

Luke 2:40-52 ⁴⁰ And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. ⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. ⁴³ And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. ⁴⁴ But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. ⁴⁵ And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. ⁴⁶ And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. ⁴⁹ And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? ⁵⁰ And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. ⁵¹ And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. ⁵² **And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**

- We know much about the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ from gospel writers Matthew and Luke.
- However, Jesus disappears completely from our view from the age of 2 until He begins His ministry at the age of 30, with the exception of this one brief sighting in the Temple at the age of 12.
- Much conjecture, supposition and mythology has arisen surrounding “the silent years” of Jesus, but **the Bible is purposely silent to establish a pattern.** Abraham had endless weeks of wandering toward a vague promise, Moses his lengthy years in a lonely desert, Joseph his prolonged prison terms, David his dull days of obscurity as a shepherd boy, Paul his extended period of anonymity in the desert of Arabia and a self-imposed exile in his remote hometown of Damascus. **This was a time of proving!**

JESUS, THE SON OF GOD ...

1. A Divine Lineage

- Jewish genealogies usually named for an ancestor, this one named for its final descendant.
- Unusual for women to be named in genealogies, but Matthew names five: Tamar was a Canaanite woman who posed as a prostitute to seduce Judah, Rahab was a Gentile and a prostitute, Ruth was a Moabite woman whose offspring were forbidden to enter the assembly of the Lord for ten generations, Bathsheba committed adultery with King David, and Mary bore the stigma of pregnancy outside of wedlock. Five object lessons about the power of grace!
- Jeconiah's presence in this genealogy (v.11) presents an interesting dilemma. A curse on him forbade any of his descendants from the throne of David forever (Jeremiah 22:30). Since Jesus was heir through Joseph to the royal line of descent, but not a physical son of Joseph, this curse bypassed him. He was the answer to this “riddle of the Rabbis.”
- Joseph's entry in the genealogy (v.16) is the only one where the word “begot” is not used, including those where whole generations were skipped. The pronoun “whom” is singular, referring to Mary alone. This entry emphatically underscores the miraculous birth.

2. A Virgin Birth

- Matthew 1:23 quotes Isaiah 7:14 which says, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”
- Some liberal scholars have pointed out that the Hebrew word “almah” can mean merely “a young woman.” Their attempt to disprove the virgin birth is misguided because:
 - * The word “almah” is used seven times in the Hebrew Bible and in each instance it either explicitly means a virgin or implies it, because “almah” always refers to an unmarried woman of good reputation. (i.e. Rebekah in Genesis 24:43)
 - * More than two centuries before Jesus was born, the Hebrew Bible was translated into the Greek Septuagint. The Jewish translators chose the Greek word “parthenos,” a word which unequivocally means “virgin,” to render the word “almah.” Many reputable Jewish commentators, both ancient and modern, do not believe in the virgin birth of Christ but are still honest enough to support this translation. Matthew chose to use this word!
- The reactions to Jesus' birth range from the worship of the shepherds to the indifference of the innkeeper. “The servant is not greater than his Lord” (John 15:20), and our “supernatural birth” (new birth) is received in various ways by others. Some are indifferent, some even get angry, but others worship God at our birth! **This new birth puts us in a “royal lineage” and is “not conceived” by man! It is a miraculous birth!**

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ⁹ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves

with mankind,¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Peter 1:18-19, 23¹⁸ Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ...²³ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

BUT AFTER THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH COME THE SILENT YEARS ...

- We know only a few details of Jesus' life during the 28 silent years ...
 - Pagan wisemen followed His star for many arduous miles and found the Messiah.
 - Hebrew scholars knew God's Word but were indifferent to a Messiah living five miles away.
 - Herod had all children under two murdered in an attempt to kill Him (fulfilling Jeremiah 31:15).
 - His family, though devout Jews, were forced to live in Egypt (fulfilling Hosea 11:1).
 - When they finally returned to Israel, they were forced to live in Nazareth (fulfilling Isaiah 11:1).
 - Through all this time, Jesus remained submitted to His parents (Luke 2:51).
- In the only recorded event from the "silent years," we are shown His devotion to the house of God!
- THIS "PATTERN OF PROVING" IS TRUE IN EVERY INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN LIFE!
- The times of faithfulness and growth are not glorious, but they are absolutely necessary. Many Christians try to "short-circuit" them, unaware that this is the divine plan of God to develop them.
- A faithful Christian life is a sign that points to the King of Kings – all "wise men" will see it!

These 17 messages recently appeared on billboards and buses in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. The Smith Agency in charge of the advertising campaign said an anonymous individual is footing the bill. They are signed "GOD" and have caused quite a stir:

- Let's Meet At My House Sunday Before the Game
- C'mon Over And Bring The Kids
- What Part Of "Thou Shalt Not" Didn't You Understand?
- We Need To Talk
- Keep Using My Name In Vain And I'll Make Rush Hour Longer
- Loved The Wedding, Invite Me To The Marriage
- That "Love Thy Neighbor" Thing – I Meant It
- I Love You ... I Love You ... I Love You
- Will The Road You're On Get You To My Place?
- Follow Me
- Big Bang Theory – You've Got To Be Kidding
- My Way IS The Highway
- Need Directions?
- You Think It's Hot Here?
- Tell The Kids I Love Them
- Need A Marriage Counsellor? I'm Available
- Have You Read My #1 Bestseller? There Will Be A Test

- Prepare for opposition from so-called "scholars" who are indifferent to the claims of Christ.

(Telegraph Journal, Saturday, December 26, 1998) Allison Brewer, the leading voice for Fredericton's gay and lesbian community, has no time for organized religion. She's been on the receiving end of the intolerance for too long. For Ms. Brewer, God is not found inside churches or religions that voice such seemingly unloving beliefs. "I know from experience that the Bible is just wrong," she says. "I know from being a lesbian and from being a woman that the Bible doesn't speak to us. It tends to be quite misogynistic. It's also extremely contradictory. "I have really grave concerns about people who attach themselves to such an old and dated document." Rather, she says God is that internal spiritual force that links each of us - man or woman, gay or heterosexual. "God has become such a negative to me over the years I almost hate to use that expression," she says. "If I believe in a God, I believe that it's something inside of us. It's our spirit and who we are. I don't believe in the old guy sitting in the sky version - that doesn't wash with me."

(Vance Havner) Modernism has no message, for it denies the only hope of the world, a supernatural Bible and a supernatural Christ. It is rooted in evolution and therefore rotten at the source. It denies the depravity of the human heart and the need of a blood-bought redemption. It laughs at a "slaughter-house" theology and eliminates the "blood songs" from hymnals. It takes the precious name of "Emmanuel," removes the "Em" from the beginning and the "uel" from the end, and leaves only "man." It gives to the congregation a set of blocks and lets the people spell "God" the best they can. It calls weakness what God calls wickedness, recommends culture instead of Calvary, and polish instead of pardon. It has tried to revise the Bible, streamline the Gospel, remodel Heaven, explain away the devil, and air-condition Hell. It has no "hallelujah." It never produces a revival. It never saved a soul. It never convicted a sinner. It never changed a dope fiend into a Christian. It never took away a drunkard's love for booze or loosed a libertine from the shackles of lust. It is a form without force, a religion without redemption. It defies the Book, denies the Blood and derides the Blessed Hope, and the wrath of God is upon it.

(IGNORANCE OF SCHOLARS) Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal, they lay down for the night and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars." "What does that tell you?" Holmes asked. Watson pondered for a minute. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of

planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you?" Holmes was silent for a minute, then spoke. "Watson, you idiot! Someone has stolen our tent!"

- The devil has launched an all-out attack of sin against the world in an effort to destroy you. But, his attacks miss the faithful Christian! Living faithfully for God may not be glorified by the world or the liberal church, but it certainly has its benefits!

(James Dobson) To date, over 20 different and dangerous sexually transmitted diseases are rampant among the young. Add to that the problems associated with promiscuous behavior: infertility, abortions and infected newborns. The cost of this epidemic is staggering, both in human suffering and in expense to society, yet experts tell us we've only seen the beginning.

- The Federal Centers for Disease Control estimate that there are now 1 million cases of HIV infection in the U.S.
- 1 in 100 students coming to the University of Texas health center now carries the deadly virus.
- The rate of heterosexual HIV transmission has increased 44% since September 1989.
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) infect 3 million teenagers annually.
- 63% of all STD cases occur among persons less than 25 years of age.
- 1 million new cases of pelvic inflammatory disease occur annually.
- 1.3 million new cases of gonorrhea occur annually; strains of gonorrhea have developed that are resistant to penicillin.
- Syphilis is at a 40-year high, with 134,000 new infections per year.
- 500,000 new cases of herpes occur annually; it is estimated that 16.4% of the U.S population ages 15-74 is infected, totaling more than 25 million people – among certain groups, the infection rate is as high as 60:5.
- 4 million cases of chlamydia occur annually; 10-30% of 15-19 year-olds are infected.
- There are now 24 million cases of human papilloma virus (HPV), with a higher prevalence among teens.

(Illustration) Lady at school curriculum meeting who was ridiculed for promoting abstinence and didn't shake hands at coffee break. Chairperson: "Who has a chair with a mark on the bottom? Who did you shake hands with? And you? (etc.) This is how AIDS is spread, and now each one of you would have AIDS." Lady: "I don't have AIDS. I abstained."

- We are living in Egypt, "in the world but not of the world." At the rapture, God will call His church out of the most sinful generation history has ever seen, to His ultimate glory!
- When Matthew quotes the prophets saying "He shall be called a Nazarene," he is making reference to the fact that Jewish society saw the word "Nazarene" as a synonym for someone who was despised or detestable. That is why Nathaniel said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Those in the last generation look down on faithful Christians; they are "despisers of those that are good." (2 Timothy 3:3)
- A faithful Christian remains submitted to God – and to spiritual authority – throughout the "silent years" of the Christian life. Only God's glory is sought!
- The only recorded words from Jesus during this time are, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). **JESUS WAS FAITHFUL IN OBSCURITY!**

MIKE ESSES, IN "JESUS IN EXODUS" ...

Praise God that He has given His children the high calling! If God has called you to be like Jesus in all of your spirit, and if you have absolutely sold yourself to be His slave, He will take you at your word. He will wrap you up in a jealous love and will put on you such demands of obedience that He will not allow you to do things which He seems to let other good people do. Other Christians may push themselves forward, pull wires and work schemes to carry out their plans, but you cannot. And if you attempt to, you will meet with such failure and rebuke from the Lord as to make you sorely penitent. Others can brag on themselves, on their work, on their success, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing. And if you begin it, He will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.

Others will be allowed to accumulate great wealth, but God may supply your needs on a daily basis because He wants you to have something far better than gold - and that is a helpless dependence on Him. The Lord may let others be honored and put forward while He keeps you hidden away in obscurity, because He wants you to produce some choice fruit for His coming glory that can be brought forth only in the shade. God will let others be great, but He will keep you small. He will let others do a work for Him and get credit for it, but He will make you toil on without knowing what you are accomplishing. And then, to make your work still more precious, He will let others get the credit for what you have done. And all this will make your reward ten times as great when Jesus comes.

The Holy Spirit will put a strict watch on you with a jealous love. He will rebuke you for wasting your time or for little words and feelings which never seem to distress other Christians. And He will not explain to you a thousand things about His dealings which may puzzle your reasoning. So make up your mind that God is sovereign and has a right to do as He pleases with His own. Settle it forever that you are to deal directly with the Holy Spirit and that He is to have the privilege of tying your tongue or chaining your hands or closing your eyes in ways that others are not dealt with.

When you are so possessed by the living God that you are in your secret heart delighted over this peculiar, personal, private, jealous guardianship and management of His Holy Spirit over your life, you will have found the vestibule of heaven in Jesus Christ.