

Chapter 2

Before Jesus' Public Ministry



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The Circumstances Surrounding His Birth

The Bible reveals little detail about Jesus' life before He began His very public ministry. However, even though we do not know much about His formative years we can still learn about His character by studying these accounts. For example, we are able to recognize that Jesus' advent and life were exceptional. God Himself directed the events from Jesus' birth, to His escape from the king's jealousy, to clues about His development into manhood.

Jesus grew and matured physically and mentally like any other normal male. He was cognizant of who He was at an early age even though only a few other people ever appreciated His uniqueness. He was as mindful of His words and actions as God's Ambassador, as well as being a dutiful Son to His earthly parents. Even when His mother asked Him to perform something He did not care to at a wedding, He obeyed her because it did not impede His relationship with His Heavenly Father. Evidently she, too, had observed and took note of the importance of everything Jesus ever said or did.

"In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary and having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women,' but when she saw him she was troubled at his saying and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then 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 bring forth a Son and shall call

Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest... and of His Kingdom there will be no end.'

Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be since I do not know a man?'

And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also, that Holy One Who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren, for with God nothing is impossible.'

Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your words,' and the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:26-39)

Before involving Mary God sent His Personal angel to disclose part of the plan in which she would play a prominent role to redeem mankind. God did not just impregnate her without first advising her of the situation and obtaining her permission to use her body. God would not have impregnated any woman without her consent because He never would have nullified her freewill to disobey Him. Although some translations of the Bible read as if she had no choice in the matter that interpretation is inconsistent with the nature of the Holy Trinity. Even though Jesus, who was the express image of God the Father in Heaven, was confident that two sisters would want Him to bring their brother back from the dead He asked both of them individually beforehand for their permission before He acted.

When Mary determined that it was indeed God's messenger who spoke to her, the choice to accept His Seed was a monumental decision, one from which she could not escape afterward if she ever changed her mind. Once she was expecting, she could not hide her condition for very long. Nor could she abort the Child that was God's Son if she ever regretted the arrangement without offending Him immensely. Mary had to be convinced that she was in the hands of a Father Who not only told her the complete truth about His will, but would take care of her life as well as the entire situation around her.

The woman who birthed, nurtured, and raised the Son of God did so knowing that her decision in all likelihood might ruin her social life, possibly even causing her to become outcast from her family and friends. She was betrothed to a man who under the Law could discard her. Being pregnant meant that not only her fiancé but also all other people would think that she no longer was a virgin. They would scorn her because she must have been with another man intimately while still unmarried. In that society Mary's acceptance of God's Seed was a very courageous thing to do.

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac.... David the king begot Solomon.... And Jacob begot Joseph--the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus Who is called Christ.... Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with Child of the Holy Spirit. Then, Joseph, being a just man and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to break off with her secretly. But, while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the

Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son and you shall call His Name Jesus (meaning Savior) for He will save His people from their sins.' (John 12:47) So, all this was done that it might be fulfilled by the prophet saying, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with Child, and they shall call His Name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God is with us'.

Then, Joseph being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took her to wife and did not (make love to) her until she had brought forth her First born Son, and he called His Name Jesus." (Matthew 1:1-25)

The Scriptures likewise inform us how God instructed Mary's promised husband Joseph to behave toward that situation, for he was to raise a Child that was not his own by blood. It is clear that when Mary told him Whose Baby it was he did not believe her at first. Joseph loved her but he initially did think that she had been unfaithful because He fully intended to break off their engagement, although secretly so as not to embarrass her. God the Father prepared not only Jesus' mother for what was to come, God also got His adoptive father ready to parent to His Child. God the Father did not neglect the emotional needs and reactions of either individual. He convinced them both that He, and not another human man, indeed was the Jesus' Father. No matter how the situation appeared, Joseph finally was assured that Mary always had been faithful to him. He not only accepted the Baby into his family, but also protected and raised Him as his own.

Jesus' Nativity

"It came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria, so all went to be registered--everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea to the city of David which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be registered with Mary his betrothed wife who was with child.

So it was that while they were there the days were completed for her to be delivered. And, she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were afraid.

Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people! For, there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior Who is Christ, the Lord and this will be a sign to you: you will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.'

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly hosts praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'

So it was when the angels had gone away from them into Heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass which the Lord has made known to us!' and they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told to them concerning this Child, and all those who heard marveled in those things which were told them by the shepherds, but Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen as it was told them." (Luke 2:1-21)

Jesus was born during the first complete census that the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus ordered of his entire empire. Curiously, he did not decree that people register to be taxed where they were residing but instead go to their city of birth. This meant that quite a number of them might have to travel, spend some of Caesar's tax money for their journeys. This also might have created increased traffic and confusion on the roads, as well as crowd wherever people had to find lodging during their stay in the cities and towns. Caesar's ruling seemed peculiar because it created unnecessary complications for everyone involved, even his Roman subjects. Therefore, when Joseph housed himself and his pregnant wife in a stable it was not because he chose to but because there was nowhere else available in Bethlehem at that moment to spend those days and nights.

While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, she went into labor and gave birth to her first child in that stable. Unless there really was no other location, or she was impaired mentally in some way, she never would have remained where she was to bring forth this special Baby unless she was assured that it was part of God's plan. God's Son did not enter this world like a King but as a very poor and lowborn infant. His birth was not announced to any rich or powerful people, nor was He transported to a better spot right after He was born. On the contrary, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes instead of an expensive blanket and laid in a stable manger instead of a crib. Not even Caesar himself, the most powerful man alive, knew what had taken place that eventually would affect the entire world.

Jesus of Nazareth was not born there, but in Bethlehem. As mentioned, He was not born where His earthly father and mother were from and had been residing. As predicted in the Scriptures, the Son of God was born in what was known as the city of David. Remember, centuries beforehand, God had told the prophet Samuel to go to see Jesse, King David's father, the Bethlehemite. (*1 Samuel 16:1*) God later promised David that His Savior would come from his lineage.

Evidently God did want someone other than Mary and Joseph to know about the advent of His Son. God had the entire world from which to choose witnesses, so whom did He select to announce this special birth and confirm His part in it? He told the good news to a group of unpretentious shepherds who worked at night in fields guarding sheep. Angels came to them and proclaimed Who was just born as well as exactly

where to find Him. Since these men were working outside the city limits guarding their flocks it was amazing that they immediately abandoned their work to look for a place in the city which would have been nearly impossible to find. Only something or someone very extraordinary could have induced them to leave their livelihoods.

When the shepherds saw the Baby not only did they rejoice, they left the stable and spread what they had witnessed. Those who heard it marveled, yet it was not recorded that any other people went to see the miracle for themselves. The same shepherds did return however and praised God for sending His Promise to live as one of them to deliver His people.

Dedication to God at the Temple in Jerusalem

"When eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child His name was called Jesu--the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the thirty days of her purification, according to the Law of Moses, were completed they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.' And, to offer sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, 'A pair of turtledoves and two pigeons.' (Leviticus 12:2-8)

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was a just and devout man waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy spirit was upon him and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So, he came by the Spirit into the temple and when the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him according to the Law.

He took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now You are letting your servant depart in peace according to Your word. For, I have seen Your Salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples--a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel' And, Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.

Then Simon blessed Him and said to Mary, His mother, 'Behold! This Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.'

Now there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity and this woman was a widow of eighty-four years who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day, and coming in that instant gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

So, when they had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord they returned to Galilee to their own city Nazareth and the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of the Lord was upon Him." (Luke 2:21-39)

Jesus' parents lived under and followed God's Law given to the people by Moses. Therefore, they did what was commanded after a woman gave birth: Jesus was circumcised after eight days, Mary stayed alone with her family until her body had been purified, and then they all traveled to the temple in Jerusalem to make the required sacrifices as an offering to God. His Son did not live apart from the Law, but was raised from the beginning to respect and honor its statutes.

In the temple God directed the Holy Spirit again to confirm that Jesus was His Son. God prompted an old man to visit there at the exact moment that Mary and Joseph would be present with the Baby. Additionally, He also led an old woman who was in the temple daily witness what took place in order to corroborate further the uniqueness of the Infant. The Messiah's appearance was established by many prophets from ages past, some shepherds, these two people in the temple in Jerusalem, as well as angels from God Himself.

Even if they somehow knew all of the pertinent the prophesies in the Scriptures, the likelihood of these unrelated people who confirmed the same thing about this particular Infant being God's Son was staggering. It was virtually impossible for all of these individuals to have met each other because they were from completely different parts of the country. Without the modern system of communication that we now take for granted they could not possibly known the same information unless God Himself engineered and coordinated everything they did and witnessed.

Wise Men Came from the East

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem saying, 'Where is He Who was born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star and have come to worship Him.'

When Herod the king heard this he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him, and when he had gathered all the chief priests and the scribes of the people together he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah are not the least of the rulers of Judah, for out of you shall come a Ruler Who will Shepherd My people Israel.'

Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared and he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the young Child and when you have found Him bring back word to me that I may come and worship Him also.'

When they heard the king they departed> And, behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy and when they had come into the house they saw the young Child with Mary--His mother--and fell down and worshipped Him, and when they had opened their treasures they presented the gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being Divinely warned in a dream that they should not

return to Herod they departed for their own country another way.

Now when they had departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise! Take the young Child and His mother! Flee to Egypt and stay there until I bring you word. For, Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him!'

When he arose he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt and was there until the death of Herod--that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I will call My Son.'

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry and he set forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its districts from two years old and under according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children. Refusing to be comforted because they are no more.'

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, 'Arise! Take the young Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead.'

Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother and came to the land of Israel. But, when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And, being warned by God in a dream he turned aside into the region of Galilee, and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazaret--that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets. 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" (Matthew 2:1-23)

God did not just reveal the birth of His Son through many prophecies about Him throughout the Scriptures (beginning at mankind's fall out of His Kingdom). (Genesis 3:15) He told at least three non-Jews about it, too. They lived far away from the site, but apparently something motivated them so strongly that they traveled a long distance to confirm it. The Bible does not reveal much detail about these men other than this, and the fact that may have been rich because of the costly gifts they brought to present to the Child. We do not even know how, when, or where God informed and directed them. Nor does the Bible disclose whether they knew each other before they set out on their journeys or met up and shared what they were doing along the road. However, the important thing is that God Himself engineered everything.

When these wise men from the East entered Judea they went into Jerusalem to meet the king before they sought out the Child. Their inquiry suggested that they assumed that Herod would have the information they needed to pinpoint Him. After all, they were looking for the King of the Jews, so naturally they assumed that the king would know what they did, and more since he was a Jew himself and they weren't. However, although Herod pretended to welcome and support their quest, he became troubled that there might be an adversary to his throne. He asked scholars what the Scriptures revealed and told the wise men the location. Herod even instructed the wise men to come back and report what they had witnessed in Bethlehem so that he could

go and worship Jesus also. In essence, Herod used them as ignorant spies to disclose information that he would be able to use to destroy his supposed "rival".

As the wise men journeyed they saw and followed the same star that the shepherds had seen the night Jesus was born. The star even moved before them until it stopped directly above the house to where the family had since moved from the barn. It is possible that several years had passed, since the Bible is unclear about the time frame between the visits of the shepherds and the wise men to visit Him. The Bible does reveal, however, that although God's Son was born in a stable He did not remain there. When the wise men arrived in Bethlehem the family was then staying in another and better location. As the angel directed the shepherds, so did God's star lead the men who went to worship His Child. It is important to notice that God *precisely* directed people who earnestly sought Jesus right from the night of His birth, as well as kept providing not only for Him but those who wanted to revere and help take care of Him.

The wise men presented Jesus with very costly gifts, ones that seemed odd to give to any infant or toddler. Why would they do so? God knew about Herod's plans to get rid of the Child. In fact, God even warned the wise men not to return to Jerusalem and testify about what they had experienced. Nevertheless, the king, probably becoming increasingly nervous and suspicious, ordered his soldiers to slaughter every single male in the Bethlehem area under the age of three to ensure that the "Pretender" could not escape and ever try to dethrone him.

What then were those particular presents good for? More than likely they were used to fund Jesus' family's escape to Egypt. Since Joseph originally had intended to travel to Bethlehem merely to complete a census, he probably left most of his money and possessions in Nazareth and taken with him only what he and Mary would require for a short time. Unless God specifically told Joseph that he would not be returning to his home it would have been the most logical thing for him to do. Whatever really happened, however, the new family still could have used these expensive gifts to sell in order to help pay for their travel and living expenses for awhile. Although this was not mentioned specifically in the Gospels it was a perfect way for God to finance His Child's journey and safety, as well as His parents'. God apparently led other people give to His cause and be blessed by their giving, instead of Him just providing everything. Remember, this is one of the rules of the Heavenly Kingdom of God:

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35b)

"Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For, with the same measure you use it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38)

Just as the Bible does not disclose just how old Jesus was when the wise men visited Him in Bethlehem or His family fled to Egypt, it does not divulge how long Joseph, Mary, and Jesus stayed and lived in that country, nor what they did there. It does reveal, however, that their exile lasted until the king who had tried to kill the Child was dead. Finally God instructed Joseph that it was safe for them to return to Israel. However, he became afraid to go back once he heard that Herod's son was the new

ruler in Judea. God warned him again and he turned and went to the region of Galilee. Joseph settled them all in the city of Nazareth, the place where he came from before Caesar's first census. This is why God's Son grew up there and became identified as Jesus of Nazareth or Galilee, not Jesus of Bethlehem.

When He Was Only Twelve

"The Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year according to the custom of the Feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem and Joseph and His mother did not know it, but supposing Him to have been in the company they went a day's journey and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So, when they did not find Him they returned to Jerusalem seeking Him. Now it was after three days the found Him in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him they (also) were amazed.

So his mother said to Him, 'Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought You anxiously!' and He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?', but they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart and Jesus increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:40-52)

Jesus and His family evidently did not travel by themselves to Jerusalem, so it would have been easy for His parents to think that He was with someone else when they all departed to go home. Evidently, Jesus never had gotten lost in this manner before because His parents didn't even consider that He wasn't responsible enough to be with the caravan when they left the city. Most probably there were other children in the group, too so Jesus' mother thought that if they were trustworthy enough to be in the right place at the right time to go home then certainly her Son would as well.

Even as a Child Jesus had to have been recognized as being some kind of prodigy. Even the religious teachers at the temple apparently considered Him to be so. As they were instructing Him His questions and responses must have been extremely insightful. Remember that Jesus was not born with His brain already possessing the same information that He had known in Heaven about the Scriptures. He was a human being not only in outward appearance but mentally as well. Jesus of Nazareth had to listen, study, and learn about God's Kingdom just like any other normal person. Additionally, as God's primary Ambassador on the earth Jesus had to excel in and comprehend everything about the Scriptures, something which had to require an enormous amount of personal time and effort. Along with His regular duties as the Son of a carpenter Jesus had to become proficient in God's knowledge to one day be entrusted to spread His Heavenly Father's Gospel accurately.

Jesus did not expect His parents not to have anticipated that He would be in the

temple. Nor did He count on them ever becoming anxious and afraid of the possibilities of what might have happened to Him. Jesus always was so calm and trusting in God that He probably never even gave such things a thought. Joseph and Mary however, had to have remembered how they had to flee to another country to save Jesus from king Herod. Also, think about what they must have been going through, especially His mother; she not only had lost her Son, but God's. I expect that she was acutely aware of both facts.

Seemingly, Jesus parents never asked God where to find His Own Son. Instead, they frantically scoured the city for three entire days before locating Him, and in those days there was no electronic system of communication as there is today. Nor, was there any police service especially designated to find missing children. Mary and Joseph probably had to do everything by themselves, and on foot. Imagine their conversations on those several nights when they had been out searching all day and had not found their Child. Joseph and Mary must have been increasingly apprehensive, yet Jesus questioned this. His faith and trust in God already was more developed than that of these two adults when He was only twelve years old.

Mary made a point of stating that Jesus' "father" had been looking for Him. When He asked her why she had not considered that He would be doing His "Father's" business, it must have seemed curious to anyone who was listening to their conversation. Nowadays we have the entire Scriptures in written form, so we can detect the different meaning: Jesus Heavenly Father is capitalized, while the other reference is not. However, anyone who heard this dialogue would not be able to differentiate between the two words. They would not have caught the inference as Mary did.

When Jesus returned to Nazareth with His earthly parents He lived under *their* authority like any other normal boy. He developed like an ordinary child, too, in both size and mental capacity. And, He was popular not just with God, but other people. Jesus definitely was a bright, delightful, above-average kid. Only His mother seemed to be aware that there was anything special about Him other than that. And, until He was fully ready to leave His home to go and begin His ministry Jesus remained under their control as well as God's.

Jesus' Baptism

"It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John (the Baptist) in the Jordan (River).

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of Whom I said, 'After me comes a Man preferred before me; for, He was before me.' ...

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water, and while He prayed, behold, the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of the Lord descending in bodily form like a dove and alighting on Him.

And, suddenly a Voice came from Heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased,'

And, John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven

like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He Who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon Whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, This is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit,' and I have seen and testified that This is the Son of God." (Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22 & John 1:28-34)

When Jesus was led to begin His public ministry He was about thirty years old. Both He and His Heavenly Father not only had waited patiently for *centuries* for the time to be ripe so that Jesus could be born, They had waited another three *decades* for Him to be prepared *sufficiently* in order to leave His earthly family and embark on His mission to spread the Gospel (or "good news") about God His Father and His Kingdom. Jesus first was baptized--given the authority and power to fulfill His objective before God allowed Him to do anything publicly.

Temptation by Satan Immediately Afterward

"Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And, when He had fasted forty days and forty nights and in those days He ate nothing and afterward when they had ended He was hungry.

(#1) Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

But He/Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'

(#2 or #3) Then, the devil took Him up into the holy city--Jerusalem--set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash you foot against a stone.'

And, Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'

*(#3 or #2) Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him **all** the kingdoms of the world and their **glory in a moment of time** and said to Him, 'All these things I will give You, for this has been delivered to me and I will give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You bow down and worship before me, all will be Yours.'*

Then Jesus answered and said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan! Away with you, Satan, for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve,'

Now when the devil had ended his temptation (Hebrews 4:15) he departed from Him until an opportune time. Then the devil left Him and, behold, angels came and ministered to Him." (Matthew 4:1-1, (Mark 1:13), Luke 4:1-13)

God the Father allowed His worst enemy, Satan, tempt His Son instantly after He had just been baptized to begin His public ministry. The Holy Spirit even led Jesus into the wilderness purposely; knowing full well that Satan would come to try to test His faith

and endurance. *Mark 4:15* says that the devil comes immediately to try to steal God's Word out of people's hearts; so, as a human being, Jesus of Nazareth was no exception to Satan's craftiness on the earth because at that time it still was part of his kingdom.

God recognized that Satan would treat Jesus no differently than he had every person ever born from the Adams forward. Therefore, this was a good means of discovering right at the onset how Jesus would react to unGodly ideas to which the rest of us too often respond favorably. It is critical to recognize that when Jesus was being tempted to sway over to Satan's kingdom He only quoted the Old Covenant in order to free Himself from all enticement. Jesus never used any special influence or abilities that He did not tell other people to employ when they ran into similar circumstances.

"We do not have a High Priest Who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are." (Hebrews 4:15b)

"In that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to aid those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:18b)

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted nor does He Himself tempt anyone, but one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and seduced. Then, when desire has conceived it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full grown, brings forth death/Death." (James 1:13-15)

Satan's first temptation was to try to force Jesus to do anything in order to eat, even create bread out of some rocks. Interestingly, food likewise had been the same ploy he used on the first man and woman as well. God's sworn adversary initially attempted to sway Jesus away from His Father's will with the same con, but this time it did not work. So, he had to try further worldly enticements that not only would appeal to Jesus' physical senses, but mental and emotional outlook as well. However, no matter how or what the devil used Jesus never became fixated on Himself and His pleasures knowing that those things were short-lived and too often deceptive in their rewards.

As well, Jesus knew that Satan, as the father of lies (*John 8:44*), would never really give Him what he promised except temporarily. Satan's gifts would act like narcotic drugs to get Jesus addicted and want more. Their intent only was to lead Him even further away from God the Father not closer. Luke's gospel even says that Jesus resisted the temptations to rule over the things and people that He had not come into existence yet. The Bible teaches that Satan showed Him *all* the kingdoms of the entire world and their glory in only a moment of time.

When the first test did not influence Jesus, the devil tried several additional ways to entice Him away from His Father's will: safety, fame, and social prominence, along with wealth, power, greed, special powers, and ultimately world domination. There are also temptations that would accompany the other obvious ones. They would namely be sex (which He would get as the "ruler" of the world), as well as extravagance and complete hedonism (not needing to care about being wasteful or considerate of others). As well, no other physical restrictions that Jesus even could think up or desire would suppress His life on the earth. However, Jesus' influence would then have become a

totally hedonistic concern only for Himself, as well as being merely superficial. Satan tempted Jesus with far, far more enticement than any one of us ever faces; yet, He withstood them *all*.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke reverse the ordering of Satan's second and thirst tries to tempt to endeavor to sway Jesus away from God's Word, i.e. to get Him to "turn to the left or the right". His following the directions of either even slightly would have been rebellion causing sin against God's will as stated in His Word. Satan may have waited to confront Jesus directly only at the end of 40 days of His fasting. This would signify that Satan first spoke to Jesus after it became imperative that He eat or possibly die as a result of starvation. Matthew states that the devil was not even near Jesus until that point. Luke, however, makes it seem as if Satan was indeed hanging around from the beginning and pressuring Jesus to give up and get out of the wilderness. Regardless, both gospels imply that Satan did not approach Jesus until He was quite weak from hunger and the physical and mental repercussions of it.

Jesus never acquiesced to Satan's pressures and merely used things that He gave and taught other people to imitate to be as successful as He was in countering temptation. Namely, Jesus only quoted God's Word--the Sword of the Spirit--to guard and defend Himself. He deflected every provocation solely by using the Scriptures. God's Own Son did not use any special abilities that He had possessed when He was in a Spiritual instead of physical body and lived in Heaven. On the earth, as the Son of Man, He was completely human and thus exclusively allowed to use those defensive and offensive weapons against the devil that God gave to mankind as a whole.

Additionally, Jesus never once called upon His Father to just step in and do things for Him. He prayed and continuously asked for wisdom and guidance on how to react to situations, yet He never expected His Father to perform a deed. Jesus just spent sufficient time communing with His Father so that He always was equipped and ready to hear, accept, and use His Father's guidance through the Holy Spirit to direct Him. Jesus never petitioned God to get rid of Satan's presence for Him. Jesus employed His own personal faith and spoke what was required to get whatever He wanted to accomplish every task set before Him.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man, but God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able but with the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it." (I Corinthians 10:13)

By bowing to the devil instead of taking control of every situation through the Holy Spirit Jesus instantly would have reversed roles with him. Satan immediately would have become the way he always wanted to be--like God Himself--while Jesus would become his enemy's Servant instead of His Father's. Likewise, because Jesus is a member of the Godhead Trinity and He and His Father are One, not merely He and His Father would lose Their Divine authority and be subject to Satan's domination but the Holy Spirit would be as well. The consequences of Jesus' not resisting Satan did not merely affect Him personally but everyone and everything we can ever imagine.

Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus but he did so deceptively. He wanted to get his personal desires satisfied, not consult, consider, or try to convey God's true thoughts or

authority about the matter. In other words, Satan did not employ the Word to demonstrate the accurate will of God. Basically, Satan merely quoted it in order to try to substantiate his own opinions and entice Jesus into acting contrary to His Father's wishes. Unfortunately, people likewise too often chose to imitate his demeanor instead of Jesus', which is hypocritical and dangerous to everyone concerned. We can see what Jesus said about this kind of behavior by observing the highest leaders of the church in that society from the temple in Jerusalem, the capital. Jesus consistently countered their ordinances by teaching that they had become more influenced by their carnal traditions than by the Scriptures themselves.

"The scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, for they do not wash their hands when they eat bread?'

He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded saying, 'Honor your father and your mother' and 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you have received from me is a gift to God' then need not honor his father or mother.' Thus, you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me and in vain they worship Me, teaching doctrines the commandments of men.' When He had called the multitudes to Himself He said to them, 'Hear and understand!'

Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?'

But, He answered and said, 'Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind and if the blind leads the blind both will fall into a ditch.'

Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.'

So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But, those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart and they defile a man, for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication's, thefts, false witness, (and) blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'" (Matthew 15:1-20)

Because Jesus kept His faith steadfast and held onto on the authority of the Word unceasingly Satan had no other choice than finally to leave Him alone. The devil stopped trying to provoke Jesus and left His presence because he was forced to, not because he wanted to. From then until the crucifixion the devil never again faced Him directly. However, Satan never stopped hounding Jesus continually and constantly by directing his own fallen angels to harass Him, through people. Sometimes they approached Him with sickness, but instead of avoiding any encounter Jesus always stayed firm with his Godly love towards everyone. His faith in the power of His Father's

Word not only kept Himself unharmed; it helped release anyone else who was being tormented in any way whatsoever.

Jesus even resisted when even one of his own beloved disciples urged Him not to complete His ministry by letting Himself be murdered by His enemies. Even though Peter had just announced to the rest of the group that Jesus was indeed the Messiah that the Hebrews had been awaiting for centuries when he soon afterward endeavored to stop Jesus from finishing His work on the earth. Jesus realized what was going on and rebuked the spirit of Satan who was controlling Peter's emotions about the matter. Jesus recognized that human beings fluctuate in faith, but what Peter was thinking was so bad that Jesus did not pause to consider that He might offend him with His rebuke. Jesus perceived Satan's invisible influence in Peter and delivered him from it immediately.

Jesus had the ability to sin and rebel against His Father, if He had wanted to at any time during His 33 years as a Man. How can we know this? If He really lived as a bona fide human being then Jesus could have sinned. If it was impossible for Him to disobey His Father, then why was He lead by the Spirit into the wilderness expressly to see if He would succumb to any trial or temptation? If Jesus of Nazareth did not have the same freewill to disobey God that we do why was He tested? It makes that ordeal a complete waste of valuable time.

If Jesus were not able to sin He should have started His travels forty days earlier--a considerable segment of a mere three year ministry. He just had been baptized and authorized, so what would be the point of His squandering time in the wild? He came here to teach about God's Kingdom and to heal people, not to play with rocks. God did not send Jesus to this planet only to waste Their efforts. Therefore: (a) God's Son really was a true human being, (b) He really could have sinned because He possessed the freewill to be capable of doing so, and (c) He had to be fully prepared for what lay ahead. (Which, by the way, made His life even *more* difficult, as well as extraordinary.)

As much as Satan tried, he never could influence Jesus' spirit, soul, or body. Even when He was about to starve. Jesus never buckled under any of his tests, even those designed to tempt Him with power, fame, or wealth.

"The ruler of this age is coming, but he has nothing in Me." (John 14:30)

As soon as Jesus followed His Father's direction, God's angels came immediately and ministered to His needs. The Father dispatched His angels to comfort and help strengthen His Son, maybe even bringing Him food. However, God sent Jesus relief only at the perfect moment, not when it only seemed to be the best time from a purely human perspective. The Father gave His Son what He needed, not merely what He might think that He required due to basic human nature for immediate gratification.

Turning Water into Wine at a Wedding

"There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples (Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel) were there and when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus

said to Him, 'They have no wine.'

Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour is not yet come.'

His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you do it.'

Now there were set six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water,' and they filled them to the brim and He said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast,' and they took it.

When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and did not know where it came from (but the servants who drew the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and he said to him, 'Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!

This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." (JOHN 2:1-11)

Jesus' mother ignored His displeasure when she wanted Him to do something that He obviously was reluctant to do. Therefore, although by that time He was an adult, Jesus still respected His mother's wishes and did the favor she asked Him. He obeyed the sixth commandment that states that God's will is that we honor our parents.

Jesus spoke what He wanted to exist not what did already. However, His words came to pass only when the people He directed followed His directions precisely. Even though the servants probably did not know Jesus they indeed followed His instructions. Thus, the miracle happened and the wine that Jesus created was even better than what had been served before.

How did Jesus' mother know to tell the servants to do whatever He said? She had lived with Him for 30+ years, so she had to have seen what He had spoken come into being before, most likely on numerous occasions. Jesus knew the value and power of words and He never used them idly. What He later taught demonstrated the effects that words have on the course of nature. In fact, James, Jesus' brother (not the apostle) later wrote about this particular phenomenon in greater detail in his letter to the churches. Therefore, Jesus' siblings likewise clearly knew His position on the power of a person's tongue to plant invisible, yet powerful, seeds--either of faith that agreed with a true understanding of the intent of the Scriptures, or the reverse.

Curiously, Jesus' new disciples believed in Him after they saw this one, rather insignificant miracle that He called into tangible reality. Yet, later in His ministry after they had traveled and lived with Him and seen countless and much more awesome things, when Jesus asked them Who they thought He was, they seemed reluctant to answer. (*Matthew 16:13-15*)