter is exactly what makes it maturity. "I do not have to do it, that is true, but I choose to stand and identify, with sinners and pour out my life for them." I tell you, when Jesus develops that much in your heart and mind, that you willingly take your stand in the water's of death, you are experiencing the maturity of Jesus in your heart.

Did you notice that the dove and the Holy Spirit are closely connected? It is because in maturity one cannot think about dying without the Holy Spirit's enabling. It is all part of this maturity. The duty to die belongs to you. The duty to die belongs to me. The power to die, however, belongs to Him. Only He can do it. It is a glorious day when Christ is formed in us to the place, not because we have to, but because we want to, we stand and identify with sinners. It is the maturity of Christ in us when we are enabled to say and mean, "I know I had my own ambitions, I had my own desires, but not anymore. I want to die. By the power of the Holy Spirit I want to stand with sinners and identify with them. I am willing to die as their representatives." I tell you, that is the first part of His maturity: Separated, standing in the water in identification with them and by the power of the Holy Spirit, dying.

## THE OPENED HEAVENS

All right, hold that a moment. There is another fact. Matthew 3:16,

*"Lo, the heavens were opened."*

I told you that Luke informed us that Jesus was praying as He stood there in the water. He was praying. There is an expression that the Bible uses a number of times. I have been in some fellowships where they have actually captured this expression as a principle. People automatically know what is meant when they hear the expression. Have you heard this? What would I mean if I said to you, "Are you living under an open heaven?" You see, in some groups they have attached meaning to those words. "To stand under an open heaven" illustrated by Ezekiel's experience, means to have special visions of God. It has to do with a relationship, a communication. God has opened the heavens before this test of maturity. To the sinner the heavens are closed. To the immature Christian, for the most part, the heavens are closed. Do you want to know what maturity is? It expresses itself in being willing to die for others, not because you have to, but because you want to. The cross has come upon you. You identify with sinners. It also means that you stand under an open heaven; there is a two way communication taking place. There is nothing hindering fellowship with God. The heaven is open and there is free communication between the One in heaven and the one standing in the water willingly identifying with sinners. I tell you, that is the baptism of Christ. That is how He stands before men.

## GOD IS WELL PLEASED

Then there is one more principle, and it is that glorious word, in Matthew 3:17:

*“A voice out of the heavens, ‘This is My beloved Son  
in whom I am well pleased.’”*

This is the voice of God’s approval. Jesus had found His home. You know that satisfaction Dana was talking about? His delight was to please the Father. He was always about the Father’s everything, and now God is pleased. The baptism of the Lord Jesus describes a mature Christian before men. Christ, mature in my heart, expresses itself when I am willing to die for the sake of others by the power of the Holy Spirit; when I stand under an open heaven and have this wonderful relationship with God; when God expresses His joy and says at last, “I am satisfied. I am happy. I am fulfilled.” This is my desire because His desire is my desire. It is this *glorious* fulfillment.

When Christ is mature in you that is what you will look like. You will be dead to yourself and all of your ambitions. You will be identifying with sinners although you will be separated from them. You will be standing under an open heaven in free communication with the Lord and you will hear Him say, “Have you considered my servant Job? Look at him. I am so happy. I am so satisfied.”

## THE TEMPTATION OF THE LORD JESUS (MATTHEW 4:1-11; MARK 1:12,13; LUKE 4:1-13)

All right, hold that for a moment, that is how it looks before man when Jesus is mature. What does it look like before God? I want us to read Luke’s account, if you will turn, please, to Luke chapter 4 beginning at verse 1:

*“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days being tempted by the devil. He did eat nothing during those days. When the days had ended He became hungry and the devil said unto Him, ‘If Thou art the Son of God command that this stone become bread.’ Jesus answered unto him, ‘It is written, “man shall not live by bread alone.”’ And he led Him up and he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. The devil said unto Him, ‘To thee will I give all this authority and the glory of them for it has been delivered unto me and I will give it to whomsoever I will give it if Thou therefore will worship before me it shall all be Thine.’ Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘It is written, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shall thou serve.”’ And he led Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said unto Him, ‘If Thou art*

*the Son of God cast thyself down from hence for it is written, "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee to guard Thee" and "on their hands they shall bear Thee up lest haply Thou shall dash Thy foot against a stone." And Jesus answering said unto him, 'It is said, "thou shall not make trial of the Lord thy God,"' and when the devil had completed every temptation he departed from Him for a season."*

Now some would say that Matthew's order of these temptations—first the temptation of turning the stones to bread, then the temptation to cast Himself down from the temple and finally seeing the kingdoms of the world as a reward for worshipping Satan—is the proper order. Also, Matthew is the one that says at the end, "*Be gone Satan*", which looks like the temptations are concluded. I think, because Matthew gives one order of events and Luke gives another, that probably the order is not important. For our discussion we are going to follow Luke's order because I think that is the spiritual order. In other words, Christ is tempted in the wilderness; He is tempted on the mountain; He is tempted in the holy city, in the temple. I do not have any doubt that you have probably been tempted in the wilderness. I have no doubt you have probably been tempted on the mountain. Undoubtedly you have had some very spiritual temptations in the temple and in the holy city. Well, it is my privilege to announce some good news to you. Your substitute, our Lord Jesus, has had victory in the wilderness, He has had victory on the mountain, and He has had victory in the holy city and the temple.

## REPRESENTATIVE TEMPTATIONS

Almost all who study this portion of the Scripture point out that there are three temptations mentioned, and they must be representative temptations. Well, that must be true because Hebrews 5:7, 8 tells us that He was tempted all 30 years. Luke chapter 4 verse 2 tells us that He was tempted all 40 days. Luke chapter 4 verse 13 tells us,

*"After this time He was tempted again because it was until an opportune time."*

In other words, He was tempted before the temptation in the wilderness, He was tempted during the temptation in the wilderness, and He was tempted after the temptation in the wilderness. So the question is, "Why does the Holy Spirit focus on these three?" Some say, "Well, you know, if you read the beginning of the Bible, Genesis chapter 3 verse 6 when Eve was tempted, you find that the tree was good for food; it was a delight to the eyes; it was desirous to make one wise. Three. And you can compare them to the experience of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness and they are the same" (they say). There are others that say, "No, that's not it, rather it is 1 John 2:16, '*All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life.*' Three. Those are the three areas in which Jesus was tempted" Still others say, "No, no, you're missing it. He was actually tempted in body, soul, spirit. He was tempted in all three areas." Others say, "No, no, no. You too have missed the point. He was tempted in mind, emotion and will." The way to study it says another commentator, is to realize that God has given us three natural desires—the desires to enjoy, to acquire and to accomplish. Those three

desires are the areas in which He was tempted. Someone else says, “Haven’t you ever read about the world, the flesh, the devil? Those are the three areas of vulnerability in which Jesus was tempted.” I think a lot of those suggestions miss the bottom line.

## THE BOTTOM LINE OF ALL TEMPTATION

You know, you read all of those things and you try to put all that together. Trust the Lord with me, brothers, as we look at this, because we have not come to Black Rock to play games. We have come here because we have found a Savior, a Savior who, with all His heart and soul, loves you. Not only loves you, He is in love with you. He wants to plant you in the land. He wants to stir you up and get a desire burning in your heart so that you can know His desire. He wants to bring you home. He wants us to see His heart, His temple, His house. He wants to manifest Himself, as Dana beautifully painted last evening. What a picture! I wanted to sign up for the next bus to be out of here. Christ finally will have His day. What a day for Jesus, when He is finally manifest through His corporate body. Oh! What a gem that will shine through.

Anyway, there is a passage that, to my heart, has served as a little key that unlocks this entire temptation thing. So I am going to ask you to actually turn there please. The passage is in II Corinthians 11. I am going to deliberately miss all the context and just sort of dip down into this one burden that the apostle has expressed. II Corinthians 11:3, Paul says:

*“I’m afraid as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness,  
your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and  
purity of devotion to Christ.”*

In other words Paul said, “I’ve got some concerns for you Corinthian Christians. I don’t want Satan doing to you what he did to Eve in the garden.” What did he do to Eve? He bumped her away from the simplicity and devotion to Christ. Quite apart from everything else, that is what the temptation in Eden was all about. It had to do with devotion to Jesus. Satan does not want us to trust the Lord. He hates simplicity and devotion to Christ. That is what happened in the garden; that is what the temptation in the wilderness is all about. Satan has got to try, somehow, to get Jesus to break union with His Father.

I don’t want to play with this. I don’t want to be misunderstood, and I certainly don’t want to be irreverent or careless. I think if you were to go up to the average Christian and you just say, “Temptation” they would register something other than Paul mentions in II Corinthians 11. In the mind of the average Christian, temptation is more than distracting someone from their simplicity and devotion to the Lord. They relate temptation to some moral departure from God’s law. Temptation, they say, is Satan’s attempt to get someone to sin. That is not the approach Paul took; he feared something far worse than a moral fall. Quite honestly, Satan is not trying to get Jesus to chase skirts. That’s not what this is about. There is no temptation in the record where Satan is trying to get Jesus addicted to some substance or to get Him involved in some embezzlement or

some kind of fraud or something like that. He is not trying to get Him angry so that He swears and says bad words or loses His temper. Satan is not trying to get Him to be a gambler or a pervert. That is what we think about when we say, "Temptation." Boy I've been through a temptation. We think of that kind of temptation, but it is deeper than that. Satan is actually trying to shake Jesus from His simplicity and His devotion to His Holy Father God. You are not going to understand maturity if you do not understand this as the nature of Satan's temptations. In the temptations, Satan is trying to cause Jesus to break union with His Father; step away from His devotion to God.

In passing, let me say this brothers, because, what is true of the Head is true of the members. I am convinced that Satan is a million times more concerned about breaking your fellowship with your God than to get you to run away with your secretary, or to get you hooked on some internet pornography or something like that. When he tempts us to turn stone to bread or to desire mammon, or to throw ourselves from the temple, it's all about attacking our union with God. He can't stand it when we are related to God. To make this practical, let me try to take each temptation and just give the heart of each temptation. We don't have time to get any deeper than that.

## THE TEMPTATION TO DOUBT THE LOVE OF GOD

In order to destroy the simplicity and devotion that our Lord Jesus had to His Father God, Satan first tried to get Him to doubt the love of God. That was the first temptation, to doubt God's love. See, our Lord Jesus had just stood under an open heaven and heard a voice from heaven:

*"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."*

And Satan begins:

*"If you are the Son of God..."*

It is not surprising that Satan begins there. You look at the facts of the temptation and you can see the power of this temptation. He is doing what he did to Eve, "Are you sure the Father loves you? Why is God holding back? Why won't the Lord allow you to touch that tree? He doesn't want you to have it." See, our Lord Jesus was in an uninhabited wilderness, a dry place, a barren place. Ever been there? Have you ever been in the dry place? It was bad enough that it was the dry place; add to that the fact that Jesus was all alone. You see, the angels did not come until after it was over to minister to Him. The temptation was heightened because our Lord Jesus was surrounded by wild beasts. Then too, Jesus was worn out physically. He was tired. He was hungry. That is the power of the temptation. Satan suggested, "If God loved you would He allow this in your life? Why doesn't He rescue you? Why does He permit this terrible situation? How come He doesn't respond to your need?"

Brothers in Christ, there is such a destructive element in that suggestion, "If God loves me, He will deliver me. If He does not deliver me, He does not love me." God's

love must never be measured by any outward circumstance. Satan actually whispered this in the ear of our Lord Jesus as He hung upon the cross. As He hung on the cross, Matthew 27:43:

*“If He is the Son of God, let Him come down.”*

He trusts in God and then he made this comment:

*“Let Him deliver Him if He delights in Him.”*

Oh, how subtle. Satan made a connection between deliverance and delight. Satan suggested that if God does not deliver, then God does not delight. Oh, I'll tell you brothers, Satan would love to have you hold God's love in suspicion when your bread fails, when your strength fails, when your health fails, when your opportunities dry up, when things get tough and difficult and murky, and you become confused. I do not have a lot of time to develop this, but I know this much, it kills the devil when you trust the love of God. “He loves me.” No matter what He allows in my life, nothing can shake me from that reality. He loves me! See, that is part of maturity, “He loves me, no matter what.” Even when our Lord Jesus had that orphan cry:

*“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”*

He would not let go of, “My God.” It's still His God,

*“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”*

When I look at some of these facts, my heart goes out in sympathetic love to those under attack. I know some dear brothers here and some of you know who I am talking about, who are facing such an onslaught at the present moment. You guys who are single, alone, or widowers, honestly Satan tries to get you there. He takes advantage of the fact that you are alone. Jesus was all alone. Sometimes he attacks when you are run down, tired and weary. Adam fell before the temptation for food and he wasn't even hungry. Amazing! The temptation comes when you are surrounded by wild beasts. We all have our set of beasts. You have your jackals and hyenas, I have mine. In times like these Satan suggests, “God doesn't love you.” When you look around you see all these circumstances, you begin to ask questions. “Why am I alone? Why am I single? Why doesn't God give me a life partner? How come, God? I've been praying that God would give me a life partner. He must not love me. Why do I have this disease? Why must I live with chronic pain? Why is God allowing this?” If Satan can get you to doubt God's love, he has succeeded. You see, God wants to minister through you, but He is not ready to minister until He finds somebody in whom He can be formed in such a way that they will not doubt the love of God no matter what happens.



Let me summarize this first temptation with a couple of verses from Jeremiah 31. Jeremiah 31 verses 2 and 3:

*“Thus says the Lord, the people of God found grace in the wilderness. Israel when it went to find its rest.”  
The Lord appeared to him from afar saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”*

How do you find grace in the wilderness? You hear God from afar saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” You know what that means? I think we’ve touched on that before. What is an everlasting love? His love is everlasting at both ends. What that means practically is that He will never stop loving you, and that He has never started to love you. He has always loved you. He loves you with an everlasting love; it never had a starting point. From eternity He has loved you. Don’t doubt it. That is maturity. There is grace in the wilderness for those who cannot be shaken from the reality that God loves them.

## THE TEMPTATION TO DOUBT THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE LORD

All right, let us look at the second temptation. Chapter 4 verses 5 to 8. Once again Christ is our representative. He had this temptation in the extreme. He had all the kingdoms of the entire world, and all the glory of all the kingdoms of the entire world pass before His eyes in a moment of time. I don’t know how that happened. At best we will have a little wedge of gold, a seat of honor and an hour of glory offered to us. Jesus had it all laid out before Him. What was the point of that temptation? Do you see? To the Lord Jesus His Father was everything. His Father was His life. Jesus could say, “For me to live is My Father. My meat is to do will of Him that sent me. I am happy in God. I am satisfied in Him. I am fulfilled; I am complete in God.” Satan dangles everything—the whole world—everything before the Lord Jesus. It was as if Satan was asking, “Isn’t there something else, something here, anything, that will get you to doubt God’s sufficiency? Look at what I place before your eyes. Isn’t there something in the world that will take You off track? Is He really sufficient? Is He really enough? Satan will do all in his power to get Christ to lose His simplicity and devotion to His Father. His tactics haven’t changed through the years. If Satan cannot get you to doubt that God loves you, he will try to get you to doubt that God is sufficient. This whole temptation came before the Lord in a moment of time. I tried to apply that to my heart. The closest I could come to that ploy was to relate it to my daydreaming. I am a daydreamer. I don’t know if you ever daydream but every now and then I just sort of sit in a trance. I then picture what is going to happen in my life, how this is going to happen and that is going to happen. In a moment of time I see myself as one who is going to get rich, or going to be famous, or going to address millions with a life changing message...all this kind of foolishness. I ask you brothers, “Is Jesus enough? Is He enough?” You see, if you can say yes to that question, well, that is maturity.

Before man, if Christ is mature in me, I am willing to die by the power of the Holy Spirit and pour out my life. If Christ is mature in me I am standing under an open heaven and I am bringing satisfaction to the heart of God. If Christ is mature in me, I also have a standing before the Lord. Before God, I do not doubt His love no matter what wilderness I am in. What do I have on earth to desire? I desire nothing but Him. In heaven there is nothing but Him. Is He enough? Is He adequate? See, He brings us to that place. He said, "I want to minister, but I need somebody who will never doubt my love; I need somebody who I have convinced that I am sufficient; I am enough. When the world is laid before us in all of its vain glory, and the opportunities of dominion are presented to us, Is He enough then?"

## THE TEMPTATION TO DOUBT THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

The last temptation is recorded in chapter 4 verse 9. I think this is the most subtle of all the temptations because it takes place in the temple. It appears to be the most spiritual of the temptations. It takes place in the holy city. Once again, Satan's target is relationship with God. He is trying to shake Jesus so that He will doubt His Father's love; he is trying to shake Jesus so He will doubt that His Father is sufficient. Now he comes again, and this time his attack is, "God is not faithful." God is not faithful. To press his point home, he quotes Psalm 91. In effect he says, "God has given you a promise. His angels are going to watch over you, they are going to protect you so that you don't even stub your toe. He has promised You that in His Messianic Psalm. Can You trust His promise? Will He keep His word? Go ahead, jump! See if He will keep His word; He is not faithful." It was a temptation to take—now watch this, brothers—to take your eyes off the faithfulness of God and place your eyes on your own faith. Jump. Prove His faithfulness. Trust Him. Put your eyes on your faith. If he can get you to take your eyes off the fact that God loves you; if Satan can get you to believe that God is not enough; if the enemy can get you to believe that God is not faithful, then he wins.

This is Christ in His maturity, "I trust Him no matter what, because He loves me. I don't care what the situation looks like; it doesn't matter what I have or I don't have. I love Him because He first loved me. Satan may place the whole world before me, I don't need it, I have Him! I have Him! He is enough! I have the Lord. I will ever trust His faithfulness; I'm not going to trust my faith. Satan will not jar me from my simplicity and devotion to Christ."

Sometimes of my life people have said, "You know, I am impressed. This is amazing! You live by faith." I check them on that statement every time, I do not live by my faith. I live by His faithfulness. That is not the same thing. It is a different direction altogether.. I'll tell you, brothers, the life which is not shaken from simplicity and devotion to the Lord, that is a life in which Christ has matured. "Doubt His love, look to circumstances; doubt His sufficiency, look to this old vain world; doubt His faithfulness, look to your faith.", says the enemy of our souls. That is the goal of all temptation. Of course there is more, brothers, but I think that is the heart of it. How do we end? That is Christ in His maturity

Our hearts respond, "Tell me how. I want such a life! Tell me how I may have it; make it practical!" Let me give you the key to the whole thing, brothers, and may God write this in your heart. When our Lord Jesus, for 30 years lived this way, the Bible tells us that He was living as our Representative, right? He lived as your Substitute; in your place; in your room and stead. If we were to go to the average Christian and say, "Is Christ your Substitute?" He would say, "Yes! He died for me. He is my Substitute Savior." Let me ask, "Was He your Substitute on the cross, yes or no?" Believe it with all your heart. He was certainly your Substitute on the cross. Let's back up. "Was He your Substitute in Gethsemane? Was He your Substitute when He was tempted in the wilderness? Was He there, your Example or your Substitute? Did He do it first so you could learn how to do it second? Or did He do it once so that you would never have to do it? Ah! There is the key. Was He your Substitute in the waters of baptism? Do you see my point? You say, "I've reckoned myself dead with Him; I believe in identification truth. I know that I am dead in Christ." Have you ever reckoned on His circumcision, because you are also circumcised in Christ with a circumcision not made with hands? Have you ever taken His circumcision like you have taken His death? He lived as your Substitute. That is how He did it then, and I said, "As He came, He comes."

Do not get this idea, "Now He is in my heart and I have to get Him to grow beyond this fetal position and get into some kind of an infancy. I have to quit looking to instruments; I am going to have to really work on that." You do not have to quit looking to instruments. You do not have to try to get Jesus to develop beyond the fetal stage into infancy; out of the infancy stage into some more advanced stage. I do not have to say, "I am going to stop dragging Jesus on all my mission trips." It is not about that! He has come into your heart to be your Substitute. This is Christ being formed in you. I have little doubt that almost everybody here, or everybody here, has at one time said, "Lord, I trust your death, you died for me, you are my Substitute, thank you for your death." Brothers, have you as deliberately trusted God to live for you as you once trusted Him to die for you? He wants to be your Substitute. He wants to come into your heart and to live in you. It is Him growing! You say, "What is my responsibility?" There is one gospel duty, and it is not to get out of the fetal position and get into infancy, and get out of infancy into young adult. That is His job! He is the One that is growing! Your responsibility is to abide in the vine. Abide in Christ. Continually, just look to Christ and He will grow; then you look to Him again and He will grow some more. He will grow and grow and never stop being formed in you.

There is not a shot, not a chance in the world, that when things come against me; the beasts come against me; I get tired and worn down; I get discouraged and find myself in the wilderness, that I will not be tempted to look away from Christ. When I am all alone and Satan comes against me and the whole world is presented to me on a platter, do you think I am not going to doubt that He loves me??? Of course I am going to doubt it! I wish I could tell you that I would always know that He is enough. But I know my heart; I am going to run after the stupid vanity and vexation he dangles before me. I am going after it. That is why I need to look to Christ. I will fail, but Jesus will not fail; He is not going after those things. *It is His life that is the secret to my life..*

My son Steven said, “When you end this morning you better end with Philippians 1 verse 6:

*‘I am confident brothers that He who has begun a good work in you,’*

Can you finish it?

*‘Will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.’”*

He is in you. He is going to grow. Look to Him. Abide in Him. Do not try to live it; He did not live those 30 years to teach you how live. He did it because you couldn't do it! There is only one Person who has ever lived the Christian life. His name is Jesus, and He wants to live it again in you. He wants to bring you to the place and me to the place where He is mature in us. He desires to conform me so to Christ that His maturity will be manifest through me. I don't have to, but I want to die to self; I want to stand under an open heaven; I desire to have a relationship with God. I want to bring satisfaction to His heart. I want to hold on to His love no matter what; know that He is enough no matter what, and believe that He is faithful no matter what. God says, “Now I am ready. Now I will start to minister.” May God work this in our heart; let us pray.

*Our Father, how glad we are that by Your Word, Your vows are binding on us. You never leave an unfinished symphony. You always complete what You begin. Thankful we are that You have begun a good work in us. We have great confidence now that You will fulfill it, complete it to the end. Grow in us Lord Jesus. Amen.*